



# Preparing for *College*

*A Guide for High School Parents*

PORTSMOUTH  
CHRISTIAN  
ACADEMY

DOVER, NEW HAMPSHIRE





## *Impacting the World for Good*

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Your child has tremendous potential to make an impact on the world through a meaningful career, utilizing their God-given gifts and talents, and through Christ-like words and actions. While it may seem like a long journey from diapers to diplomas, your student will be ready to take on the independence and responsibility of flying solo before you know it. In the meantime, preparing your student for a strong academic and spiritual path in college is an important task.

We hope this guide to college preparation will be useful as you and your teen navigate the process of finding the college that is just the right fit. You'll discover steps to take at each grade level in high school, and you'll find information about how Portsmouth Christian Academy (PCA) helps students find their calling through academic guidance, personal relationships in and outside the classroom, and programmatic offerings that'll lead your son or daughter to their God-given calling.





# COLLEGE PREP

## *Step by Step*

**Planning for college should start in the ninth grade.** While the bulk of the college testing and selection process takes place in 11th grade, there are a number of steps students and parents should be taking early in high school. Follow our grade-by-grade college prep list to help guide your child as he or she prepares for the next level.

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# 9th Grade

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## Navigating High School Course Selection

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For many new high school parents, the various types of high school classes are confusing. What's the difference between College Prep (CP), Honors, Advanced Placement (AP), and Dual-enrollment classes, and which ones should my child be taking?

- College Prep courses are designed to give teens the foundational knowledge and skills needed to successfully build on and advance at the college level.
- Honors classes offer more of a challenge and provide a deeper dive into each subject than College Prep classes. Honors classes also generally carry more weight in the college admissions process.
- Advanced Placement classes, also known as AP courses, are college-level classes that allow high

school students an opportunity to earn college credit through an AP Exam given at the end of the AP class. If your student is passionate about a particular area of study that may also connect to her planned college major, she should consider taking an AP class in that subject. Also, any student considering an Ivy League or selective school should have a strong mix of Honors and AP classes. Note that many colleges require a score of four or higher on the AP exam for the class to count as credit.

- Dual-enrollment classes are offered on and off the PCA Campus. These classes count for both high school and college credit. Students can take a variety of courses in Personal Finance, Business, Psychology, and more through accredited universities such as Liberty University Online and Southern New Hampshire University.





## *Discover Gifts and Interests*

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Children begin understanding more about their strengths, weaknesses, and academic interests during high school. Personality inventories and career interest tests can help freshmen start thinking about careers, majors, and colleges that would be a good fit for them. Most students consider these tests fun since they don't require preparation or have right and wrong answers.

These test results show measurements across various factors. Does he enjoy leading, instructing, creating, or fixing? Is she happier working in groups or alone? Does he thrive indoors or outdoors? Is she drawn to adventure and a varied schedule or crave structure and routine?

## *College Prep in 9th Grade at PCA*

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All students at PCA take College Prep classes starting in 9th grade, and those who are ready for an even more rigorous curriculum may take Honors classes.

Students also begin meeting with our College Planning and Academic Guidance Team to map out their studies.



# 10th Grade

## Studying Hard and Preparing for the PSAT

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### Continue Exploring Career Interests

Some students may benefit from repeating a career interest inventory. Teens should also consider job shadowing in the workplace for a day. They can also learn more about careers by volunteering or working a summer job. For example, a student interested in teaching may be able to secure a job at a summer day camp, or a teen who wants to pursue a career in healthcare may be able to volunteer at a local hospital.

### Begin College Research

Students and parents should be exploring college websites and attending college fairs that are offered at your teen's school

or in the community. Many schools also have admissions representatives from various colleges visit the school. As you and your child explore colleges, take virtual tours on websites and start making a list of campuses you may want to tour in person.

### Take the PSAT

The PSAT serves as a practice test for the SAT. This not only helps your teen become familiar with the structure and types of material covered in the SAT, it can identify any weaknesses that need to be strengthened before the SAT.



A young man with dark, wavy hair is seated at a wooden desk in a classroom or office setting. He is wearing a light blue blazer over a white dress shirt and a dark blue tie with a white geometric pattern. He is looking down at a piece of paper on the desk, which also has a small white object on it. The background is blurred, showing a window and some indoor plants.

## *College Prep in 10th Grade at PCA*

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Starting sophomore year, PCA students are encouraged to take advantage of meeting with the more than 50 college admissions officers who visit campus. Students are able to meet with college representatives during lunch. In October, all 10th graders take the PSAT at school. Counselors can help students review the PSAT results to pinpoint any subjects or areas where the student may benefit from tutoring or extra test prep before taking the SAT in the 11th grade.



# 11th Grade

## College Applications and the SAT

### Understanding the College Planning Timeline

Take note of the application deadlines for schools of interest. Many colleges offer an early admissions process, which requires applications to be submitted sooner. If your student has a very strong preference for one school that you are confident is a good fit, you may want to consider early admissions.

It's also best to find out if the schools your student plans to apply to accept the Common Application or require an alternative application. This can affect the amount of time your teen spends on the application process senior year. While your student will not need to submit applications until fall of senior year, knowing the timelines well in advance allows latitude to refine essays and gather letters of recommendation. Students who are heavily involved in sports or extracurricular activities may want to start applications over the summer.

### Select Colleges to Tour

Use online research to create a list of colleges to tour. Ideally, you should select schools that have strong programs in the major or majors in which your child is interested. Consider the size, location, tuition, and merit scholarship opportunities of the colleges. You should be fairly certain the schools you tour will align with your priorities in these areas. Begin touring schools in the fall of junior year.

### Understand Scholarships and Financial Aid

Applying for financial aid and scholarships takes time. Start researching these processes now. Learn the difference between federal financial aid, need-based scholarships or grants, academic scholarships, and sports scholarships. PCA offers a "Financial Planning for College" informational session every year for interested families.



# College Planning Timeline

## Junior Year

### #1. Attend College Fairs

These can be a great opportunity to understand the college selection process.



### #2. Prepare for the PSAT

The PSAT is a great way to gauge where you can improve for the SAT next year.



### #3. Register for the SAT

The SAT is typically offered in March-June and October-December.



September

October

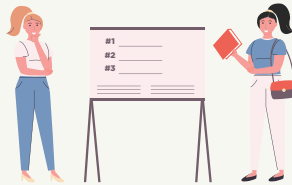
November

December

January

### #4. Make Your List of Colleges

Start with 15-20 schools based on size, location, tuition cost and strength of program in your major.



### #4. Explore Possible Majors

Think about your skills, not necessarily your career. Identify majors that could help you maximize your God-given gifts and talents.



February

April

March

### #5. Start Touring Colleges

Get a feel for the climate of your campus, how you'd travel around, what you'd eat, and more.



May

### #6. Prepare for the SAT

Junior Year Grades are the most closely analyzed by college admissions teams. Put your best academic self out there.



### #7. Begin Thinking About Your College Essay

While you're enjoying your summer before Senior Year kicks off, think about what you'll write in your essay to colleges.



June



# 12th Grade

## Acceptance and Enrollment

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### Acceptance Letters and Decision Time!

Each college application will have a number of steps. While applications may vary, almost every application requires the following:

- **Gathering Letters of Recommendation** – Students typically need two or three letters of recommendation from teachers, coaches, pastors, or other adults who are not related to them but know about the academic achievements, extracurricular activities, and character of your teen.
- **Completing Essays** – Many applications ask teens to complete one to three short essays. Sometimes essays are optional for an application but required in order to be considered for scholarships awarded by the institution.
- **Completing the Application** – The application typically asks for general biographical information, intended major, and may also ask for courses completed or underway in high school, extracurricular activities, and awards.
- **Sending Transcripts** – If your child has also completed courses at a local college while attending high school, those transcripts will need to be submitted as well.
- **Sending Test Scores** – While more colleges are becoming test optional, the majority of schools still require students to submit either SAT or ACT scores. If your teen has taken a test twice, he or she may have the option to submit the best score from each section of the test.





## *College Prep in 12th Grade at PCA*

Seniors meet with PCA college-prep counselors for support throughout all aspects of the application process, including help with collecting and preparing the supporting documents needed.

Counselors also actively announce local scholarship opportunities as well as help individual seniors identify sources of scholarships and financial aid.

In addition to academic and financial preparation, PCA prepares its students to walk boldly in Christ as they matriculate to this next phase of life. Spiritual emphasis days and sessions with the previous year's alumni allow students to talk through and prepare to stand firm in their Christian convictions.





## *PCA Students Attend Schools Like...*



Berklee  
College of Music



WILLIAM  
& MARY



LOYOLA  
UNIVERSITY CHICAGO



WPI



NORTHEASTERN



UNE  
UNIVERSITY OF  
NEW ENGLAND





**Nate Wibowo '22**

Computer Systems Programmer  
United States Air Force



**Alicia Vining '15**

Marketing Coordinator  
New York Islanders



**Julie Pease '13**

Registered Nurse for Exploited  
Women and Children in Ecuador



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*Learn more at [pcaschool.org](http://pcaschool.org)*

