



Sophomore Year: Your Guide to Life Beyond High School

Get prepared for life after high school

Some people know from an early age exactly what they want to be when they are adults – and how they can get there. Others aren't sure of their plans, and that's okay too.

Regardless of what you want to be, you most likely will be heading toward higher education of some kind. This guide can help you prepare.

Think about your future

Your sophomore year is the perfect time for you to be thinking about your future and what you want that future to be like.

Start thinking more seriously about what careers make the best use of your skills and incorporate your interests. When you find a career path that involves work you love, you will set yourself up for success. The earlier you can find the career area that is right for you, the easier it will be to make the best decision when choosing the right college, studying the correct subjects, and earning the degree that will get you the job you want.

Ask yourself:

What is my favorite subject and why?

What is my least favorite subject and why?

What kind of assignments do I enjoy?

What are my hobbies, and what is my favorite part about those hobbies?

What activities am I involved in and why?



There is help available as you plan your career:

- Ask your school counselor or CCR Advisor about taking a career assessment test.
- “Shadow” someone in a field that interests you, especially if you aren't sure if that career is right for you. By observing that kind of work in action, you'll be able to see what your life might be like on a day-to-day basis if you chose that career field.
- Check out free website that offer career information. Mapping Your Future has information, including its CareerShip® tool (mappingyourfuture.org/PlanYourCareer/careership/). Another good resource is www.bls.gov/oco, the federal government's Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook, which tells you which fields are growing.

If you still aren't sure, that's okay! You may not have yet discovered your passion, and that's one of the great things about college. Plan to take interesting elective classes, read a lot of books, and talk to people. The right career for you is just waiting to be discovered!

Education

Continuing your education beyond high school is a smart investment. It will pay you back in many ways over the course of your lifetime. Completing a college degree will help you:

- Increase your knowledge and better your skills. The more you know about the world around you, the better decisions you will make, not just about your career, but about many aspects of your life.
- Earn the degree that will get you the job you want. Most careers will require some training beyond high school, whether it is a technical school degree to become a mechanic or a medical degree to become a doctor.
- Make more money. According to Postsecondary Education Opportunity (www.postsecondary.org), college graduates earn about \$19,000 more per year than high school graduates.

Prepare academically

Practice good study habits

It's worth your time to develop good study skills because having them will help you get the best grades that you can. Those skills will also help you be better prepared to succeed at college.

Tips to improve your study skills:

- Stay organized by making a "to do" list. Stick to it.
- Set goals for yourself.
- Prioritize! A test tomorrow is more important than an assignment due next week.
- Take good notes, and review them carefully later.
- Experiment a little. Where and when do you work best? Alone or in a group, bright or dim lighting, quiet or noisy. Then study that way!



Improve your writing skills

Effective writing conveys your thoughts into words. It's a skill you use throughout your life, and no matter what career you pursue, the ability to communicate in writing will help you succeed.

Quick tips for effective writing:

- Think about your audience. For example, you would use a different tone in an essay than you would in a note to a friend.
- Plan ahead. List important points in the order you wish to make them.
- Use a strong opening sentence to catch the reader's attention.
- Be clear and to the point. Edit out unnecessary words and information.
- Know and use proper grammar and punctuation!!

Challenge Yourself

Challenge yourself to get the best grades possible, and to explore challenging classes and activities. Doing so will set you up to succeed academically in college, and will look great on your record. Scholarship committees and college admissions offices will notice that you've taken upper level classes and see that you're a dedicated student.

Attend a college fair

Did you know that you can go to one place and learn about dozens of colleges? Attending a college fair is an opportunity for you to speak with dozens of admissions officers, ask questions, and pick up materials so that you start to become more informed about the right college for you.

FBISD hosts college nights at two separate high school campuses every year – where over 100 colleges and universities from all over the United States are in attendance. Many times your campus will host a mini-college fair with maybe 15-20 colleges attending your school during the school day.

Research standardized tests

In addition to grades and extra-curricular activities, most colleges require that you take either the ACT, SAT or both. The purpose of these standardized assessment test and college entrance exams is to help college admissions officers predict your academic performance during your first year in college. Depending on the college, your scores could help you to qualify for financial aid. Talk to your counselor or CCR Advisor about which test you should take, when the tests can be taken, and how much they cost.

Learn about paying for college

How are you going to pay for college? Most students are concerned about the cost of college, but it's important to know that most college students receive some type of financial aid to help them afford the cost of their education. You can make your college dream come true, but it helps if you understand a little about how to pay for college.

Savings

Maybe your parents have a college fund for you. If so, that's great! But it's also important that you save what you can for the costs of your education.

Below are some ideas for sources of money for college:

- Part-time or summer job. By working on nights and weekends, you not only earn money for college, you can get valuable experience in how to balance different responsibilities.
- Gift money.
- Sell stuff. Money you earn from selling items you no longer need (like at a garage sale) can help increase your college savings.



Every dollar that you can save for your own college fund will help you afford the costs of college.

Types of financial aid

Also be aware that financial aid may be available to you, and there are several types.

- Scholarships – money you do not have to pay back. Scholarships are awarded based on qualities the applicant has. Each is different and may be awarded based on athletic ability, musical accomplishments, academic achievement, your heritage, place of worship, or your parents' workplace.
- Grants – money you do not have to pay back. Eligibility for grants is usually based on your financial need for them.
- Work-study – money you earn that does not have to be paid back. This type allows you to earn money for your education, usually by working on your college campus.
- After you've exhausted every other type of financial aid, then look at student loans, which is money you have to repay, even if you don't finish college or can't find a job afterwards. Be careful to only borrow the amount of student loans that you really need.

FAFSA4caster

One great way to get a "sneak peek" into the financial aid process is to check out the FAFSA4caster at www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov. This program takes your current financial situation and gives you an estimate of what kinds and how much federal financial aid you might receive.