Preparing for the Future

8th Grade

A comprehensive guidebook to help you succeed!
# Preparing for the Future: 8th Grade

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Introduction to the DPS Grade Level Planning Guides

Welcome! These Grade Level Planning Guides contain information that will be helpful in navigating your way through school. They will assist you in looking at careers and post high school options. Each Grade Level Planning Guide has information relevant to that grade level, as well as links to additional information that are listed by topic at the end of each Planning Guide.

Throughout your 8th grade year, you will participate in lessons given at your school. These are some topics you may be learning about in school this year:

- Time Management
- Goal Setting
- Why Get a College Degree?

For specific information about planning for high school in DPS, visit: www.dpsk12.org
Click on Departments
Click on Counseling Services

What does Post-Secondary mean?

You will come across the term “post-secondary” often as you use these Planning Guides. Post-secondary means all programs after high school. This includes 2 and 4-year colleges, vocational and technical schools, apprenticeships, and the military.

We encourage you to challenge yourself academically. You will have opportunities to take more challenging classes as you get closer to high school. In middle school, seek out clubs or opportunities related to academic interests you have. Some examples are Robotics or Destination Imagination.
What is a PEP or ICAP?

A PEP (Personal Education Plan), sometimes referred to as an ICAP (Individual Career and Academic Plan), is a personalized plan for each student in which a student defines his/her career and post-secondary goals and what he/she needs to do to achieve these goals. This plan will start as early as 6th grade.

The PEP is very important in developing a clear and focused vision and goals that relate school to what you will do after high school. Your PEP is always subject to change, as your goals and interest may change over time. What is important is that you continue to have a vision and plan.

A PEP/ICAP includes:

- **Career Interest Areas**
- **Post-Secondary Education Goal**
- **4-Year High School Plan**

There are many people who will be assisting you in your PEP. These people may include your counselor, teachers, administrators, and parents. They will be helping you look at your goals and making them a reality!

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**8th Grade Checklist**

___ Attend high school magnet presentations to shop for the high school that best fits your needs!

___ Gather and fill out the necessary high school paperwork (application, letters of recommendation), and return to your counselor by the deadlines.

___ Fill out the Freshman Academy paperwork and turn it in to your perspective high school. This Academy will help your transition as well as earn you high school elective credit!

___ Continue exploring scholarship websites. Look at [www.salliemae.com](http://www.salliemae.com)

___ Continue to keep track of your activities, community service and awards and recognitions on the “Brag Sheet”.

___ Continue exploring [www.CollegeInColorado.org](http://www.CollegeInColorado.org). It has great information on colleges, careers, scholarships, etc.

___ Check with your counselor to find out if there are scholarships that require you to take certain courses or participate in certain activities beginning in 9th or 10th grade.

___ If available, attend college fairs.
School Counselors
*Educating for Today ~ Empowering for Tomorrow*

**Career Planning**

- ICAP/PEP
- Strengths & Interests
- Vision for the Future
- Career Options
- Pathways to Careers

**Personal/Social Awareness**

- Self-Confidence
- Decision Making
- Problem Solving
- Conflict Resolution
- Interpersonal Skills

**Academic Success**

- Study Skills
- Learning Styles
- Self-Advocacy
- Graduation Requirements
What Can Your Professional School Counselor Do For You?

Make yourself known to your counselor! Your school counselor can be a huge help to you! School counselors have a variety of roles, all with the goal of helping you be successful in school and prepared for the future. There are three main ways you will meet with your counselor:

• **Guidance Curriculum.** A school counselor teaches a lesson to a class or a grade level. This could be a presentation on bullying, organizational skills, or how to do a college search on Naviance or College In Colorado.

• **Private Meetings.** A school counselor meets with you one-on-one, for a variety of reasons. This could be to talk about your classes or an important issue or stressor you might have.

• **Group Meetings.** A school counselor will meet with a group of students who are dealing with the same issue, such as a study skills group.

In middle school, your school counselor will focus on school success skills, career awareness & exploration, and introduce you to high school and post-secondary possibilities. Post-secondary options are whatever you plan to do after high school to prepare for your career. This could be an apprenticeship, career or technical school, the military, or a 2-year or 4-year college or university.

Your school counselor will:

✓ Help you understand graduation requirements
✓ Help you explore career options
✓ Help you apply to post-secondary opportunities

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**Answer these questions. If you do not know the answers, go find them out!!!**

My school counselor’s name is: __________________________________________________________

I can make an appointment to see my school counselor by: __________________________________

Will my parents know if I have seen my school counselor? Is it confidential? ______________

What do I do if I need to see a school counselor, but my school counselor is not available? __________________

________________________________________________________

Can I see my school counselor without missing class?
Academic Success:

How to be Successful in the 8th Grade
Academic Habits

A habit is an acquired pattern of behavior that often occurs automatically. That means that the more you do it, the easier it gets and the less you have to think about doing it. Habits do not form overnight. The more you practice the things on this list, the more likely it is that these skills will become a habit for you. Follow this daily checklist to ensure your success in school.

_____ Read at least 30 minutes a day. Make use of your summer to catch up on some good books.

_____ Write! You probably do this regularly during the school year, but during the summer, keep it up by writing letters, journaling, or writing creative stories.

_____ Complete your assignments and turn them in to your teacher on time!

_____ Get organized! Assignments often need to be managed over weeks or months, so it is crucial to get organized.

_____ Check with Infinite Campus at least once a week. This is a great way to track your grades and assignments. Follow-up with teachers on missing assignments or concerns with grades.

_____ Build regular study time into your schedule. Study at these times each and every day.
# 8th Grade Independent Reading List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fever</td>
<td>Anderson, Laurie Halse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak</td>
<td>Anderson, Laurie Halse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Warriors Don’t Cry</em></td>
<td>Beals, Melba Pattilo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Darkness Before Dawn</em></td>
<td>Draper, Sharon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Tears of a Tiger</em></td>
<td>Draper, Sharon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Silent to the Bone</em></td>
<td>Konigsburg, E.L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Swallowing Stones</em></td>
<td>McDonald, Joyce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Touching Spirit Bear</em></td>
<td>Mikaelson, Ben</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Soldier’s Heart</em></td>
<td>Paulsen, Gary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TIME MANAGEMENT QUIZ

This quiz is designed to help you figure out how you spend your time. The way we manage our time can be the difference between getting our homework done and not getting it done. When you get done with this quiz, look where you spend your time and where you should spend more time. It is important that you have a balance between work (school, job, chores) and play (friends, family, fun and relaxing).

Answer each of the following questions with a Yes or No answer.

1. Do you have a quiet place to study uninterrupted for at least an hour every day? ______
2. Do you estimate how many hours you will need to study each week? _____
3. Do you meet assignment deadlines? _____
4. Do you begin working on semester projects early in the semester? _____
5. Do you write a daily “to do” list? _____
6. Do you prevent social activities from interfering with your study time? _____
7. Do you use a planner? _____
8. Do you set specific goals for each study period? _____
9. Do you begin your study time with your most difficult assignment? _____
10. Do you complete most of your studying during your most productive hours each day? _____

Add up your “yes” responses. What is your score? A 10 is the maximum score, and indicates your study skills are effective and in use. If your score is lower than a 7, it may be helpful to learn some techniques for using your study time more effectively. Start by making a goal of the items above that you responded “no” to.

“Where you come from is not nearly as important as where you are going.”
-Unknown
TEST TAKING

As long as you are in school, you cannot escape tests. However, there are ways you can improve your test scores.

First, let’s look at what you are currently doing.

How do you study for tests? Do you review your notes every day or cram at the last minute? What strategies do you use?

_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________

How effective is the method you use?

_______________________________________________________________________________

Now, let’s look at some other things you can try.

Here are some things to try next test:
___ Get a good night’s sleep.
___ Eat a good breakfast.
___ Exercise before the test.
___ Wear comfortable clothing.
___ Take a few deep breaths during the test.
___ Focus on the test and not on what else may be going on in your life.
___ Visualize yourself as relaxed, competent, and confident!

Here are some test-taking strategies you might try:
___ Read test directions carefully.
___ Read the entire test before you begin, and plan time for each section.
___ Answer the easiest questions first.
___ Take you time working through answers.
___ Answer the questions with the greatest point value first.
___ Ask you teacher to clarify questions you do not understand.

What three new strategies will you try next test you take?

_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________

Keep on trying until you find a combination of strategies that work for you. If you continue to struggle with this, ask your counselor or teacher for further advice. GOOD LUCK!!

From: Tucson United School District (TUSD) School Counseling Department Handbooks
Use this chart to write in the classes you plan to take in High School. The classes that are in bold are required to graduate. The classes that are in grey are required to graduate, but you may select from with the exception of World Languages. You are STRONGLY RECOMMENDED to take 4 semesters of World Languages. See the chart on p. 20 for ideas of classes to take each year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Requirements</th>
<th>9th Grade - Freshman</th>
<th>10th Grade - Sophomore</th>
<th>11th Grade - Junior</th>
<th>12th Grade - Senior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English (4 years/8 semesters required to graduate)</td>
<td>Intro to Lit &amp; Comp S1 &amp; S2</td>
<td>American Lit S1 &amp; S2</td>
<td>Upper Division Writing or World Lit S1 &amp; S2</td>
<td>Language Arts course S1 &amp; S2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics (4 years/8 semesters required to graduate)</td>
<td>Algebra 1 S1 &amp; S2</td>
<td>Geometry S1 &amp; S2</td>
<td>Algebra 2 S1 &amp; S2</td>
<td>Math course S1 &amp; S2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies (3 years/6 semesters required to graduate)</td>
<td>2 semesters SS Course</td>
<td>US History S1 &amp; S2</td>
<td>1 semester of Civics 1 semester other SS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science (3 years/6 semesters required to graduate)</td>
<td>3 years required: 2 years (4 semesters) must be from Earth Science, Biology, Chemistry or Physics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Electives</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.E. or equivalent (2 semesters) (Marching Band, ROTC, Dance)</td>
<td>Physical Education or Equivalent S1 &amp; S2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Arts elective (2 semesters) (visual/performing arts or CTE)</td>
<td>Fine Arts Elective S1 &amp; S2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Electives (16 semesters) (World Languages, CTE, etc.)</td>
<td>World Language course (recommended)</td>
<td>World Language course (recommended)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessments</strong></td>
<td>CSAP (required) PSAT</td>
<td>CSAP (required) PLAN PSAT</td>
<td>ACT (required) SAT AP Testing</td>
<td>ACT SAT AP Testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracurricular Activities and/or Community Service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Personal Social Awareness: How to be Your Best Self
YOUR PERSONAL MISSION STATEMENT

A personal Mission Statement is about you. It will tell who you are, what you like, what you would like to do, and what you are good at. Answer the questions below and then at the end use your answers to write your Personal Mission Statement. Get out more paper if you need it or write on the back of this paper.

1. Think of a person who made a positive difference in your life. What qualities does that person have that you would like to possess?

2. Imagine yourself in 20 years. The most important people in your life surround you. Who are they and what are you doing?

3. If a steel beam (six inches wide) were placed across two skyscrapers, for what would you be willing to cross? A thousand dollars? A million? Your pet? Your brother? Fame? Think carefully.

4. Describe a time when you were deeply inspired.

5. List 10 things you love to do. It could be singing, dancing, looking at magazines, drawing, reading, daydreaming – anything you absolutely love to do.

6. If you could spend one day in a great library studying anything you wanted, what would you study?

7. Five years from now, your local paper does a story about you and they want to interview three people – a parent, a brother or sister, and a friend. What would you want them to say about you?

8. Think of something that represents you – a rose, a song, an animal. Why does it represent you?

9. If you could spend an hour with any person who ever lived, who would it be? Why that person? What would you ask?
10. Everyone has one or more talents. What are your talents? Use the ones listed below or write your own. Write at least 3 talents you have, you can do more if you want.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working with people</th>
<th>Building things</th>
<th>Sharing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>Mechanical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorizing things</td>
<td>Predicting what will happen</td>
<td>Artistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletics</td>
<td>Singing</td>
<td>Speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>Humorous</td>
<td>Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dancing</td>
<td>Sensing needs</td>
<td>Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making things happen</td>
<td>Accepting others</td>
<td>Trivia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. NOW . . . let’s apply this to YOUR life. Using the questions above, draft your own Personal Mission Statement

For additional information, visit www.seancovey.com or the 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens (Sean Covey)
Goal Setting

Goals help us keep our direction and our focus. They help us decide where to place our efforts and energy. They guide our life. In this exercise we will practice setting a goal for yourself.

There are many aspects of our life in which we can make goals. Some are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Sports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Hobbies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Jobs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For starters, **pick just one of these areas to make a goal**. Start by dreaming about what you would like to achieve in this area. Then, decide if your dreams are realistic or possible.

Choose your goal. Your goal will start out as something general. An example could be, “I will be a better basketball player.”

**My general goal is:**

________________________________________________________________________

Now make it specific. A specific goal will give dates and exact targets to reach. A specific example could be, “I will get 18 baskets in 20 attempts by June 1, 2010. I will begin working on this goal Jan 15, 2010.

**My specific goal is:**

________________________________________________________________________

**I will start working on this goal:**

________________________________________________________________________

To help keep you focused on your goal, it is helpful to remember why the goal is important in the first place.

**I will benefit by meeting this goal because:**

________________________________________________________________________

For a long-term goal, you might have to break the goal down into several smaller goals. Keep revisiting your goals. Your vision may change, and it is okay to change your goals over time.

*From: [www.712educators.about.com](http://www.712educators.about.com)*
Post-Secondary Planning:

How to Prepare for Education After High School
This is your chance to see everything you do all in one place. Whenever you do a sport, a club, volunteer work, a job for someone (paid or unpaid), it is important to write it down. You will use it in high school when you are applying for college, scholarships, clubs, or a job. Keeping all this information in one place will help to make filling out job applications, scholarship applications and post-secondary applications a lot easier. Keep this page for the next several years, and write everything you do here to help keep track of it all.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Grade levels - Check all that apply</th>
<th>hours/week</th>
<th>wks/year</th>
<th>Positions held, honors won, or letters earned</th>
<th>Do you plan to participate in college?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 7 8 9 10 11 12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

This is your opportunity to document all of the activities that you participate in! List your extracurricular and community activities, community service and work experience. Also take note of any special school classes (college classes, AP, or honor classes). Note details such as leadership positions held, grades earned in classes, and any other detail that might be of interest to colleges or employers. This will be of great help to you when it comes to writing your resume.
Post-Secondary Options

We have defined post-secondary options, but we have not looked at the differences between those options. Below is a list of post-secondary options available to you. It is a good idea to talk to your parents, teachers, and professional school counselor to figure out which options might be the best fit for you. You can also use some of the quizzes and activities you have done that identify your interests and abilities. If you go visit College in Colorado or Naviance, you can see how your interests match careers and what post-secondary options you should look at to do those jobs.

Four-year Colleges offer bachelor’s degrees and prepare students for professional careers as well as graduate school. Students receive a broad education, in addition to their concentration, which opens doors to many opportunities later on.

Two-year Colleges offer associate’s degrees, certificates, and/or training and prepare students for skilled jobs. Students who attend two-year colleges can transfer to a four-year institution if they wish to earn a bachelor’s degree. Two-year college tuition is usually less than a four-year school, and students usually live off campus.

Private Colleges are run using endowments and private funding. They are often more expensive than public schools, but often offer more financial aid.

Public Colleges/Universities are run and subsidized by states. They are often very large and offer a wide variety of programs. Public colleges and universities offer reduced tuition rates to in-state students.

Vocational Training/Technical Colleges and Institutes are colleges that offer training for a particular field or career, often offering programs that can be completed in two to eighteen months.

Apprenticeships are training in an art, trade, or craft. Apprenticeships combine training on the job with related instruction at school.

What type of college is right for you? That will be determined by many factors.

- How much money do you have to put towards college?
- What sort of degree do you wish to obtain?
- What type of education is necessary to meet your career goals?
- Do you wish to participate in inter-collegiate athletics?
- Will you be able to attend full-time?

Below, write the pros and cons of different types of post-secondary option, IN TERMS OF WHAT YOUR NEEDS AND WANTS ARE.

NOTES
Students: Below is a recommended sequence for courses you’ll need for admission to college. These include all the DPS graduation requirements, plus additional courses you’ll need to be accepted into most two year and year colleges.

* Check individual college admission requirements for specifics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Two Year College Course Work</th>
<th>Four Year College Course Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 9th Grade Year | • Intro to Lit and Composition  
• Algebra 1  
• Geography  
• Earth Science or Biology  
• World Language  
• Physical Education  
• 1 additional elective, art/music/drama, or Career Tech. class | • Intro to Lit and Composition  
• Algebra 1  
• Geography  
• Earth Science or Biology  
• World Language  
• Physical Education  
• 1 additional elective, art/music/drama, or Career Tech. class |
| 10th Grade Year | • American Literature  
• Geometry  
• US History  
• Biology, Chemistry, or Physics  
• World Language  
• 2 elective courses, see above suggestions | • American Literature  
• Geometry  
• US History  
• Biology, Chemistry, or Physics  
• World Language  
• 2 elective courses, see above suggestions |
| 11th Grade Year | • World Literature, or upper division writing course  
• Algebra 2  
• Civics and 1 semester of social studies elective  
• Science elective  
• 1 Post Secondary or AP Course  
• 2 elective courses | • World Lit. or AP English Course  
• Algebra 2  
• Civics and 1 sem. social studies elective  
• Biology, Chemistry, Physics, or AP Science course  
• World Language  
• 2 elective courses, see above suggestions |
| 12th Grade Year | • English Elective Class  
• Math class above Algebra 1 level  
• 2-4 Post Secondary or AP courses  
• Other elective courses | • AP English Course  
• Pre-Calculus or AP Math course  
• World History, or social studies elective  
• AP Science course  
• AP World Language course  
• 2 Elective courses, AP or Post Secondary course |

Note: Colleges also look at ACT and SAT scores. Your target composite score for ACT should be between 22-26 and your target composite score for SAT should average 1175. Extracurricular activities like community service and letters of recommendation are also very important.

**YOUR HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELOR WILL TELL YOU MORE ABOUT THIS!**
Why get a College Degree?

1. Why is getting a college degree important to you?
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

2. There might be reasons why you do not want to get a college degree. You might feel like there are barriers to you getting a degree. List these reasons as well.
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

College certainly does have its benefits. You will have more job opportunities available to you if you do choose to go to college. More and more jobs require education beyond high school. Additionally, those who go to college usually earn more than a person who doesn’t. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, on average, someone with a bachelor’s degree earns $50,900 – that’s 62% more than the $31,500 earned annually by someone with only a high school diploma.

Many students are unsure about whether to go to college. Here are five common reasons, and why they do not hold water.

1. I cannot afford it. Most students get financial aid to help pay for college, and most aid is based on need, which means the less money you have, the more aid you might get.
2. Nobody in my family has ever gone. Being first can be hard. For instance, you may have to explain to the family why college is important to you. On the other hand, being first is likely to be a source of pride, for you and your family.
3. I don’t know what I want to do with my life. Join the crowd. Thousands of college freshmen haven’t decided on a major or career. College gives you the opportunity to learn more about what’s out there. You’ll be exposed to a variety of academic subjects, people, and new perspectives.
4. College is too hard for me. Most students think college will be too hard for them. Remember, all colleges offer tutoring and student support. As confident as some students seem, no one goes to college knowing everything – if they did, why would they go?
5. I just won’t fit in. Most colleges have students from many backgrounds. To get an idea of what to expect, explore colleges with Naviance and CollegeInColorado, or better yet, visit in person. Ask about the makeup of the student body and if they have clubs and activities that you are interested in joining.

*College graduates earn One Million more over a lifetime than high school graduates*
-U.S. Census Bureau, 2001
Top 10 Questions to Ask Your High School Counselor about College

As you get ready for High School, it is good to have an idea of some of the things you will talk to your counselor about. Your counselor is your ally in the college search process. Ask your professional school counselor some questions on this list and you’ll be amazed at what they can offer you.

1. **What classes should I take?** This question can encompass several things, including whether to take AP courses, what classes colleges want to see on transcripts, what electives would be useful for you to take and recommendations of what college-level courses are available.

2. **What standardized test should I take and when are they?** Your counselor can tell you whether it’s better to take the SAT or the ACT or both. Other important questions to ask: How do I sign up for the tests? When are they? Where will the tests be given? How much do they cost?

3. **What can I do now to plan for college?** Your counselor can advise you on what sort of degree you should pursue, give you a timeline on when to start thinking about college, and show you how to start educating yourself on college options.

4. **Are there any college fairs being given at our school?** College fairs are a great opportunity to see what colleges have to offer, even if graduation is still a couple of years away.

5. **How can I start building my college resume (and also have fun)?** As a sophomore or junior, you’re in a great position to take leadership positions in any activities you’re involved in or find out about other cool and fun extracurricular activities you can participate in and have fun with.

6. **I’m not ready to commit to anything, but could you tell me about what kinds of jobs and careers are out there?** You have a long time before you even have to find a “real-world” job, let alone settle on a career. But your counselor might be able to suggest some career or job possibilities, if he or she knows what you’re interested in. You never know, they might be able to recommend some cool opportunities to learn more about what you’re interested in.

7. **Do you know about any good scholarships or financial aid?** Many counselor offices know about community scholarships or other resources to look for scholarships and financial aid (such as FastWeb!) that you can apply for now and stow away for when you end up going to college in a year or two.

8. **What do I need to do for you to give me a recommendation when I am ready to graduate?** Your counselor might tell you what activities to participate in, or they may simply tell you to come in more often so they can get to know you. Either way, your counselor could be a great opportunity for a recommendation for senior year, if you start building the relationship now.

9. **Can we go over my transcript?** Reviewing your transcript can show whether any mistakes have been made. Additionally, your counselor can take a look at the courses you’ve taken and advise if you’re missing any required courses that colleges want you to take.

10. **Do you keep in touch with any of your former students?** If a former student is attending a college you are interested in, ask how you might be able to contact that person and ask questions about the college.

-Chris Diehl
Career Exploration

How to Prepare for the World of Work
Ten Ways School Prepares you for the Work World

Do you ever feel like there is NO WAY what you are doing in school is preparing you for the real world? You might be surprised. You are building strong skills and valuable habits now. School is full of opportunities to develop the qualities most important to employers.

1. **Writing Skills.** If you dread essays and other writing assignments, consider this: in a recent survey of employers, communication topped the list of skills they look for most. By doing your best on every research paper and lab report you write, you’re preparing yourself for a career.

2. **Speaking Skills.** Next time you are assigned a class presentation, think twice before dismissing it as an unimportant part of your education. Employers look for speaking skills in job hopefuls and it’s never too soon to practice good eye contact and other public speaking techniques.

3. **Teamwork Skills.** How many times a week does your class count off and break into small groups to tackle a challenge? You practice voicing your opinions, listening and responding to others, and reaching compromises. By the time you leave high school, you can be an expert in teamwork, an increasingly important skill in today’s workplace.

4. **Problem-Solving Skills.** Every school assignment is an opportunity to weigh all possible solutions carefully and select the one you think is best. As a working professional, you’ll keep solving problems, whether computer programming bugs or budget shortfalls.

5. **Initiative.** Every time you raise your hand in class, every time you choose your own research topic, every time you interpret a piece of literature, you take initiative. And employers value can-do professionals who come up with new ideas.

6. **Cool Under Pressure.** Who hasn’t made the argument that testing isn’t a real-life situation? It’s not like your future boss is going to ask you to translate a Spanish passage without a dictionary in under 20 minutes. But try thinking of the pressure of testing as practice for the work world’s own explosive situations. You could someday find yourself meeting tight deadlines, speaking with irate customers, holding a scalpel, or handling dangerous chemicals.

7. **Attention to Detail.** When you double-check your calculations for a math problem, make sure you’re using the correct homonym in an essay, or cite sources carefully in a research paper, you are paying close attention to detail. That habit will come in handy in any workplace, whether you maintain a database, keep a log of the hours you spend with clients, or simply write emails.

8. **Time Management.** How many classes do you attend each day? How many homework assignments do you tackle each night? And what about sports practice, play rehearsal, and other extracurriculars? You will be ready for the many demand on your time in the work world.

9. **Honesty.** Employers need to know that they can trust you with everything from credit cards to trade secrets. But how can you work at honesty? Every day that you do your own homework and resist the temptation to cheat on exams; you exercise your integrity muscle.

10. **Love of Learning.** Last, but not least, a love of learning will see you through the initial weeks of a job. It will also serve you well as you advance in your working life, taking on new projects, building expertise, and branching into new areas of interest.

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