

11th Grade: College Planning Timeline

By Peterson's Staff & customized by North High staff

This is a key year in the college planning process because you'll be taking standardized tests, narrowing down your college list, and learning more about financial aid. In addition, you'll need to stay involved in your high school courses and activities. Use North High resources such as your counselor, the College Career Center and Family Connections.

Fall:

Stay on track with your classes and grades.

Meet with your counselor to see what you still need to take. Check on your class rank and your GPA. Even if your grades haven't been that good so far, it's never too late to improve. Colleges like to see an upward trend.

Evaluate your education options.

Now is the time to follow a more specific path. Decide whether you want to pursue full-time employment, further education or training (such as a vocational-technical school, career college, or two-year or four-year college), or a military career. Utilize [Family Connection](#).

Make a college list.

Your list of colleges should include schools that meet your most important criteria (for example, size, location, cost, academic majors, or special programs). Weigh each of the factors according to their importance to you and develop a preliminary ranking of the schools on your list. Utilize the colleges tab in [Family Connection](#).

Talk to your family.

Have a discussion about the colleges you're interested in. Your family can learn about what you want to pursue and you can hear any concerns or suggestions they might have.

Learn more about financial aid.

Examine your family's financial resources and gather information about financial aid from the schools you're interested in. Financial aid nights, college financial aid counselors, and advice articles are also good sources of information. Attend the presentation **"Conquering College Costs" on October 24th at 7:00 pm in the DGN Auditorium.**

Continue gathering college information.

Go to college fairs, attend college nights, and speak with college representatives who visit your high school; use an online college finder and search top college lists. You may be able to narrow your choices or add a school to your list. Attend the **College and Career Planning Night at DGN on February 22nd at 6:30 pm.**

Organize a testing plan.

Learn more about the [ACT vs. the SAT exams](#). Figure out when you'll be taking important tests like the SAT, ACT, SAT Subject Tests, and AP exams, and mark the dates on your calendar. You'll want to have plenty of time to prepare. Access the [Testing Information](#) page on DGN's website for more details.

Winter:

Begin narrowing down your college choices.

Make sure you have all the information you need about the colleges you're interested in (entrance requirements, tuition, room and board costs, course offerings, student activities, financial aid, etc.). Then begin comparing the schools by the factors that are most important to you and rank your choices. Utilize the colleges tab in [Family Connection](#).

Prepare for standardized tests.

Find out if the colleges you are interested in require the SAT, ACT, or SAT Subject Tests. Register to take the tests you need; most juniors take them in the winter or spring. You can take them again in the fall of your senior year if you're unhappy with your scores. (Be sure to check on registration deadlines.)

Make sure you're meeting any special requirements.

If you want to play Division I or II sports in college, start the certification process and check with your counselor to make sure you're taking a core curriculum that meets [NCAA requirements](#).

Prepare a challenging schedule for senior year.

Meet with your counselor to determine what classes you'll take next year and to make sure you're on track for graduation. When you pick your classes, don't load up on easy electives. Colleges do consider your senior year courses and grades, so stick with a schedule that challenges you.

Spring:

Start a scholarship search.

There are lots of scholarships out there; you just need to spend a little bit of time and effort to find them. Check with College and Career Center for scholarships from local organizations and use online scholarship search tools to find a wider range of options. The sooner you start looking for scholarships, the easier it will be to select some to apply to during your senior year. Also utilize the colleges tab in [Family Connection](#). Click on “scholarship list.”

Consider your recommendation writers.

Teachers and school counselors are often asked to write recommendations for many of students. Consider who you want to ask now and ask them if they would be willing to write a letter of recommendation for you now or in the fall. Ask teachers who know you well and who will have positive things to say.

Develop a tentative “finalized list” of colleges you want to apply to in the fall.

As you continue to narrow your list of colleges to apply to, develop a list of those colleges you are *certain* you want to apply to. Be sure to include an academic and financial safety school in your list.

Visit colleges. Set up appointments at your top college choices.

You’ll often have to plan ahead when visiting colleges. Call the admissions office to set up a personal interview, tour, and a meeting with a professor or coach if you’re interested. Visit the campuses of your top five college choices. Take a tour and speak with the admissions and financial aid staff. Try to set up these visits when the college is in session to get an accurate picture of the college environment.

Summer:

Visit colleges.

Visit or revisit the colleges you are most interested in. Summer is not the best because there are fewer students on campus but it is better than no visit at all.

Organize your financial aid information.

Develop a plan that includes a list of the aid sources, requirements for each application, and a timetable for meeting the filing deadlines. Getting organized will make the process of applying a lot easier because you’ll know where to find important information.

Start working on your application essays.

Compose rough drafts of the essays you’ll need for your college applications. Have a teacher read and discuss them with you so you can see what to work on. Make any revisions to your application essays and prepare final drafts. Don’t forget to proofread your final essays a few times. Utilize [DGN’s website](#) for help with essays.

Make early decision preparations.

If you plan to apply early decision to any school, take the time to visit the school again and make sure you’re willing to commit. If you elect to apply early decision, you should start working on your application as soon as possible because its deadline will be earlier than others. Additionally, you should utilize the college’s net price calculator to get an estimate of the cost. Consider talking with the college’s financial aid officer as well.

Visit the [Common Application website](#) to investigate your options to apply via the Common Application.

EARLY SEPTEMBER OF SENIOR YEAR:

BE PREPARED TO START THE APPLICATION PROCESS TO YOUR FINAL CHOICE SCHOOLS.

Important Dates

Week of October 17th Junior Group Guidance

- Learn how to use Family Connection to search careers and colleges.
- Gain information on testing and important dates for this year.

October 18, 2016: [College of DuPage Regional College Fair](#) 6-8pm

November 24, 2016: Conquering the Challenges of College Costs, 7-8:30pm, DGN Auditorium

February 6-9, 2017: Senior year registration

February 22, 2017: College and Career Planning Night, 6:30-8:10pm, DGN Auditorium

March 20, 2017: [North Central College Regional College Fair](#), 6:30-8:30pm

April 5, 2017: [College Fair at Lyons Township High School](#), 6-8pm

April 20, 2017: [College Fair at Hinsdale Central High School](#)

Testing Information and Dates:

- [ACT](#)
- [SAT](#)