

I Want my Child to go to College Tips for the Freshman Year

1. Establish study habits beyond “completing homework.” Reviewing notes, reading the textbook (even if it isn’t assigned!), and reading books will all develop a “college-readiness” attitude.
2. Don’t give up if grades take a “freshman dip.” Help your child access tutoring, verbalize family expectations on grades, and communicate with teachers. Organization methods, time management and less “free” time are all factors needing to be addressed. Share your family’s expectations on grades, but also share how the family will support the child who is having difficulties. Strictly punishing the struggling student may produce a power struggle. Couple logical consequences with the opportunity to re-earn privileges. Discussing these plans before they are needed is also important in maintaining a positive parent/child relationship.
3. Get your child involved in a non-profit organization that he/she can stay involved with through out high school. Volunteer at least 2 hours a week in community supporting activities. Religious organizations are often excellent sources of volunteer opportunities, but United Way agencies, animal rescue efforts, libraries, and hospitals can also use committed volunteers. Always keep track of the name of the volunteer supervisor and how to get in touch with that person. You will need this for scholarship applications/letters of recommendation.
4. Get your child involved in extra-curricular activities. While it is helpful if the club offers competitions your child can participate in, participation on a regular basis is key.
5. As a parent participate in activities at your child’s school to encourage their involvement.
6. Familiarize yourself with the vocabulary of college entrance. (Do you know what SAT, ACT, PSAT, THEA, and Accuplacer are?)
7. Explore college web-sites with your child. Learn together how to read a college application, how to read a college catalog, how to get in touch with the people you need to know at that college.
8. Share with your child how he/she will be paying for college. Do you have a substantial savings account, and how big is it? Will your child be paying the bills primarily on their own through scholarships, grants, part-time work and loans? Are you willing to take out a loan to fund your child’s education? Stress to your child that a college education is worth the expense!!
9. Looking to next year: The PSAT is in October. This test is only offered once a year, and is a great way to practice taking timed-standardized tests. We suggest that all students to take the test in both the sophomore and junior year. At this time, NISD pays for all sophomores to take the PSAT so no registration is necessary for the sophomore testing.
10. Students have the opportunity to enroll in their first AP course with World History AP. This is a rigorous, college-level class.

11. Some essay and public-speaking scholarship competitions (Usually, these are sponsored by civic organizations like the American Legion and Rotary.) are open to all age levels. The local PTSA may also participate in the Reflections scholarship program. While the vast majority of scholarships are awarded during a student's senior year, the earlier the search begins, the more awareness of opportunities you will have. Have your student start a listing of potential scholarships and contact information for their senior year.
12. If a scholarship offer comes with strings attached, be suspicious. Students and their parents can become the victim of scholarship fraud. Also, most students do not need to pay a company for financial aid advice, information or "insider's tips." Most of what these companies offer is available for free, and some is common sense. Just because a company says it is non-profit or a foundation does not mean that they are.
13. Visit the public library to find books on scholarships, college application, and the financial aid process. The more you know before your student's senior year, the more you will be able to take advantage of the available opportunities.
14. If your child is an athlete, your child's coach can help you with the particulars of athletic scholarships.
15. Every person who wants to go to college can find a college to go to. Our local community colleges have "open enrollment" which means they will accept any high school graduate in Bexar County. The challenge in going to college is paying for it. One (3-hour) class at Northwest Vista in Fall 2006 was \$394. A full-time student (15 hours) paid \$745. At The University of Texas at San Antonio a 3-hour class was \$809.52, and full-time (15-hours) was \$3101.05 (Fall 2006). These figures do not include books and other necessities of college, but you can see that cost varies from school to school. Still, college is not free, and the time to make plans for this expense is now.