**Planning Timeline: High School and Beyond**

**MIDDLE SCHOOL:**

* Participate in Career Cruising to help identify potential career options
* Use Career Cruising to research classes
* Share Career Cruising results with family to start planning
* **Summer**: Enroll in summer learning programs and find volunteer opportunities
* Talk with family about developing a saving plan
* Start saving money! (babysitting, pet care, etc.)

**9TH GRADE:**

* **Fall**: Meet Counselor to introduce yourself (share goals/career interests)
* Enroll in classes that support your goals
* Get involved in clubs, sports or other extracurriculars
* Start learning about post-high school options (trade schools, community colleges, 4-year universities)
* **Summer**: Enroll in summer learning programs or find a job and/or volunteer opportunity
* Start saving money! (babysitting, pet care, etc.)

**10TH GRADE:**

* Check in with guidance counselor about helpful/important classes or any adjustments in your future plans
* Keep your grades up—get help if you need it!
* Take practice PSAT (usually offered at school)
* Start researching schools and/or programs that are in line with your goals
  + Learn about entrance requirements (GPAs, test scores, etc.)
* Start tracking academic and personal achievements (awards, etc.)
* Keep up with extracurricular and volunteer activities
* Save, save, save!
* **Breaks and Summer**:
  + Visit campuses
  + Work and/or volunteer (save!)
  + Participate in summer learning programs

**11TH GRADE:**

* Meet with your guidance counselor about any additional required classes and tests (SAT, ACT, etc.)
* Take the PSAT (offered at school)
  + Consider taking SAT or ACT (this is good practice but also gives you a chance to take it again)
* Make firm decisions about your plans for after high school (training, education and/or job opportunities)
  + For job opportunities, research requirements or speak with someone in that job who can tell you how to prepare for that job (classes, licenses, etc.)
  + If looking at trade schools, colleges or universities, you should attend college fairs and events
  + Many universities and colleges will send representatives to high schools who meet with students during the school day (this is a great time to ask questions and learn more about schools)
* Start researching scholarship and financial aid options (you can also speak with visiting reps about this)
* Identify adults who can write recommendation letters (teachers, mentors, supervisors)
* Keep your grades up—get help if you need it!
* Save, save, save!
* **Breaks and Summer**:
  + Visit campuses
  + Work and/or volunteer (save!)
  + Start working on college entrance requirements (essays, etc.)

**12TH GRADE:**

* Meet with counselor for final class preparation/selection
* Take SAT and/or ACT (depending on goals and school requirements)
* Create a plan or schedule to follow important deadlines (applications, etc.)
* Complete CSS Profile and/or FAFSA
  + These are required for financial aid
* Ask for recommendation letters from teachers, supervisors, mentors, etc.
  + You can use these for college entrance requirements or job hunting!
  + Provide envelopes (and stamps if mailing!) for rec forms that are sent directly to schools.
* Complete applications
  + Check for accuracy, spelling and any errors before sending them in!
* Continue searching for scholarships and apply to them!
* Complete financial aid application
* Keep an eye out for responses from colleges and universities!
  + Make sure you watch for acceptance deadlines!
* Once you have received responses/offers, decide which school or job you want
  + Be sure you respond to all offers
* Write a thank you note or letter to each person who helped you in this process

**Planning Reminders: High School & Beyond**

There is a lot to keep track of when planning for your child’s future, so please use this list to help you.

1. **Saving for life after high school**
   * No matter your child’s plan, it’s good to help them learn how to save
   * If they work, teach them to save a little each time they get paid
     + Start small! If your child is babysitting, mowing lawns or something similar, teach them to save a few dollars each time they are paid. This teaches great habits!
   * Create a plan for setting aside a small amount of money each week or month. Make sure this money isn’t used for anything except helping your child with college or settling into a job after high school.
     + Any little bit helps!
2. **Helping your student be well-rounded is important for their success**
   * A good GPA and strong test scores important, but they’re not the only thing colleges look for
   * Students should try to be active in school or their community in a variety of ways. This shows they can stay organized, have passion for activities or sports and can manage their time.
     + Extracurriculars (sports, clubs, music classes, etc.)
       - Summer learning programs are a great option for busy students
     + Volunteering shows dedication to community and an interest in service
     + Jobs (encourage your child to pursue jobs that will help them gain useful skills for future jobs or college)
   * Be sure to track any awards or recognition (academic, attendance, service, athletic, etc.) your child receives. They can use this as part of their applications.
3. **Help your student visit campuses or engage with college representatives**
   * Many local colleges and universities are accessible by public transit, so if you aren’t able to travel, try to encourage your child to visit local institutions.
   * Many schools have tour guides or staff who meet with potential students. Reach out to them ahead of time to schedule a meeting.
   * Create a list of questions with your student to help them think about what is most important for them
     + For example, do they want to attend a large school in a small town? Do they want to work in a fast-paced environment? Is it important for them to be somewhere with students/coworkers that are close to their age?
   * If you aren’t able to visit campuses, remind your child to keep an eye out for representatives visiting their high schools.
4. **There are a number of free resources available to help students prepare for after high school.**
   * Most public library branches offer tutoring and many offer test prep services for the SAT and ACT. They also offer computer access and printing services for free, which can be helpful for job and college applications.
   * School counselors, College and Career offices, GEAR UP staff and others are available to help
   * Visiting college reps are great resources for students with questions about educational options after high school.
5. **Most importantly, be supportive of your child. They will need some encouragement throughout this decision-making process.**