



## Preparing for Post-Secondary Options

### Making the most of your BG experience

#### GRADE 9

**Pick the Right mix of classes:** make sure you're enrolled in appropriate college-prep or tech-prep classes and that you are taking key core requirements such as English, math, science, social studies, religion and a foreign language.

**Make the grades:** Your GPA and rank start calculating on your very first day of high school. Make sure you are taking thorough notes, asking for help when needed, and studying often. Colleges want to see students in at least the top half of their class; at BG that means a 90% gpa or higher.

**Get involved:** Extracurricular activities (both school- and non-school-sponsored) are an important part of high school. Make the effort to get involved with groups, clubs, or teams that interest you. These activities are fun and make you a well-rounded student. Colleges and technical schools like applicants with a wide variety of interests. But don't join everything, be selective and offer your skills fully.

**Explore your interests and possible careers:** Discuss your skills and interests with your school counselor. Take advantage of any local career fair opportunities in the community.

**Build your credentials:** Keep track of academic and extracurricular awards, community service achievements and anything else you participate in. Write it down! This will make it easier to remember later when you apply for college and scholarships.

**Start learning about college:** Look at college information available in the counseling office or by visiting collegeboard.org. This site allows you to search by school, major, cost, extracurriculars, etc.

**Begin to get a feel for college life:** Visit relatives or friends who live on or near a college campus. This is a great way to get a sense of what college is like. Check out the dorms, go to the library and student center, and walk around the campus. Don't worry about where you want to go—just get a feel for college in general.

**Make summer count:** There are plenty of ways to have fun and build your credentials during the summer, such as volunteering, getting a job or signing up for an enrichment program.

**Keep up to date:** Keep up to date on what is new and available for BG students through the BG counseling webpage: [guilfoylecounseling.weebly.com](http://guilfoylecounseling.weebly.com)

#### Grade 10

**Stay on track:** Remember all of the important information you learned about preparing in college during the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Keep your GPA up, study hard, get involved, learn about colleges, and pick challenging courses.

**Take rigorous classes:** AP courses are available beginning your tenth grade year, these are the types of courses colleges want to see their potential students take. While AP courses demand a higher level of thinking and a heavier workload, the payoff for taking them is the preparedness for college and a stronger transcript. Furthermore, AP courses are weighted at 1.10x in your GPA and rank, meaning if you score a 90% in an AP course, it will factor into your GPA and rank as if you received a 99%. Many classes are offered to 10<sup>th</sup> graders for College Credit learn more on the BG counseling page: College in High School

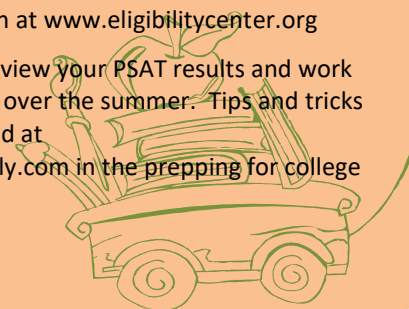
**Take the PSAT:** In October of your sophomore year you will sit to take the PSAT. Currently, the PSAT tests students on Math, Writing, and Reading skills. To keep up to date on the newest changes and to prepare for the PSAT, visit: [www.collegeboard.org/psat](http://www.collegeboard.org/psat)

**Review your PSAT results:** Your counselor will sit down with you for a one-on-one review of your PSAT scores. This is your chance to see your areas of strength, areas where improvement is needed and tips on how to better your scores. Your parents will be emailed with a brief synopsis of your results and steps for improving your scores.

**Start to familiarize yourself with the ACT and SAT:** These two tests are very important for college admissions. Students who understand the format of the tests do much better on the test than those who go blindly into testing. The iTunes App Store offers a variety of free and low cost SAT and ACT apps, Barnes and Noble offers books for preparing, Hollidaysburg High has an SAT Prep Class, and BG offers SAT/ACT courses. These are all good ways to familiarize yourself with the two tests.

**College athletics:** If you think you may be interested in playing college athletics at the Division I or II level, you must take certain classes in high school and obtain a certain GPA and SAT/ACT score. Now is the time to start reviewing this information at [www.eligibilitycenter.org](http://www.eligibilitycenter.org)

**Make summer count:** Review your PSAT results and work on improving your scores over the summer. Tips and tricks on improving can be found at [guilfoylecounseling.weebly.com](http://guilfoylecounseling.weebly.com) in the prepping for college packet.



## Grade 11

**Stay Focused:** Your junior year is your last full year of classes that colleges will review before deciding if you are admitted to their school. If you haven't done so already, now is the time to incorporate AP classes into your schedule. Also, make sure you are taking classes that make sense for the major you are pursuing. If you undecided about a major, pick a challenging, well-rounded course load. More information is available in the prepping for college packet on the counseling webpage.

**Dual Enrollment:** Dual Enrollment courses offer BG students the opportunity to earn college credits while taking regular high school courses. The cost of these credits is drastically less than taking the course at college; for instance, in 2017 students on average paid \$60 a credit, for that same credit at a public university a student would pay roughly \$700. *Classroom teachers will discuss with students in early September how to enroll in this program.*

**Evaluate your Education Options:** It is time to decide whether you want to pursue full-time employment, further education/training, or a military career. If you are interested in attending a military academy, talk to Mrs. Barkman about starting the application process now.

**Make a College List:** Your list should include schools that meet you most important criteria (size, location, cost, major, and activities). Rank the schools by weighing the factors according to how important they are to you.

**Gather information:** Go to college fairs, attend college nights, speak to representatives, and make college visits. This will help you narrow down your list. Make sure when you communicate with the college, you are the one making contact not your parents.

**Make sure you are meeting requirements:** Each school, military branch, or job has certain requirements make sure you meet them to give yourself the best opportunity. Does a school you are interested in require four years of foreign language? Then make sure you take all four years.

**College athletics:** If you are interested in playing college athletics at the Division I or II level, you must register with the NCAA and meet their admissions requirements.

**SAT and ACT:** Register for the SAT and ACT to take the test in the Winter of your junior year. It is recommended that you take these tests at least twice during your junior year. For more information on registering visit: [guilfoylecounseling.weebly.com](http://guilfoylecounseling.weebly.com)

**Make Summer Count:** Ask local businesses if they are offering internships, take advantage of college summer camps, and visit all potential schools.

**Keep up to date:** Keep up to date on what is new and available for BG students through the BG counseling webpage: [guilfoylecounseling.weebly.com](http://guilfoylecounseling.weebly.com)

## Grade 12

**Senioritis:** Senior year can be a time when students think they can slack off and take an easy course load. This is very far from the truth! Did you know that colleges and employers look at your senior schedule, may request senior grades halfway through the year, and could deny you admission if your end of the year grades show a drop in effort? They can and do. Keep working hard!

**Retake the SAT/ACT:** Before November, retake the SAT and/or ACT. You want to optimize your score for the best chance of college admissions and financial aid packages. Taking the tests before November will give you the best opportunity for schools to review your new scores before making an entrance decision. Remember to send your scores directly to the schools you are applying to attend. For tips on how to improve your scores, view the prepping for college packet on the counseling webpage.

**SAT Subject Tests:** Few schools require these tests, but the ones that do want to see you do well on them. It is your chance to show where you excel beyond the typical SAT subject areas. Check with interested schools to see which tests they recommend or require. More information is available in the prepping for college packet on the counseling webpage or at [collegeboard.org](http://collegeboard.org).

**Applications:** Start early! Some applications are short, while others are more time intensive. You should begin to fill out college applications by September. Remember all applications should be submitted by Thanksgiving, if not earlier.

**Letters of Recommendation:** Most post-secondary schools, scholarship programs, and coaches will ask for LORs. Be sure to ask someone who knows you well, but is not related to you, to write the letter. Guidelines on how to request a LOR are available in the career and college section of [guilfoylecounseling.weebly.com](http://guilfoylecounseling.weebly.com)

**College Essays:** This is your chance to show your personality. Don't just relist all your achievements and areas of involvement, usually this was already listed in your application. Your essay should be used to showcase something about yourself that wasn't already hit on in the application. For essay tips, visit the career and college section of [guilfoylecounseling.weebly.com](http://guilfoylecounseling.weebly.com) and ask an English teacher to review and proof the essay.





## Grade 12 Continued

**Scholarships:** Senior year is when the most scholarships are available for you to apply for. This is free money that you should take advantage of receiving. Scholarships are available in the counseling office, online at [www.guilfoylecounseling.weebly.com](http://www.guilfoylecounseling.weebly.com), and at websites like [fastweb.com](http://fastweb.com). For more information, visit our scholarships page. Do not wait until the last minute to start working on scholarships, put in the effort and you will have a better chance of reaping the reward. Most scholarships require an essay, which should not discourage you from completing it.

**FAFSA/PHEAA:** Free Application for Federal Student Aid should be filled out after October 1st of the student's senior year of high school. The application is used to determine the dollar amount you or your family will be expected to contribute towards college. All federal grant and loan awards are determined by the FAFSA, and nearly all colleges use the FAFSA as the basis for their own financial aid awards. All applications must be received by May 1st, but earlier application is advised. Students, you must submit a FAFSA every year you attend college in order to receive federal aid. Visit: [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov) PHEAA: Pennsylvania's Higher Education Assistance Agency. Visit: [www.pheaa.org](http://www.pheaa.org)

**Acceptance Letters:** Schools vary in when they send acceptance letters. Some schools will send acceptance or denial letters within two weeks, some within a few months and others not until April. It is good practice to ask an admissions officer when decisions are typically made. Once a letter is distributed, please pay careful attention to when you have accepted the college's acceptance. Usually a deposit and room request is due at the time of acceptance. Please be sure to keep all of your admissions information from each school, the counseling office will request this information as part of your senior survey.

**Financial Aid:** Schools often send your financial aid package with your letter of acceptance. Go over your letter carefully, remember to check the school's scholarship/financial aid page to make sure you weren't overlooked for any scholarships you qualified to receive. If the monetary offering isn't where you expected it to be, feel free to call the financial aid office to see what you can do to improve your package. Please be sure to keep all of your admissions information from each school, the counseling office will request this information as part of your senior survey.

**Senior Survey:** BG will give you a senior survey to complete in March-April of your senior year. This gives the counseling office the needed information to send your final transcript to the college, military branch, or employer listed. It also is used to collect data on how much money our students were offered and if our students are getting accepted into the colleges of their choosing.



## Information for all grades

- Scholarships are available in the counseling office throughout the year, most are for seniors but often we have scholarships for grades 9-12. Take advantage of this free money!
- It is never too early to job shadow or to intern in your interested area of work. These invaluable experiences will help you to narrow down your career choices and will look great on college applications. If you need help brainstorming where you could job shadow, stop by the counseling office for some suggestions.
- Summer camps are available to all grades at a wide variety of institutions. Check out your grade level page on [www.guilfoylecounseling.weebly.com](http://www.guilfoylecounseling.weebly.com) for up-to-date information. Also, people to people is a wonderful organization that students can take advantage of by learning more about a specific field, traveling the world or to gain leadership experience. If you would like to be nominated to attend people to people, ask Mrs. Barkman.
- Colleges want their potential students to be active members in their community. Often, prestigious colleges not only expect their students to have been involved, but they want students who have spearheaded an initiative. If you have an idea, present it to your club, local agency, or the school administration. It is never too early for you to start making an impact.
- Do you need a transcript? Complete the Transcript Request Form which is available in the counseling & main offices. Once the list is completed, please bring it to the counseling office at Bishop Guilfoyle. All components must be accounted for on the form BEFORE any transcripts will be sent. We also require an initial \$25.00 fee for transcripts, official and unofficial. The \$25.00 fee will cover sending all transcripts needed throughout the year. The \$25.00 fee is charged as part of your school bill at the beginning of the school year.



