



SJNA College and Career Readiness Plan ***Academic Preparation and Support Guide***

The SJNA College and Career Readiness Plan is designed to help guide our students and their families as they craft their unique post-high school plans, including selecting current high school courses to match interests, college prospects, and career possibilities. At SJNA, we believe it is never too early to start helping our students plan for a successful future and mapping the course to help ensure continued growth, lifelong learning, and personal excellence.

Middle Schoolers (7th and 8th Graders)

Although their high school careers haven't started yet, middle school can be a critical time in a student's life and is often filled with growth and self-reflection. Although they may not know exactly what career path they want to follow, we can begin analyzing possibilities based on academic strengths and personal interests.

- Select a variety of different courses to discover academic interests.
- What kind of jobs and careers have you heard of that you think are interesting?
- Begin thinking of which subjects and classes you like best and why.
- What are some activities that you look forward to adding in high school?
- Take the [PreACT 8/9](#) to help determine your starting baseline for standardized tests and testing stamina.
- Consider taking advanced courses for accelerated learning and achieving long-term high school goals.

Freshmen (9th Graders)

Even though their high school career just started, we can ease them into thinking about their immediate and long-term goals. Each student's cumulative GPA begins with Freshman year, and a poor performance early on can be difficult to offset and makeup for later. Colleges also begin looking at all academic and extracurricular activities starting with Freshman year, so it is important for students to start building their resume of activities and honors early.

- Review the [SJNA Academic Guide](#) for graduation requirements for the standard College Prep Diploma and additional courses needed for the Humanities Honors or STEM Honors Diploma
- Enroll courses that meet graduation requirements and align closely with personal interests



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- Explore a variety of extraarticular activities (sports, clubs, community service, volunteer opportunities, tutoring, part-time jobs, etc.)
- Develop time management and study skills
- Create an activity log to track all activities, summer experiences, academic honors and other achievements
- Start building positive relationships with school faculty and staff
- Begin exploring how to pay for colleges and what options might be available for you and your family
- Utilize your [Methodize Test Prep](#) account and begin studying for standardized tests and improving on core subjects
- Take the [PreACT 8/9](#) and compare results from last year to view growth or focus in on areas that need improvement

Sophomores (10th Graders)

Entering sophomore year, each student should build on what they accomplished freshman year and add more in-depth college and career exploration. In addition to paying close attention to your evolving values, interests, and activities, challenge yourself early on by taking Advanced, Honors, or AP Courses. Not only are these higher-level courses viewed favorably by colleges, but the honors grading scale can boost your cumulative and make it possible to achieve above a 4.0 weighted GPA.

- Increase involvement in any sport or extracurricular by taking on a leadership role or step outside of your comfort zone and try something new
- Stay focused on keeping your grades up - this year's grades are also important to college admissions officers
- Challenge yourself academically by taking higher-level ([Honors and AP](#)) classes in subjects that you are interested in
- Start a possible list of colleges and careers you may be considering
- Evaluate and discuss your course selection or ask questions about new courses to develop your academic interests
- Continue looking at how you want to pay for colleges, research [scholarships](#) opportunities and learn about budgeting
- Utilize your [Methodize Test Prep](#) account and continue studying for standardized tests and improving on core subjects
- Take the [PSAT/NMSQT test](#) in October to qualify for [National Merit Scholarships](#)
- Optional [PreACT](#) also available
- Use the summer to attend local college fairs or go on college tours, either locally or while you are travelling. Create a list of what you like and dislike about each college.



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Juniors (11th Graders)

Junior year is a critical time in a student's college and career readiness. This year, they will take [College and Career Planning](#), a course led by our College and Career Counselor. In this course, students will take personality assessments, vocational aptitude tests, have visits from college admissions officers, meet with recruiters for the military and various employment opportunities, and more! They will also begin their college applications and write their personal essay. This year, students should evaluate if any of your values have changed over time, stay consistent with non-academic extracurricular activities, expand your leadership opportunities and keep up on your activity log. Continue to look for ways to strengthen and deepen your interests in these activities and pinpoint the areas of academics that you are the most avid about.

- Keep your grades up! Junior year grades are the last ones some schools will see before making an admission decision.
- Enroll in the College and Career Planning Class either your first or second semester - this will help you write your personal statement, begin your college applications, research colleges and trade schools, provide aptitude and career assessments, and more!
- Create [SCOIR](#) account to create a list of colleges and track application deadlines
- Continue challenging yourself academically with AP or Honors classes
- Utilize your [Methodize Test Prep](#) account and continue studying for standardized tests and improving on core subjects
- Take the [PSAT/NMSQT test](#) in October to qualify for [National Merit Scholarships](#)
- Begin studying for the ACT/SAT and register for tests in your area - your first [ACT](#) or [SAT](#) will be offered in October with additional testing days going through April and May
- Take the [ASVAB](#) – an aptitude test that helps predict academic and occupational strengths, both for military and civilian positions
- Start thinking of 2-3 teachers you would like to ask for letters of recommendation from
- By the end of your junior year, you should refine and finalize your college list - be sure it reflects a balance of admission possibilities (likely, possible, level, and reach schools)
- Research the type of applications required for each school on your list, as they will vary – [Common App](#) for most universities, [UW System Application](#) for all UW schools, and Coalition schools through [SCOIR](#)
- Keep track of application deadlines for college admissions and [scholarships](#)



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Seniors (12th Graders)

Your high school career is quickly coming to an end and you have some important decisions to make and actions to take! Colleges begin accepting applications as early as August (with some programs accepting even earlier) and it is important that all of your application documents and requirements are ready to turn in. Acting early in your Senior year can be a key to a stress-free year and ensuring that you meet all application deadlines and do not miss out on any scholarship opportunities. Plus, applying early means that you will also get your admissions decisions back sooner, allowing you and your family more time to make a commitment decision.

- Retake the [ACT](#) or [SAT](#) early in the fall to try and obtain a higher score
- Retake the [ASVAB](#) to obtain a higher score – an aptitude test that helps predict academic and occupational strengths, both for military and civilian positions
- Confirm your final college list, application deadlines and requirements
- Write your college-specific supplemental essays
- Meet individually with the College and Career Counselor to review your college applications and personal statement
- Continue to research [scholarships](#), adding requirements and deadlines to your list
- Check-in with teachers who are writing your letters of recommendation and ensure they are received in [SCOIR](#) before you submit applications
- Apply to scholarships throughout the school year
- Prepare financial aid paperwork and apply through [FAFSA](#) (the Free Application for Federal Student Aid)
- Complete and submit all [Common App](#), [UW System Application](#), and [SCOIR](#) applications
- Send out all Early Action (EA) and Early Decision (ED) applications. Deadlines to apply are typically around November 1 and early applications indicate to colleges that they are your top choice for enrollment if accepted. EA is non-binding but the ED is binding.
- Send completed applications, test scores, letters of recommendation and transcripts to colleges
- Regular Decision (RD) deadlines typically fall between January 1 and March 1
- Colleges have until April 1 to release decisions
- Schools with Rolling Admissions do not have hard deadlines and will accept applications throughout the year, typically reaching out with an admissions decision within four weeks
- Plan visits to accepted colleges to finalize your college choice
- National College Decision Day is May 1st – if your school requires you to secure your spot, you will need to commit to the school by paying an enrollment deposit