

Junior Year Checklist

Here is a checklist to help you get started on the right track. Check off each item as you complete it. This list is just a beginning, so there's no doubt you will have many more questions. Continue to look at this checklist regularly with your parents and counselor.

SEPTEMBER

- Start planning for postsecondary education as soon as you can. Talk to your high school counselor, go online, or visit the public library to get information and resources such as college/university catalogs.
- Begin the process of exploring and choosing postsecondary options with an assessment of your interests and abilities and a comprehensive vocational assessment.
- Start a folder of everything you collect on postsecondary education. This should include contact names, addresses, phone numbers, emails, etc.
- Understand the differences between the academic organizations and differences in expectations of high school and postsecondary education (see Section 3).
- Consider joining clubs and participating in other high school activities. Colleges/universities like to see that future students are involved in various aspects of their education.
- Talk with your high school counselor to see if you should consider taking a practice college entrance exam. Arrange for accommodations as needed. Community colleges do not require college entrance exams.
- During this year attend at least one College Night or Future Fair in your area and try to meet with representatives from different colleges or universities.
- Know your Social Security Number. You'll need to know it for financial aid applications, summer jobs or work at college. If it has been lost, obtain another card from the Social Security Administration.

OCTOBER-DECEMBER

- Investigate features of postsecondary education that seem to suit your interests, needs and abilities (such as size, type of school, location, fields of study offered, academic quality and demands, cost, social environment, necessary facilities, desirable programs, and special opportunities).
- Determine and understand the specific support services, academic adjustments, and auxiliary aids that you will need to succeed in postsecondary education and search for an institution which best meets those needs.

- Make contact with your local Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) counselor. You must apply for services and your DVR counselor will determine your eligibility for services. This is a possible source of some financial help for postsecondary education.
- Meet with your school counselor to review your credits for this year and possible credits for next year. Be sure you are on track for graduation and that you are taking the courses you need for admission to the institution of your choice.
- Make sure that you understand your disability and can explain your strengths and weaknesses. You should be able to explain how your disability affects learning.
- Understand your learning style and be able to explain it in meaningful terms.
- Be able to explain and justify the accommodations you may need.
- Try out and learn to use a range of accommodations and technological aids while in high school (i.e. audio text books, grammar and spell checkers, computer voice synthesis, etc.).
- Research Recordings for the Blind & Dyslexic to see if the audio textbooks they provide will work for you. If so, discuss options for membership with your VR or RSB counselor.
- Fill out the form “Get Ready for Your First Meeting with Disability Support Services” with your Resource or Special Education teacher. You can find this form later in this section.

JANUARY

- Start writing to colleges/universities you're thinking about attending and ask for information on their academic programs, admission criteria, financial aid, and disability support services. If you need help writing letters, see your counselor and the sample letters later in this section.
- Ask your counselor if you should take the SAT or ACT assessment this spring. Many students take admission tests more than once. You may apply for accommodations, i.e., extended time, readers, interpreters, etc. - but you must make advanced arrangements for these. Read the directions for these adaptations carefully with your counselor and parents. Be sure to act early.
- Keep your grades up. Postsecondary programs are concerned about grades. It's also the road to possible scholarships.
- Read your school bulletin boards. Watch for notices of college or career meetings, test dates, special grants or scholarships. Read your local newspapers for this type of information, too.

FEBRUARY

- This is a good time to start estimating how you and your family will pay for your postsecondary education. Ask your school counselor and Vocational Rehabilitation counselor for information on meeting costs of attending college. See the Financial Aid section in Section 5 for additional information.

- Get leads on local sources of financial aid by reading the newspaper, accessing websites, and seeing what scholarships and awards graduating seniors are receiving. Write to these programs for information you can use next year.
- Review your academic skills with your counselor to see if you have any weak areas that need improvement. Consider signing up for tutoring or for summer programs to help with any academic deficiencies.
- Attend seminars on ways to be successful in postsecondary classes - learning strategies, test preparation and test taking strategies, study skills, time management, organizational skills, generalized study skills, outlining, notetaking, memory techniques, and word processing skills for example.
- Develop personal qualities such as a positive self-image by stressing strengths, willingness to take risks, social skills, and self-advocacy skills.
- Plan your senior classes carefully with your school counselor. Consider admission requirements to postsecondary education when planning.

MARCH

- Be sure to check arrangements for April ACT/SAT. Make sure everything is in place, including accommodations if necessary. If you are attending a community college, you will not need to take the ACT/SAT.
- Continue staying in contact with your Division of Vocational Rehabilitation counselor.

APRIL

- It's time for the ACT/SAT - double check date, time, and place.
- Have you attended a College Night or Future Fair? Contact your school counselor.

MAY

- Consider making campus visits in conjunction with any summer trips you plan to take. Write to or call college/university admission offices and disability support services offices for more information on visits.
- Work during the summer if you can. This is good experience and can help pay for some of your college expenses.
- Read as much and as widely as you can. Set aside time for reading every day. It's important to keep up your skills in English and math during the summer months.