

# Parent School Counselor Guide

## 11<sup>th</sup> Grade

Your child's school counselor is a vital resource. The counselor is trained to take a complete look at your child, from academic achievement to college and career planning to emotional and social development. You should contact and stay in touch with your child's school counselor, in addition to your child's teacher. While every school is different, many have counselors on-site during parent-teacher conferences, and encourage parents to drop by for a meeting. Additionally, many schools offer counselor-led parents' nights, or back-to-school nights, where they offer a variety of information and advice for parents of students in each high school grade. The counselor's role varies in each school, but many counselors follow a class for all four years of high school, which means the counselor assigned to your child's 9th grade class will stay with that class until 12th grade. This gives the counselor a unique view of your child as she progresses through high school. The counselor can offer insight into what types of classes your child will be challenged by and what kinds of careers may interest her, and can also suggest special-education or AP classes that would be a good fit for your child.

- **No one knows your child better than you do.**

Despite the fact your child is taking on more responsibility and independence in high school, your involvement is still critical. The counselor will likely be doing a lot of work with your child in planning for her future. Your insights for the counselor are just as important as what the counselor can offer you. The partnership you form with the counselor will benefit your child and help all of you find the right fit for your child after graduation, whether it is a four-year university, community college, military enrollment, or career.

- **Your child's school counselor has a more comprehensive view of your child than her teacher may have.**

Especially in high school when teachers are often focused on their class or subject, counselors monitor your child's academic progress and make sure she is taking the right types of classes to graduate on time and be prepared for career and college.

- **If your child is struggling, the first person you may hear from is the counselor.**

If your child is having difficulty in multiple classes, the counselor may be brought in to arrange conferences with different teachers. He can develop interventions like monitoring homework completion, having you keep track of grades online, and bringing in tutors if necessary. He may ask you questions about home life – if there's a place for your child to do homework or if there's anything emotionally concerning at home that may be interfering with her ability to focus on schoolwork. Counselors are concerned with your child's overall wellbeing, and can offer referrals to mental health professionals if your child is having emotional or behavioral difficulties.

- **Your child's junior year is crucial.**

Check in with the counselor to make sure your child is on track for graduation. Eleventh grade is the most academically rigorous for students and most of your child's high school graduation requirements will be fulfilled by the junior year. Any misstep could cause a delay in graduation.

- **Ask the counselor about college visits and college fairs.**

Many parents visit college campuses with their child for tours during this year in order to give their child a sense of what to expect out of college life and atmosphere. Some schools allow one excused absence for a college visit, something your counselor will know. Additionally, some school counseling departments schedule a bus trip for students to colleges in the area, which can be a way for your child to have that experience even if you aren't able to take her yourself. The counselor will also know of any colleges that are planning a visit to the school for a college fair.

- **If your child is interested in military service, talk to the counselor about what applications are due this year.**

Most colleges don't start accepting applications until the senior year, but if your child is planning on going into military service, that can be different. Many military academies like West Point or the Air Force Academy begin the application process in 11th grade, and many ROTC scholarship applications are due this year as well. The counselor may suggest that your child take the ASVAB - the Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Battery entrance test this year as well.

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- **Eleventh grade is the time for your child to start taking college admission tests.**

Your child's counselor will be able to help you and your child decide which tests should be taken. For example, your child may take the ACT, SAT, or SAT II Subject tests. This will depend on your his plans for college and where he would like to apply. Some schools will take scores from either test, while others specifically require one test. It is important to know the testing requirements of the specific college he's applying for. Many counselors recommend taking the tests in spring of the junior year, and can offer parents guidance on test registration, getting students to the testing site, and interpreting the scores. Depending on the results, counselors may suggest taking the test again. While there are fees associated with these tests, if you meet certain income requirements, your child may qualify for two fee waivers per test. Some schools and parents groups also offer scholarships to offset these fees.

- **Counselors can also offer guidance on routes beyond a four-year university degree track.**

A recent study predicts that 63 percent of jobs by the year 2018 will require education beyond a high school diploma, but not all will require a four-year degree. Your child's counselor will be able to speak to you and your child about technical colleges and training programs. Most counselors are required to take courses in career development, and their expertise can help as you and your child discuss goals for life after high school.

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