

Resources

- CCISD course catalog is also an educational planning guide (online at ccisd.net)
- PTA newsletters
- Princeton Review - Best 366 Colleges
- College Board – collegeboard.com

Things we did wrong

- Did not take PreAP English freshman year
- Didn't know some foreign languages don't have level 1 classes available. Research your language choice if taking level 1 classes is part of your 4 year plan
- Missed a registration deadline for the SAT

Things we did right

- Set up a project management plan – these 4 years can be overwhelming; breaking it down really helped
- Went to see HS counselor during a quiet time of the year
- Let student set up all the campus visits, interviews, etc.
- Took the SAT and the ACT

Things we did right but way too late...

- Read CCISD course catalog from cover to cover (I recommend you read it before you take that first HS course; for many that is spring of 6th or 7th grade)
- Set up regular meetings with your child and put it on the calendar like an appt
- Parent Brag Sheet and Student's Autobiographical Sketch

Things I wish we had done differently

- Go to Senior Parent night when your child is in 10th or 11th grade.
- Plan on taking two SAT IIs, even if not sure you need them, immediately after completing the appropriate class
- Keep copies of writing samples, including a back up copy
- Start a spreadsheet right after 8th grade graduation; include the following; put on calendar to update information regularly
 - Awards-academic, athletic
 - Community service
 - Jobs
 - Dates
 - Contact information
 - Number of hours per week; weeks per year

Things to put on your calendar

- Renew student's driver's license on their 17th birthday and 18th birthdays; there are no reminders and you will need a VOE (verification of enrollment)
- PSAT, SAT, ACT, SAT II and AP test dates **and** registration deadlines
- NHS application deadline – confirm number of service hours
- 2 weeks before college visits, get approval to avoid impact on exemptions from finals
- If applying early decision, get a copy of transcript as soon as you get back to school your senior year; check it for accuracy
- 20 days before your college application deadline is your deadline for most high schools
- Several days before your application deadline, confirm everything has been mailed

Thoughts about visits to college campuses

Visit all your top choices. It does matter. Let the PSAT scores start the clock.

- Summer after sophomore year – visit different types of colleges
 - large vs. small
 - public vs. private
 - rural vs. urban
- Spring Junior year –
 - make a more concrete list based upon test scores,
 - visit 2 colleges and take classes, eat in the dining hall;
 - junior year grades are critical so make sure campus visits do not interfere with making the grades
- Summer after Junior year – visit as many as you can
- Fall Senior – take classes, spend the night if possible
- Weather – consider whether you are visiting in prime season or normal conditions

Thoughts about Level 1 classes (PreAP, AP, G/T)

Definitions.

- Pre AP – prepares student to take an AP class
- AP – prepares student to take the AP exam in that subject the following May.
 - See CCISD course catalog for AP exam dates
 - See “Why Take an AP Exam?” on page 3 below
- G/T – gifted

Balance

- Start in 6th grade. Start by erring on the side of too many level 1 classes.
- Take at least one high school level course in 8th grade. Intermediate school is the time to make some mistakes and learn from them while the cost is lower than HS
- Your goal is to find that elusive balance by junior year. This year is critical for colleges and you get to add the following exams to your already busy schedules.
 - PSAT
 - SAT
 - ACT
 - AP
- Grades – your child’s grades are the number one factor when making this decision. Note this only works if your child is doing all his own assignments, including typing papers and all projects. If all you are doing is providing supplies, time, space and support when questions arise, this should be a fairly accurate way to determine what they can handle.
 - If your child has a full level 1 load (such as Omega or WAVE) and is making all As and Bs, that’s great;
 - If not, you need to consider the effort expended and perhaps make some changes
- Free time – I consider “passive” play. If my son thinks he has enough time to play X Box for 3 hours on a school night, maybe he should add another level 1 course to next year’s load. If every waking minute is spent exercising his body and educating his mind, perhaps we should reduce the number of level 1 courses.
- Teachers – if grades and free time don’t provide a clear cut answer, the next step is to speak with teachers in the subjects of concern. Is lack of organization the problem? Or is it subject content?

Why does it matter?

- ❑ Colleges are looking for students who have challenged themselves so your college options are expanded by level 1 classes. But remember, after removing Texas A&M and UT, there are still 364 “best” colleges in the Princeton Review book I mentioned at the very top under resources. You will find one that works for your child. If you find the right balance for your child by junior year, you have a better chance of finding the best college as well. Your child’s GPA and test scores will help you find a college at which he will be successful.
- ❑ Your child will be better prepared for college courses by taking level 1 classes so choose courses he may pursue in college. If science is not your child’s thing, maybe PreAP Biology is not the best choice.

Why Take an AP Exam?

High School

- ❑ DAP – Distinguished Achievement Program
see CCISD course catalog
- ❑ Exemption from finals

College

- ❑ AP Exams are scored with a 1-5.
- ❑ Most colleges will give college credit for a 4 or a 5.
- ❑ Some give credit for a 3
- ❑ One college we visited only gave credit for a 5 in AP Psych
- ❑ One college we visited only gave credit for one exam in each subject area; ie: one English, one Science, one Social Studies, etc.

What is the Parent Brag Sheet and the Student Autobiographical Sketch?

In September of senior year, there is a parent meeting with all the specifics. And September is a perfect time unless you are applying early decision. Here are some highlights:

- ❑ Parents must complete a Parent Brag Sheet on Naviance
- ❑ Students must complete an Autobiographical Sketch on Naviance
- ❑ You must turn in your request 20 days in advance of the college deadline
- ❑ I suggest asking your teacher if they will write a recommendation for you at least a week before that 20 day deadline. Some teachers will want additional information from you, such as samples of your writing, etc from the year you were their student.