

8/14/2008

People have asked us “What else should we do”, or “When do we prepare for college”. The follow list has been repeated through so many conversations that I thought I would put pen to paper and add references when I had them. Please read and remember that Academic Development is meant to provide a well-rounded education.

1. High School Vocabulary – expanding a student’s vocabulary can be through a dedicated curriculum or a [reading list](#) (classical approach). Most courses also teach roots/prefixes/suffixes which will help students with spelling and reading comprehension.
2. World View – This class will help students beyond the course’s basic goals; additionally giving them exercises with essays and applying literature to contemporary settings.
3. Study Skills – Students need to see this as a necessary discipline. Many home scholars have an extremely flexible study environment (sometimes for very good reasons) but they fail to grow beyond their “comfort zone” and prepare for advanced studies. At some point, move your student in phases from “kitchen home schooling” towards self-directed education.
4. Critical Thinking – Use an active approach to develop abstract thinking. Adolescents struggle with conceptual development; this is evident in their difficulties with freshman/sophomore math or math word-problems. Consider this area of study whether your need is for advancing studies or remedial instruction. (Critical Thinking, Verbal Logic, Figural Logic are three curriculums you can take as HS or with SOE).
5. PSAT – prepare for this test similarly as for the SAT or ACT. The results give excellent feedback for problem areas AND many scholarships are based upon the results. It is important that they have completed Algebra and Geometry. SOE suggests a PSAT Summer program just before their junior year.
6. PSAT – the [scholarship programs](#) will only consider scores during your junior (October) year. You may take it as a sophomore (October) to see where you need additional assistance.
7. At some point take a Personality Inventory and Career Planning assessment. These are included in several different courses and also available on-line. These questionnaires allow the students to see how God has made him/her for a purpose, and in His wisdom has already given them certain talents. Our task as educators is to help them prepare a talent for a vocation/ministry. Through this exercise, try to get your child to at least choose a college type (Liberal Arts, Humanities, Science, Engineering, etc). This will greatly influence your core HS curriculum.
8. Discuss with your child whether college is the right course of action. Technical schools, Community Colleges, or Certification programs can create a great vocation and cost much less. This alternative path may actually be superior to fostering an entrepreneur spirit. Regardless, this step is important to help set up a student’s goals and strengthen their motivation to complete the tasks to come.
9. Review your core curriculum choices. More math and sciences are expected for some programs, but don’t forego the humanities and a “well rounded” education. Colleges need to see more than straight “A” in science and math, don’t make this your sole priority.
10. Decide which college entrance exam you will take (SAT or ACT). [Check out our comparison for some help](#)

11. Take a Prep class – I suggest taking a SAT Prep Course during the sophomore year. “Boot Camp” style classes are like drinking from a fire hose and they are filled with tips and strategies. The SOE Prep courses teach what the tests cover as well as sharing tips and strategies. A nine-month course does not always fit within a student’s schedule, so choose the one that best fits your situation. These can serve as preparation for the PSAT (junior/Oct) as well. If you wait to take the SAT Prep course as a junior, you limit your test dates, miss the PSAT opportunities, and may not lose some valuable preparation time. [Check out a suggested timeline.](#)
12. SAT/ACT tests – Plan ahead so you can take a test when you are ready. Testing occurs from Oct through June of your junior or senior years. You may take the again to improve your score, but review the [data](#) to see if this is for you. Waiting until late in your senior year is not advisable.
13. Transcripts, Resumes, Test Scores are used to show the breadth of preparedness. Many colleges have essays or other forms of writing assessments as part of their evaluation process. Prepare your student early and this won’t be an area of anxiety when the time comes. Your transcript should contain a description of the courses you take.
14. Extra-curricular activities are important. Start a transcript and keep it updated. Volunteer, lead a group, start a program for assistance; these are excellent ways to show community involvement and leadership. Start early, if you wait too long for these activities, you won’t have time when they are juniors/seniors. Boy Scouts, 4-H, and Civil Air Patrol are examples that show involvement, teamwork, and leadership. See below.
15. Sports and Band are OK, but the lack of these particular extra-curricular activities isn’t an automatic flag for colleges.
16. The categories of courses you take are as important as “Grades”. Colleges are not fooled by a valedictorian of a home school class of “one”.

There are many successful homes scholars because they prepare with college in mind. Many students begin dual enrollment at a community college. They can take courses and receive both HS and college credit simultaneously. This process is often free for those who live within the community college’s district limits!

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