West High Counseling’s
College Preparation Timeline

Freshman Year of High School

Fall Semester
- Participate in extracurricular activities
- Sign up for difficult courses and work hard to get good grades

Spring Semester
- Sit down with your guidance counselor and plan the next three years of your high school career.
- Discuss your goals with your counselors

Sophomore Year of High School

Fall Semester
- Continue to take challenging courses. Your grades matter, so strive for excellence.
- Dedicate yourself to a few extracurricular activities and work toward leadership positions. Make sure to participate in community service activities.
- Think about taking the PSAT in October of your junior year.

Spring Semester
- Attend college fairs and start to browse college guidebooks.
- Meet with your counselor to discuss your transcript thus far.
- Start studying for the PSATS.

Junior Year of High School

Fall Semester
- Take the PSAT in October and enroll in a SAT prep course.
- Your junior year grades are extremely important so work hard to keep them up.
- Take the SAT 1 in October or November, especially if you are thinking about applying for Early Decision or Early Action for next fall.
- Begin to explore the college application process with your parents and request information on the colleges that you are interested in applying to.
- Think about how you are going to prepare for and pay for college.
- Focus on your leadership positions, extracurricular activities, and community service.
- In December, register for the SAT I, ACT, or SAT Subject Tests exam.
Spring Semester
- Take the SAT I (usually in January, March, May, or June) or the ACT (usually in February, April, or June).
- Sign up to take AP courses and exams.
- Make an appointment with your guidance counselor to review your transcript and discuss your plans for applying to college.
- Find a summer job and continue to participate in community service programs.
- If you have not done so, register for the SAT I, SAT Subject Test, or ACT exams for the fall.
- Compile a list of colleges you want to apply to and start thinking about your essay.

Senior Year of High School

Fall Semester
- Start your college preparation immediately by visiting your guidance counselor and compiling a list of colleges you want to attend.
- Create a calendar to help you better organize important dates and deadlines.
- Take the SAT I, SAT Subject Test, or ACT.
- Take challenging courses throughout the course of your senior year. Your grades will be reviewed on your final transcript, so do your best to earn great grades.
- Approach your teachers and guidance counselor early to fill out your recommendation forms.
- Continue to work on your application essays.
- Apply for scholarships; online or through your school.

Spring Semester
- Fill out FAFSA forms for financial aid; continue to apply for scholarships.
- Avoid “senioritis” by working hard, focusing, and staying committed to achieving excellence.
- Sing up to take AP courses and exams.
- Make sure to send thank you letters to the professionals who have helped you through the college application process.
- If you find out you are wait-listed write a letter to the college expressing your interest in being admitted.
- Review all of your acceptance offers with your parents and make the best possible decision about where to attend.
- Make sure your counselor submits your final transcript to your chosen college.
- Last, but not least, enjoy your final days of being a high school student. Remember, when one door closes, another one opens….and this one happens to lead to your future.