



GETTING TO COLLEGE STARTS NOW

Make the Dream Real.

You want the best for your children. That usually includes dreams of a college education. Certainly, a college education expands an individual's knowledge and skills, but it also brings greater job opportunities and the chance to earn more over a lifetime than someone who only has a high school diploma. Increasingly, employers are looking to hire individuals with a college degree. Making the right choices now and through high school will open up possibilities that are not available without a college education.

Plan ahead.

Preparing for college academically and financially requires planning. The courses students take in middle school and later in high school build on each other, each one leading to the next, higher-level, courses. And, research has shown that students who take algebra and geometry in middle school or early high school are more likely to go to college. Enrolling in those courses early and following a sequence of courses will save a student time and money. Why is that? Well, algebra prepares students for higher-level math courses and for science courses such as biology, chemistry, and physics. Completing those courses in high school helps students prepare for college work and gets them on track to begin the courses in their selected major. For instance, students studying to become an engineer, or even a math teacher, often need to have already completed calculus or other advanced math before entering college. Students who have not yet successfully completed the preparatory work will need to catch up, spending extra time and money to take the required courses.

Core courses – math, sciences, English, languages – are very important, but so, too, are electives that allow students to explore other interests and nurture special talents. Help your children find what they are passionate about and encourage them to pursue those interests.

Set the Bar High. Expect the Best.

Get help when needed.

Wanting the best for your children means setting the academic bar high and expecting their best. Learning does not occur in a vacuum. If you find your child is struggling in particular academic subjects, is not taking initiative, or doesn't seem motivated to study, meet with his/her teachers and school guidance counselors to help identify issues and plan for additional support. Working together will help your child achieve success in school.

Also, time management and consistent study habits – good note taking, review time and learning to summarize well – are important skills in the classroom and outside the school as well. Get your child help with these if you think they could be improved.

Which courses to take?

Be familiar with the high school course sequences suggested by your school or state. New York State's current guidelines to earn a Regents Diploma are listed below. Plus, students can also take other courses if they are offered and meet the criteria for graduation. What is important is for students to keep on track with schoolwork, build those course sequences and make steady progress.

NYS Regents Diploma Requirements.

To receive a New York State Regents Diploma, students must complete a specific number of units within the areas of English language arts, social studies, mathematics, and science, with additional units completed in health, the arts, a language other than English, physical education, and a sequence of courses or electives.

In addition, students are required to pass (at a defined passing grade) a specific number of Regents examinations in the areas of English, geography/global studies, U.S. history/government, mathematics, and science.

To ensure that your student is on the path to a Regents Diploma early, talk with your student's school guidance counselor for the most up-to-date standards. Visit the NYS Education Department's Web site www.nysed.gov and search for "diploma requirements."

Grades DO matter.

Colleges look carefully at the types of courses students took in high school and how students performed in them. The top 10 factors that matter to college and university admission committees when they review students' applications point to the importance of the selection of high school courses and the grades students' received. Yes, grades do matter.

And it's not just the grades students received in their junior year that are important. College admission committees look at a student's entire high school transcript, beginning with the freshman year. Some colleges will even ask to see students' final grades at the end of 12th grade!

It is clear that students who take sequences of courses in math, science, English language arts, social studies and another language – and do well in them – will have a better chance of being accepted at their preferred college or university. They may also receive additional scholarships. Again, grades do matter.



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