

Thoughts about your college search:

What does your post high school path look like?

Does it involve college? If it does, these thoughts are for you, but college is not your only option and may involve many years of study to get you to where you want to go in life. Planning now for your future can save stress and disappointment later on. See your guidance counselor with your questions and check out the document **Thoughts about your life after high school** found in the Counseling section.

Where in the world to do want to go?

Do you want to stay close to home or get away?!
How about the East Coast, West Coast or Over Seas?
Do you like hot or cold, sunny or rainy?
Remember the costs associated with traveling back home!

How big?

How big off a school and city/town/rural...

What programs do they offer?

Athletics, clubs, study aboard and, of course your area of study.

A brief timeline for middle school though 12th grade:

Middle School

- Take the most difficult courses available to you, particularly in math and world language. This will give you a head start in high school. Difficult courses prepare you for the challenges of high school and beyond.
- Picture yourself going to college and take the steps to make it happen!
- Parents – it's not too early to make financial plans for your student's post high school endeavors...

9th grade

- Continue on your course of study, taking the most difficult courses available to you. If you haven't begun a world language, do it now! You need to take at least through the second year of the world language but if possible, three or four/AP is even better!

- Take the PSAT in October; it's good practice for the 11th grade one that really counts! You will have access to My Road on collegeboard.com. This is a good site for many of your college search needs. It's not too early to begin to dream!

10th grade

- Continue on your course of study, taking the most difficult courses that are available and appropriate for you and don't forget about those high school graduation requirements...
- It's not too early to start thinking about your areas of interest and fields that you might like to go into...look for job or volunteer opportunities in those areas. Remember you need 60 hours of service learning for graduation but that is very little when it comes to showing an area of interest or passion on your college applications.
- Attend College Fairs.
- Take the PSAT in October; next year's counts for National Merit considerations.
- Class trainings on the use of My Road are done each spring and access codes are distributed for this powerful post high school search tool with PSAT results. Check in the College and Career Center with any questions.
- Take the appropriate Advanced Placement courses and exams (in May).
- Parents – Plan to attend the Financial Aid/Planning Night held at Garfield in December.

11th grade

Now it really gets going!

- Continue on your course of study, taking the most difficult courses that are available and appropriate for you and don't forget about both high school graduation requirements and college entrance requirements. Pick up a Graduation Check List in the Counseling Office or on the Garfield web site.
- Begin your college search in earnest, using My Road. Consider the "Thoughts" presented at the beginning of this article.
- Attend College Fairs and the College Visits sponsored through Garfield's College and Career Center.

- Keep an eye on the scholarship bulletin put out by the College and Career Center, noting those that may be appropriate for you. Some are for juniors but most you will be completing during your senior year.
- Take the PSAT in October. You will get your results in early January.
- Take the SAT and SAT Subject Tests in the spring. Register early to get your preferred location.
- Take the AP Exams; registration is in late March, with the exams in May.
- There will be some overlap in these tests. Consider taking the SAT Subject Tests in May, around the time that you are already preparing for your AP Tests! Check with your colleges and teachers to see which tests are appropriate for you. Take the SAT either before your AP and Subject Tests in April or consider taking them in June as you end your year of study.
- Whenever you take them, evaluate your results and only retake them if you feel there is room for improvement. Use available resources for preparing. The Counseling Office has preparation booklets and collegeboard.com has additional resources. You may want to consider a visit to the bookstore or even a course at the community college or a private test center.
- Over the spring and summer, it's time to really narrow your search and perhaps take some college tours, if you haven't already. Mid-Winter Break and Spring Break are also good opportunities to plan a family vacation that includes visiting colleges. If visiting colleges is not an option, do virtual tours online!
- Also over the summer, request applications and financial aid information so that you begin completing the applications for colleges that you have decided on. Essays are particularly important. You don't want to be rushed or frazzled when completing this important process. Yes, colleges do read the application and it makes a big impact on their decision.
- Know the important dates for your colleges: application, scholarship and financial aid deadlines, in particular. Consider creating your own Personal College Calendar!
- Parents – Plan to attend the Financial Aid/Planning Night held at Garfield in December and it wouldn't hurt to monitor your student's progress in the process, perhaps even meeting with them and their counselor!

12th grade

- It's finally here. If you've been planning, things should go smoothly and you should enjoy your year.
- Continue on your course of study, taking the most difficult courses that are available and appropriate for you and don't forget about both high school graduation requirements and college entrance requirements. Pick up a Graduation Check List in the Counseling Office or on the Garfield web site.
- Yes, colleges look at your senior year!
- Meet your application deadlines. Consider Early Action or Early Decision if there is a particular school that you want to attend.
- Hopefully you've narrowed your number of colleges to around 5 or fewer. If you know where you want to go and you are sure or pretty sure, there is no benefit in applying to a larger number of schools (except to the college or university that you are giving a donation to in the form of your application fee!).
- If you are not sure that you'll get in to the school of your dreams, be sure to apply to at least one school that you know you could get accepted at and would be willing to go to as a fall back, just in case...
- There is no sense in applying to a large number of schools with a similar profile; you'll probably get accepted to them all or rejected from them all...
- A note about letters of recommendation: Contact your teachers early. Consider using the Letter of Recommendation Form available in the Counseling Office or on the Garfield web site. Even though your Garfield counselor doesn't write a letter of recommendation, they will need this form to complete important college application forms that function as a letter. Please turn the form into them by October 1st if you are applying for Early Action or Early Decision and by December 1st if you are applying for a regular deadline of January 15th. For other deadlines, allow at least two weeks, out of consideration for the person doing the recommendation. Most deadlines are between January 1st and February 15th. It doesn't hurt to be early and that will take away any last minute stress or rush.
- A note about transcripts: At Garfield you fill out a transcript card, turning it in to the Counseling Secretary. Your transcripts should be ready the next Friday for you to pick up and mail. If you need more, ask for your transcript card and add additional requests, turning it back to the secretary.

- Parents – It’s a little late to start thinking about the finances for college but the Financial Aid/Planning Night is held at Garfield in December and you will definitely get some pointers.
- Keep an eye on the scholarship bulletin put out by the College and Career Center, noting those that may be appropriate for you. The Scholarship Profile is due October 1st for consideration for select Garfield scholarships.
- The FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) should be completed as soon after January 1st as possible. NELA (Northwest Education Loan Association) is a good resource and has been involved with Garfield and the Financial Aid/Planning Night for quite a while.
- Your college may also require the PROFILE...
- Many colleges and universities begin informing students of their acceptance as early as January, while others don’t notify until much later. Check with your schools to find out their timelines. Most will offer letters of acceptance and financial packages in mid-April.
- Now it’s time to decide.
- Visit the school, if you haven’t already, before you make your final decision!
- And it’s not too late if you have been disappointed. Many colleges have rolling admissions and will accept your application until there are no more spots in their freshman class.
- May 1st is generally the deadline for you to confirm that you are planning to attend. You will need to send in your deposit around this time.
- In case you forgot, graduation is just around the corner! Meet your graduation requirements and complete your college entrance requirements. You must continue the pattern of academic achievement that you have set in your application or you may risk the chance of being denied admission! Yes, it does happen...
- It’s now time to start gathering everything you’ll need to set up for your first room away from home!

Good luck!