



## Dr. Messer's Tips for College Prep



### Middle School 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Grades

1. Participate in a summer enrichment camp at the local college
2. Tour a college campus while on summer vacation or away at a family reunion
3. Parents meet with the principal and guidance counselor to ensure that your child is placed in a high school with college prep courses and enriching extra-curricular activities
4. Parents continue to save toward your child's education

### Freshman Year

1. Select College Prep Courses that challenge and stretch your abilities
2. Explore your interests: extracurricular clubs, sports, community service
3. Start your college web search
4. Identify a teacher to write a letter of recommendation for you
5. Parents meet with guidance counselor to establish your presence and involvement in your child's education

### Sophomore Year

1. Consider taking the PSAT or PLAN
2. Explore Career Options with your guidance counselor
3. Tour college campuses as you travel with family
4. Participate in a pre-college program sponsored by local university or agency such as the Urban League or NAACP
5. Identify a teacher to write a letter of recommendation for you
6. Parents get involved in parents committees, attend school board meetings and continue to advocate on your child's behalf.

### Junior Year

1. Check course selection and credits with guidance counselor
2. Find passion through diverse recreational and community recreational and community service activities
3. Participate in campus tours and campus visit programs
4. Take the PSAT/NMSQT
5. Take the SAT or ACT
6. Prepare a draft of your Essay/personal statement to be critiqued and edited by teachers
7. Identify a teacher to write a letter of recommendation for you
8. Parents familiarize yourself with the FAFSA and keep a separate file for financial statements/taxes documents that will be needed to complete the process the following year

### Fall of Senior Year

1. Continue to pursue a strong academic curriculum
2. Create a calendar for the year and include all important dates and deadlines for campus programs, application fees, financial aid, ect.
3. Create a senior year college file and use it to hold copies of every document you receive and every document you send away, your application, financial aid forms, recommendations, ect. You may need to create one for each college to which you apply
4. Obtain financial aid/scholarship information
5. Set aside money from summer employment to be used to pay application fees, housing deposits or transportation costs to campus visits
6. Schedule final campus tours and attend open house/overnight programs
7. Send admissions applications to your colleges of choice
8. Create your portfolio
9. Explore financial aid process
10. Parents be supportive of students during this stressful time
11. Parents advocate on students behalf and remain vigilant with teachers and guidance counselors to make sure that they are completing your child's application, supporting fee waivers when

### January of Senior Year

1. File your FAFSA, if you plan to receive financial aid
2. Plan to attend a free financial aid session offered by a local college or university
3. Check with the colleges to which you are applying to see if they require additional forms
4. Pursue other forms of financial aid (churches, fraternities/sororities, ect)
5. Try to visit all the campuses to which you have been admitted before committing
6. Parents allow your child to be responsible for completing their application process but stay involved to ensure that everything is completed
7. Parents should contact the guidance/college counselor to ensure that your child's needs have been met

## My College Portfolio

### What is an Admissions Portfolio?

An Admissions Portfolio is a document that contains the highlights and accomplishments of the years preceding your college application process.

### Why do I need an Admissions Portfolio?

The Portfolio allows you to present yourself in a coordinated and comprehensive manner to admissions representatives, interviewers, or teachers who may be recommending you for admission. Most colleges and universities do not require a portfolio unless you are applying to an Arts or Design focused institution. However, it is important to note that the portfolio presentation makes a lasting impression and provides you with an opportunity to present yourself in a professionally documented manner.

### What should the Admissions Portfolio contain?

Typically the Portfolio would begin with a cover page and be divided into 5 or 6 major sections:

1. Cover Page - Include a photo (optional) and basic information (Name, birth date, hometown, motto or quote and it's significance)
2. Personal Overview – Include Resume'
3. Academic – unofficial transcript, test scores, AP score, ect.
4. Extracurricular/Community Service – co-curricular transcript (similar to a resume of extracurricular activities.
5. Personal Statement – Include Personal Statement or Goals Statement
6. Honors, Awards and Recommendations – Include actual copies of Awards, Citations, Recommendations and Certificates Received. Newspaper clippings should be added in this section as well.

If you have an additional talent or are artistic, you may include an additional section to include a CD or samples of your writing or drawing, ect. This portfolio would be in addition to your Arts Portfolio.

### How do I begin?

Building a portfolio can be done in a few simple steps. It will require a notebook or three ring binder and inserts. Using a computer you will create the cover page and heading pages for each section. Place each of those pages in a protective insert and add the documents for that heading behind the appropriate section heading page.

If you have the resources, you may also create smaller mini portfolio's that you can duplicate at a copy center such as FedEx/Kinko's or through the use of smaller plastic sheaths.

### What do I do when it is completed?

Once completed, have your parents, or mentors/advisors review it. Be thorough and check for errors. When it is completed, you can take it to college fairs, on college interviews, scholarship interviews, internship interviews, ect.