

Critical College Readiness Guidelines

Overview and General Recommendations

The following represent best practices for students seeking admission to higher education:

- Join extracurricular activities and engage in community service.
- Maintain good grades and study habits, and explore your career and academic interests
- Build strong relationships with teachers, and seek additional help and support as needed.
- Complete [state assessments](#) and district assessments.
- Attend college fairs and career exploration events, and visit college campuses.
- Identify college costs and payment or savings options (e.g. [GET](#) and [financial aid](#)).

Timeline

The timeline below includes critical dates for students pursuing higher education, by grade level.

Middle School Students

- Apply for the [College Bound Scholarship](#) if eligible. The application deadline is June 30 at the end of the 8th grade year.
- Begin to develop a [high school and beyond plan](#) and identify possible courses offered in the high school that align with that plan.

High School Students

- Consider opportunities to [earn college credit during high school](#).
- Take national college qualifying exams in the sophomore year (e.g. the [preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test](#), or the [ACT Plan](#)).
- Complete national college entrance exams in the junior or senior year (e.g. the [SAT](#) or the [ACT](#)). Other exams include the Asset, Accuplacer, or Compass exams (two-year colleges) or ASVAB exam (military).
- Apply for [federal or state financial aid](#) (FAFSA or WASFA) as soon after October 1 of your senior year as possible.
- Apply for colleges (e.g. see Washington colleges' [application deadlines](#))
- Satisfy the [state's high school graduation requirements](#) (and local requirements).
- Meet the [minimum college admission standards](#) (additional standards vary by institution).

Adult Students

- Pursue a [General Educational Development](#) (GED) certificate (for students without a high school diploma)

- Apply for [federal or state financial aid](#) (FAFSA or WASFA) as soon after October 1 of your senior year as possible.
- Identify what exams are required for entrance to selected colleges.
- Understand your options to [transfer credits between colleges](#).