

# College Checklist & Resources for Parents and Students

## Compiled by True North Youth Program



**COLORADO**  
Colorado Opportunity  
Scholarship Initiative

It's never too soon to start preparing for college! Below is a list of items you and your student can complete together.

### Pre-High School

- Make a plan to check in regularly about schoolwork. Celebrate good grades and help your student address academic concerns.
- Start helping your student save for college by opening a savings account. Your local bank can answer questions and help you open a 529 college savings plan. More information about 529 college savings plans can be found at: <https://www.collegeinvest.org/?pageid=67>
- Take PSAT if available.
- MY COLORADO JOURNEY:** Create an account with My Colorado Journey at <https://www.mycoloradojourney.com/journey?>. This platform is designed to help students connect to education, work, and support services.

### 9th Grade

- ACTIVITIES:** Get involved in high school clubs, activities and sports from the start; this is the time to try a few different things to see what clubs, activities and sports really resonate with you. Consider volunteering in the community; colleges and scholarships like to see that students are involved in their community, figuring out what makes them tick, and are doing things to build passion and interest. Keep an ongoing list of your accomplishments and awards to start building your resume (which lists sports, leadership opportunities, activities) that you will need for college and scholarship applications.
- GRADES:** Remember that your GPA and class rank begin with your freshman grades. Get off to a good start by doing well in all of your classes.
- GRADES CHECKS:** Start asking your student about their grades and check their grades through PowerSchool. Encourage your student to keep up their grades and attendance.
- (This applies to 9th - 12th grade): If your student is struggling in a subject, ASK FOR HELP! Find out the teacher's name and have your student make an appointment with the teacher to see how he/she can bring up their grade. Consider attending True North's weekly academic tutoring sessions and/or talk to your teacher/counselor about finding an academic tutor to work with outside of school hours.
- Take PSAT if available.

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- Continue saving for college.
- COLLEGE FAIR:** Consider attending the workshops at the [Western Slope College Fair](#) in Aspen as a family. This event is held annually, the first Sunday in October. Alternatively, ask your counselor if your school provides transportation to the fair.
- COLLEGE COUNSELOR:** If you or your parents have any early questions about the college application process, don't hesitate to talk to your school counselor or True North

### 10th Grade

- LEADERSHIP:** Being a leader in an activity or group shows you have worked hard, are dedicated and can work as a team member. Start a new club, head up a community service project, or run for student government.
- Encourage your student to take the PSAT, and then make an extra effort to study for those areas where they are weakest. Test scores and grades matter to colleges and scholarship funders.
- Continue saving for college.
- CLASSES:** Take the most rigorous classes possible.

### 11th Grade

- CAREER RESEARCH:** Shadow for a day or do a short internship with a professional in a field you're considering.
- TEST PREP:** Start preparing in August for the SAT or ACT.
- MAKE AN APPOINTMENT:** Meet with your college counselor to discuss college applications.
- Check in with True North Youth Program and with your librarian at your local library to search for available scholarships and other financial aid.
- STANDARDIZED TESTS:** You should probably take the SAT or ACT in December and will be taking the state-mandated SAT in April. Mark the date on your calendar and make sure you have a good night's sleep and a good meal the night before! Students on free/reduced lunch should consider talking to your counselor about a fee waiver.
- Continue saving for college.
- If you are staying in Colorado for college, make sure you have registered for the College Opportunity Scholarship Fund, a financial incentive program created by the state of Colorado, applied toward each college credit hour. True North can assist with this.

### The Summer Before 12th Grade

- Visit local colleges together if possible. Make the most of your trip by visiting this site: <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges/campus-visit-guide/campus-visit-checklist>
- You can also take a virtual tour of each college. Learn more at: <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges/campus-visit-guide/10-ways-to-learn-about-colleges-online>

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- In addition to visiting colleges you are interested in, consider attending an academically enriching summer program, seek an internship or get a job.
- Start applying for colleges in July/August

### 12th Grade

- MEET in person** with your High School Guidance Counselor to discuss applying to colleges.
- Talk to your counselor about the best way to access school transcripts, and, as applicable, counselor reports and teacher recommendations.
- RECOMMENDATIONS:** If you have not gotten your teacher recommendations yet, plan to do that in the fall.
- FILE FAFSA:** [Federal Student Aid](#), a part of the U.S. Department of Education, is the largest provider of student financial aid in the nation. To be eligible for financial aid (which includes grants, work-study opportunities and student loans), you must file electronically the Free Application for Federal Financial Aid (FAFSA). Everyone planning to attend college is strongly encouraged to apply. Even if you may not qualify for federal aid, FAFSA is also used to qualify for college specific financial aid. Pay attention to financial aid deadlines as they can sneak up on students and parents. Students and parents must each complete the FAFSA ([fafsa.ed.gov](https://fafsa.ed.gov)) and you can submit starting on October 1st. FAFSA will determine how much you are eligible for in grants (grants do not have to be paid back) and loans (some of which are special low-interest), and will help your family determine an “EFC” or Expected Family Contribution.
- Students and parents complete the FAFSA together. This is a very useful FAFSA checklist in both English and Spanish:  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9VBI1r6qumPSjZqNE1nWUFPMMW05ZVVtRXZfZVZKUzBvZkhB/view?usp=sharing>
- Some students may also have to complete the CSS Profile. Check prospective college financial aid websites to learn what each college requires.
- True North Youth Program is happy to talk to both students and parents if they have questions or concerns about completing or filing the FAFSA financial aid form. Every circumstance is different, so please contact us. The FAFSA financial aid form must be completed by both the student and the parent.
- If your student qualifies for ASSET, DACA, or is undocumented, please visit the following site to learn about financial aid options for your student:  
<https://www.ciccoloradoasset.org/>
- Continue saving for college.
- Many local organizations give scholarships to HIGH SCHOOL seniors but are much less likely to give scholarships to students who have taken a gap year See

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your College Counselor and make sure you apply for any scholarships for which you qualify. There are also regional and national scholarships available.

Researching these and applying for them takes time and organization. Scholarship databases and search engines can be helpful. True North likes the following ones: Naviance, fastweb.com, bigfuture.org and Denver Scholarship Foundation.

### What sets student applicants apart for admissions officers and scholarship committees?

- Grades
- Test scores (SAT / ACT)
- Meaningful participation in community service
- Holding a job
- The good recommendation of employers, teachers, coaches, and other adults in the community.
- Meaningful participation in extracurricular and leadership activities.

### Career Exploration Websites:

- <https://www.myplan.com/assess/values/pg1.php>
- <https://www.truity.com/view/tests/personality-career>

### More College Planning Websites:

- <https://www.collegeboard.org/>
- <http://scholarprep.org/>

*This checklist has been reviewed and approved by college counselors at Telluride, Norwood, and Nucla High Schools. Adapted from the Parent Checklist at <https://dccap.org/parents/parent-checklist> and the checklist at <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-started/for-parents>*