

# College & Career Checklist & Resources for Parents and Students

## Nucla High School



**COLORADO**  
Colorado Opportunity  
Scholarship Initiative

It's never too soon to start preparing for college! Even if you don't plan on going to college, or if you want to attend a career and technical (trades) school, this checklist can be very helpful in navigating and financing your education and career plans!

Be sure to also check out [other online resources for college and career planning](#).

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.
- Have your student create an account with My Colorado Journey at <https://www.mycoloradojourney.com>. There is a High School Planning timeline, starting in 7th grade. However, any year is a good time to sign up!

### 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, high school transcript, and class rank begin with your freshman grades. Get off to a good start by doing well in all of your classes.

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- GRADES CHECKS:** Start asking your student about their grades and check their grades by talking to teachers or through *Infinite Classroom*. 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 finding an academic tutor to work with outside of school hours, either in person or online. Also check in with your True North rep, there are some community after school tutoring resources available such as Friday homework club at Norwood library.
- Take PSAT if available.
- 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 or True North reps about other transportation options to the fair. Sometimes there's a shared bus with Norwood and Telluride High Schools or volunteers who are available to drive.
- 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 the NHS College Counselor, Kelly Arnold.

#### 10th Grade

- LEADERSHIP:** Being a leader in an activity or group shows you have worked hard, are dedicated and play well with others. Start a new club, head up a community service project, 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 college counselor (Kelly Arnold) to discuss college applications.
- [The Chang Chavkin Scholarship](#) is a great regional scholarship opportunity, and is open to first generation, high achieving students. The application process is during the Junior year. Be sure to check with Mr. Arnold or True North to see if you might be eligible.

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- STANDARDIZED TESTS:** You should probably take the SAT or ACT in December and will be taking the state-mandated SAT with his/her class 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.
- Continue saving for college.
- If you are staying in Colorado for College, make sure you have registered for the [College Opportunity Fund](#), a financial incentive from the state of CO, applied toward each credit hour.
- Now is a good time to start understanding [College Terminology](#).

### 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>
- 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** with Kelly Arnold to apply for college.
- 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 (that 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.

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- ❑ More information on the FAFSA can be found at:  
[https://www.collegeincolorado.org/Financial\\_Aid\\_Planning/Financial\\_Aid\\_101/FAFSA\\_is\\_the\\_key.aspx](https://www.collegeincolorado.org/Financial_Aid_Planning/Financial_Aid_101/FAFSA_is_the_key.aspx)
- ❑ 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 sending in 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 is on 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.
- ❑ There are many regional and national scholarships available. Researching these and applying to them takes time and organization. Scholarship databases and search engines can be helpful; use Naviance, fastweb.com, collegeincolorado.org, bigfuture.org, denverscholarship.org/students/scholarships, for example.
- ❑ Check out <https://www.truenorthyouthprogram.org/college-corner-1> for more scholarship lists.

### 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 and Career Planning Websites:

- <https://www.collegeboard.org/>
- <http://scholarprep.org/>
- Free digital college & job advisor on Get Schooled
- Virtual tours of colleges and college planning through College Board's Big Future.
- Applying to and paying for college on Raise Me.

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*True North is at Nucla High School every Thursday to assist with scholarship applications, essays, and any aspect of the college going process. True North staff are also available by appointment.*

### **Vivian Russell**

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*Adapted from the Parent Checklist at <https://dccc.org/parents/parent-checklist> and the checklist at <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-started/for-parents>*