NOTE: EDIT FOR YOUR DISTRICT CONTEXT BEFORE DISTRIBUTION



8th to 9th Grade Transition

and Beyond

Family Toolkit

**Success in 9th Grade is a predictor of graduation!**

***This handbook is a tool for families to help you support a successful 9th grade year with your child and to help them stay on track to graduation.***

Inside you will learn: page #

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* About important events at your child’s school 3
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school events and communicate with staff 4

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Photo by Suzie Fitzhugh

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**Find Out About the Kinds of Supports your School Provides**

**Who to Contact at Your Child’s School**

*Ask your child’s school for a Contact sheet of important Resources in the school that will support your child’s success. These are resources that parents and guardians can contact when you have questions or concerns.*

* Counselor
* Academic Intervention Specialist
* Assistant Principal
* Teachers
* After School Tutoring
* Teen Health Center
* Mentors

**Find out about Important Events at Your Child’s School**

**Back to School/Curriculum Night:** Every year there are “Back to School” Nights, generally in September and October.

Be sure to go to the Back to School/Curriculum Night at your child’s school!

**Reasons to Attend Back to School/Curriculum Night at Your Child’s School:**

* In most schools you will be able to follow your child’s class schedule and get to experience their learning environment firsthand.
* Get to know your child’s teachers and other important contacts at the school.
  + Learn the best ways to communicate with each teacher and you may be able to let them know the best way to communicate with you:
    - Such as emails, phone calls, etc.
    - What time of day is the best time to reach each teacher
  + Learn about the curriculum and classroom expectations in each of your child’s classes.
  + Let them know critical information that will benefit your child’s learning throughout the year.
* Network with other parents/guardians. You will be able to meet the parents of your child’s peers and participate in a group question and answer period. Sometime parents learn the most from the questions asked by others.
* Most importantly, the fact that you are attending this event shows your child that you are interested in their experiences as a student and what they are learning.

**Ask for an interpreter, if needed, to help you navigate the Back to School/Curriculum Night event and to help you understand all of the information.**

**Your child’s school will have other important events for you to attend to help you learn about the resources available at the school and how you can support your high school student.**

**(USE THIS PAGE IF APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR DISTRICT]**

**Requesting an interpreter:**

The [ADD NAME OF DISTRICT DEPARTMENT] Programs provides translation and interpretation to all families in [DISTRICT NAME] in the following languages: [list languages available].  
  
Other languages are available by request with the Bilingual Family Coordinator.   
Please call: [add phone number] or email: [add email address]   
  
ASL interpretation is available with the 504 Coordinator.   
Please email: [ADD EMAIL]

Contact your child’s teacher, counselor, principal, or case manager (for students with IEPs) to let them know if you will need or wish to request an interpreter.

**High School Graduation Requirements Checklist**

**(Edit for your particular district)**

Students in the Class of [DATE] and beyond must earn xx credits to graduate. [ADD SOMETHING LIKE THE FOLLOWING TO INDICATE HOW A STUDENT STAYS ON TRACK TO EARN THE NECESSARY CREDITS] A student who takes 6 classes each semester can earn 3.0 credits per semester, to total 6 credits per year. Therefore, if a student takes a full schedule of six classes every year and passes all classes all four years, they would graduate with 24 credits. *(Please see Explanation of Terms on the last page of this document.)*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Courses** | **Credits** | | | | | **Completed** | **For 4-year college** | **Additional HS Requirements** | **Completed** |
| Fine Arts | .50 | Fine Arts-**2 credits**. 1 can be personal pathway. | | | |  | For minimum 4-year college admissions standards go to:  [Add appropriate state website]  Some colleges have additional requirements. |  | |
| Fine Arts | .50 |  | High School Beyond Plan |  |
| Fine Arts | .50 |  | Service Learning-60 hours Hours Completed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |  |
| Fine Arts | .50 |  |
| Language Arts 9A | .50 | Language Arts - **4 credits**. | | | |  | Students are required to pass state determined exams or approved exam alternatives in Language Arts and Math. Passing the Science assessment is required starting with the class of 2019-20. |  |
| Language Arts 9B | .50 |  |
| Language Arts 10A | .50 |  |
| Language Arts 10B | .50 |  |
| Language Arts 11A | .50 |  |
| Language Arts 11B | .50 |  |
| Language Arts 12A | .50 |  |
| Language Arts 12B | .50 |  |
| Algebra1A or Integr Math | .50 | Mathematics  -**3 credits** | | | |  | 3 math credits plus senior year quantitative math | \*\*\* Students should take Algebra I or Integrated Math 1, and Geometry or Integrated Math 2, Algebra 2 or earn credits in OSPI approved equivalent career and technical education (CTE) courses | |
| Algebra 1B or Integr Math | .50 |  |
| Geom. 1Aor Integr Math2 | .50 |  |
| Geom. 1Bor Integr Math2 | .50 |  |
| Algeb 2Aor CTE opt \*\*\* | .50 |  |
| Algeb 2Bor CTE opt \*\*\* | .50 |  |
| Science with a lab | .50 | Science – **3 credits.** | | | |  |  | \* Students should complete Phys A/Chem A and Biology A and B. At least 2 of the 3 science credits shall be in a laboratory science, the third credit may be chosen based on the students’ interest and may include a CTE science-equivalent course. | |
| Science with a lab | .50 |  |
| Science with a lab | .50 |  |
| Science with a lab | .50 |  |
| Science or CTE option\* | .50 |  |
| Science or CTE option\* | .50 |  |
| Physical Education (PE) | .50 | Health and PE – **2 credits** | | | |  |  | PE Competency Test—happens in class. If student’s PE is waived, student must still pass test. |  |
| Physical Education | .50 |  |
| Physical Education | .50 |  |
| Health | .50 |  |
| Career & Tech Ed (CTE) | .50 | CTE – **1 credit** | | | |  |  | See official District course catalogue for approved courses | |
| Career & Tech Ed (CTE) | .50 |  |
| State History \*\*\*\* | .50 | (SPS) Social Studies – **3 credits.** | | | |  |  |  |  |
| World History 1 | .50 |  |
| World History 2 | .50 |  |
| World History 3 | .50 |  |
| US History 11A | .50 |  |
| US History 11B | .50 |  |
| American Govt | .50 |  |
| WL or Personal Path\*\* | .50 | WL or Personal Pathways-**2 credits** | | | |  | 2-3 years of one world language | \*\*Personal Pathway may include World Language (WL), Career & Technical Ed (CTE), Art, etc. –courses related to career goals | |
| WL or Personal Path\*\* | .50 |  |
| WL or Personal Path\*\* | .50 |  |
| WL or Personal Path\*\* | .50 |  |
| Electives as needed  (4 credits) | .50 ea |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |
|  |  |  |  |
| TOTAL Requirements |  | 24 Credits | | | |  | Some 4-year colleges will require a Grade Point Average (GPA) of at least a 2.0, (a “C” average). | | |





**Family Engagement is Key**

Once your student reaches high school, they may try to talk you out of being involved. Don’t believe it. Your student needs you now as much as they ever did!

Make sure you:

* Get a copy of your student’s progress report (every five weeks) and report cards (every nine weeks) to keep track of your student’s progress toward graduation.
* Attend school open house, meetings and conferences.
* Set aside time to ask your student about their homework.
* Know who to call at the school if your student needs help.

**Fact**

*A recent survey of high school students in an urban district found that more than 70% rely on their families more than anyone else for advice on college and career planning.*

**9th Grade is the most important year in high school**

The top priority is for your son or daughter to graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in their career goals. Preparation for college must begin in middle school or even earlier. To graduate from high school a student must be on track in 9th grade by paying attention to these four areas:

**1. Attendance Matters**

If students are not in class, they are not learning. Research shows that students missing more than five days a semester are much less likely to pass the class and earn credits. These students are also much more likely to drop out of school.

**How parents can help**

* Talk to your student about the importance of being in school every day.
* Help your student get out the door on time each morning.
* Set bedtime and homework schedule for your student.
* Set screen time limits for your student.

**2. Credits Count**

Ninth-graders must earn at least six (6) credits to be on track for graduation (24 credits required). [EDIT FOR YOUR DISTRICT] Students who do this are more likely to graduate on time than those who do not.

**How parents can help**

* Make sure your student is taking courses required for graduation
* Make sure he/she is passing all 9th grade courses.
* Encourage your student to ask their teachers for help when they need it.
* Make sure you know the grading policies for each of your student’s teachers.
* Sign up for district’s online parent portal tool to help parents monitor student daily attendance and grades.
* Get to know your student’s teachers and counselors. Encourage them to let you know if there is a challenge or problem that you can work together to solve.

**3. Passing 9th Grade Courses Matters**

Students can pass their courses and earn credits with a grade of 60 percent or above - but to be on track for college, your student should strive to earn the best grades possible. Students who earn low grades may not be prepared for the state exams (required for graduation) or qualify for college entrance requirements.

Earning all their credits the first-time students take a class will ensure that they have time in their schedule in 11th and 12th grade to take advanced classes which will help them be more prepared to apply for a 4-year college. But if needed, students may recover failed credits. Some schools offer opportunities for credit retrieval before/after school, with on-line credit retrieval, or during the summer. Check with your child’s school for more information if your child needs credit recovery.

**How parents can help**

* Make sure your student is doing homework every night.
* Set goals with your student and ask them about their progress.
* Encourage your student to ask their teachers for help when they need it.
* Make sure you know the grading policies for each of your student’s teachers.
* Ask your school to see a copy of your student’s *High School and Beyond Plan [EDIT TO MATCH DISTRICT TERMINOLOGY]*.
* Encourage your student to use their electives to explore their interests and take advanced classes.

**4. High School Proficiency Exams are Required**

In order to graduate from any school in this state, your student must pass exams in reading, writing, math and science. {EDIT AS NEEDED, DEPENDING ON THE STATE}

**How parents can help**

* Understand the state exam requirements for your student’s graduating class.
* Make sure that your student understands that the state exams are required for graduation, not optional.
* Make sure your student is ready on test day with enough sleep and a good breakfast.
* Make sure you review your students test results when they arrive. If your student does not meet standard on any section contact your school counselor.

**Fact**

*College graduates earn an average of $12,900 more a year than students who dropped out of school*

**Understand graduation requirements for your student.** They can be found at the District website at ADD WEBSITE AND NAVIGATION DIRECTIONS]. Or ask your student’s counselor for a copy of the Graduation Bulletin.

**Fact**

*People who complete college will be much less likely to be unemployed in their lifetime.*

**PARENT PORTAL [ADD DISTRICT SPECIFIC INFORMATION AS NEEDED]**

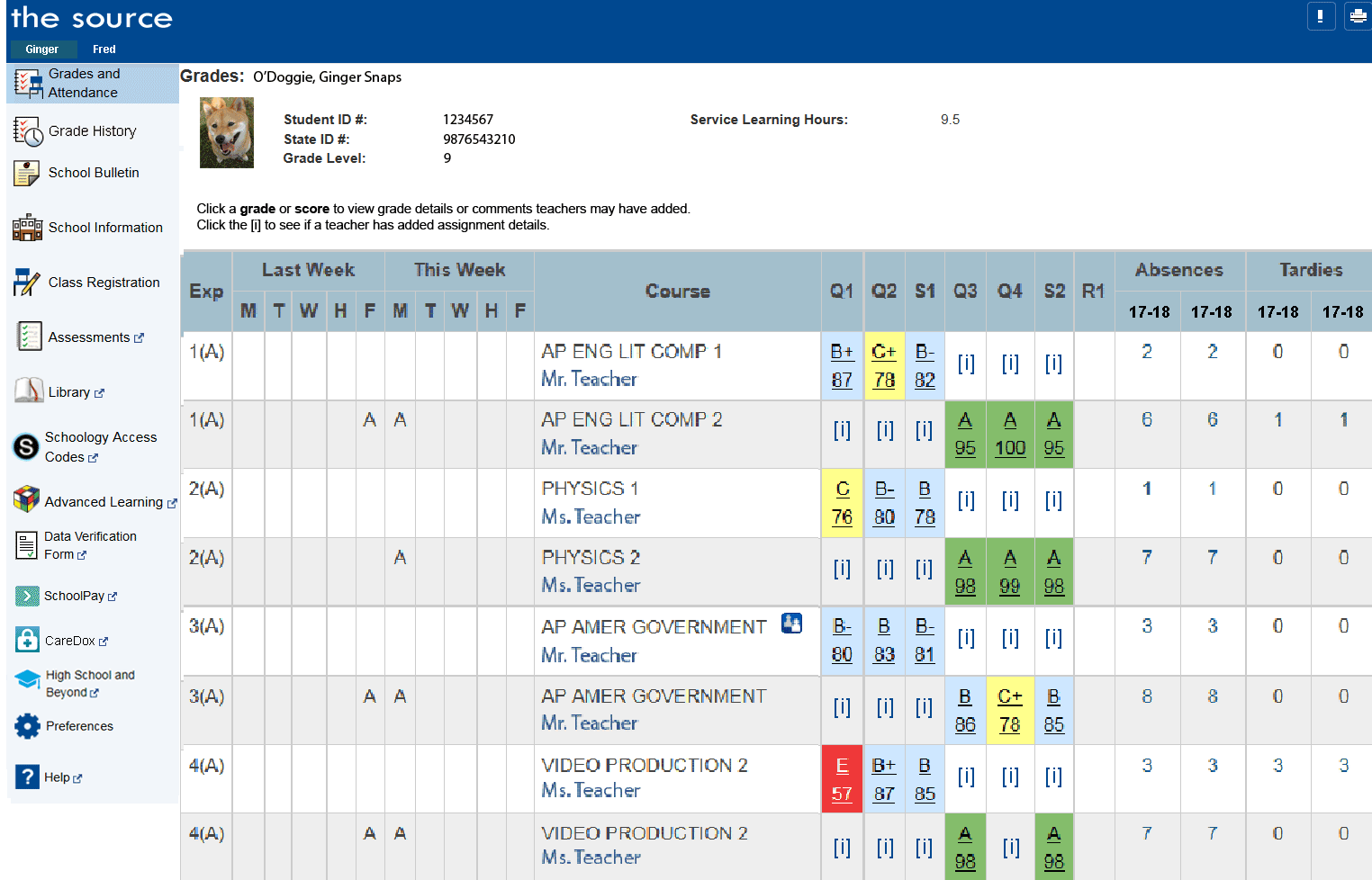
The [name of parent portal] is a web resource for you and your child to monitor their attendance and progress in their courses, and to track missing assignments. Students can have their own [name of parent portal] accounts. Parents/guardians can have a separate [name of parent portal] account in order to track and support your children’s progress in school. Parents/Guardians can have one account which will give you access to each of your children’s information. The [name of parent portal] allows you to:

* **See your child’s class schedule**
* **See and monitor grades**

**Grades Attendance**

* **View attendance records**
* **Track missing assignments**
* **Email teachers**
* **Access your child’s scores on standardized assessments**
* In some cases, **view upcoming assignments**
* And more…

**ADD SCREENSHOT OF DISTRICT’s PORTAL**



Click here to view **your child’s scores on standardized assessments (tests)**

Click here to view **missing assignments.**

**PARENT PORTAL Account Set up**Share via Twitter Share via Twitter Opens a New Window. Print this Page **[EDIT TO REFLECT DISTRICT SPECIFIC DETAILS]**

1. **Before you setup a [name of parent portal] account:**
2. For each of your children that is enrolled in the district, you must be on record as the **parent or guardian** of that student.
3. Your **email address** must be on record for each student. Please make sure you have provided the same email address for each student in your family.

Check with your child’s school to make sure you are on record as the parent or guardian and to make sure that you have the same email address on record for each of your children. Alternatively, if you have children in more than one school, it is advisable to update this information by calling Enrollment Services at [add phone number] to update the information for all of your children, making sure you have listed the same email address for each of them.

1. **To setup a [name of parent portal] account:**
2. Please visit [add website] and click the **Set up** button.
3. Type the email address on record at each student's school, then click **Enter**.
4. Check your email for a message from [add email address]
5. If you don’t receive this email:
   1. Check your Spam or Trash folders.
   2. Contact the school(s) or Enrollment Services at [add phone number] to provide your email address.
6. Open the email and click the link.
7. Enter your **Username** (the **email address** on record at the school)   
   and create a **Password**.
   1. Your password must be 5 or more characters long.
   2. Please do not use an apostrophe ' in your password.
8. Click **Enter** to begin exploring the parent portal!

For assistance, please contact [add email address]

OR you can contact the main office at your school.

**In addition to or if you do not have a computer at home, you can access your portal account using a computer at:**

* A public library
* Your child’s school
* A community organization near you

**Families often ask: “How often should I check the parent portal?”**

Answer: Most teachers update the portal approximately every two weeks, but this is not required. You are welcome to check as often as you feel necessary, but you may see most accurate data if you check the portal every two weeks. If you wish to monitor attendance closely, you can check the Portal more frequently. You can email your child’s teachers if you are not sure the information in the Portal is current.

**[ADD IF APPROPRIATE FOR DISTRICT] Schoology** Some teachers may use **Schoology** to post assignments, messages, events, and calendar items. You can get access to Schoology through your Portal account.



**How Parents Can Support Homework Completion in High School**

Research shows that the benefits of homework are even more evident at the high school level than at the elementary or middle school level. There is little question that parental involvement in homework has a strong positive effect. While parents may be tempted to throw up their hands when their teens resist homework or lack the skills to do it, school success may depend on parents’ willingness to help overcome obstacles to homework completion.

**WHAT PARENTS CAN DO**

Parents can help teens succeed with homework by providing clear messages about the importance of homework and specific support strategies. There are three key messages about homework that parents need to give their teens:

***Homework is an important part of school.*** Expect teens to complete homework and hand it in when it is due. Holding teens accountable for homework builds responsibility and time management skills.

***Parental or other support will be provided as needed.*** Some teens are genuinely overwhelmed by homework, either because they find it too difficult or because they don’t know how to work on their own. However, teens are less likely to become discouraged or frustrated when parents offer encouragement and assure them that help is available when they get stuck. You can help your child figure out which areas of their homework they are not understanding or having trouble with. If your teen needs more help with homework than you can provide, suggest that they or you can contact the teacher of the subject they are struggling with. Or you may contact the counselor to find out the best way to get additional help. Your child can practice asking questions with you to prepare them for a conversation with the teacher. Parents are encouraged to contact teachers directly if student initiatives are not working. Even the most successful students and smartest parents can sometimes benefit from the outside help of a homework center at the school or a tutor.

***Parents will not do homework for their teens***. This message lets teens know that the parent role is to encourage and to help them get unstuck, not to do the work for them.

Adapted from *Homework: A guide for Parents*

By PEG DAWSON, EDD, NCSP, Seacoast Mental Health Center, Portsmouth, NH

National Association of School Psychologists



**Strategies for Supporting Homework**

Beyond these messages, there are important ways parents can help teens with homework:

**Check in with your teens every day.** Studies show that teens who have parental assistance in completing homework spend more time on homework. Parents can help motivate their teens and give them strategies for sustaining attention and combating the negative emotions often associated with homework. While some teens, particularly as they get older, resist help or supervision from parents, minimally parents can ask them about homework and plans for completing it. ‘‘What do you have to do and when are you going to do it?’’ should be a daily mantra for parents as they help their teens plan for homework.

**Establish clear homework routines**. Tasks are easiest to accomplish when they are tied to specific routines. By establishing daily routines for homework completion, parents will not only make homework go more smoothly, but they will also foster a sense of order that teens can apply to later life, including college and work. The steps to establishing homework routines include:

* Help your child create a productive learning space. Not all students learn and study the same way. Generally, a student is more motivated and able to concentrate in a study place free of distractions and interruptions, with good lighting and a comfortable chair.
* Make sure teens have all the materials needed to complete homework assignments (e.g., pencils, erasers, paper, dictionary, calculator).
* Decide on the best time to do homework (e.g., right after school, just before or after dinner).
* Make plans for completing homework (i.e., list all the tasks to be accomplished, identify when teens will begin each task, and have your teen estimate how long it will take to complete each task).
* Help teens establish and maintain organizational systems. Help your teens keep workspaces neat and set up systems to keep track of homework assignments.

Adapted from *Homework: A guide for Parents*

By PEG DAWSON, EDD, NCSP, Seacoast Mental Health Center, Portsmouth, NH

National Association of School Psychologists

**Most Frequently Asked Questions of School counselors**



What can I do to help my child to be successful in high school?

Answer: Stay involved! High school students are moving towards independence. However, they still require parent involvement and supervision. This is not the time to let go!

Stay involved at home and school. Research shows that adult involvement often dips significantly as students move from middle school to high school. Remember that no one has more influence than you in setting the tone for the importance of school in your student’s life. Increase time for conversation at home. Discuss classroom assignments, activities, and homework. Ask your child how he or she is doing and/or what they are learning in class and how you can help.

Will counselors assist my child in college planning and applications?

Answer: this is an important and rewarding part of our job. We are able to be most helpful to you and your child if we meet and develop a working relationship early in high school.

My child is having trouble with a particular class/teacher. Can we have the class changed?

Answer: Direct contact with the teacher can resolve most issues. This is the place to start! Email can be an efficient method for contact, but sometimes messages for teachers may be left in the Main Office or on voice mail. Be sure to include a daytime phone number. If your child continues to have difficulty, let a counselor know.

If my child is sick, how can I get missing work?

Answer: You may send an email or call your child’s teachers directly to access missed assignments. You may access the Source and Schoology Pages to check for missed work. Also, you can encourage your student to contact a fellow student for the homework assignment.

If my student does not pass one of his/her classes, will summer school or credit retrieval be needed?

Answer: It depends on the course. It is best to talk to your child’s counselor.

If you are concerned about your child or if they seem changed and you don’t know why -- contact your family doctor for a possible referral. You can also contact the Teen Health Center, the school nurse, or your student’s school counselor.

If you have a general concern but do not know whom to call, please call your child’s school counselor.

Adapted froman urban high school’s  *“Welcome to 9th Grade Parent Orientation” Packet*



**Naviance: An Online College and Career Planning Tool**

**(Include this page if Naviance is available)**

Naviance is available to all 8th through 12th grade students and their families. With Naviance, students can explore colleges and career paths, analyze skills and talents with career and personality assessments and help stay on track to reach academic goals. Naviance fosters post-high school planning communication and collaboration for students, counselors and families.

**Student Benefits**

Naviance helps students plan for life after high school by giving them the opportunity to:

* Explore college possibilities and career fields
* Create a 4-year course plan and stay on track for high school graduation
* Understand financial options for college including scholarship search
* Identify best-fit colleges, college majors and careers fields
* Develop resumes and portfolios for job and college applications including their transcript and letters of recommendation from teachers

**Family Benefits**

Naviance helps families plan for life after their student's graduation by giving them the opportunity to:

* Research career and college possibilities with your student
* Help your student take ownership of college and career planning process
* Help your student examine their strengths, interests and goals
* Explore financial options for college including scholarship search and financial aid information
* Stay up-to-date on time sensitive dates

**How Students Log into Naviance**

ADD DETAILS



**Supporting 9th Grade students who receive**

**Special Education Services**

Studies show that the incidence of chronic absenteeism and course failures is greater among students with special needs than it is in the general population of 9th graders.

It is important to look at and address the cause of absences. It is found that chronic absenteeism (missing more than 10% of the school days) does lead to course failure. What are the causes of absenteeism among students?

* Are absences related to the child’s disability?
* Are there chronic health conditions that need to be documented and addressed in the IEP?
* Is transportation an issue?
* Absences related to a student’s disability such as anxiety or depression that lead to school refusal should trigger a quick response.

As much as possible, involve students in developing solutions and strategies to improve attendance, including how to improve the climate at the school so that the student wants to be there.

Parents/Guardians can request an IEP meeting (for those with Individual Education Programs) or another school team meeting to discuss the best ways to address attendance and course passing issues. You may ask your child’s counselor or IEP case manager to set up the meeting. Be sure to ask in advance for an interpreter if needed to help you understand the information and communication at the meeting.

**Preparing Students with Disabilities for Postsecondary Education**

Here is a link to the [ADD NAME OF STATE’s Resource Guide for Preparing students with Disabilities for Postsecondary Education].

ADD LINK

This resource guide is designed to assist families and those who work with high school students with disabilities who plan to continue their education in postsecondary institutions, including vocational and career schools, two- and four- year colleges, and universities. Because postsecondary institutions differ significantly from high school, it is imperative that students with disabilities know their rights and responsibilities and self-advocate in order to be successful.

State Testing Requirements for Graduation

ADD STATE REQUIREMENTS

Contact the school’s counselor or academic intervention specialist to find out which options may be offered at your student’s high school.

**Explanation of Terms**

**ACT and SAT College Entrance Exams**

Many colleges require scores from the ACT or SAT exams as a part of the admissions process.

They are entrance exams used by most colleges and universities to make admissions decisions. The purpose of the ACT and SAT exams is to measure a high school student's readiness for college and provide colleges with one common data point that can be used to compare all applicants. Most high school students take the ACT, the SAT, or both during the spring of their junior year or fall of their senior year. It's important to leave time to re-take the test if you need to raise your score before you apply to college.

**Credit**

**”What is a Credit?” Credits** are one of the primary methods used to determine and document that students have met academic requirements, generally at the high school level. Credits are awarded upon completing and passing a course or required school program. States require students to accumulate credits to earn a diploma.

**Naviance**

Naviance is a web resource that allows students to explore colleges and career paths, analyze skills and talents with career and personality assessments and help stay on track to reach academic goals.

**SAT College Entrance Exam**

*(See ACT and SAT College Entrance Exams above)*

**Service Learning**

Service Learning is a teaching and learning strategy which connects learning (classroom and community) to real world issues and meeting community needs. [NAME OF DISTRICT] requires students to complete 60 hours of service learning before graduation. Students often volunteer their service for something they believe in and then reflect on their experience.

**The [NAME OF PARENT PORTAL]**

The [name of parent portal] is a web resource that allows families and their students to: see the student’s class schedule, monitor grades, view attendance records, track missing assignments, email teachers, and in some cases, view upcoming assignments. ADD IF APPROPRIATE: [NAME OF DISTRICT] has an APP that can make it easy for families and students to access this information on their phones.

**ADD IF APPROPRIATE FOR DISTRICT**

**Schoology**

Some teachers may use Schoology to post assignments, messages, events, and calendar items. You can get access to Schoology through your parent portal account.

For all students, taking courses in World Languages (like Spanish, French, etc.) for at least two years is recommended for students planning on attending a 4-year college or university for admissions purposes.

