

Beyond the Basics

In high school your child may consider taking one year of fine arts classes and should continue to build on computer skills. In addition, you and your child might consider the following:

- **Electives.** Your child should choose electives that follow his or her interests. Electives can provide an overlap of knowledge to enhance your child's academic education. Make sure your child is taking classes to meet the entrance requirements for college, then add electives that will diversify your child's academic experience. You can help your child use his or her high school education to prepare for life after high school by working with the school's guidance counselor to map out a challenging core curriculum and an enriching selection of electives that will maintain his or her interest.
- **Advanced Placement (AP).** Some high schools offer college-level advanced placement classes. These classes allow your child to get a head start on the type of coursework he or she will face in college, develop the study habits necessary to tackle rigorous coursework, and demonstrate his or her maturity and readiness for college. In addition, your child may get college level credit for passing the advanced placement exams.
- **International Baccalaureate (IB).** The IB program offers a pre-college course of study that leads to examinations. It is designed for highly motivated high school students. College credit may be awarded for successful completion of IB examinations.

Where Can My Child Get Help with Class Planning?

Your child's school counselor will have many answers to your questions about classes to take in middle and high school to help your child meet his or her goals for the future. If the counselor does not have all the answers, he or she will be able to direct your child to someone in the school who does have the answers.

Here are some questions you might ask the school counselor:

- What basic academic courses do you recommend for students who want to go to college?
- What elective courses do you recommend for college-bound students?
- Can students who are considering college get special help or tutoring?
- What activities can my child do at home and over the summer to strengthen his or her preparation for post-high school training or college?
- What do different colleges require in terms of high school grades and SAT or ACT scores?

For more information:

U.S. Department of Education at:
<http://www.ed.gov/>

College is Possible at:
<http://www.collegeispossible.org>

College Board at:
<http://www.collegeboard.com>

Mapping Your Future at:
<http://www.mapping-your-future.org>

U.S. Department of Education, Condition of Education, NCES. (2002) at: <http://nces.ed.gov/>



America's Career Resource Network

What Classes should my child take in Middle and High School?



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Solid Academic Foundation is the Key to Your Child's Future

When your child enters middle school, he or she may or may not be thinking about what to do after high school. When your child starts middle school, you should help your child choose classes that will prepare him or her for any post-high school option available. Even if your child does not end up going to college, the skills he or she will learn in high school by taking courses that prepare him or her for college will also act as preparation for the world of work. Everyone in every kind of work needs to be able to write and speak clearly, listen carefully, understand what is written and spoken, and use math effectively.

In elementary school your child learned basic reading, writing, and math skills. Your child will build on those basic skills in middle and high school. In order to take and be successful in high school classes, your child will need to take academically challenging classes in middle school, and do well in them to acquire the knowledge to take high school courses.

The courses your child takes starting as early as 8th grade can have a large effect on his or her choices after high school graduation. The decisions made about which classes to take can affect how soon your child will go to college, the type of college your child will attend, or even if he or she goes to college at all.

As a parent, your support will be crucial through this time to help your child make decisions that will lead to the most suitable college and career path.



What Middle School Classes Will Prepare My Child for High School?

Most middle schools require their students to take certain subjects. However, as a parent, you can encourage your child to select academically challenging classes, and to do well in his or her middle school classes. Some examples of middle school classes that your child will most likely take, and that will prepare him or her for high school include:

- **English, science, history or geography.** Together with math, these make up the basic academic classes a student will take every year.
- **Foreign language.** Since many colleges require their students to have taken at least two years of a foreign language, your child's middle school may require these classes, or he or she may be interested in learning a second language.
- **Algebra I and Geometry** (generally offered in the eight and ninth grades). Algebra and geometry form the foundation for the high school math and science courses your child may want to take. These math classes can also give your child the skills he or she needs to succeed in high school, college and future career.
- **Computer classes.** Basic computer skills are now required in most education classes. More and more jobs require at least a basic knowledge of computers. Make sure your child takes advantage of the opportunities that his or her middle school offers to learn to use computers, or learn new skills.
- **The Arts.** Most middle schools will offer classes in art, music, theatre, etc. Taking these classes, if offered, can be a valuable experience to your child, and may help him or her explore outside interests. Courses in the arts will most likely broaden your child's understanding and appreciation of the world. It is also well known and widely recognized that the arts contribute significantly to intellectual development.



How can I Work with the School to Help my Child Succeed?

The high school courses required for entrance to different colleges and postsecondary training institutions vary from school to school. In general, however, this is what students need to complete in high school to meet the minimum college entrance requirements:

- **Four years of English.** Your child should take an English class every year. These might include writing, composition, speech, and literature classes.
- **Three or four years of math.** As mentioned for middle school classes, algebra and geometry should be taken early so your child can then focus on higher level math classes that show colleges he or she is ready for advanced work. Additional math classes might include algebra II, trigonometry, or calculus.
- **Two to three years of science.** Science teaches students to think analytically and apply theories to reality. Laboratory classes let students test what they have learned through hands-on work. Recommended science classes include one year of biology, one year of chemistry or physics, and one year of earth/space science, advanced biology, advanced chemistry, or physics.
- **Two to three years of social studies.** Social studies help your child understand local and world events by studying the culture and history that has shaped them. Recommended classes include one year of U.S. History, and classes in world history, geography, and economics.
- **Two or more years of one foreign language.** Solid foreign language study shows colleges your child is willing to stretch beyond the basics. Many colleges require two years of foreign language study, and some prefer more.