Grade Level 11

Overview

Approaching graduation, students face the new and unfamiliar process of applying to programs and colleges. They can easily be overwhelmed with the volume of information they receive and have to analyze: due dates, deadlines, and forms vary from place to place making the process more difficult to follow.

In this lesson, students will learn the rudimentary skills necessary to successfully navigate the application and financial aid process.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Describe their progress for high school graduation and describe their postsecondary plans.
- Identify the time-sensitive tasks they must complete for their personal postsecondary plans.

Language Objectives

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Verbally discuss postsecondary plans and initial steps with peers.
- Share steps they have taken to prepare and answer junior/senior calendar questions through written response with a partner or small group.

Standards Alignment

- California Common Core State Standards: College & Career Readiness Anchor Standards:
  - W.4; SL.1, 4, 6
- California Career Technical Education Anchor Standards:
  - 2, 3, 5, 9
- California Standards for Career Ready Practice:
  - 2, 3
- National Career Development Guidelines:
  - CM 1–3
• International Society for Technology in Education Standards:
  o 2, 3
• English Language Development Standards:
  o Part 1: 1, 2, 4, 6, 10
• American School Counselor Association Mindsets & Behaviors:
  o M 4; BSM 10

Materials

1. Student Handouts
   o Junior-Senior Calendar (pp. 7–13)
   o Junior-Senior Calendar Questions (p. 14)
   o College Admission Tips (pp. 15–16)
   o Postsecondary Inquiries (p. 17)

2. Online Resources
   • Due Dates, Deadlines, & Decisions Start-Up Video
     https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PFZ8LDkQ_FU
   • Education and Training, California Career Center
     https://www.calcareercenter.org/Home/Content?categoryID=167
   • College Planning Checklists, California Career Center
     https://www.calcareercenter.org/Home/Content?contentID=379
   • ASVAB Program
     http://www.asvabprogram.com
   • Military Careers
     http://todaysmilitary.com/
   • The PSAT/NMSQT and SAT
     https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/psat-nmsqt-psat-10
   • The ACT
   • CSS Financial Aid PROFILE
   • Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
     https://fafsa.ed.gov/
   • California Student Aid Commission
     http://www.csac.ca.gov/
**Academic Vocabulary**

- **Career Technical Education (CTE):** classes and programs that teach the high demand skills needed to get a job in today's economy; they are designed to prepare students for occupations needed in local communities and the state and to help students achieve their career needs and desires.

- **Certified Grade Point Average (GPA):** is the official transcript you ask your high school to send to colleges and programs to which you are applying. Your school "certifies" your transcripts are official.

- **CSS Financial Aid PROFILE:** the PROFILE is an online application that collects information used by certain colleges and scholarship programs to award institutional aid funds.

- **Early Action:** is a non-binding plan in which an applicant is admitted to college early but does not have to commit until the normal reply date.

- **Early Decision:** is a binding plan in which an applicant is admitted to a college early and must commit to attending at that time regardless of what other college acceptances may come their way.

- **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA):** is the application used by nearly all colleges and universities to determine eligibility for federal, state, and college-sponsored financial aid including grants, educational loans, and work-study programs.

- **Letter of Recommendation:** is a document in which the writer assesses the qualities, characteristics, and capabilities of the person being recommended in terms of that individual's ability to perform.

- **Senioritis:** is a reduction of academic focus or worsening academic performance characteristic of some high-school seniors, especially after acceptance into college.

- **Transcript:** is an official document of evidence issued by a secondary or postsecondary institution listing coursework and grades. Transcripts are a record of the courses completed in high school, the course credit, and each course's final grade. Transcripts also include personal information used for identification purposes and, usually, a grade point average (GPA).

- **Work Experience Education (WEE):** programs combine an on-the-job experience with related classroom instruction designed to maximize the value of on-the-job experiences. WEE programs help students choose a viable career path, prepare for full-time employment suitable for their abilities and interests, and provide the opportunity to learn to work with others in ways that are successful and rewarding.
• **Work Permit**: is a legal document required by the State of California that allows a person under 18 years of age to hold a job.

**Activity**

Students will review the suggested calendar for junior and senior year to prepare for their postsecondary education plans.

**Getting Ready**

- Preview the “Due Dates, Deadlines, & Decisions” start-up video (link in Materials section)
- Become familiar with handouts and online resources in the Materials section
- Review the vocabulary

**Lesson Procedures**

1. Introduce the lesson by showing the “Due Dates, Deadlines, & Decisions” start-up video (link in Materials section) and confirm students understand what to expect. Or you can introduce the lesson without the video by describing the topic and activity.

2. Ask students to work in small groups to discuss: (a) what they plan to do after graduation; and (b) what steps they have taken to prepare. After a few minutes of discussion, ask for a volunteer from each group to summarize their conversation. Make sure students realize that junior and senior year are crucial to prepare for postsecondary education and training. Whether they want to go to a four-year college, community or technical college, get an apprenticeship, join the military, or get a job, they need to prepare now.

3. Distribute the “Junior-Senior Calendar”. Explain to students that this calendar is for all students, regardless of their postsecondary plans.

4. Optional step. If you want to break this lesson into two class sessions, distribute the “Junior-Senior Calendar” and walk through it with students, answering any questions. Then assign the calendar as homework and ask students to write down the step they will take to accomplish each bulleted item on the calendar.

   For example, bullet one is to “Review your transcript to make sure you are on track to graduate on time”. A student response might be “On Monday, I will put in a request for my transcript and make an appointment with my counselor.”

5. Distribute the “Junior-Senior Calendar Questions” and ask students to answer the questions individually and share out in small groups. (This can be a second-day opener.)
6. Distribute the “College Admissions Tips”. Give students a chance to read them then ask, “What are some of the ‘should do’ factors you can do now to positively impact your applications?” Then ask, “What are some of the ‘should not do’ factors you will avoid? What is your strategy for avoiding them?”

7. Have students arrange to meet with their counselor to move forward with their postsecondary plans. To ensure they do, have students write down their appointment date and time on either the “Postsecondary Inquiries” handout or their “Junior-Senior Calendar” homework assignment.

8. Distribute the “Postsecondary Inquiries” handout. Have students complete it individually and base it on their current postsecondary plans.

9. Wrap Up. Remind students that whether they use pen and paper checklists, calendar alerts, and or e-lists, tracking their decisions, deadlines, and due dates helps them get where they want to go.

10. Remind students to put their work products in the career portfolios whether they are using a paper folder or an online filing system.

**Estimated Time**

One class session. It can be two sessions depending on whether or not you assign homework.

**Evaluation**

- Review student responses to the “Junior-Senior Calendar Questions” and completion of the “Postsecondary Inquiries” worksheet. Ensure counselor appointment information is on the worksheet.

**Additional Resources**

- [Find A College In Your Area](http://www.cacareerzone.org/colleges/location), California CareerZone
- [College Planning Checklists](https://www.calcareercenter.org/Home/Content?contentID=379), California Career Center

**Adaptations**

- After this lesson, you may wish to schedule time for counselors to come to class and discuss students’ postsecondary plans and help them develop schedules for application submission.
- Schedule a College Application Night for students and their families to help them understand the college application process.
• Schedule a Financial Aid family night to provide information about the California Student Aid Commission, the FAFSA, CSS PROFILE, scholarships and grants to engage parents/guardians in the financial aid process.

• Use the California CareerZone feature, Find a College in Your Area (link in Materials section) so students can learn about nearby college options.

• Use the California Career Center College Planning Checklists (link in Materials section) to supplement the Junior-Senior Calendar.

Lesson adapted from:

Junior-Senior Calendar: Junior Year

How Many Steps Have You Completed?

Use Junior and Senior checklists to track your application process. Download the College Planning Checklists from the California Career Center. The URL is https://www.calcareercenter.org/Home/Content?contentID=379.

FALL: Whatever career you plan to follow after high school, take college entrance exams now. Along your career path you may find a job you want but it requires more education than you currently possess. So prepare now while everything is fresh in your mind.

- Review your transcript to make sure you are on track to graduate on time.
- Take the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) in October, if you didn't take as a sophomore.
- If your school did not offer the ASVAB Career Exploration Program in the tenth grade, check with you local Military Entrance Processing Station to see if they can offer it to you. The ASVAB offers general career information as well as information about military careers. The URL is http://www.mepcom.army.mil/meps/.

FALL: Research postsecondary educational programs that support your career goal. It is critical you understand the educational needs for your chosen career before you start looking for the right educational program. Why? Because you could complete a program that does not meet industries standards or earn you the correct certificate or license, so you would have invested a great deal of time and money and find yourself needing to invest more. Learn as much as you can about programs that will support your career choice. Examples of information to gather include:

- Program
- Program length (one, two, three, four or 5-years)
- Program Prerequisites*
- If applicable, major(s) that support your career goals
- Cost (to do a cost/benefit analysis)
- Financial aid
- Employment services

*Programs and majors within colleges and universities may have requirements in addition to the basic admission requirements. Contact the program office for information.
Junior Year, p. 2

Educational options to consider include technical schools, vocational programs, apprenticeships, the military, two- or four-year colleges and universities, and national or state service opportunities.

**FALL:** Look for programs offered by your school or district that can help you develop work skills. Get a work permit from your school if you plan to work during high school. Programs that help develop work skills include:

- California Partnership Academies
- Career Technical Education courses
- Work Experience Education

**WINTER/SPRING:** Register for and take entrance examinations

**For four-year colleges:**

- Take the SAT, SAT Subject Tests, and/or ACT in the spring of your junior year.
- Take the AP tests for any AP classes you have completed.
- For exam information go to:
  - PSAT/NMSQT
    https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/psat-nmsqt-psat-10/taking-the-tests
  - SAT
    https://sat.collegeboard.org/home
  - ACT
  - AP tests
    http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/home

**For community colleges:**

- Check with your high school to see if your district has an agreement with the local community college that simplifies the application process.

**For the military:**

- Take the ASVAB in spring of your junior year for practice.
  - ASVAB
    http://www.asvabprogram.com
Junior Year, p. 3

SPRING/SUMMER: Develop a list of options and plan your application strategy.

- Develop a list of 5 to 10 educational options that interest you and support your career goals.
- Visit the organizations that offer the educational options you are interested in pursuing (colleges, businesses, unions or military recruiters).
- Sign up for a tour so they'll know you are interested in their programs!
- Finalize your list of programs. Be sure your list includes Match, Reach, and Safety schools. Request application and information packets from each program.
  - Match schools are schools whose qualifications you have met and may slightly exceed; you are fairly certain you will be admitted.
  - Reach schools are schools where your qualifications fall below the school’s minimum requirements but not so far below that your application wouldn’t be considered.
  - Safety schools are schools whose minimum qualifications you exceed; you would have every reason to believe you will be admitted.
- Register with the NCAA Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse if you plan on competing in Division I or Division II college sports.
- Register for fall entrance exams.
Senior Year

SEPTEMBER: Plan your application strategy

- Meet with your guidance counselor to be sure you are meeting your postsecondary deadlines.

- Application processes vary from institution to institution. Learn the application process for the institutions to which you are applying. Get started on the applications now! Start writing your application essays.

- Update your resume with your senior activities. Your resume will help you complete your applications. Also, you'll need to share it with people who are writing letters of recommendation for you.

- Ask teachers, counselors, coaches, or employers for letters of recommendation. Give them plenty of time. Make sure you give them a copy of your resume plus the recommendation form and a stamped envelope (if needed).

- Be sure to write a thank you letter to each person who writes you a letter of recommendation!

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER: Take required entrance exams

Depending on your plans and the requirements of your chosen program, register and take one or more of the following tests. Talk with your guidance counselor or contact your postsecondary choices if you need more information. Make sure your scores are sent to each of your programs:

- Take the SAT again if you think you can raise your score.

- Take the ACT again if you think you can raise your score.

- Take the ASVAB if you did not do it earlier.

NOVEMBER-JANUARY: Complete your applications

- Complete all required parts of each application, either on the Internet or on paper.

- Submit each application on time. Look at deadlines carefully, especially if you are applying for Early Decision or Early Action. Proofread each application before you send it and print a copy for your files.
Senior Year, p. 2

- Work with your school counselor to get your transcript sent to each program. Make sure you send them before the deadline.

**NOVEMBER-FEBRUARY: Apply for financial aid**

- Complete your FAFSA form as close as possible to January 1.
- Complete a CSS PROFILE form if required by your colleges. Check college deadlines carefully, as the PROFILE may be due before January 1.
- Ensure a certified transcript showing your GPA is sent to the California Student Aid Commission.
- Complete any other scholarship and financial aid forms required by schools/programs you are applying to and submit them before the deadline.
- Be sure to file for merit- and need-based financial aid.

**JANUARY-FEBRUARY:**

**Close the loop on your applications**

- Follow up with your programs to be sure they have received all necessary materials from you. Submitting everything doesn’t mean the program received everything—check with them.
- Have your school counselor send your first semester grades, if required.
- Don’t get senioritis! Colleges and programs will want to see your second semester grades, too.

**Close in on your career goals by checking employment, the military, and/or national service**

- Visit [America’s Job Center of California](http://www.americasjobcenter.ca.gov/)
- Visit a local [recruiting station](http://todaysmilitary.com/contact-a-recruiter) for military service
- Visit [Corporation for National & Community Service](http://www.nationalservice.gov/) for national service options
Senior Year, p. 3

MARCH-APRIL: Make your decision

Educational option

- You will start receiving admissions decisions and financial aid awards. Read everything you receive carefully and discuss it with your family. If a document requires a response from you, respond as quickly as possible.

- Make your decision and mail the enrollment confirmation form to the school you select before the deadline (May 1 for most schools, but may be earlier for Early Decision or Early Action). Be sure to check with the school to find out if you need to include a deposit check with your enrollment confirmation form.

- Notify each school to which you were accepted but will not be attending so that your spot can be freed up for another student on a waiting list.

- If you are on a waiting list, contact the Admissions Office and let them know if you are still interested in the spot. If you are still interested, call Admissions again and give them an update on your spring grades and activities.

Direct-employment option

- Review the career information you've collected thus far, review the applications you've submitted and determine where you want to focus your energies.

- If you filed applications and haven't heard back, contact the employer/institution.

- Be sure to get your letters of recommendation before you leave school. If you need them during the summer and don't have them, you'll be stuck.

- Pay attention and promptly respond to any communications you receive about options you are interested in pursuing, don't lose out because you didn't respond.

- You may start hearing about opportunities that can begin as soon as school ends, or you may have summer to fill. Make plans for both possibilities.
Senior Year, p. 4

MAY-JUNE: Finish the school year in style!

- Thank everyone who helped you with your references and applications.
- Have your counselor send your final transcript to the educational institution you will be attending. It is a good idea to get a copy of your transcripts for your records.
- If you plan on competing in Division I or Division II college sports, have your counselor send your final transcript to the NCAA Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse. Contact the eligibility clearinghouse to verify they received it.
- Make your final financial aid decisions.
- Get ready for summer whether you’ll be working, heading off for a National Service experience, traveling, or starting an internship.
Junior—Senior Calendar Questions

Name________________________________________ Date________________

Make the most of your junior and senior years.

Use the Junior-Senior Calendar and these questions to review actions you should take.

Have you registered or taken any college or program entrance exams? If so, which exams and when did you take them? Do you have your scores?

Have you researched educational options including majors, certifications, employment training programs, and/or military branches? Which option(s) sounds most interesting to you? Why?

Name three people you can ask to write a letter of recommendation for you. How will you ask them? When will you ask them?

Have you researched scholarship and financial aid options? What have you learned? If you haven’t, how will you do this? (Hint: https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search and http://www.fastweb.com/)

What are the application deadlines for your programs? When should you start working on them?

Can you visit any of the postsecondary options you are interested in? If not, can you register on their Web sites to receive information?

Your resume in an important tool. Have you updated your resume?
College Admission Tips
What Can You Do To Increase Your Odds?

Getting the Admissions (or Hiring) Officers to Notice You!

Admissions officers use a comprehensive review process to evaluate your academic accomplishments, as well as your essays and personal statements, leadership experiences, contributions to your community, individual circumstances, and distinctive attributes. Test scores are also evaluated, but admissions officers say test scores are rarely the decisive factor.

Hiring officers have a very similar process which may or may not include test scores.

What You Should Do

Look for ways to distinguish your application from others. These factors have a positive impact on your application:

- **Challenging senior year**: Taking a full academic load through senior year.
- **World languages**: Taking 3 or 4 years of the same foreign language.
- **Math & Science**: Taking Math through pre-calculus or calculus and 4 years of science, including chemistry and physics.
- **Rigorous courses**: While advanced classes such as AP, Honors, and IB are outstanding options for many students, taking a full schedule of “regular” classes can be equally impressive in the application review.
- **Personal attributes**: Perseverance in the face of significant hardship; personal contributions to the community, including multiculturalism, exceptional talent, leadership, passion for a subject, activity or cause.
- **Strong application**: Well-written error-free essays or personal statements.
- **Work experience**: Paid or unpaid.

What You Should *Not* Do

Here are some areas where students hurt themselves on applications:

- **Too little challenge**: Little or no academic coursework beyond the core requirements, even though more challenging options are available.
- **Senioritis**: Students who mistakenly assume that senior year is not important.
• **Too little Math or Science**: Less than 3-4 years of math or missing core requirements for chemistry or physics.

• **A grade slide**: Sporadic attendance or negative grade trends, frequently followed by an across the board drop in curricular rigor.

• **Poor presentation**: Not taking the time to put your best foot forward; missing deadlines; failing to follow up.
Postsecondary Inquiries

How can you find out about the program that is right for you?

Request information! Requesting information does two things: it helps you learn more about their programs and services and it lets them know that you are interested.

Select a minimum of two places from which to request information. These requests can come from the same type of program or different programs and institutes. For example, you may be interested in knowing more about the Marines, a state school, or different vocational programs. Go to the California Career Center Education and Training section and use the links to find the institutions from which you want more information. The page URL is https://www.calcareercenter.org/Home/Content?categoryID=167.

After you have submitted requests for more information, spend a few minutes searching their Web sites and then fill in the information below.

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<th>TEST</th>
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<td>SAT/ACT Tests</td>
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California Career Resource Network, California Department of Education