



Class of 2022

**College & Career
Junior Toolkit**

College & Career Junior Toolkit

Students can take many paths to earning higher education degrees or technical certifications in the career fields they choose. Whether you are considering a university, community or technical college, apprenticeship, or the military, your junior year is the perfect time to begin a conversation about goals, explore options, and plan your next steps. This toolkit highlights the key steps and resources you'll need to make a smooth transition to life after high school. Don't wait until the last minute! Plan your future now.

1. Check Your Transcripts

If you are interested in college, make sure your transcript reflects the requirements listed below. These are called College Academic Distribution Requirements.

ENGLISH	4 Credits	For TPS graduation
MATH	3 Credits*	Including 2 algebra and 1 geometry; many 4-year colleges require 4 credits
SCIENCE	3 Credits	Including 2 lab science); many 4-year colleges require 3-4 credits
SOCIAL STUDIES	3 Credits	For TPS graduation
CAREER & TECHNICAL ED	1 Credit	For TPS graduation
HEALTH & FITNESS	2 Credits	2 credits for TPS graduation (.5 Health + 1.5 PE)
ARTS	2 Credits	Such as choir, band, theater, photo, or drawing
WORLD LANGUAGE or PPR	2 Credits*	Same language; credits may also be in a <i>Personalized Pathway Requirement</i> (i.e. courses leading to a post-high school plan such as Career & Technical Education)
ELECTIVES	4 Credits	Student's choice

*For more selective 4-year colleges, the requirements may be greater. These colleges want to see that you have challenged yourself with college preparatory classes. Make sure you check the admission requirements for schools you are considering and plan your summer and senior year accordingly.

2. Get Back on Track

It's not too late if you're missing something. Meet with your school counselor ASAP to make a plan and fill any gaps in your transcript. This can include retrieving or adding credits, retaking classes, and improving your GPA (grade point average).

3. Pave Your Pathway to Success

Use the Junior Checklist on the last page of this toolkit to find right-fit schools and prepare for a competitive application package.

4. Maximize Your Summer

Do something that makes you stand out from the crowd: work, volunteer, intern, job shadow, attend a camp, or participate in a summer program. Go to TacomaLearns.org for more information.



"Set your future self up right now. Take care of it so you can be the person you want to become!"
— Michael, Lincoln Class of 2021

5. Get Help When You Need It

Your high school's College and Career Guidance Specialists can answer questions, and many schools also have very knowledgeable college support staff. Don't hesitate to seek help. Speaking up will help you stay on track.

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Know Your Options

High school graduates have many pathways to a degree and career. Whichever path you pick, make sure it's the right fit for you. Find more resources at your high school college and career website and [GraduateTacoma.org/TCSN](https://www.graduatetacoma.org/TCSN).

"Think about how you'll find your people, your community. Maybe you know you'll be more successful if you are near family, or maybe you are thrilled by meeting new people. Just make sure you have community."
—Shirley Siloi, Evergreen State College



Four-Year Colleges

Four-year colleges offer four years of study that lead to a bachelor's degree. Students choose a major in a range of areas, such as art, business, psychology, or sciences.

Universities often are larger and offer more majors and degree options—bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees—than colleges. Most universities contain several smaller colleges, such as colleges of liberal arts, engineering, or health sciences. These colleges can prepare you for a variety of careers or for graduate study.

Liberal Arts Colleges offer a broad base of courses in the liberal arts, which include areas such as literature, history, languages, mathematics and life sciences. Most are private and offer four-year programs that lead to a bachelor's degree. Many private liberal arts colleges use one online Common Application ([CommonApp.org](https://www.commonapp.org)) for admission.

Two-Year Colleges

Some two-year colleges now offer four-year bachelor degrees in specific fields. Check with specific colleges to see what degree programs are offered.

Two-year colleges, including community colleges, offer programs that last from three months to two years that lead to a certificate or an associate degree. Students who earn an associate degree can transfer to a four-year university as a junior and often can finish in two years. This is a great way to cut costs or improve grades. To learn more about the variety of programs available, visit [SBCTC.edu](https://www.sbctc.edu).

Military

Military experience teaches life skills and often provides technical education. Military service can also provide scholarships and help pay for future college education. Learn more at [TodaysMilitary.com](https://www.todaysmilitary.com).

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are a mix of technical education and on-the-job training. Offered in multiple sectors such as trades, technology, and engineering, they allow students to earn a wage while learning the skills and knowledge needed for the job.

Employers (such as Boeing), trade unions (such as electricians and roofers), and independent programs offer apprenticeships. Apprenticeship programs lead to certifications, licenses, and/or college degrees. These two- to four- year programs provide the pathway to family-wage jobs.

Learn more at [LNI.wa.gov/TradesLicensing/Apprenticeship](https://lni.wa.gov/TradesLicensing/Apprenticeship).

Career-Technical Schools

There are many career-specific programs with certification options. Depending on the certification, these can be as short as five months or as long as two years.

Some vocational schools are for-profit, so check the job placement rates and make sure that there is a good transition into employment. If not, stay clear.

Career and technical schools offer specialized training in a particular industry or career. Possible programs of study include the culinary arts, firefighting, and dental hygiene. These programs often offer certificates or associate degrees. [RWM.org](https://www.rwm.org) lists schools that offer associate degree programs in Washington and nationwide. If you plan to attend a career or technical school and then transfer, talk to the school you plan to transfer into to ensure your credits are valid.

► When should you fill out the FAFSA or WASFA?

October! Both the FAFSA and WASFA open every year on October 1st. Schools use a first-come-first-serve approach when they write their financial aid award letters. You can edit them at any point, but getting it submitted in October means that you're putting yourself in line for money from the school.

► What is Signing Day?

Held on May 1, **Signing Day** is recognized across the US as a day to celebrate the path each high school senior is taking after high school. Make sure you talk to a guidance specialist or college access program about your next steps, especially if you're having a hard time deciding.

Junior Planning Checklist

Explore

There is no one perfect college, so consider a range of schools that fit your needs.

- Make a list of 5-7 programs or colleges that meet your interests and career goals. Include “reach,” “solid,” and “safety” schools on your list.

REACH – someplace you would like to go, but may not match the recommended grades and test scores

SOLID – a good match with your grades and test scores

SAFETY – you are highly likely to be accepted based upon your grades and test scores

- Keep track of application deadlines, requirements, tests, and procedures. Use a calendar, phone, or set up an account at a college search website such as [CollegeBoard.org](https://collegeboard.org) to track your progress.
- Research and register for summer opportunities, including jobs, internships, and summer study programs that can help you get ahead.

Plan

Use these planning steps this spring and summer to make sure you are prepared for your senior year and have many options open to you.

- Meet with your counselor and review your plans following high school graduation, grades, transcript, test scores, and courses planned for senior year including rigorous classes (AP, IB, Tech Prep, College in the High School, and Running Start), to make sure that you are on track for graduation and college applications.

- Finish your junior year strong with good grades! Your junior grades are the first thing colleges look at and will contribute to your overall GPA and a competitive application package.

- Prepare for standardized college entry exams, SAT or ACT.

Due to COVID, many colleges have made entry exams optional, so check with the colleges you are applying to first. Strong SAT or ACT scores can still help with applications and scholarships, as well as meeting placement requirements.

SAT prep materials and study tips can be found online at [CollegeBoard.org](https://collegeboard.org), [KhanAcademy.org](https://khanacademy.org), [EnhancedPrep.com](https://enhancedprep.com), and at your library or career center.

Some students do better on the ACT. [ActStudent.org](https://actstudent.org) features test prep, registration, and dates. Fee waivers are available; check with your counselor.

Self-Promote

Start developing a competitive application package that proves you are a strong candidate for admission or scholarships. Put your best foot forward with a well-written, clear, and complete profile.

- Create a resume or “brag sheet” that includes awards, extracurricular activities, leadership roles (official and personal), work, and volunteer experiences.
- Draft a personal statement for college and scholarship applications. This essay is about who you are beyond your grades and test scores. It highlights your unique talents, passions, and obstacles you have overcome. Demonstrate your best writing skills and take time to draft and edit. Ask your Career Guidance Specialist for resources and workshops to help.
- Decide who will write your letter of recommendation. Ask them for a letter at least four weeks before a deadline. Many four-year colleges require recommendations from 1-2 teacher(s) and some accept community references. Choose someone who knows you well and will write positively about you as a student. Provide them with a resume or “brag sheet” so they can write the best letter possible.

Visit

See what college life is really like. Pierce County has many two- and four-year options to choose from. Virtual college fairs and campus tours are available. Make sure to sign up and learn about the programs offered. Contact your Career Guidance Specialist for more information.

- Sign up online for college visits this spring and summer break. Go to the “admissions” link on the websites for the colleges on your list and register for a virtual tour.
- Attend a virtual college or career fair in the Puget Sound area. Details about these free events can be found via your career center or at [GraduateTacoma.org/TCSN](https://graduatetacoma.org/TCSN).
- Meet college admissions and outreach representatives. You can set up virtual appointments and interviews with colleges of interest. This is a great way for colleges to get to know you and for you to ask questions. Making this connection can help your college representative advocate for you and your application.

Funding Your Future

The cost of attending college is different for every school and every student. If you apply to several schools, you can compare the types of financial aid you are offered. It is important that you learn about the first steps and many different ways to pay for college listed below.

Talk About It

Take time as a family to discuss your education budget, funding resources, and options so everyone is on the same page. Remember, financial aid is available for families who demonstrate need, so be sure to consider the potential return as well as the cost of the investment you make in higher education. Reach out to a college access support person from your school if you need help talking about this.

Learn About It

Go to individual school websites and see estimated costs for tuition and housing. Many school websites have net price calculators which will help provide an estimate of costs and eligibility for financial aid. Contact the Financial Aid or Admission Office at each school for help with applications and explanations of aid available.

Prepare for It

Complete the FAFSA or WASFA in the month of October if at all possible. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) will ask for information about your family's finances and then calculate how much you and your family are expected to pay for your college expenses. The FAFSA is available at [FAFSA.ed.gov](https://fafsa.ed.gov) and required at most colleges in order to qualify for grants, loans, work study, and most scholarships.

Before filing the FAFSA, each student and parent will need to file separately for a FSA ID at fsaid.ed.gov.

If you don't qualify for federal financial aid, use the Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA), ReadySetGrad.wa.gov/WASFA.

The FAFSA mobile app is available for Android and iPhone users. Download *myStudentAid* for free to be ready for the FAFSA opening on October 1. You will need your FSA ID to apply.

Use FAFSA4caster to see what your student aid might look like at StudentAid.gov/understand-aid/estimate.

Stay Updated

In addition to state and federal financial aid, there are a variety of local scholarship opportunities for Tacoma students. Visit GraduateTacoma.org/TCSN for a list of scholarships and financial resources available.



"The small steps are equally as important as the big ones. Filling out the FAFSA/WASFA is one small step to help you succeed financially in college."
— Ky, Foss Class of 2021

Where can I get more information on scholarships?

GraduateTacoma.org/TCSN



WashBoard.org

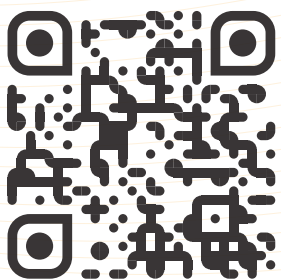


Who can support me with my postsecondary options?

There are community-based organizations that have a wealth of knowledge they can pass on to you. Reach out to them! You can also talk to your Career Guidance Specialist to learn more. If you don't know where to start, make sure to visit: GraduateTacoma.org/TCSN

What actions can I take NOW to set myself up for success?

- 1) Create an FSAID and save your login information in a safe place.
- 2) List your top 5 options for life after high school.
- 3) Check in with your counselor, and learn how you can stay on track.



Visit GraduateTacoma.org/TCSN for web tutorials, information sessions, scholarship opportunities, and more resources as you prepare for life after high school.