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|  | Ninth Grade | Winter Edition  |  |
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|  | NEWSLETTER TEMPLATEHigh School & Beyond Planning — News & Information |  |
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| *Replace with School Contact Info* |
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| **GRADES MATTER**Getting good grades in challenging classes throughout your teen’s high school experience is important in college admissions decisions. Good grades also show that your child understands the material and is ready for the next step, whether the next semester, the next grade level, college, or training after high school.Share these four tips with your teen:* **Get organized.** Use a planner or calendar to track assignments and tests. Keep loose papers in a folder or binder to avoid getting lost.
* **Get help.** Ask your teachers, classmates, parents, and siblings for support if you don't understand something.
* **Sit front and center.** Students who sit in the front and center of the classroom have been shown to achieve higher average test scores.
* **Hang out with friends who work hard in school.** Research shows that good (and bad) grades are contagious, so choose your friends wisely.
 |  |  | **FREE MONEY—IT’S POSSIBLE!**College and career training costs include tuition, fees, books, living expenses, and transportation. However, once grant aid is included, most students pay only about 60 percent of the advertised price of a four-year college. Financial aid includes free money through federal and state grants, scholarships, work-study jobs, and the College Bound program. Most students receive some financial aid to help pay for the cost of their education. Unlike loans, grants and scholarships do not need to be paid back if a student successfully finishes their courses. **How & When To Apply For Financial Aid?**For scholarships, you can help your child start searching now. For federal or state government financial aid, the first stop is the FAFSA or WASFA in October of your child’s senior year of high school. | FAFSA stands for Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Students must have a Social Security Number or permanent resident card to file the FAFSA. Suppose your child does not have a Social Security Number. In that case, your child can file the new Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA) to be eligible for the Washington College Grant. Visit wsac.wa.gov/wasfa for more details. A person should complete the WASFA if they are undocumented or do not qualify for federal financial aid because of their immigration status.The best resource for families and students to get more information is gearup.wa.gov, where you can learn more about our state’s most popular financial aid programs, such as the Washington Grant, the College Bound Program, and the Passport to Careers program for foster youth. If you want to go to college, you live in the right state! Washington is number one nationally for students receiving undergraduate financial aid. |
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| UPCOMING EVENTS*Click here to enter text.* |  |  | Graduation cap with solid fillDID YOU KNOW?Grades and challenging or “rigorous” coursework weigh more heavily on college admissions than standardized test scores. |

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| High School & Beyond Planning Ninth Grade | Winter Edition | gearup.wa.gov  |
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| ATTENDANCE COUNTS |  | When students improve their attendance rates, they improve their academic prospects and graduation chances. What you can do:* Insist on regular, prompt attendance. Encourage your teen to get involved at school with a club or activity.
* Establish and stick to the basic routines (going to bed early, waking up on time, etc.) that will help your teen develop the habit of on-time attendance.
* Talk to them about why going to school every day is critical unless they are sick. If your teen seems reluctant to go to school, find out why and work with the teacher, administrator, or after-school provider to get them excited about attending school.
* Reach out for help if you are experiencing tough times (e.g., transportation, unstable housing, job loss, health problems) that make it challenging to get your child to school. Other parents, your child’s teacher, principal, social worker, school nurse, afterschool providers, or community agencies can help problem-solve or connect you to a needed resource.
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| Students who miss more than ten percent (or just two days every month) of school days in one year are considered chronically absent. Students miss school for various reasons: illness, doctor’s appointments, vacations, or skipping classes because of lack of interest or success. Absences can signify that a student is losing interest in school, struggling with schoolwork, dealing with a bully, or facing other potentially serious difficulties. Regardless of the reason, the effects are real. Once freshmen missed ten percent of school days, their odds of graduating dropped below forty percent. |
| STUDENT CHECKLIST* Start a portfolio of your work and list your awards, honors, paid and volunteer work, and extracurricular activities. Update it throughout high school.
* Discuss next year’s classes with your family and guidance counselor. Make sure you take the challenging courses.
* If a problem comes up, ask for help. If you're having trouble with a class, talk with a teacher or school counselor about what type of tutoring or other assistance is available.
* Create an account and profile at [**thewashboard.org**](http://thewashboard.org/login.aspx)**.**
* Maintain daily routines, such as finishing homework and getting a good night’s sleep.
* Get involved. Explore activities such as sports, school government, or clubs.
* Ask for help from your family, teachers, guidance counselor, or a caring adult if you’re skipping because you do not feel safe, are having class challenges, or for another reason.
 |  |  | MYTHBUSTER**MYTH:** Financial aid is just loans.**REALITY:** There are types of financial aid that students do not have to pay back. These include:**Scholarship money!** Check out thewashboard.org.It is a free online resource. Create a profile & search. It is only for people living in Washington State and is spam-free.**Grants**.These are usually awarded to students whose families may not have the money to pay for college. They can come from the federal, state, or college governments.**Work Study.** Rather than getting the money upfront, it is earned through a job. Work-study job opportunities can be on or off campus. Work-study jobs typically require up to 19 hours per week and sometimes pay a student more than minimum wage. |
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| FAMILY CHECKLIST * Discuss next year’s classes. Learn more about the high school classes that colleges look for.
* Check in regularly about schoolwork. If your child has problems in a class, encourage participation in study skills and tutoring activities.
* Help your teen create an account and profile at [**thewashboard.org.**](http://thewashboard.org/login.aspx)
* Talk about the importance of attending school daily; make that the expectation.
* Help your child maintain daily routines, such as finishing homework and getting a good night’s sleep.
* Talk to teachers if you notice sudden changes in behavior. These could be tied to something going on at school.
* Ask for help from school officials, afterschool programs, other parents, or community agencies if you’re having trouble getting your child to school.
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