

Reach for the Stars: 3 Tips for Helping Your Gifted Child Plan for College

By Jane Morrison

Although gifted children excel in academics, their growth can sometimes be stunted in the classroom. Most of a teacher's attention is spent on struggling students and this leaves little time for them to help [further develop A-students](#). This inattention is also evident when gifted students start getting ready for college. They're typically expected to easily get into their first choice college based on their grades, and therefore schools do not take the necessary steps to prepare each and every student. However, straight A students need just as much attention and college prep as any other student and if you're a parent of a gifted student, you will want to do everything possible to ensure they get into the college of their dreams. So, don't let the schools cheat your student and check out these helpful tips for getting your child ready for the rest of his or her life.

Start planning early

Most schools start prepping high school students for college during their junior year. This is because most students do not have the capability of stressing about college and completing their high school courses. However, your student can most likely juggle the two much earlier than junior year. It is critical that you sit down with your child and [start strategic planning for college](#) during the start of child's ninth grade year. You will want to get a feel of what they want to major in, what career paths they're thinking about, and what colleges they want to apply to. From here, you can start to shape your student's high school career and determine what classes or after-school activities will help them get the results they want.

Take the PSATs

Once again, most schools give children the option of taking the [PSATs during their junior year](#). However, this is entirely too late. Parents are also rarely informed about the tests since they don't affect quotas, federal aid, or state regulations. Gifted students should be taking this test in their sophomore year. This is especially significant because if a student scores a high enough score, he or she can be qualified as a National Merit Finalist. These finalists are eligible for extra financial scholarships and some colleges even offer free room and board for National Merit Finalists.

Don't forget about the ACTs

Although the ACT was developed in 1959, many parents forget about the extra option for students. All schools allow students to take either the SAT or the ACT, and it can

be strategically smarter for your student to take the ACT or both. The ACT has a science section, which may be better for students that are especially gifted in that subject. It is also great for fast readers and is a generally straight-forward test. However, the SAT tends to be better for gifted math students and those that love test-taking strategies. Have your student take a couple of [free online ACT practice tests](#) to see if he or she likes them. Then, decide which one you think is better suited for them. It also doesn't hurt to take both. You can pick and choose what scores you send to what college.

Your student most likely excels in school. However, you should be strategically planning and use their free time to prepare them for the rest of their life. With great preparation, you can ensure your child gets into the college of their dreams.

janesandwood.writer@gmail.com

Jane Morrison is a parent, educator, former tutor, and a team leader for the compilation of a series of ACT practice papers.