

# Parent Advocacy Handbook

## Guide for Fairfax County Public Schools

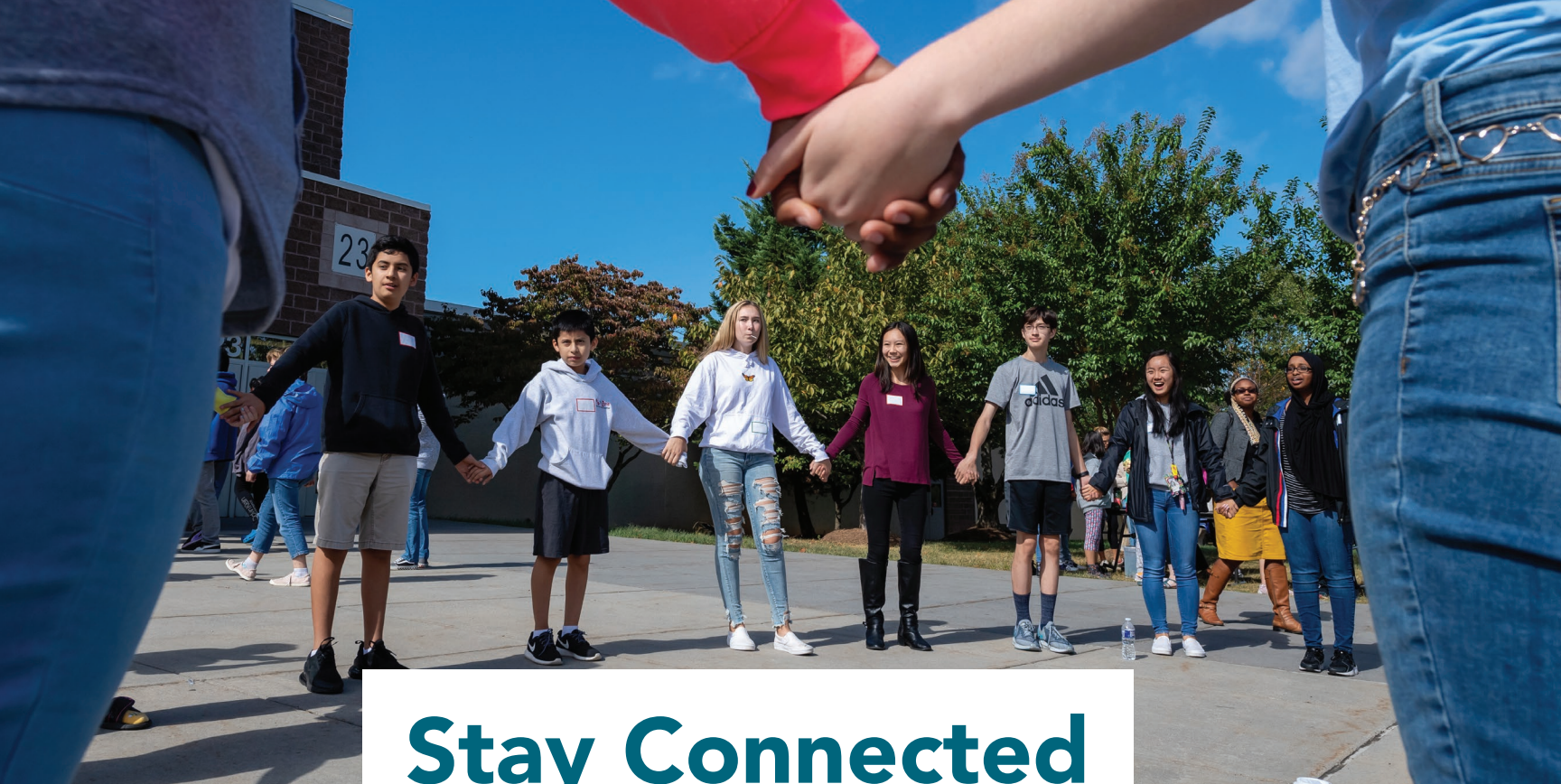
RESOURCES FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS



MINORITY STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT  
OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE







# Stay Connected

- Keep a list of important school numbers.
- Bookmark the FCPS website for information about Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS), to sign up for parent accounts, and to register for school email services.
- Create a Parent Overview Account for the **Student Information System (SIS)**. Your SIS account includes information about attendance, classes, and academic progress. It also has links to **FCPS 24-7 Learning (Blackboard) Parent View** and **e-Notify** emergency email and text from your child's school. If you need help, contact your school's School Based Technology Specialist (SBTS).
- Ask family members and caregivers to sign up for News You Choose, an email service of FCPS.
- Learn how your school communicates with parents. Some schools communicate through email, the school's website, and social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter).
- Learn how to access the online tools your child's teachers or school use for homework, class assignments, calendars, and school activities (e.g., Google Classroom, Blackboard, etc.).

## I AM CONNECTED

I am signed up for and have looked at:

- SIS
- FCPS 24-7 Learning Parent View
- We Care (Emergency Care Information updated)

## MY SIS ACCOUNT

Site Address

Log In/User Name

Password

*Update Your Password Every Year.*

Notes



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# Purpose

The Parent Advocacy Handbook is for parents and guardians -- a child's first teacher and advocate. It is believed that parents and guardians should advocate and support their children's academic, social, and emotional growth from preschool through high school, and beyond.

- Information and resources within the handbook are designed to help parents and guardians.
- Learn about their rights and responsibilities as an FCPS parent or guardian.
- Learn more about what is going on in the student's school.
- Gain skills to advocate for your student at school.
- Learn more how to monitor and help your student at home.
- Find extra help and resources.

The handbook contains answers to the many questions parents may have about the school system and how they can best advocate for their student at the various stages of their school experience (see Common Questions).

**Be an advocate for your child. Know what is happening at school. Ask questions. Express your ideas, comments, and concerns. Check to see that promises made are kept.**







# What is an Advocate?

As an advocate parents and guardians can make sure the student gets the most value from public school programs and resources.

Parents and guardians can help by ensuring that the student comes to class every day, on time, prepared, with a positive attitude, personal integrity, and a commitment to making good choices.

Being a strong advocate also means ensuring that the needs of the student are met, and that they are treated equitably and fairly by FCPS staff.

## HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE

### Build Good Relationships from the Start

- Introduce yourself to your child's teacher(s).
- Introduce yourself to the principal and school office staff.
- Be supportive of teachers and staff.
- Keep in regular communication with teacher(s) throughout the year.
- Volunteer at your child's school or in the classroom.

### Ask Questions and Ask for Help

- Ask how parents and guardians can contact the school to talk to the teacher or in case of emergency. Also tell the school staff the best way for them to contact you.
- If your child is struggling with a subject, ask the teacher for help.
- If there are concerns about the student's social or emotional well-being, speak with the student's school counselor, the school social worker or the school psychologist.
- If the student is teased or bullied, get the facts and contact your teacher or principal to ask for help.

## Stay Informed

- Know your rights as an FCPS Parent.
- Know your responsibilities as an FCPS Parent.
- Learn who's who in FCPS, from the teachers, to the school principal and administrative team, to the superintendent.
- Know who to contact when you have questions or concerns.

## TRANSLATION SERVICES

If you do not speak English and need help, FCPS provides free language interpreter services, including:

- Translation of documents and other written information sent home to parents.
- Translation during meetings when you need help in communicating with school personnel.

Ask your school to provide an interpreter.

Note: Some schools have a parent liaison that may speak your language and may be able to assist you. You also may ask a friend or relative to help you to request a translator.

**Parent Information phone lines are available in eight different languages for parents who need help. A bilingual staff member will answer your call within 24 hours, Monday through Friday. The staff member will help you speak with the appropriate school employee or connect you with the appropriate resource.**

To use the parent information phone lines please call:

Amharic (አማርኛ): 571-423-495

Arabic (العربية): 571-423-4952

Chinese (中文): 571-423-4953

Farsi (فارسی): 571-423-4954

Korean (한국어): 571-423-4951

Spanish (español): 571-423-4950

Urdu (اردو): 571-423-4955

Vietnamese (Tiếng Việt): 571-423-4956





# PARENT RIGHTS

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## As a FCPS Parent, you have the right to . . .

- Advocate for your child. You have a right to speak with teachers and administrators about your child. Make an appointment to ensure you have adequate time to do so.
- Ask for a supervisor to review the decision or response if you disagree with a decision about your student.
- Have a translator provided free-of-charge.
- Expect your child's school to be safe, welcoming, and fair.
- Express your opinions through speech, assembly, petition, and other lawful means.

## Privacy: You have a right to . . .

- Expect your child's personal information and school records to be protected in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 C.F.R. Part 99.
- Expect that school staff will not ask about your or your child's immigration status. Schools must enroll all students without regard to immigration status. They may not discriminate against a student because of race, color, or national origin. Remember that residency means where you live, not what country you came from.

## Student Records/Student Information: You have the right to . . .

- Expect school employees and volunteers to "maintain personally-identifiable student information, whether oral, written, or automated, in a confidential manner." FCPS Regulation 2730.3.III.
- Request and review school records about your child. You also may request copies of your child's record. FCPS Regulation 2601.32P.I.1
- Challenge the contents of your student's scholastic records, following required procedures. FCPS Regulation 2601.32P.I.6.

## School Visits and Parent Participation in School Activities: You have the right to . . .

- Visit your child's school to observe lessons, volunteer at school, chaperone field trips, etc. Check your school's policy on school visits. You may need to make an appointment to observe a class.
- Request that your child be released to you from school during the school day, if you have legal custody of your child.
- Attend school events for parents, such as parent lunches and parent-teacher conferences.

## Educational Decisions: You have the right to . . .

- Join in educational decisions about your child.
- Request that your school evaluate your child for special education services if you suspect your child may have a disability.
- Expect placement of your child in any middle or high school course for which your child meets the course prerequisites. FCPS Regulation 3250.3 (Exception: Placement of students in Algebra 1)

## Opt Out: You have the right to . . .

- Request that your child's name, address, telephone number are kept private. (Your information does not have to appear in a school directory.)
- Request in writing that your child not participate in academic, career, or personal or social counseling. FCPS Regulation 2501.5.IV
- Review the Family Life Education (FLE) curriculum materials and decide whether your child will participate in FLE lessons. FCPS Regulation 3204.7.C
- Inspect certain student surveys and request that your child not participate.
- Request that your child's image not be included in graduation photographs.
- Request that your students' names, addresses, and telephone numbers not be provided to military recruiters.
- Decline physical examinations of your child if not required by state law.
- To do so, you must take the necessary steps to state your specific wishes (often by completing an opt-out form).



## Challenge Library or Instructional Materials: You have the right to . . .

- Challenge library or instructional materials. FCPS Policy 3009.5. You may request that such materials be removed, or that students have restricted or expanded access to such materials. FCPS will make a final determination on challenged materials.

## Student Transfers: You have the right to . . .

- Request a student transfer to a school other than a base school under certain circumstances. FCPS Regulation 2230.13.III.B.

## Testing: You have the right to . . .

- Receive information about testing policies and practices within the Commonwealth of Virginia and FCPS.
- Refuse standardized testing for your children under Virginia law. Refusals are subject to state reporting guidelines for SOL testing.
- Receive prior notice of tests, such as the Universal Screener and Standards of Learning (SOL) tests, and of individual educational and psychological tests.
- Request ("Opt In") that your student be allowed to take end-of-course tests that are not needed for verified credit.

## Safety and Discipline: You have the right to . . .

- Expect safe and welcoming schools. Your school can provide information about its safety policies and safety drills that students will participate in during the school year.
- Talk to school staff about disciplinary decisions. Steps to appeal disciplinary decisions are outlined in the Student Rights and Responsibilities (SR&R) handbook.
- Receive timely information of your student's suspension; be informed of the rules governing suspensions and the procedures for appeal. FCPS Regulation 2601.33.
- Receive notice when your child is restrained or secluded at school. 8 VAC 20-750-50.
- Receive advance notice that your student may be questioned by a School Resource Officer (SRO), unless there is "immediate risk of danger." In that circumstance, your principal must contact you as soon as possible. SR&R p.14
- Be notified "as soon as practical" by your principal if your student has engaged in misconduct that may result in referral to the Hearings Office, e.g., for weapons violation, illegal drugs, and other offenses that could result in the student being excluded from school.
- Be notified if your student is questioned by a police officer, other than an SRO, in school or on school property about alleged illegal activities. Schools must make reasonable efforts to get your permission by telephone or in person before questioning. If you cannot be reached and school staff makes reasonable efforts to get your permission, the school must notify you in writing. FCPS Regulation 2616.9.III

- Participate in hearings before the Hearings Office and School Board before your student is excluded from school (“where it is determined there are special circumstances and whether a different consequence might be more appropriate.” SR&R, p.25).
- Attend and have representation at any discipline hearings.
- File a written appeal if you are not satisfied with the results of a discipline decision or hearing.

### **File a Complaint and Appeal Decisions: You have a right to . . .**

- Express your concerns informally (e.g., by email or call to teacher or principal) or formally (e.g., by official complaint).
- Present a concern or complaint to teachers, counselors, or your school principal, if you disagree with school decisions.
- Contact your Region Assistant Superintendent if you are not satisfied with the resolution of a complaint presented to the principal.
- Contact the Superintendent or the School Board if you are not satisfied with the resolution of a complaint presented to a Region Assistant Superintendent.
- Present a complaint if you believe your child’s special education needs are not being met.
- Present a complaint if you believe that you or your child have been discriminated against because of “age, race, color, disability, marital status, gender/sexual harassment/pregnancy, religion, retaliation(for a complaint), ethnicity/national origin, nationality, or genetic information.” (See discrimination claims)
- Present a complaint with regard to student health and/or safety.
- Receive a timely response to your complaint or appeal.

### **Right to Appeal Decisions: You have a right to . . .**

- File written appeals of decisions regarding your student’s placements in programs (e.g., AAP, SPED, immersion programs).
- File written appeals of discipline hearing decisions (e.g., out-of-school suspensions; Hearing Office decisions).
- File written appeals of decisions made at the school level to the Regional Assistant Superintendent, the Superintendent, and the School Board.
- If you have a question or concern about your right to complain, contact the Ombuds Office at 571-423-4014 or email at [ombuds@fcps.edu](mailto:ombuds@fcps.edu).



## Do you have a Potential Discrimination Claim?

If you believe you or your child have been discriminated against because of “age, race, color, disability, marital status, gender, sexual orientation, pregnancy, religion, retaliation for filing a complaint, ethnicity or national origin, nationality, or genetic information,” you have a right to file a complaint with the FCPS Department of Human Resources, Office of Equity and Employee Relations (EER).

You may file a FCPS Complaint of Alleged Discrimination form (HR-153), or submit a letter to:

### Office of Equity and Employee Relations

Department of Human Resources  
Gatehouse Administration Center I  
8115 Gatehouse Road, Suite 2500  
Falls Church, VA 22042

Call: 571-423-3070

Fax: 571-423-3057

## PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

### As a FCPS Parent, you have the responsibility to . . .

- Advocate for your child.
- Register your child for school.
- Provide proof of immunizations required by Virginia law for all students to attend public schools.
- Notify your child’s school if your family moves. (If you move outside the boundaries for your student’s current school, your student may have to be reassigned to a different school.)
- Complete the Emergency Care Form for your child every year and update when necessary. (Use weCare@school, through your SIS account.)
- Review the Student Rights and Responsibilities handbook’s important topics and discuss with your child and then sign and return the Parent and/or Guardian Signature Sheet to school. *You can also do this thru weCare@school or by paper.*

## Attendance: You have the responsibility to . . .

- Ensure that your child attends school regularly and on time, and that your child follows assigned school schedules. Code of Virginia § 22.1-279.3
- Notify the school when your child will be absent or late.
- Request a pre-arranged absence, when your child will be absent for several days for any reason. (Prearranged Absence Forms are available at your student's school or at the Attendance Form link on your school's website).
- Ensure that your child completes any assignments missed during an absence.

## Monitor Academic Performance: You have the responsibility to . . .

- Visit your child's school. Learn about your school's policy about visiting the classroom. Contact your school to schedule an observation. When you visit, report to the Main Office and register. (You may have to wear an ID badge.)
- Attend Back to School Night.
- Attend parent teacher conferences.
- Review your student's progress report "report card". If your child might fail and/or not meet the promotion benchmarks, you should contact your child's teacher and school administrator to set a remediation plan.
- Ask about programs and services that are available for your child both at your base school and at other schools.

## Monitor Screen Time: You have the responsibility to . . .

- Know what your child is looking at on television, tablets, phones, etc.
- Limit screen time on TV, computers, televisions, tablets, and smartphones, when it interferes with schoolwork.
- Review and moderate your child's use of social media.





## SCHOOL ATTENDANCE MATTERS

Virginia law requires all children between the ages of five and 18 must be enrolled in school and to attend on a daily basis. Code of Virginia § 22.1-254

**Report All Student Absences:** If your child will be absent from school, or tardy, for any reason, you must contact their school. You may:

1. Complete an attendance form online (link on school's website); or
2. Call your school's attendance line.

Make sure your child completes all missed schoolwork.

### Attendance Matters:

- Attendance is checked every day. FCPS is required by state law to call, text or email you if your child does not come to school as expected.
- If your child is absent for five full days, a school attendance officer will contact you. VA Code § 221-258.
- If your child is absent for 15 (or more days) in a row, they will be withdrawn from school. You must officially re-register your child when he or she returns to school.

### Absences Add Up:

- Students who attend 90 percent or more of the school year are more likely to graduate from high school on time.
- Middle and high school students who miss 18 days of school (two days a month) during the school year, are less likely to graduate from high school.
- Students who are absent more than 10 percent of the school year are considered "chronically absent" under Virginia law.

### Transportation

FCPS provides transportation to students who live in the designated attendance area of a school, if the student lives beyond the approved walking distance. (Usually one mile for elementary schools and 1.5 miles for middle and high school students). There are exceptions made for safety reasons. Please check with your school about specific bus routes.

Students who ride buses for any reason (including field trips) must comply with the FCPS Standards for Students Riding Buses. Discuss bus conduct with your student so that all riders have a safe and pleasant trip. Bus privileges can be taken away.

# STUDENT HEALTH AND SAFETY

## STUDENT HEALTH

Every school has a School Health Room ("clinic") and a **School Health Aide** (SHA) who:

- Cares for sick or injured students;
- Gives medications to students, following FCPS regulations;
- Notifies parents or guardians, if students need more care or treatment; and
- Coordinates vision and hearing screenings.

The SHA is a trained, para-professional, but not a professional nurse. A **Public Health Nurse** (PHN) provides additional support to schools. PHNs serve more than one school and may not be at your school every day.

Every school also has a social worker and a school psychologist to support students.

- **School Social Workers** provide services to address the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students. They provide risk assessments, connect with students who are unable to attend school, assist homeless students and families, etc.
- **School Psychologists** provide family-school collaboration services to help families navigate educational and community systems that support students' academic, mental health, and behavioral needs. They also serve on the school's Crisis Team.

Most school social workers and psychologists are assigned to work at more than one school.

### Be an advocate for healthy children.

- Notify your school about any medical conditions (e.g., allergies) your child may have that could affect them during the school day.
- Bring medications that your child may need during the day to the SHA. DO NOT send your student to school with medication without pre-approval from the SHA.
- Keep up with required vaccinations. (Note: Students in 7th grade, for example, must receive a Tdap booster shot.)



## Do not send your student to school if your child has:

- Fever of 100.4° or higher (keep student home until fever stays below 100.4° for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication).
- Diarrhea or Vomiting
- Discharge from eye (if eye is pink/red and there is a thick yellow/green discharge)
- Coughing (if severe and uncontrolled, rapid, or there is wheezing or other difficulty breathing)
- Rash (if rash spreads quickly or is not healing)
- Strep Throat (if doctor diagnoses strep, stay home for 24 hours after antibiotics are begun)
- Chicken Pox, Measles and other vaccine-preventable diseases. If student has chicken pox, measles, rubella (German measles), mumps, or pertussis (whooping cough), they must stay home until a health care provider says the student is no longer contagious.

## STUDENT SAFETY

**Student Safety is the #1 Job of School Personnel.** School personnel work to keep all students safe by:

- Checking attendance every day and calling you if your child is absent from school.
- Asking all school visitors (including parents) to sign in and present a photo ID.
- Allowing only you, or authorized adults, to pick your child up from school.
- Practicing safety drills – such as fire, lockdown, and tornado drills – because they need to be prepared to protect children if an emergency occurs.

Middle and High Schools have additional security personnel, including the School Security team and a Student Resource Officer (SRO).

**Safety for Young Students.** School personnel also provide added support for our youngest students. They:

- Help new students understand the importance of emergency drills and bells or sirens that may be used in those drills. Your school principal will notify you before the first drills of the school year.
- Do not release kindergarten bus riders unless met at the stop by an authorized adult, or an authorized middle or high school sibling. If this does not happen, the bus driver will return the child to the school and you will be contacted.

**Be a Safety Advocate.** You can help keep your child safe at school by:

- Contacting the school when your child will be absent or late.
- Updating your Emergency Contact (weCare@school) information when you change your emergency contacts.
- Giving the school written notification if you authorize someone other than yourself to pick up your child from school.
- Helping your child understand emergency drills, and preparing them for drills ahead of time before they take place

**Questions or Concerns?** *If you have questions about school safety, contact your school's principal, or security staff (in middle and high schools). You may also contact the FCPS Office of Safety & Security.*

## WHO'S WHO IN FCPS?

Fairfax County Public Schools is one of the largest school systems in the United States. There are more than 187,000 students in 198 schools and centers. FCPS employs more than 25,000 staff.

It is important to understand how FCPS is organized and governed, so that when you need help or have concerns, you know who to contact.

### Important names and contact information to know:

- School Board members
- FCPS Superintendent
- Region Assistant Superintendent (RAS)
- School principal and key school staff members

### Know Your Base School

Your base school is your neighborhood (attendance area) school. Students may be assigned to another school for special programs (e.g., advanced academic centers; special education centers; academies) or if a parent's transfer request is approved.

## Know Your Pyramid

- Region 1 (Herndon, Langley, Madison, Oakton, and South Lakes Pyramids)
- Region 2 (Annandale, Falls Church, Justice, McLean, and Marshall Pyramids as well as Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology)
- Region 3 (Edison, Hayfield, Lee, Mount Vernon, and West Potomac Pyramids)
- Region 4 (Centreville, Lake Braddock, Robinson, South County, and West Springfield Pyramids)
- Region 5 (Chantilly, Fairfax, Westfield, and Woodson Pyramids)

(See Administrative Center Maps)

## Who to Call?

PARENT	
<b>Teacher</b>	If you have questions, start with your child's teacher. You may email the teacher with your questions or make an appointment to discuss your concerns.
<b>Assistant Principal</b>	If you need additional help, or your concerns involve a teacher, contact an assistant principals (AP). In elementary school, there is at least one AP. In middle and high schools, there are more APs. You can contact the AP who leads the department in which the teacher is assigned (e.g., science, math, English) or the AP who leads the class or grade of your child.
<b>School Principal</b>	If you are not satisfied, contact your Principal. Email or arrange to meet with your principal.
<b>Office of Region Assistant Superintendent</b>	<p>If you need additional help, you may contact your Region Assistant Superintendent (RAS). The RAS is the regional leader for schools in his/her area and monitors school effectiveness.</p> <p>If you have questions about special education, transportation, or other issues, contact the appropriate departmental assistant superintendent (e.g., for Special Services, Facilities, etc.) instead.</p>
<b>Office of the Superintendent</b>	If you need additional help, or your issue has not been resolved, contact the Office of the Superintendent or your School Board representative.

*If you do not know where to start, or you need help with navigating the school system, contact the FCPS Office of the Ombuds.*



## Advocacy Tips: Keep a Record

- Do your homework. Read FCPS regulations, contact the Ombudsman, speak with other parents and make sure you understand your rights and responsibilities.
- Keep copies of all important documents (e.g., progress reports, certificates, and school letters) in a file so they can be found when you need them.
- Gather and organize the information and documents you may need to ask questions, request action, etc.
- If you are not satisfied with the response, follow up with the person you first contacted. You should get a response within 24 hours.
- After the first meeting, keep a record of all your communications and contacts. Take notes – either during the meeting or soon after to remember what was discussed.
- Follow-up with emails to record your understanding of the meetings or if any decisions or agreements were made. If you send a letter, use certified mail and request a return receipt so you have a record of if your letter was received.

*If you have questions or concerns about your student, begin with a casual meeting or email to a teacher or counselor. If you have safety issues or concerns about a teacher, contact your principal or other school administrator.*

## School Board Advocacy

The School Board sets policy for FCPS and their meetings are open to the public.

*If you are concerned about programs or practices within FCPS, you may contact the Ombuds, your Region Assistant Superintendent or your School Board member to voice your concerns.*

*If you find that other parents have similar concerns to those individuals noted above or sign up to speak about your concerns to the School Board at a public meeting.*





# Getting Ready for Kindergarten

As your child's first teacher, you help them get ready for kindergarten by developing their intellectual, social, emotional, and physical skills. Children who have positive experiences with learning before starting in kindergarten are more ready for school.

FCPS offers preschool programs to help you prepare your child to be ready for kindergarten. In addition, Fairfax County OFC offers preschool as well.

## BE AN ADVOCATE

### BUILD AWARENESS

- Create an interesting and stimulating environment for your child.
- Introduce them to new objects, events, and people.
- Ask them questions and give them problems to solve
- Encourage your child's interests and share your experiences.

### ENCOURAGE EXPLORATION

- Make play a learning opportunity.
- Discuss your child's activities with them.
- Try to understand their thinking and how they learn.
- Allow your child to make mistakes and learn from them.

## Ask and Answer Questions

- Help your child think through and understand questions.
- Give answers when asked.
- Allow time for questions and answers.
- Ask specific questions-- "What else works like this?" and "What happens if . . .?"
- Guide and focus their attention.
- Help them connect their ideas.

## Build Language and Math Skills

- Help your child learn about the letters and the sounds they make.
- Read to your child and show enthusiasm for reading. Your local library can help.
- Explore writing by drawing shapes, forming letters, and writing sentences.
- Help your child copy, trace, and write letters.
- Count and practice counting by asking-- "How many fingers do I have on this hand?" "How many pennies do I have?"
- Help them learn to sort objects into groups by shape, color, or size.

# RESOURCES

Fairfax County offers many programs for pre-school aged children. Some programs are free of charge while others are not. It is important to apply early and follow up to insure a place for your child. If a program is full, ask to be placed on a wait list and monitor your child's position.

The Fairfax County Office for Children (OFC) offers many early education programs for children, including Healthy Families Fairfax and Infant and Toddler Connection. OFC also has information about programs and services:

- Fairfax County Libraries
- Fairfax County Parks Authority
- Fairfax County Health
- Fairfax County Human Services
- Fairfax County Office of Housing and Community Development



## CHILD CARE RESOURCES

**Early Childhood Identification and Services (ECID&S).** The ECID&S, or Child Find, identifies children with potential special education needs, and educates the community about child development and the importance of early identification. Child Find provides free screenings for children from 20 months to 5 years old.

**Family and Early Childhood Education Program (FECEP/Head Start).** FECEP/Head Start is a full-day child development program that primarily serves income-eligible children who are 3 and 4 years old. Head Start provides services that assist families with child education and development, health services (medical, dental, nutrition, and mental health), parent education, family literacy, and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

OFC operates FECEP/Head Start in classrooms in many, but not all, FCPS elementary schools. If your school does not have a program, they may be assigned to another school. Spaces are very limited and based on income. Contact the Head Start Office at 703-208-7900 (English) or 703-208-7901 (Spanish) to see if your child is eligible for FECEP/Head Start.

**FCPS PreK and Early Head Start.** Early Head Start is for children from birth to 2 years old and also supports pregnant women who live in the Reston, Herndon, and Springfield areas of Fairfax County. The application begins on January 1 each year for the coming school year. Apply as soon as possible because space is limited.

**FCPS PreK and Early Head Start offers preschool and comprehensive services at no cost to qualifying families for children who will be age 3 or 4 by September 30 of the calendar year.** The programs are managed by the FCPS Office of Early Childhood Curriculum and Grant Management. Contact the Head Start Office at 703-208-7900 (English) or 703-208-7901 (Spanish) for more information.

**Family Literacy Program.** The Family Literacy Program “supports residents with limited English skills, building literacy and community connections for students and their families.” This two-generation approach works with parents and children to get the children ready for kindergarten.

**Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY), HIPPY is a free program for parents of children ages 3 - 4 years old.** Parents are taught to be their child’s first teacher. HIPPY also strengthens parent-child relationship. HIPPY home visitors show parents how to teach: Shapes and Colors, Reading, Writing, Mathematics, Science and Language Development. Parents meet with a HIPPY-trained home instructor for an hour each week in the parent’s home or with a small group of parents at a central location.

**Early Literacy Program (ELP).** The ELP is a free program for parents of children ages birth – 5 years old. ELP helps parents learn to teach basic skills needed to be ready for kindergarten. The program is similar to HIPPO and provides workshops two times a week for diverse parent groups.

**Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI).** VPI supports quality early childhood education programs for children with special needs; foster children; children under a CPS order; children in families who receive TANF or families that are enrolled in the VIEW program; or children of teen parents. There are VPI programs at many child development and learning centers in Northern Virginia.

**Neighborhood School Readiness Teams NSRT is a collaboration of OFC, FCPS and Fairfax Futures.** Learn more about school readiness by contacting the Office for Children, at 703-324-8100 TTY 711. [dfschildcarecentral@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:dfschildcarecentral@fairfaxcounty.gov)

## Other Opportunities for Children and Parents

**Public Library:** The Fairfax County Public Library offers special programs for children, including programs for infants and preschoolers. Many local libraries have regular story times for their visitors. You can borrow books from the Library to read and share with your child.

**Recreation Centers:** Fairfax County's Park Authority operates recreation centers throughout Fairfax County, which offer gym facilities, swimming pools, classes, and other recreational programs. You can find information about current classes and programs in Parktakes, a Parks Authority publication.

**Parks:** Fairfax County has many parks for play and exploration. Get to know the parks near you: Which ones have playgrounds, nature trails or Nature Centers?

**Museums:** There are many museums in the DC area. Some Smithsonian Museums that preschoolers might enjoy are:

- National Zoo (live animals, including a petting zoo);
- National Museum of Natural History (for dinosaurs and other exhibits about the natural world);
- National Air and Space Museum (airplanes; spaceships);
- National Museum of American History (trains; farm equipment; toys).

All of the Smithsonian Museums are free of charge and most are accessible by public transportation.

## Playground Fun!

Visit the playground at your local elementary schools regularly (after school and on weekends or holidays). Playgrounds offer preschoolers the opportunity for:

- Physical activities
- Meeting other children and work on their social skills; and
- Developing a sense of comfort at, and growing familiarity with, school.

## CHILD FIND

Help for Children Who Need Special Education or Related Services

Help for Parents:

- If you are concerned about your child's physical, intellectual, or emotional development, or
- If you believe your child may need special education or related services, or they have a disability.

**Preschool Child Find** provides FREE screening for special education and related services for children 20 months through 5 years old. Child Find also provides liaison or referral services to community preschool, day care, Head Start, and FECEP programs.

- **For Children Ages Birth through Age 2:** Contact the Infant and Toddler Connection (ITC) of Fairfax/Falls Church, (703) 246-7121 for information about a referral.
- **For Children Ages 2 through 4:** Call 571-423-4121 for information about interventions, workshops, screening, and evaluations.

For School-Age Children and Young Adults with Disabilities (21 years or younger), contact your school's Local Screening Chairperson.









# Elementary School (Grades K-6)

Elementary school (kindergarten through sixth grade) forms the foundation for lifelong learning. Beginning as early as kindergarten, FCPS offers a curriculum that encourages and supports your child's social, emotional, physical, and intellectual growth. Every day, your elementary school child is involved in learning experiences with language arts, reading, writing, mathematics, social sciences, science, technology, health, music, movement, and art.

## ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

- Elementary schools include students in kindergarten through sixth grade (some elementary schools end at fifth grade). Students in elementary school range in age from 5 years old to 12 years old.
- The school day in most FCPS elementary schools begins between 8:10 a.m. and 9:20 a.m. and ends between 2:55 p.m. and 4:05 p.m. Schools have different times of operation (called the "Bell Schedule") depending on the bus schedules for that school. If you have children who attend different elementary schools, they may not have the same school hours.
- In elementary school, students usually have one main teacher—their classroom teacher. Students spend most of the day with that teacher. This teacher teaches language arts (reading and writing), math, science, social studies, and health.
- In upper grades (fourth-sixth), students may have more than one teacher. For example, one teacher may teach all fourth graders language arts and social studies, while another teacher may teach science and math. Each student still has a main classroom teacher.
- Elementary school students also have classes in art, music, physical education, and in some schools, foreign language (FLES) or STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts integration and math). These subjects often are called "specials."

- Elementary schools serve breakfast and lunch for students in the school cafeteria. Some elementary schools also offer Breakfast in the Classroom, a program that provides breakfast at no charge to all students in the school.
- In elementary school, all students participate in daily recess, a time for unstructured play that happens outside (weather permitting) or in the classroom. Recess is an important time for physical activity and socialization.

## ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: WHO IS IN THE BUILDING?

### Main Office

- Principal
- Assistant Principal
- Office Staff

### Classroom

- Classroom Teacher
- Reading Teacher
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Teacher
- Special Education (SPED) Teacher
- Advanced Academic Program (AAP) Teacher
- Art Teacher
- Physical Education Teacher
- Music Teacher
- Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES) Teacher
- Instructional Assistants

### School Support Staff

- School Counselor
- School Librarian
- School Health Aide
- Parent Liaison
- School Psychologist
- Social Worker
- School Based Technology Specialist (SBTS)
- Equity Lead

### Other Staff

- Cafeteria Staff
- Custodial Staff
- SACC (School Aged Child Care) Staff





# BE AN ADVOCATE

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## AT HOME:

- Set high goals for learning. It is never too early to talk to your child about graduating from high school, and college and career goals. Praise your child for putting forth good effort in their schoolwork.
- Set clear guidelines for behavior at school and home.
- Keep an eye on your child's progress. Check your child's backpack or book bag every day! Is there homework? Is there other important information for you from the teacher or principal?
- Make sure your child gets enough sleep at night (10-12 hours per night is recommended) and starts the day with a healthy breakfast.
- Help your child develop good study habits at home by providing a clean, quiet space for them to study without distractions. This may be a place at home (desk, table, or other workspace) or in the community (local library, community center, or other location).
- Encourage reading. Read to and with your child, in any language with which you are comfortable. Listen to your child read. Plan regular visits to your local public library. Get a library card for your child and for yourself. It's free! Your school's website will also have free reading apps, such as MyOn, that your child can use at home.
- Help your child develop special talents and interests by having him or her join a variety of activities, both in and out of school. This may include playing a musical instrument, art, dance, scouting, or sports. Many groups have scholarships to help with the cost of activities.
- Limit screen time. This includes TV, video games, and other electronics or mobile devices (e.g., cell phones, tablets, etc.)
- Monitor your child's use of social media platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, and Facebook.

## AT SCHOOL:

- Know how the school works. (Where is the main office? What are school hours? Where is the clinic?) Read welcome letters and other mailings and information packets. Keep all important school phone numbers and email addresses such as main office, attendance line, and school clinic; and teacher and administrator contact information.
- Make sure that all of your contact information (e.g., email addresses and phone numbers for parents/guardians and emergency contacts) is up to date with the school.

- Bookmark your school's website so that you can easily find links your school may use. Examples include the Attendance Form, FCPS 24-7 (Blackboard), G Suite, Google Classroom, and FCPS Online Databases.
- Know all important dates for school events, testing, and school holidays or vacations. Your school's website will have a Calendar of School Events. Check [www.fcps.edu](http://www.fcps.edu) for system-wide events and holidays.
- Participate in your child's school activities and events. When children see that their parents care about their education, they are more likely to take learning seriously.
- Let teachers know your goals for your child and share information about your child's skills and any concerns you have about your child. Keep in mind that teachers are responsible for the learning of many students. It is important for all students to meet state standards. Remember that teachers may not be familiar with your culture, expectations, or concerns.
- Attend your school's Open House, which is usually held before the first day of school, and Back-to-School Night, which is held soon after the start of school.
- Ask your school administrators about parent-teacher conferences, home visits, parent liaisons, and interpreters. Request an interpreter or translator if you need help with English. Ask about what your student will learn in every subject and at each grade level in elementary school. Ask any questions you may have about the elementary school grading policy.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences. Elementary schools may schedule parent-teacher conferences for all parents in early November. You may also request a conference with the teacher at any time. Write down your questions before you meet with your student's teacher.
- Ask about volunteer opportunities in your school. Some parents offer to help in the classroom or school library. Others help on field trips, and some assist at other special school events. Your school may have parent volunteers that serve on school-community advisory committees such as a Human Relations Advisory Committee or Curriculum Advisory Committee.
- Join the PTA/PTO (Parent Teacher Association/Organization) to meet other parents and get involved with your school. You may request a translator for PTA meetings. Or, you may bring a neighbor or friend who can help you understand.

# ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PROGRAMS

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All elementary schools provide the following services to students who require them.

- **Special Education:** FCPS provides specialized services for students with disabilities. These services are supported by special education teachers and other professionals such as school psychologists, speech and language pathologists, and physical therapists. For more information, contact your child's teacher and the principal or procedural support liaison.
- **English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Services:** ESOL helps children who speak other languages learn to read, speak, and understand English. Elementary school ESOL services focus on each individual student's English-language development needs. School-based ESOL teachers work with English language learners to improve their English skills.
- **Advanced Academic Programs (AAP):** AAP provides higher-level learning for students who show exceptional abilities in academic, intellectual, and creative learning. Students may receive differentiated services (Level II) in specific areas at their base school. Others may receive part-time services (Level III), usually once a week, at their schools. Some students also are identified for full-time services in all academic subject areas (Level IV) at a Local Level IV center. Students are identified for Level II and III services through testing and a school-based screening process. Students are identified for Level IV services through testing and a selection committee at the Central Office. Some elementary schools offer the following academic programs and services.
- **Foreign Language in Elementary School/Language through Content (FLES/LTC)** helps students learn world languages through science or STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics). Some schools offer FLES/LTC in Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Korean, and/or Spanish.
- **Foreign Language Immersion Programs** are full-day world language programs where students have some of their learning in English and some in another language. Immersion is offered in French, German, Japanese, Korean, and Spanish at some elementary schools in FCPS. Students are selected for immersion programs by lottery. Registration for the lottery begins in late January every year.
- **Young Scholars Initiative** identifies and nurtures gifted potential in young learners from underrepresented populations in FCPS to prepare students for advanced academic programs. Students are identified through a selection process.
- **Magnet Programs**, with specialized focuses, are offered at two elementary schools in FCPS: Bailey's Elementary School for Arts and Sciences; and Hunters Woods Elementary School for Arts and Sciences. Students are chosen by lottery.

- **Title I Schools** are schools with a high number of students that qualify for free and reduced-price meals (FRM), who qualify under federal rules to receive grants under Title I, Part A of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Title I schools receive extra funding that allows for smaller class sizes in grades K through 3, and also provide more supports for their students.

Contact your teacher or school counselor for more information about these programs and if your child is eligible to participate in these programs. If your school does not offer a program that you would like started for your student, talk with your school's principal.

## RESOURCES FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PARENTS

- **Parent-Teacher Groups:** Many schools have a PTA/PTO that offers help to schools. The PTA is run by parents, many of whom can be helpful to new parents.
- **Parent Resource Center Library:** The Parent Resource Center Library has books, journals, periodicals, and videos to assist parents and professionals in better understanding children with special needs, family interaction, education, and roles and responsibilities in the special education process. Contact: 703-204-3941 or [FCPS.edu/node/31312](http://FCPS.edu/node/31312)
- **Fairfax Office of Early Childhood and Family Services:** The Office of Early Childhood and Family Services runs preschool, kindergarten, and early elementary programs such as the Family and Early Childhood Education Program (FECEP), Head Start, and the Parent Child Center.







## Middle School (Grades 7-8)

Most middle schools in FCPS are for students in grades 7 and 8. Three middle schools include students in grade 6 (Glasgow MS, Holmes MS, and Poe MS), and three middle schools are part of larger secondary schools, which include students from grades 7 to 12 (Robinson SS, Hayfield SS, and Lake Braddock SS). Middle schools are larger, both in physical size and in student enrollment, than most elementary schools. Students come from a wider geographic area than in elementary school.

Middle school may be the first experience a student has with multiple teachers and the team approach to instruction. Middle school also brings new rules and expectations regarding academics and student behavior. Middle school is not the same as elementary school.

### MIDDLE SCHOOL: WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

- The school day in most FCPS middle schools begins at 7:30 a.m. and ends at 2:15 p.m. (Hours for students who attend secondary schools may vary.) The school day includes time for classes in core subjects and electives, lunch, and embedded remediation and enrichment time, which may serve as a homeroom, study hall, etc., depending on the individual school. Middle school classes may meet on a daily basis, or every-other day, if the middle school uses block scheduling.
- Middle school students take classes in English, math, social studies, science, physical education (including health and family life education), with a different teacher for each subject. In addition, students may take elective courses in fine arts, career and technical education, and world language. Students choose middle school courses in the spring before 7th and 8th Grades.
- Middle school is organized around a team approach where students on the same team share the same teachers in English, social studies, science, and math. This helps students bond with classmates and helps teachers get to know, and work together with, the students on their team.
- Academics are more rigorous in middle school. Middle school students are expected to take more responsibility for keeping track of their assignments and their schoolwork.

- Middle school is an often exciting, and sometimes overwhelming, experience for many students. Middle school students must learn to navigate a new building full of students who are bigger and older, to use a locker and remember its combination, and to get to each class in the time allowed. They also are expected to use a planner to keep track of their assignments, and to change their clothes for physical education class. Meanwhile, they are meeting a lot of new people, making new friends, and trying to figure out where they fit in to this new place.
- Middle school can be a difficult time for teens and parents as adolescents go through many social, emotional, and biological changes. Parents must learn how to provide guidance and assistance to their students while also allowing for increased independence and personal responsibility both in and outside of the school building. Your middle school staff is a resource to help you meet these challenges.

## MIDDLE SCHOOL - WHO IS IN THE BUILDING?

### Main Office

- Principal
- Assistant Principals
- Office Staff

### Classroom

- Department chair
- Classroom teachers (by subject matter)
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers
- Special Education (SPED) teachers
- Equity lead teacher
- Instructional assistants

### Student Support Staff

- Director of student services
- School counselors
- School librarian
- School psychologist
- Social worker
- Speech/language pathologist
- School health aide
- Parent liaison
- Department chair
- Equity lead

### Other Staff

- Cafeteria staff
- Custodial staff
- SBTS (school-Based technology specialist)
- SRO (student resource officer)



# BE AN ADVOCATE

For parents, your middle school child may seem to change on a daily, if not sometimes hourly basis. During adolescence, brains grow at different rates. Friends have more influence, and some students experience their first boyfriend or girlfriend. Parents need now more than earlier to stay engaged with their student, to know their friends, and to help them find activities in the community and at school that will keep them engaged and interested in school and the world around them. As your child adjusts to a new routine and new and different expectations for schoolwork and behavior in middle school, it is important that you provide support to your child and that you advocate on his or her behalf when questions or concerns arise.

## AT HOME

- Talk to your child. Check in every day and ask them to tell you about their day. Sometimes it helps to ask them one thing that interested them during the day.
- Make sure your child gets enough sleep at night (9 – 9 ½ hours per night is recommended) and starts the day with a healthy breakfast.
- Talk with your child about the normal changes that come with puberty. Students will discuss adolescent development as part of the Family Life Education (FLE) portion of the physical education curriculum, but need to hear from you and know that they can come to you with any questions or concerns they may have as they continue to grow and mature.
- Establish a daily routine. Middle school starts earlier in the morning (usually between 7 and 8 a.m.) than elementary school, which can be an adjustment for many students.
- Establish an after-school plan. Middle schools end in mid-afternoon, and your child may be coming home alone for the first time. Discuss your expectations with your child. When will homework be completed? How should relaxation time be used (for example, do you want to limit screen time)? Are there household and personal chores or obligations to complete? Are visitors allowed when you are not present?
- Plan for student homework. When will your student do their homework? (Same time every day or does it need to change because of after-school activities?) Where will your student do their homework? (Establish a clean space with no distractions, e.g., desk, table, community room, library.) How long for homework? (Learn each teacher's expectations for homework. What is the minimum amount of time their teacher expects be spent on homework?)
- Do your parent homework! Mark important school dates (e.g., middle school orientation; first day of school; Back to School Night) and all school holidays in your personal calendar or planner. Keep a copy of your child's daily class schedule handy, so

that you know who their teachers are, what period each class meets, and where each class is located. Some questions to ask yourself: Do I know my school's bell schedule? Is there block scheduling? What team is my child on?

- Check course information in FCPS 24-7: Parent View regularly. Make sure that the teachers is posting their syllabus and other materials so that you can help your student develop habits to stay on top of this. Check this information regularly, and especially prior to the end of the quarter, when grades are coming out. Check on the teacher's schedule and encourage your student to take advantage of extra help time.
- At the beginning of every school year, discuss with your child FCPS's Student Rights and Responsibilities. Students will talk about this important document in school but also need to hear from you about your expectations regarding their rights and their behavior in school. Speak with your child as well about your desire to be told about any social cruelty (e.g., teasing, bullying, etc.)
- Monitor school and class attendance. Absences from school may be a sign that your student is losing interest in school; is struggling with schoolwork; is dealing with conflicts or other social situations with classmates; or is dealing with other academic, physical, psychological, or emotional challenges. Your middle school staff can be of assistance. Ask for help if you need it.
- Help your child with planning and time management. Ask to see their planner. Ensure that your student is developing strong study skills by checking that class assignments are entered into the planner and that all assignment have been completed. Use your FCPS 24-7 Learning Parent View account to check assignments and to email teachers.
- Establish rules and boundaries for use of electronic devices (e.g., smartphones, tablets, and computers) and check in regularly with your child regarding screen time. You may need to limit screen time (e.g., television, video games, and movies, etc.), especially during the school week. Continue to monitor and moderate your child's use of social media (e.g., Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Facebook, etc.) and any increased need to use electronic communications.
- Monitor your student's progress report (report card). If your child is at risk of failing and not meeting the promotion benchmarks, you should meet with your child's teacher and counselor to see that a focused remediation plan is established.
- Encourage your child's development of special interests and talents outside of school, including activities that include the child in various social circles (e.g., with groups of friends and peers in non-academic activities, on outside sports teams, in activities at their personal place of worship, etc.). Your local community center, recreation center, library, house of worship, etc., may provide options. Investigate these options early. Don't miss out because you waited too long to check them out.



## AT SCHOOL

- Encourage your student to advocate for themselves and to contact their teachers when they have questions or concerns. If you must contact a teacher, keep in mind that middle school teachers are responsible for the learning of many more students, for many different classes, than elementary school teachers. In dealing with your child's teacher, they may not be familiar with your culture, expectations or concerns. So it is important that you share information about your goals and concerns about your child.
- Contact your child's counselor if there is information about your child that the counselor needs to know (such as special needs, health concerns, and family circumstances). If you think that your child may have unique needs, such as a developmental delay, an intellectual disability, a serious emotional disability, a specific learning disability, or for other reasons would benefit from special education services, ask your student's counselor for assistance and guidance. The Special Education Handbook for Parents is an important reference for parents of students with disabilities.
- Attend Back to School Night (BTSN) to meet all of your child's teachers and learn about each teacher's expectations. BTSN is very important for middle school parents because your child not has many teachers—not just one.
- Be involved with your child's Academic and Career Plan (available through Naviance Student). This plan helps your child develop academic and personal goals and an action plan that is SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-Bound. This goal-setting and reflection process involves you, your child's teachers, and school counselor, and incorporates goal setting and academic and career planning. Work with your child's counselor to help your student select appropriate and challenging courses. This required planning begins in grade 7 and continues through high school. You can view information on your child's plan through your FCPS 24-7 Learning: Parent View account.
- Ask about specialized programs that may be of interest or assistance, such as International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program; AVID; College Partnership; and summer enrichment. Pay attention to deadlines.
- Ensure that your student takes a sufficiently rigorous Math class. Some students are ready to take high-school level math classes in middle school (e.g., Algebra 1, Geometry, etc.).
- Volunteer at your school, if time permits. Many middle school students who welcomed their parents' participation in daily life in elementary school do not want their parents around during the middle school day. Don't take it personally. Unlike elementary school teachers, middle school teachers are less likely to use classroom volunteers. But there may be other ways to help your school that do not involve being in the classroom. Parents can help in the main office, in the library, in the clinic, or serve as a mentor. The school will let you know its needs.

- Get involved with the Parent Teacher Group (PTA/PTSA) at your school. Plan on attending these monthly meetings. They are a good way to learn about your child's school and what is going on in middle school that your child may not be sharing with you.

## MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAMS

All middle schools provide the following services to students who require them:

- **Special Education.** FCPS provides specialized services for students with disabilities.
- **ESOL Services.** ESOL helps children who speak other languages learn to read and understand English so they can succeed in school.
- **Honors Classes.** Honors classes offer additional academic rigor for middle school students in Math, English, Science, and Social Studies. Honors classes are open to all students who request them..

In addition, some middle schools offer the following academic programs and services.

- **Full-Time Advanced Academic Program (AAP) Level IV Program.** Students who are eligible for Level IV AAP Center placement may participate in a Level IV center program at the middle school level. Consult the boundary locator to identify the middle school in your region that offers a Level IV Center Program. Students who are eligible for Level IV center placement also have the option of taking a full honors program at their local middle school, if they choose not to attend the Level IV center school.
- **International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program (IBMYP).** The IBMYP "encourages students to embrace and understand connections between traditional subjects and the real world and become critical and reflective thinkers." IBMYP is offered at five middle schools in FCPS, and in four high schools. Students may continue with IBMYP in grades 9 and 10 in preparation for the International Baccalaureate (IB) program in grades 11 and 12. The students can earn an IBMYP Certificate at the end of 10th grade.
- **Career and Technical Education (CTE).** Middle schools offer courses that teach students technical applications of many occupations. These courses can help your student prepare for higher education and for entry-level employment.

- **Middle School Immersion Transition Program.** Students who successfully complete the FCPS elementary school foreign language immersion program are offered immersion classes at some middle schools in grades 7 and 8 to continue their world language studies. Students who complete Immersion 1 and 2 in middle school earn two high school language credits and enter the third year of that language in grade 9.
- **Young Scholars Program (YS).** YS is “designed to find and nurture academic potential in students from historically underrepresented populations,” and to increase their proportions in advanced academics in grades K-8. YS is offered at three middle schools: Glasgow; Holmes; and Poe..
- **College Success Program:** The College Success Program prepares students for success in higher education. Some (but not all) of the programs are for students who will be the first in their family to attend college and who do not have the financial means to attend college without significant financial support. The four College Success programs for middle school students are:
  - > **Achievement Via Individual Determination (AVID).** AVID’s mission is to close the achievement gap by preparing all students for college readiness and success in a global society. AVID is an elective course that teaches students study skills, and offers motivational activities and the opportunity to explore college and career options. For more information, speak to the AVID coordinator at your middle school. (Not all middle schools offer AVID.)
  - > **Early Identification Program (EIP).** EIP is a cooperative program between George Mason University (GMU) and FCPS that offers a multi-year college preparation program to students who will be the first in their families to attend college. EIP offers academic support and explores college options during the school year and offers a three-week academic program at GMU during the summer.
  - > **College and Career Exploration Club (CCE)/College Partnership Program (CPP).** Some middle schools offer the CPP’s College and Career Exploration Club (CCE) as an after-school program. 8th graders may apply for the high school CPP through the CCE. CPP assists high school students from groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education navigate the college admissions process by providing monthly sessions and workshops. The CCE is open to all students.

If your school does not offer a program that you would like started for your student, contact your school’s principal.

# RESOURCES FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL PARENTS

**Parent-Teacher Groups.** Many schools have a PTA/PTO that works to ensure students receive a high-quality education and the necessary supports to grow academically. Many PTAs are run by parents and provide educational and financial assistance to schools. Some offer before and after-school programs for students as well. The PTA is a great resource for parents. You can learn a lot about what is going on at your middle school through your PTA.

**Parent Resource Center Library.** The Parent Resource Center Library is a lending-library that offers parents and professionals books, journals, periodicals, and videos to assist them in better understanding children with special needs, family interaction, education, and roles and responsibilities in the special education process.

**School Library/Media Center:** Your school's library/media center can provide books, journals, periodicals and videos for your student. The school library staff can assist students in doing research for their classes, offer suggestions of books for independent reading, and provide workshops and presentations on various subjects that may be of interest to your middle schooler. The library also has desktop computers available for students to use during the school day. In addition, the school librarian can help students borrow laptops and MiFi hotspot devices to use at home.







## High School (Grades 9-12)

High school is a time of academic and career choices for teens. They must decide whether to take regular, Honors, Academy, Advanced Placement (AP), or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses. They must seriously begin investigating their options after high school. High school also is a time of increased involvement in extracurricular activities, whether it is a school club or activity, athletics, community service, or outside employment. It, therefore, is important for parents to have a basic understanding of these course options and where to go for assistance to help their teen make decisions.

### HIGH SCHOOL: WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

- The school day in most FCPS high schools begins between 8:00 and 8:10 a.m. and ends between 2:45 and 2:55 p.m. The school day includes time for classes in core subjects and electives, lunch, and embedded remediation and enrichment, which often is named using the school's mascot as an identifier (e.g., "Jaguar Time").
- Most high school classes do not meet every day. Instead, they meet every other day in a block schedule that allows for longer instruction time on the days the specific class meets. Block schedules identify when classes meet by an Odd Day-Even Day schedule system-wide. Individual schools usually designate these days by their school colors. (Note: If you have students at more than one high school at the same time, pay attention to the Odd/Even designation and not the color, especially if their schools have the same color or colors.)
- High school students take classes in English, Math, Social Studies, Science, Health (including Family Life Education and Drivers' Education), and physical education, to meet the graduation requirements of the Commonwealth of Virginia. In addition, students may take elective courses in fine arts, career and technical education, and world language. Students choose high school courses in late winter/early spring before 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th Grades.
- Academics are more rigorous in high school. High school students have various options for advanced study, including Advanced Placement courses; International Baccalaureate courses; and Dual Enrollment courses.

- Many high school students participate in extra-curricular activities (e.g., school clubs and academic teams; sports teams; etc.) at school and in their communities. Many high school students also have paid employment outside of the school day. Organization and careful planning are essential skills for all high school students.
- High school can be overwhelming to teens as they are faced with academic, social, and emotional challenges not experienced in middle school. Although the typical teenager increasingly holds their parents at arms-length to show their independence, this is a time for parents to be watchful and to discreetly be engaged in the personal and social life of the student. Parents, therefore, must learn how to provide guidance and assistance to their students as their teens take on increased independence and personal responsibility both in and outside of the school building.

## HIGH SCHOOL - WHO IS IN THE BUILDING?

### Main Office

- Principal
- Assistant Principal
- Office Staff

### Classroom

- Department Chair
- Classroom Teachers (By Subject Matter)
- ESOL Teachers
- SPED Teachers
- Instructional Assistants



## Student Support Staff

- Director of Student Services
- School Counselors
- SOSA (System of Support Advisor)
- College & Career Center Specialist
- School Librarian
- Director of Student Activities
- School Health Aide
- Parent Liaison
- School Psychologist
- Social Worker
- Speech/Language Pathologist
- Department Chair
- Equity Lead

## Other Staff

- Cafeteria Staff
- Custodial Staff
- School Security Staff
- SRO (Student Resource Officer)
- SBTS (School Based Technology Specialist)

# BE AN ADVOCATE

## AT HOME

- Talk to your child. Check in every day and ask them to tell you about their day. Sometimes it helps to ask them one thing that interested them during the day.
- Help your teen develop consistent study habits during the early high school years by ensuring that homework assignments and special projects are completed on time. Check Course Information in FCPS 24-7 Learning: Parent View regularly. Make sure that the teacher is posting their syllabus and other materials so that not only the student can access but the parents can stay on top of this. This will be helpful prior to grades coming out so that you can make sure your child takes advantage of the teacher's open hours to meet.
- Help your child with planning and time management. Ask your teen how they keep track of class assignments. Many schools issue paper planners (or agendas) to their students. Does your teen use a planner (either a paper planner or a calendar app)? Ensure that your student is developing strong study skills by checking that class assignments are entered into their planner and that all assignment have been completed.
- Talk to your student about balancing academics and extracurricular activities. If your teen also has a job, after school and/or on weekends, discuss your expectations regarding work hours and giving priority to schoolwork.

- Help your student plan for homework. When will your student do their homework? (Same time every day or does it need to change because of after-school activities?) Where will your student do their homework? (Establish a clean space with no distractions, e.g., desk, table, community room, library.) How long for homework? (Know each teacher's expectations for homework. What is the minimum amount of time their teacher expects be spent on homework?)
- Do your parent homework! Mark important school dates and all school holidays in your personal calendar or planner. Keep a copy of your child's schedule handy, so that you know who their teachers are, what period each class meets, and where each class is located. Some questions to ask yourself: Do I know my school's bell schedule? What are the school's colors for odd and even day scheduling? (If you have children in different middle and high schools at the same time, the colors may not be the same.)
- At the beginning of every school year, discuss with your child FCPS's Student Rights and Responsibilities. Students will talk about this important document in school but also need to hear from you about your expectations regarding their rights and their behavior in school. Speak with your child as well about your desire to be told about any social cruelty (teasing, bullying, etc.)
- Monitor school and class attendance. Absences from school may be a sign that your student is losing interest in school, or is struggling with schoolwork, or is dealing with conflicts or other social situations with classmates, or is simply tired or overwhelmed balancing academics, extracurricular activities, and other commitments. Speak with your high school staff if you need help.
- Establish rules and boundaries for use of electronic devices (smartphones, tablets, and computers) early on in high school, and check in regularly with your child regarding screen time. You may need to limit screen time (e.g., television, video games, and movies, etc.), especially during the school week. Continue to monitor and moderate your child's use of social media (e.g., Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Facebook, etc.) and any increased need to electronic communications.
- Monitor your student's progress report (report card). If your child is at risk of failing and not meeting the graduation requirements, you should meet with your child's teacher and counselor to see that a focused remediation plan is established. If your child is struggling in a class, encourage them to get help (e.g., during their daily embedded remediation and enrichment period; after school through teacher meetings or peer tutoring; etc.).
- Pay attention to graduation requirements. Know what the graduation requirements for your child. (If you have more than one student in high school, the graduation requirements may be slightly different.) Monitor your child's progress to make sure he or she is on track to graduate. Encourage your child to speak with his/her counselor to discuss their progress towards meeting graduation requirements. Schedule an



appointment with the counselor for yourself if you have questions.

- Encourage your child's development of special interests and talents outside of school, including activities that include the child in social circles (e.g., with groups of friends and peers in non-academic activities, on outside sports teams, in activities at their personal place of worship, etc.). Your local community center, recreation center, library, house of worship, etc., may provide options.
- Discuss the importance of getting enough sleep at night (9 – 9 ½ hours per night, recommended) and starting the day with a healthy breakfast. Studies show that the majority of teenagers do not get enough sleep. Sleep deprivation can contribute to an inability to concentrate, poor grades, anxiety, and depression. (If your child drives to school, and drives others to school, sleep is critical.)
- Set expectations regarding social life. Do you have a curfew? Can your child ride with a student driver? Can your student driver give rides to others? What are your consequences if you find that your teen is using alcohol or drugs?

## AT SCHOOL

- Stay in touch with teachers and make sure that they are communicating with you about your child. This lets the teachers know that you care and will be involved as a parent. This communication may be by emails, phone conversations, and/or periodic face-to-face meetings. Let the teacher know your preferred method of communication.
- If the teacher contacts you about your child – please respond to the teacher within 24 hours, if possible.
- Work with your teen and your child's school counselor to create an Academic and Career Plan, including successful course sequencing, for your student. Make sure that your child is on track to graduate. If your child is college-bound, you want to make sure that your student takes the appropriate college preparation classes.
- Hold regular meetings with your child's Counselor and your student. Let the counselor know that you are going to be actively involved in insuring that your child has a successful high school experience. This communication can help to get the most out of the counselor, as well as keep you involved with the school, so things do not slip.
- Take advantage of opportunities your school offers to learn more about planning for life beyond high school. Attend college planning programs, college fairs, etc. Learn about the various opportunities available to students who wish to pursue an apprenticeship or employment directly from high school.

# HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS

All high schools provide the following services to students who require them:

- **Special Education.** FCPS provides specialized services for students with disabilities.
- **ESOL Services.** ESOL helps children who speak other languages learn to read and understand English so they can succeed in school.
- **Honors Classes.** Honors classes offer additional academic rigor for high school students. They are open to all students who request them. Available in Math, English, Science, and Social Studies.

In addition, high schools may offer the following academic programs and services.

- **Advanced Placement (AP):** AP courses can provide college-level credit for work performed in high school. They are more advanced than regular high school courses in the same subjects. For college admissions, good performance on AP exams can help your child significantly. AP classes receive a weight of +1.0 when calculating grade point average.

AP Students may be eligible to participate in AP Capstone, a diploma program based on two year-long AP courses: AP Seminar and AP Research. In the Capstone program, students study a variety of topics across multiple disciplines, and have the ability to choose topics that are of particular interest to them. Students work on mastering skills in critical thinking, research, and presentation.

- **International Baccalaureate Program (IB):** The International Baccalaureate (IB) program, offers a rigorous academic curriculum for 11th and 12th grade students. Students can earn a full IB diploma that consists of external examinations in six subjects, participation in community service activities, and completion of a 4,000-word extended essay. Students who do not want to complete a full IB diploma may earn a separate IB certificate for each IB course completed. Any student enrolled in an IB course is required to take the end-of-course examination. IB classes receive a weight of +1.0 when calculating grade point average. IB is offered only at Annandale, Edison, Lee, Marshall, Mount Vernon, South Lakes, and Justice High Schools and Robinson Secondary School, but is open to all students through pupil placement. IB courses are recognized for advanced course placement or college credit by many universities in the United States.
- **International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program (IBMYP).** High School students in grades 9 and 10 may participate in the IMMYP program, which “encourages students to embrace and understand connections between traditional subjects and the real world and become critical and reflective thinkers.” MYP is offered at four FCPS high schools. Students can earn an MYP Certificate at the end of 10th grade.

- **Dual Enrollment:** Dual enrollment courses are courses offered to high school students (generally seniors) where they can earn high school and college credits at their high school. These college level courses are taught at their high school by Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) faculty and students pay reduced tuition rates. Upon completion of dual enrollment courses, students may receive college credit.
- **Career & Technical Education (CTE) Programs.** Professional Technical Studies courses in the following areas are offered in the comprehensive high schools: business, industrial technology, marketing, trade and industrial, and work and family studies.
- **Academies:** A high school academy is a center within an existing school that offers advanced technical and specialized courses that successfully integrate career and academic preparation. Six FCPS high schools have Academies. Courses in health occupations are available to all high school juniors and seniors at Chantilly, Edison, Falls Church, and West Potomac High Schools, and school bus transportation is provided. Programs for students with special interests are available at community-based locations and at single school sites. For further information, speak with your student's school counselor or call the Office of Professional Technical Studies at (703) 208-7796.
- **College Success Program:** The College Success Program prepares high school students for success in higher education. Some (but not all) of the programs are for students who will be the first in their family to attend college and who do not have the financial means to attend college without significant financial support. The four FCPS College Success Programs are:
  - > **Achievement Via Individual Determination (AVID).** AVID's mission is to close the achievement gap by preparing all students for college readiness and success in a global society. AVID is an elective course that teaches students study skills and offers motivational activities and the opportunity to explore college and career options. AVID students learn how to navigate the college admissions process. They are given opportunities to visit college campuses and attend college information fairs with their AVID class, and they may receive college application fee waivers and earn specialized scholarships. Students who wish to take AVID go through a screening process. For more information, contact the AVID coordinator at your high school.
  - > **College Partnership Program (CPP).** CPP assists high school students from groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education learn how to navigate the college admissions process through monthly, after-school sessions and workshops. Some middle schools offer the CPP's College and Career Exploration Club (CCE) as an after-school program.

- > **Early Identification Program (EIP).** EIP is a cooperative program between George Mason University and FCPS that offers a multi-year college preparation program to students who will be the first in their families to attend college.
- > **Pathway to the Baccalaureate/ Pathway Connection.** The Pathway program is a cooperative program with Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) that offers structured support for high school seniors as they transition to and through NOVA, and later transfer to George Mason University or another university that participates in the guaranteed admission program (where NOVA students who complete an associate degree are insured admission to a participating four-year college to complete their bachelor's degree). Seniors must apply to, and be enrolled in, Pathway in the fall of 12th grade to participate in this program beyond high school.
- **Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC).** JROTC offers courses that focus on academic preparation, citizenship, leadership, character development, and the scope and nature of a particular branch of U.S. military service. Students in grades 9-12 may participate in JROTC. The program is offered at some FCPS schools. Students who do not attend those schools also may enroll in JROTC through pupil placement.

More information on high school academics can be found online.

## RESOURCES FOR HIGH SCHOOL PARENTS

- **Parent-Teacher-Student Associations/Organizations.** Many high schools have a PTSA/PTSO that includes students as members, to work with their schools to ensure students receive a high-quality education and the necessary supports to grow academically. Some PTSA/PTSO are run by parents and provide educational and financial assistance to schools. The PTSA/PTSO is a great resource for parents. You can learn a lot about what is going on at your high school through your PTSA/PTSO.
- **Booster Clubs.** Many high school athletic and academic teams, and other extracurricular clubs, have Booster Clubs for parents to support their students in their extracurricular activities. Booster Clubs offer volunteers for school events, raise funds to support teams and clubs, and attend events and competitions to support their students.
- **Parent Resource Center.** The Parent Resource Center library offers parents and professional's books, journals, periodicals, and videos to assist them in better understanding children with special needs, family interaction, education, and roles and responsibilities in the special education process.



- **College and Career Center:** Every high school offers a College and Career Center that offers current college and career resource materials. The CCC specialist can assist your student with investigating colleges and/or career and technical opportunities and training, financial aid/scholarships/grants. CCCs host college visits, military recruiters, and representatives from apprenticeship and training programs.
- **School Library/Media Center:** Your school's Library/Media Center can provide books, journals, periodicals and videos for your student. The School Library staff can assist students in doing research for their classes, offer suggestions of books for independent reading, and provide workshops and presentations on various subjects that may be of interest to your high school student. The library also has desktop computers available for students to use during the school day. In addition, the school librarian can help students borrow MiFi hotspot devices to use at home.









# Thinking Beyond High School

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

A goal of FCPS' Portrait of a Graduate is to provide opportunities for emerging adults to learn skills to be successful after high school. Parents and guardians can help students develop these skills by working with teachers and school staff.

Young adults have many options today -- from choosing to start a business, enjoying international travel, joining the military, learning a trade, obtaining an internship, enrolling in adult education classes, earning a vocational certificate, or attending a two- or four-year college.

Parents and guardians can support their student in many ways. The College and Career Specialist and counselors at the high school have resources for students and parents or guardians.

## BE AN ADVOCATE

- **Listen to your young adult:** Talk with your young adult about mutual expectations but also listen to what they are saying about their future. What do they want to achieve as an adult? What are their passions? What are their strengths? How do they want to contribute to society? How can you help them achieve their goals?
- **Encourage Experiences:** Encourage your young adult to apply for jobs, college, or further training. Suggest and encourage your young adult to acquire part-time work or volunteer experiences related to their career plans.
- **Consider Career Options:** Attend career information programs or college fairs and college night programs. Young adults should consider taking an occupational survey that develops a profile of the likely careers that would fit well with their survey profile. Also consider taking career-related tests (e.g., O\*NET Interest Profiler at My Next Move).

- **Get Familiar with College Admission.** Young adults applying to college should take the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) in the fall of their sophomore year of high school (for practice) and junior year (for scholarships). College entrance exams Scholastic Aptitude Test I (SAT I), American College Testing (ACT), Scholastic Aptitude Test II (SAT II), Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) are typically taken in the spring of junior year, and again in the fall of senior year if needed. If military service is under consideration, the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) is required. Higher scores on admissions tests can mean more choices when considering colleges and military branches. Higher test scores can also open up opportunities for additional grants and scholarships to help pay for college.

## WHAT ARE SOME OPTIONS?

### EXPLORE OPTIONS

Some students want to enter into the workplace right after graduating high school and others want to follow a pathway from workplace into college and back to the workplace after receiving a post-secondary credential or college degree.

Whether your young adult plans to attend college or trade school, enter an apprenticeship program, join the military, or simply find a job, parents and guardians can help them consider opportunities and help find information about various options.

### College/University

Students have many opportunities through two year (community college) or four year programs.

### Two-Year Programs:

A two-year college offers many options for students. Students may earn a two-year associates degree and may use it to transfer to a four-year program. They also can earn a one-year certificate that prepares them for a specific vocation.

Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) is the largest public education institution in Virginia, and the second largest community college in the U.S. The main campus is in Annandale, VA, but the college has five additional campuses in Northern Virginia. NOVA also offers numerous distance learning opportunities.



- **A.A. /A.S. /A.F.A. Degrees:** Students may earn an Associate of Arts or an Associate of Science Degree or an Associates of Fine Arts Degree from NOVA in various academic disciplines. These degrees allow students to continue education towards a bachelor's degree at a four-year college. Students who earn an A.A. or A.S. degree may earn guaranteed admission to a four-year college that has a Guaranteed Admission Agreement with NOVA, if they meet the requirements of that agreement for that school.
- **A.A.A./A.A.S Degrees:** Students may earn a two-year Associate of Applied Arts Degree to prepare for employment in fine arts, music, or photography or an Associate of Applied Science Degree to prepare for employment in various technical fields. These programs are not designed generally for transfer to four-year colleges or universities.
- **Certificates:** Students may earn a certificate for a specific job. Some certificates are part of an associate degree program, while others are stand-alone programs. Certificates can lead to immediate full-time employment in a variety of areas, including (but not limited to): information technology; various health services, such as nursing, dental hygiene, occupational therapist assistant, physical therapist assistant, and emergency medicine technicians; and various skilled trades, such as welding, automotive technology engineering technology; and air conditioning and refrigeration.

Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) is the largest public education institution in Virginia, and the second largest community college in the U.S. The main campus is in Annandale, VA, but the college has five additional campuses in Northern Virginia. NOVA also offers numerous distance learning opportunities.

### **Some benefits of community college:**

- Everyone with a high school degree can attend. There is no admissions test (SAT/ACT). You register to attend.
- Community college is a less expensive post-secondary option than many four-year colleges. If a student qualifies for a Pell Grant, that grant will basically cover most of your costs at NOVA. Two years of community college before transferring to complete a bachelor's degree at a four-year institution may be a very cost-effective way to pay for college for many families.
- Certificate programs offer a pathway to immediate full-time employment. For students who do not wish to enroll in two or four-year studies, certificate programs offer a pathway to jobs that offer financial benefits and stability. (Students who are paying for college themselves might consider earning a certificate first to enable them to secure employment that will help them pay later college expenses.)

## Four-Year Programs:

A four-year college or university gives students many different options for post-secondary study. Students may earn a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) Degree or a Bachelor of Science (B.S.) Degree upon completion of the coursework required for their specific degree. Students who want to earn a postgraduate degrees (masters or doctorate) must complete a bachelor's degree first.

According to the Association of American Colleges and Universities, there are approximately 2,618 four-year colleges and universities in the United States. Students have many different choices to consider, so students should begin thinking about, and preparing for, college early.

Students can begin to identify college options by using tools provided in Naviance Student by visiting their High School College and Career Center, and doing online research. There are many college guide websites that may be helpful such as:

- Princeton Review's Complete Book of Colleges
- Barron's Profiles of American Colleges
- The College Board College Handbook
- The Best 385 Colleges (Princeton Review)
- The Fiske Guide to Colleges

Students must apply for admission to four-year colleges. Applications may require personal essays; admissions testing (either the SAT or the ACT); teacher and counselor recommendations; and a high school transcript. Students apply to most four-year colleges in the fall of 12th grade.

Four-year colleges and universities vary in price, with public institutions (such as state universities) being less expensive than private colleges and universities. Many parents are overwhelmed by the possible cost of college. It is important to know that there are many ways to pay for college including savings and financial assistance (scholarships, grants, and loans). Families with fewer resources are eligible for greater financial assistance.

Financial aid is available from many universities based on family financial need. Some colleges and universities have committed to financing college in full, with no loans, for students who meet need requirements. Scholarships also are available to students through colleges and universities, and private and non-profit business and organizations. Families interested in applying for financial help must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) online. Some colleges and universities also require the College Board's College Scholarship Service (CSS). These applications are used to determine how much students and their families are able to contribute to the cost of college.

For more information about colleges and universities, speak with your student's counselor and the College and Career Specialist at your high school.

## JOB TRAINING

- Apprenticeships
- Trade and Technical Training

### Apprenticeship Programs

Apprenticeship Programs are open to young adults who are at least 16 years old. Apprentices receive on-the-job training in a particular skill or trade. Apprenticeship programs also include some classroom instruction, and can culminate in a degree or certification. A typical program lasts from three to four years, depending upon the trade.

For more information about apprenticeship programs in Northern Virginia, please call the Fairfax County Public Schools representative of the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry, Division of Apprenticeship Training at (703) 506-2300.

### Trade and Technical Training

Fairfax County Public Schools has professional technical centers where students may continue training after high school. The adult education program offers courses for people no longer in high school. Many community colleges have trade and vocational training programs, as do private trade and technical schools.

### Military Service

Joining the military (U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, or Coast Guard) can be an exciting way for a young person to serve the country and build marketable skills. Students who wish to serve can enlist in the military branch of their choice. In addition to pay and training, enlisted men and women can earn funds for college through the G.I. Bill.

Students who wish to pursue a college degree and military service at the same time can do so by applying to one of the U.S. military service academies or the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) offered at many colleges and universities.

Both men and women may enlist in all branches of the armed forces. Enlistment procedures are similar, but the services differ in length of enlistment and opportunities for specific training. A local military recruiter can provide more complete information about military options. There is a testing requirement for military service.

### Trade and Technical Training

Fairfax County Public Schools has professional technical centers where students may continue training after high school. The adult education program offers courses for people no longer in high school. Many community colleges have trade and vocational training programs, as do private trade and technical schools.

## Gap Year / Undecided

For some high school graduates, taking a year off between high school and the “real world” can be beneficial. A gap year offers recent high school graduates an opportunity to take a break from academics before heading on to college, trade school, military service, or full-time employment. Young people can do community service (e.g., AmeriCorps), work on political campaigns, and get a full-time job to earn money for college, travel or live in a foreign country, or work on art projects or other passions, among other things.

Students opt for gap years for many different reasons. Some are simply burned out after twelve or thirteen straight years of formal education. Others want another chance to apply to a dream school that did not offer admission on a first attempt. Others have personal or family circumstances that necessitate a year off before taking next steps. Any of these reasons are valid reasons for a break. And, many colleges actually encourage students, even those who already have been admitted, to take a gap year.

There are many formal gap year programs now that offer structured programs for students, but many of them are expensive, especially those that involve foreign travel. There are many, more-local opportunities for recent graduates. Fairfax County offers volunteer opportunities for its residents, including ones for teens, and provides useful information on other volunteer opportunities and internships available for young adults.

## Undecided

If your student does not know what they want to do after high school, a good source of information and a place to start is the O\*Net, a free publication of the federal government. O\*Net is an excellent career reference guide for career awareness and job searches.

# PLANNING FOR COLLEGE TIMELINE

## FOR PARENTS

### Elementary School

- Speak with your child about your thoughts and expectations for college.
- Encourage your student to work hard, to read, and to find subjects they are interested in.
- Start saving for college, if you are able to do so.

### Middle School

- Speak with your child about college and your thoughts about college, and any expectations you have for college.



- Help your child develop strong study skills.
- Speak with your school's counselor about whether, and when, your student is ready for high-school level courses. Middle school students may take high-school level math classes (e.g., Algebra 1; Geometry,) and foreign language classes for which they may earn high school credit.
- Monitor your student's progress. Encourage your student to get help at school if coursework becomes challenging. Investigate outside options as well, such as tutors, enrichment programs, etc.
- If your child is taking a high school level course in middle school, and you have concerns about the grade received appearing on their official transcript, you can ask to expunge the class and grade from their record. Consult with your child's counselor.
- Start, or continue, saving for college.

## High School

- If your student is thinking about college, they need to begin laying the foundation for college beginning in their freshman year of high school.
- The best predictor of college success is good grades in high school. Students with higher GPAs have many more choices for college.
- Speak with your child's counselor yearly to ensure that they are taking classes that will prepare them for college admissions and acceptance.
- If your child wants to play sports at a NCAA Division I School, they will need to have a 2.3 GPA in core courses and a 900 SAT or 75 ACT sum score. For a Division II school, athletes need a 2.20 GPA and an 840 SAT or 70 ACT sum score to be able to play.

## FOR STUDENTS

### Ninth Grade

- Take challenging courses (math sequence) – work with your school counselor to plan your high school path.
- If having trouble in a class, get help.
- Explore athletics, school clubs, and other extra-curricular activities (both inside and outside of school) – find a passion
- Develop an independent interest.
- Explore volunteer opportunities.



- Start a resume – students should begin making a list of all of your activities, volunteer work, jobs, awards and honors. Keep track of how many hours a week you spend on each activity, any special projects you undertook, any leadership positions you held.
- Explore possible careers and research requirements
- Work with parents to estimate your financial aid and save for college
- If you are interested in playing college sports, make sure that they register with the NCAA Eligibility Center before their sophomore year to start a Certification Account and Profile Page. Students who wish to play for a Division I or II school must create a Certification Account to make an official school visit or to sign a National Letter of Intent.

## Tenth Grade

- Take challenging courses (Honors or AP if ready).
- If you are having trouble in class, get help.
- Plan to take the PSAT in October. This is good practice for later high-stakes college testing.
- Find a mentor/potential college recommender.
- Focus extracurricular activities – colleges like to see long-term commitment.
- Update resume.
- Visit some college campuses.
- Check financial feasibility of colleges that interest student (be honest with student about paying for college and which schools are feasible).

## Eleventh Grade

- Take a challenging course load (Honors or AP/IB classes).
- If you are having trouble in a class, get help.
- Take leadership roles in extracurricular activities
- Plan to take PSAT/NMSQT in October. Students who take the PSAT/NMSQT in 11th grade are eligible for National Merit Scholarships awarded to college-bound high school seniors every year.
- Plan to take the SAT (March or May) and/or ACT (February or April) early so you have time to re-take tests, if desired.
- Visit your school's College and Career Center regularly.
- Study for standardized tests (SAT/ACT). There are many free online services.
- Attend college fair and college night programs in October and April.

- Develop a list of colleges to visit. Plan visits. If you visit during the summer before 12th grade, arrange to have an on-campus interview during your visit.

## Twelfth Grade

- Take a challenging course load (beware of too many easy classes).
- If you are having trouble in a class, get help.
- Take leadership roles in extra-curricular activities.
- Visit your school's College and Career Center regularly. Take advantage of the information sessions the CCC offers with representatives from visiting colleges and universities.
- Retake the SAT or ACT in the fall if you are looking to improve your scores.
- Request that your SAT or ACT scores are sent to the necessary colleges.
- Complete the FAFSA as soon as possible after the open date of October 1. (Note: Parents must submit financial information, including tax returns, during the FAFSA application process and for many schools' financial aid).
- Submit early-action/early-decision applications, or applications for ROTC scholarships, by October or November deadlines.
- If you have a job outside of school, establish a reasonable schedule for schoolwork, job, and sleep.
- Finalize your list of colleges you want to apply to.
- Plan for college applications. Know deadlines. Request teacher recommendations early. Check with your school's Student Information Assistant (SIA) about process for requesting transcripts.







## **Gatehouse Administration Center**

8115 Gatehouse Road  
Falls Church, VA 22042

















