

**PREPARING FOR THE COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS**

# 9th & 10th Graders

Lana Meskunas College and Career Counselor



# Purpose?

## **To Prepare, Learn, and Find**

- Preparing 9th & 10th graders for college applications
- Learning college application vocabulary
- Finding reliable resources for your answers



# 9th & 10th Grade Matter!

## Grades



- Grades impact your future
- **GPA** includes 9th & 10th grades

## Classes



- Plan for prerequisites
- Class rigor counts—try **Honors**
- Prepare for **AP** in later years
- Build strong study & time management skills

## Testing



- Start **ACT & SAT** practice
- Focus on understanding the test, not the score
- Try an SAT or ACT question daily





# GPA & Transcript

- Computing GPA
  - Unweighted A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F=0
    - 3 As, 2 Bs, 1 C, 1D then  $GPA = (3*4 + 2*3 + 1*2 + 1*1) / 7 = 3.0$
  - Weighted
    - Honors Courses A=5, B=4, C=3, D=1, F=0
    - (all Honors) 3 As, 2 Bs, 1 C, 1D then  $GPA = (3*5 + 2*4 + 1*3 + 1*1) / 7 = 3.85$
    - AP Courses A=6, B=5, C=4, D=3, F=0

Some colleges  
recalculate GPA  
using core courses  
only.

- Check transcripts twice a year
  - Always check for mistakes and correct them immediately



# Rigor Definition

## **Challenge Yourself**

Take AP and  
Honors Courses

## **Variety**

Have a combination of  
core and elective AP  
courses. Check out the  
MCS course catalog

## **Stay Prepared**

Full schedules throughout  
HS (not the min only). 32  
credits is better than the  
minimum required 26.  
Layout all 4 years now to  
find needed prerequisites



# Honors vs. AP

## Advanced

## Placement

- AP is a college-level class (CollegeBoard)
- Standardized exams in May
- Exam is recommended but not required
- Graded on a scale of 1-5
- College credit varies with scores over 3 (University of Alabama gives credit for 3+ while some colleges require a 5 for credit)
- AP scores aren't sent with applications, but some schools require self-reporting

## Honors

Honors is an accelerated version of a regular class





# College Entrance Exams

SAT – Scholastic Aptitude Test

ACT – American College Test

Either test is accepted by all colleges and universities

Try both then concentrate on the one that fits you the best

ACT is more like a HS test as it measures what you know in 5 different subjects (Reading, Math and English. Science & Writing are optional)



# ACT: What's New!

**WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE CHANGES COMING IN APRIL 2025**

@thecollegereviewers




**ONLINE TEST**  
BEGINNING WITH THE APRIL 2025 EXAM:

STUDENTS CAN CHOOSE TO TAKE THE ACT ON A COMPUTER AT AN OFFICIAL ACT TESTING CENTER (NOT AT HOME)

THE APRIL, JUNE, & JULY TEST DATES WILL OFFER BOTH THE NEW ONLINE FORMAT AND THE TRADITIONAL PAPER VERSION (OLD FORMAT)

BY SEPTEMBER, ALL NATIONAL TEST DATES WILL FEATURE BOTH ONLINE AND PAPER OPTIONS WITH THE NEW TEST FORMAT, WITH SCHOOL-DAY TESTING ADOPTING THE NEW FORMAT IN SPRING 2026.



**SHORTER TEST**  
IN THE NEW TEST FORMAT


THE OVERALL ACT EXAM LENGTH WILL BE REDUCED BY ONE-THIRD, WITH THE NEW EXAM TAKING 2 HOURS AND 5 MINUTES

THIS MAKES THE EXAM 70 MINUTES SHORTER & 9 MINUTES SHORTER THAN THE DIGITAL SAT

PLUS, MORE TIME PER QUESTION!

THE READING & ENGLISH PASSAGES WILL BE SHORTER & THERE WILL BE FEWER QUESTIONS PER SECTION (44 FEWER QUESTIONS OVERALL!)

THE MATH SECTION WILL REDUCE FROM 5 ANSWER OPTIONS TO 4




**OPTIONAL SCIENCE**  
IN THE NEW TEST FORMAT

STUDENTS TAKING THE ONLINE EXAM IN APRIL, JUNE OR JULY WILL HAVE THE OPTION TO TAKE THE SCIENCE SECTION

STUDENTS TAKING THE PAPER FORMAT IN APRIL, JUNE OR JULY WILL STILL BE REQUIRED TO TAKE THE SCIENCE SECTION

IN SEPTEMBER, BOTH THE PAPER AND ONLINE EXAM WILL OFFER STUDENTS THE OPTION TO TAKE THE SCIENCE SECTION




**SCORING**  
THE NEW TEST FORMAT

ENGLISH, READING, & MATH WILL REMAIN THE CORE SECTIONS OF THE ACT, DETERMINING THE REPORTABLE SCORE

THE COMPOSITE SCORE WILL BE THE AVERAGE OF THESE THREE SECTIONS ON A 1-36 SCALE

STUDENTS WHO TAKE THE OPTIONAL SCIENCE SECTION WILL RECEIVE A SEPARATE STEM SCORE: AVERAGE OF MATH & SCIENCE SCORES

SUPERSCORE: HIGHEST SCORES FOR EACH SUBJECT WITH THE TEST DATE - BASED ON ENGLISH, READING, MATH




**WHAT'S NOT CHANGING**  
WITH THE NEW TEST FORMAT

UNLIKE THE CHANGES WITH THE SAT, THERE IS NO NEW CONTENT BEING INTRODUCED TO THE ACT - ONLY SHORTENING THE SECTIONS/TIMES

SCORES FROM TESTS TAKEN PRIOR TO THE ROLLOUT OF THE NEW COMPOSITE SCORE WILL NOT CHANGE

THE ACT WILL STILL BE SCORED 1-36

THE WRITING SECTION IS STILL OPTIONAL  
(THOUGH MOST COLLEGES DON'T CONSIDER IT)



**2025 TEST DATES**  
REGISTER ON [WWW.ACT.ORG](http://WWW.ACT.ORG)

<b>APR 5</b>	ONLINE (NEW FORMAT)
<b>JUN 14</b>	OPTIONAL SCIENCE
<b>JUL 12</b>	PAPER (OLD FORMAT)
	NO CHANGE

<b>SEP 6</b>	BOTH DIGITAL & PAPER OFFER NEW FORMAT WITH OPTIONAL SCIENCE
<b>OCT 25</b>	
<b>DEC 6</b>	

AS OF FEB 2025, REGISTRATION OPEN FOR APR/JUN/JULY EXAMS



**ACT OPTIONS**  
WHEN REGISTERING FOR THE NEW FORMAT

**ACT ONLY**  
\$65

**ACT + SCIENCE**  
\$65 + \$4

**ACT + WRITING**  
\$65 + \$25

**ACT + SCIENCE + WRITING**  
\$65 + \$4 + \$25

FEB THRU JULY 2025





# Extracurricular

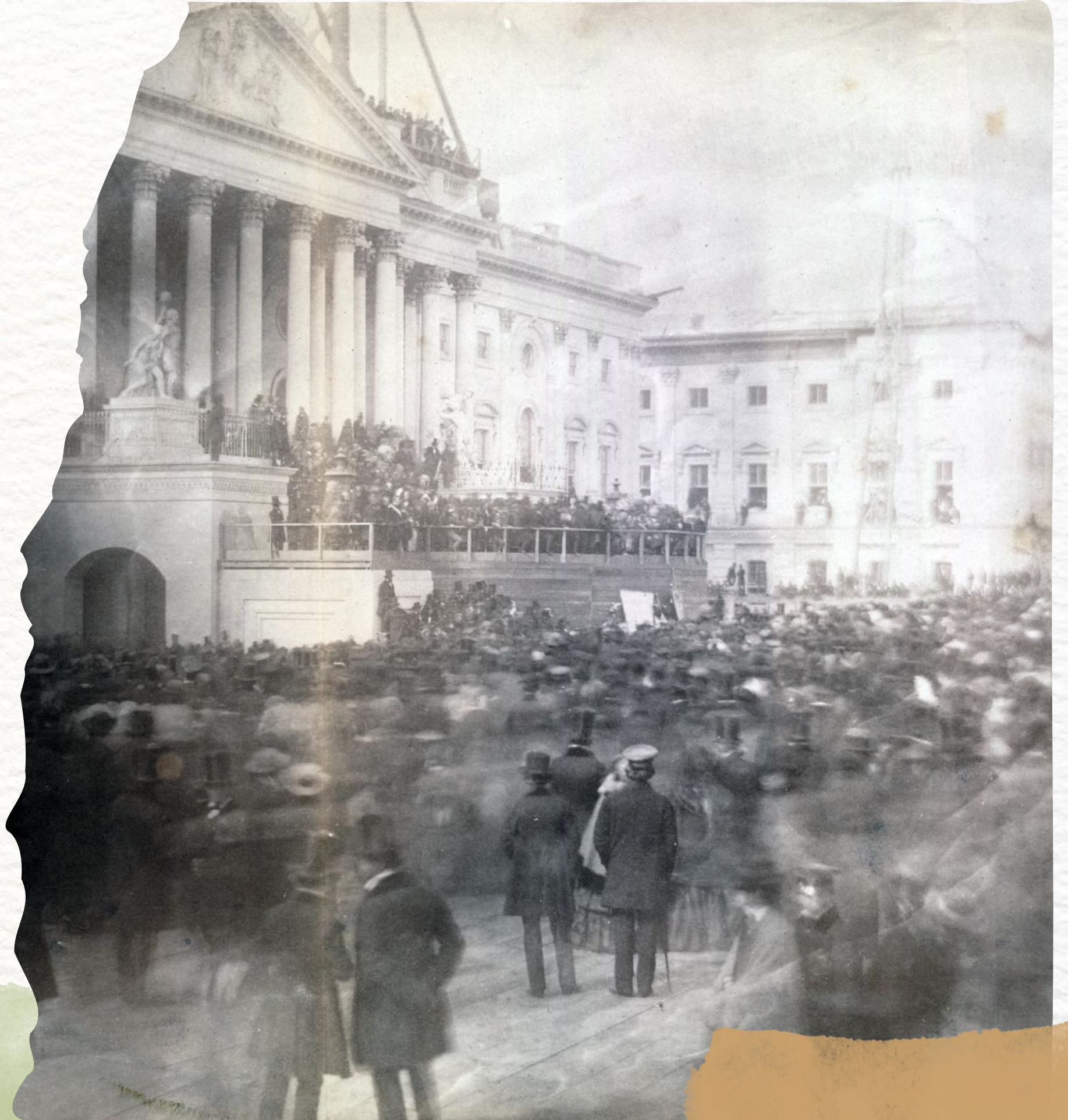
- Quality vs. quantity
- Inside and outside of school
- Look towards 2-3 with leadership positions





# Applying for Art or Music

- Portfolio
- Auditions





# Resume

- Start to record all activities (suggest every quarter)
  - Community service
  - Athletics
  - Clubs
  - Religious activities
  - Scouts



# Are Minimum Requirements Enough?

- Check out the web sites of colleges of interest
  - Many schools require 3 or 4 years of a world language (Alabama colleges vary)
  - Math requirements vary
  - Fine Arts Credit
- Collegeboard.com
  - Register to obtain an account (Big Future)
  - Explore
    - Colleges
    - Financial Aid
    - Majors



# COLLEGE PLANNING TIPS FOR EACH SCHOOL YEAR

## TIPS FOR FRESHMAN YEAR



CREATE GOOD  
STUDY HABITS  
& PRIORITIZE  
GRADES



BECOME ACTIVE  
IN YOUR  
SCHOOL  
COMMUNITY



MAP OUT  
YOUR  
4-YEAR  
ACADEMIC PLAN



RESEARCH  
& EXPLORE  
YOUR INTERESTS



VOLUNTEER  
WITH LOCAL  
ORGANIZATIONS



GET TO KNOW  
YOUR SCHOOL  
COUNSELOR

## TIPS FOR SOPHOMORE YEAR



TAKE MORE  
CHALLENGING  
COURSEWORK



STAY INVOLVED IN  
CLUBS & TAKE ON  
LEADERSHIP ROLES



PRACTICE  
STANDARDIZED  
TESTING WITH  
PSAT/PRE-ACT



ATTEND COLLEGE  
FAIRS IN YOUR  
AREA



BUILD UPON YOUR  
EXTRACURRICULAR  
RESUME



VOLUNTEER  
6/OR WORK A  
SUMMER JOB

## TIPS FOR JUNIOR YEAR



FINISH STRONG.  
ACADEMICALLY  
THE MOST  
IMPORTANT YEAR



MAKE IMPACT  
IN SERVICE &  
LEADERSHIP  
ROLES



TAKE THE FALL  
PSAT/NMSQT  
& SPRING  
SAT/ACT



TOUR COLLEGE  
CAMPUSES &  
BUILD COLLEGE  
LIST



BRAINSTORM  
COLLEGE  
ESSAY IDEAS



PARTICIPATE  
IN MEANINGFUL  
SUMMER  
ACTIVITIES

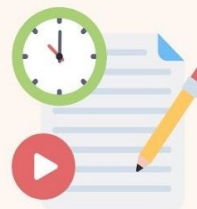
## TIPS FOR SENIOR YEAR



ENROLL IN  
HONORS, AP  
& DE COURSES



TAKE COURSES  
ALIGNED WITH  
INTENDED MAJOR



FINALIZE ANY  
STANDARDIZED  
TESTING



COMPLETE  
COLLEGE ESSAY  
BEFORE SCHOOL  
BEGINS



CONNECT WITH  
COLLEGE  
ADMISSION  
COUNSELORS



APPLY TO  
COLLEGES IN  
EARLY THE  
ROUNDS



# Financial Aid

- Scholarships, grants, and loans
- Public vs. Private Colleges
  - private schools may provide significantly more money than public
- FAFSA – Free Application for Federal Student Aid





# JCHS Resources

- College counselor
- Guidance page on the JCHS Website
- **JCHS College And Career Information**

<https://www.madisoncity.k12.al.us/domain/611>

- **Alabama Quick College Guide:**

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1X3W78BiOfFQn7JNISnayuypqItDh2k3f/view>

## **Career Resources**

<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/>

<https://www.onetonline.org/>

## **College Search**

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/>

## **Scholarships**

<https://www.fastweb.com/>

<https://www.goingmerry.com/>





# Online Resources

- **College Board College Search Site**
  - <http://apps.collegeboard.com/search/index.jsp>
- **College Net**
  - [www.collegenet.com](http://www.collegenet.com)
- **College View College Search**
  - [www.collegeview.com/collegesearch](http://www.collegeview.com/collegesearch)
- **US News College Search**
  - [www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/college/tools/brief/cosearch\\_advanced\\_brief.php](http://www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/college/tools/brief/cosearch_advanced_brief.php)
- **Peterson's College Search**
  - [www.petersons.com/ugchannel/code/searches/srchCrit1.asp?sponsor=1](http://www.petersons.com/ugchannel/code/searches/srchCrit1.asp?sponsor=1)
- **School Guides**
  - [www.schoolguides.com](http://www.schoolguides.com)
- **Go College**
  - [www.gocollege.com](http://www.gocollege.com)
- **Any College Search**



The background features a collage of watercolor-style shapes in shades of orange, pink, and light blue. On the right side, there is a collage of images showing graduates in black gowns and white shirts, with one person throwing a black mortarboard into the air against a clear blue sky.

# Remember!

Visit a college  
and take a tour.  
Have fun but stay  
on track!



T H A N K

Y O U