DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

www.dcps.dc.gov

Have a question? Feel free to contact us at
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DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

PARENT CURRICULUM GUIDE

HIGH SCHOOL HS

"We know that every single parent cares deeply about their child's academic achievement. That's why we are working more closely with families, because we know their involvement is critical to the success of our children, and our schools."

- Chancellor Kaya Henderson

How to Use the Parent Curriculum Guide:

This guide gives you the tools you need to support your child at home. In this booklet, you'll find strategies based on the DCPS curriculum to help your child meet his or her learning goals. You'll have a better understanding of what your child is learning in school and how you can further learning at home.

In addition, this guide provides specific strategies to implement at home for our Cornerstone assignments. Cornerstone assignments are high-quality, in-depth activities offered across the district that all DC Public Schools students will participate in during each unit of study. We have provided you with four sample Cornerstone assignments that your child may experience along with tips and suggestions on ways to support them at home.

For more information on Cornerstones visit bit.ly/DCPSCornerstonesVid.

What You Can Do:

You play a very important role in your child's academic performance. Here are some things you can do to support learning at home:

- Let your child know that education is the foundation for success.
- Know what your child is expected to learn in high school.
- Help your child set high short-term and long-term academic goals.
- Provide a designated time and location to complete homework.
- Talk to your child about what is happening in school and constantly monitor progress.
- Advocate for your child.
- Share your child's strengths with your child's teacher.

Questions to Ask Your Child's Teacher:

When speaking with your child's teacher about academic progress, here are a few questions you may want to consider asking:

- What are the learning goals? Can you show me examples of student work that meets the learning goals?
- May I see an example of my child's work? How does it or doesn't it meet these learning goals?
- Is my child at or above grade level, what extra support is available? What can I do at home?
- What classroom routines do you have that should also be used at home?
- What kinds of questions could I ask my child on a daily basis about your class?

Speaking With Your Child:

Good conversations help our children see that we are interested in their lives. Here are a few conversation starters you may want to consider asking:

- What can I do to help you be more successful in school?
- Are you having trouble with any of the concepts you are learning in school?
- Do you have any projects due in the next month? Have you started working on them?
- Do you have any tests coming up? What classes? Do you think you will do well on them?

Algebra I Cornerstone

In this Cornerstone, students collect data about the freefall of a Barbie that is dropped from a specified height. Students use rubber bands to create a "bungee cord" that allows Barbie to travel as close to the ground as possible without touching the ground. Students complete and analyze numerous trial runs in the classroom in order to create a successful plan for this task.

How You Can Help Your Child:

- Direct your child to visit khanacademy.com for algebra tips and strategies.
- Speak with your child's teacher to plan academic success. Develop an academic plan that includes tutoring or regular check-ins with your child's teacher.
- Have your child watch an online tutorial for Barbie Bungee Project www.youtube.com/watch?v=YmjhGYoP-2E

Biology Cornerstone

In this Cornerstone, students use the International Student Carbon Footprint Challenge website to track their carbon footprints, compare them to those of other students throughout the world, and interact with international students through online discussion forums.

How You Can Help Your Child:

- Complete the Family Carbon Footprint activity online to calculate your family's carbon footprint. During the activity, you and your child will learn about ways to reduce your impact on the environment. The data collected in this activity can be used for your child's Cornerstone.

Algebra II Cornerstone

In this Cornerstone, students will use linear functions to model their lifetime earnings in various career paths, accounting for the costs of higher education in careers that require it. At the end of the project, each student will produce a report in written, poster, or Powerpoint form -- that details a desired career path, a chosen college, and the mathematical analysis that supports both the college and career choices.

How you can help your child:

- Visit the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics' occupational outlook handbook www.bls.gov/ooh/ and discuss career paths with your child. Ask your child what do they want to do when they grow up. Research career paths by highest paid, fastest growing and most new jobs projected.

Chemistry Cornerstone

In this Cornerstone, students will make functional electrical cells and determine the relative strength of each type of cell.

How you can help your child:

- Explore the Internet with your child to find ways to build a battery out of simple household materials. Determine what kinds of materials you would need to power your own smartphones.

Year long learning tips:

- Help your child prioritize tasks. Ask your child to write out all of things he or she needs to do for the week, including non-school related task. Have your child label each task from 1 to 4, with 1 being the most important. Help your child prioritize for better academic success and tell them to rewrite the list with all of the 1's at the top. Check in frequently to see how the list is evolving over time.

Geometry Cornerstone

In this Cornerstone, students use protractors and a magnetic compass to navigate on a map. Students find a series of points shown on a map, and plan routes that require the shortest amount of time.

How You Can Help Your Child:

- Create an account on LearnZillion.com. The site has great video tutorials your child can watch to reinforce learning at home.

Physics Cornerstone

In this Cornerstone, students demonstrate their physics knowledge presentating to a group of drivers education teachers. The instructors evaluate student knowledge through an oral and written presentation on the physics of braking distances, friction and curves, safe following distance, and yellow-light intersections.

How You Can Help Your Child:

- Challenge your child to a go-kart race where they can safely practice applying the physics of speed and friction in an actual vehicle. There are a lot of outdoor (and a few indoor) tracks in the DC area to visit for this fun activity.
- Encourage your child to read Stop or Speed Through a Yellow Light at www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/06/100608162244.htm.

Year Long Learning Tips:

- Help with time management. Most High School students spend a significant amount of time doing homework and extracurricular activities. Help your child develop time management skills by creating a study plan.
- Help your child set high academic goals. At the beginning of each grading period, help your child determine what grade he or she should be able to earn in each course. Setting realistic goals will help your child understand what your expectations are. Goals also give your child something positive to work towards. Consider reflecting on these goals throughout the quater to ensure that your child continues to work toward the goals he or she has set. Consider asking “What is your long term goal in this class? What short term goals can we develop to make sure you meet your long term goal? How can we check on your progress to make sure that you are on the right path?”
- See all midterm reports and report cards.
- Talk to your child about what’s happening at school and be a good listener. Pay attention not only to the words your child uses, but also to your child’s body language, attitude and mood.

English Cornerstone

In this Cornerstone, students chart moments of tension as they read August Wilson's play, Fences. They then use textual evidence to complete a character sketch of one of the characters in the play. The character sketch will include a description of how the character affects and is affected by tension in the play.

How you can help your child:

- Discuss *Fences* with your child – what do they think about the play? Ask your child to share the tension chart they will create in class.
- Encourage your student to present their character sketch for family members.
- Consider watching clips from August Wilson's Fences at bit.ly/DCPSFences and discuss the tension represented in that scene.

English II Cornerstone

In this Cornerstone, students build upon and demonstrate their understanding of the realities of war by reading *The Things They Carried* and/or other texts about the Vietnam War- era. Students complete a gallery walk featuring images from the Vietnam War. Students then create a museum exhibition guide that contains an in-depth analysis of several of the images, specifically comparing and contrasting how the images and texts emphasize various details about war.

How you can help your child:

- Have your child gain useful background information on this Cornerstone by watching author Tim O'Brian discuss his book *The Things They Carried* www.youtube.com/watch?v=B8ivNokqT74.

Year Long Learning Tips:

- Encourage independent problem solving. Being able to resolve their own problems helps students gain confidence and become more independent.
- Make the most out of parent teacher conferences. Parent teacher conferences provide a unique opportunity for parents and teachers to work together toward student success. Consider spending time working together to develop a plan for student achievement. Be sure to prepare a list of questions and concerns you may have such as "In what areas does my child need improvement?" or "Do you have any advice on how I can support my child at home?".
- Stay in constant communication with your child's teacher. Consider asking, "Would it help if we brainstorm some ideas to help my child become successful in your class?"
- Did you know that your school has a new digital grade book called EngradePro? EngradePro allows for parents to monitor student progress in real time. You can view your child's grades, assignments and send messages directly to the teacher. For more information, and to get your username and password, please contact your child's school.
- Empower your child. Ask them "Who is the most important teacher I need to see?" or "What do you need from me to help you be successful?"

Health Cornerstone

In this Cornerstone, students learn how to prepare for and respond to emergency situations at home or at the workplace. During this unit, students learn strategies for addressing emergencies, which will include hands-only CPR and first-aid. They inspect their home for emergency and child safety and create a plan for their family to ensure safety of children in emergencies.

How You Can Help Your Child:

- Learn CPR and have your child critique your technique.
- Families can also learn the hands-only CPR skills that students will learn in class. Videos and demonstrations can be found at www.heart.org.

Music Cornerstone

In this Cornerstone, students prepare for the Music Festival by rehearsing, recording their performance, evaluating their performance through specific criteria, and applying constructive criticism. A feedback cycle for continuous improvement is implemented prior to the festival and post-festival adjudicator comments are utilized to improve student performance.

How You Can Help Your Child:

- This Cornerstone involves building students' abilities to provide, hear, and implement critical feedback in preparation for participation in the DCPS Music Festival. Critical feedback practices can be shared with families. Families can listen to students' practice and provide feedback.
- Families that are more deeply engaged in music may be invited to share their work in the class in ways that pertain to the project.

Year Long Learning Tips:

- Make sure your child has a quiet, well-lit place to study. Avoid having your child do study with the television on or in places with other distractions.
- Allow your child to take regular study breaks. Students should break for 10 minutes after every 45 minutes of studying.
- Allow your child to struggle through problems. When your child asks for help, provide guidance, not answers. When helping your child, ask questions to guide the process, such as "Where do you begin?" or "Can you show me how you got the answer?"

Family College Plan: Grades 9 and 10

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Summer

☐ **Visit a college campus together.**
The District of Columbia has some of the best colleges in the world, and visiting campuses in and around DC is a great way to get your child excited about college. College tours are free, and students of all ages are considered "prospective students." Aim to visit every college in DC before senior year.

- American University (Red Line—Tenley-town/AU Metro)
- Catholic University (Red Line—Brookland/CUA)
- Howard University (Yellow/Green—Shaw-Howard U)
- George Washington University (Orange/Blue/Silver—Foggy Bottom)
- Georgetown University (D6 or Circulator)
- Marymount (Orange/Silver Line—Ballston Station)
- Trinity Washington University (Red Line—Brookland/CUA)
- University of Maryland (Green Line—
- College Park/U of MD)
- University of District of Columbia (Red Line—Van Ness/UDC)

☐ **Show your child how to explore career ideas.**
He or she can make a list of interests, talents, and favorite activities and start matching them with occupations. Learn more about how your child can access all DCPS career resources in the Family Connections tab in Naviance bit.ly/DCPSFamilyConnection.

☐ **Get the facts about what college costs.**
Visit the U.S Department of Education's College Affordability and Transparency Center at bit.ly/DCPSAffordability. You may be surprised at how affordable higher education can be. Start by reading Understanding College Costs bit.ly/DCPSUnderstandCost.

CollegeBoard

Family College Plan

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Fall

- ☐ **Make sure your child meets with the school counselor**
  Your child should schedule a meeting to talk about college and career options and to choose the most appropriate classes. Learn more about the high school counselor's role bit.ly/DCPSCounselor.

- ☐ **Help your student get ready for the PSAT in October.**
  All DCPS 9 – 11 grade students will take the PSAT for FREE during the school day in October. This is a preliminary test that helps students practice for the SAT and assess their academic skills. Students who score well on the test are also eligible for scholars opportunities. Find out more about the PSAT bit.ly/DCPSPSAT. To help your child prepare for the SAT access the Khan Academy/College Board Test Prep Program khanacademy.org/test-prep/sat, this is available at no cost to all high school students.

Winter

- ☐ **Start thinking about financial aid.**
  It's not too early to look into types of aid that could help you cover college costs. Start by reading 7 Things You Need to Know About Financial Aid bit.ly/DCPSFinancialAidInfo.

- ☐ **Research D.C. Resident Scholarship & Grant Programs.**
  D.C. residents have access two specialized grant programs through OSSE, DC TAG bit.ly/DCPSDCTAG and the Mayoral Scholars osse.dc.gov/MayorsScholars. Additionally, by taking the PSAT in 9th and 10th grade students will be considered for numerous scholarships that are administered through The United Negro College Fund www.uncf.org and The Hispanic Scholarship Fund www.hsf.net.

Spring

- ☐ **Help your child start a college list.**
  Visit College Search Step-by-Step together to get tips on how to start a college search and figure out what matters most to your child when choosing a college bit.ly/DCPSCollegeSearch.

- ☐ **See how much you need to save for college.**
  Use the College Savings Calculator to get an idea of where you are in relation to your savings goal bit.ly/DCPSCollegeCalculator.

- ☐ **Help your child make summer plans.**
  Summer is a perfect time to explore interests and learn new skills and colleges look for students who pursue meaningful summer activities. Find out five ways your high schooler can stay motivated this summer bit.ly/DCPSSummer; consider DC Summer Youth Employment bit.ly/DCPSsyep. NAF Academy students should speak with their college & career coordinator about summer NAF internships. Explore FREE summer dual enrollment at UDC-CC bit.ly/DCPSDualEnrollment and search Family Connection for opportunities at local colleges bit.ly/DCPSFamilyConnection or College Greenlight for Nation Wide Opportunities bit.ly/DCPSSummerProgFinAid.

For more free college planning resources, visit:

bit.ly/DCPSCollegePrep9

bit.ly/DCPSCollegePrep10

Family College Plan: 11th Grade

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Summer

- ☐ **Research D.C. Resident Scholarship & Grant Programs.**
  D.C. residents have access two specialized grant programs through OSSE, DC TAG bit.ly/DCPSDCTAG and the Mayoral Scholars osse.dc.gov/MayorsScholars. Additionally, by taking the PSAT in 9th and 10th grade students will be considered for numerous scholarships that are administered through The United Negro College Fund www.uncf.org and The Hispanic Scholarship Fund www.hsf.net.

Fall

- ☐ **Dual Enrollment**
  Our high school students can take pursue credit-bearing courses at a local college or university. Students enrolled in the GW Early College Program at Schools Without Walls HS and at the Banneker/McKinley HS Howard University Early College Program will receive both high school and college credit (dual credit) for successfully completing approved courses. Additionally, dual credit is available for eligible students in 13 courses at UDC-CC, with the approval of the school counselor and principal. Visit the website at dcps.dc.gov/service/dual-enrollment-program or contact your school counselor for more information on dual enrollment opportunities.

- ☐ **Consider applying to the OSSE Scholars Program.**
  D.C. juniors with a GPA of 3.2 or higher who demonstrate leadership skills inside and outside of the classroom should apply for the OSSE Scholars program to jumpstart their college experience. Through this FREE program, students attend top-tier universities across the country for rigorous summer courses. The program offers early exposure to college-level academics, navigating a college environment, and, at certain universities, earning college credit. Application due October 30.
  (bit.ly/DCPSOSSEScholars)

- ☐ **Help your junior get ready for the PSAT in October.**
  This is a preliminary test that helps students practice for the SAT® and assess their academic skills. Juniors who score well on the test are also eligible for scholarship opportunities. Find out more about the PSAT bit.ly/DCPSPSAT. To help your child prepare for the SAT access the Khan Academy/College Board Test Prep khanacademy.org/test-prep/sat, this is available at no cost to all high school students.

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Winter

- [ ] **Review PSAT results together.**
Your child's score report comes with a free SAT study plan. This online, customized plan is based on your child's test scores and can help him or her work on areas that need improvement bit.ly/DCPSPlanningKit.

- [ ] **Encourage your junior to consider taking SAT Subject Tests™.** Many colleges require or recommend taking these tests to get a sense of your child's skills in a certain academic area. In general, it's best to take a Subject Test right after taking the relevant course. Learn more about SAT Subject Tests bit.ly/DCPSSATTest.

- [ ] **Help your child prepare for the SAT.**
All DCPS juniors take the SAT in March for FREE during the school day. Taking the SAT early allows DCPS students to get a head start on planning for college and applying for scholarships.

- [ ] **Encourage your child to take AP Exams.**
If your 11th-grader takes Advanced Placement (AP) or other advanced classes, have him or her talk with teachers now about taking these tests in May. Read more about the AP Program at DCPS bit.ly/DCPSAdvancedPlacement.

- [ ] **Discuss next year's classes.**
Make sure your child will be challenging him or herself and taking the courses college admission officers expect to see. Learn more about AP and the high school classes that colleges look for apstudent.collegeboard.org/exploreap.

Spring

- [ ] **Search together for colleges that meet your child's needs.**
Once you have an idea of the qualities your child is looking for in a college, search colleges on My College Fact Finder mcff.osse.dc.gov for DC graduation rates, College Results Online www.collegeresults.org for national graduations rates, and help him or her create a list of colleges to which to consider applying on the Family Connections tab in Naviance bit.ly/DCPSFamilyConnection.

- [ ] **Help your child research scholarships.**
Summer is a perfect time to explore interests and learn new skills and colleges look for students who pursue meaningful summer activities. Find out five ways your high schooler can stay motivated this summer bit.ly/DCPSSummer; consider DC Summer Youth Employment bit.ly/DCPSsyep. NAF Academy students should speak with their college & career coordinator about summer NAF internships. Explore FREE summer dual enrollment at UDC-CC dcps.dc.gov/node/1013692 and search Family Connection for opportunities at local colleges bit.ly/DCPSFamilyConnection or College Greenlight for Nation Wide Opportunities bit.ly/DCPSSummerProgFinAid.

- [ ] **Attend college fairs and financial aid events.**
These events allow you to meet with college representatives and get answers to questions. Your child can ask the school counselor how to find events in your area. Checkout the College Fair Checklist for more information bit.ly/DCPSChecklist.

- [ ] **Help your child make summer plans.**
Summer is a perfect time to explore interests and learn new skills and colleges look for students who pursue meaningful summer activities. Find out five ways your high schooler can stay motivated this summer bit.ly/DCPSSummer and consider DC Summer Youth Employment bit.ly/DCPSsyep.

For more free college planning resources, visit:

bit.ly/DCPSCollegePrep11

Family College Plan: 12th Grade

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Senior year is a whirlwind of activities. This is a big year for your child as he or she balances schoolwork, extracurricular activities, and the college application process. Use the suggestions below to help you and your child successfully navigate this important process.

Summer

- ☐ **Encourage your child to get started on applications.**
  He or she can get the easy stuff out of the way now by filling in as much required information on college applications as possible. Read about how to get started on applications bit.ly/DCPSHowToBegin.

- ☐ **Research D.C. Resident Scholarship & Grant Programs.**
  D.C. residents have access two specialized grant programs through OSSE, DC TAG and the Mayoral Scholars. (dconeapp.dc.gov) Review the application criteria and eligible colleges. Ensure your student is applying to qualified colleges.

- ☐ **Help your child prepare for the October SAT.**
  All DCPS seniors retake the SAT in October at their high school for FREE. Many colleges look closely at students' SAT scores when reviewing their applications — doing well is important. Learn more about helping your 12th grader prepare for admission tests and the registration requirements bit.ly/DCPSAdmissionPrep.

Fall

- ☐ **Meet with your senior's counselors by October 31.**
  This year, he or she will work with the counselor to complete and submit college applications. It is important that you attend a fall meeting with your senior's counselor to understand the application timeline and financial aid expectations, learn how you can best support your student, review their graduation status, and sign your student's Letter of Understanding. Learn more about the counselor's role in applying to college bit.ly/DCPSApplyingtoCollege.

- ☐ **Create a college application calendar with your child.**
  This should include application deadlines and other important dates. Your child can find specific colleges' deadlines in Family Connections on your high schools' website bit.ly/DCPSFamilyConnection. As your child adds colleges, he or she can get a custom online calendar that shows those colleges' deadlines.

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Fall cont.

- ☐ **Offer to look over your senior's college applications.**
  But remember that this is your child's work so remain in the role of adviser and proofreader and respect his or her voice.

- ☐ **Help your child find and apply for scholarships.**
  He or she can find out about scholarship opportunities from the school counselor. Your high schooler will need to request and complete scholarship applications and submit them on time. Learn more about scholarships bit.ly/DCPSScholarshipFind.

- ☐ **Encourage your child to set up college interviews.**
  An interview is a great way for your child to learn more about a college and for a college to learn more about your child. Get an overview of the interview process bit.ly/DCPSCollegeInt.

Winter

- ☐ **Fill out the FAFSA to apply for aid by Feb. 28.**
  The government and many colleges use the FAFSA to award aid. Now it's easier than ever to fill out this form because you can automatically transfer your tax information online from the IRS to the FAFSA. Read How to Complete the FAFSA to learn more bit.ly/DCPSFinancialAid101.

- ☐ **Submit DC TAG application by Feb. 28.**
  Once you complete your FAFSA, immediately complete the DCTAG application to gain access to grants just for D.C. residents https://dconeapp.dc.gov/. DC TAG provides up to $10,000 toward the difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition at public four-year colleges and universities throughout the US, Guam and Puerto Rico. DC TAG also provides up to $2,500 per academic year toward tuition at private colleges and universities in the District and private Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and two-year colleges nationwide.

Winter cont.

- ☐ **Complete your taxes EARLY.**
  File your taxes as early as possible, but don't delay filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) because your taxes are not complete. It's okay to estimate your financial information on the FAFSA and finalize it later.

Spring

- ☐ **Help your child process college responses.**
  Once your child starts hearing back from colleges about admission and financial aid, he or she will need your support to decide what to do. Read about how to choose a college bit.ly/DCPSNowWhat.

- ☐ **Review financial aid offers together.**
  Your 12th-grader will need your help to read through financial aid award letters and figure out which package works best. Be sure your child pays attention to and meets any deadlines for acceptance. Get more information on financial aid awards bit.ly/DCPSUnderstandingAwardLetter.

- ☐ **Help your child complete the paperwork to accept a college's offer of admittance.**
  Once your child has decided which college to attend, he or she will need to accept a college's offer, mail a tuition deposit, and submit other required paperwork. Learn more about your high school senior's next steps bit.ly/DCPSChoice.

For more free college planning resources, visit:

bit.ly/DCPSCollegePrep12