

THE JAMES RIVER HIGH SCHOOL PRIMER— **SOPHOMORE EDITION, 2009-10**

Information to Help Prepare You to Do Your Best in High School and in Planning for “Life After High School”

Congratulations! You have successfully navigated the rough waters of your Freshman year and you have earned the status of Sophomore, the year many educators feel is the most important of all in high school. In fact, research shows that those students who complete the 10th grade are over 90% likely to finish high school and, thus, be better prepared to tackle the rigors of post-secondary education and the world of work. Studies prove that the better you do in your sophomore classes, the greater your options are after high school, whether those choices include college, a trade or technical school, an apprenticeship, or the military.

This helpful booklet is designed to give you information, help, and hints on how to best prepare and plan for a successful sophomore year. Read each section carefully and feel free to ask your counselor, teachers, administrator, parents, or peers about items that you are unclear about or with which you need assistance. Remember, it is never too early to plan for a more successful school year or for more options in your future.

Once again, congratulations on your sophomore status, and let us know how we can help make your year productive and enjoyable.

I. Important Dates to Remember in Your Sophomore Year:

October-

- 9 Interim Progress Reports Issued via Edline
- 14 PSAT Administered
- 27-29 Career Development Sessions during H/PE 2
- 30 End of the First Quarter

****Task of the Month**: Use the PSAT practice materials given to you to prepare for testing on Wednesday, October 14th.

November-

- 8 College Fair at Midlothian High School, 4:30-6 p.m.
- 9 College Fair at John Tyler Community College, Chester, 7 p.m.
- 13 Report Cards Issued

****Task of the Month**- Review your report card with your parents, teachers, and school counselors to prepare and “Academic Improvement Plan” (see p. 4 in this booklet) for greater success in the second quarter.

December—

- 11 Interim Reports via Edline
- 15-18 First semester exams

****Task of the Month—** Visit the College and Career Center during your free time and take a career interest inventory to better understand your options after high school.

January—

- 7 Financial Aid Workshop, 7 p.m., James River H.S.
- 6-7 PSAT Score Interpretation sessions
- 12-14 SOL Fall Testing, for select students
- 11-22 Receive Course Recommendations for 2010-11 from teachers
- 19-20 Chesterfield Technical Center presents their 2010-11 course offerings through H/PE 2 classes
- 22 End of the first semester

****Tasks of the Month—**

1. After receiving your first semester grades, set one or two goals on how you are going to improve your grades then write a plan for how you are going to accomplish these goal(s). (See attached “Academic Improvement Plan” worksheet)
2. Compute your own GPA and determine your progress toward: 1) the high school diploma of your choice, and 2) the “Career and Educational Pathway” of your choice.

February—

- 5 Report Cards Issued
- 18 3 – 5 p.m., Parent Open House on Program Planning and student scheduling, School Counseling Department (please call for an appointment)
- 18 Chesterfield Technical Center “Opportunities Day” visitation
- 21 1-3 p.m. Parent Open House at the Chesterfield Technical Center
- 25 “Life After High School Program”, JRHS, 7 p.m.

****Task of the Month—**

1. Write out a “Planning Schedule” for the 2010-11 school year after you have learned about your elective course options and received your teachers’ course recommendations.
2. Complete a CTC application if you are interested in attending the Technical Center in 2010-11.

March

- 1-5 SOL Writing Test Administered to students in English 10
- 25 6-8 p.m., Parent Open House on Program Planning and student scheduling, School Counseling Department (please call for an appointment)
- 26 Interim Reports Issued via Edline

April—

- 2 End of the Third Nine Weeks
- 23 Report Cards issued

****Task of the Month—**After you receive your report card, review your academic standing and write another “Academic Improvement Plan” for the final quarter of the year.

May—

- 5-28 SOL End-of-course Tests
- 3-14 AP Testing

****Task of the Month—**Review how many verified credits you need to graduate and how many SOL tests you need to pass. Register for Summer School if necessary.

June—

- Week of 14-18: Second Semester Exams (dates subject to change)
- 18 End of Second Semester
- 28 Report Cards mailed home

****Task of the Month—**After receiving your final report card, re-compute your cumulative GPA, and determine your progress toward: 1) the high school diploma of your choice, and 2) the “Career and Educational Pathway” of your choice.



II. Graduation Requirements—Class of 2012

Please read the information below carefully. The Class of 2012 must not only earn course credits, but you must also earn *verified credits*, which are awarded once you pass a SOL course AND the accompanying end-of-course test. Please be familiar with how many course and verified credits you need to earn. Please see your counselor if you have questions.

III. Your Transcript and Your Grade Point Average/Class Rank:

Once you have taken high school classes, you begin to build your secondary school transcript. In addition, the grades you earn each semester will translate into a grade point average (GPA). Your GPA will, in turn, give you a class rank which is the position of your GPA from the top of your class. Understanding each of these important characteristics of your high school record is key to unlocking the options to your future.

A. The High School Transcript—(see the example on the next page)

- Your High School Transcript consists of three parts:
 1. A comprehensive listing of all of your courses, the ability level of the courses, and semester grades you earned for high school credit, including courses in middle school that are considered high school classes.
 2. A “Test Data Sheet” listing all of the standardized assessments you took in high school, such as the SOL, SAT, and ACT tests.
 3. A “School Profile” describing the James River and Chesterfield County school community in both academic and demographic terms.

B. Grade Point Average (GPA)—

- Calculated by assigning point values to the SEMESTER grades of credit courses you take
- Each letter grade is given a grade point value:
A = 4 pts. C = 2 pts. F = 0 pts.
B = 3 pts. D = 1 pt.

Additions: “+” (e.g., “B+”) = +0.5 pt. & Honors level courses = +1 pt.

- Formula to determine GPA: Add the grade points of the semester grades for each credit course and divide by the number of total semester grades—**See Example Below:**

COURSE	SEM 1	SEM 2	FIN	CREDIT
English 9 C-level	B = 3 pts	C = 2 pts.	C+	1.0
Geometry H-level	B = 4 pts.	C = 3 pts.	B	1.0
WH/WG I C-level	B = 3 pts.	B+ = 3.5 pts.	B+	1.0
Earth Sci H-level	C = 3 pts.	C+ = 3.5 pts.	C+	1.0
H-PE 9 O-level	C = 2 pts.	B = 3 pts.	B	1.0
Art I O-level	C+ = 2.5 pts.	B+ = 3.5 pts.	B	1.0

Total Grade Points = 36.0, *divided by the*

Total Number of Sem. Grades = 12 **Equals: 3.0 GPA**

C. Class Rank—

- Once your GPA is calculated, it is placed on a scale from top to bottom with your same grade (sophomore) classmates
- Your rank is the position number where your GPA stands from the top of the class
- *Example:* If you have a rank of 50/455, this simply means that you have the 50th highest grade point average in a sophomore class of 455 students.

IV. “Life After High School:” What are My Options?

Earning a high school diploma is a BEGINNING, not an END!

Your primary goal at James River High School should NOT be to earn a diploma; rather, you should set your sights on acquiring the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to achieve your goal AFTER high school. If you accomplish this mission, then earning a high school diploma will take care of itself.

- A. In order for you to eventually take care of yourself as an adult both financially and responsibly, you will need to learn a **marketable skill**.
- A marketable skill is a talent, ability, and/or knowledge set that makes you different from everyone else, and allows you to earn more than minimum wage in the economy.
 - **To master a marketable skill means that you will need to continue your education beyond high school.** The four most popular pathways to learn, refine, or improve upon a marketable skill are:
 - 1) attending college/university
 - 2) attending a “professional school,” such as a trade, technical, business, or nursing school
 - 3) enlisting in the military
 - 4) “learning while earning” through an apprenticeship program or a similar on-the-job training program

In summary . . . There is no “right” or “wrong” pathway to your chosen career. The decision as to which path you will take is a personal and family choice, made with input from many resources and trusted people. There are possible advantages and disadvantages to each option. Be a wise decision-maker and investigate each pathway on your route to a successful career.

B. The Major Pathways After High School—

1. College or University:

a. The Facts—

- The most popular choice for high school graduates
- Over 2,500 two- and four-year institutions throughout the United States
- Admission to four-year colleges/universities is based on four major factors:
 1. High School Grades (GPA and Class Rank)
 2. Strength of Courses Taken (Curriculum)
 3. Standardized Test Scores (SAT, ACT, TOEFL)
 4. Quality Participation in Extracurricular Activities

b. Advantages—

- College graduates tend to earn more income than graduates in other post-secondary programs of study
- College graduates tend to have an advantage in getting hired over non-graduates, and tend to have greater job security and retention than non-graduates

c. Challenges—

- Can be costly to attend, even with financial aid
- Only about 50% of college freshmen ever graduate

2. Professional Schools:

a. Facts—

- Thousands of mostly private post-secondary schools throughout the country dedicated to teaching adults specific marketable skills
- Schools include career and technical schools offering program training in areas such as computer skills, auto body repair, legal secretarial work, surveying, nursing, air conditioning/ventilation/heating, and truck driving
- Admission usually requires at least a high school diploma or a GED

b. Advantages—

- Students can learn marketable skills in a relatively short amount of time
- Financial aid is available for many career and technical schools

- c. Challenges—
 - Buyer Beware: many schools are not accredited and/or licensed; check out the credentials of each institution
 - Costs and quality of programs vary widely—do your research before committing to a school
3. The Military:
- a. Facts—
 - Branches of the military include: Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Coast Guard, and the Reserves of each branch
 - Enlistment usually requires a high school diploma
 - Students must take a qualification and placement test called the ASVAB, as well as a physical exam and a background check
 - b. Advantages—
 - Learn while you earn—thousands of job skills and positions available for qualified individuals to choose from, while getting paid
 - Assistance with post-secondary educational funding possible
 - c. Challenges—
 - Basic Training—6-8 weeks of intense physical and mental preparation
 - Job placements in both position desired and geographic location requested are not often guaranteed
4. Learning While Earning—Apprenticeships and other On-the-job Training Programs:
- a. Facts—
 - Apprenticeships are usually four-year on-the-job training programs in over 800 different fields or trades, including auto mechanics, carpentry, electricity, plumbing, cooking, and firefighting
 - Program participants learn a skilled trade through a combination of classroom instruction and field experiences
 - b. Advantages—
 - You can earn wages while you learn and train in a trade
 - Demand is high in the job market for students who complete a full apprenticeship program
 - c. Challenges—
 - Securing an apprenticeship or other quality on-the-job training program is very competitive and program completion is rigorous
 - Applicants often need to be a minimum of 18 years of age, healthy, physically fit, and have a high school diploma or a GED

In conclusion . . . Please remember that regardless of your pathway choice after high school, one fact remains certain: YOUR EDUCATION DOES NOT END WHEN YOU GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL! Choose your path of continuing education carefully and thoughtfully. The goal of your learning is simple, but important: using a combination of your interests, abilities, and experiences identify the marketable skill that you

want to develop and pursue your dream. Whether your plan is to go to college, technical school, nursing school, the army, or an apprenticeship the choice is with you and your family . . . and the School Counseling Department is here to assist you in making your dreams come true!