

Stratford High School: Sophomore Parent College Information Session

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Building the Foundation for Junior & Senior Year Success

Sophomore year is the perfect time to begin laying a strong foundation for the college application process. While applications may feel far away, the habits and choices your students make this year matter.

1. The Expanded Resume

Your student should begin building (and updating) a detailed expanded resume now. This document should include:

Academics

- Courses taken (include advanced coursework)
- GPA (weighted & unweighted)
- Academic honors or awards

Extracurricular Activities

- Clubs, athletics, fine arts
- Leadership roles
- Years involved
- Time commitment per week/year
- Specific accomplishments (not just participation)

Service & Community Involvement

- Volunteer activities
- Organizations served
Hours completed
- Impact made

Work Experience

- Jobs, internships, family business involvement
- Responsibilities and skills developed

Summer Activities

- Camps, academic programs, mission trips, employment

Why this matters: The expanded resume helps with applications, scholarship forms, recommendation letters, and brag sheets.

2. Brag Sheets (Student & Parent)

Student Brag Sheet

Students should reflect on:

- Academic strengths
- Growth areas and challenges overcome
- Leadership experiences
- Meaningful service
- Activities they love most
- Future goals

Parent Brag Sheet

Parents provide valuable insight for counselor recommendations:

- Character traits
- Examples of resilience
- Contributions to family/community
- Personal growth stories
- Special circumstances (if applicable)

Start collecting stories now while they're fresh.

3. PSAT & SAT Information

PSAT

- Typically taken junior year (some sophomores may take practice versions)
- Practice for the SAT
- Qualifier for National Merit Scholarship (junior year)
- Excellent benchmark tool

Encourage:

- Familiarity with digital format
- Light prep through Khan Academy
- Reviewing score reports carefully

SAT

- Many students begin testing spring of junior year
- Sophomore year focus: strong coursework & reading/writing skills
- Consider prep during summer before junior year if needed

4. Application Platforms

Common Application

Used by many private and out-of-state colleges.

- One main application
- Personal essay
- Supplemental essays per school

ApplyTexas

Used by Texas public universities and some private schools.

- Separate application system
- Specific essay prompts
- Sophomore takeaway: Students do not apply yet — but they should begin building a profile that will translate well into either platform.

5. Advanced Coursework

Colleges look for:

- Rigor appropriate to the student
- Honors, AP, or dual credit (when appropriate)
- Core subjects taken at highest reasonable level
- Important: It is not about taking “all APs.” It is about balance, success, and growth. Plan junior year carefully — it is the most important academic year for college admissions.

6. The Personal Essay

Though written summer prior to senior year, the groundwork starts now.

Encourage your student to:

- Try new experiences
- Reflect on meaningful moments
- Keep a journal of challenges, leadership, service, and growth
- Notice stories that reveal character
- Colleges want voice, authenticity, and self-awareness — not perfection.

7. Service Matters

Quality over quantity.

Students should:

- Choose causes meaningful to them
- Demonstrate consistency
- Seek leadership or initiative opportunities
- Reflect on impact
- Authentic service tells a powerful story.

8. Extracurricular Activities

Depth matters more than breadth.

Encourage:

- Long-term involvement
- Leadership roles
- Skill development
- Initiative (start something if passion exists)
- Colleges look for contribution and growth - not just membership.

9. College Visits (Yes, Even Now!)

Sophomore year is a great time for:

- Casual campus visits while traveling
- Virtual tours
- Attending college fairs
- Exploring different types of schools (large/small, public/private, faith-based, urban/rural)
- The goal now: exposure, not pressure.

Sophomore Year Action Plan

- ✓ Build & update expanded resume
- ✓ Explore interests deeply
- ✓ Prioritize strong grades in rigorous courses
- ✓ Begin test familiarity
- ✓ Serve consistently
- ✓ Visit campuses when convenient
- ✓ Encourage independence & ownership

Final Encouragement for Stratford Parents

Your role is shifting from manager to guide.

Encourage responsibility.

Celebrate effort over outcome.

Allow productive struggle.

Keep communication open.

College admission is not just about getting in - it is about becoming ready.