

# **BGHS Postsecondary Planning Guide**



**Greetings!**

**While it is exciting to realize you have almost completed your high school career, planning for life after high school can be stressful and even scary at times. This guide was designed to help you and your family navigate in preparing for the next step, no matter WHAT you are planning to do.**

**The BGHS Counseling Department believes strongly in supporting you in your transition to postsecondary life, whether you are planning to attend college, begin your career, earn a certificate, or even join the military. Our goal is for you to be able to have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be a successful adult who is invested in continuous learning, a fulfilling career, and a contributing member of their community.**

**For convenience, we have created ordered checklists which, if begun in the Spring of junior year and continued into senior year, will ensure you are prepared for any of the following postsecondary options:**

- **Attending a four-year or two-year college**
- **Attending Ivy Tech Community College**
- **Attending a trade school**
- **Applying for an apprenticeship**
- **Joining the military (whether full-time active duty or in the reserves)**
- **Taking a structured “gap year”**
- **Entering the workforce**

**Of course, no manual can or should replace the support your school counselor can provide to you, so never hesitate to reach out to them for individual support.**

## **Definitions**

**4-year or 2-year college or university:** an institution of higher learning, especially one providing a general or liberal arts education rather than technical or professional training. Typically, an Associate's (2-year) or Bachelor's (4-year) degree is earned.

**Community college:** a junior college that focuses on students primarily on one-year certificates or Associate (2-year) degrees. Students can often transfer from a community to a 4-year college or university to earn a Bachelor's (4-year) degree.

**Trade school:** a postsecondary institution giving instruction in the skilled trades.

**Apprenticeship:** unique, flexible training system which combines job related technical instruction with structured on-the-job learning experiences. Most apprentices begin employment day one, with incremental wage increases as they advance and become more proficient on the job. Apprenticeships can range from 1 – 6 years.

**Military (not college-bound):** serving in the armed forces (Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, or Coast Guard) full-time on active duty or in the reserves, but not attending college.

**Gap year:** a structured experience through an internship, service, etc. that is taken by a student after high school before further education.

**Entering the workforce:** not obtaining further education after high school. Students are still strongly encouraged to seek assistance with career skills and training.

# Checklist- attending a 4 or 2-year college or university

- ❑ Create your FSA ID in preparing to complete the FAFSA as this will be your login information; this can be done at <https://fsaid.ed.gov/npas/index.htm>. Please note that your parent/guardian will also need an ID to complete the FAFSA and sign it.
  
- ❑ Take SAT or ACT for the first time in Spring of junior year, and re-take in the Fall of senior year, if necessary. Please note that registration deadline for the June SAT is in April and ACT in May.  
*\*If on free or reduced lunch, come to the Guidance Office for a fee waiver to take the SAT and/or ACT up to twice a year for FREE.*  
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- ❑ Practice writing your college application essay as this will be required in most cases; sample writing prompts can be found [here](#). Save your practice essays in a folder or electronically to make the application process easier.
  
- ❑ Begin to apply for scholarships as soon as possible, and check the application deadlines. *Spend most of your time applying for local scholarships as you're more likely to be awarded those.* Local scholarships will be posted on your Guidance Schoology page as we become aware of them. Other good scholarship websites include [scholarships.com](http://scholarships.com), [fastweb.com](http://fastweb.com), [chegg.com](http://chegg.com), and [cappex.com](http://cappex.com).
  
- ❑ Visit colleges in-person or virtually, preferably before applying. Call/look on a school's Admissions page for events or to schedule a visit. Also, [youvisit.com](http://youvisit.com) is a great site for virtual tours of out-of-state schools.
  
- ❑ Apply to colleges as soon as possible beginning August 1st of your senior year, as this is the date most applications are open. Check for priority or early admissions deadlines- many times, this date is November 1st, and may also be the deadline for school-specific scholarship consideration.  
*\* If on free or reduced lunch, come to the Guidance Office for a fee waiver to apply to up to four colleges for FREE.*

- ❑ Ask teachers, your counselor, or other adults for a letter of recommendation by September 1st and keep copies for your files.
- ❑ Open a Parchment account at [www.parchment.com](http://www.parchment.com) to request transcripts to be sent to colleges. See the “Transcripts” tab on the BGHS School Counseling website for a 6-minute video on how to request transcripts or click [here](#).
- ❑ Complete your Student Brag Sheet (enclosed in your postsecondary folder) and submit it to your school counselor after creating your Parchment account. **THIS IS IMPORTANT FOR LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION AND COMPLETING SECONDARY SCHOOL REPORTS** (basically, when the counselor tells your school(s) if you’re a good candidate for acceptance)!
- ❑ Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as soon as possible after October 1 and by March 10. Make edits as needed until May 15th. [fafsa.gov](http://fafsa.gov)
- ❑ Men- register online with the Selective Service once you turn 18, as this is required to receive Federal Financial Aid. [www.sss.gov](http://www.sss.gov)
- ❑ Request a meeting with your school counselor to discuss your post-secondary plans, receive support, and review your college essay, as needed.
- ❑ If your schedule allows, consider a part-time job to save money for extra college costs (clothing, going out, gas, etc.)
- ❑ Volunteer in your community.
- ❑ READ!

**OPTIONAL TASKS (not applicable to everyone):**

- ❑ **Complete your ALL your grades 9-12 SSP (Scholars Success Program) activities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Scholars by JUNE 30th of your senior year. [Link to ScholarTrack](#)**

***\*Please note you MUST enroll in an Indiana college within a year of graduation to receive funds!***

- ❑ **Register with the NCAA or NAIA if you plan to play sports in college. More information for student athletes can be found [here](#).**
- ❑ **Register with the ROTC before the end of junior year if you plan to enter the Army after college. More information on ROTC can be found [here](#).**

# **Checklist- attending Ivy Tech Community College**

- ❑ Visit campus for a group or individual tour. If you prefer a group visit go to [ivytech.edu](http://ivytech.edu) then search for “Go Ivy Day” select the Valparaiso campus and sign-up for the visit day that works best with your schedule. If you prefer and individual visit and tour send an email to Megan Juchcinski at [mjuchcinski@ivytech.edu](mailto:mjuchcinski@ivytech.edu) stating the program you’re interested in and three dates and times that you are available to visit campus. Visits are offered Monday through Friday 8:00am to 5:00pm and usually last one hour.
  
- ❑ Keep up strong grades in all of your courses. Your final two years in school are the best predictor of how well you’ll do in college. Also, if you are on track to obtain a Core 40 diploma or academic Honors Diploma and have at least a 2.6 cumulative GPA after your junior year of high school you will not need to take any tests to be admitted and start classes at Ivy Tech.
  
- ❑ If your GPA is below a 2.6 or you are not getting either a Core 40 or Academic Honors Diploma you should sign-up to take either the SAT or the ACT at least once. If you do well enough on one of these exams you will not need to take an additional placement test at Ivy Tech.
  
- ❑ After applying to Ivy Tech, create an account on [parchment.com](http://parchment.com) to send a copy of your transcript. To view a video that shows you how to do this, click [here](#).

## **Checklist- attending a trade school**

- ☐ DO YOUR RESEARCH:** Check out various trade schools to determine the right fit for you. Some notable links to research include:
  - [-tradeschools.net](http://tradeschools.net)**
  - [-Ivy Tech](http://IvyTech.com)**
  - [-tech-schools.us](http://tech-schools.us)** (lists colleges and universities offering technical certificates)
  
- ☐ Get your best grades from here on out!**  
Employers and trade schools like to see that you worked hard and challenged yourself.
  
- ☐ Consider attending Career and Technical Education (Vocational) senior year, if you haven't already.** Earning dual credits in high school can help “jump start” your career and save you money on school in the process!

# **Checklist- applying for an apprenticeship**

- ❑ Get good grades. Many programs want students who work hard, and who have completed as much math and science as possible. Consider take courses such as Chemistry, Physics, and Pre-Calculus even if you're not required to.**
  
- ❑ Participate in Career and Technical Education through Vocational if you've not already. Many programs can lead to referrals for apprenticeship opportunities. See your counselor for more details.**
  
- ❑ If you are able, consider earning the Technical Honors diploma as this can help you "stand out" compared to other applicants. See your counselor to discuss if this is an option.**
  
- ❑ Research the different trades to determine what may be the right fit for you. [Webuildnwi.com](http://Webuildnwi.com) is a great resource to begin this research.**
  
- ❑ Stay or get in shape! Standing and doing manual labor all day takes endurance.**
  
- ❑ STAY DRUG FREE. Passing a drug test is required.**

# Checklist- joining the military (not college-bound)

- ❑ Do your research on the various branches of the military to determine the best fit for you. Ask questions if you are not sure which career may be best for you. Some military careers align with civilian careers better than others.
  - Army: <http://www.goarmy.com/>
  - National Guard: <https://www.nationalguard.com/>
  - Navy: <https://www.navy.com/>
  - Marines: <http://www.marines.com/home>
  - Air Force: <http://www.af.mil/>
  - Coast Guard: <http://www.uscg.mil/>
  - [Today's Military](#) is also a great site to learn about all the branches, including the Reserves and National Guard.

\*Keep in mind the process differs according to branch; for example, the process for the National Guard can start as early as September of junior year, whereas other branches begin in March or April of junior year. To connect with a local recruiter, see your counselor or call the local Valparaiso Military Recruiting Office.

- ❑ Sit down a talk with a recruiter to make sure you meet minimum legal, age, and health requirements. **\*PLEASE NOTE THAT DIFFERENT BRANCHES DIFFER ON THEIR POLICIES REGARDING TATTOOS. SPEAK WITH A RECRUITER FURTHER REGARDING EXCLUSIONS.**
- ❑ Take a practice ASVAB test with your recruiter.
- ❑ Maintain physical fitness with regular exercise, whether in a sport or on your own. Some local branches may offer group exercise times as well.
- ❑ Do well in your courses to ensure you will graduate!
- ❑ **READ!**

# **Checklist- taking a structured gap year**

## **❑ DO YOUR RESEARCH**

**-Do you want to work, travel, or volunteer? Whatever you do, it must be enjoyable and meaningful to you.**

**❑ If you're planning on attending college after your gap year, consider applying BEFORE the gap year (i.e., with others in your class going to college right away) and defer your admission, if accepted.**

**-Even if you're NOT planning to attend college after your gap year, you can still benefit from self-exploration, and figuring out what's important to you.**

**❑ Figure out your finances! If your gap year includes travel, consider applying for gap year scholarships, which are increasing in number each year.**

**❑ Keep the lines of communication open. Halfway through your gap year, consider contacting your school counselor to let them know how the gap year is going, and whether you feel the experience would benefit other students. As gap years are still unknown to many students, this is a helpful way to "get the word out".**

**Resources to research gap year opportunities and scholarships:**

[American Gap Association](#)

[Americorps](#)

[United Way Porter County](#) (provides Americorps opportunities)

[USA Gap Year Fairs](#)

# **Resources for entering the workforce after high school**

**Work One:** can assist with job placement, training, employability skills, and in obtaining a diploma, certification, or degree. You **MUST** be graduated or out of high school for at least one month.

**\*Contact Marlene Murphy at 219-384-3652 or at [mmurphy@gotoworkonenw.com](mailto:mmurphy@gotoworkonenw.com)**

**Vocational Rehabilitation:** can assist students with IEPs, 504 plans, or any other student with a documented medical impairment that affects that ability to work or attend school. Can assist with job placement, training, employability skills, and in obtaining a diploma, certification, or degree.

**\*Contact the Valparaiso Vocational Rehabilitation Services at 219-462-0521. Self-Referrals are *recommended* by September of senior year, at latest.**