



Roadmap to High School

Guide for Middle School Students



- **DEVELOP A SENSE OF INDEPENDENCE:** One of the biggest differences between elementary school and middle school is the independence you gain. With this new freedom, you will take on more responsibility as you go through the school day and manage more homework and tasks, while making new friends and meeting new people. It's important to stay organized and keep track of your work, so you can stay focused.
- **ESTABLISH GOOD HABITS:** Classes in sixth grade may be more difficult than what you're used to. Plus, in middle school, grades start to really matter. That's why it's important to establish good study habits and time management skills. They'll be more important in the years to come.
- **DO EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES:** Even with all this work, it's important to have fun and relax. Extracurricular activities—whether a sports team, or a club, or a volunteer opportunity—are great ways to let off steam and build life skills. Plus, colleges pay attention to your extracurriculars, so it's important to have a strong portfolio of activities at an early age.
- **PARTICIPATE IN BRONX INSTITUTE PROGRAMS:** Refer to your 21st Century Scholar Certificate for more information on Bronx Institute programs and resources, such as the Saturday Academy and STEM Summer Institute.

- **MAKE A HIGH SCHOOL LIST:** By now, you should have a good sense of your academic strengths and interests. Start doing some research on different NYC high schools and begin to put together a list of schools that you'll apply to. The earlier you start, the better!
- **START STUDYING FOR TESTS:** If you're planning to apply to a specialized high school, you'll need to start preparing for the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT). Although you'll probably be taking the test in eighth grade, it's incredibly important to start preparing early and build on your foundation in the seventh grade. Keep an eye open for SHSAT prep opportunities in The Bronx Institute GEAR UP program.
- **BUILD YOUR ACADEMIC PORTFOLIO:** In addition to continuing extracurriculars, you should also start to build your "academic portfolio"—a collection of your best work, in the form of tests, projects, writing pieces, or artwork. Some high schools may ask to see an academic portfolio, so don't throw out those old assignments or tests! You'll also want to participate in GEAR UP activities, after-school classes, STEM Saturday Institutes, or STEAM Summer Institutes as much as possible!
- **MAINTAIN A GOOD REPORT CARD:** In sixth grade, it's important to build a solid academic foundation, but your seventh-grade report card is the one that really counts. NYC high schools that screen students will use seventh grade report cards to rank students.

- **MAKE A PLAN:** As you start applying to high schools, create and stick to a plan. Get familiar with the application deadlines and due dates, mark them on a calendar, and make sure that everything high school related is on schedule.
- **FINALIZE YOUR HIGH SCHOOL LIST:** By now, you should have a solid list of high schools. Determine a definitive ranking of schools you would like to attend, ordered from most to least preferred. In the end, you should have a numbered list from 1 to 12, at most. The more schools you are able to put on this list, the better the chances of getting into a school in the first round.
- **PRACTICE WRITING ESSAYS:** Many high schools will ask you to write essays. Essays take time, so it's a good idea to start as soon as possible. Ask a teacher or your GEAR UP coach for feedback and revise, revise, revise!
- **POLISH YOUR APPLICATIONS:** The final stretch, when all applications are due, is probably the most stressful period of the application process. However, this period can be made exponentially easier by properly planning. Make sure you've met all your academic requirements, and use your time to polish your applications, essays, portfolios, and other materials. You're almost done!

Making the Most of Middle School

MIDDLE SCHOOL IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT TIMES IN YOUR LIFE. THOUGH THIS CAN BE A STRESSFUL TIME BOTH FOR STUDENTS AND FAMILIES, THIS GUIDE IS MEANT TO HELP YOU REDUCE THIS ANXIETY AND MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR MIDDLE SCHOOL EXPERIENCE. FAMILIES CAN HELP THEIR CHILDREN CONTINUE TO PREPARE FOR HIGH SCHOOL, LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR COLLEGE, AND TACKLE THE CHALLENGES AS THEY ARRIVE.

SPECIALIZED HIGH SCHOOLS

New York City has nine specialized HIGH schools, all public. Eight of these schools determine admission based on your score on the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT), and one (LaGuardia) is determined based on auditions. It's important to keep up with the most recent information—be sure to talk to your GEAR UP counselor.

These schools are:

THE BRONX HIGH SCHOOL OF SCIENCE



With an enrollment of about 3,000 students, Bronx Science specializes in the STEM fields. Bronx Science graduates include Nobel Laureates and other famous leaders in government, education, medicine, and business. The school offers far more than science, with exemplary teachers in a wide range of subjects.

THE BROOKLYN LATIN SCHOOL



Brooklyn Latin is the newest specialized high school, specializing in the humanities, with a curricular focus on English, History, Latin, and foreign languages.

BROOKLYN TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL



Brooklyn Tech also specializes in the STEM fields. A key part of the program is that students “declare their major,” or academic focus, in 11th grade. Examples include industrial design, mechatronics & robotics, and software engineering, among others.

HIGH SCHOOL FOR MATHEMATICS, SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING AT CITY COLLEGE OF NEW YORK



With about 500 students, HSMSE is also a STEM-focused high school. In 11th grade, students may choose from three concentrations: Higher Mathematics, Mount Sinai School of Medicine Bio-medical Research Program, or Advanced Engineering.

FIORELLO H. LAGUARDIA HIGH SCHOOL OF MUSIC & ART AND PERFORMING ARTS



LaGuardia is the only specialized high school focused on the arts, including dance, drama, instrumental music, technical theater, and vocal music. Unlike other high schools on this list, LaGuardia requires students to audition for a spot.

HIGH SCHOOL OF AMERICAN STUDIES AT LEHMAN COLLEGE



Located on the Lehman College campus, American Studies is focused on US history and politics. Students are able to take classes at Lehman College, and get a taste of real college coursework.

QUEENS HIGH SCHOOL FOR THE SCIENCES AT YORK COLLEGE



QHSSYC is located on the York College campus in Queens, and has an enrollment of about 475 students. The curriculum is focused on the STEM fields.

STATEN ISLAND TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL



Staten Island Tech is STEM-focused, but is also well-known for its career readiness program, including the Pre-Engineering Career & Technical Education (CTE). Students can also participate in the Science & Engineering Research Program.

STUYVESANT HIGH SCHOOL



Located in Lower Manhattan, Stuyvesant is well-known for its rigorous STEM program, which includes courses in science research, genetics, engineering, organic chemistry, and many other topics. It also offers plenty of top courses in humanities and social sciences.

SHSAT

The SHSAT itself is challenging, but manageable with the right preparation. Students have a total of three hours to answer 114 questions, evenly divided between ELA and math. The exam covers some material that students usually learn in high school classes, especially in math, so be sure to take as many practice tests as you can. If you are thinking of applying to a specialized high school, talk to your GEAR UP coach, and join any of the SHSAT prep programs offered by GEAR UP!

CONSORTIUM SCHOOLS

Some New York City public schools are members of an organization called the New York Performance Standards Consortium (better known as “Consortium schools”). These high-performing schools are unique in that they do not require students to take standardized tests, like the NYS Regents Exams, instead focusing on different styles of teaching, collaboration, and assessment. Some of these schools include Beacon High School in Manhattan, Bronx International High School and Bronx Collaborative High School in The Bronx, and others. Talk to your GEAR UP coach for more information.



IMPORTANT TIPS

STAYING ORGANIZED

When you go to school, you should be well prepared and organized. Here are some organizational tips to keep in mind:

- Develop the habit of writing down all assignments and reviewing and checking when assignments are due.
- Keep track of your work with to-do lists and calendars—do a little bit of work each day to keep things manageable.
- Get in the habit of emptying your backpack, binder, or book bag once a week.
- At home, try to keep everything you need for school—your bag, binders, books, or whatever—in one place.

THE HIGH SCHOOL APPLICATION

During the application period, students can access a personalized high school application by visiting www.myschools.nyc, or through a school counselor. You can apply to up to 12 schools anywhere in the city. As you start exploring your high school options, sit down with your family and talk about what matters most to you—whether it's location, language offerings, or a particular program. Visit the High School Directory at www.myschools.nyc to learn more about different schools.