

Having A Purposeful Summer ...

-By Dean Johns, CPA, CFP®

One month of summer vacation is already behind us and the 4th of July holiday is just around the proverbial corner! However, there's still quite a bit of the summer break left, enough in fact that your students can still take advantage of some free time to make it a "purposeful summer." If your students are presently filling their days with hanging out with friends, or lying by the pool, or even congregating in your living room playing video games, here's a few ideas to help get them thinking about taking advantage of the remaining summer vacation and get ready for their return to school.

Often parents will want their high school freshman to dive right into the college planning process, when in reality, that's a little soon for tackling college entrance test prep, college visits and more. That doesn't mean freshmen students can kick back and coast. The 9th grade year in high school is the perfect time for your students to really buckle down and focus on their studies and develop excellent study habits. If they have some weak academic areas, this summer break is the perfect time to take advantage of tutoring and study habits instruction. These foundational skills will likely result in higher test scores on the ACT and SAT in their junior year of high school.

Freshman students should also start developing a resume of their academic and work experiences, including volunteer work, for use when they complete college applications, and this summer break is a perfect time to begin working on the resume. Your high school students should build a resume with the activities they choose to pursue around their passions. This includes community service, whether it's a school requirement or not, as well as finding leadership opportunities. It's important early on to formalize this into an actual resume that will be extremely helpful in the senior year of high school.

While casual college visits will start earlier, the junior year is when official college visits start. Families can easily incorporate visits into spring break, days off for teacher in-service and summer vacations. While you've got some time right now this summer, maybe sit down with your student and brainstorm a list of colleges you'd like to visit and start developing a "college visit list." Something to consider when visiting a college campus is to try and visit the campus during the school year. The campus will be active and will give your student a more realistic view of what the campus will be like during the school year. Do the guided tour, but also get off the beaten path, see what's important to your student and eat a meal. These may seem like small details, but they are very important aspects of college life. These are all important things to consider when developing your college visit list and the slower summer months are a great time to work on this project.

The junior year is for ACT and SAT testing. It is crucial to have a testing timeline and test prep plan in place PRIOR to the junior year; families should make this plan as early as the sophomore year. Generally, it takes five to eight weeks to prepare for college entrance exams, and this is where formal test prep will provide great value.

Students should also plan to take the test at least two times because each additional point could be worth thousands of dollars. The summer months are great blocks of time to use for test prep and studying. Be sure to check many online resources for test prep classes before registering for the ACT and SAT exams.

In the midst of the college and financial planning, remember, you don't have to navigate this journey alone. We all seek out the help of professionals for all manner of things. If you're spending tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars on your child's education, doesn't it make sense for you to seek out expert resources to advise you as you and your child make this journey? Doing so will help ensure a smooth and successful journey. Please call our office at 513.579.9400 if you'd like to make an appointment for a conference call or meeting. We'd love to assist! You still have plenty of time to help your student make it a purposeful summer!



Dean Johns is a principal with John D. Dovich & Associates, LLC. Dean graduated summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Accounting from Minnesota State University in 1991. He received his Master's Degree in Business Taxation from the University of Minnesota in 1999. Dean is a licensed Certified Public Accountant (CPA) having received the Elijah Watts Sells award for the November 1991 exam (top 100 in the country). Dean also received his CFP certification in 2013. Dean has 20-years' experience in public accounting with two international accounting firms. Before joining our firm, he was the Executive Director of Partner Matters for Grant Thornton LLP, serving as the trusted advisor for more than 500 partners and their personal financial interests of the firm.

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