

A Parents' Guide For Ninth Grade

Introduction and Overview of Ninth Grade:

- The challenge ahead
- Student experiences will vary
- While no description perfectly captures an age, *awkwardness, self-doubt, self-absorption, fragility, and timidity usually mark the ninth grader.*

Introduction and Overview of Ninth Grade:

- Nothing seems to fit.
- casual comment from adults often overwhelms a ninth grader;
- Trials and tribulations

Introduction and Overview of Ninth Grade:

- Studying can be more difficult and good grades harder to achieve
- Parents must begin to relinquish control.

Some cautions

- Not all ninth graders experience the year in precisely the same way.
- While ninth graders experience some angst, they are still fun to be around, and give us joy!

Some cautions

- In general, girls appear to go through harder times than boys during the year.
- **Life does get better!**
- Never underestimate the remarkable resilience of youth!.

What does St. Margaret's value?

- Honor
- The Pursuit of Excellence
- The Episcopal Tradition

What do 9th grade teachers like to see in their students?

- The instinct to be proactive in their approach to learning.
- The ability to focus, pay attention, and follow directions.
- The character to take responsibility for their thoughts and actions.
- The ability to learn independently, rather than being "spoon fed".

It is important to note that throughout the middle school years more structure and framework are typically given to students, whereas in our Upper School students are expected to create these frameworks for themselves.

What are the new experiences that 9th graders will face in the months ahead?

- Academically, school work is challenging
- The time required for all school teams and activities consumes many more hours
- Parents may have to closely monitor and set limits
- Becoming involved in the life of the school is a high priority for ninth graders.

What is the school doing to work with the unique challenges of 9th grade?

- Orientations – first week meetings, Retreat
- Advisory relationships, Dean's relationship
- Parent-Student Handbook
- This meeting!
- The Human Development course requirement
- An extensive extracurricular program
- PTF-sponsored meetings and workshops that focus on adolescent and family issues.

To what extent should or can parents support 9th graders this year?

- Provide students with a supportive environment, while they face their own challenges.
- Let them experience short-term failure.
- Encourage them to address their own issues.
- Communicate with the school when in your judgment we need know about something going on in their personal lives.
- Give them constructive criticism when warranted.
- Compliment them when it is deserved.
- Celebrate with them along the way!

What can you, the parents, do in particular to help your children during this year?

- Provide clarity and a calming presence at home when all is not well in your child's world.
- Be present and active in your child's life.
- Keep in mind that your child needs you to be a parent and not a friend.
- Children need to know what is appropriate and right, and what is clearly wrong. "Coach" with this in mind
- In all ways imaginable, support your child's growth to adulthood

**What is perhaps the “best”
advice for parents of 9th (10th
11th, 12th...) graders?**

- **“Under React”**

What are some qualities of parenting that support children's growth to maturity and goodness?

- Allow space and time for children to grow.
 - Don't call repeatedly during the school day
- Hold children accountable for their actions.
- Listen a lot.
- Possess a reservoir of love, patience, and perspective.

How important is it to make connections with other parents?

- "Am I alone in all this?" "Am I doing the right thing?" (or "Am I the only one doing the right thing?")
- Make fellow parents your allies.
- Coordinate and communicate on such things as curfews.
- Through communication and commitment, ensure no unsupervised/ inappropriate parties

Do grades count? How can we measure a successful year?

- Yes, they do count because they begin shaping the portrait of a student's academic life.
- The purpose of education is learning and not the mere acquisition of grades.
- Frequent conversations about learning (rather than grades)
- Frequent conversations about grades subvert this value.
- St. Margaret's and colleges recognize that ninth grade is a transition period for students in many ways.

Do students need to focus on college at this time?

- No, they need to focus only on learning more about themselves, others and the world in which they live.
- Work hard at developing good study habits, gaining knowledge in many disciplines, at becoming clearer thinkers and moral persons.
- Colleges want students who are interested and interesting, and who cultivate wonder, openness and love of learning.

Do parents need to focus on college at this time?

- No special counselor or course, manual, form or test, inordinate parental concern or worry, is required
- SMES is blessed in having an impressive college guidance team.
- When the time comes for you to become involved in the college process (spring of the junior year), this team will connect you with all the steps and resources.

Do parents need to focus on college at this time?

- Over the course of the year, the guidance office sends their college newsletter to all families.
- At the ninth grade parent evening in the spring, we will review the college process appropriate for the next and subsequent years.

Issues We're Working On

- Goals for the US
 - Curricular Mapping
 - Advisory Curriculum
 - Academic Planning
 - Consistency of experiences in courses
- Attendance Issues
- Dance Conduct / Attire

Welcome to the ninth grade!

- Q & A