

COUNSELORS' CORNER

September 2026

Quarter 1

12th Grade Presentations

2026 College & Career Night at
World Golf Village Renaissance –
September 2, 2026; 6:00-7:30
p.m.

ELA FAST 10 Retakes –
September 10, 2026

EOC Assessments (Retakes and
for courses completed virtually)
– September 15, 2026

PSAT – October 21, 2026

School Counselors

Courtney Derisse
Last Names: A-Eo

Kimberly Grillo
Last Names: Ep-Le

Karin Ngai-Crim
Last Names: Li-Ri

Monica Ferguson
Last Names: Ro-Z



Samantha Cruess is Ponte Vedra High School's new College & Career Advisor. She is here to support students as they plan for life after high school. Students can visit the College & Career Center in room 565 for assistance with college applications, Common App, essays, scholarships, college and career exploration, application deadlines, and other postsecondary planning needs. Ms. Cruess will also coordinate college representative visits and college/career programming throughout the year to help students explore their options and connect with future opportunities. Students should stay updated on the College & Career Schoology page where they can sign up for college visits and book personal appointments. Her goal is to provide students with the resources, guidance, and individualized support they need to feel confident and prepared for their next step!

Freshmen

Welcome to high school, Sharks! Our team looks forward to meeting our 9th graders. We will discuss tips on how to be successful in high school and prepare for the future. It is very important to start strong. Here are some strategies that lay the groundwork for a successful year:

- Get involved-sign up for a club!
- Find study partners in your classes
- Begin community service
- Learn about your GPA- Check HAC!
- Take care of your emotional and mental health
- Know where you can get help on campus (Teachers, Counselors, Deans)
- Set a goal for the end of the year and where you want to be in 4 years

Sophomores

Welcome to 10th grade! The beginning of the school year is a great time to set goals, get involved, and start building a strong sophomore year.

- Get Involved & Build Your Experiences! Join a club or sport, participate in community service, or consider a part-time job. Getting involved helps you develop leadership, teamwork, and communication skills while building connections within your school and community. Consistent involvement can also strengthen your high school transcript, future college applications, and overall college and career readiness.
- Start Strong Academically! The habits and grades you build this year are important. Focus on:
 - o GPA: Stay on top of your grades and ask for help early.
 - o Organization: Keep track of assignments, deadlines, and upcoming assessments.
 - o Course Rigor: Challenge yourself with courses appropriate for your academic strengths.
 - o Study Habits: Develop a consistent routine. Take advantage of tutoring and teacher support.

The PSAT is scheduled on campus for ALL sophomores on October 21.

Juniors

11th grade is about focusing on grades, preparing for college entrance exams, beginning the college search, and planning for life after high school. During this 1st quarter, students should work on the following:

- Set goals for the school year
- Take the PSAT/NMSQT – it's a qualifying test for the National Merit Scholarship Program. It will be administered on October 21st. Look for the sign up and pay the test fee.
- Stay on track in classes and strengthen the GPA
- College Exploration: Build a list of top 6 colleges; attend local information sessions from visiting college representatives
- Update/create a resume
- Stay active in clubs, sports, or community service (run for leadership and/or lead an initiative)

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Seniors

School Counselors visited all Gov and Econ classes to review needed graduation requirements, provide support for Common App, talk about plans for after graduation, and cover eligibility for Bright Futures. Seniors are encouraged to make an appointment with their respective School Counselor to further discuss their individual plans for after graduation. It is important for seniors to check the Class of 2027 Schoology page on a weekly basis as all timely information from Guidance will be posted on that page.

Transcripts for college applications will be sent via Common App this year. Your senior must invite their School Counselor on their Common App so that required documentation and transcripts can be uploaded for delivery to their colleges. Seniors who are applying direct need to let their School Counselor know.

Students needing a **REQUIRED** counselor letter of recommendation need to follow the instructions that are posted on their Class of 2027 Schoology page.

The Bright Futures portal will open on October 1st. Please make sure that your senior applies at that time.

Volunteer/work hours do not have to be completed to apply. Updated hours, grades, and test scores are uploaded to Bright Futures in January and again in the summer after graduation. Here is the link:

<https://www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org/SAPHome/SAPHome?url=home>.



Important COMMON APP INFO

KNOW IT. DO IT. OWN YOUR FUTURE.

PLAN. PREPARE. APPLY. SUCCEED!

HOW TO SELECT YOUR SCHOOL COUNSELOR in Common App

To select your school counselor on the Common App, navigate to the "Recommenders and FERPA" section under any college on your My Colleges tab.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

- 1  Go to the My Colleges tab and click on any college on your list.
- 2  Click Recommenders and FERPA.
- 3  Complete the FERPA Release Authorization. (Waiving your rights is generally recommended).
- 4  Scroll down to the Counselor section and click Invite Counselor.
- 5  Enter your counselor's correct name and email address, then click Invite.

SCHOOL COUNSELORS

• Courtney Derisse	courtney.derisse@stjohns.k12.fl.us
• Kimberly Grillo	kimberly.grillo@stjohns.k12.fl.us
• Karin Ngai-Crim	karin.ngai-crim@stjohns.k12.fl.us
• Monica Ferguson	monica.ferguson@stjohns.k12.fl.us

HOW TO REQUEST A LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION in Common App

To request a teacher recommendation in the Common App, first verify the colleges you're applying to and ask your teacher in person. Then, complete your Education section, sign the FERPA release authorization, add your teacher's contact info under the "Recommenders and FERPA" tab, and formally to your them to your selected colleges.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

- 1  Ask in Person: Always approach your teacher first to ask if they are willing to write a strong letter of recommendation. Do this at least 4-6 weeks before your earliest application deadline.
- 2  Complete the Education Section: Ensure your high school information is accurately filled out in the Common App tab under Education.
- 3  Sign the FERPA Release: Go to the My Colleges tab, click on any college, and select Recommenders and FERPA. Follow the prompts to complete the release authorization. (Waiving your rights to view the recommendation is generally recommended and favored by admissions offices).
- 4  Invite Your Teacher: Under the same Recommenders and FERPA page, scroll down to the Teacher section and click Invite Teacher. Enter their exact name and email address.
- 5  Assign and Submit: Once added, select your teacher's name from the dropdown menu and click Assign for each specific college you want their letter sent to.

**Stay organized.
Stay on track.
You've got this!**

**SMALL STEPS TODAY.
BIG OPPORTUNITIES
TOMORROW.**

**Dream big.
Work hard.
Make it happen.**

YOU'VE GOT THE PLAN. NOW TAKE THE NEXT STEP!

COUNSELORS' CORNER

NOT GOING TO A 4-YEAR COLLEGE? WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?



THERE ARE
MORE PATHS
TO SUCCESS
THAN YOU
THINK!

★ EXPLORE YOUR OPTIONS. PLAN YOUR FUTURE. BUILD YOUR LIFE. ★



2-YEAR COLLEGE

- ✓ Programs lead to an AA/AS degree, certificate, career, or transfer to a 4-year university.
- ✓ Decide: AA → transfer OR AS/certificate → career.
- ✓ Research Florida colleges + programs that fit your goal.
- ✓ APPLY! Each college sets its own application, financial-aid, orientation, and registration deadlines.
- ✓ Complete FAFSA/scholarships; send required records; meet with an advisor; register for classes.
- ✓ Transfer Option: Earn your AA degree at a Florida public college, then transfer to a Florida public university to work toward your bachelor's degree.

★ **BENEFITS:** Affordable tuition, smaller classes, career training, and transfer opportunities.



TRADE / TECHNICAL SCHOOL

- ✓ Hands-on training for skilled careers such as HVAC, welding, automotive, cosmetology, health care, construction, and more.
- ✓ Choose a career and check required license/certification.
- ✓ Compare technical colleges, career centers, and apprenticeships. Ask: How long? How much? What credential will I earn? Is job placement offered?
- ✓ Apply to the program and complete financial-aid steps if eligible.

★ **BENEFITS:** Get career-focused training in less time and enter an in-demand skilled profession.



MILITARY

- ✓ Serve in the U.S. Armed Forces while receiving career training, pay/benefits, and possible education benefits.
- ✓ Compare branches, military careers, Active Duty, Reserve, and National Guard options.
- ✓ Talk with recruiters, ask about jobs, contracts, service commitment, training, and benefits.
- ✓ Prepare for and take the ASVAB; scores help determine job eligibility.
- ✓ Complete eligibility/MEPS steps and READ your enlistment agreement before signing.

★ **BENEFITS:** Receive paid training and benefits, with opportunities for education, assistance, and career development.



WORKFORCE

- ✓ Start a paid job after graduation and build experience, skills, certifications, and career opportunities while working.
- ✓ Explore careers that match your interests, strengths, and salary goals.
- ✓ Create a résumé and professional email; ask adults/teachers for references.
- ✓ Practice interviews and appropriate workplace communication.
- ✓ Search and apply for entry-level jobs, internships, apprenticeships, and employer training. Use [CareerSource Northeast Florida](#) to explore local job and career opportunities in St. Johns, Duval, and surrounding counties.

★ **BENEFITS:** Start earning money right away, gain real-world work experience, and build your future.

NEXT STEPS

1 CHOOSE
YOUR TOP PATHWAY.



2 HAVE
A BACKUP.



3 QUESTIONS?
MEET WITH YOUR SCHOOL
COUNSELOR OR THE COLLEGE
& CAREER ADVISOR.



YOUR FUTURE. YOUR CHOICE. YOUR MOVE.

START EXPLORING TODAY. THE FUTURE IS **YOURS!**

COUNSELORS' CORNER

St. Johns County School District



COLLEGE & CAREER FAIR 2026

**Hosted at the World Golf Village Renaissance
St. Augustine Conference Center**

500 S Legacy Trail, St. Augustine, FL 32092



**Wednesday,
September 2nd**



6:00pm - 7:30pm

**FOR MORE INFORMATION
SCAN QR CODE**