

## Planning for Ninth Grade - Sean

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Sean will be going into the ninth grade this fall. He is the youngest of three brothers who live in an apartment in a safe, predominantly African-American section of the city. Sean and his brothers have grown up on the block on which they live, and know most of the other kids they live in their neighborhood. Sean's oldest brother did very well in school. He graduated from high school last year, and lives at home as he attends a state college campus right in town where he received a partial scholarship. Sean's other brother (now entering the eleventh grade) hasn't done as well. He hangs out with a crowd that is known to cause trouble. He has little interest in school, and often skips it all together. He barely passed last year, and only did so because one of his teachers (who had Sean's older brother a few years earlier) wouldn't allow him to fail.

Sean's parents are very involved in their kid's lives. His father is a banker, and his mother works in a preschool. Most of what they earn, they put into their children, and they have made this very clear to them. Over the last year they haven't spent too much time with either Sean or his oldest brother, as they have been trying to deal with the middle brother's problems.

Sean isn't noticed too much at school. He is short and not very athletic. He passes his classes because they aren't too challenging and don't require him to do much work. Most of Sean's friends perform similarly in school, though one of his close friends got into a lot of trouble at the end of last year, and was suspended until the second semester. Sean occasionally hangs out in the computer room after school, but he hasn't had an opportunity to pursue his interest in computers during school, since computer classes are restricted to kids who have taken advanced math classes.

Sean is nervous about attending high school in the fall. The school is large, and his brothers have told him that it is rough on freshmen. His brother that is entering eleventh grade told him that a couple of his friends also had brothers enter ninth grade, and that he should meet them over the summer, but Sean has been too shy to do this. The schedule that he made with his guidance counselor last spring puts him in pretty easy classes, except for math, where he has been pushed to an advanced class. Sean is scared about that class, but he knows that it will be easy to get out of it and drop to the lower level class, even though this will mean not being able to take computers for another year.

While Sean's parents have been preoccupied with his other brother, they are concerned about sending Sean to the public high school. While this school worked very well for his oldest brother, it definitely had the potential to fail for him as it has so far for his middle brother. Sean's tendency to let things happen to him might prevent him from making the right choices. Should they take their chances? Or try to scrape up the money for a private school? Perhaps they should try sending him to the new media charter school? Maybe Sean's mom should team up with her friend who has been homeschooling their son for the last two years? What do you recommend?