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# The Prep Academy

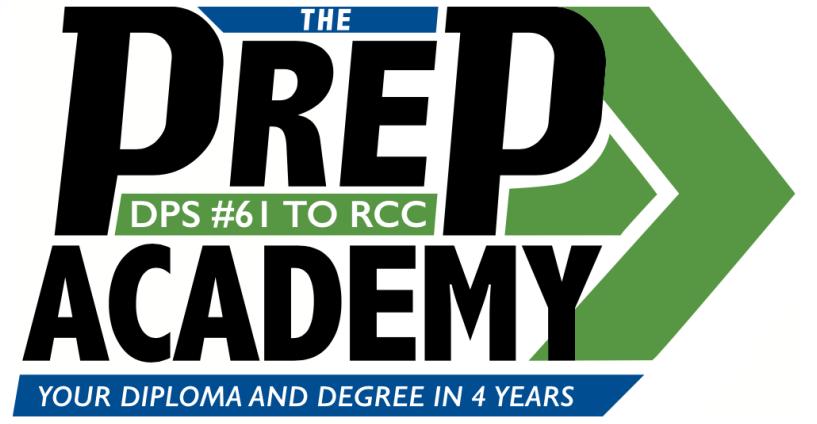
- The Prep Academy, a partnership between Decatur Public Schools (DPS) and Richland Community College (RCC), offers several key advantages designed to give students a competitive edge for both future college and career opportunities.
  - Earn high school diploma + Associate's Degree from RCC concurrently
  - **NO COST TO STUDENTS** (*Free tuition and free books!*)



The Prep Academy is an exciting opportunity offered **only** to Decatur Public School students and families.



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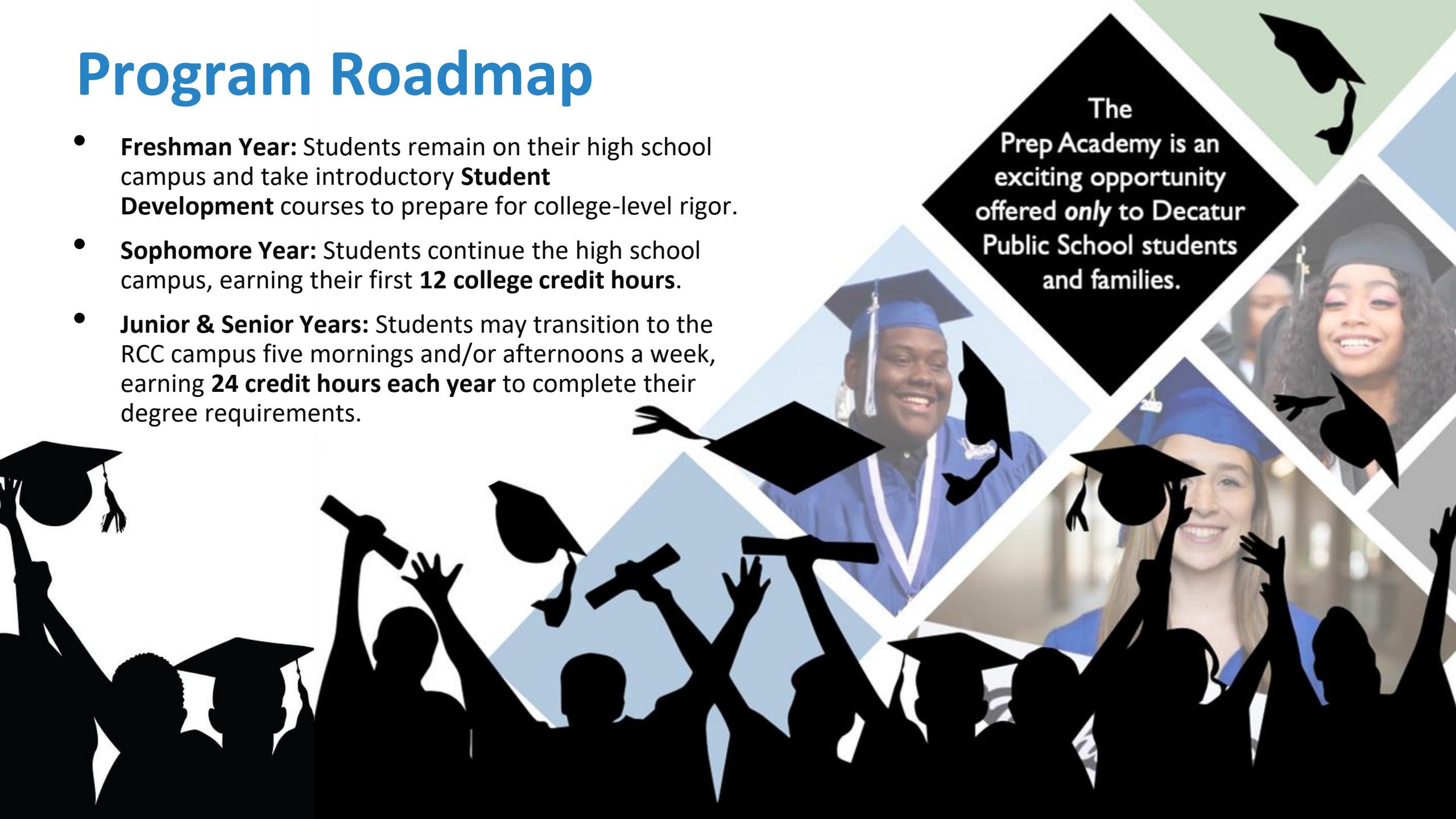


## How does the dual credit process lead to an Associate Degree?

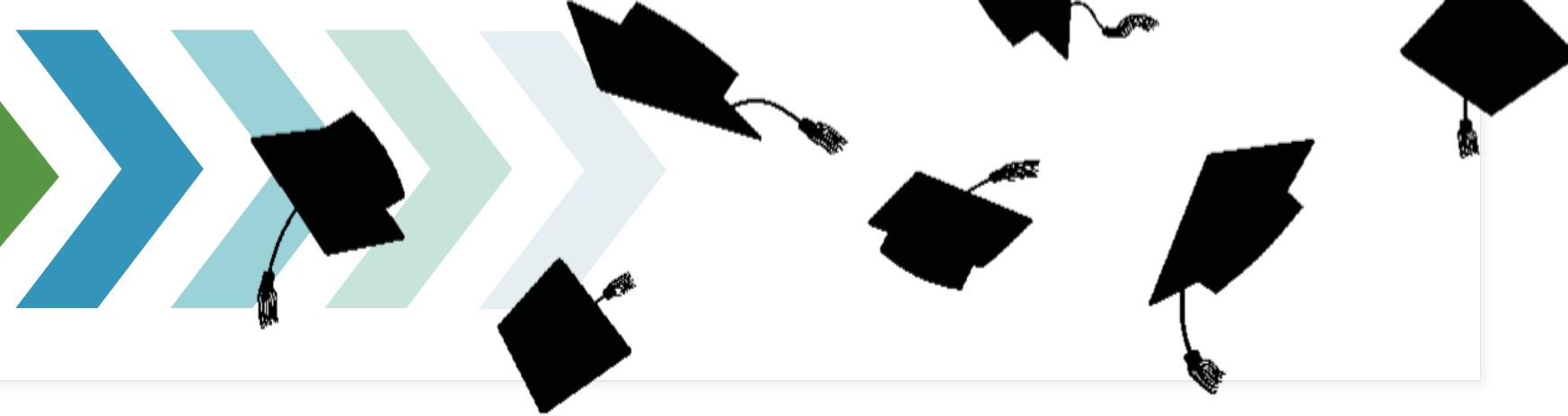
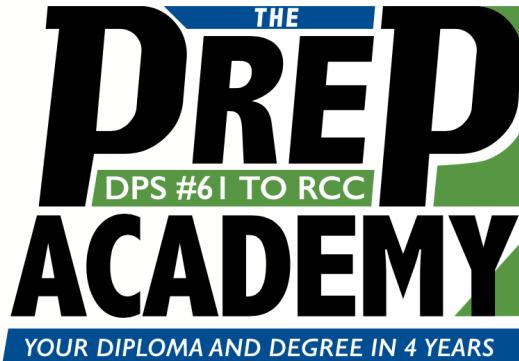
Dual credit allows students to earn high school and college credits simultaneously for the same course. In this program, those credits are strategically sequenced so that by high school graduation, the student has also completed the 60 credit hours required for an **Associate Degree**—a two-year college degree that serves as the foundation for a Bachelor's degree or immediate entry into the workforce.

# Program Roadmap

- **Freshman Year:** Students remain on their high school campus and take introductory **Student Development** courses to prepare for college-level rigor.
- **Sophomore Year:** Students continue the high school campus, earning their first **12 college credit hours**.
- **Junior & Senior Years:** Students may transition to the RCC campus five mornings and/or afternoons a week, earning **24 credit hours each year** to complete their degree requirements.



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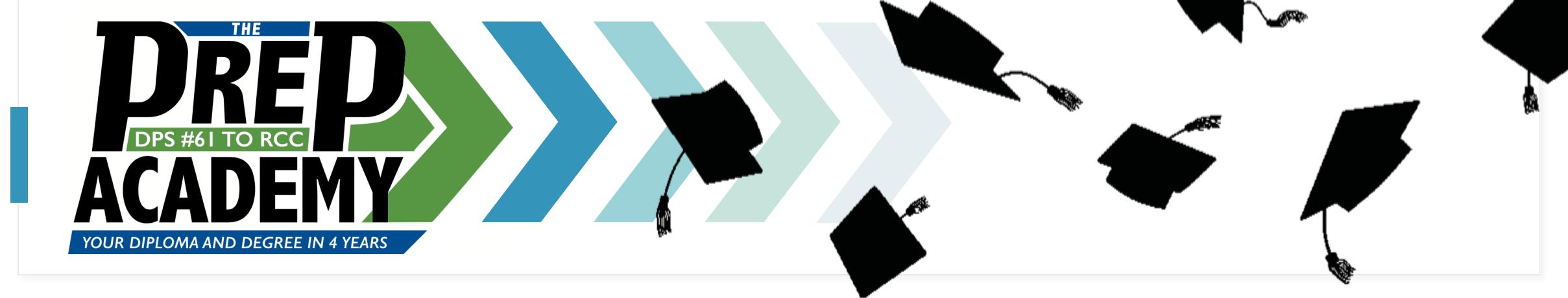


## Core Benefits of the Program:

- **Dual Completion:** Students can earn their high school diploma and a **full Associate's Degree** simultaneously within the same four-year high school period.
- **Substantial Cost Savings:** The program is **entirely free** for DPS families. It covers 100% of tuition and textbook costs, saving families an estimated **\$20-\$25,000** in future public college tuition expenses.
- **College Preparedness:** Students gain early exposure to college-level rigor, developing essential skills in time management, critical thinking, and mature study habits ahead of their peers.
- **Academic Support:** The program includes **personal coaching**, tutoring, and guidance from college staff to ensure students thrive in their advanced coursework.

## Career & Employment Advantages:

- **Early Career Exposure:** Students can explore technical programs on the RCC campus.
- **Competitive Edge:** Graduates enter the workforce or a four-year university with a head start, increasing their long-term earning potential.
- **Transferability:** Credits earned are transferable to four-year universities, often satisfying many introductory general education requirements.



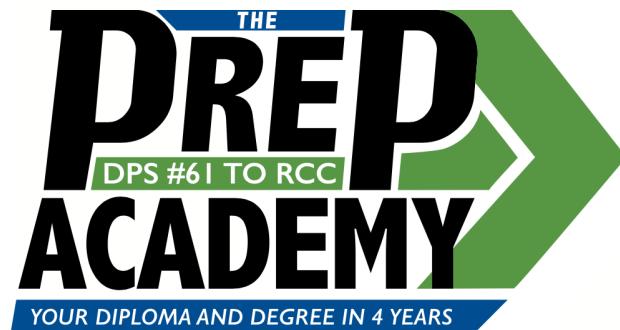
## Program Guiding Principles

- Inclusion and diversity
- Accessibility for all students
- Real world applications
- Cost savings
- Personal coaching
- College preparedness
- Early career exposure
- Increased future employment opportunities

## Enrollment by Cohort

- **25 current Seniors (Cohort 1) graduated May 2025!**
- 34 current seniors (Cohort 2) graduate May 2026!
- 31 current juniors (Cohort 3) graduate May 2027!
- 41 current sophomores (Cohort 4) graduate May 2028!
- 49 current freshman (Cohort 5) graduate May 2029!
- 50 incoming freshmen (Cohort 6) to begin Fall 2026!

**\*\*Every year a cohort will graduate!\*\***



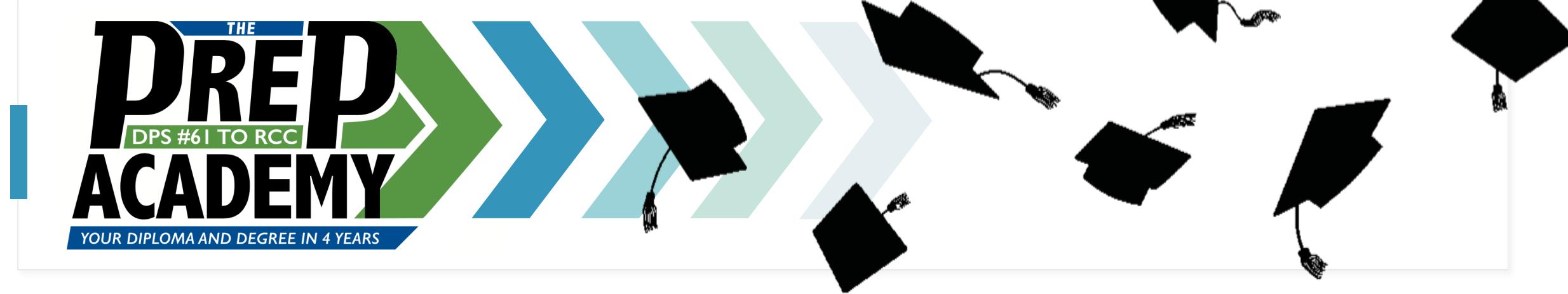
# 4-Year Sample Schedule

	Semester 1	Semester 2		Semester 1	Semester 2
9th	English	English	10th	Math	Math
	Math	Math		World History	World History
	Science	Science		Science	Science
	Foreign Language	Foreign Language		Foreign Language/ or Another Elective	Foreign Language/ or Another Elective
	Health	Drivers Ed		Early Bird ENG 2/PE	Early ENG 2/PE
	DPS Elective	DPS Elective		Fine Arts Elec/BUS - 3	Fine Arts Elec/BUS - 3
	STDEV 101 - 1	STDEV 102 - 1		AFAM 100 - 3	AFAM 120 - 3
	Semester 1	Semester 2	11th	Semester 1	Semester 2
11th	US History	US History		STDEV 104 - 1	CHEM 100 - 4
	Math	Math		RCC Elective - 3	RCC Elective - 3
	ENG 101 - 3	ENG 102 - 3		RCC Elective - 3	RCC Elective - 3
	RCC Study Hall	RCC Study Hall		-----	RCC Elective- 3
	COMM 101 - 3	SOCIO 110 - 3		Math 113- 4	Engl 4 ( <b>if needed</b> )
	PSYCH 110 - 3	BIOL 101 - 4		English 4	Inspired Futures Internship
	RCC Elective- 3	RCC Elective- 3		Consumer Ed	
				Civics	Inspired Futures Internship



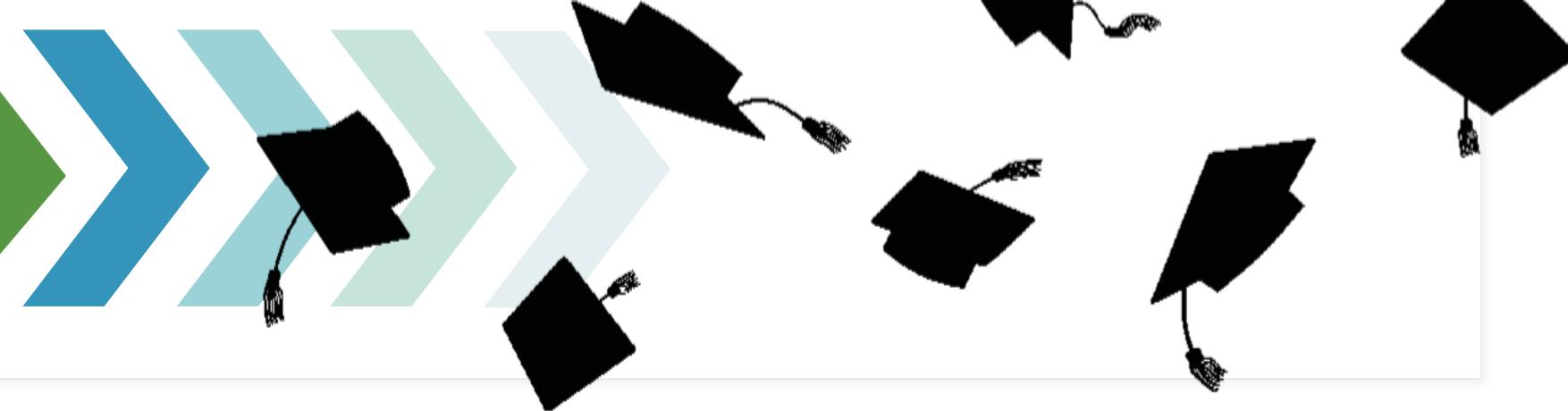
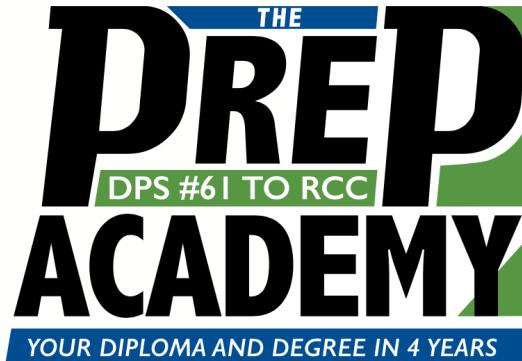
## Other Information

- DPS electives are still **very** limited due to the tight schedule of meeting the requirements of both the degree and diploma. Each student should continue to work with their Counselor on their 4-Year Plan.
- **Band and AG courses cannot be guaranteed in your student's schedule. Please have this discussion with your student and make the decision of what's best for your student upfront.**
- Each student receives one Macbook!
- Transportation provided to RCC during junior and senior year.
- Prep Academy students will be taken on college visits.
- Students will have an adult Mentor for support + college mentors available at each high school to assist students.
- Students must maintain a 2.75 Grade Point Average (GPA) or higher at DPS and RCC to remain in the program.
  - Students that do not maintain this GPA, will be transitioned out.
- Discipline, grade checks, and progress monitoring is on-going, and students must strive to represent themselves and the program at high standards, or students can be transitioned out of Prep Academy.



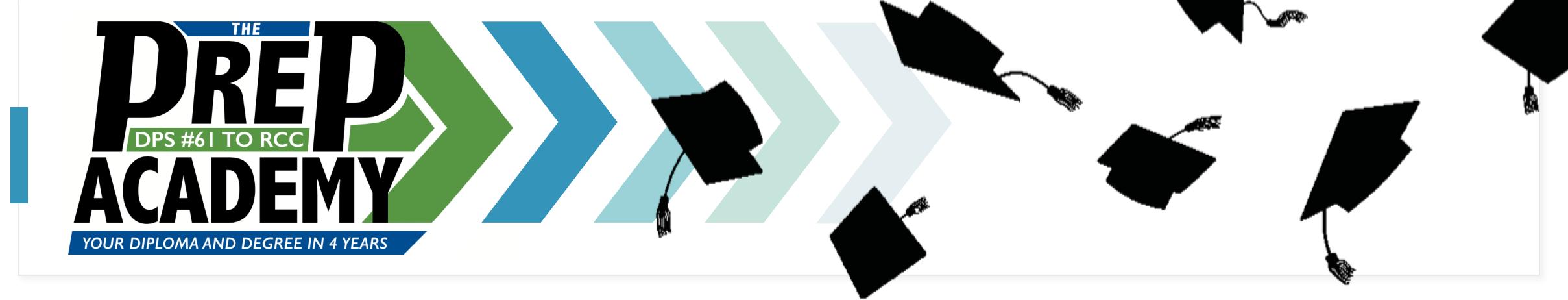
## Completed application includes:

- Attendance **required** at Student informational session.
- Attendance **required** at Parent informational session.
- One letter of recommendation **required - more are welcomed.**
- Five paragraph essay **required** on why they want to be accepted into Prep Academy program.
- Completed application, along w/ supporting documents must be electronically submitted via School Mint. **Only fully completed applications will be reviewed.**
- **February 20, 2026- Application Deadline in SchoolMint.**
- Reviewing committee will review grades and student assessment data (FastBridge and IAR) , discipline data, and attendance on each fully completed application submitted
- Building level recommendations will also be considered



## Next Steps for Rollout

<b>Week of February 2</b>	Student informational sessions at Stephen Decatur Middle School and all K-8 buildings
<b>Week of February 9</b>	Parent informational opportunities via webinar (see next slide)
<b>February 20, 2026</b>	APPLICATION DEADLINE- Submit electronically in School Mint
<b>Weeks of February 23 - March 2</b>	Committee reviews applications
<b>March 16</b>	Acceptance and Denial letters mailed
<b>April 17, 2026</b>	Acceptance confirmation deadline
<b>May 4, 2026</b>	Prep Academy Signing Day Event for those <b>accepted</b> <i>**More information will be sent via email/**</i>



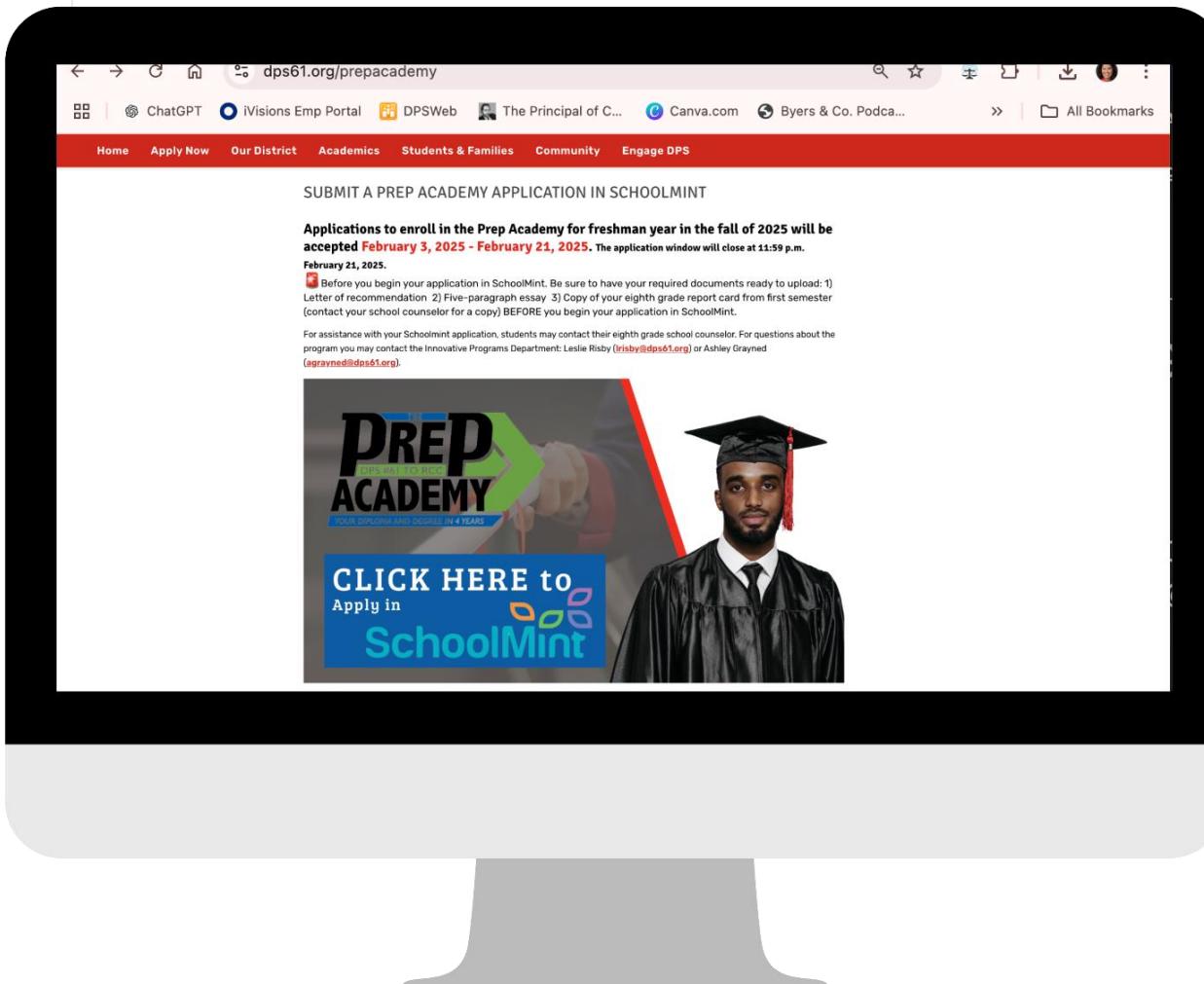
## Parent Informational Sessions

Parents ***must*** register and attend one of the following informational sessions:

- **Tuesday, February 10, 2026 @ 11:30 a.m.**
- **Tuesday, February 10, 2026 @ 5:00 p.m.**
- **Thursday, February 12, 2026 @ 11:30 a.m.**
- **Thursday, February 12, 2026 @ 5:00 p.m.**

To register, visit [www.dps61.org/prepacademy](http://www.dps61.org/prepacademy)

# How to apply once you have all the required documents!



[www.dps61.org/prepacademy](http://www.dps61.org/prepacademy)

Scan the QR Code below!



Decatur Public Schools #61 | X +

dps61magnet.schoolmint.com/login

ChatGPT iVisions Emp Portal DPSWeb The Principal of C... Canva.com Byers & Co. Podca... ISBE indesign tutorial -...

All Bookmarks

Guardian Log In

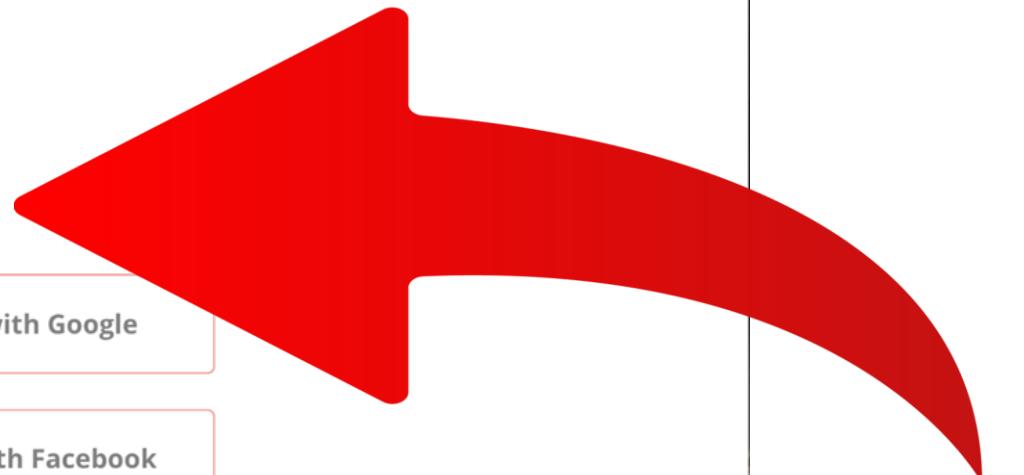
Need an account? [Create an account](#)

Enter Email or Phone Number\*

Enter Password\* 

 Continue with Google

 Continue with Facebook



Login

Forgot password? Can't find account

# Prep Academy Application: 2025-2026

1. Prep Academy Overview	
2. Student Information	
3. Guardian Information	
4. REQUIRED Parent Zoom W...	
5. Required Documentation	
6. Signatures	
7. Review and Send	

## Required Documentation

5/7

### Letter of Recommendation

 \* Choose File

Accept .doc, .docx, .pdf

*One Letter of Recommendation is required. More letters are recommended. Letters must be individuals outside of the student's immediate family ie: coaches, teachers, principals, etc..*

### Student Essay

 \* Choose File

Accept .doc, .docx, .pdf

*Student must write a five paragraph essay to accompany their application. Please include: 1) Who you are 2) Why do you want to be in the Prep Academy 3) How do you plan to be successful in the Prep Academy.*

### Report Card

 \* Choose File

Accept .doc, .docx, .pdf

*The minimum report card must be from 8th grade first semester (1st and 2nd quarters). May submit previous report cards. Copies may be requested by contacting the student's counselor.*

## Prep Academy Application: 2026-2027

1. Program Selection	✓
2. Student Information	✓
3. Guardian Information	✓
4. REQUIRED Parent Zoom Webi...	✓
5. Required Documentation	✓
6. Signatures	✓
7. Review and Send	✓

### Review and Send

7/7

#### General Information

Student Name	Noah Sutton
Registration Year	2026 - 2027
Grade level	9
<b>School(s) Applying To:</b>	
Prep Academy 2026-27 Cohort 6	

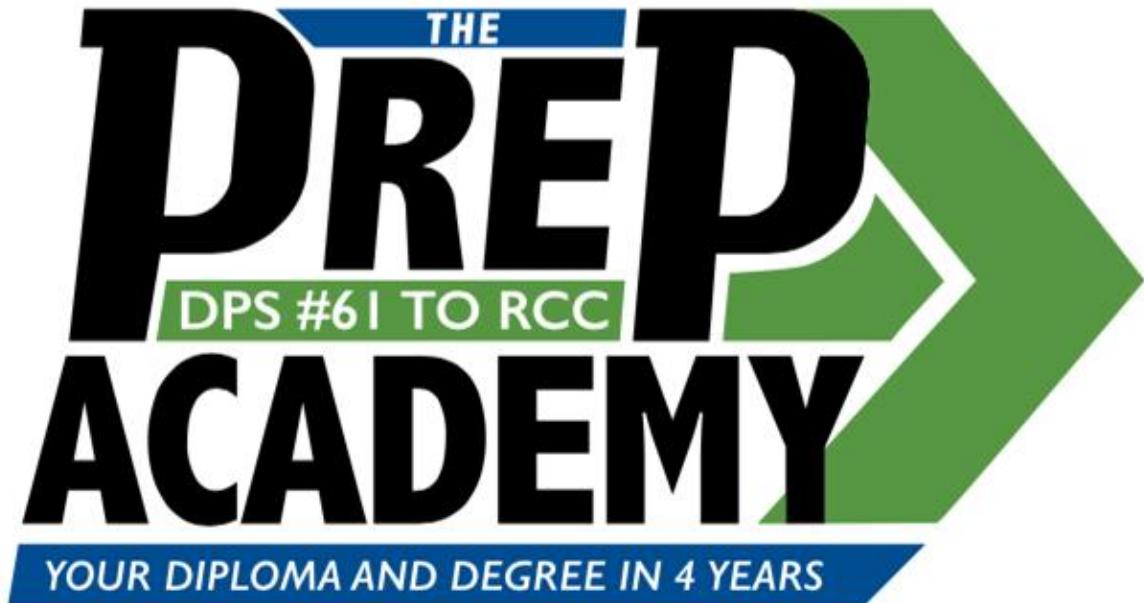
#### 2. Student Information



Student First Name	Noah
Student Last Name	Sutton
DPS Student ID	000000
Current School Attending	Johns Hill
DPS High School Attending Next Year	MHS
NAME of 8th Grade School Counselor	
Student Address	512 W Ash Ave
Student Address 2	
Student Address City	Decatur
Student Address State	Illinois
Student Address Zip Code	62526
Student Cell Phone if Applicable	

# THE **PREP** DPS #61 TO RCC **ACADEMY**

YOUR DIPLOMA AND DEGREE IN 4 YEARS



For more information or to apply, contact:

**Ashley Grayned**

Executive Director of Innovative Programs & Strategic Planning

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or

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(217) 362-3064 or (217) 855-8156

