

BURLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL

POST SECONDARY PLANNING PACKET

FALL 2024







BURLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL

School Counseling Department

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Dear Junior Families,

Welcome to the Post Secondary Planning Process!

We know this is a daunting process for many, but our hope is that you will also find this process to be exciting. Each family proceeds through the college search process at their own pace. Some students are eager to get started, and others may want to avoid the conversation for as long as possible. Opinions and suggestions will come from everywhere. Sorting it out can be a challenge.

A key aspect will be self-reflection on the part of the student. The most successful students are those who truly think about who they are as a person and what kind of learner they are. While the reputation of a college is important, the more critical question is whether or not a school is a good "fit". We encourage you to avoid the term "good school" altogether. Any student's list should represent a range of selectivity, but if only the more selective colleges are described by parents or others as "good" schools, how will your student feel if accepted only to one or more that weren't considered "good?"

Your beginning list of colleges should be the result of your use of college search tools and discussion with your family and counselor. Each brings certain knowledge and expertise that is important to the planning process. The list will evolve over the course of the students junior/senior years and eventually result in the group of schools to which the student will actually apply. Let's remember, of course, that this is the student's life we are talking about and they should decide where to look, apply, and attend after considering the wisdom of all concerned.

We hope that the information included in this packet will help answer some of your questions and support you through the process. Please don't hesitate to reach out to your school counselor. We look forward to working with your student in the coming months as you plan for your future.

Good luck!

The Counseling Department
Ms. Dougherty, Ms. Bruder, Ms. O'Hara, Mrs. Prouty, Mr. Settel

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Advice from Graduates

Graduating seniors were asked what advice they would give students who are starting the college process. In their words...

- **DO NOT MISS DEADLINES** (this does not just mean for applications, but also financial aid and scholarships).
- **Get started early – the process takes longer than you think.**
- Time management is essential. Make a chart with all your deadlines.
- Memorize your social security number.
- Do not get fixated on one school, have options.
- When visiting schools, get your questions answered.
- When you fill out applications for schools or register for tests, print your name exactly the same way on everything. (If you hyphenate – always hyphenate; if you use a middle initial – always use a middle initial).
- Prioritizing and organization are two necessary life skills.
- Actually study for the SAT or ACT.
- If you don't get into your first choice, you'll still be happy – trust me.
- You are not done with college stuff when you mail your applications. Don't forget about financial aid.
- Do not stop doing work senior year – colleges notice.
- The FAFSA is not the only way to pay for college.
- Auditions for college (theater) are hard, waiting stinks, but getting accepted feels good!
- Be sure you know WHY you are applying to the colleges that you are applying to (you should not have a blank stare on your face when asked this in an interview).
- Don't go for a good name or reputation; go for a good "fit".
- Make your own decisions.
- Proofread your essay.
- Do not stress too much. You WILL get into college. I did, and I didn't think I would.
- Get to know your School Counselor.
- Apply for scholarships.
- Visit as many schools as you can and follow up with a thank you email.
- Do not wait to write your essay – your teachers will not let you turn in other work late just because you have a college essay to write.
- Give your teachers plenty of notice when asking for recommendations.
- Don't be late with ANYTHING. I didn't get housing because I missed a deadline by a day.
- Keep ALL options open. You never know how you'll feel at the end of the year.
- Work hard – it pays off.
- Be open to different ideas from different sources. Get multiple references: students, teachers, friends and counselors.
- It seems like the process will never end. It does. You will survive.

Good Luck!

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Overview of the Process

1) Figure out what factors will influence your college choice:

- Your specific needs
- Geographic location
- Size
- Co-educational
- Cost
- Curriculum
- Resources
- Difficulty
- Environment

2) Research colleges that have the characteristics you desire by using various resources:

- School Counseling staff
- Individual college websites as well as those listed later in this handbook
- Extensive materials in the School Counseling Office and library
- Naviance

3) Make a list of schools that interest you and do research on each individual school:

- Compare and contrast information in mailings and on-line (always use more than one source)
- Visit campuses, meet with representatives, explore websites, talk to current students
- Meet with college representatives visiting TBLS in the Fall or at college fairs and make sure to get their contact information.
- From your list, choose approximately 8-10 schools:
 - 2 *likely* schools – your high school record exceeds admission's requirements & the school accepts 70% or more of applicants
 - 2-4 *target* schools – admissions requirements match your high school record & the school accepts about half of applicants
 - 2 *reach* schools – admissions requirements may be higher than your individual high school record or school accepts less than 40% of applicants
- Continue to use Naviance to record, update, and communicate with college and School Counselor.

4) Applications:

- Submit Common Application at www.commonapp.org
- Applications should be filled out on individual college websites if not with the Common App.

5) Review essay topics from applications:

- If a specific essay is requested, be sure to follow directions
- Try to pick an essay topic that will work for most of your applications

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- Create a high school resume to provide more depth and/or supporting information to Submit with your application and to bring along to interviews
 - Be thoughtful with your choice of essay question when using the Common Application
 - Observe and note when additional or alternative essays are required with the application
- 6) Request two teachers to write recommendations between spring break and the end of junior year if possible (remember, teachers are extremely busy and you won't be the only one making this request):
- Teachers should be from Junior or Senior year, preferably one humanities teacher and one STEM teacher (be thoughtful with your choices)
 - Teachers should know you and your work
 - It is encouraged that all teacher requests should be in by the end of your Junior Year
 - Don't forget to write thank you notes to all teachers for spending time writing your letter
- 7) Fill in the application:
- BE AWARE OF DEADLINES
 - Ask a friend or family member to proofread your application for errors
 - Be sure to read/follow ALL directions
 - Certain schools require or recommend interviews as part of the application process – call the admissions office to make an appointment. (Interviews are granted on a first come, first serve basis. The earlier you call, the more likely you are to get a date that works well for you).

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DEFINITIONS OF ADMISSION OPTIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION



National Association for
College Admission Counseling
Guiding the way to higher education

STUDENTS: WHICH COLLEGE ADMISSION PROCESS BEST SUITS YOU?

Non-Restrictive Application Plans

Regular Decision

DEFINITION:

Students submit an application by a specified date and receive a decision in a clearly stated period of time.

COMMITMENT:

NON-BINDING

Rolling Admission

DEFINITION:

Institutions review applications as they are submitted and render admission decisions throughout the admission cycle.

COMMITMENT:

NON-BINDING

Early Action (EA)

DEFINITION:

Students apply early and receive a decision well in advance of the institution's regular response date.

COMMITMENT:

NON-BINDING

Early Decision (ED)

DEFINITION:

Students make a commitment to a first-choice institution where, if admitted they definitely will enroll. The application deadline and decision deadline occur early.

COMMITMENT:

BINDING

Restrictive Early Action (REA)

DEFINITION:

Students apply to an institution of preference and receive a decision early. They may be restricted from applying ED or EA or REA to other institutions. If offered enrollment, they have until May 1 to confirm.

COMMITMENT:

NON-BINDING

Students are not restricted from applying to other institutions and have until May 1 to consider their options and confirm enrollment.

Students are responsible for determining and following restrictions.

For a copy of this flyer, please visit www.nacacnet.org

Name: _____
 My GPA: _____
 My SAT/ACT: _____

My College List

REACH

(your record does not reach admissions requirements)

TARGET

(your record matches admissions requirements)

LIKELY

(your record exceeds admissions requirements)

School: <u>Avg GPA:</u> <u>Avg SAT:</u>	School: <u>Avg GPA:</u> <u>Avg SAT:</u>	School: <u>Avg GPA:</u> <u>Avg SAT:</u>
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What Determines College Admission

THE STRENGTH OF YOUR TRANSCRIPT is almost always the most important factor. In other words, what courses did you take at IHS and how well did you perform in them? Your grades are important, however, colleges are specifically looking for the level of challenge in your course selections, for example, AP classes show you are really challenging yourself in those subjects. Your transcript lists all of your high school courses and all final grades earned; it also indicates Regents scores. It does not include teacher comments or attendance records.

COLLEGES ALSO LOOK AT OTHER CRITERIA SUCH AS:

- ➔ **SAT Scores/ACT Scores** – Contrary to popular belief, colleges do not rely solely on standardized test scores. Colleges look at “the whole person” when making their decisions among thousands of applicants. The importance of test scores will vary from college to college.
- ➔ **Activities & Awards** – Colleges look at the depth of your involvement, not the quantity. It’s important to let them know **WHY** you’re involved and not just in **WHAT** you’re involved in.
- ➔ **Letters of Recommendation** – Typically, you will need two teachers and one counselor recommendation. You must ask teachers to write your letters of recommendation as soon as possible. You don’t need to get an “A” in a teacher’s class in order to ask him/her for a letter. Ask a teacher with whom you have a good in-class relationship. If you would like an additional recommendation, it should be from someone outside of school who can speak to a different attribute you possess (ie: boss from your job or a supervisor at an internship). **We do not recommend asking a third teacher, unless the can write about an aspect of you that cannot be addressed in the initial two recommendations.**
- ➔ **Personal Essays** – The essay is your opportunity to show “who you really are” to an admissions officer. How do you spend your free time? What are your passions? Who or what has influenced you? What do you value? What obstacles have you overcome? Most of your application consists of statistical and biographical data. The essay is where you can demonstrate your own particular strengths, interests or abilities in your own unique voice. A good rule of thumb - the essay should be 80% about you and 20% about your topic.
- ➔ **The Personal Interview** – Colleges that either require or recommend an interview will likely weigh it more heavily in their decision-making process. Like the essay, the interview is your way of showing who you are beyond your grades and test scores. It’s also a great place to ask questions and learn more about the school. Call each college to find out how to set up an interview.
- ➔ **Level of Interest Shown** – Colleges want to know that you are interested in them as much as they are interested in you. Show your interest by making scheduled visits, attending classes on campus, emailing professors in your intended major, and calling or emailing the admissions officer responsible for reading your application. Contact should be initiated by students, not the parent.

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Choosing the Right College

- There are always several colleges that will be right for you.
- You should be in the driver's seat, so listen to others' opinions but the choice is up to you in the end.
- Your choice must be based on your interests, not your friend's.
- Students need to know parents'/guardians' parameters around an acceptable selection.
- Finances must be discussed with family. The price tag is usually not what you pay.
- Avoid the "bumper sticker" mentality- names are not everything.
- Be realistic.
- Consider the distance from home and what feels most comfortable.
- Visit when possible: taste the food, talk to student, attend classes, walk the outskirts of the campus, read the flyers of activities, read the campus newspaper, meet with admissions staff and current student, and stay overnight if possible.
- Consider the surroundings that are essential to your happiness.
- Consider the diversity on campus or lack of diversity and determine if you will be comfortable.
- Check out your intended major and look at the depth or breadth of courses offered in that area of study.
- Research the entrance requirements for your intended major.
- Consider the degree of academic challenge that is best for you.
- Explore the balance of study, activities and social life that fits your needs.
- Explore the intellectual life on campus: What are students on campus reading? What are students talking about? How does the campus environment feel to you?
- Explore the structure or lack of structure on the college campus.
- Consider your family's thoughts and opinions and how they will impact your decisions.
- Take a look at campus communities, clubs, and abroad programs.

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Responsibilities in the Search And Selection Process

Student's Role:

- Be honest and think carefully about your goals, dreams, strengths and weaknesses.
- Take time to assess who you are and what you like and do not like.
- Always strive to do your best academic work.
- Own the process and take the time necessary to research college options.
- Attend local college fairs and receptions to gather more information.
- Be your own advocate.
- Be the one to call or email colleges for information.
- Do not apply to colleges in which you have no interest.
- Take care in completing applications.
- Use your own voice in your college essays or personal statements.
- Be aware of all deadlines.
- Do not let others make decisions for you.
- Know that there is more than one "right" college and take time to determine the best fit for you.
- Keep your School Counselor informed of your interests, priorities, considerations and final decisions.
- Update Naviance regularly as you navigate the process.
- Be respectful of others and their college choices

Parent/Guardian Role:

- Respect your child and your child's thoughts.
- Be honest and provide your child with realistic information about finances available for the college education.
- Listen to your child.
- Encourage your child to explore a variety of options.
- Contact your School Counselor with any concerns or questions you might have.
- Visit colleges with your child.
- Attend college fairs with your child.
- Allow your child to own the college process; know when to "step back"
- Remember that educational needs should guide the college choice.
- Distinguish your child's needs from your own.
- Don't underestimate your child's potential and don't raise your level of expectations beyond the student's capabilities.
- Be a great encourager and avoid being a discourager.
- Be available for advice when needed.
- Allow your child to assert their identity.
- Share in decision making.
- Be sensitive to your child if a letter of denial is received.
- Remember that there is more than one right college for every child.

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During a Campus Tour and College Visit, First Impressions Count

Would you ever think of buying a car without driving it first? Of course not—you don't know how a car runs until you get behind the wheel and take it for a spin. The same goes for choosing a college. A campus tour can help you figure out how well a college runs. While a school may look good on paper, you might be in for a shock when you actually step on campus for the first time. Perhaps the freshman dormitories look like they should be condemned or maybe the campus is even better than you expected. If the admissions office is doing its job, you will not see potential deal-breakers on the pages of the glossy catalog featuring happy-go-lucky coeds under the flowing branches of a wispy willow tree. While these examples may seem like an exaggeration, they are a possibility. That's why you should try to make a campus visit to every school on your list.

A college visit will tell you about the school's academics

The best time for college visits is during the school year, when classes are in session. That way, you can see the actual sizes of a variety of classes, the format in which classes are run, and who is teaching (professors or teaching assistants) the classes. Can't get there during the school year? No worries. At most schools, classes go on throughout the summer.

During a college visit, take a look at the size of the classrooms. Are they large lecture halls that hold more than 100 students? Are they smaller rooms? If you're a self-starter, then large lectures might be OK for you; if you need one-on-one attention, the school you choose should provide small-class learning opportunities. Ask your tour guide about the average student-teacher ratio in freshman classes versus upper level classes.

Campus visits let you pinpoint the school's location

Campuses are located in one of three types of locations: urban, suburban, or rural. If you're looking to attend college in a bustling city, that's great, but just because a school that interests you is situated in a city doesn't mean that it's the right place for you. Perhaps the campus is located in a remote part of a city, from which it is difficult to get to the city's center. Or maybe the campus is in one of the busiest, noisiest sections of town, and you like peace and quiet when you study. This might not be the best location for you.

The same goes for suburban and rural schools. The location may sound ideal from a catalog, but it might not be ideal when it comes time to actually live there. Perhaps that university located in the rolling green hills of Kentucky didn't mention that there were dozens of horse farms surrounding it. Sure, horses and green hills sound lovely, but will you feel the same about the smell of horse manure waking you up every morning? Be sure of the reality and take a really good look around you when you make your campus visits.

Make sure your campus tour includes a look at housing

Another thing to consider: Where are you going to be living? The school's academics and location are very important, but you'll be spending many of your waking (and sleeping) hours in your dorm room. Find out if:

- There are freshman dorms and if freshmen are required to live on campus
- On-campus housing is guaranteed

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- There are other dorms set aside for upperclassmen
- The dorms are coed or single-sex
- There is a quiet time enforced every night for studying
- Laundry facilities are available
- There is a student lounge
- There are computer and phone hookups in all the rooms
- The dormitory has a sprinkler system

While you are on campus, visit the social scene

Let's face it. You're not going to spend all of your time studying and sleeping, so you also need to find out what the social situation is. Is the school a party school? Are sororities and fraternities big on campus? What kind of extracurricular activities and competitive sports are available? Use your campus visits to learn about your prospective schools. Knowing what to expect before you sign on the dotted line will help you determine if the school will be right for you.

Use your college visits to find out about campus security

Though it may not be the first thing that comes to mind as you build your college list, your personal safety is of utmost importance when you leave for college. You'll be walking a lot of places on your own, both during the day and at night, and you need to know what kind of security is available.

If the campus is large, find out if there is transportation. Many large campuses offer bus service to help students get around, and schools with multiple campus often offer intercampus bus service—just make sure to ask when the last bus runs. You should also find out if the school offers an escort service. If you are studying late at night at the library and don't want to walk back to your room by yourself, it is reassuring to know that a security guard will be available to accompany you.

If you have a question during your campus tour...ask!

The more active you are in exploring your potential new college, the more prepared you'll be to make the right decision. As your campus tour group makes its rounds on the campus, make sure you ask your tour guide lots of questions to get the real scoop!

Borrowed from: <http://www.petersons.com/college-search/campus-tour-first-impression.aspx>

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Overview of Standardized Tests

Why Am I Taking These Tests? One of the reasons that colleges use these tests in the admissions process is that they are supposed to level the playing field. High schools are different from one state to the next (and even from one town to the next) and standardized tests should (in theory) give colleges one common criterion on which to compare all applicants.

The PSAT is not only great practice for the SAT, it's also used as the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. All BHS students have the opportunity to take a practice PSAT in October of their sophomore year, but it's the PSAT you take in October of your junior year that counts for the **National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (NMQT)**. Burlington High School currently sponsors all juniors who sit for the exam. It's important to remember that the PSAT is not seen by colleges or used for admissions decisions.

The Pre-ACT empowers 10th grade students with a unique ACT test practice experience. Scores provide valuable insights into students' predicted performance on the ACT and help inform important high school course decisions. Pre-ACT reporting includes both academic and career indicators, which are designed to identify strengths and areas for improvement, providing a complete view of students' college and career readiness.

The SAT is one of the oldest and best known college admissions tests. However, the SAT went through a redesign which was unveiled with the March 2016 test date. All schools will accept scores for admissions and to award scholarships. The SAT I Reasoning Test is a three-hour exam that tests reading, writing & language and math. There is an optional fifty minute essay that some selective colleges require in order to use your SAT scores for admission. Each section (two total) is scored on a scale from 200 to 800.

The ACT is accepted equally by colleges instead of the SAT exam. It is a two-hour and fifty-five minute multiple-choice test that measures skills in English, mathematics, reading, and science reasoning and each section is scored from 1 to 36. The ACT has a reputation for being more direct (fewer trick questions) than the SAT. There is an optional forty minute essay that some selective colleges require in order to use your ACT scores for admissions instead of the SAT.

The SAT Subject Tests (discontinued as of 1/21), formerly known as the SAT II, are subject-specific tests. These are one-hour multiple choice tests offered in 15 different subject areas such as Math, Chemistry, Latin, History, and Literature. There are around 40 schools that require them; however the majority will accept the ACT (with writing) exam instead. Most schools requiring SAT subject exams require that you take two, however there are a select few of the most competitive schools that ask for three. It's always a good idea to check with the schools you're applying to and find out if they require SAT Subject Test scores, and if so, if they require any particular tests. You may take up to three tests in one day but not on the same day as the SAT Reasoning Test. Note: The Latin and World History subject tests are only offered in June and December yearly.

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AP, or Advanced Placement exams, aren't involved in admissions decisions, but they can certainly help you once you get to college. Many high schools offer AP courses in a variety of subjects. If you take an AP course and receive a high enough score on the AP exam for that course, you can earn college credit while in high school. Additionally, some college admissions officers look for AP courses as a sign of a challenging high school curriculum. The more opportunities you take to academically challenge yourself, the more impressive it is to colleges and universities.

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is a test for non-native English speaking students. Most colleges will not require this unless you've been in the country for four years or less. In the U.S., students take the TOEFL exclusively by computer. There are four sections: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The test is offered year-round at a number of test sites. If you do not speak English at home or if English is not your first language, the results of the TOEFL may help to explain a lower-than-expected verbal SAT score. See your college counselor for more information.

Sending Scores to Colleges: You should use the four free score reports when signing up for the SAT/ACT to send scores to colleges. It costs money to send a score report to a school, so this can really add up. Colleges will always take your highest scores in each section of the SAT, so it can't hurt to send multiple scores. You will be responsible for making sure that EVERY college gets your scores DIRECTLY from The College Board or ACT before your deadlines in the fall. Please note, it can 4-6 weeks for your scores to be delivered.

Fairtest.org: FairTest's work to reduce the role of standardized tests as gatekeepers to higher education has never been more important - nor has it had as much support. Nationwide, scores of colleges and universities are reexamining their admissions policies and de-emphasizing test scores. There are currently more than 850 Four-Year colleges that do not use standardized tests to admit a substantial number of bachelor-degree applicant.

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MY TESTING PLAN

This worksheet is designed to help you plan your testing calendar for the next year. Although these tests are given frequently, we do not encourage you to take each test every time it's offered. **Also, remember, ALL schools will accept either the SAT or the ACT, but that many are also test optional**

Try not to over test yourself. There are many factors that go into the college decisions. Testing will never be the sole factor.

The SAT is one of the oldest and best known college admissions tests. Created by the College Board, the SAT is an entrance exam used by most colleges and universities to make admissions decisions. The goal is to provide colleges with one common data point that can be used to compare all applicants. There are two SAT sections: Math, Evidence-Based Reading and Writing, plus an optional Essay. The Essay results are reported separately. Start to finish, the test will take you three hours and 50 minutes. Each section is scored on a scale from 200 to 800. Burlington Burlington High School is NOT a national testing site. You register for this exam at www.collegeboard.org.

The ACT is accepted equally by colleges as an alternative to the SAT exam. It is a three-hour multiple-choice test that measures skills in English, mathematics, reading, and science reasoning, as well as an optional 40-minute writing test. Some schools may require the writing test, so be sure to ask before you take it. Each section is scored from 1 to 36. Burlington is NOT a national testing site. You register for this exam at www.actstudent.org.

I plan to take the SAT:

(Please check all exams you plan to take)

March

May

June

August

October

November

December

I plan to take the ACT:

(Please check all exams you plan to take)

February

April

June

July

September

October

December

I need to register by:

Test #1 _____

Test # 2 _____

I need to register by:

Test #1 _____

Test # 2 _____

With Essay? YES NO

Letters of Recommendation

There are two types of recommendations that are requested by colleges and universities: Teacher Recommendations and Counselor Recommendations.

Teacher Recommendations: Most colleges require at least one – if not two – formal recommendations from teachers. Since you will want to have the best possible recommendations sent to each college, we suggest that you consider the following in choosing teachers who will write on your behalf:

- How well does the teacher know you? Will he/she write well on your behalf?
- Has the teacher taught you more than once? A teacher who taught you over a two or three year period has seen your talents and personality develop.
- Has the teacher sponsored an extracurricular activity in which you made a contribution?
- Do you get along with the teacher?
- Does the college or university specify that a recommendation must be from a particular subject instructor (e.g., a science teacher, an English teacher, etc.)?

Also...

- If you declare an intended major, try to choose a teacher in that particular field.
- If possible, choose your Junior and Senior year teachers. They are best able to address your ability to do college level work.
- Try to choose teachers from academic subject areas (e.g., Math, English, History, etc.).
- If you have a strong commitment and/or leadership role in an activity, community service activity, job, etc., you may want to add a recommendation from the supervisor/moderator in charge.

Counselor Recommendations: This will be written by your school counselor. This recommendation is a more personal overview of your high school experience, including:

- Your involvement in the school community.
- Your progress as a student, especially specific information about obstacles you have overcome and an explanation about a rough patch you may have gone through personally or academically.
- How you are perceived by your peers and your teachers.
- Any other information about your life as an Burlington student. If you have a specific issue you would like to be discussed, be sure to bring this to your counselor's attention.

After your teachers and counselor have written recommendations for you, be sure to write a thank you note. Remember it takes time and effort to write these letters.

BREAKDOWN OF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

STUDENT	TEACHER	COUNSELOR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Request recommendations from teacher. ➤ Add the specific school requests to Naviance. ➤ Submit addressed, stamped envelopes (if applicable). ➤ Submit Recommendation Questionnaire (if applicable) ➤ Write thank you notes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Write the recommendation. ➤ Upload the recommendation to Naviance. ➤ Submit the recommendation to schools requested by student. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Educate students on the formal process. ➤ Provide appropriate paperwork to students. ➤ Provide training to faculty and staff.

Writing the Personal Statement

It's all about you. The college application provides an overview of who you are as a student: the classes you took, the grades you earned, the activities you participated in. Then there are test scores and recommendations to help round out the picture. The personal statement is your opportunity to get personal – to transform your academic history and statistics into a real story of who you are.

What should I talk about? In the words of Flannery O'Connor, "Anybody who has survived his childhood has enough information about life to last him the rest of his life. If you can't make something out of a little experience, you probably won't be able to make it out of a lot." Here's your opportunity to take a look at your life and examine your accomplishments, your struggles, your adventures, your successes and your failures. No one knows better than you the key experiences in your life that have transformed you into the person you are today.

Get your personal statement reviewed! It's a good idea once you've worked on your statement and reviewed it yourself, to have someone else look it over. Choose one person, whether it be a counselor, magister, or family member to work with and stick with them. Getting multiple opinions will not only take away from the personal feel, but may lead to conflicting suggestions. Have them look over your personal statement a few times. A good personal statement doesn't appear overnight. With hard work, multiple drafts, and an open mind, you can create a strong piece of writing that reflects you well.

...AND DON'T FORGET TO HAVE FUN! Don't think of the personal statement as torture. It's a unique opportunity to be yourself and show the Admission Committee who you really are. There's no one in the world quite like you and colleges need to know just how special you are and what a valuable addition you will make to their next freshman class.

TIPS FOR COLLEGE ESSAYS FROM THE PROS

(Compiled from comments of admissions counselors from all over the world)

- You should write about something you care about.
- Proofread! Proofread! Proofread!
- It can be about the most mundane subject, but I want to see your reflection in the essay.
- If you are writing about an influential person, use the essay as an opportunity to see your personality reflected through the prism of that person. Why are you different than you would have been if you hadn't known the person?
- Tell about yourself through a story/anecdote.
- Allow plenty of time to write a first draft, proof multiple times for edits, and finalize essay (don't even THINK about waiting until the night before the deadline)
- Don't write on a topic that "sounds" impressive.
- Write in a style that reflects who you are.
- Don't write about your summer trip to Israel or any event that you know that 5 of your friends could write about.
- Make sure that the essay could only be written by you. You must present a personal perspective that allows colleges to view an aspect of you that is not reflected elsewhere in your application.
- The opening sentence needs to "grab" the reader. An imaginative opening will get our attention.
- Be sure to focus on the "why" of an experience, not the "what."
- Those essays that reveal an intellectual epiphany are rare – but impressive. For those who find their intellectual passion while in high school and somehow tie it to their collegiate goals, that'll impress any sound admissions counselor.
- Above all, be yourself.
- Good writing is lean, progressive, imaginative, grounded in specifics, energized by apt verbs, and respectful of the reader's intelligence.
- Do go for depth rather than breadth, answer the question, write about something you care about, use the essay to explain a problem, illustrate and interest, be sincere, be interesting, proofread.
- DON'T write a glorified list or a travelogue or blame others for your situation.
- Focus on a specific idea, not a generality (like taking a picture and focusing on one specific part of the picture)
- Be clear, concise, insightful.
- Own it.
- Keep it short.
- Make one point well.
- Do not use a thesaurus.
- Like it.
- Share the essay with someone, preferably an English teacher, to catch the minor syntax things you don't catch because you know what you meant to say.
- Be yourself, write your own essay, use your own voice and have a little fun with it. It is not a book report. Remember, someone is going to be reading yours, alongside 80 – 100 other essays that day and the same for the next 12 weeks.

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THE COMMON APPLICATION ESSAY

Below are the essay topics from the Common Application (as of November 2024). Although they may change year to year, this should give you a better idea of the types of questions you may be asked to answer.

The essay demonstrates your ability to write clearly and concisely on a selected topic and helps you distinguish yourself in your own voice. What do you want the readers of your application to know about you apart from courses, grades, and test scores? Choose the option that best helps you answer that question and write an essay of no more than 650 words, using the prompt to inspire and structure your response. Remember: 650 words is your limit, not your goal. Use the full range if you need it, but don't feel obligated to do so. (The application won't accept a response shorter than 250 words.)

Below is the full set of essay prompts for 2024–2025.

- 1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.*
- 2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?*
- 3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?*
- 4. Reflect on something that someone has done for you that has made you happy or thankful in a surprising way. How has this gratitude affected or motivated you?*
- 5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.*
- 6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?*
- 7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.*

*Will retain the **optional community disruption question** within the Writing section.*

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Finding the Right Fit: What to look for when choosing a College with LD Programs and Services

While the general information presented in this guide is valuable for all students, there are issues specific to students with special needs that those families will need to address. Neither student transcripts nor standardized test scores indicate that a student has received support services in school or has used test accommodations. Colleges will know about your disability and special needs only if you choose to release that information. Recognizing that it is important to find the right fit for a student, most families choose to divulge the information. The choice is yours.

In general, there are three levels of service on the college level:

Structured Programs: These schools have specific programs from students with LD/ADHD and provide the highest level of service. They are typically characterized by special admission procedures, specialized and trained professions, compensatory strategies, one-on-one tutoring, additional fees, and compulsory attendance and monitoring.

Coordinated Services: These schools may have some coordination with admission decisions and while they will provide more than mandated services, participation is typically voluntary and not all services will necessarily be provided by people specially trained in the area of special needs.

Basic Services: All colleges are required to provide basic services to comply with section 504 mandates. Participation is voluntary and those providing services are rarely trained in the area of special needs. Strong self-advocacy is a must for the student.

When students move from high school to college, their services and test accommodations do not automatically continue. Colleges will make their own determination regarding these issues and typically will require a current (within three years) complete psycho-educational evaluation in order to make those determinations.

Though we recognize that discussion of these issues with your School Counselor may have begun earlier, they will certainly be part of the discussion we have in the family meetings during the coming months.

When visiting colleges, students with special needs should plan enough time on campus to adequately investigate the program and services provided. This should include seeing the area where services are provided and ideally meeting key staff members who the student would actually be working with. Conversation with students who are currently enrolled in the program would be helpful as well.

Here are some questions you might want to explore as you compare the various services and programs at different colleges. The checklist can help you to evaluate the colleges that you are interested in.

1. Does the college have a comprehensive program?
2. Is the college culture sensitive to the gifts and needs of LD students?
3. Are LD students fully integrated into college?
4. What is your LD Program and Services reputation and/or length of existence?
5. Is there a fee? Academic credit recovery?
6. What is used to evaluate students for admissions? Are SAT/ACT scores used? Do you need a copy of the Psycho-educational Report? Do you do personal interviews? Is there a special application?
7. Are LD specialists available? What is their professional level of training? What is your staff/student ratio?
8. What is the nature of the support? Do you do "Strategy Instruction" ? (For reading comprehension, time management, etc.) Do you have mentoring? Do you have Advocacy Strengthening?
9. Is there a preparatory Summer Program?
10. Is there academic advising that integrates the LD issues?
11. Are facilities inviting & appropriate?
12. Is there an Assistive Technology Center? Do you offer recorded textbooks, calculators, outline software, tape recorders/CD's, portable keyboards, reading pens, voice-activated dictation software?
13. Are the following services available? Extended time, alternative exam arrangements, note-takers, etc.
14. Is subject area tutoring available? Is there Peer Tutoring? Is there Professional Tutoring?
15. Are there counseling services available? Individual, ADD Counseling, LD Support, Career Counseling, Substance Abuse Issues, etc.

(Information was gathered from Curry College)

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College Admission for the Student with Special Talents

Colleges and Universities are interested in what sets you apart from other applicants, especially when it comes to talents, interests, and qualities that you will contribute to the college community. Occasionally, these special talents can be the factor that tips the admission decision in your favor. Here's some advice:

Athletes: Talk to your coach about opportunities to compete on the college level and determine what level of competition would be best for you. Express your interest to coaches at the schools you are applying to when visiting campus and try to arrange a meeting with the coach. Many college coaches will have a recruiting questionnaire on the college website which you should complete. Prepare an athletic resume but keep it brief and concise. Be wary of promises made by coaches guaranteeing admission. Although they will communicate with the admission staff about you, ultimately it is the admissions staff who will make the decision. Students planning to play at the division 1 or 2 levels should register with the NCAA clearing house in the fall of senior year. The NCAA has specific coursework and GPA requirements and students should consult with their counselors about the completion of these requirements.

Artists: You will want to prepare a portfolio of slides of your work. Be sure to consult college websites for specific instructions on the portfolio. If necessary, speak to one of your art teachers for advice and consultation. When visiting campuses, call in advance and try to meet with members of the art faculty and see their studio space. Portfolio Days, where your work can be reviewed by several colleges, take place at various colleges throughout the fall. For more information, consult individual art college websites or google "Portfolio Review Days."

Musicians: Prepare an audio recording and if you are a composer, send original sheet music. Consult the college website for specific instructions. In some cases, a live audition may be required. When visiting campuses, call in advance and try to meet with members of the music faculty and see their performance and practice studios.

Actors and Dancers: Check each college's specific requirements. Often an audition will be required or you may want to send in a video or web link to a website of your work. When visiting campuses, try to meet with faculty and see the performance and practice space.

Other Talents: Some of you have other unique talents or interests that don't fall into any of the above categories. For example, you are a serious collector, have invented something, have started your own business, or have unusual interests that you have pursued outside of school. Let the colleges know about them!

How Financial Aid Works

Help is available in the form of financial aid and scholarships. The total cost of college to you and your family may not be as high as it seems at first glance. However, you must be aggressive in researching aid packages. While all colleges offer financial aid packages the amount that they offer is individual to the school and your family income. Colleges are not required to fund your education.

The FAFSA is required by all college financial aid offices, and the CSS Profile (a College Board form) is required by some colleges. Many colleges issue their own financial aid forms, which are part of the application. Always check with the financial aid office of each college to which you apply to learn what it requires!!

Financial Aid is broken down into two categories: Need-Based Aid and Merit-Based Aid. Each college manages their financial aid policies differently, ranging from only granting need-based aid, to having large merit scholarships available for many students. Researching individual school policies can help determine the appropriate school for your family's financial situation. Most colleges give out financial aid packages that are a combination of Grants or Scholarships (money that does not need to be paid back), Loans (usually paid back after graduation) and Work-Study (which requires the students to earn money by working on campus). Although there are a handful of schools that pledge to meet 100% of need, it is unusual to have a financial aid package filled entirely of grants and scholarships.

Financial Aid Websites

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

<http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>

This form NEEDS to be filled out to qualify for federal money towards college. It is suggested that all families fill out this form regardless of their level of need. The FAFSA is valid for one year, and must be resubmitted every year the student is in school. The FAFSA is a FREE application. If you are asked to submit a payment, you have reached the wrong website. Please note: we recommend listing your colleges on the FAFSA in alphabetical order, not order of preference.

Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC)

<https://www.vvac.org/>

The Vermont Student Assistance Corporation is unique in its scope and role. Created by the Vermont Legislature in 1965 as a public nonprofit agency, we advocate for students and their families to ensure that they have the information, the counseling and the financial aid to achieve their education goals. We begin by helping families save for education. Our counselors work with students in nearly every Vermont middle school and high school, and again as adults. Our financial aid programs attract national recognition, and our loan programs and loan forgiveness programs are saving Vermont families thousands of dollars in interest.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN THE COLLEGE PROCESS

The following terms are commonly used by secondary school counselors and admissions personnel when working with college-bound students' in admissions, choice of testing and in discussing college life.

ACADEMIC RECORD – Transcript of grades, courses, credits and related academic information kept on file by the school. The transcript often includes grade point average (GPA) and/or rank in class. Standardized test scores may or may not be recorded on the transcript.

ACCELERATED STUDY - A college program of study completed in less time than is usually required, most often by attending classes in the summer and/or by taking extra courses during the regular academic terms. Completion of a bachelor's degree program in three years is an example of accelerated study.

ACCREDITATION - Recognition by an organization or agency that a college meets certain acceptable standards in its educational programs, services and facilities. Regional accreditation applies to a college as a whole and not to any particular programs or courses of study at the college. Specialized accreditation of specific types of schools may also be determined by a national organization.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP) PROGRAM - A service of the College Board that provides high schools with course descriptions in college subjects and Advanced Placement Examinations in these subjects. High schools implement the course and administer the examinations to interested students' who are then eligible for advanced placement, college credit, or both, on the basis of earning satisfactory scores.

ASSOCIATE DEGREE - A degree granted by a college or university after the satisfactory completion of a two-year full-time program of study or its part-time equivalent. In general, the Associate of Arts (AA) or Associate of Science (AS) degree is granted after students complete a program of study similar to the first two years of a four-year college curriculum. The Associate in Applied Science (AAS) is awarded by many colleges upon completion of technological or vocational programs of study.

BACHELOR'S OR BACCALAUREATE DEGREE - A degree received after the satisfactory completion of a four- or five-year, full-time program of study (or its part-time equivalent) at a college or university. The Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Bachelor of Science (BS) are the most common baccalaureates.

BRANCH CAMPUS - A small campus connected to, or part of, a large institution. Generally, students spend the first two (2) years at a branch campus and then transfer to the main campus to complete a baccalaureate degree. A branch campus provides students with a smaller and more personal environment which can help the student mature personally and academically before moving to a larger setting.

COLLEGE-LEVEL EXAMINATION PROGRAM (CLEP) - A program of examinations in undergraduate college courses that provides students' and adults the opportunity to demonstrate college-level achievement. The examinations are used by colleges to award credit to entering freshman and adults completing their education. They are also used by business, industry, government and professional groups to satisfy educational requirements for advancement, licensing and admission to training programs.

COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP SERVICE (CSS) - A service of the College Board that assists postsecondary institutions, state scholarship programs and other organizations in the equitable distribution of a student's financial aid funds by measuring a family's financial strength and analyzing its ability to contribute to college costs. CSS provides the Profile Form with which students may apply for institutional aid at some private colleges.

COMBINED BACHELOR'S/GRADUATE DEGREE - A program to which students are accepted for study at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The programs usually can be completed in less time than two individual programs. (Such degrees are also called dual programs).

COOPERATIVE ("CO-OP") EDUCATION - A program that provides for alternate class attendance and employment in business, industry, or government.

CREDIT HOURS - The number of hours per week that courses meet are counted as equivalent credits for financial aid and to determine a student's status as full-time or part-time. Upon successful completion of a course, credit hours are applied to graduation requirements.

CROSS-REGISTRATION - The practice, through agreements between colleges, of permitting students enrolled at one college or university to enroll in courses at another institution without formally applying for admission to the second institution.

CUMULATIVE GRADE POINT AVERAGE - A grade point average that is based on all previously completed work (see Grade Point Average).

DEFERRED ADMISSION - The practice of postponing enrollment for one year after acceptance to a college.

DISCOVERY/SEEK: These programs are available for students who qualify for comprehensive academic and financial support at New York City 4-year and 2-year schools. The program is designed to encourage students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds an opportunity to succeed on a more level playing field. These programs provide counseling, tutorial services and a financial aid stipend for educational expenses.

DOUBLE MAJOR - Any program of study in which a student completes the requirements of two majors concurrently.

EARLY ACTION PLAN - A student applies to an institution early in the senior year and receives an early notification of his/her admission to the institution. If the student is accepted, he/she is NOT obligated to attend that institution.

EARLY DECISION PLAN - A student applies to an institution early in the senior year and receives an early notification of his/her admission status. It is a contract between the student and the institution. If the student is accepted, he/she is obligated to attend that institution.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS - Limited English Proficient students who speak English as a second language and who wish to take college-level courses need to demonstrate proficiency in English. The

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TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) exam is a commonly used test to determine the level of English language proficiency.

EOP/HEOP - The (Higher) Educational Opportunity Program is for students who qualify for comprehensive academic and financial support at New York public and private 4-year schools. The program is designed to encourage students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds an opportunity to succeed on a more level playing field. These programs provide counseling, tutorial services and a financial aid stipend for educational expenses.

ESL - An English as a Second Language program offers a variety of courses and schedules to meet the needs of a diverse population with limited English proficiency.

GRADE POINT AVERAGE (GPA) - A system used by many schools for evaluating the overall scholastic performance of students. It is found by first determining the number of grade points a student has earned in each course completed and then dividing the sum of all grade points by the number of hours of course work carried. It is calculated by multiplying the number of hours given for a course by the student's grade in the course. The most common system of numerical values for grades is A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, and F=0.

GRANTS/SCHOLARSHIPS - General term that describes the outright gift of a sum of money to a student.

GREEK LIFE - The influence of sororities and fraternities on the campus life of an institution.

HONORS PROGRAM - Any special program for exceptional students that offers the opportunity for educational enrichment, independent study, acceleration, or some combination of these characteristics.

INTERNSHIPS - Short-term, supervised work experiences, usually related to a student's major field, for which the student earns academic credit. The work can be full or part-time, on or off campus, paid or unpaid. Students teaching and apprenticeships are examples of internships.

MATRICULATION - A point in college admissions when a student is formally admitted into a curriculum, under standard college procedures. A student must be matriculated in order to apply for financial aid and/or try out for intercollegiate athletic programs.

NON-MATRICULATED - A student has either not been formally admitted into a curriculum or has been academically dismissed. This classification excludes a student from financial aid and /or intercollegiate athletics.

OPEN ADMISSIONS - The college admissions policy of admitting high school graduates and other adults generally without regard to conventional academic qualifications, such as high school subjects, high school grades and admission test scores. Virtually all applicants with high school diplomas or their equivalents are accepted when an institution adheres to an open admissions policy.

RESERVE OFFICERS TRAINING CORPS (ROTC) - Programs conducted by certain colleges in cooperation with the United States Air Force, Army and Navy. Local recruiting offices can supply detailed information about these programs, as can participating colleges.

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RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS - Most colleges and universities require that a students spend a minimum number of terms taking courses on campus (as opposed to independent study or transfer credits from other colleges) to be eligible for graduation. Also, residency requirements can refer to the minimum amount of time a student is required to have lived in a state in order to be eligible for in-state tuition at a public (state-controlled) college or university.

RESTRICTIVE EARLY ACTION – Same as EA, but a student may apply to only one institution.

RETENTION RATE - The number and percentage of returning students at a given college.

ROLLING ADMISSIONS - An admissions procedure by which the college considers each student's application as soon as all required credentials, such as school records and test scores, have been received. The college usually notifies applicants of its decision within 4-12 weeks.

STUDENTS DESIGNED MAJOR - An academic program that allows students to construct a major field of study not formally offered by the college. Often non-traditional and interdisciplinary in nature, the major is developed by the students with the approval of a designated college officer or committee.

SUITCASE COLLEGE - A term used by students to describe a college whose students' frequently go home on weekends, thereby creating a less active student life on campus during weekends.

TAP - Tuition Assistance Program of NY State is a financial aid program based on an established formula. Money awarded can only be used at a New York State college or university.

WAIT LIST - A student is not offered admission, but is placed on a waiting list should an opening occur. After a certain time, if an opening is not available, the student receives a rejection notice.

WORK STUDY - An arrangement by which a student combines employment and college study. The employment may be an integral part of the academic program (as in cooperative education and internships) or simply a means of paying for college (as in Federal Work-Study Program).

YIELD - The percentage of accepted students who will actually matriculate at an institution.

