

Taconic Hills High School

Class of 2017

**College Planning
Guidebook**



Table of Contents

Preface	4.
The College Search	
High School Course Selection	5
What to Consider When Choosing a College	7
College Admissions Policies	8
College Representatives Visiting Our School	9
Visiting a College Campus	10
The College Admission Interview	12
What is an Alumni Admissions Interview?	13
Sample Thank You Letter to an Interviewer	14
Summer Planning Activities for College Bound Seniors	15
Information for Students with Learning Differences	16
Information for the Student Athlete	17
Guidance Office	
Computer Searches	18
College Entrance Testing	
College Board Testing	19
Tests, Scores and Score Reports	20
ACT...AP...TOEFL	21
The Transcript Package and the College Application	
Your Transcript Package: Putting It Together	22
Teacher Recommendations.....	23
Other Items in the Transcript Package	24
Student Record Consent Form.....	25
Transcript Package Release Procedure	26
The College Essay	27
Examples of College Essay Questions	28
Financial Aid	
Financial Aid: Sources and Programs	29
Second Semester	
Course Selections	31
The Wait List: Questions and Answers	32
Additional Post-Secondary Options	
More Options	33
Career Decision Making, Summer Opportunities	34
Appendix	
College Comparison Chart	
Top 10 College Application Mistakes	
College Planning Questionnaire Parent Response Form	
Organizing Checklist	
Top 10 College Planning Tips	

SAT and ACT Test Dates

ACT Test Date	Registration Deadline
9/12/2015	8/7/2015
10/24/2015	9/18/2015
12/12/2015	11/6/2015
4/9/2016	3/4/2016
6/11/2016	5/6/2016

SAT Test Date	Registration Deadline
10/3/2015	9/3/2015
11/7/2015	10/9/2015
12/5/2015	11/5/2015
1/23/2016	12/28/2015
3/5/2016	2/5/2016
5/7/2016	4/8/2016
6/4/2016	5/5/2016

Information you will need:

Our College Entrance Examination Board (SAT) code and ACT code is 334505

School phone: **518-325-2800**

Counseling office phone: **518-325-2861**

Counseling office fax: **518-325-2865**

School Address: 73 County Route 11A
Craryville, N.Y. 12521

Preface

The College Planning Guidebook is updated and reprinted annually by the Taconic Hills Guidance Department. It is given each year to all members of the junior class in order to provide important information as students begin planning for their post-secondary education.

The booklet includes specific information on college entrance testing, financial aid, and college application procedures. Some sections are designed to raise questions about individual priorities and to offer general guidance concerning adequate high school preparation. Other parts provide information about resources available for further research. Finally, the concluding section suggests a variety of alternatives for the student who chooses not to continue on to college at the conclusion of his/her high school career.

All of these sections are meant to provide initial information or raise general questions that are most useful when supplemented by the individual guidance of a student's counselor. Students and parents are encouraged to contact counselors at any time they would like assistance with post-secondary planning. All students will have a chance to discuss the issues surrounding post-secondary planning in their junior advisories meetings in the spring and will be urged to initiate individual appointments. Parents are also encouraged to meet with the guidance counselor. Many students and parents have a family conference with a counselor in the spring of junior year or early fall of senior year to establish a direction for future activities.

A series of evening meetings also provides an over-view of the post-secondary planning process as well as specific information on testing, interviews, essay-writing, financial aid, and Guidance Office resources and materials. Parents and students are encouraged to attend these sessions. Our website also provides a great way to research scholarships, see who is visiting our school, and how to get help with the college process.

We hope you will find this variety of resources useful as you plan your educational opportunities for after high school. As always, we look forward to assisting you in any way possible.

Kimberly Carlo
Content Coordinator Guidance, Speech, and Psychology

How to Select Your High School Courses

Your course schedule may seem like a random selection of classes to you, but college admissions officers see it as the blueprint of your high school education. They're looking for a solid foundation of learning that you can build on in college.

Take at least five solid academic classes every semester. The following subjects and classes are standard fare for success in high school and beyond, whether you plan to attend a four-year, two-year, or technical school.

English (Language Arts)

Take English every year. These courses will help you improve your writing skills, reading comprehension, and vocabulary. New York State requires 4 credits in English to graduate.

- * English 9, 10,11,12
- * AP English Composition & Language, AP English Literature & Composition *
English 101 and 102

Math

You need algebra and geometry to succeed on college entrance exams, in college math classes, and in most careers. Take them early on and you'll be able to enroll in advanced science and math in high school—and you'll show colleges you're ready for higher-level work. Three credits of Mathematics are required by New York State for graduation.

- * Integrated Algebra
- * Integrated Geometry
- * Algebra II/ Trig
- * Pre Calculus

Science

Science teaches you to think analytically and apply theories to reality. Laboratory classes let you test what you've learned through hands-on work. Three credits are required by New York State for graduation.

- * One credit in Living Environment
- * Two credits in Chemistry and/or Physics
- * One year in Earth/space sciences, AP Biology, AP Chemistry, or Physics

Social Studies

Understand local and world events that are happening now by studying the culture and history that has shaped them. Social sciences round out your core curriculum. New York State requires 4 credits in Social Studies as part of the graduation requirements.

- * One credit in U.S. history
- * One half credit of U.S. government
- * One half credit in economics
- * Two credits in world history or geography

Foreign Languages

Solid foreign language study shows colleges you're willing to stretch beyond the basics. Many colleges require at least two years of foreign language study, and some prefer more.

The Arts

Research indicates that students who participate in the arts often do better in school and on standardized tests. The arts help you recognize patterns, discern differences and similarities, and exercise your mind in unique ways, oftentimes outside of a traditional classroom setting. New York State requires one credit in Art or Music.

Computer Science

More and more college courses and jobs require at least a basic knowledge of computers. Computer skills also can help you do research and schoolwork better and faster.

Independent Study

If you're interested in a subject that isn't offered at your school—say, botany, economics, or instrumental music—don't give up on your interest. Many schools allow motivated students to pursue independent studies, often with a teacher as an advisor. Most schools have rigorous standards for independent study. Be sure to talk to a counselor or teacher to find out if independent study is an option at your school, and what requirements may exist.

What to Consider When Choosing a College

The following factors should be considered before beginning your college search:

Self - Exploration:

What are your interests, abilities, goals, and expectations? Students should review the course work, extra-curricular activities, or community service that they have found most interesting throughout their high school years. Academic records, standardized testing, special awards, and feedback from teachers, coaches, club advisors, and other adults can help students assess activities. Career interest inventories and other information in the Guidance Office may be useful in considering personal and career goals. Students are encouraged to meet with their school counselor to explore all these factors.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR IN THE COLLEGE YOU CHOOSE?

- . **Type of institution** (two or four year, coed or non-coed)
- . **Geographic location** (region, state, distance from home)
- . **Majors offered/curriculum** (liberal arts, technical, business)
- . **Setting** (urban, rural, suburban)
- . **Size of institution** (small, medium, large, very large)
- . **Selectivity** (very difficult, moderately difficult, open)
- . **Cost** (tuition, room and board, books fees, travel, financial aid)
- . **Diversity** (race, religion, national, international, age)
- . **Extracurricular activities** (sports, entertainment, culture, religious, educational)
 - . **Housing** (on/off campus, coed, single sex, special interest, size of room, food, meal plans, rules, roommates)
- . **Facilities** (building, architecture, libraries, student unions, classrooms, lecture halls, labs, recreational/athletic offerings, stores, laundry, handicapped access)
- . **Specialized Programs** (programs and services for students who are learning disabled, physically challenged, or who have English as a second language.)

College Admissions Policies

Explained below are the most common application plans students may encounter during the college admissions process. Given the variety of plans and the subtle differences between them, students should read each college's literature carefully.

Regular Application Deadline and the Candidate's Reply Date

Many colleges establish an application deadline by which all applications must be received. All students are then notified of the college's decisions at a uniform response date, typically on or before April 1st.

At most colleges, May 1st is the date by which accepted applicants must indicate their intention to enroll. By use of a common reply date, students may evaluate all notices of admission and financial aid awards before deciding on any one college.

Early Decision

Many colleges offer this plan to applicants who are sure they want to attend the college. This college should clearly be the applicant's first choice. Traditionally, the deadline for early decision applications has been November 1st or 15th. Colleges then render a decision by mid-December. Some colleges also have a second round of early decision (usually in January or February). These later plans have the advantage of giving students more time to think through their decision.

If accepted under this plan, the student is under strong ethical obligation to attend the college and to withdraw or forego applications to all other colleges. Some colleges exchange lists of students accepted under this program.

Early Action or Early Admission

This program is similar to early decision, except that, if admitted, the applicant is not ethically obligated to withdraw other applications and has until May 1st to decide.

Rolling Admissions

Under this program a college considers a student's application as soon as all the required credentials have been received. Notification of acceptance or rejection is mailed as soon as a decision is made. Colleges that follow this practice may make their admissions decisions continuously over several months, in contrast to the practice of other colleges who accumulate their applications until a deadline date and then announce all their decisions at the same time.

Deferred or Delayed Admission

Most colleges allow an accepted candidate to postpone enrollment in a college, generally for one semester or one year. Talk with your counselor about your plans and how to contact your college of choice.

Open Admissions

An open admissions policy grants acceptance to all high school graduates without regard to additional qualifications.

College Representatives Visiting Our School

Beginning in late September, some college representatives will be available to meet with students in pre-arranged small group interviews. This is an opportunity for the visiting representative to "sell" their school's programs. The meetings with college admissions personnel are not intended to replace a personal interview or campus visit, but should allow students the opportunity to gain a general impression of a college, ask specific questions about programs, activities or admissions at that college, or gather written information about the institution. Please view our calendar online to view which college will be visiting Taconic Hills.

<http://www.taconichills.k12.ny.us/highschool/Guidance/index.html>

Students should review the following suggestions:

- Develop a few specific questions to ask the representative. Questions might include: special academic interests, particular sports, support services available, or financial aid procedures. Collect written materials if you are interested in that school.
- Sign a card provided by the college. That will put your name on a mailing list to receive more information from the school. If you have already visited a college or had an interview, a quick hello to the admissions person visiting us provides a good way to be remembered.
- Ask about the off-campus interview opportunities, if interested.
- Be open to schools that might not have been on your original investigating list but which seem interesting.

Visiting a College Campus

A personal visit to a post-secondary institution is often the most useful step in helping students and their parents decide whether or not to apply to a particular school. Students are encouraged to make use of group tours, open house events and group information sessions as a way of obtaining first-hand impressions of schools they have previously researched.

Visits during the regular academic year provide a more accurate view of the academic and social life of a campus, but families often make use of summer vacation to visit several schools that are at a distance. Where possible, it is a good idea to avoid the distortions of registration, final exams and special campus events such as homecomings or festivals. Several high school holidays such as Columbus Day, Veteran's Day, and February and April vacations, allow students who visit colleges to minimize the disruption to their own academic program. **We are happy to provide families with a college visit form that may excuse their absence from school. Please see the high school guidance office for more information.**

What Are Some Questions to Ask a College Admissions Representative?

- What constitutes a typical freshman program?
- Who teaches freshman courses - graduate assistants or permanent staff?
- What is the average class size for freshman and introductory courses?
- Which departments are the strongest?
- To what extent is there interaction between faculty and students?
- How good are the library facilities? What are the library hours?
- What cultural opportunities are available in the community?
- For what reasons did the students you see on campus choose that particular college?
In their opinions, are these reasons being borne out?
- What is the makeup of the student body? Are there a number of foreign students and students from all over the U.S. and from all types of home environments? Does one region or class predominate?
- What types of financial aid are available?
- Is there a professional counseling service available for career planning and personal concerns? Faculty advisor?
- What are the opportunities for participating in intercollegiate or intramural sports?
- What type of housing is available to first year students?
- Can you pick your roommate?
- Is campus security an area of concern to students or faculty?

When Is a Good Time To Visit a College?

Students should begin planning college visits after they have given considerable thought to their abilities, interests, and career plans. They should also consult with the college counselor and utilize the material available in the Guidance Office.

Some students begin visiting colleges during the spring of their junior year. Others visit campuses during the summer between the junior and senior year. Others prefer to wait until the fall of their senior year. By starting early, the process will feel less stressful.

How Do You Make Arrangements For a Campus Visit?

Many schools offer on-line registration for their tours. Students can also write or call the admissions office of the college in which they are interested two or three weeks in advance and make arrangements for a personal interview and a tour of campus facilities. Some colleges, usually large universities will offer only group interviews. At a few

colleges, typically the most competitive schools, you may need to schedule an interview several months in advance. Some schools will not be able to grant a personal interview; they rely on alumnae/alumni interviews which are arranged after an application is on file.



What Questions Might You Be Asked During An Interview?

Anticipating what questions might be asked during a college interview and being prepared to answer them is highly recommended. Always be prepared to answer the "WHY" that goes with each of these questions.

How are you unique?

What do you do best?

What is the last book you read?

Who is your favorite author?

Who is your favorite character?

Who is your favorite teacher?

What person has influenced you the most?

What event has influenced you the most?

What makes you who you are?

What are your best traits?

What are your faults?

What is your family like?

Tell me about yourself.

Why do you want to go to college?

What made you select this particular College or University?

What do you think you will add to University XYZ?

What do you consider to be your greatest asset?

What do you consider to be your greatest fault?

What are you looking for in an education at our

To which other colleges are you applying?

What books NOT required by the school have you read recently?

Where do you picture yourself ten years from now?

What television shows do you watch?

What magazines and/or newspapers do you read regularly?

How do you spend a typical afternoon after school? A typical evening? A typical weekend?

Do you have any heroes, contemporary or historical?

What have you liked, and what have you disliked about high school?

If you were principal, what would you change?

What significant contributions have you made to your school or your community?

What is the most important thing that you've learned in high school?

We have your application, your transcript, your test scores, and recommendations. What ELSE do you want us to know about you? What would you like to know about our school?

Tips to Review Before Going to an Interview

- Get name of anyone you talk to when setting up or planning interview
- Get name & title of interviewer for thank you note & follow-up

- Start with your least difficult to get in to schools & least desired
- Prepare answers to anticipated questions
- Prepare questions to ask
- Dress appropriately & be punctual
- Don't offer any negative information. Don't apologize. You are the "buyer"

What Is An Alumni Admissions Interview?

Some colleges do not give personal interviews to students, but do offer the option of an alumni interview. Colleges are increasingly utilizing alumni in the college admissions process. In some cases on campus interviews are not granted, but once an application is filed, the student may arrange for an alumni interview. Many Ivy League schools utilize this system.

In other cases, on campus interviews are encouraged, but a student may be unable to arrange a visit. In such cases, the alumni interview may be requested, and is a good alternative. These interviews are arranged through the admissions office and are often conducted at the alumni representative's home.

Sample Thank You Letter to an Interviewer

Date

Name of college visited

Address

Dear (Name of interviewer):

I was very pleased to meet with you on (date of interview) *and would like to thank you for the time and consideration you gave to me during my admission interview to* (name of college).

I particularly enjoyed (add point(s) which impressed you).

Sincerely,

(Your signature)

Summer Planning Activities for College Bound Seniors

Although summertime is a welcome break for most students from their high school education, it is a good time to make progress in planning for education beyond high school. During the summer before the senior year, there are several things students can do to help prepare for college applications in the fall. Listed below are some suggested activities related to college selection and the application process:

- Using resources available in the public library and the suggestions of family and friends, develop and expand your current list of schools to investigate. Summer is a good time to do the research you may not have found the time to do in the spring. Learn the competitive level of the different colleges, the entrance requirements and the difference between liberal arts and specialized majors.
- Try to visit colleges which are difficult to reach during the school year. Even though the regular students may not be present, you can still gain much information about the college environment that will help you make final selections about the schools to which you want to apply.
- Write letters or email to colleges in which you have an interest, requesting a catalog and any other desired information such as financial aid. Applications are usually available at the college website. Check to make sure it is a current application.
- Talk with older students who are home from colleges about which you want to learn more. They should have "first hand" knowledge to share.
- Review college entrance exam dates for the fall and mark them on a calendar with registration deadlines. (Deadline for registration for the first exam is soon after school starts in September.)
- If students have not scored as well on previous entrance exams as they would like, they may want to use the summer for individual preparation or for a SAT/ACT review course.
- Consider summer sources of character references such as employers, activity group leaders, coaches, etc. Ask these people for a reference during the summer so they will have time to prepare it by the fall. Students may want to identify one or two teachers they might ask for a teacher reference soon after the start of the school year.
- Begin a rough-draft list of activities and interests. Students might want to include extra curricular activities, honors and awards, volunteer or work experience, travel or special interests. This information will eventually be sent to colleges and is often asked about during interviews.
- Try writing drafts of the types of essay questions most commonly found on applications. It helps to begin thinking of how you might respond to questions concerning books, career

goals, and influential people in an applicant's life, special interests, achievements and events of particular importance.

Information for Students with Learning Differences

Students with identified learning differences may want to investigate the programs and services that are specifically designed to meet their post-secondary educational needs. Within a four-year college there are often special support services necessary for the student to succeed in regular classes. These programs also frequently provide non-credit courses which help the student identify her or his learning style and develop appropriate compensatory skills. There is often a separate admissions process to enter a Learning Differences program.

Even in colleges with programs for those with learning differences, individuals without learning differences may take advantage of tutorial or other support services. Students with documented learning differences may request appropriate modifications such as extended time testing and taping of lectures.

As students explore post-secondary options, they should raise questions about the availability of support services, the presence of trained learning specialists, and the provision for classroom modification, if necessary. In most instances, students should indicate in the application process the nature of the learning services they have received in high school, and the nature of accommodations that will be necessary in college, if any. If the school has a special learning support program, the student should also be in contact with the director of that program during the admissions process. Colleges that have a program for students with learning differences frequently require professional assessments that document and identify the specific learning disability of the student who is applying.

Students with documented hearing, learning, physical or visual differences which might impact their performance on college entrance examinations such as the SAT/ACT can receive special accommodations for testing. These accommodations, for eligible students only, can include additional time to take the tests, large type test booklets and answers sheets, a sign-language interpreter or a reader. These accommodations are available during specific periods of the academic year and do not cover all regularly scheduled test dates.

To be eligible for these special accommodations a student needs to either have an Individualized Educational Plan that identifies the need for these testing conditions, a "504 Plan" in force, or documentation which provides independent verification of the existence and nature of the difference signed by an appropriate licensed or certified professional. In either case, to qualify for modifications, a student also needs to be currently receiving *in school* those modifications for instruction and assessment that they would receive on the SAT and ACT program tests. The SAT/ACT company will review all materials and determine which, if any, accommodations they will allow. Information about non-standard admissions testing is available from the Guidance Office. Registration deadlines apply to non-standardized testing.

Information for the Student Athlete

Athletics is an area of special talent that can make a difference in the college admissions and financial aid process. At most colleges, athletics are regulated by the rules established by the **NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association)**. The NCAA has instituted several rule changes in the last several years. In an attempt to keep students informed of these changes, the Guidance Office important information for the student athlete. We suggest that student athletes do the following:

- Let your school counselor know that you are interested in competing in athletics at the college level. We can introduce you to resources in the career center and can also help you to outline the athletic recruiting process and what the role of the student athlete should be in that process.
- Inform your high school coach that you are interested in playing that sport in college. Work with the coach and ask if he or she will contact college coaches on your behalf. Give them a copy of your athletic resume.
- When visiting colleges be sure that you have read the NCAA Guidelines which will inform you of the rules regarding contacting college coaches.
- Obtain a copy of the **NCAA Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete** in the Guidance office or go on-line to: <http://www.eligibilitycenter.org>. This is the best place to start to familiarize oneself with the rules, philosophy, and organization of the NCAA.

To be eligible to participate at the Division I or II level, students must be certified as eligible by the NCAA Clearinghouse. Pick up a copy of the pamphlet **Making Sure You Are Eligible To Participate In College Sports** or learn more at the website <http://www.eligibilitycenter.org>

Computer Searches

Internet searches enable students to perform a college search, get information about specific colleges, explore occupations, and obtain additional sources of financial aid much more quickly and efficiently than by any other means.

Many students who want to develop a list of colleges or look for specific information about individual colleges can use the www.collegeboard.com website from school or home. It is helpful to create a student account on the site for storing searches, registering and learning scores.

The collegeboard.com site contains information on approximately 4000 two-year and four year colleges. It enables students to explore colleges that match certain factors selected by students, such as degree desired, geographic location, school size, and more. Once a list is obtained, students can explore individual colleges to and learn about degree offerings, entrance requirements, student life on campus, and extracurricular activities

Other useful **Internet** resources are listed below:

<http://www.commonapp.org>

Download The Common Application, accepted over 450 private colleges and Universities

<http://www.clas.ufl.edu/CLAS/american-universities.html> Links to all college and university home pages.

<http://www.petersons.com>

Peterson,s Education Center
A wide range of information and resources.

<http://www.embark.com/> embark.com

Search; apply; test prep.

<http://www.ncaa.org/cbsa/>

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)
NCAA information for college-bound students. Academic eligibility, recruiting, etc.

<http://www.finaid.org> Financial

Aid Information Page

Want to know how safe your daughter/son's prospective college campus is?
Visit the following website for the numbers: <http://ope.ed.gov/security>

For information of 1000 U.S. schools offering merit scholarships:
www.meritmoney.com

College Board Testing (The SAT and Subject Tests)

Students planning to attend college after graduation should take the College Board Entrance Examinations (aka **SAT**) or the **ACT**. Some students take the PLAN, the practice test for the ACT, or the PSAT, the practice test for the SAT. The PSAT is offered once a year in October. Students should plan to take the **SAT** and, if appropriate, the **Subject Tests** in the spring of the junior year and probably again in the fall of their senior year. Colleges may accept the ACT in lieu of the SAT and the **Subject Tests** together.

The SAT is a three hour and forty-five minute exam that measures ability to critically reason and apply mathematical concepts and write. The **SAT** is required by most four-year colleges and some two-year colleges. Registration forms are available in the Guidance Office along with a booklet entitled **SAT Preparation Booklet**. Registration forms should be mailed directly to Princeton, New Jersey. Students may also register on-line at www.collegeboard.com.

Subject Tests are required by some private colleges, usually the more competitive institutions. Those colleges that do require the **Subject Tests** often require three. With the advent of the new SAT that includes writing beginning with the class of 2006, some of these schools may now only ask for two Subject Tests. It is the student's responsibility to check with each college and learn the requirements. It is not advisable to rely on books published by outside sources for this information.

Tests are offered in Literature, American History and Social Studies, World History, Mathematics Level IC (Calculator), Mathematics Level IIC, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Chinese with Listening, French and French with Listening, German and German with Listening, Modern Hebrew, Italian, Japanese with Listening, Latin, Spanish and Spanish with Listening.

Subject tests last for one hour, and a student can take a **maximum of three** on a given test date. Students should confer with their counselors to determine if and when to take a specific test. For example, students should plan to take the Math IC test after the Advanced Algebra/Trigonometry sequence, usually June of the junior year.

Because last minute cramming is not likely to be of much use, a student who decides to take a Subject Test in a subject he or she has not studied recently should review the course material over several weeks. Sample questions are contained in SAT Subject Test Preparation Booklet, a booklet that students can obtain in the Guidance Office. In addition, preparation books for specific Subject Tests are commercially available in many bookstores.

Our school's College Examination Board (CEEB) High School number is 334505. Test Centers are listed in the back of the registration bulletin and on line, and there are many in the area.

Students are reminded that when they register to take the test at collegeboard.org they are requested to upload a picture of themselves. Please see the website for more information.

Fee Waivers

Fee waivers are available to students who need financial assistance. Students that are granted fee waivers are also eligible for free college applications. If the cost of making application to college will be an obstacle, it is important to ask for the SAT fee waiver to ensure this benefit. Fee waivers are also available for the ACT and Subject Tests. Please see your school counselor for more information.

Test Scores and Score Reports

Students' score reports are to be sent by the student so that they are considered official. This can be done at collegeboard.org. The high school will also receive a score report if students provide our high school code number, **33450**. **Scores will not be printed on your transcript.** It is the student's responsibility to send their scores to the colleges that they are applying to.

Score reports are student directed. You choose which scores that you would like colleges to see for the SAT. Regarding the ACT, students **MAY** select which scores to forward to colleges. A score report will also list all the colleges and scholarship programs designated to receive scores, with descriptive and deadline information about each of the colleges listed. (This list of colleges does not appear on reports sent to colleges.)

If it is necessary to send test scores to additional colleges, an *Additional Report Request Form* can be used. One is usually sent in the admission packet. This can be handled through the collegeboard.com site, too. This service is also available by phone at an additional charge. Requests should be made at least five weeks before the date colleges and scholarship programs need to receive a report. College and scholarship codes appear in the Registration Bulletin and on-line.

The ACT

The ACT, another standardized college admissions test, is administered by the American College Testing Service located in Iowa City, Iowa.

The ACT is composed of four 35 to 50 minute sections in English usage, mathematics usage, social studies reading, natural science reading and an optional writing test. The main difference between the ACT and the SAT is the ACT is a yardstick of both reasoning ability and knowledge of specific subject matter covered in classes. If students need more information about the ACT, they should go to the www.act.org website or check with their school counselor. ACT applications are available in the Guidance Office.

Advanced Placement (AP) Tests

The Advanced Placement Test (AP Test) allows current high school students to demonstrate college level proficiency achieved in demanding high school course work. Students who are enrolled in an Advanced Placement class are strongly advised to take the AP Test that is associated with that course.

The AP exam is not required as part of the college admissions process, and many students who choose to take AP exams do so in the spring of their senior year, well after admissions decisions are made.

College policies vary in how AP scores are used. Students are advised to check with the college they plan to attend to determine the college's policy on AP scores and whether an AP exam might be of use for a given student. High scores on AP exams may permit students to be exempted from certain college courses, may provide credit for some college course work, or may provide access into honors or other specialized programs.

TOEFL - Test of English as a Foreign Language

The purpose of the TOEFL test is to evaluate the English proficiency of students whose native language is not English. Any student whose native language is not English should check with her or his school counselor to see if this test might be necessary.

Your Transcript Package: Putting it Together

It is the student's responsibility to see that their application is complete.

In addition to the student's portion of the application, colleges and universities require a number of supplemental pieces of information which, taken together, form a student's "transcript package". A student's transcript package can include:

1. A transcript of high school courses;
2. A school recommendation(s);

3. An optional character reference from someone who knows the student outside of school such as a coach, activity advisor, or employer;
4. A personal statement;
5. The copy of college entrance exam scores, including SAT's and Subject Tests and/or ACT's. Official scores still need to be sent directly from CEEB in Princeton to the college or from the ACT company in Ohio:
6. First quarter/semester grades;
7. Secondary School Report and Teacher Evaluation Forms from the college's application;
8. A descriptive profile of our school;
9. Other information, such as copies of student's Individual Education Plan, and special education testing, if appropriate.

We strongly recommend that you consider using

www.commonapp.org

to submit your college application.

Teacher Recommendations and Teacher Recommendation Forms

Although college requirements vary with respect to teacher recommendations, it is suggested that students get at least two academic teacher references. Colleges prefer recommendations from teachers of courses taken in the junior or senior years. Because teacher recommendations take a great deal of time to write, students should not ask more than two academic teachers to write them a reference. If a student feels that she or he

may need more than two references, s/he should talk to their school counselor. Once a student identifies those teachers s/he wishes to ask, s/he should do the following:

1. Provide each teacher with information such as a written summary of your activities (a resume), names of colleges to which you are applying, and your personal goals in order to assist the teacher in writing the recommendation.
2. Be sure you allow your teachers two to four weeks to complete your recommendation. Remember a good letter takes time!
3. Ask your teacher to return it directly to the Guidance Office or they can upload your letter if you are using the Common Application website. **Please remember to check to be sure that any letters were received and that your admission package is complete.**
4. Remember to send thank you notes to individuals who took the time to write letters of recommendation for you.

If a college application you are completing contains its own Teacher Recommendation Form(s), we suggest the following:

1. Complete the steps as outlined above.
2. Fill out the personal information section on the college's teacher form, and then give it to the teacher with the materials listed. **If you request the letter before you are sure of which colleges you are applying to, provide those materials to the teacher as soon as possible.**

Secondary School Report Forms

If a college application contains a Secondary School Report Form, complete the personal information section on the form and submit it to the Guidance Office. Request that it be sent along with your transcript and the other materials you are releasing.

Other Items in the Transcript Package

Character Reference

Obtaining one character reference from someone who knows you outside the classroom such as a coach, activity advisor, or employer can be helpful in presenting you

from a different point of view. A character reference can be written on the person's own stationery or on that of his or her company.

Activities Record Worksheet or Resume

This form, which outlines your extra-curricular activities, may be included in your transcript package. You need not include this form in your transcript package if you expect to upload/ write this information directly on the college application.

SAT and Subject Tests

In most cases, colleges consider entrance test scores sent by high schools as unofficial. Students are responsible for having official scores sent directly from the Educational Testing Service in New Jersey. Students may identify the colleges to which they wish to send scores on the registration material for each test administration or after taking a test by filling out the Additional Score Report Form which is available in the Guidance Office. Students can also take care of this at the www.collegeboard.org website.

The Mid-Year Report and Final Report

The Guidance Office will send mid-year assessments to all schools for which an application has been sent. At the end of the fourth quarter in June, your transcript will be automatically sent to the school that you indicate to us that you will be attending. Please do not forget to let us know where to send your final grades!

Applying On-Line

Many school offer students the option of applying electronically, on-line. It is the student's responsibility to let the counselor know once the application has been submitted, so that the guidance office can send the supporting materials to the college. Students must complete a Transcript Request Form to help with this process. This can be found on the next page.

Student Record Consent Form

POST SECONDARY PLANNING CHECK LIST
(SENIOR CHECKLIST / TRANSCRIPT REQUEST)

STUDENT'S NAME _____

** Please note it is each student's responsibility to maintain accurate records in an effort to adhere to deadlines and due dates. This checklist will assist you with each application.

CHECKLIST

College/Military Branch/or Employer name

Address

Application due date – postmarked by:

Please circle one : On-Line College App., Common App., Paper App.

Activities Resume submitted Date _____

Transcript Release submitted Date _____

Teacher recommendations requested Yes No

Teacher Name _____

Teacher Name _____

Teacher Name _____

Counselor recommendation requested Yes No

SAT and/or ACT taken ** Yes No Date(s) _____

Student / Parent portion of application completed

Date _____

Application Fee included (if applicable)

Personal Statement or Essay (if needed)

Supporting Documents included (examples Midyear report) Yes NA

Date submitted to guidance office Date _____

Student Signature _____

Parent Signature _____

Counselor Signature _____

**** *SAT / ACT scores sent by student through College Board***

Transcript Package Release Procedure

Your written consent must be given to the Guidance Office to have your transcript package released. No less than two weeks before each college application deadline, you need to fill out one **Student Record Consent Form**. On the form you are required to indicate where you wish to have your information sent.

It is the student's responsibility to see that deadlines for applications are met and the correct materials are identified to be sent. If you need help filling out an application or Consent Form, see your school counselor.

The College Essay

The **college essay** is one part of the application process that gives students the opportunity to inform admissions officials about their special abilities, interests, and qualities, or about any significant factors that might set them apart from a large number of qualified applicants. As many colleges begin to doubt the usefulness of standardized test scores, college essays are being given more weight than ever in the admissions process. While a superb essay will not cancel out a poor high school record, a well written essay can make a student with a good record stand out from the other applicants.

Colleges that ask students to write essays really do want to know the person behind the numbers. A good essay can present the student as an interesting and valuable person who is worth knowing, who is genuine, thoughtful, engaging, and able to handle what he or she has set out to do. An essay can also comment on any setbacks the student has suffered or explain any gaps in the academic record.

In general, essays are evaluated on three basic criteria:

- **The student's ability to use standard written English** that is correctly written, punctuated, and contains correct grammar, usage, and syntax.
- **The content, substance, and depth of insight** which reflects the student's ability to think about him/her self and to convey authentic feelings or opinions about a topic.
- **Creativity and originality** which shows an individual who would bring qualities such as intellect, initiative, energy, and a fresh viewpoint to the college community.

Students writing college essays would do well to avoid the following:

- Inflating experiences, trying too hard to impress, or adopting a pompous or overly intellectual tone.
- Expressions of anger or hostility toward others.
- Mere repetition of information that is available elsewhere in the application.
- Undue influence by parents or other adults in the writing of the essay. The voice of an adult can easily come through an essay too strongly and drown out the authentic voice of the student writer.

- General statements and clichés that make the essay unremarkable from hundreds of similar essays which admissions officials read. Telling details and specifics make the essay "live."
- Being overcautious or too eager to please the admissions committee. A mediocre essay won't hurt the applicant much, but a truly good one can help immensely.

Examples of College Essay Questions

The questions below are typical examples of those which frequently appear in college applications:

1. Describe your most significant personal experience. Why was it significant and how has it influenced you?
2. Identify and discuss a significant problem facing your generation.
3. What have you read that has a special significance for you? Explain why.
4. Describe a person or experience of particular importance to you.
5. Please describe the reasons that influenced you in selecting your intended field of study.
6. If you could travel through time and interview a prominent figure in the arts, politics, religion, or science, for example, whom would you choose and why?
7. Describe your experience in living in a racially, culturally, or ethnically diverse environment; what do you expect to need to know to live successfully in the multicultural society in the future?
8. Make up a question, state it clearly, and answer it. Feel free to use your imagination, recognizing that those who read it will not mind being entertained.
9. Please use the space provided to indicate what you consider your best qualities to be, and describe how your college education will be of assistance to you in sharing these qualities and accomplishments with others.

Financial Aid: Sources and Programs

Financial aid programs are designed to assist those who, without such assistance, would be unable to meet the costs of a post secondary education. Financial aid comes from several different sources: The federal and state government, colleges and universities, local private organizations and scholarship programs, and banks.

In general, eligibility for financial aid is based on need. Some financial assistance is awarded not on the basis of need, but for scholastic excellence, athletics, or other specialized talents. Much of the financial aid awarded, however, is need-based. Need will vary from college to college according to the cost of attending the school and how much the student/family is expected to contribute to the student's education. Need is not one set dollar amount.

The student/family expected contribution (**EFC**) is an amount determined by a formula established by Congress that indicates how much of a student's family's financial resources should be available to pay for school. Student/family financial information is collected in two ways:

1. The CSS (College Scholarship Service) Financial Aid **PROFILE** form
2. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (**FAFSA**)

While the **FAFSA** is used to apply for most federal and state aid, the **PROFILE** is the form used by most institutions (private) to dispense their own funds. Colleges may also require students to fill out financial aid forms specific to their given institution. In determining the financial aid package, private colleges are not bound by the analysis of need presented in the **FAFSA**.

The **FAFSA** should be mailed out as soon after January 1st as possible (but not before). One may register for the **PROFILE** service early in the fall. This is especially important for students applying early decision or early admission. The organizations and colleges that are to receive the results must be identified on the form or through a written request at a later date. The Guidance Office has the code numbers you will need to file these forms. The codes are also available on the website for each of these tools, and in the college bulletins. The **FAFSA** and **PROFILE** forms, along with other financial aid information, are available in the Guidance Office. One may apply on-line for both forms. (Personal Identification Numbers) PIN 's are required for on-line filing. The **FAFSA** form requires that BOTH parent and student have their own individual PIN.

FAFSA: www.fafsa.ed.gov

PROFILE: www.collegeboard.org

A student eligible for aid will likely be offered a financial aid package composed of the following components: self aid (loans and work study), and gift aid (grants and scholarships which do not have to be repaid). Some schools vary the proportion of each kind of aid based on the student's academic performance or other factors.

Some common financial aid programs are listed below. The amounts of each program may vary from year to year depending on federal funding for financial aid.

Stafford Loan (Formerly called the Guaranteed Student Loan) Loans are insured by State and Federal governments. Eligible students can borrow up to \$3500 in their freshman year, \$4500 in their sophomore year, and \$5500 in their junior and senior years to a maximum of \$23,000. Subsidized loans will have their interest paid by the government while a student is in school full time. This information varies yearly, please check with your college for the most up to date information.

College Work-Study Program

College work study provides federally subsidized jobs on campus and in the community. Employment offers included in financial aid packages range up to \$1400 for about 10-15 hours of work per week. Students are paid minimum wage.

Perkins Loan

This federal loan program, administered by the individual colleges, provides low interest educational loans for qualified students who are enrolled at least half-time.

Pell Grants

These federal grants, awarded to eligible full and part-time undergraduate students, are based on financial need. The amounts range from \$400 to \$4050 a year.

Plus Loan (Parent Loan for Undergraduate Students)

Through a local bank, parent may borrow up to the full cost of education minus any financial aid received.

Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant Program (SEOG)

These federal grants, of up to \$4,000 yearly, are offered to students with exceptional need.

Federal Supplemental Loans for Students (SLS)

This loan is now part of the *unsubsidized* portion of the Stafford Loan program. SLS applicants must be independent undergraduate students. They may borrow amounts similar to those offered under the Stafford Loan provisions except that the government does not pay the interest on these loans while a student is in school.

Many colleges and universities have their own loan programs and/or tuition plans. For information contact their financial aid offices.

Second Semester Senior Year: Issues and Follow Through

Academic Performance

Admissions decisions are also contingent on the successful completion of all course work, and admissions officers reserve the right to question poor second semester performance and, in some cases, to reverse an admissions decision already made. A letter sent by the University of New Hampshire to students whose concluding high school transcript was considered unsatisfactory contains the following statements:

"We have received a report of your final grades for the academic year and consider them unacceptable. It is clear that your admission status must be reevaluated and, consequently, I have suspended your admission.

If you wish to communicate with us about your circumstances, please do so in writing within the next five days. It is our preference not to talk with you or your parents until we have received your written communication.

We will contact you again once we have received and reviewed your statement. At that time we will make a determination as to whether it is appropriate for you to meet with us.

We look forward to hearing from you shortly."

Double Depositing

Each year some seniors have a difficult time making up their minds about which college to enroll in after they have been accepted. In order to have more time to make a decision they send deposits to more than one college on or after May 1st. This is called "double depositing" and is unethical practice. Should the colleges involved determine that a student has "double-deposited," admission may be jeopardized. It is an acceptable practice to deposit at one school and maintain your name on a wait list at another. However, indicating to two schools that you will be attending by sending deposits to both should not be considered.

The Wait List: Questions and Answers

Should I ask to remain active on the wait list?

Only if you are seriously interested in attending that college. If you are, then you should indicate that by informing them in writing or by returning the postcards many colleges provide for that purpose as soon as possible. If you definitely will attend if admitted, tell the college that.

When will I learn if I will be admitted from the wait list?

The very earliest you can expect to hear from colleges is late April, but usually not until after the first week of May. Most colleges will finalize the status of students by June 1st. Occasionally colleges will extend to students the opportunity to remain on a wait list throughout the summer.

Should I call the college?

No. Colleges will only ask you to indicate your position in writing. Until the first week or so of May, colleges rarely have any information that will be helpful to you as you try to calculate your chances.

What are my chances?

Until early May this is an impossible question for even the colleges to answer. Quite simply, they do not know. Colleges must wait to hear from all of the students to whom they have extended an offer of admission. Those students have until May 1 to respond. Often times those responses, mailed on April 30, do not arrive until May 3rd or 4th. Colleges past records regarding their wait list, the next year they may not be able to take any. It will all depend on how many admitted students decide to enroll before May 1st.

How many applicants usually end up on a wait list?

Usually quite a few. For even a small school 300-500 is not unusual. Remember, not everybody who is offered a position on a wait list will wait to be considered. The initial number placed on a wait list usually "melts down" quite significantly.

How can I find out what my "rank" is on a wait list?

Colleges will not rank their wait list until after they have heard from both admitted candidates (May 1st).

What can I do to improve my chances?

If your transcript since mid-year is good, sending it along to the colleges may help. If you've taken on responsibilities, or in any other way distinguished yourself since you applied, don't hesitate to let the colleges know. Remember, though, even if you've completely turned things around this will not make a difference if the colleges do not go to its wait list.

Should I try to set up another interview?

Colleges rarely permit second interviews, particularly before May 1st. If you happen to be in the area it doesn't hurt to stop by "just to check on things", and to say hello. A major investment of time and money to visit a college where you have been placed on a wait list is probably not worth the effort. Consult with the Guidance counselor regarding this matter. It will vary from case to case.

What should I do while I wait?

Assume you are not going to get in off the wait list. Statistics clearly indicate the chances are quite a bit less than 50/50. The most important thing for you to do at this time is to focus on the options you do have and make an informed, rational decision regarding those options.

Should I make an enrollment deposit at my second choice college?

YES! Unfortunately this fee is normally not refundable, but it is important for you to guarantee that you have a place in a college next year. Make your deposit before May 1st.

What should I do if I have been placed on several wait lists?

There is nothing wrong with remaining on more than one wait list as long as each one of them is a school that you are more interested in than the options you currently have. Obviously you can only indicate to one of them that they are your first choice.

Who should I keep informed about my wait list status?

Your parents and your counselor should be kept advised of your status. There should be no miscommunication or lack of communication during this time.

Additional Post-Secondary Options

Preparatory Schools

Some students may wish to consider as additional year of secondary school prior to attending college. A list of preparatory schools offering post-graduate options is available in the Guidance Office.

Typically, students who consider this option do so to improve their study skills or their academic record in a structured environment with small classes in order to increase college preparedness. Often students will consider a post-graduate year at a preparatory school while simultaneously applying to colleges during the fall of the senior year. Decisions and deposits are not required until May 1st in most cases.

The Thirteenth Year

Many students are not yet ready or prefer not to go directly to college or to some other degree granting educational programs immediately after completing high school. While some of these students may choose a year at a prep school, join the military, or work full time before enrolling at a college, many others are seeking alternatives for a single year.

In a process called deferred admissions, students can apply to college in the fall of their senior year and in the spring ask permission of the college they wish to attend to defer their admission for one year. Admission can also be deferred until the following January. In other words, students wanting to pursue this option can maintain their acceptance to a college but not begin until a year or six months later. A student and a family who are considering this option should discuss the idea with the student's school counselor.

Career Decision Making

Students who are unsure of their future educational and/or occupational plans, unable to decide whether or not to continue with their education, or confused by the number of educational and/or occupational possibilities, can use the assistance and materials available in the Guidance Office to help them:

- Obtain information about career or educational options,
- Identify those options that have possibilities,
- Evaluate the possible outcomes of different options, and
- Choose one or several options to pursue.

Through the use of interest surveys, computer-aided educational and occupational searches, and by exploring the available materials, students can either narrow or increase their options, depending on their objective. Students who are having some difficulty putting together their post-secondary plans or would like to discuss questions about their future plans are encouraged to see their school counselor.