

# College Planning Timeline<sup>1</sup> for the Class of 2026

|                     | <b>Basic</b>  | <b>Extra</b>   |
|---------------------|---|--|
| Winter <sup>2</sup> | Keep Schoology notifications for the “#RedDevilNation: Class of 2026” turned on. Parents can join the group with this join code:QCMS-FM3P-H3VB.   |  |
|                     | Begin researching colleges - use <a href="#">Naviance</a> to create and maintain a list.  | Use this <a href="#">Google Sheet</a> to take notes on schools. Save a copy of it to your Drive.   |
|                     | Decide which [professional] email you’re going to use for college correspondence. Do not use your Clarence Schools email account. You’re going to get a <i>ton</i> of email, how do you want to manage it?  | Create an account specifically for the college search (e.g. JaneDoeCollegeSearch@gmail.com) and then another one for the application process (e.g. JaneDoeCollegeApplications@gmail.com).  |
|                     | Plan to take <i>both</i> <sup>3</sup> the SAT and ACT. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SAT is offered at Clarence on 3/8 and 5/3. <a href="#">Sign up</a> by 2/21 and 4/18 respectively.</li> <li>• ACT is offered at Clarence on 4/5. <a href="#">Sign up</a> by 2/28.</li> <li>• Check our <a href="#">website</a> for more general testing info.</li> </ul> | Use <a href="#">Khan Academy</a> for free, official SAT prep.<br><br>ACT offers <u>free</u> prep that can be found <a href="#">here</a> . Additional official online prep can be found <a href="#">here</a> .<br><br>There are <i>lots</i> of test prep companies out there. <sup>4</sup> Stop by our office if you’d like a list. |
|                     | Attend College Planning Night for Juniors in the HS auditorium on March 6th. Evening presentation with High School Counselors and College Reps.   |  |

<sup>1</sup> This is a rough timeline. Everyone is different. It might be ok to wait to visit or apply until late Fall for some, but for others that would put them behind. Just because your friend is doing “it” doesn’t mean you should be too (wait, I think that applies to more than just college). Check with your counselor to see what’s right for you.

<sup>2</sup> This is a season - it feels like the longest one. :(

<sup>3</sup> Some kids do better on one test than the other. It’s tough to know who fits into which category, so take both to be safe. Colleges accept both and take the higher score. [Here’s](#) a good overview of the difference between tests.

<sup>4</sup> We don’t recommend one test prep company over another. There are a lot of good ones and a range of different options. Choose the one that best fits your schedule and budget.

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|                            | Go on the field trip to the National College Fair at the Convention Center on March 15th. More information will be forthcoming.  | Attend the College Fair again with your parents in the evening.  |
|                            | Have a conversation with your parents about what's important to each of you in a college.  |  |
| <i>Spring</i> <sup>5</sup> | <p>Visit a college.<sup>6</sup></p> <p>Even if you're not considering a local college, use them as a test run. They can help you understand which criteria are important to you without having to go on a road trip. Try to go while the colleges are in session; they look much different over the summer when students aren't there.</p> | Plan your Spring Break around college visits. :)   |
|                            | Have a strong academic finish to your school year.   |  |
|                            |  | Many schools (but not all!) rely heavily on something called "demonstrated interest" to make decisions on your application. Any contact you have with them is documented (email, social media, phonecall, visit). They can even tell if you open the emails they send you. If you're truly interested in a school, you should have some digital breadcrumbs that signal your interest to them. You don't need to go overboard interacting with them (more isn't necessarily better), but you don't want your application to be the only thing they see in your file. |
|                            |  | Talk to one or two teachers about writing a letter of recommendation. <sup>7</sup>   |

<sup>5</sup> Another season - generally feels like it's only about ten minutes between the frigid days that seem to creep into late April and the oppressive heat that soon follows.

<sup>6</sup> Make sure you use the admissions office when you visit, don't just drop by and walk around. Most colleges have a spot on their website where you can sign up for a tour and/or meeting with the admissions office.

<sup>7</sup> Some teachers appreciate the notice and will work on the letter over the summer, and others prefer to wait until the fall.

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| <p>Summer<br/>8</p>      |  | Create a <a href="#">Common App</a> Account and start plowing through it. Use the guide found <a href="#">here</a> . <sup>9</sup> |
|                          |  | Begin working on your <a href="#">essay</a> .   |
|                          |  | Visit additional colleges.  |
|                          | Do something productive with your time, like a <a href="#">summer job, an internship</a> or college program.   |   |
| <p>Fall<sup>10</sup></p> | Meet with your counselor to discuss the application process. <sup>11</sup>   |   |
|                          |  | Consider retaking either the SAT (~11/1 at CHS) or ACT (~10/25 at CHS) - whichever test you felt more comfortable with.           |
|                          | Continue to visit colleges - try to attend an Open House.  | Meet with some of the college reps that visit CHS.  |
|                          | Personally invite one or two teachers to write a letter of recommendation if required by your college(s). Then send them an electronic invite through Naviance. <sup>12</sup> Be sure to write a thank you note. |   |
|                          | Go to the actual college website to understand all application requirements ( <i>don't</i> just rely on the Common App, use the primary source).   |   |
|                          | Attend Financial Aid Night in late September/early October.  |   |

<sup>8</sup> The *best* season - ample time to work on college stuff without interruption.

<sup>9</sup> You don't *have* to use the Common App. If you're applying to a few SUNY schools and one local private school you can probably get away without doing the Common App.

<sup>10</sup> No fancy font to be found, but I personally think "Fall" is a way better term than "Autumn."

<sup>11</sup> This is super important. Seriously. Everyone's process is slightly different. We can help to make sure you're on the right track.

<sup>12</sup> We give presentations on the application process through English classes in the third week of September. We'll show you how to send the invitation through Naviance, but [here's](#) a video tutorial if you're eager.

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|                      | Apply for financial aid by completing the <a href="#">FAFSA</a> . The app is available 10/1.  | Some private schools require the <a href="#">CSS Profile</a> . Complete it if required.                                  |
|                      | Have a regularly scheduled meeting (weekly, biweekly?) with your parents to discuss the application process.                                    |  |
|                      |   | Register with the <a href="#">NCAA</a> if you plan on playing a Division I or II sport.                                  |
| Winter <sup>13</sup> | Submit your application prior to the posted deadlines. Work with your counselor to make sure we know what needs to be sent out on your behalf.  |  |
|                      | Apply for scholarships. <sup>14</sup> The best way to do so is by using websites like <a href="#">Fastweb</a> and <a href="#">Going Merry</a> . |  |
|                      |   | Submit the Google Form posted in Schoology to request mid-year reports in early February if your college(s) require one. |
| Spring <sup>15</sup> | Wait for the acceptance letters to roll in as a reward for all your hard work over the last few years. <sup>16</sup>                            |  |
|                      | Compare award letters to help you make the best financial decision for you and your family.   |  |
|                      |   | Do an overnight visit at your top choice school. Many colleges offer these opportunities to accepted students.           |
|                      | Send in your deposit by May 1st.  | Wear the t-shirt/hoodie of the school you plan to attend on college decision day (TBD).                                  |

<sup>13</sup> Again!?!

<sup>14</sup> The biggest scholarships given out are by the individual colleges. Most of the scholarships found on these sites are smaller in size when compared with institutional scholarships, but every dollar helps the cause!

<sup>15</sup> Anyone else tired of this gimmick? You stopped reading these two seasons ago? Ok, got it!

<sup>16</sup> Maybe, maybe not. Some will get into every school they apply to, some will only get into a few. Celebrate every acceptance. Whatever your situation, these decision letters don't define who you are as a person and, while important, won't determine the rest of your life.

