

COLLEGE

AND

CAREER

HANDBOOK

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GENERAL INFORMATION
Introduction

This handbook has been created for TCA students and their parents to make the transition after TCA as smooth as possible. Much of the information herein is general and does not apply equally to all colleges, universities and post-secondary options. It will serve as a resource or reference for the questions usually asked about the process.

We encourage students to embrace this opportunity to explore your values, make important adult decisions, and become more independent. Students are bound to learn a lot about themselves, and will discover that there are a wide range of options available to them after TCA. Students will not be alone in this process. This is a partnership with students, parents and with TCA. We are here to advise and support you, to help you make sense of the process while keeping you on task.

It is our belief that two principles prevail throughout:

1. Each student's best interests are served through good communication among the four parties involved—the student, the school, the parents, and the colleges/universities;

2. Post-secondary options are to be considered in context of the student as a whole; the student's total secondary school record (academic and personal), extracurricular pursuits, recommendations (counselor, teacher, and supplemental), personal essays, demonstrated interest, and standardized test scores, if required (SAT and ACT Reasoning Tests, SAT II Subject Tests, Advanced Placement Exams, etc.).

Of course, this handbook is only a resource guide, and often you cannot navigate your way through the options and the contingencies and the strategies without talking through the issues with someone who has experience with this process. That is why we expect all parties to be active participants, and we hope to sustain steady contact with you through email, phone, and visits. In our experience, consistent communication is essential to making this process positive and productive.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT THE COLLEGE AND CAREER CENTER

TCA's College Counseling Philosophy

The philosophy of TCA's College and Career Center is that the match between student and their post-secondary choice is our most important concern. Therefore, we assist the student in discovering colleges and institutions that will allow him or her to attain the best education to achieve the greatest success, and to emerge from the experience as well-prepared as possible to lead a productive, constructive, and satisfying life. Our function is to guide the student and family in making the best decisions relative to applications and choice. It is fundamental to our thinking that the final decision-making role remains with the student and his or her family.

We believe the more one knows about something, the better one is able to make decisions; therefore, we consider researching colleges, universities, and institutions **essential** to finding the best match for the student. The research process requires the following elements:

1. reading about various colleges, universities, and institutions.
2. talking with people personally knowledgeable about the institution, such as current and former students, professors, deans, etc.
3. visiting each institution and interviewing (if possible)

Students will work jointly with their college counselor to create a vertical list of colleges that includes:

- Reaches - an institution where admission is not likely, but possible;
- Middles - institutions to which admission is a possibility; and
- Likelies - institutions where experience indicates that the applicant is in a category often or usually admitted.

Primary attention should be given to those colleges determined to be possible or likely. Admission standards and competition pools vary from year to year; therefore, the last two categories may change from year to year.

Not all students are accepted by all institutions to which they apply. Students should have full knowledge of their choice of schools, including the characteristics an institution is seeking in a prospective applicant and how competitive it is for admission to those schools.

TCA subscribes to the practices and policies articulated in the National Association for College Admission Counseling's (NACAC) Statement of Students' Rights and Responsibilities.

For reasons of confidentiality and privacy, The TCA College and Career Center does not, without prior permission, disclose information that could identify an individual student during the application process. This policy is consistent with the Family Educational Right to Privacy Act (Buckley Amendment).

General Information

TCA works to assure that all students are prepared to pursue their post-secondary goals. This requires a thorough advisement process by the school, realistic decision making, and active participation by the student and family. Our program guides the student through a series of organized events, meetings and activities that will lead to appropriate post-secondary choices.. All TCA students will have to have a high school graduation plan that will lead into college and career after high school. This is called a Post-secondary & Workforce Readiness (What we call a PWR "power" Plan). Throughout the year the students are given interest surveys, inventories, and goals to meet in order to help them plan their high school courses to best prepare them for life after high school. The students will explore their interests and strengths and be matched up with careers that best fit their results. From there they will be able to explore what path they need to take to reach their goals. We mainly utilize Naviance. Using this program, the students can save all of their careers, colleges, resumes, course plans and survey results so they can revisit them whenever they need. The College and Career Center will use that information to pass along scholarships, college info, career exploration opportunities, and anything else that will be a match to the student's results.

FRESHMAN YEAR

Students are strongly encouraged to contribute to the school by participating in extracurricular programs. Freshmen also should develop good and strong work habits and positive attitudes. A freshman parent information night is held in the fall to give an overview of the year and what will follow in the next four years of high school.

During Freshman Orientation, freshman complete a learning Styles Inventory. These results are reviewed during their first PWR meeting. In subsequent meetings, freshman will also complete inventories for career and college interest.

SOPHOMORE YEAR

Sophomores can take the PSAT/NMSQT in October. A college night is held in the fall to discuss mock admission cases and to assess academic performance. The feasibility of visiting college campuses will be discussed. In June, some students may be ready to take SAT Subject Tests.

JUNIOR YEAR

All juniors have the opportunity to take the PSAT/NMSQT in October from which National Merit semifinalists are determined and strengths and weaknesses in scholastic preparation and aptitude are identified.

A junior college night is held in April to explain the college admission and application process and to discuss the relevant criteria in selecting colleges and for postsecondary planning.

In the spring, the student identifies and asks two teachers to write letters of

recommendation for the fall. (At the start of senior year, they provide their teachers with the appropriate forms.)

The student will be sitting for various standardized tests (see section on standardized tests for specifics). As with any part of the search process, the student should consult his or her college counselor regarding the testing timeline.

SENIOR YEAR

Seniors sign up to meet with college admission representatives who visit TCA during the fall. In a typical year, more than 100 representatives will visit the school. A comprehensive list is posted outside the Upper School office and on the school's website. Updates and changes are made weekly.

Seniors, when appropriate, register and take the SAT Reasoning Test, SAT Subject Tests, or ACT.

Seniors continue to meet individually and in groups with their college counselor. Seniors and parents keep their college counselor informed about progress, problems, acceptances, and final college choice. The student needs to take responsibility for following procedures and meeting deadlines. The student's college counselor, as well as the entire college counseling office, are here to advise the student and facilitate the college application process, but cannot be responsible for those who do not meet their obligations.

The Role of the Student, Parent, and Counselor in the College and Career Counseling Process

Each person in the college counseling process has a very specific role. The student, parents, and college counselor should focus on the phrase, "Post-secondary planning is a match to be made and not a prize to be won." This is the goal of the college and career counseling process.

THE STUDENT

The responsibilities of the student are to:

- keep their college counselor abreast of their search process;
- discuss post-secondary options they are interested in pursuing;
- apply to an appropriate array of colleges, as determined jointly with their college counselor;
- request recommendations from teachers;
- take advantage of the resources available in the College and Career Center;
- use their college counselor as a resource;
- advise their college counselor of information requested by colleges, and
- inform college counselors about their final post-secondary plans.

THE PARENT

Parents need to:

- participate in college and career programs offered by TCA;

- keep discussions open about different post-secondary options;
- work on the financial arrangements that will support the college education. Explain any financial boundaries or geographic limits to your child;
- get educated. Visit websites where free information is available;
- be supportive of the student in the search process;
- let the student be responsible for filing applications, asking for appointments, asking for recommendations, thanking faculty, registering for testing, and writing essays; and
- be an objective participant in the process.

Always keep in mind that your child will be the one going to college and an over-involved parent can often do more harm than good. Back your child with guidance and support, but allow them to remain autonomous. You can help with creating folders, electronic and paper files and an application checklist. Parents can assist their child with navigating various post-secondary websites.

THE COLLEGE COUNSELOR

The college counselor will:

- provide up-to-date, current information to parents and students;
- write the counselor letter of recommendation and complete the secondary school report (SSR);
- mail teacher letters of recommendation, counselor letter, official transcript and the secondary school report to all colleges to which a student has applied;
- give appropriate advice and guidance when needed; and
- assist in solving issues/problems that might arise in the application process.

Everything You Want to Know about Standardized Tests

Standardizing testing for college admission is an issue that generates many questions and anxiety. Colleges require standardized tests as a means to see how students compare to other college-bound seniors in the country.

It is rare that a test score will make or break a student's chances but instead it will be folded into the larger assessment of a student's academic ability and potential. The goal is to provide colleges with one common data point that can be used to compare all applicants. That said, it is just one factor in the admissions decision.

Schools also consider your high school GPA, academic transcript, letters of recommendation, extracurricular activities, interviews, and personal essays. The weight placed on SAT and ACT scores in admissions varies from school to school.

However the tests are used, they are only part of the mosaic. Students are responsible for having their scores reported to the colleges (via College Board or ACT websites, listed below) as well as to the TCA College Counseling office.

Students should consult with their parents and college counselor to determine the dates when they should take the test; some students may wish to capitalize on positive PSAT scores, while others may need additional time to prepare. **Each student should create his/her own standardized testing plan**.

College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) Code and ACT Code

TCA's CEEB code is 060-252. This number is needed for all test registrations and college applications. When you provide this number as part of your registration, your scores will be sent to TCA.

Testing Requirements

Most colleges require at least the ACT or the SAT, but some do not. (For a list of colleges that do not require standardized tests as a part of a completed application, go to www.fairtest.org.)

For the schools that require testing, most will take your best scores, even if it means mixing different scores (i.e. SAT Critical Reading score from one test date and the SAT Math score from another test date). This practice is called Super Scoring

Schools don't have a preference between the ACT and the SAT and will take either one. A smaller number of schools (usually more selective ones) require two SAT Subject Tests.

Score Choice: Students taking the SAT and SAT Subject Tests and ACT have the option of sending scores from select test dates (or select Subject Tests) while not revealing others. It is important to note that a small number of colleges do not participate in Score Choice and will require that students submit all of their test scores regardless. Most colleges will select a student's best scores from all of their score reports anyway and use those when making their admission decisions. Students will need to refer the specific

policies of the colleges on their list.

PSAT/NMSQT

The PSAT Reasoning Test, in October, is available to all sophomores and juniors. The PSAT places emphasis on a student's ability to determine the meaning of words in extended contexts and how word choice shapes meaning, tone, and impact. The test measures a student's skills in two core areas: Evidence-Based Reading and Writing and Math, and is composed of three sections—Reading, Writing, and Math. Total testing time is 2 hours and 45 minutes. The PSAT serves as practice for the SAT and as a counseling tool. The PSAT/NMSQT is the qualifying test for the National Merit Scholarship program. National Merit is open only to juniors. For additional information about the content of the PSAT/NMSQT, visit the College Board Web site at www.collegeboard.com. Selection for National Merit commendation or semifinalist status is based on a selection index, which changes each year. Students are notified of National Merit, National Achievement or National Hispanic status in the fall of their senior year.

SAT REASONING TEST

The SAT Reasoning Test, offered Saturday mornings in August, October, November, December, March, May and June, is taken by juniors and seniors.

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 of the SAT is scored on a 200 to 800 point scale, making the "perfect" score 1600

SAT registration deadlines fall approximately five weeks before each test date. Register online on the College Board website.

ACT

The ACT has four sections: English, Reading, Math and Science, 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.

The ACT is offered nationally every year in September, October, December, February, April, June and July.

You'll earn one ACT score (1 to 36) on each test (English, Math, Reading and Science) and a composite ACT score, which is an average of these four tests. Usually, when people ask about your score, they're referring to your composite ACT score.

Registration deadlines fall approximately five weeks before each ACT test date. You can also register online on the ACT website.

SAT SUBJECT TESTS

SAT Subject Tests are given in 20 areas including languages, sciences, histories and social studies, math, and English literature.

Each test is one hour and offered on the same Saturdays as the SAT Reasoning Test (except for March/April). It is not possible to sit for the SAT Reasoning Test and SAT Subject Tests on the same day. As many as three SAT Subject Tests may be taken at one sitting.

Most colleges do not require SAT Subject Tests, but those that do, require two or three subject tests. **Students should consider taking SAT Subject Tests in May or June based on their curriculum, teacher and counselor input, and academic strengths.** SAT Subject Tests also are scored on a 200-to-800 point scale and designed to show an applicant's grasp of a specific subject. The tests are sometimes used by colleges and universities for placement in freshman courses. Some colleges accept a combination of SAT Subject Tests in lieu of the SAT Reasoning Test for admission purposes; some accept the ACT in place of the SAT Subject Tests.

AP EXAMS

Advanced placement exams are given at TCA in 12 subjects and used primarily for establishing proficiency, advanced standing in college and/or college credit. Policies vary by institution, so it is important to identify each school's evaluation of AP scores. AP exams are given by subject at specific times during May and scored from five (high) to one (low).

For most colleges, A.P. scores do not factor into an admission decision. However, colleges acknowledge that A.P. certified courses are typically very rigorous, and you will get credit for challenging yourself.

FRESHMAN YEAR

April	PSAT/9 State Test
May	AP exams for students who are enrolled in an advanced placement course

SOPHOMORE YEAR

October	PSAT/NMSQT for practice
April	PSAT/10 State Test
May	AP exams for students who are enrolled in an advanced placement course
June	SAT Subject Tests (if needed) There might be cases where SAT Subject Tests would be appropriate. If you have questions contact the College and Career office for advice.

JUNIOR YEAR

October	PSAT/NMSQT to practice for SAT. Score is also used to determine National Merit Scholarship semifinalist status
March	SAT Reasoning Test
April	SAT State Test ACT Test
May	AP exams, SAT Reasoning Test recommended for a second time if warranted

June SAT Subject Test (If needed)

SENIOR YEAR

September	ACT Test
October	ACT or SAT Test
	SAT Reasoning Test or SAT Subject Tests (if needed)
November	SAT Reasoning Test or SAT Subject Tests
December	ACT or SAT Reasoning Test or SAT Subject Tests if needed
May	AP exams

Athletic Information

The NCAA, or National Collegiate Athletic Association, is the governing body that oversees 23 different sports and athletic championships at 1,200 colleges and universities in the United States. It stresses a well-rounded student, who excels at sports, as well as academics and campus life.

Divisions I, II, and III

Schools that are part of the NCAA are divided into Division I, II and III schools. Each of these divisions reflects the relative priority of sports and academics.

Division, I schools generally have the largest student bodies, as well as the largest budgets and scholarships for sports. 350 schools are classified as Division I and 6,000 teams belong to those schools.

Division II schools strive to provide student-athletes with a high level of athletic competition, while also maintaining high grades and a well-rounded campus experience.

Division III schools also provide opportunities for student-athletes to compete and participate athletically, but the primary focus is on academic achievement.

This is the largest division in both total participants and number of schools.

Students who hope to play Division I or Division II sports as college freshmen must be certified by the NCAA Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse. The clearinghouse monitors the admission of student-athletes and verifies that they meet the qualifications established by the NCAA. Students register with the clearinghouse, preferably at the end of junior year, at www.ncaaclearinghouse.net. There is a registration fee.

Students must also send SAT Reasoning Test scores to the clearinghouse through the College Board website (code 9999) to qualify for eligibility.

Recruitment

There are specific NCAA rules and regulations regarding visits and contacts between student athletes and college coaches. It is imperative that students understand these rules to ensure they remain eligible for college-level athletics. The NCAA web site is a great source of information.

The Student Athlete

Can you play intercollegiate sports in college (and do you want to)?

1. Be honest with yourself about your athletic ability, potential, and commitment to the sport.
2. Speak with your coach, college coaches who have seen you perform, and former players (especially those with similar ability to yourself). Ask them for their perspective on your chances of success in collegiate sports and what you should probably work on to improve. Also get their advice on what to expect from college sports to see if it's the kind of commitment you want to make.
3. What is the strength of the athletic program you are considering? Does the program welcome almost anyone, or does it only consider those it has recruited? Though it's not impossible to make a team if you haven't been recruited, many colleges, even ones at the division III level, discourage "walk-ons."

Finding colleges that meet your athletic (and academic) needs

1. Talk to your coach (or the coach of your out-of-school team) to determine the most appropriate schools for you to consider. Ask if your coach is willing to contact these schools on your behalf.

2. Meet with your college counselor to determine which schools have a proper mix of your athletic, academic, and other preferences. Do not pick a school solely for athletic reasons. If you get injured, don't make a team, lose interest in the sport, don't like the coach, etc., you might be left with a school that doesn't match any of your interests. You also want to insure that you have a reasonable chance of admission. While athletic ability can increase your chances of admission, only a few students are able to get admitted almost entirely on the basis of their athletic contribution.

3. Contact the coaches at the colleges directly, informing them of your interest and your back- ground. It is usually best to do this through an inquiry letter or email. Determine if the coaches have any interest in you, and if they think you could play on their team.

Financial Aid

College is expensive. It is a major investment, and one that usually pays off down the road. But for many families, it is difficult- even impossible- to cover the full cost of college tuition and living expenses. As a rule, it is important not to dismiss a school solely because of its price tag; the "sticker price" of a school is not necessarily the amount that you will need to pay. All colleges provide some type of financial assistance to ease the burden for families that need it, and to reward some students who have earned it.

College costs include numerous factors—tuition, room, board, books, fees (student, social, medical, laboratory, athletic, etc.), travel, and incidentals. Help is often needed and financial aid is available. You should always contact the financial aid office as early as possible, especially if you plan to visit campus to meet with the college's admission office. (As with admission, appointments with a financial aid representative can be scheduled in advance.) In most cases, financial aid awards and admission decisions are made independently and you should contact both offices.

Demonstrated need is determined by analyzing family resources, which include the intended parental contribution, the intended student contribution, and specific assets. Once the amount of need is established, financial aid offices attempt to meet need for qualified students with a variety of assistance methods.

A good starting point is to first learn about the different types of financial aid that is available, as well as how that aid is funded.

Where Does Financial Aid Come From?

The three main sources for financial aid are the federal government, postsecondary institutions, and private organizations.

Federal Aid

The federal government is the largest financial aid provider in the nation. Types of financial aid for college that the federal government offers include loans, grants, and work-study funds. Anyone who wants to apply for federal financial aid must file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Institutional Aid

Institutional financial aid consists of aid that individual colleges and universities provide to their students. Colleges and universities typically offer scholarships, grants, and work-study programs. Talk to the financial aid officers at the colleges and universities you are interested in attending to determine what type of aid is available through the institution.

Private Aid

Typically in the form of loans and scholarships, private financial aid comes from corporations, religious organizations, cultural organizations, professional and service organizations, and more. To find out about the types of financial aid available from private sources, get in touch with college financial aid offices, or stop by the College and Career Center. There are also a number of websites, which provide search tools that can help you identify potential scholarships.

Four Types of Financial Aid

There are four main types of financial aid for college students including grants, scholarships, loans, and work-study funds.

Grants

Grants are a type of financial aid that does not have to be repaid. Offered by the federal and state government, as well as by some institutions, grants may be merit-based, need-based or student-specific. Examples of student-specific grants might include grants for minorities, women, and students with disabilities. The competition for grants is usually fierce since no repayment is required. The federal government offers the following grants:

- **Pell Grants**– Pell grants are usually awarded to undergraduate students who have not earned a bachelor's degree or professional degree. The amount of aid you receive depends on your financial need, the school's cost of attendance, and other factors.
- **Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG)**– FSEOG are grants for undergraduate students with exceptional financial need. FSEOG are administered directly by the financial aid offices of participating schools.

Scholarships

Like grants, scholarships do not require repayment. They are typically offered by individual institutions and private organizations and can be awarded based on a number of factors, such as academic performance, athletic ability, religious affiliation, and race, among others. In order to apply for a scholarship, you will often be asked to write an essay.

Loans

Offered by both the federal government and private institutions, loans are money that you borrow to attend college. You must repay your loans with interest. Loans provide students and families with immediate access to funds to help cover the cost of college.

Federal Loans

The two main types of federal loans available for college students include:

- **Subsidized Loans**– Subsidized student loans are available for students who have demonstrated financial need. They have slightly better terms than unsubsidized student loans, because the US Department of Education pays your interest while you are in school and for a six month grace period after you graduate.
- **Unsubsidized Loans**– Unsubsidized loans are available to students regardless of financial need. Students are responsible for repaying interest during all periods.

There are also specialized student loans available, such as PLUS loans and Perkins Loans:

- **PLUS Loan**s – PLUS loans are loans made to graduate or professional students and parents of dependent undergraduate students to help pay for expenses not covered by other financial aid options.
- **Perkins Loans**– Perkins loans are school-based loans for undergraduate and graduate students with exceptional financial need.

Private Loans

Private loans are granted by private banks and may help to bridge the gap between the cost of your education and the amount of financial aid you receive from the government. Eligibility for private loans often depends on your credit score, and private loans tend to have higher interest rates than loans that the government offers. Students are encouraged to pursue all options for federal student aid before entering into a private loan.

Work Study

A work-study program is a work program where you can earn money that helps you pay for school. Work-study programs provide students with federally funded jobs on campus or at other approved locations. The campus facilities at many colleges and universities, including the student center, career center, athletic department, and residence halls, employ work-study students. However, the positions available and the pay offered vary widely.

Financial-aid applicants are required to file the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) beginning in October. Many colleges also require students to complete The College Board's CSS (College Scholarship Service)/Financial Aid Profile. Some colleges may require an additional form of their own—be prepared to complete up to three forms. Be sure to determine which forms are required by the colleges and universities to which you are applying. Even if you are seeking only student loans, you must file the FAFSA. Information about both the FAFSA and the CSS/Financial Aid Profile is available at the following URLs: www.fafsa.ed.gov and www.collegeboard.com.

Be wary of organizations that offer to conduct a scholarship search and provide an eligibility determination for a fee. Many of these organizations take unfair advantage of their clientele and conduct less-than-satisfactory searches.

The most highly-recommended scholarship search program is found at www.fastweb.com. Register online and you will receive applications for scholarships (via email) for which you may be eligible.

Glossary of Terms Most Often Used

ACT	American College Testing program. Students often take the ACT to supplement or take the place of the SAT Reasoning Test.
AP	Advanced Placement: exams given in specific subjects at a specific time on a specific day in May. Results may earn students advanced standing and/or credit in college.
CEEB	College Entrance Examination Board or the College Board. TCA's code is **060252**.
CLASS RANK	Academic standing of a student within the class. **TCA does not calculate a class rank.**
CSS/Financial Aid Profile	College Scholarship Service calculates and disseminates financial aid information to participating colleges/universities after receiving the completed CSS Profile from an applicant's family. CSS is a service offered by the College Board. Select colleges require both the CSS/Financial Aid Profile and the FAFSA.
COMMON APPLICATION	A standardized application form accepted by more than 600 colleges in lieu of their own application. See www.commonapp.org
DEFERRAL	Response to early decision or early action candidate indicating that the student is not accepted, but will be reviewed as a regular applicant.
EARLY ACTION (EA)	A plan used by some colleges for applicants who wish to apply early (usually by November1) and to receive an admission decision by mid-December. Acceptance is binding on the institution (as long as academic performance is sustained), but the applicant is not bound to the college and may apply to other colleges (including through those college's EA programs).
SINGLE CHOICE EARLY ACTION (SCEA)	A procedure identical to EA, except that the student may only apply to one institution as SCEA; all other applications must be regular decision.
EARLY DECISION (ED)	A widely-used term in which the application is usually made by November 1 and indicated as a first choice with the understanding and commitment that an acceptance obligates the applicant to withdraw all other applications and enroll in that institution; notification is usually in mid-December. ED2 has a later timetable.
FAFSA	The Free Application for Federal Student Aid

	Application is the required form for federal financial aid. Online version is preferred.
NACAC	National Association for College Admission Counseling, a professional association of which TCA is a member and to whose policies and practices we subscribe.
NATIONAL CANDIDATE REPLY DATE	May 1. The date applicants must reply to colleges that have accepted them about whether or not they will attend. Confirmation usually is accompanied by an enrollment/housing deposit. Students may deposit at ONLY ONE SCHOOL.
PROFILE	The TCA profile is a description of TCA and the applying class sent with the secondary school report and transcript to each college of application.
PSAT/NMSQT	Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test is used as a qualifying exam for National Merit Scholars (commended, semi- finalists or finalists). Some private scholarship groups also use PSAT criteria. It is given once a year, in October.
ROLLING ADMISSIONS	A plan of reviewing applications as they are received by admissions offices. Decisions are usually returned within four to six weeks of submission.
SAT Reasoning Test	A three-hour plus test that measures developed verbal and mathematical reasoning and writing abilities.
SAT Subject Tests	Designed to measure knowledge in specific subject areas. Each test is an hour long and three tests may be taken in a single sitting.
SCHOOL CODE	CEEB school code for TCA is **060252**
SECONDARY SCHOOL REPORT	A part of the application given to the college counseling office to be completed by the college counselor and sent to colleges with the student profile, transcript, TCA profile, and teacher recommendation letters.
TEACHER RECOMMENDATION	Letters (usually two) written by faculty upon request of the applicant. A form for this is typically included as

	part of the application materials.
WAIT LIST (W/L)	Response to an applicant indicating that his/her application is acceptable, but the limit of accepted students has been reached. If there are spaces available after May 1, students may be admitted from the wait list.

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2. Playing the Selective College Admissions Game, Richard Moll, Penguin Books, NY
3. From High School to College: A Critical Transition, NACAC, Alexandria, VA
4. The College Application Essay, Sarah McGinty, College Entrance Examination Board

ANECDOTAL GUIDES (updated annually)

1. The Insider's Guide to the Colleges, The Yale Daily News New Haven, CT
2. Fiske Guide to Colleges, Edward Fiske and Robert Logue, Time Books, NY, NY

GENERAL GUIDE BOOKS

1. Barron's Profiles of American Colleges, Barron's Educational Series, Inc., Happauge, NY
2. College Admissions Data Book, Orchard House, Concord, MA
3. The College Handbook, The College Board, New York, NY (updated annually)
4. The College Handbook Index of Majors, The College Board, New York, NY
5. The K & W Guide to Colleges for the Learning Disabled, Kravets and Wax, Harper Perennial, New York, NY
6. Lovejoy's College Guide, Macmillan, New York, NY
7. The National Directory of College Athletics (men's edition and women's edition) National Association of Directors of Athletics, Cleveland, OH
8. Peterson's Guide to Undergraduate Study, Petersons's Guides, Princeton, NJ (updated annually)

FINANCIAL AID

1. Don't Miss Out: The Ambitious Student's Guide to Financial Aid, Anna Leider and Robert Leider, Octameron Press, Alexandria, VA
2. The A's and B's of Academic Scholarships, Debra L. Wexler, Editor, Octameron Press, Alexandria, VA

3. Need a Lift? To Educational Opportunities, Careers, Loans, Scholarships, Employment, The American Legion, Indianapolis, IN

COLLEGE MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS BOOK

1. Rugg's Recommendations on the Colleges, Frederick E. Rugg, CA

GENERAL SITES

COLLEGE RELATED WEBSITES

The College Board online — www.collegeboard.com (register for SATs online, complete CSS/PROFILE online, other related services)

My College Guide — www.mycollegequide.org (college search, questions and answers, financial aid)

College Net — www.collegenet.com (lists colleges either alphabetically or by state, with links)

College View — www.collegeview.com (search for colleges and financial aid information)

Ecola College Locator — www.ecola.com/college (direct links to 2000 US universities and colleges)

Kaplan Educational Centers — www.kaplan.com (general information, test preparation)

Common Application — www.commonapp.org (common application)

Peterson's Educational Center — www.petersons.com (research colleges, camps, study abroad programs, and careers)

The Princeton Review — www.review.com (APPLY application program, test preparation, and general college information)

Campus Tours — www.campustours.com (virtual tours of many college campuses)

ACT online – www.actstudent.org

FINANCIAL AID

U.S. Department of Education — www.ed.gov/finaid.html

FAFSA – www.fafsa.ed.gov

Fast Web — www.fastweb.com (provides a free scholarship search service)

Finaid — www.finaid.com (provides extensive financial aid information)

Sallie Mae — www.salliemae.com (provides brief, readable explanations of types of aid, as well as a family contribution estimate)

CSS Profile - www.collegeboard.com

NINTH GRADE

Planning Timetable

The best recommendation for freshman year is to start on the right track academically, socially, and emotionally. This is a great time to be open-minded and take advantage of many opportunities. Be proactive both in and out of the classroom!

BALANCE YOUR SCHEDULE

The freshman year schedule leaves the student with little creativity in selecting courses, but he or she will begin to make more choices in subsequent years. When it is recommended, enroll in honors or advanced placement courses. Remember that colleges are looking for students who are willing to challenge themselves with more difficult courses. However, it is not recommended for a student to remain in advanced courses if he or she is earning a grade of D or lower.

GET INVOLVED

What do you like to do with your free time? What talents do you possess? How can you contribute your talents to the TCA community? These are important questions that you should consider to make the next four years the best possible.

Colleges do not want to see that a student was involved in 10 different extracurricular activities. Rather, they want to see the extent of the student's participation and contribution. Remember, depth of involvement is more important than the breadth of involvement. Students should not worry if the bulk of their time is devoted to activities outside TCA. Participation is key. Find the activities that excite you and get involved.

August

- Get to know your CCCC Advisors and talk about career and college plans.
- Check out College in Colorado for a great planning timeline!
- Update email in Naviance so we can communicate all the important info!
- Review high school coursework and activity plans.
- Colleges look for:
    - challenging coursework
    - a strong GPA
    - involvement in extracurricular activities
- Begin considering your interests and future goals.

September

- Record any Community Service completed over the summer in x2VOL
- Attend ROAR college planning evening event at TCA with your parents
- Attend a college fair, just to see what it's like!
- Attend a college visit in the CCCC with a college admissions rep!
- Start thinking about your post-secondary plans- college, trade school, work, military? How are you going to get the most out of your high school years?
-

October

- Keep those grades up!
- Become involved in community service and volunteer work.
- Complete the Career Cluster Finder and add careers to your favorites list in Naviance
- Keep exploring and having conversations with teachers, staff, parents, and community members to get insight into careers.

November/December

- Come visit the College and Career Connections Center and KNOW everything we have to offer you!

January/February

- In January you will meet with the scheduling specialist and develop your FOUR YEAR PLAN for high school classes.
- Consider taking an AP course next year-talk to your current subject teacher about AP courses
- Make sure you have your PE requirements in your schedule; also, have you completed Computer Apps and/or Latin I?
- How are you meeting your Fine Arts requirements for graduation? Meet with your advisor with questions.
- Attend Course Information night in January
- Attend mandatory AP exam in January (if registering for an AP course next year)
- Turn in ALL course registration forms by the deadline!

March/April

- Check the CCCC Newsletter on the CCCC webpage of the TCA website for Summer Opportunities you may want to attend
- Check out MySummerAdvisor.com to find summer opportunities that match your interests!
- Start a resume in Naviance, Add Colleges and Careers to your favorites list in Naviance
- Do a SuperMatch college search in Naviance to sort colleges by major, location, and more!

May

- Finalize summer plans (summer school, job, travel/exchange, volunteer)
- Think about taking the PSAT/NMSQT in the fall of sophomore year
- Time to celebrate! You are going to be sophomores!

TENTH GRADE

Planning Timetable

The following is an action plan to follow to set you up to have any opportunity you desire after high school. This game plan will help you stay on track so feel empowered to continue making the right choices to reach the goals you have set for yourself.

Practice good time management and study skills to keep good grades. Use a calendar to keep track of assignments & deadlines. Staying organized helps. Remember - every class counts!

Either get or stay involved with extracurricular activities, clubs, leadership roles and community service. Remember, many admissions officers look for well-rounded students who participate in the world around them. These will help on college and scholarship applications and it is proven that students who are involved in school are more successful in school. And plus…they are a lot of fun!

Look at and modify your 4–year educational plan to help you reach your goals for after high school. The college counselors will help you with this through Naviance.

Register for the NCAA Clearinghouse if you are interested in participating in college athletics.

Consider taking the PSAT/NMSQT test in October. This is a practice test for the SAT which is one of the required admissions tests for 4 year colleges. Planning ahead, it might also serve as preparation as the PSAT/NMSQT the only opportunity for juniors to qualify for the National Merit Scholarship.

Keep those grades up! You might have a lot going on this year, but it's important to stay focused on your schoolwork

Talk to your parents about financial aid options. It's a good idea to start talking about how you're going to pay for college

Continue your conversations with your counselors, teachers, family members or trusted adults about your plans for college or other paths towards a career.

Look into participating in academic enrichment programs, summer workshops and camps with specialty focuses such as music, arts and sciences

Start thinking about what factors are important to you in choosing a college: size, location, availability of extracurricular activities, for example

Keep reading! Expanding your vocabulary and learning new things will help with many things over the next few years

August

- Sophmore year is your chance to take more challenging courses-it looks good to both colleges and employers.

- Get to know your CCCC Advisor and talk about career and college plans.
- Update your email in Naviance so we can communicate all the important info!
- Review high school coursework and activity plans.
- Colleges look for:
    - challenging coursework
    - strong GPA
    - involvement in extracurricular activities
- Begin considering your interests and future goals.
- Turn in your AP agreement form and have your parents pay your AP exam fee in PayForIt
- If you are taking the optional PSAT/National Merit exam, pay your fee in Payforit.

September-October

- Keep those grades up!
- Become involved in community service and volunteer work.
- Complete the Career Cluster Finder and add careers to your favorites list in Naviance
- Keep exploring and having conversations with teachers, staff, parents, and Community members to get insight into careers.

November/December

- Come visit the College and Career Connections Center and KNOW everything we have to offer you!

January/February

- In January you will meet with the scheduling specialist and develop your FOUR YEAR PLAN for high school classes.
- Consider taking an AP course next year-talk to your current subject teacher about AP courses
- Make sure you have your PE requirements in your schedule; also, have you completed Computer Apps and/or Latin I?
- How are you meeting your Fine Arts requirements for graduation? Meet with your advisor with questions.
- Attend Course Information night in January
- Attend mandatory AP exam in January (if registering for an AP course next year)
- Turn in ALL course registration forms by the deadline!

March/April

- Check the CCCC Newsletter on the CCCC webpage of the TCA website for Summer Opportunities you may want to attend
- Check out MySummerAdvisor.com to find summer opportunities that match your interests!
- Start a resume in Naviance, Add Colleges and Careers to your favorites list in Naviance
- Do a SuperMatch college search in Naviance to sort colleges by major, location, and more!

May

- Finalize summer plans (summer school, job, travel/exchange, volunteer)

Think about taking the PSAT/NMSQT in the fall of sophomore year

- Time to celebrate! You are going to be sophomores.

ELEVENTH GRADE

Planning Timetable

The following is an action plan to follow to set you up to have any opportunity you desire after high school. You should revisit this plan each year, but we want to give you a game plan so you feel prepared to make the best choices to reach your goals.

Practice good time management and study skills to keep good grades. Use a calendar to keep track of assignments & deadlines. Staying organized helps. Remember - every class counts!

Either get or stay involved with extracurricular activities, clubs, leadership roles and community service. These will help on college and scholarship applications and they are a lot of fun!

Look at and modify your 4–year educational plan to help you reach your goals for after high school. The counselors will help you with this through Career Cruising.

Attend College and Career Fairs as often as possible. Dates and locations are posted on Naviance and in the College and career Center. Take the actual SAT (sat.collegeboard.org) and/or ACT (www.actstudent.org) in the spring. These are required for admission into 4 year universities. Consider taking some SAT subject tests as many colleges look at these scores as well – plan according to your current classes.

Register for the NCAA Clearinghouse if you are interested in participating in college athletics.

Start considering colleges and majors you are interested in and make a point to start visiting some campuses. It is important to get a feel for as many campuses as you can so start early!

Scholarship search time! Visit the scholarship page on the West Hills website and Ms. Murillo in counseling. Other great scholarship websites are www.fastweb.com and www.cappex.com.

Begin thinking about teachers who would be willing to write letters of recommendation for you for college and scholarship applications. Plan ahead and ask early!!!

Fall: Take the PSAT/NMSQT and start a list of colleges

Stay on track with your classes and grades. Meet with your college counselor to see what you still need to take. Even if your grades haven't been that good so far, it's never too late to improve. Colleges like to see an upward trend.

Take the PSAT/NMSQT. This is the only opportunity for juniors to qualify for the National Merit Scholarship program, which means you could earn money for college. In addition, it's a good way to practice for the SAT.

Evaluate your education options. Now is the time to follow a more specific path. Decide whether you want to pursue full-time employment, further education or training (such as a vocational-technical school, career college, or two-year or four-year college), or a military career. If you're interested in attending a military academy, talk to your college counselor about starting the application process now.

Make a college list. Your list of colleges should include schools that meet your most important criteria (for example, size, location, cost, academic majors, or special programs). Weigh each of the factors according to their importance to you and develop a preliminary ranking of the schools on your list.

Continue gathering college information. Go to college and career fairs, attend college nights, and speak with college representatives who visit TCA; use the Naviance college finder and search top college lists. You may be able to narrow your choices or add a school to your list.

Organize a testing plan. Figure out when you'll be taking important tests like the SAT, ACT, SAT Subject Tests, and AP exams, and mark the dates on your calendar. You'll want to have plenty of time to prepare.

Make sure you're meeting any special requirements. If you want to play Division I or II sports in college, start the certification process and check with your college counselor to make sure you're taking a core curriculum that meets NCAA requirements.

Winter: Stay involved, organize college lists, and prepare for standardized tests

Stay involved with extracurricular activities. Colleges look for consistency and depth in the non-academic activities you pursue. Taking on leadership roles and making a commitment to the same groups are more important than trying out tons of new activities each year.

Begin narrowing down your college choices. Make sure you have all the information you need about the colleges you're interested in (entrance requirements, tuition, room and board costs, course offerings, student activities, financial aid, etc.). Then begin comparing the schools by the factors that are most important to you and rank your choices.

Prepare for standardized tests. Find out if the colleges you are interested in require the SAT, ACT, or SAT Subject Tests. Register to take the tests you need; most juniors take them in the winter or spring. You can take them again in the fall of your senior year if you're unhappy with your scores.

Talk to your family. Have a discussion about your post-secondary plans. Your family can learn about what you want to pursue and you can hear any concerns or suggestions they might have.

Learn more about financial aid. Examine your family's financial resources and gather information about financial aid from the schools you're interested in. High-school sponsored financial aid nights, college financial aid counselors, and advice articles are also good sources of information.

Spring: Search for scholarships and gather recommendations

Prepare a challenging schedule for senior year. Meet with your college counselor to determine what classes you'll take next year and to make sure you're on track for graduation. When you pick your classes, don't load up on easy electives. Colleges do consider your senior year courses and grades, so stick with a schedule that challenges you.

Start a scholarship search. There are lots of scholarships out there; you just need to spend a little bit of time and effort to find them. Check with the College and Career Center for scholarships from local organizations and use online scholarship search tools to find a wider range of options. The sooner you start looking for scholarships, the easier it will be to select some to apply to during your senior year.

Contact your recommendation writers. Teachers and college counselors are often asked to write recommendations for lots of students. Consider whom you want to ask now and let them know so they'll have time to prepare before getting tons of requests in the fall. Ask teachers who know you well and who will have positive things to say.

Apply for a summer job or internship. Summer employment and internships in fields you're interested in will look appealing on a college application or resume. The money you earn can also be used to help pay application and testing fees in the fall.

Summer: Visit colleges and work on application essays

Visit colleges. Visit the campuses of your top five college choices. Take a tour and speak with the admissions and financial aid staff. You may also be able to talk to students if some classes are in session. If you have an interview, be sure to send a thank-you letter to the interviewer once you return home.

Organize your financial aid information. Develop a plan that includes a list of the aid sources, requirements for each application, and a timetable for meeting the filing deadlines. Getting organized will make the process of applying a lot easier because you'll know where to find important information.

Start working on your application essays. Compose rough drafts of the essays you'll need for your college applications. Have a teacher read and discuss them with you so you can see what to work on. Make any revisions to your application essays and prepare final drafts. Don't forget to proofread your final essays a few times.

Make early decision preparations. If you plan to apply early decision to any school, take the time to visit the school again and make sure you're willing to commit. If you elect to apply early decision, you should start working on your application as soon as possible because its deadline will be earlier than others.

SEPTEMBER

Meet with your college counselor to confirm your courses for your junior and senior years have the right balance of rigor and challenge to meet your post-secondary goals.

- If you have not already done so, be sure to be registered for the October PSAT.
- Step up your involvement in one or two organizations. It's not the number of organizations you belong to, but that you have leadership experience that matters the most.
    - Begin keeping track of your community service activities and hours. Start collecting materials for your portfolio and begin identifying accomplishments and achievements you will list on your resume.
    - Make an appointment with your CCCC advisor to talk about your college/career plans.
- Update your email in Naviance so we can communicate important info
- Review high school coursework and activity plans.
- Colleges look for:
    - challenging coursework
    - strong GPA
    - involvement in extracurricular activities
- Continue considering your interests and future goals.
- Turn in your AP registration/agreement form and have your parents pay your AP exam fee in PayForIt
- Register for the PSAT/NMSQT exam by paying in PayForIt –this is a National Merit Scholarship qualifying exam for Juniors- administered in October.
- Record any Community Service completed over the summer in x2VOL
- Attend ROAR college planning evening event at TCA and go to breakout sessions on essay writing, choosing a major, etc.
- Attend as many college fairs as you can.

OCTOBER

- Take the PSAT.
- Talk with teachers, family members, and other adults you respect about the colleges they attended.
- Begin the career exploration process with some assessment tests.
- Take the PSAT/NMSQT in October at TCA. This may qualify you for the National Merit Scholarship competition.

- Keep those grades up! Colleges will usually receive your transcript with grades through your junior year (six semesters) so impress them with those challenging classes and good grades.
- Continue to be involved in community service and volunteer work.
- Attend college visits at TCA. Login to Naviance and sign up when college reps come and visit.
- Complete a SuperMatch College Search in Naviance and save your favorite colleges to your list.

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

- Keep your focus on your grades. You'll want your grades for this entire junior year to be as strong as possible.
- Continue your research in potential colleges and careers.
- Continue gathering materials for your resume and portfolio.

- Once you receive your PSAT scores, make plans for how to maximize the good and plan to improve the rest.
- Look ahead to the spring and summer and begin mapping out the dates for your other standardized tests: AP Placement Exams, ACT, SAT, SAT Subject Tests.
- Stay focused on grades.
- Research NCAA if you're thinking about college athletics. Register for the ACT or SAT for the spring semester.
- The state SAT will be given to ALL Juniors in April at TCA (free and no registration required) but some colleges may require the ACT or the writing portion of either exam.
- Come visit the College and Career Connections Center and KNOW everything we have to offer you!
-

JANUARY

- Continue your research on potential colleges and careers.
- Consider asking to job shadow one or more people you know to learn more about those careers firsthand.
- Stay focused on grades.

FEBRUARY

- Schedule meeting with your guidance counselor to discuss possible college choices.
- Begin to focus on the key 10 to 15 colleges that are a good fit (based on your academics and career choice).
- Stay focused on grades.

MARCH

- Develop (if you haven't already) a file for each of the schools on your list.
- Start learning about scholarships and grants.
- Brainstorm and research rewarding summer jobs, internships, or scholarship opportunities.
- Stay focused on grades.

APRIL

- Work with your guidance counselor to assure a challenging senior year of courses.
- Register for the May and/or June SAT tests.
- Consider visiting some of the colleges on your list.
- Begin identifying teachers who may be willing to write recommendations letters for you.
- Begin reviewing for SAT.

MAY

- Take AP Placement Exams if you have taken AP courses.
- Firm up your summer plans, including visits to other colleges on your list.
- Push yourself hard to end the year with solid grades.

JUNE

- Take the SAT and SAT Subject Tests.
- Continue contemplating various careers and colleges.
- Be sure to get the most out of your summer vacation.

How to Research Colleges and Universities

STEP ONE: SELF ANALYSIS

Decide what you seek from your college experience. You must determine your strengths and weaknesses, preferences and biases, secondary-school experiences you wish to duplicate, and new experiences you wish to explore. Once you know what you want—even if it is in the most general terms—then you may start looking for the colleges and universities that best match your interests and goals.

Reviewing your Naviance Profile might help you understand your strengths and interests.

STEP TWO: RESEARCH

Some general reading about colleges precedes in-depth reading about individual colleges. Because no two colleges are exactly the same, you must learn about the variations and combinations (such as the difference between a college and a university) and categories (such as large or small, urban or rural). This stage of research usually is satisfied by reading the commercial guidebooks about colleges and universities (see suggested resources) and visiting the college and university web sites. To accomplish this step, you should select 10 to 20 schools to research. The process will introduce you to some of the differences and variations. You can make better decisions when you learn more.

Make sure you keep track of your favorite school in Naviance in the “Colleges I am Thinking About” tab.

STEP THREE: ANALYZING MATERIALS

Step three is really an extension of step two—you should view and read college websites. Read this information cautiously; although informative, they are written to enhance the image of the college. Certain factual/statistical information about an institution can be obtained and compared from the initial research as:

- Size and location (on- and off-campus environment)
- History
- Mission
- Means of achieving mission (curriculum, philosophy)
- Admission requirements and procedures (deadlines, fees, required tests, courses, degree of selectivity)
- Graduation requirements and degrees awarded
- Costs (tuition, room, board, books, fees, travel, incidentals)
- Academic program (distribution requirements, core curriculum, innovative programs, majors, interdepartmental programs, independent study, off-campus and overseas programs, co-op study plans)
- Graduate placement (graduate schools, career counseling, outcome data)
- Social and political climate
- Recreational facilities and availability
- Faculty (level of degrees, accessibility to undergraduates, faculty/student ratio)
- Student body composition (size, academic level, geographic origins, social/ethnic/economic diversity, graduate vs. undergraduate, commuting or residential, suitcase school)
- Honor societies (Phi Beta Kappa, Tau Beta Pi, etc.)
- Campus organizations/activities (role of Greek life, clubs, concerts, guest speakers, athletics, weekend activities)
- Housing (variety, availability for all four years, comfort, can you study there?)
- Rules (cars, visitation, absences, etc.)
- Student government and administrative role
- Calendar (quarters, trimesters, semesters)
- Health and counseling services, services for learning disabled, academic resource centers
- Safety issues

STEP FOUR: PERSONAL OPINION

Talk to those directly involved with the institution. Friends who are currently enrolled, recent graduates, faculty/staff members (including admission interviewers), tour guides, are invaluable sources of information, insights, and opinions. Make sure to keep track of the college that are visiting TCA through Naviance.

Their personal views usually are most valuable when compared and contrasted. Since each of them is providing a subjective opinion, you will have a better perspective every time you speak with another person. Just like the historian must distinguish fact from

opinion, so must you!

STEP FIVE: THE VISIT

The visit must be considered as serious research. Before setting foot on a campus, you should thoroughly research the school and decide what information you need to confirm or determine. Record your reactions to all visits—the things you liked and disliked, the highlights of the visit, and the names of people with whom you spoke. Months later, when memories tend to blur, your comprehensive journal will be especially helpful!

You should have an interview where available (see your college counselor beforehand for tips), take a conducted campus tour, and then take time to wander the campus to acquaint yourself with the institution as thoroughly as possible. When possible, stay overnight in a dorm, attend classes, eat with the students, and experience the daily life. This should occur during the second visit, since initial visits are often during vacations when the campus life is largely absent. Remember, the more you know...

THE CAMPUS TOUR

The campus tour should have two components—informal wandering and chatting with people, and the formal, guided tour.

The following suggestions will help make your tour as complete and useful as possible.

• Visit the library—is it accessible, quiet or noisy, fully-computerized, comfortable? Does it have late weekend hours?

• Get a copy of the school newspaper. What are the controversial issues on campus?

• Look at the announcement boards and posters. What performers and speakers are coming to campus? What clubs and organizations are promoting their activities?

• Visit the bookstore and snack bar. What are students talking about?

• Talk to students on campus. Is the campus climate conservative or liberal? Is everyone alike? Are differences welcomed? Is safety an issue?

• Ask questions about workload, methods of instruction (lecture, small group recitation, technology) and methods of evaluation.

• Ask about professors and teaching assistants (T.A.s). Are they available for office hours and one-on-one assistance?

• Locate the writing center for special help or tutoring opportunities.

• Find out what the campus is like on weekends. Do most students leave the campus?

• Inquire about religious services.

• Discover if there are programs which link students with families in town.

• Visit the best and worst dorm on campus. Is special interest housing available (language houses, quiet floors, alcohol-free dorms, etc.)?

• Ask students about their friends who decided to transfer to another school; what were their reasons?

• Locate the fitness center or sports center.

- Check on computer accessibility in dorms and other locations.
- Ask about the relationship between the college and the nearest town or city.

TWELFTH GRADE (FORM VI)
Planning Timetable

Congratulations on reaching your senior year of high school. It is an exciting time in your life, but it is also a very important and busy time. The following game plan should help you as you maneuver through your last year in high school and figure out exactly where you are going to be when it is over.

Practice good time management and study skills to keep good grades. Use a calendar to keep track of assignments & deadlines. Staying organized helps. Remember - every class counts!

Either get or stay involved with extracurricular activities, clubs, leadership roles and community service. These help on college and scholarship applications and they are a lot of fun!

Attend our district's Got Plans? College and Career Fair in October to start getting excited and interested in different colleges and careers. Attend other college fairs in San Diego too.

Take the SAT (sat.collegeboard.org) and/or ACT (www.actstudent.org) by Nov. or Dec. (should be taken in the spring of Jr. year also). These are required for admission into 4 year colleges. Consider taking some SAT subject tests as many colleges look at these scores as well. ** If you need accommodations, contact the College Boardfor the SAT or ACT for the ACT test.
Start applying to colleges. All CSU and UC schools have deadlines of Nov. 30 and private and out of state schools have deadlines closely after in December and January (for most). Make sure you have narrowed down your college list – you should not apply to tons of schools because you should have already started figuring out the ones you are truly interested in. Community college applications are due in the spring.

Ask adults who are willing to write letters of recommendation for you in advance. We are all asked to write many letters and they are quite time consuming. You need to fill out the "Senior Brag Packet" and turn it in by September 30th in order to get a letter of recommendation or Common App response from your counselor.

Make sure to send official scores for SAT, ACT and AP tests to the schools you are applying to as well as sending your official transcripts from all high schools and colleges you have attended. Requests for West Hills transcripts can be made with Mrs. Stratton in the front

office.

Fill out the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) at www.fafsa.ed.gov as close to October 1 as possible, but make sure to wait until after October 1 and before March 2.

Apply for scholarships. Visit the scholarship page on the West Hills website and Ms. Murillo in counseling. Other great scholarship websites are www.fastweb.com and www.cappex.com.

September

- Your CCC advisor will assist you with the application process, so keep your advisor informed.
- Update your résumé on Résumé Builder in Family Connection (About Me > Resume)
- Ask for letters of recommendation to include with your admissions and/or scholarship applications. Ask advisors, teachers, coaches, and employers. Give them plenty of time to meet your deadlines. Provide them with stamped and addressed envelopes if needed. Follow the "How to Request a Letter or Rec or Form" in Family Connection.
- Schedule your senior meeting with your advisor to talk about your plans after high school.
- C3 Chat: Getting Organized. You will learn the college and scholarship application process and how to use Family Connection for college and scholarship applications. Follow the deadlines.
- Get started on your applications right away if you plan to apply through an Early Decision or Early Action program. Deadlines for early applications tend to fall in October or November.
- Attend college fairs/events. Sign up to meet with admission reps on the Colleges Tab in Family Connection.
- Continue (or start) working on your college essays. Write essays that focus on your experiences and make you stand out from the crowd. The CCC Presentation on Essays in September will get you started.
- Take charge in your extra-curricular activities and continue to demonstrate leadership.
- Students and parents should apply for a PIN for FAFSA. Go to: www.pin.ed.gov PARENTS: Begin gathering and preparing your tax information. Be prepared to complete the FAFSA as soon as possible after October 1st.
- Add colleges of interest in Naviance.
- Green Cord: If you are applying for the green cord, you must submit your 40 hours and 4 reflection papers (350 words each) for graduation by the end of the FIRST SEMESTER as a new requirement for the green cord. (All green cord hours are IN ADDITION TO the graduation requirement of 40 hours and 4 papers)

October

- File the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid); Opens on October 1st; Go to fafsa.ed.gov
- Register to retake the SAT/ACT tests, if needed.
- Start filling out Common Application (if you are using it)
- Add colleges to "My Colleges" list
- Visit your top school choices. Interview some students, faculty, and staff.
- Find out which financial aid applications your college choices require and when the forms are due. Some private universities may require registration for the CSS Profile.
- C3: College Visit Trips/ Résumé/Updates.

November

- College application deadlines are approaching. Make sure you know and follow the deadlines to have paperwork requested through Family Connection (including Early Action/Early Decision deadlines)
- C3 Chat: Community Service Reminder. Continue tracking your 40 hours and write your
- 4 papers. Remember the deadline is the end of the 3rd quarter.
- Need FAFSA help? Attend College Goal Sunday. Stay tuned for more details on location and time.
- Search and Apply for Scholarships: Check the college websites, Naviance, and scholarship search engines
- Double-check college admission AND financial aid priority deadlines. Colleges will not determine financial aid until you have been admitted.
- All males must apply for Selective Service Registration to receive financial aid. More details at: **www.sss.gov**
- Colorado public colleges/universities will have you apply for College Opportunity Fund (COF), You can complete this now: https://cof.college-assist.org/COFApp/COFApp/Default.aspx

December

- Confirm materials have been received by colleges, including letters of recommendation, official scores, transcripts, etc. Check Naviance for status.
- CCC Scholarship Search Presentation during flex

January

- Use Financial Aid Calculators found on each college website and College in Colorado.
- Watch deadlines for scholarship applications. Continue to search and apply for scholarships.
- Some colleges include your first-semester grades as part of your application folder. This is called the **mid-year grade report**. Request your transcripts and any mid-year forms in Family Connection.
- C3 Chat: Scholarships/FAFSA/Senioritis/Mid-Year Reminders

- Send in enrollment deposit IF admitted to Early Decision school
- If deferred from first choice college, send a letter or email to let them know they are still your first choice

February

- Contact your colleges and confirm that all necessary application materials have been received.
- Rolling Admission may be an option but WATCH the February 15th financial aid deadlines, some scholarship deadlines are even earlier. Make sure you know and follow the deadlines to have paperwork turned requested in Family Connection.
- C3 Chat: **PWR** Plan (**P**ostsecondary and **W**orkforce **R**eadiness)
- Don't get senioritis! Colleges want to see strong second semester grades.
- The Community Service Deadline is quickly approaching. Make sure you turn your 40 hours and 4 papers into the CCC by the mid-March deadline.
- Request mid-year transcript if REQUIRED

March

- Meet the Community Service Deadline at the end of the 3rd quarter. Remember that this is a Graduation Requirement.
- Visit colleges to which you have been accepted if you still need help making a decision.

April

- Most admissions decisions and financial aid award letters arrive this month. Read everything you receive carefully, as some of it may require action on your part.
- On the waiting list? Contact the admissions office and let them know of your continued interest in the college and update them on your spring semester grades and activities.
- Compare award letters from colleges. Go to College in Colorado -> Financial Aid Planning -> Financial Aid 101 -> The Basics, "How do I compare financial aid award packages?"
- C3 Chat: Compare College Costs and Award Letters/ Looking Toward College and Career
- Make a final decision on a school and submit enrollment forms and deposit checks before May 1.
- Sign and return your award letter/financial aid package by the deadline.
- If you are not going to college meet with your CCC advisor to discuss your plans and to get support whether you plan to work, go into the military, travel, or participate in a GAP Year Program.
- Register and attend on-campus programs for accepted students
- Register and attend any receptions for accepted students in your local area

May

- May 1 enrollment deposit is due.

- Notify each of the schools to which you were accepted that you will not be attending in writing so that your spot can be freed up for another student. Send them a “Thank You” for helping you with this process.
- C3 Chat: Survey/Final Plans – During this session, each college-bound senior will request a final transcript to be sent to the institution they are attending. Every senior will address an envelope to themselves to receive an unofficial copy of their transcript; Official test scores and immunization records will also be given to seniors; TCA will no longer have back-up copies of test scores.
- AP Exams are administered. Make sure your AP Grade Report is sent to your college.
- Study hard for final exams. Most admission offers are contingent on your final grades.
- Thank your advisors, teachers, coaches, and anyone else who wrote you recommendations or otherwise helped with your college applications.
- Finalize summer plans: work, internships, travel, community service, etc.
- Finalize your housing plans for next year and shop for items you will need.
- Sign up for and attend Orientation at the college of your choice.

June/July

- Send in your health records. You may need to make your final payment for university residence halls. Sign up for new student orientation if you haven't already done so.
- Prepare for college and living on your own by understanding how to manage your money. Complete the **Online Money 101** courses. www.cicmoney101.org/
- Participate in any summer orientation programs for incoming freshmen.

August

- Arrive on campus move into university housing or look for an off-campus apartment. Open a bank account, get a phone, pick up your books, and prepare for a great year. Attend new student orientation.

Other Summer Items

- Watch the mail/your email for additional documentation to register for classes.
- Research transition programs into college.
- Attend freshmen welcome weekend.
-

Get Yourself Organized

Organization is one of the keys to completing a project on time, and this is certainly the case during the college application process. If you are organized, the process becomes much simpler. Create a filing system with files for the following:

- Each different application
- Testing information
- Secondary school reports
- Essays
- Financial Aid and scholarship information
- NCAA clearinghouse information (if necessary)
- Transcript (unofficial copy)
- Activities

Develop a system for keeping track of deadlines. Keep a large calendar easily accessible. Give yourself deadlines prior to the colleges' and TCA's absolute deadlines. Do not procrastinate!

The Application, Personal Statement and Essays

ELECTRONIC APPLICATION

The college counseling office can direct students to application software—such as Common Application, APPLY, and College Link—which may be used to apply to multiple colleges. You may also choose to apply online directly to an individual college. Be aware that computer glitches do occur; always keep a copy of your applications.

The Common Application allows the application to be filled out once online and submitted to all schools, with the same information going to all schools. Once the application is submitted to a college online, it cannot be changed for that college; the student must contact the college directly if he or she wishes to correct an error or provide more information. The Common Application also allows the student to submit and track other components of his or her application such as supplemental questions, recommendation letters, application fees, and school forms. Students may also roll over their account information within the Common App tab of the dashboard from year to year, using the same user name and password.

Although the Common Application allows you to self-report standardized test scores, the vast majority of college's require you send them an official score report from a testing agency.

THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

Often required as part of the application, the personal statement is the means by which the applicant may describe and explain himself or herself to the college or university, so it should be honest, precise, and well thought out. The personal statement should present the reader with information about the applicant that will allow the college to evaluate him/her as a student and member of both the school

and home communities. It should clearly indicate the kind of person the applicant is by defining and describing the applicant's experiences, expectations, ambitions, hopes, apprehensions, priorities, and biases. It should be an interesting, creative, and comprehensive portrait of the applicant.

THE ESSAY(S)

Some colleges require an essay in addition to the personal statement. The essay is an opportunity for the applicant to demonstrate four important qualities: his or her facility with language, his or her ability to articulate ideas, his or her depth of thought in response to the essay instructions, and his or her problem-solving skills and analytical ability.

As with the personal statement, the quality of the writing and of the thinking are important, so try to avoid trite topics, clichés, and simplistic writing, and follow the five-stage preparation described above. College admission officers read hundreds of these essays and personal statements (up to 50 a day) each year, so providing them with something out of the ordinary is desired. Write as if your work will be read at 9 p.m. when readers are tired, and try to catch their interest and attention. Be innovative, humorous, mysterious, and/or creative. There is no right answer to the essay question. The reader wants to find you in the essay. How you respond to a person, event, or situation is what is most important, not necessarily a weighty subject.

Teacher and other Letters of Recommendation

TEACHERS

Many colleges and universities request or require letters of recommendation from teachers who have taught the applicant in a major course during the last two years in secondary school. Some institutions will want one letter of recommendation and others will want two letters. During spring of junior year or early fall of senior year, you should ask your teachers for letters—select the teachers who you feel know you well and can write about you positively.

Teachers should be asked to write a universal/generic letter that can be photocopied and used for each institution to which you will apply. They should be asked not to make references to a specific institution, unless you are asking them to write for only one college. Letters should be submitted to the college counseling office to be sent with your secondary-school report, profiles, and transcript. When two letters of recommendation are needed, it usually is advisable to select a math/science teacher and a humanities teacher; when only one is needed, go with your strength. Extra recommendation letters may be sent, but they must be of significant value to the readers; they must tell something about you that is not apparent in other parts of your application. When in doubt about letters, consult your counselor.

OTHERS

The major purpose of any letter of recommendation is to tell the admission office about the candidate, so, to be of value, it must offer specific insights and examples about the student. A general declaration of support is of limited or no value—the letter should detail the positive aspects of your personality and give an insight or example not illustrated in the teachers' recommendation or parent letters. Most admission officers consider letters from clergy, alumni who don't really know the candidate, and friends of the family of limited worth.

Admission Practices and Policies

Admission offices vary in specific priorities, practices, and procedures in evaluating applicants, but there are approximately 12 criteria that most offices consider in varying degrees of importance.

The primary criterion upon which most institutions agree is the level of courses taken during secondary school. Colleges want students who have opted for the broadest and most demanding curriculum they can handle successfully—the days of getting good grades in lesser courses as an admission strategy are past.

The remaining criteria are course grades and overall GPA (information contained in the student transcript); the application, personal statement, and essay(s); school recommendation (student profile); teacher recommendations; SAT score; AP courses; activities; specials (see below); other recommendations; the record of the sending secondary school; and, finally, if required, the interview. Obviously, superiority in each of the categories is most desired, but colleges evaluate the mosaic created by these factors, and demonstrated growth and consistency are very positive in the institution's eyes. Admission officers look at all four secondary-school years, so a consistent or improving trend is desirable. They are seeking evidence of ability, commitment, sensitivity, seriousness-of-purpose, leadership, responsibility, maturity, and the ability to adjust and meet challenges successfully. Remember, they are building a community of unique individuals to develop a well-rounded class.

"Activities" refers to extracurricular participation, both school-sponsored programs and those activities that are not school-organized. Admission offices evaluate a student's activities by considering the student's degree of involvement, his commitment, and his success. Quality participation in activities is far more important than quantity—that is, it's better to have deep involvement in a few activities than to participate in many activities in a superficial way. As a director once said, "Don't tell me you're on the track team; tell me how fast you run!"

"Specials" is a catch-all term referring to any additional considerations that admission offices consider in evaluating a student. Generally, students that fall into particular groups may have an additional advantage in the admission process. For example, some groups that may receive special consideration include legacy students (students who are related to alumni), students of color, students from disadvantaged backgrounds, outstanding athletes, actors, musicians, and applicants with unusual geographic origins.

Most admission offices operate by committee wherein at least two members read the application folder and then present the candidate to the full staff for consideration. Some larger institutions have area directors who read all folders from their area and make decisions on their applicants, taking to committee only those cases they find appropriate.

Institutions such as large state universities often operate solely numerically, wherein they put GPA and SAT score (and usually class rank) into a qualification index (mathematical formula) or wherein they consider only those applications that meet minimum numbers (with higher numbers required for out-of-state applicants). In these cases other factors are not usually considered.

Early Decision, Early Action, and Rolling Admission

Many colleges and universities employ practices designed to expedite and facilitate the admission process, allowing the applicant to request decisions prior to the usual April 5 notification date.

EARLY DECISION (ED)

Early decision is a procedure whereby an applicant will submit an application, designated ED, on an earlier-than-regular date (usually between November 1 and December 15). The college or university agrees to make a decision (accept, defer, or reject) by a given date (usually December 15 or January 15). If the applicant is accepted, the institution commits itself to that decision (given continued academic performance) and the applicant commits himself or herself to attend that institution, withdrawing any and all other applications. If rejected, the applicant will no longer be considered for admission. If deferred, the candidate's application automatically becomes a regular application and will be reconsidered later with no commitment from either side. Students applying for financial aid should consider the ED option with great caution because not all colleges make a financial award at the time of ED acceptance.

A student considering an early decision application should know that he or she will be considered primarily on the basis of grades through the junior year. Recently, many colleges have requested senior year grades, and all seniors should be prepared to submit their unofficial grades for college review. The choice of an ED college should come only after thorough research of all other possible preferences.

The advantage of ED is that, if successful, it abbreviates the period of anxiety associated with college admission and clarifies the applicant's plans earlier. There are, however, two drawbacks to early decision. First, the commitment required of the successful applicant means the student cannot change the choice, thus precluding other options. Second, if accepted, an applicant may lose his motivation for school work, suffering a senior slump because he feels as though he has completed the secondary-school stage of education. On the other hand, early acceptance could clear a student's mind of college apprehensions and facilitate increased concentration and interest in learning. A number of institutions offer two or three ED plans, one in the fall and one or two others in the winter.

EARLY ACTION (EA)

Early action is a program offered by some colleges and universities that uses a procedure identical to ED, but does not require the applicant to make a commitment to attend the EA institution if accepted. The applicant may apply to other institutions and decide by May 1, which is the student reply date, but an EA acceptance is binding on the institution—contingent upon continued academic performance.

SINGLE CHOICE EARLY ACTION

Early action single choice is a program offered by some colleges and universities that uses a procedure identical to early decision, but does not require the applicant to make a commitment to attend the early action single choice institution if accepted. The applicant may apply to other institutions under regular decision and decide by May 1, which is the student reply date, but an early action single choice acceptance is binding on the institution—contingent upon continued academic performance. Early action single choice

differs from early action in that, under the former, a student may not apply to other colleges or universities using their early action or early decision programs.

ROLLING ADMISSION

Rolling admission is the practice used by some colleges to evaluate an application at the time of receipt and notify the applicant immediately (usually within six weeks of completion of the application materials). Commitment circumstances vary widely in this category, but May 1 is usually the deadline for deposit. However, for specialized school placement (engineering, architecture, etc.) or to assure housing, earlier responses are oftn equired. This method is found predominantly in public universities.

Processing an Application

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT

- Ask teachers to write recommendations. This should be done in the spring of junior year and reconfirmed in September of senior year.
- Upon receiving an application, or downloading one from a web site, find the school report form and teacher evaluation forms.
- Complete top portions of these forms and give them immediately to the college counseling office and teachers who have agreed to write a recommendation. Sign the waiver if applicable.

  Note: When using the common application, you need to give only one copy to each teacher and one school report to the college counseling office.
- Make copies of everything you mail**.** When applying online, print a copy for your file.
- All secondary school reports are due in the college counseling office the Monday after Thanksgiving. Early applications and rolling admission applications are due in mid-October.
- Include a self-addressed, stamped postcard with each mailed application so you have a record of its receipt at the college. See sample in the appendix.
- Online applications: If applying electronically, it is imperative that you print any forms the school must send and give them to the college counseling office.
- Send SAT Reasoning Test and SAT Subject Tests scores directly from the College Board to each college. Do this after your last test or on the registration form for your last test. When applying early, see your counselor to determine if your scores need to be rushed.
- Review transcript.
- Keep college list current with the college counseling office. Prior to winter break in December, students will sign their final list authorizing us to send support materials.
- **MEET YOUR DEADLINES!** Notice if due dates are postmarked by or received by.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COLLEGE COUNSELING OFFICE

- Counselors will complete secondary school reports, write a personal profile, advise, and review college list.

- Support materials containing the following will be sent by our office to the colleges to which you apply:
  - Secondary school report
  - Counselor's student profile
  - Transcript
  - Teacher recommendations
  - The TCA School class profile