College Applications

Tips to get you started!

Objectives:

- Discuss the important pieces of your application
- Understand the different college applications types
- Add colleges to your application list in Naviance
- Determine best tool for applying (Common App, Coalition, college's website)
- Create login credentials
- Begin a college application
- Link Common App and Naviance - if applicable
- Overview of procedures for beginning of school - requesting transcripts, letters of recommendation, senior meetings

By the numbers:

In 2024-25...

Our office processed 1819 application requests from 309 applicants. Average of 260 apps processed per counselor - approximately 6 apps per student. 34 students applied to 10+ schools in a single sitting.

- 221 students applied to West Chester University - 52 enrolled
- 193 students applied to Penn State University- 36 enrolled
- 141 students applied to the University of Pittsburgh - 12 enrolled
- 99 students applied to the University of Delaware - 10 enrolled
- 81 students applied to Temple University - 9 enrolled
- 79 students applied to Millersville University - 10 enrolled
- 62 students applied to Drexel University - 5 enrolled

Application Pieces

1. Application - required
2. Transcripts - required: either self-reported via STARS or reported by WEST
3. Letters of Recommendation - required vs. optional
4. Standardized Test Scores (SAT, ACT) - expected to remain optional or not required at 80% of all colleges. (As of 8/17/2025)
5. Essay - optional, but depends on the college and application used

Application Types:

- Common Application (CA)
  - Approx. 1000+ colleges and growing
  - 70+ colleges in PA - Ex. Penn State, West Chester, Temple, UPenn, Lehigh, Bucknell, Drexel, Gettysburg
  - http://www.commonapp.org/
- Coalition Application (CO)
  - Used by approx. 170 colleges - grew by 20 colleges this past year.
  - Colleges which demonstrate a strong commitment to access and affordability
  - Usually overlaps with Common App meaning the college will accept either type
    - If both CO and CA are offered, we prefer CA! More options!
  - CO Exclusive colleges: None!! U. Washington has now switched to Common App.
  - List of CO colleges: https://www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org/our-members

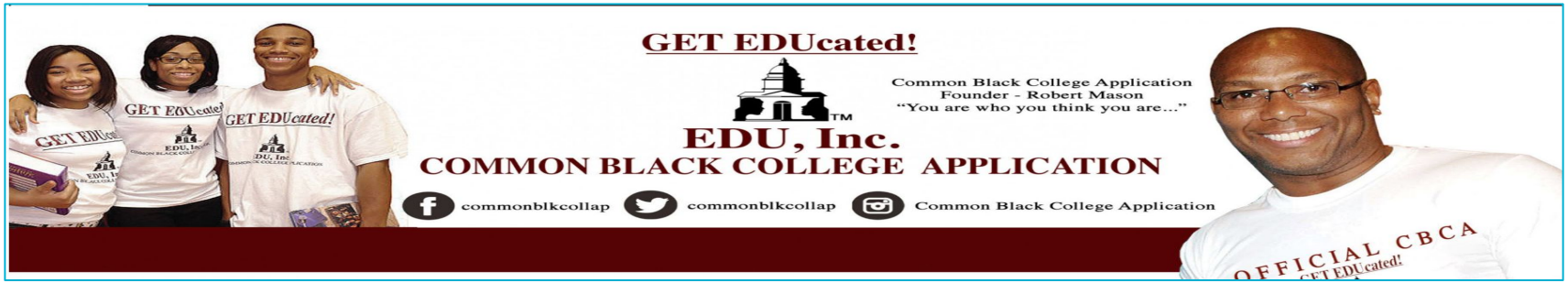
Application Types (cont.):

- College's Website Application
  - Many colleges will allow you to apply directly on their website
    - Options: Ex. PSU is website, CA, or CO; Temple and WCU are CA only, State Universities and Tech Schools will have their own application
  - Some will require it as the only way to apply - MIT, State Universities of NY, California State Universities, BYU, Service Academies, DCCC.

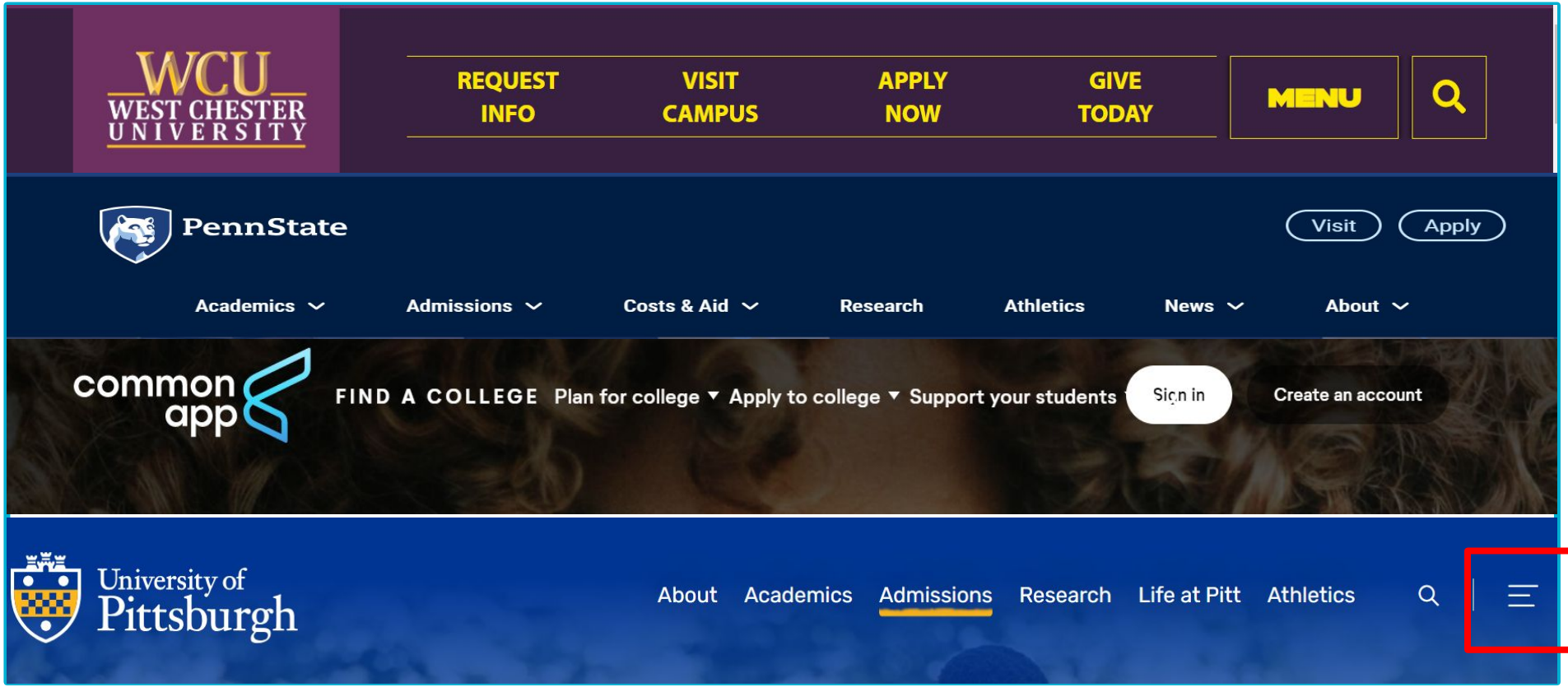
College	App Type	Deadline	Expected Difficulty*	Transcripts	Office Materials	Submission Type	Application
Commonwealth University – Bloomsburg, Lock Haven and Mansfield	Regular Decision	N/A	N/A	No Request	Pending		Unknown
Kutztown University of Pennsylvania	Rolling - Fall 2026	Jul 15	N/A	No Request	Pending	CA	Unknown
Millersville University of Pennsylvania	Rolling - Fall 2026	Jul 28	N/A	No Request	Pending	CA	Unknown
Rowan University	Regular Decision - Fall 2026 (September start)	Mar 1	N/A	No Request	Pending	CA	Unknown

Application Types (cont.)

- Common Black College Application
  - Fee based application - $20
  - Covers your application to 67 Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCU's) without additional costs per individual school. (only 3 not covered)
  - Most students can complete the application in 15 - 30 minutes.
  - https://commonblackcollegeapp.com/



Applications - Where do I find them?!



How to choose:

- You want to save time. For example, you have CA or CO schools and then some that are CA optional - use CA for as many as you can since you already have to do it.
- Colleges do NOT have a preference. Choose what is best for you.

Ex. Applying to Pitt, PSU, Temple, and DCCC

Temple - CA only **Pitt & PSU** - CA, CO or website

DCCC - website only

Our advice - use CA for Temple, PITT and PSU; then work on DCCC on the DCCC application portal. If only applying to one school - choose the method the college recommends on their Admissions webpage.

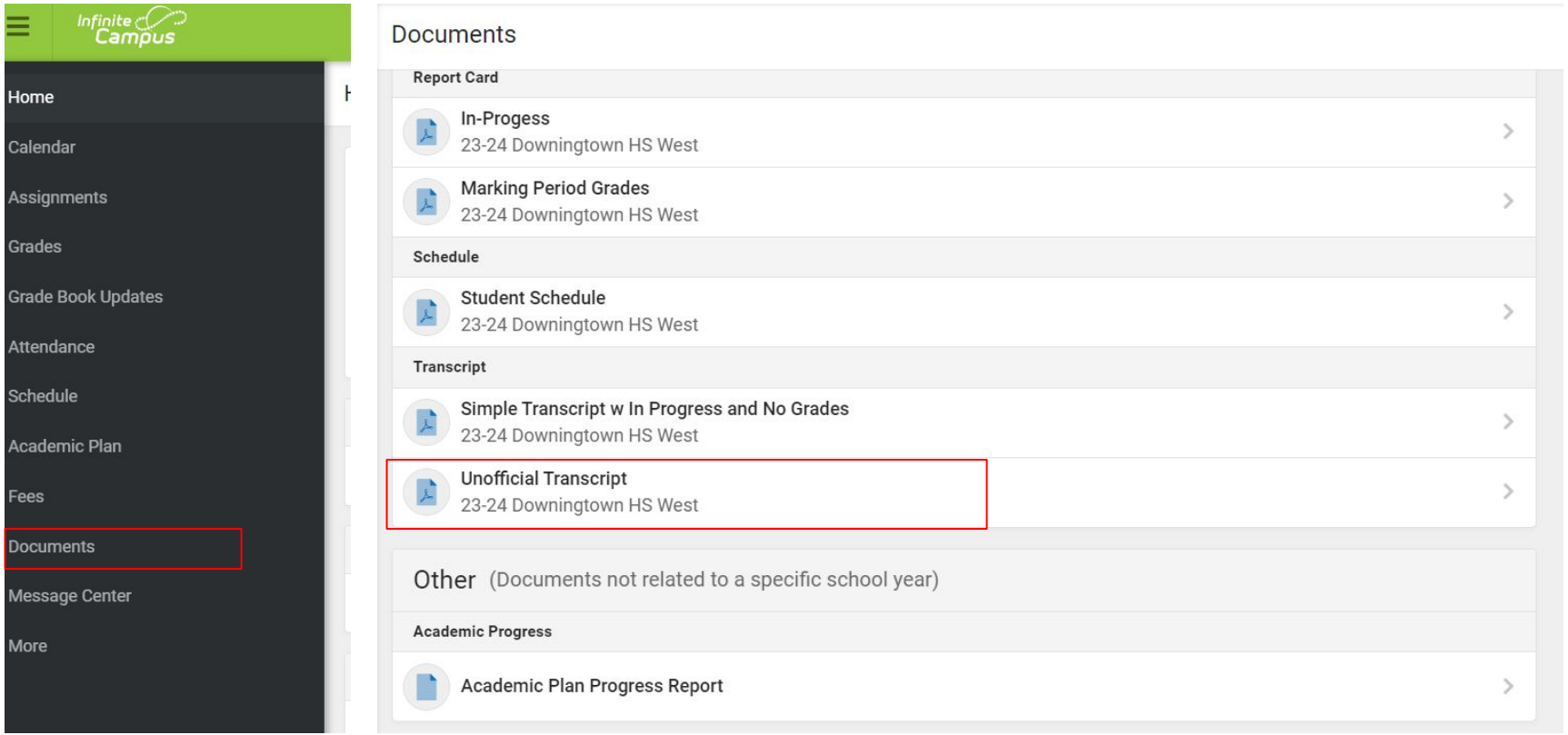
What is STARS?

- STARS stands for Self Reported Transcript and Academic Record System
- Student enters their entire high school transcript with grades and credits
- Honor system
- Most times it replaces the high school transcript
- If you are admitted and accept to attend, we will send an official final transcript which the college will check against what you self reported
    - If there are discrepancies, your admissions offer may be rescinded.
- Local colleges that require STARS include Delaware, Pitt, Penn State, Rutgers and Temple.. Click here for a list of schools requiring the SRAR.
- Caution!!! - completing the academic record portion of Common App does not replace the STARS. Once you have submitted the Common App, a college will let you know if you need to create an account and submit a STARS.

*Important info about PSU's STARS and Common App

- Once you submit your application through the Common App, you will be directed to go to MyPennState to complete the Self-Reported Transcript and Academic Record (STARS). You may feel that you completed this step as part of your Common App, but **you must complete the Penn State STARS via MyPennState in order for your application to be reviewed.** Once you submit all materials for your Common App you should regularly check the status and look to receive an admission decision in MyPennState.
- Other examples - University of Pittsburgh, University of Florida, Virginia Tech
- Make sure you double check the Admission Requirements Page on all college websites!

You Can Access Your Unofficial Transcript!



Matching Common App & Naviance:

- Must have at least one college on your Common App list and WEST listed as your high school.

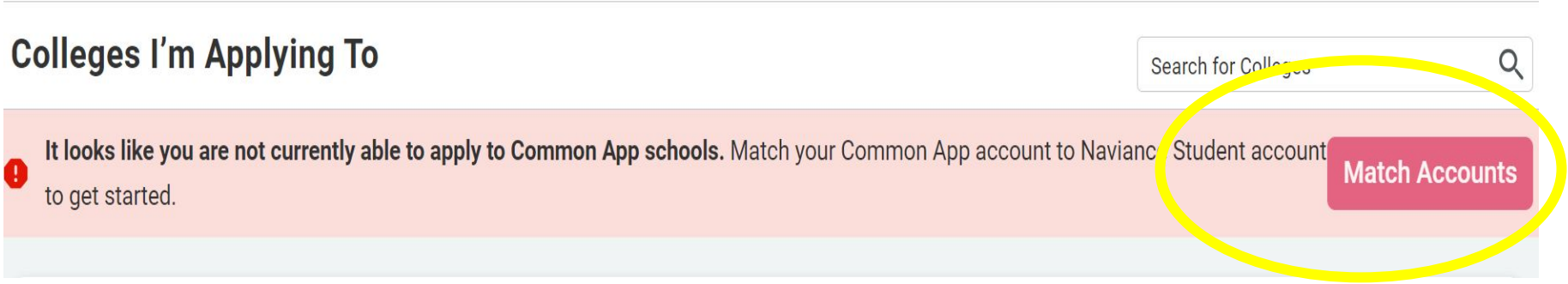
  THEN.....

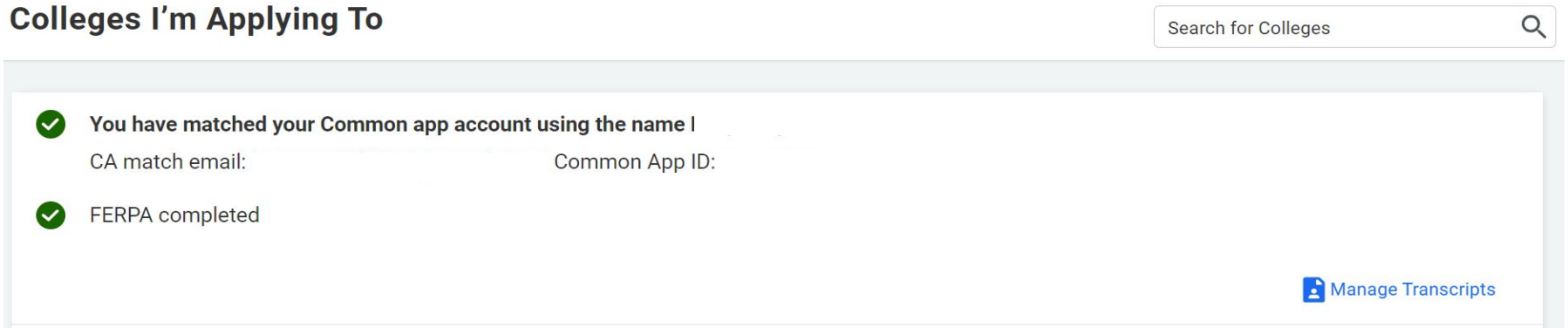
- Under the **My Colleges** tab in Common App, click on Recommenders and FERPA and complete the FERPA Release Authorization
  - This only needs to be completed one time and will automatically save for all other Common App colleges.

  THEN.....

- Log into Naviance. There is a red box under Colleges I'm Applying to. Enter the email address you used to create your Common Application. **Matched!**

Matching Common App + Naviance

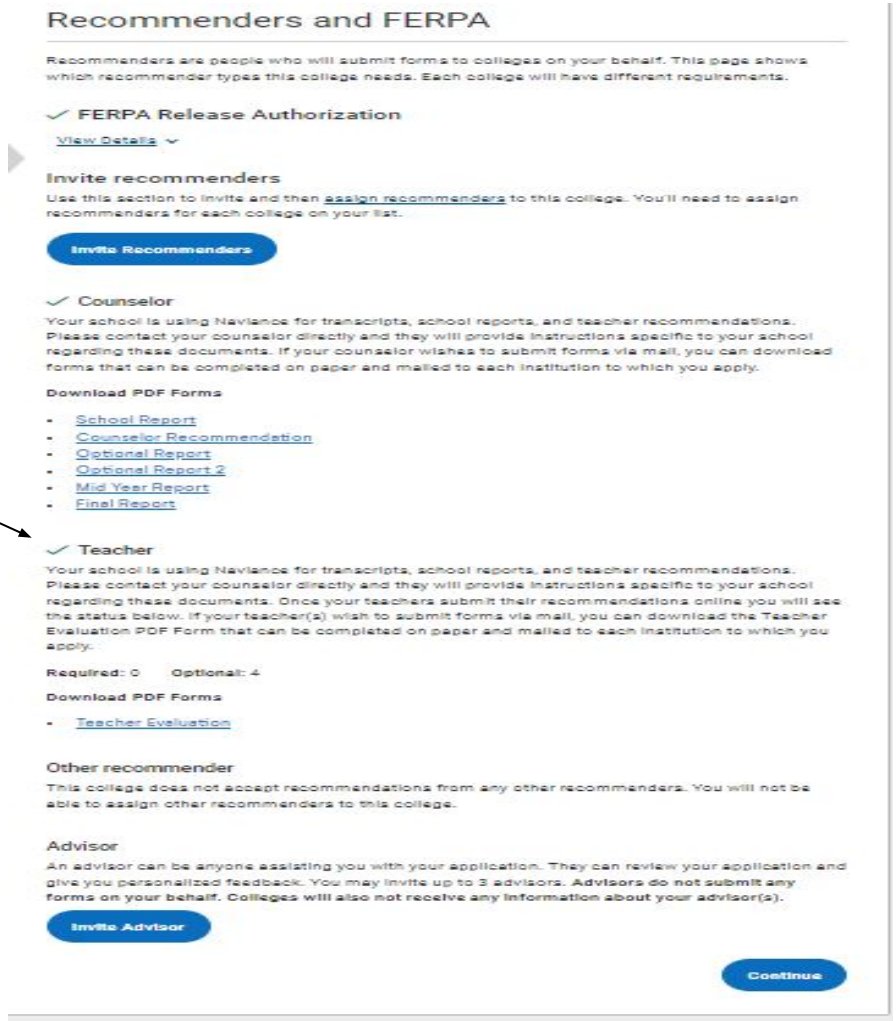




Recommenders & FERPA (CA)

- Our school uses Naviance eDocs to submit recommendation forms. Counselors and teachers will complete the recommendation process in Naviance.
- Please make sure you enter Downingtown West correctly in the Education section of the Common App tab. Use CEEB code 391-033.
- If the high school was entered correctly, you will see a message under Counselors and Recommenders that says, “Your school is using Naviance eDocs for transcripts, school reports, and teacher recommendations.”

Notice that DHSW is using Naviance. If you see anything other than a screen similar to this, you have not connected Naviance and Common App.



Recommenders and FERPA

Recommenders are people who will submit forms to colleges on your behalf. This page shows which recommender types this college needs. Each college will have different requirements.

✓ FERPA Release Authorization

View Details

Invite recommenders

Use this section to invite and then assign recommenders to this college. You'll need to assign recommenders for each college on your list.

Invite Recommenders

✓ Counselor

Your school is using Naviance for transcripts, school reports, and teacher recommendations. Please contact your counselor directly and they will provide instructions specific to your school regarding these documents. If your counselor wishes to submit forms via mail, you can download forms that can be completed on paper and mailed to each institution to which you apply.

Download PDF Forms

- School Report
- Counselor Recommendation
- Optional Report
- Optional Report 2
- Mid Year Report
- Final Report

✓ Teacher

Your school is using Naviance for transcripts, school reports, and teacher recommendations. Please contact your counselor directly and they will provide instructions specific to your school regarding these documents. Once your teachers submit their recommendations online you will see the status below. If your teacher(s) wish to submit forms via mail, you can download the Teacher Evaluation PDF Form that can be completed on paper and mailed to each institution to which you apply.

Required: 0 **Optional:** 4

Download PDF Forms

- Teacher Evaluation

Other recommender

This college does not accept recommendations from any other recommenders. You will not be able to assign other recommenders to this college.

Advisor

An advisor can be anyone assisting you with your application. They can review your application and give you personalized feedback. You may invite up to 3 advisors. **Advisors do not submit any forms on your behalf. Colleges will also not receive any information about your advisor(s).**

Invite Advisor

Continue

Transcript Requests

- Be sure to allow **ten (10) business days** processing for Downingtown WEST and additional time for college processing.
- Transcripts will be ready to send on **Thursday, September 11th.** Submit your transcript forms via the Google doc listed below and/or on the Class of 2026 Schoology page.
- Colleges cannot require you to submit your application or transcript before **October 15**.
- **Transcript Request Form**: Downingtown WEST - Senior Transcript Request Form 2025-26

Letters of Recommendation

- Ask two teachers who know you well
- Provide teachers and counselor with an Activities Resume
- Always ask the teachers BEFORE requesting in Naviance!!!
- Be sure to thank your recommender.
- In the Colleges Tab, select 'Letters of Recommendation'
- On the Letter of Recommendation screen, check to see if colleges that you will be applying to require or recommend letters
- Once you request a letter you will be able to see when you requested the letter (Requested), when your recommender has uploaded the letter to Naviance (In Progress) and ultimately when they submitted their letter to the college (Submitted).

Requesting Letters in Naviance



Upcoming SAT & ACT Tests:

- ACT - September 6
  - Late Registration - August 19
- SAT - September 13
  - Register by August 29
- **SAT - October 4**
  - **Register by September 19**
- ACT - October 18
  - Register by September 12
- **SAT - November 8**
  - **Register by October 24**

You must send all score reports directly to colleges from your account on CollegeBoard. Four free score reports each time you register for an exam.

BOLD indicates offered at DWHS

What's Next?

- Save usernames and passwords in one place.
- Work on essays and writing supplements.
- First week of school:
  - Finalize applications and work on your first transcript request form
  - Follow up with teachers re: letters of recommendation
- After the first week, schedule your senior meeting with your counselor.
- Sign up for college visits on Naviance! Visits are in person and virtual this year.
- Be mindful of your application deadlines. You can submit your applications whenever you want, independent of transcripts and letters of recommendation.
- Check your email frequently and respond to college emails.