SEACOAST COLLEGIATE HIGH SCHOOL

JANUARY 2026

# NEWSLETTER

## COLLEGE AND CAREER COUNSELING

# NEW YEAR - NEW DIRECTION



### WELCOME TO A NEW SEMESTER

A new year brings a fresh start - and a new opportunity to focus on your goals. Whether you're exploring career options, preparing for college applications, or waiting on decisions, what you do this semester matters. Small steps taken now can open big doors later.

### JANUARY FOCUS: START STRONG THIS SEMESTER

January is the perfect time to refocus and reset. Strong habits like staying organized, communicating with teachers, and asking for help early can make a big difference. Colleges and employers look for consistency, growth, and effort, especially during the second semester.




## PLANNING YOUR FUTURE

The Seacoast Collegiate High School counselors support students and families through High School and dual enrollment at Northwest Florida State College by fostering academic growth, leadership, and meaningful engagement in school opportunities

Donna Armstrong, Stacey Greenway and Mindy Larson
Your Seacoast Counseling Team

# SENIORS: AFTER YOU'VE APPLIED—WHAT'S NEXT?

## "Now We Wait" — What Seniors Should Focus on After Submitting College Applications

Submitting college applications is a huge milestone, seriously, congratulations!! But once the last essay is uploaded and the final button is clicked, many seniors ask the same question: Now what? The second half of senior year matters more than most students realize. Here's how to navigate the waiting period wisely (and sanely).

**What Not to Do After Submitting Applications**
It's tempting to mentally check out, but this is not the time to coast. Colleges can and do review final transcripts and behavior reports.

**Avoid:**

- Letting grades slide
- Skipping class or assignments
- Getting involved in disciplinary issues
- Assuming admission is "locked in"

Think of this stretch as protecting all the hard work you've already done. Keep Grades Strong (Yes, It Still Matters) Colleges expect you to finish strong. A sudden drop in grades can raise red flags and, in rare cases, impact admission decisions. Stay consistent, ask for help when needed, and treat this semester as the final chapter of your academic story in high school.

**Understand College Portals & Communication**
After applying, colleges communicate primarily through their application portals and email. Make it a habit to:

- Check portals weekly
- Read emails carefully
- Respond promptly if a college requests information. Missing a deadline or request can delay decisions - or worse.

**Deferrals: What They Mean (and What They Don't)**
Being deferred can feel discouraging, but it's important to understand what it really means:

- You are still being considered
- It is not a rejection
- It does not mean you did something wrong

Many students are admitted later in the cycle. If deferred, follow the school's instructions closely and talk with your counselor about next steps.

Waiting is hard. Comparing decisions, refreshing portals, and replaying "what ifs" is completely normal. Give yourself permission to feel anxious but don't let it consume you. Stay busy, lean on friends and family, and remember: one decision does not define your future. You've got this!!

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# JUNIORS: THIS SEMESTER COUNTS

## Juniors: Why Second Semester Matters
## Preparing for Senior Year Starts Now

Second semester of junior year plays a major role in college admissions. Colleges look closely at your grades and course rigor, so staying focused and finishing strong is important.

This is also the time to begin planning for standardized testing (ACT, SAT, or CLT), continue exploring colleges and careers, and **attend college counseling seminars and career events.**

The work you do now helps shape your options next fall - building confidence, clarity, and momentum as you head into senior year.

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# UNDERCLASSMEN: EXPLORE WITHOUT PRESSURE



## You Don't Need All the Answers Yet

If you're in 9th or 10th grade, college prep isn't about applications or choosing a college yet, it's about setting yourself up for success.

Right now, your focus should be on building strong study habits, understanding how your GPA works, and learning how to manage your time. This is also the perfect time to explore your interests, try new clubs or activities, and start thinking about careers that sound interesting to you, without pressure to have it all figured out.

The habits and choices you build now make a big difference later. By staying engaged, asking for help when you need it, and trying new things, you'll be ready to make confident decisions when college planning becomes more serious in junior and senior year.

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# CAREER EXPLORATION AT SEACOAST COLLEGIATE HIGH SCHOOL

## The Seaside School's Entrepreneur & Leadership Series

The Seaside School's Entrepreneur & Leadership Series officially kicked off on Friday, January 23rd, bringing together students, educators, and business leaders for a morning focused on value creation, leadership, and the future of work.
Our students stepped into the room as professionals, sharing ideas, engaging in conversation, and learning alongside experienced leaders. A special thank you to The Tucker Family, our program sponsor, and to Eric Krucke for sharing real-world insight that challenged and inspired our students.

This is just the beginning. Next up: student business plans, our internal Shark Tank competition, and an end-of-year entrepreneurship conference. Stay tuned for more!














## Careers on Campus Spotlight

Our Careers on Campus series launched on January 23rd with an inspiring panel of medical professionals, including nurses, physicians, and medical imaging specialists. Students gained valuable insight into real-world career pathways, training requirements, and the day-to-day realities of working in health care. We are grateful to our panelists for their time, wisdom, and guidance, and we're excited to continue the series with our upcoming February Careers on Campus featuring technology professionals in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Remote Operated Vehicles (ROVs).

SEACOAST COLLEGIATE HIGH SCHOOL PRESENTS

# CAREERS ON CAMPUS

Building Futures. Guiding Dreams.

'The Seacoast Collegiate High School's Careers on Campus' series brings leaders from high-wage, high- need professions directly to our students. Community professionals, selected based on student interest surveys, will visit campus each month to share their career journey, discuss pathways into their field, and connect with students who want to learn more. This program is designed to expand exposure to real-world careers and create pathways for future job shadowing and internships.

## MONTHLY SCHEDULE

| DATE | PROFESSION |
|---|---|
| FEBRUARY 27TH | AI, ROV, TECHNOLOGY |
| MARCH 27TH | AVIATION |
| APRIL 24TH | LAW/PSYCHOLOGY/CIVICS |
| MAY 22ND | ENGINEERING |

Career professionals interested in speaking, email Mindy Larson: larsonm@seasideschools.net

## LOGISTICS & SPONSORSHIP

**LOCATION**: ROOM 119/120 NWFSC BLDG **TIME:** 11:00 - 12:10

**Sponsorship**: Lunch can be ordered in advance from the Seacoast Collegiate High School SGA

**Audience:** All students interested in exploring future career opportunities are invited to pre-register for each speaker date. A link will be shared prior each event

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# BRIGHT FUTURES SCHOLARSHIP AND COLLEGE ADMISSIONS TESTING

## Florida Bright Futures: What Matters for the Class of 2026 and Beyond

Beginning with the Class of 2026, the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program updated eligibility requirements, primarily lowering standardized test score thresholds while keeping GPA standards the same.

### What Changed

The Legislature adjusted score requirements to better align with national testing trends, as average standardized test performance has declined nationwide over the last year.

**Florida Academic Scholars (FAS)**

Covers 100% of tuition & fees

- SAT: 1330 (down from 1340 in 2025)
- ACT: 29 (no change)
- CLT: 95 (down from 96 in 2025)
- GPA: 3.5 weighted (no change)

**Florida Medallion Scholars (FMS)**

Covers 75% of tuition & fees

- SAT: 1190 (down from 1210 in 2025)
- ACT: 24 (down from 25 in 2025)
- CLT: 82 (down from 84 in 2025)
- GPA: 3.0 weighted (no change)



### Why This Matters in 2026

- Access has expanded: More students are now within reach of Bright Futures eligibility.
- Standards aren't "easier": The changes reflect shifts in testing data—not a lowering of academic expectations.
- Financial impact is real: Qualifying can significantly reduce college costs for Florida families.

### What Students Should Do Now

- Check where you stand against the updated benchmarks
- Plan testing strategically (SAT, ACT, or CLT - choose what fits you best)
- Stay focused on GPA and course rigor, which remain critical

**Bottom line:** Bright Futures is still highly competitive - but in 2026, it's slightly more attainable with smart planning and early preparation.

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# PLANNING AHEAD




## IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES

**FEBRUARY**

**SENIOR Graduation Meetings with Counselors Begin**

27 - JUNIOR College Planning Seminar #3

27 - Careers on Campus - AI/ROV/Technology

**MARCH**

6 - FREE SAT for JUNIORS at SCHS (and any Seniors testing for Bright Futures)

24 - Priority NWFSC Registration BEGINS for SCHS students at South Walton Center

27 - JUNIOR College Planning Seminar #4

27 - Careers on Campus - AVIATION

**APRIL**

6 - NWFSC Registration opens for any online and not South Walton campus

10 - ACT at SCHS

14 - NHS Induction for new inductees 4:00PM CST

24 - JUNIOR College Planning Seminar #5

24 - Careers on Campus - LAW/PSYCHOLOGY/CIVICS

**MAY**

1 - FCLE at SCHS (any students currently taking government)

8 - NWFSC Graduation

13 - SENIORS - Honors Day Program and Graduation Practice

14 - SCHS Graduation at Seacoast Campus

22 - JUNIOR College Planning Seminar #6

22 - Careers on Campus - ENGINEERING

https://www.seasideschools.net/ 850.231.0396 129 Greenway Trail Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459