

Fox Lane High School

Junior Group Guidance Packet

2025-2026

Agenda:

<u>Date:</u>	<u>Session:</u>	<u>Topic(s):</u>
January 9	1	Introduction (process, timeline, websites, etc.) PSAT Review Standardized Testing
January 16	2	What Colleges Look for in Students What are YOU Looking for in a College
January 23	3	College Jargon Demonstrating Interest The College Visit
February 6	4	Naviance & College Kickstart Researching Colleges
February 13	5	The Application Application Component Part 1: Resume Update
February 27	6	Application Component Part 2: The Essay
March 6	7	Application Component Part 3: Recommendations / Junior Student Questionnaire
March 13	8	Financial Aid & Scholarships
March 20	9	College Plan Check-in College Interview
March 27	10	Peppercorn University Final Steps & Checklist & GG Evaluation

- Class of 2027 Google Classroom code: c5l6rmf (same GG Google Classroom from last year)
- Small groups with your counselor run on **every E and 5 day** from **January 9th through March 27th**. April 10th will be used if we have any cancellations.
- You will most likely be assigned to attend during your **PE/free period**.
- Please bring this packet every week.
- Handouts are also available on the Class of 2027 Group Guidance Google Classroom.
- Attendance is mandatory.

Helpful Websites

Category	Website	Web Address	Log in * (if applicable)	Password * (if applicable)
General	FLHS College Handouts	https://flhs.bcsdny.org/departments-pr-ograms/guidance/flhs-college-handouts		
	Naviance	https://student.naviance.com/flhsny		
	College Kickstart	https://www.collegekickstart.com/		
	Level All	https://app.levelall.com/		
	Niche (for college research)	www.niche.com		
Applications	Common Application	www.commonapp.org		
	SUNY	www.suny.edu		
	CUNY	www.cuny.edu		
	STARS (self-reported grades)	https://sra.selfreportedtranscript.com/Login.aspx		
	College Board (PSAT, SAT, APs, Bluebook)	www.collegeboard.org		
Standardized Testing	ACT	www.act.org		
	Test Optional Schools	www.fairtest.org		
	Khan Academy (for FREE SAT test prep)	www.khanacademy.org		
	Kaplan (for FREE ACT test prep)	https://www.kaptest.com/act/free/act-free-practice-test		
	FAFSA (US Gov't Financial Aid Form)	www.fafsa.gov		
Financial Aid & Scholarships	NYS Financial Aid: HESC & TAP	www.hesc.ny.gov		
	CSS/PROFILE (Financial Aid Application)	www.cssprofile.collegeboard.org		
	Fast Web and/or Going Merry (free scholarship search)	www.fastweb.com www.goingmerry.com		

* Only record usernames/passwords if you are comfortable keeping them on this form. Regardless, please keep all usernames and passwords in one place! Remember you will not have access to any personal devices during the school day!*

FLHS Junior Timeline - Class of 2027

- Students are encouraged to **visit colleges** (virtual or in person) throughout the year during the various school breaks (*most popular: February and Spring Break*)
- **Back to School Night** (September) and **Parent/Teacher Conferences** (October) for Parents
- **FLHS Club Fair** – Remember that it is important to be involved in extracurricular activities (either inside or outside of school)
- **PSATs** – Juniors take the *DIGITAL* **PSAT** exam (October); visit Khan Academy to create a SAT prep account <https://www.khanacademy.org/sat> (Encouraged for college-bound students)
- **Standardized Testing** – Register for Winter/Spring **SAT** or **ACT** (please see page 2 for test dates and deadlines) – *Need help deciding which test to take? Check out the differences [here!](#)*
- **11th Grade Parent Night** (November) – Overview of the college application process
- **Late Fall is the beginning of the college research process!** Students can begin to research schools, register for standardized testing, visit colleges, and look through FLHS statistics for individual colleges via [Naviance](#). The more formal college planning process will kick into high gear when Group Guidance begins in Q3. Students can make **individual college planning meetings** with their counselor before and during the Group Guidance season as needed.

Fall

Winter

- **February Break** – take a few days and visit colleges
- **PSAT Results** provided by the College Board
- Take **SAT** or **ACT** (please see page 2 for test dates and deadlines)
- **Junior Group Guidance** (January) – Group Guidance sessions are extremely important to assist students in the college application process; all 11th graders will meet with their counselor weekly in small groups throughout the 3rd quarter on E/5 days
- End of **Quarter 2/First Semester** – End of Semester 1 classes; check portal for 2nd semester schedule
- We *highly recommend* that families interested in applying for **financial aid** for college join one of the many events offered by NYS Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC) to assist families with the college financial aid process. <https://startheregetthere.ny.gov/events>
- **Course Selection** (tentatively January-March) – Each student will have a “Course Info Day” followed by a “Course Rec Day” with their teachers; soon after, each student will meet with their counselor individually to select courses for the following year
- **Confirm courses** for next year when posted to the portal

Spring

- Families can schedule a **college planning meeting** with their counselor (*winter meetings are suggested for families planning to visit schools during Feb Break*)
- **Spring Break** – Take a few days and visit colleges
- Take **SAT** or **ACT** – Please see pg 2 for dates/deadlines
- **AP Exams** (May; if applicable)
- **Awards Ceremony** (by invitation)
- **FLHS College N’ Coffee** informal virtual event for parents (March)
- **Local College Fairs** (information will be sent by Counseling Dept. in Spring)
- **Junior Day of Service** (May)
- Get working papers for summer employment – Check out the **job opportunity board** outside of Large Cafeteria!
- **Local Final Exams** – Students attend review sessions and/or local final exams on **all** days
- **Regents Exams** – Students only attend school on days they are scheduled for Regents exams

Summer

- **Report Cards** posted to portal – **HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!**
- Please consult the FLHS website for **summer reading list** and for **summer assignments** for some AP/Honors courses
- Take final **SAT** or **ACT** (if needed) – Please see pg 2 for dates/deadlines
- Follow steps on **Junior Summer Checklist** including: visit colleges, interview with admission counselors, revise college list, complete or update activity sheet, write or revise college essay, fill out most of the Common Application
- Engage in meaningful summer plans – work experience, community service, enrichment, etc.

2025-2026 Important Dates to Keep in Mind*

(*please refer to the BCSD calendar online for most accurate and up to date information)

September 11	Add Deadline for full year and first semester courses
September 25	Back to School Night for Parents (<i>encouraged</i>)
October 8	PSAT (<i>recommended for 4-yr college-bound juniors</i>)
October 15	Drop Deadline for full year and first semester <u>elective</u> courses (<i>if applicable</i>)
October 23-24	Parent/Teacher Conferences for Parents (<i>encouraged for parents of struggling students</i>)
November 6	11th Grade Parent Night (<i>encouraged</i>)
November 20	Course Level Change Deadline (<i>if applicable</i>)
Early Jan.	Tentative Start Date for 11th Grade Group Guidance (<i>required for 11th graders</i>)
January 26	Start of Second Semester classes
February 5	Add Deadline for second semester courses
February 23	Drop Deadline for second semester elective courses (<i>if applicable</i>)
March 4	College N' Coffee - 8am Informal Virtual Event for Parents
April 29	Southern Westchester College Fair (Westchester County Center - White Plains)
April 30	Northern Westchester College Fair (Northern Westchester BOCES - Yorktown Heights)
May 4-15	AP Exams (<i>if applicable</i>)
May 19	Awards Ceremony (<i>by invitation only</i>)
May TBD	Junior Day of Service
June 10	Last Day of Classes
June 11, 12, 15	Local Final Exams - Students attend review sessions and/or local final exams on all days
June 16-24	Regents Exams - Students only attend school on days they are scheduled for Regents exams
June 26	Report Cards posted to portal - HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!

SAT Test Date	Registration Deadline	Late Registration Deadline
August 23, 2025	August 8, 2025	August 12, 2025
September 13, 2025	August 29, 2025	September 2, 2025
October 4, 2025	September 19, 2025	September 23, 2025
November 8, 2025	October 24, 2025	October 28, 2025
December 6, 2025	November 21, 2025	November 25, 2025
March 14, 2026	February 27, 2026	March 3, 2026
May 2, 2026	April 17, 2026	April 21, 2026
June 6, 2026	May 22, 2026	May 26, 2026
August 15, 2026 (<i>anticipated</i>)	TBD	TBD

2025-2026 SAT Test Dates

2025-2026 ACT Test Dates

ACT Test Date	Registration Deadline	Late Registration Deadline
July 12, 2025 (<i>not offered in NY</i>)	June 6, 2025	June 20, 2025
September 6, 2025	August 1, 2025	August 19, 2025
October 18, 2025	September 12, 2025	September 30, 2025
December 13, 2025	November 7, 2025	November 24, 2025
February 14, 2026	January 7, 2026	January 21, 2026
April 11, 2026	March 6, 2026	March 24, 2026
June 13, 2026	May 8, 2026	May 27, 2026
July 11, 2026 (<i>not offered in NY</i>)	June 5, 2026	June 24, 2026

* Please consult College Board and ACT website for most up to date information

Guide to Your PSAT Scores

The PSAT is excellent practice for the SAT. It contains the same types of math, reading, and writing questions. The first thing to remember is the PSAT **isn't** used for college admissions, but high scores can earn you scholarship dollars, including a National Merit Scholarship. Additionally, your PSAT scores are a good predictor for how you may score on the SAT, which will be very important for college admissions and scholarships. **Bottomline... It's good practice!**

Accessing Scores Online

You can access your scores either through the Big Future Mobile app or through your [College Board](#) account. Eventually scores will also be posted on your [Naviance](#) account. The PSAT is scored on the same rubric, but a slightly different scale, as the real SAT. While the SAT is scored in a range of 400–1600, the PSAT range is 320–1520.

Understanding PSAT Scoring

Score	What is it?	Why it's important
TOTAL SCORE	- Sum of your 2 section scores - Score range: 320–1520 (Score range for the SAT is 400–1600) 48–228 for the NMSC Selection Index score	- Your total score can help you predict how you may score on the SAT. - While 1000 is the average score for the SAT, a 920 is the average score for the PSAT. - Use the percentile to see how you rank against other test-takers. - High scores and percentiles <i>may</i> earn National Merit recognition.
READING & WRITING SCORE	1 of 2 section scores - Score range: 160–760	- See which section you're acing and where you might need more prep. - Use the percentile to see how you rank against other test-takers.
MATH SCORE	1 of 2 section scores - Score range: 160–760	

Using Your PSAT Score Report

Use your PSAT score report to identify your strengths and weaknesses, so you know what to work on as you prep for the real thing. Are there algebra concepts you need to review? Did you miss picking up points because you ran out of time?

- **Your Score Range:** This range shows how much your scores would likely vary if you took a different administration of the test under identical conditions.
 - Total: ± 40 points, or Each Section: ± 30 points
- **The All Tester Percentile:** The percentile compares you to everyone else who took the PSAT on the test date. A 70th percentile score means you scored equal or higher than 70% of the students who took the PSAT during that particular administration.

Knowledge and Skills

In the Knowledge and Skills section, you'll see a graphic that shows your performance on each of the **eight content areas** measured on the PSAT (4 in Reading and Writing, and 4 in Math). For each content area, you'll see:

- The approximate number of questions in the content area.
- The % of the section covered by that area (e.g. 12–14 Q's would be ~26% of the Reading/Writing section).
- A visual indication of how you performed in each content area.

You can use this section to identify content areas you may want to focus on to practice and improve.

Career Snapshot

You'll see a section that provides a snapshot of growing careers in your state which includes:

- The median yearly income of each career.
- The expected growth rate for new job openings in your state over the next five years.
- The most common education level for people in that career.

This list might include a career you're curious about—or maybe none of the options feel like a great fit. *It's okay either way!* This snapshot does not currently reflect your performance on the PSAT. You can explore personalized options that match your interests and skills through Naviance or at bigfuture.org/career-search.

NMSC Selection Index Score

National Merit (NMSC) uses the Selection Index scores to screen students. Your score is calculated by doubling your Reading and Writing Score, adding it to your Math score, then dividing that sum by 10. After reviewing your Selection Index score you can read more information about your eligibility for the National Merit® Scholarship and how scholarship recipients are determined by NMSC.

What Could You Score on the SAT?

Naviance will provide you with a predictive score for the SAT based on your PSAT score. In order to see your predictive score, add colleges to “Colleges I’m Thinking About” and then select “Compare Me.” The “PSAT to SAT 1600” will show your predictive score.

What's Next?

After you get your PSAT scores, **create a Khan Academy account at www.khanacademy.org**. Students can also use College Board's Bluebook app (already downloaded on their Chromebook) for a free practice test which will integrate with the free SAT prep materials on Khan Academy.

Standardized Testing (SAT VS. ACT)

Fox Lane's CEEB code is 333245

Note: Each college has different standardized testing requirements. Please check with each school's website to determine what is required. For a list of colleges that have test optional/flexible policies please visit www.fairtest.org.

General Information		SAT	ACT
	Total Time	2 hours 14 minutes	2 hours 5 minutes (plus 40 minutes for optional Writing) (plus 40 minutes for optional Science)
	# of Sections	2	3 (plus optional Writing and/or Science section)
	Sections	Reading & Writing, and Math	English, Math, Reading
	Scoring	Two section scores: 200-800 scale combined for a total score of 400-1600	Three section scores: 1-36 averaged for a composite from 1-36
	Adaptive Questions	Difficulty of Module 2 depends on performance on Module 1	Every student encounters the same questions in the same order
	Pacing	More time per question	New Format allows for more time per question
	Score Reporting	Most schools will Superscore the SAT. Students send scores officially from www.collegeboard.org or self-report scores to colleges depending on college guidelines.	Many schools will superscore the ACT. Students send scores officially from www.act.org or self-report scores to colleges depending on college guidelines.
	Registration	Create an account using a personal email address at www.collegeboard.org .	Create an account using a personal email address at www.act.org .
	Practice Test	PSAT - offered at FLHS in October of junior year	Call a local test prep company or take a community sponsored free practice ACT
	Test Dates	August, September, October, November, December, March, May, June	July (no NY), September, October, December, February, April, June
	Test Center	FLHS is a test center for the SAT but does not play a role in the administration of the SAT.	FLHS is NOT a test center for the ACT.
	Testing Accommodations	If you qualify for testing accommodations at FLHS, speak to your counselor prior to registering for a SAT to apply for accommodations. Once approved, you are approved for ALL future College Board exams (PSATs, SATs and APs).	If you qualify for testing accommodations at FLHS, you must first register for an ACT exam on www.act.org . Then notify your counselor after you register for the exam and they will apply for accommodations for you.
ACT Reading	Time	N/A	40 minutes
	Format	N/A	36 multiple choice questions
	Key Skills	N/A	Reading comp, inferring, locating details. Reading passages include content from Prose Fiction, Humanities, Social Science, & Natural Science
SAT Reading & Writing / ACT English	Time	2 separate 32 minute modules	35 minutes
	Format	54 short passages with 1 multiple choice question per passage	50 multiple choice questions
	Key Skills	Craft & Structure, Information & Ideas, Standard English Conventions, and Expression of Ideas	Grammar rules, connecting sentences logically, recognizing overall structure & argument
Math	Time	2 separate 35 minute modules	50 minutes
	Format	Each module has 22 questions, some multiple choice questions and some (8-12) student produced response	45 multiple choice questions
	Key Skills	Algebra (35%), Word Problems, and Data Analysis (15%), Geometry & Trig (15%), & Adv. Math (35%)	Preparing for Higher Math (80%): Number & Quantity (10-12%), Algebra (17-20%), Functions (17-20%), Geometry (12-15%), Stats & Prob (12-15%); Integrating Essential Skills (20%): Rates & Percentages, Area/Surface Area, Average & Median
Optional Science	Time	N/A	40 minutes
	Format	No specific section; imbedded in reading and math sections	Multiple passages with 40 multiple choice questions
	Key Skills	Understanding scientific ideas, reading charts and graphs	Doing calculations, reading charts and graphs, analyzing experimental design
Optional Writing	Time	NO LONGER OFFERED	40 minutes for 1 essay
	Format		Presented with 3 viewpoints on a topic and asked to analyze and argue own perspective



What Colleges Look For in Students

While generalizations are dangerous on any topic, it is reasonably safe to say there are common criteria which colleges use to judge the acceptability of an applicant. The most selective colleges will review each component of the application more carefully and will be more discriminating than less selective schools. The factors below are important to most colleges:



The Transcript: Academic Foundation

Your high school record is the **first and most important factor** considered for admission. Colleges look at two critical aspects:

- **Program Strength:** They want to see consistent coursework in the five major academic areas: **English, Social Studies, Math, Science, and World Language**. The more selective the college, the more demanding your high school program should be.
- **Grades Received:** Your grades demonstrate your success within that challenging curriculum.
- **Crucial Tip: Take a full, demanding schedule senior year!** Colleges expect you to maintain your academic momentum.



Standardized Test Scores (SAT/ACT)

Test scores are generally considered in **relation to your overall academic record**, serving either to validate your existing performance or to demonstrate greater potential.

- **Role:** Standardized tests **will NOT override** a student's performance throughout their high school career.
- **Test Optional:** Many schools are test optional. If you feel standardized testing does not accurately reflect your potential, your grades will be weighed more heavily if you choose not to submit scores.



Letters of Recommendation

Recommender	Focus of the Letter
Counselor	A comprehensive report on your personal and academic qualities, interests, and activities . This highlights your most positive traits and includes teacher input on classroom performance.
Teacher	Describes your strengths as a student , focusing on projects, written work quality, and class participation. May also focus on your potential for academic growth and personal qualities.

Not all schools require Rec Letters



Extracurricular Activities

Admissions counselors are interested in how you spend your time outside of class. Participation and achievement can significantly enhance your application.

- **Key Rule:** GREATER INVOLVEMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT IN A FEW SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES IS MORE IMPRESSIVE THAN SUPERFICIAL INVOLVEMENT IN MANY. Show depth, leadership, and commitment.



Essays

The essay is where the student **"comes to life"** and is a critical differentiator, especially at highly selective schools where applicants often have similar GPAs and test scores.

- **Purpose:** Allows you to **individualize your application**, demonstrate your unique voice, and showcase your writing skills.
- **Requirements:** Not all schools require an essay; some may require several supplements.



Interview (When Applicable)

An interview is a personal exchange of information between you and the college. Interviews may be **required, recommended, or optional**. Not all schools offer an interview option.

What YOU Look for in a College

What factors are important to you?...

Circle or write in factors that might influence your decision of where to apply. Some factors might be very important to you while others might not apply to you at all.

Academics:

Possible Major(s):			
Research Opportunities	Co-op Opportunities	Special Programs	Class Size
Faculty: Student Ratio	Honors/Special Programs	Retention Rate	College vs. University

Selectivity:

Non-Competitive 90-100% Acceptance Rate	Competitive	Highly Competitive	Most Competitive Under 30% Acceptance Rate
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School Type:

2 Year	4 Year	Public	Private
SUNY	CUNY	Religious Affiliation	International
All Women's	Test Optional	Military or ROTC	HBCU

Location & Setting:

Urban (with defined campus)	Urban (without a defined campus)	Suburban	Rural
Commute	Dorm	Long Flight	Short Flight
Northeast	Southeast	Mid-West	West

Size:

Small (under 5K)	Medium (5-10K)	Big (10-15K)	Huge (more than 20K)
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Other Factors:

High Financial Consideration	Athletics (recruited)	Athletics (spectator)	Art
Music	Theater	Conservative	Liberal
Learning Disability Supports	Campus Facilities	Dietary Restrictions	Diversity
Study Abroad	Religious Organizations	LGBTQ+	Gender Ratio

Glossary of College Jargon

Admissions Terms:

Rolling Admissions – when a college or university accepts students on an ongoing basis without a formal application deadline. Schools that have rolling admissions benefit students who submit their applications early in the process.

Early Decision – is a program that some schools have where they accept applications early in the application process (1-2 months before the regular deadline) for those students who have chosen a school as their first choice school. Students who are accepted under an early decision program are bound to that acceptance and agree to attend that institution. The student must also agree to withdraw applications to all other institutions.

Early Action – is a program much like early decision, however in an early action agreement, a student is not bound to attend that institution and they may continue to apply to other schools. Although some schools have both an early decision and an early action program, most schools only have one or the other.

Target – a school whose profile *matches* that of a student. A student should fall between a school's mid 50th percentile of SAT scores and GPA to be a target school.

Reach – a school whose profile *exceeds* that of a student. A student who's SAT scores and GPA falls below the mid 50th percentile for a school should consider that school a reach. Even if your scores fall within the range for a school that institution may still be a reach school due to large applicant pools.

Safety – a school whose profile is *below* that of a student. A student

should be above a school's mid 50th percentile of SAT scores and GPA to be considered a safety school.

Class Rank – an admissions term that refers to whether or not a high school numbers their students based on their cumulative GPA.

GPA – stands for Grade Point Average. A GPA can be on different scales whereas the 3 most common ones are (from highest grade to lowest): A-F, 4.0-1.0, and 100-50 (where 65 is failing).

Weighted GPA – the term given to a grade point average where a student will receive extra points for classes with a honors or AP designation. Therefore, it is possible for said student to have a GPA above the maximum 100 in a class.

Unweighted GPA – an unweighted GPA assumes no extra points for the course level.

Waitlisted – a school may choose to waitlist a student if they have accepted enough students to fill their freshman class. If less than the projected amount of students deposit to a school, a school may choose to accept students off of their waitlist. Students who are waitlisted need to deposit to another school. Some years schools do not go to their waitlist. In other years a considerable amount of applicants may be taken off of the waitlist.

Deferred – a student who applies early decision or early action will either be accepted, rejected or deferred. If a student is deferred they will be reconsidered for admissions with the regular decision applicant pool.

STARS – a form required at some colleges where a student must self-report their academic record instead of sending in a transcript.

Special Talent – a student who is considered to have a special talent is typically an athlete, an artist, a performer or a musician. A special talent can be beneficial in the admissions process if a student intends to continue using that talent in college.

NCAA – refers to the division of athletics that a school participates in. Within the NCAA, a school could either be division I, division II, or division III. Within the 3 divisions there are smaller conferences that schools participate in. A student who intends to compete on either the NCAA division I or II level needs to be cleared by the NCAA. This process should be started in a student's junior year of high school.

Associates Degree – the degree for completing a 2-year college program at a community/junior college.

Bachelors Degree – the degree given for completing a 4-year college program.

Test Optional – a student is able to decide whether or not to submit standardized testing as part of their application. Students should consider whether or not they are within a school's mid-50% OR whether or not a score accurately reflects their ability when deciding whether or not to apply to a school without test scores.

Test Free/Score Free – unlike test optional, when a school is test/score free they will NOT look at standardized test scores for any student.

Campus Life Terms:

Lecture-style class – a course that is typically large in size. A lecture is when a professor or graduate student disseminates course information to a class. Although questions may be asked, the focus of the course is typically not based on discussions.

Seminar-style class – a course where classroom discussion is an integral part of the curriculum. These classes can often be smaller in size since they are dependent on a dialog between the professor and students.

Greek System – refers to whether or not fraternities and sororities are present on a college's social scene. Fraternities are for men and sororities are for women.

Suitcase school – refers to a school where most of the student body leaves campus during the weekend.

Commuter school – refers to a school where the majority, if not all, of its students do not reside on campus. Most commuter schools do not offer housing or offer limited housing options.

Residential school – refers to a school where there is a heavy presence of student life on campus. The majority of students live on or close to campus.

Conservatory – is an institution where the focus is on a visual or performing art. A student who attends a conservatory typically will not have many courses outside of their field. Conservatories train students to become professional artists.

Cooperative Education Program (Co-Op) – a college program of alternating periods of full-time study and paid employment in related

work. Graduates have the advantage of 1-2 years of practical experience. Most Co-Op programs take 5 years to complete.

"Dry" campus – does not tolerate alcohol on campus for both of-age and under-age students.

Urban – refers to a campus situated in a city.

Suburban – is situated outside of a city. Westchester is considered to be a suburban environment.

Rural – considered to be country-like. A rural school is typically not in close proximity to a major city.

Financial Aid Terms:

Need-blind – a school is need-blind with regard to financial aid if they do not look at a student's financial need when making an admissions decision with regard to that student.

Need-aware – a school is need-aware if they do look at a student's financial need when making an admissions decision.

HEOP/EOP – stands for Higher Education Opportunities Program, or Educational Opportunities Program. The funding for both programs is the same, however HEOP refers to private schools in NY State, while EOP refers to public schools in NY State. To be considered for this program students must prove both economic and educational disadvantage. If accepted a student will receive special services and special funding to that institution. A summer "bridge" program is often included to help transition the HEOP/EOP students to life at college. If a school has a HEOP/EOP program a student who meets the economic and educational requirements may apply to schools that might normally be considered reach schools.

FAFSA – stands for Free Application for Federal Student Aid. This is the document that must be filled out by the student and his/her family to be considered for Federal Financial Aid. There is no processing fee for this application.

CSS Profile – an application filled out by the family of an applicant for financial aid. Some colleges use this information in addition to the FAFSA to estimate how much money a family can contribute towards college expenses. Not all schools require this form. If there are questions, students must check with college financial aid offices to determine appropriate financial aid forms.

iDoc – a part of the CSS profile, iDoc is a service that collects a family's financial documents and distributes them to institutions on behalf of the student.

TAP – an application required for students applying for need-based aid for colleges based in the state of NY.

FAFSA Submission Summary (formerly SAR: Student Aid Report) – a summary of information provided on FAFSA used in determining student eligibility for Federal Student Aid.

Student Aid Index (formerly EFC: Expected Family Contribution) – the estimated amount of money a college assumes a family can contribute towards post-secondary education. The total tuition of a school minus the SAI determines the financial need for a student.

Net Price Calculator – is a tool you can use to help determine what need-based financial aid your family might qualify for. Each college website contains a calculator under their financial aid section.

Ways to Demonstrate Interest and Connect to a College

While an in person visit is still the best way to gauge fit, colleges are working overtime to ensure you have ample opportunities to learn about their school if you are unable to get to campus. It's increasingly important that you take advantage of these opportunities:

- **What is Demonstrated Interest?** Some colleges will keep track of various ways that you interact with them as a measure of how likely it is that you would attend their school, and therefore is taken into consideration during the application review process
- Even if you are able to visit a campus in person, taking a virtual tour or taking part in a virtual info session will be **another (somewhat new) way of expressing interest** to your prospective colleges
- Remember to always use your **personal email address** so colleges can get a hold of you

Different Resources for College Experiences/Demonstrating Interest:

→ Individual College Websites

- ◆ This should be your first stop on your virtual tour experience! Pay attention to your emails and/or go to the *Visit* section of your prospective schools' websites. For most schools you will find:
 - Virtual Tours
 - Virtual Information Sessions
 - Live Chat with an Admissions Counselors
 - Virtual Interviews (*please see our handout on Virtual Interviews for tips*)
 - Contact information to email admissions representatives

→ In Person Opportunities

- ◆ When feasible, on campus opportunities are the best way to get a sense of fit. In person opportunities can include:
 - On Campus Tours and Information Sessions
 - In person interviews
 - Regional Information sessions
 - FLHS-based visits/information sessions (in fall)
 - On Campus Open Houses and other events

→ Interactive Virtual Tours

- ◆ There are several third party companies that have wonderful resources with virtual tours, and many with virtual reality (VR) options. ALWAYS make sure to enter your contact information so you get "credit" for the tours.
 - www.youvisit.com/collegesearch
 - www.campustours.com

→ Strive Virtual College Exploration

- ◆ Strive Virtual College Exploration program offers virtual college information sessions. These 45-minute presentations will allow colleges to speak specifically about their institutions, connect with students, and answer questions live.
 - <https://www.strivescan.com/virtual/schedule/>

→ SUNY

- ◆ SUNY's [SUNY Virtual Events](#) schedule for students and parents
- ◆ SUNY also offers virtual [Financial Aid Information Sessions](#)
- ◆ Specific campus events can be found on SUNY's [Visit a Campus](#) page

CAMPUS VISITS

The best way to learn about a college is by visiting the campus.

When visiting be sure to talk to students, jot down impressions of the campus and school and consider the following:

BEFORE YOUR VISIT

Find answers to these questions before you start your visit.

- How far from home is it?
- How much would it cost to travel to campus?
- How much might it cost to attend that college (based on estimations from the net price calculator)?
- How far is the nearest city or town?
- What majors are offered? Which ones would interest me?
- Does this school celebrate diversity? In what ways?
- What forms of unique support would I need on campus? Does this school have services to match?

WILL I FIT IN HERE?

Housing and Transportation

- Do most students live on campus?
- Are students required to live on campus? If yes, for how many years?
- Is housing guaranteed for four years?
- What's campus security like?
- What are the off-campus living options, and what do they typically cost?
- Is there substance-free housing?
- How easy is it to get around campus?
- Where do students do their shopping (groceries, dorm essentials, and clothing)?
- Are there any services for getting around campus late at night?
- How is the food? Are there different meal plans? Are there special diet options (i.e. vegetarian, vegan, etc.)

Student Body and Culture

- What makes the student body unique?
- How diverse is the campus?
- Where are students from? Local communities? Other states? Public schools? Private schools?
- Are there many international students?
- What are the students like? Studious? Social? Athletic? Intellectual?
- Do students seem... Comfortable? Overworked? Bored? Intense?
- Which clubs and student organizations are popular?
- What percent of your students take part in the study abroad program?
- What's it like to be a first-year student here?
- Are there first year opportunities to help with the transition to college?
- What do students typically do on the weekends? Do most students stay on campus during the weekends?
- What's the social scene like?
- What are some of the highlights of the campus?
- Are athletic facilities open to all students?
- Does Greek life exist? If yes, what percent of the student body is involved?

Getting Support

- What is academic advising like?
- Do students use on-campus tutoring programs and/or writing centers?
- Is there tech support anywhere on campus where I could take my computer?
- Are there apps/services for safety, transportation, or booking appointments with on-campus services?
- What kinds of counseling and mental health services are available on campus?
- Are there any stress relief initiatives offered during midterms and finals?

Academics

- How often are collaborative work or group presentations required?
- How much time do students spend studying per week?
- How do class sizes compare between intro and upper-level classes? Are most classes lectures or seminars?
- How accessible are professors, and do they hold office hours?
- Do teaching assistants (TAs) teach classes? How often is your TA your instructor?

- What kinds of mentoring and advisory relationships do students and faculty have?
- How easy is it to get the classes you want to take?
- What student-faculty research opportunities exist for undergraduates?
- Do certain majors require an independent study or capstone project?

Career and Networking

- How easy is it to find summer jobs and internships through the school?
- Are there any formal internship arrangements with companies in the area?
- Are there opportunities to build leadership skills on campus?
- What options exist for service learning in the community?
- Do employers recruit students on campus?
- How long does it typically take recent graduates to find full-time employment in their fields?
- Do students have access to career services after they graduate?
- What networking and career fairs are held each year?
- How involved are alumni in the school?

ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Ask Current Students

- How many hours a week do you study? Is that typical of students here?
- How easy is it to get the classes you want?
- Are campus jobs readily available?
- Are faculty members interested in and accessible to students outside of class?
- Do many students go home on weekends?
- Is it possible to study in your dorm room?
- What is the library like as a place to study? ...to do research?
- What do you like best about this college? ...least?
- If you had it to do again, would you still choose this college?

Ask the Admissions Rep

- What is the average GPA and SAT/ACT scores for your accepted students?
- What percentage of your students receive financial aid?
- What is your most popular major? What is your school most known for?
- What factors do you consider during the application process?
- How important are the types of classes that I take (honors, AP, Regents)?
- How important are my standardized test scores? Are you test optional?
- If test optional, what % of students submitted testing? And what was the mid 50% of accepted students?
- What percentage of your students are: _____? (fill in with any community/group you identify with)
- What percentage of your freshmen live on campus?

Ask Yourself

- Is the setting appealing to me?
- What is the surrounding town like? Would I feel comfortable here?
- How is the food?
- Do the students all look the same? Are they different? Do they look like my friends?
- Are the buildings well-maintained?
- Are the grounds clean and manicured?
- Would I thrive in this academic environment?

My questions for my college visit:

Tour Guide Question:

- 1.) _____
- 2.) _____

Admissions Representative Question:

- 1.) _____
- 2.) _____

Campus Scorecard

School Name: _____

Rate these areas from 1 (low) to 5 (high). Jot down your impressions—things you like or don’t like, things you want to remember.

Campus	①	②	③	④	⑤
Dorms	①	②	③	④	⑤
Classes/Academics	①	②	③	④	⑤
Library	①	②	③	④	⑤
Food	①	②	③	④	⑤
Fitness Center	①	②	③	④	⑤
Social Life	①	②	③	④	⑤
Overall Feel	①	②	③	④	⑤

Other Notes: *Can you picture yourself here?*

Campus Scorecard

School Name: _____

Rate these areas from 1 (low) to 5 (high). Jot down your impressions—things you like or don’t like, things you want to remember.

Campus	①	②	③	④	⑤
Dorms	①	②	③	④	⑤
Classes/Academics	①	②	③	④	⑤
Library	①	②	③	④	⑤
Food	①	②	③	④	⑤
Fitness Center	①	②	③	④	⑤
Social Life	①	②	③	④	⑤
Overall Feel	①	②	③	④	⑤

Other Notes: *Can you picture yourself here?*

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Fitness Center	①	②	③	④	⑤
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Overall Feel	①	②	③	④	⑤

Other Notes: *Can you picture yourself here?*

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Dorms	①	②	③	④	⑤
Classes/Academics	①	②	③	④	⑤
Library	①	②	③	④	⑤
Food	①	②	③	④	⑤
Fitness Center	①	②	③	④	⑤
Social Life	①	②	③	④	⑤
Overall Feel	①	②	③	④	⑤

Other Notes: *Can you picture yourself here?*

Naviance is your HUB for everything career/college for the next few years! As a sophomore, you were able to research careers and interests. Junior year you will be able to research colleges and create an initial college list, and narrow down your list of schools to apply to. In senior year you will request transcripts and teachers recommendations through Naviance. Therefore it is very important that you understand the features and know how it works!

Logging On:

- **Step 1** - The preferred web browser for Naviance is Google Chrome. Using the BCSD Launchpad click on the Naviance Icon (*alternatively: go to www.naviance.com; under Account Log-in, click on "FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS"; enter zip code 10506; click "Fox Lane High School"*).
- **Step 2** - Click on "Student" then enter your BCSD email and password. Do not attempt to log in more than twice - notify your counselor if you need to reset your password. Please store your password in a safe place as you will use Naviance often in the future.
- **Step 3** - *You can now log into Naviance from any computer to explore and research college and careers!*

Now you can explore colleges in Naviance...

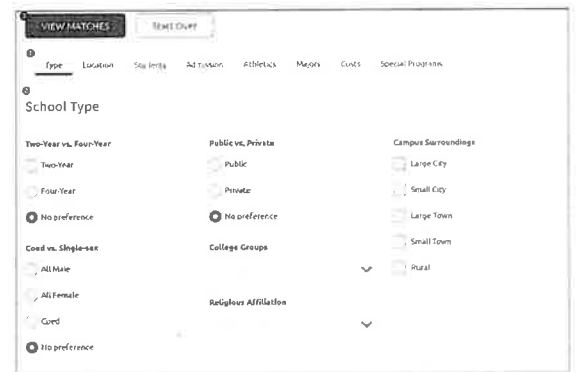
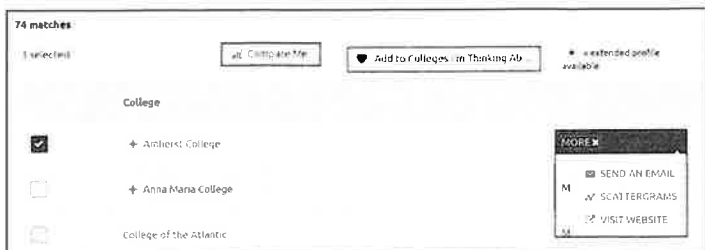
Using Naviance Student's *Find your Fit* search tools, you can locate the schools that most fit with your interests, passions, and criteria. Once you've narrowed down a group of colleges, multiple tools are available to understand more about that school in general and as a prospect.

- **Colleges I'm Thinking About:** This is a list of schools that you have *favorited* and identified as prospective schools of interest.
- **Colleges I'm Applying To:** This is a list of schools to which you are actually applying and will be updated in your senior year.

Advanced College Search

Using multiple categories, answer questions to identify colleges that match your interests.

1. Click on a *category* (i.e., Location or Majors).
2. Answer some of the *category-related questions* and *identify your preferences* for a school.
3. Click *View Matches*. A list of schools that match your criteria displays. You might need to go back to categories if you were too specific OR too vague.
4. Click the *checkbox(es)* next to the school(s) depending on what action you want to take next.

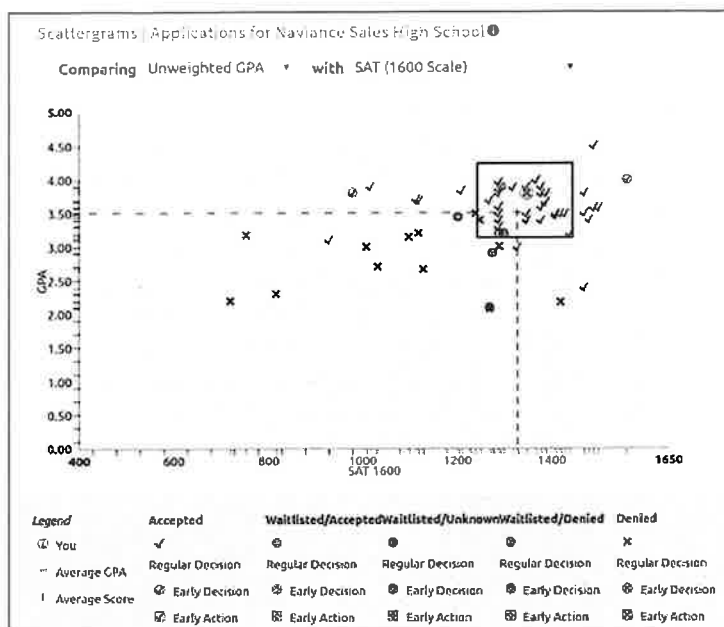



5. From results list, click *Save Search* to save this search.
6. From here, you can choose to use *Compare Me*, Add to *Colleges I'm Thinking About* (Favorite), Send an Email to the school, view a Scattergram for the school, or visit the school's website.
7. Once you Add to *Colleges I'm Thinking About* you now have a list of potential colleges. Go to *Colleges I'm Thinking About* to continue to research those schools through Naviance.

Scattergrams

A scattergram is a graph used to help you analyze how you fit in with other students from your high school who have been accepted, waitlisted, or denied admittance to a school based on GPA and test scores.

1. Select a college from the dropdown list. The number in parentheses shows how many other students from your high school, historically, have applied to this school.
2. Click *View Scattergram*. The scattergram for this school displays.
3. Change the Comparing and with dropdown menus to make sure you are comparing the right information.
4. Use the legend to view those accepted, waitlisted, and denied. Your data shows as a light blue circle provided you have taken at least 1 SAT or ACT. Hover over a data point to see connected SAT and GPA information.



College Lookup

You can add colleges individually to your *Colleges I'm Thinking About* list as well. Lookup school(s) by multiple filters including name, country, state, or college group. Favorite a school by using the heart symbol next to the college in order to add that school to your *Colleges I'm Thinking About* list.

COLLEGE Lookup

Lookup by: Quicklist

Search filters: Name, Keyword, Country, State

Search button: Search

Quicklist

College, Address and University, Athletic College, College Group, Booklist College

Results: Washington, DC, Amherst, MA, Berkeley, CA, Chestnut Hill, MA

Buttons: Add to Favorites, Remove from Favorites

College Compare

College Compare

Search for colleges

College compare averages are for students from your high school that have been accepted to that particular college from 2012-2018. Averages have a green checkmark when your number is higher and red "x" when your number is lower. Your PSAT score, if available, has been converted to the equivalent SAT score and compared to the average single SAT score of an accepted student. The column labeled "Acceptance" shows the number of students accepted out of the number of students that applied.

+ ADD COLLEGES TO COMPARE

College	GPA	Single SAT 1600	Single SAT 2400	Combined SAT 1600	Combined SAT 2400	PSAT to SAT 1600	ACT	IB	Acceptance
American Univ	3.48 ✓	1267 ✓	1879 ✗	1142 ✓	1882 ✗	1267 ✗	26 ✗	20 ✗	281/526

Under your *Colleges I'm Thinking About* list you can select "Compare Me" to see the average test scores and **weighted** GPA of FLHS students who have been previously accepted to that college. Numbers with a green check mean that you are above those averages, and numbers with a red X mean that you are below those averages. If you have not taken an SAT or ACT yet, the "PSAT to SAT 1600" will provide you with a predictive score. This is great for a quick glance! However for a more detailed understanding of where you fall, you should look at a school's *Scattergram*.

Explore, have fun, there is lots more to experience through Naviance!

College Research Table

College Name	Demographics				Academics/Student Life				Admissions				Statistics, Interest, Difficulty				Misc	
	Location		Size	Cost	Major		Extracurricular	Standardized Testing Policy	Interview Policy	Letter of Rec	Deadline Options & Dates	Application Type	GPA	Test Scores	Rating	Level of Difficulty	Misc Requirement	Notes
	Location	Hours from home	Undergrad Total	Tuition + Room & Board	1st Choice	2nd Choice	(Athletics, Music, Art, Greek life, etc.)	Self-report? Test Optional? Super-scores?	Not Offered Optional Recommendations	# Teacher # Counselor	ED I, ED II, EA I, EA II, RD, Roll, Priority	Common App, Institutional	Naviance Avg	Naviance Avg	1-5	Target, Reach, Safety		
1															★★★★			
2															★★★★			
3															★★★★			
4															★★★★			
5															★★★★			
6															★★★★			
7															★★★★			
8															★★★★			
9															★★★★			
10															★★★★			
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20															★★★★			
21															★★★★			
22															★★★★			
23															★★★★			

Application Basics

THE COMMON APPLICATION

Main application types:

- The Common Application (www.commonapp.org) #1 *OPTION!*
- Institutional Applications (found on individual school's websites) or Coalition App

Do's and Don'ts:

- ◆ **Don't** use your BCSD email for college applications
- ✓ **Do** check spelling, grammar, capitalizations, etc
- ✓ **Do** check with your parent/guardian for questions you don't know the answer to
- ✓ **Do** consult the FLHS Guidance Cheat Sheet for FLHS specific questions
- ✓ **Do** match your name exactly as it appears on Synergy
- ✓ **Do** write down your username and password somewhere

Typical Components for Most Applications:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| → Demographics | → Standardized Testing |
| → Family Information | → Honors/Activities |
| → School Information | → College Essay |
| → Grading Information | → Supplemental Essays (if needed) |
| → Senior Course Information | → Major Selection |

Family Information needed to complete most applications:

Parent #1	Name:	
Level of Education:		Occupation Title:
If college, name of institution, degree(s) earned, and year(s) earned:		
Parent #2	Name:	
Level of Education:		Occupation Title:
If college, name of institution, degree(s) earned, and year(s) earned:		
Name(s) and age(s) of siblings:		
Eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch Program ☐ (If yes, eligible for fee waiver)		

This summer you will be provided with a "Cheat Sheet" that will give you the information needed to complete the Education and other sections on the Common App.

College Resume Basics



Templates are on the Google Classroom!

What to include:

- Clubs/Extracurricular Activities
- Outside of School Activities
- Athletics
- Community Service/Volunteer Work
- Work Experience
- Internships
- Research Experience
- Honors/Awards
- Hobbies/Interests
- Visual and Performing Arts Activities
- Languages
- Category of your choice...

You decide the categories and the order - make choices based on what works best for you!

Do's and Don'ts:

- ✓ **Do** try to make it **one** page
- ✓ **Do** explain items that are unclear (bullets work well here)
- ✓ **Don't** explain *everything*
- ✓ **Do** keep the format consistent
- ✓ **Do** make it visually appealing
- ✓ **Do** think back to 9th grade
- ✓ **Do** think of both formal and informal activities
- ✓ **Do** highlight your strengths
- ✓ **Don't** include things that have happened before high school and are really old
- ✓ **Don't** include things that aren't true
- ✓ **Do** update periodically
- ✓ **Do** make sure someone edits your resume

Common App Essay Prompts & Tips

The college essay is often the most difficult part of an application for admission to a college. It is one of the few things that you've got complete control over in the application process, especially by the time you're in your senior year. You've already earned most of your grades; you've already made most of your impressions on teachers; and chances are, you've already found a set of activities you're interested in continuing. So when you write the essay, view it as something more than just a page to fill up with writing. View it as an opportunity to tell the admissions committee about who you are as a person.

Common App Essay Prompts from 2025-2026

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
 2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
 3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
 4. Reflect on something that someone has done for you that has made you happy or thankful in a surprising way. How has this gratitude affected or motivated you?
 5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
 6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?
 7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.
-

Top 10 Essay Tips

1. **Be yourself.** If you are funny, write a funny essay; if you are serious, write a serious essay. Don't be afraid to reveal yourself in your writing. We want to know who you are and how you think.
2. Tell us **something different** from what we'll read on your list of extracurricular activities or transcript. They do **not** want to read **a summary of your resume**.
3. **Don't try to take on too much.** Focus on one "most influential person," one event, or one activity. Tackling too much tends to make your essay too watered down or disjointed.
4. **Write thoughtfully** and from your heart. Don't tell them what you think they want to hear.
5. Use a **strong opener**. Catch their attention from the start. Essays should have a thesis that is clear to you and to the reader. Your thesis should indicate where you're going and what you're trying to communicate from the outset.
6. **Don't do a history report.** Some background knowledge is okay, but do not rehash what other authors have already said or written.
7. **Proofread**, proofread, proofread. Nothing says "last-minute essay" like an "are" instead of "our" or a "their" instead of "they're."
8. Keep it **short** and to the point.
9. **Be specific** – avoid clichéd and generic writing. Use vivid and precise details. Show rather than tell, using anecdotes, examples, and descriptions.
10. **Limit the number of people** from whom you request feedback on your essay. Too much input creates an essay that sounds as though it has been written by a committee or results in writing that is absent of your own voice.

Three Steps to a Great College Essay

You, in 650 Words or Less

The college application essay is a chance to explain yourself, to open your personality, charm, talents, vision, and spirit to the admission committee. It's a chance to show you can think about things and that you can write clearly about your thoughts. Don't let the chance disappear - believe in yourself!

The Essay Writing Process

To write a college essay, use the exact same three-step process you'd use to write an essay for class: first prewrite, then draft, and finally, edit.

1.) Prewriting:

To begin, you must first collect and organize potential ideas for your essay's focus. Since all essay questions are attempts to learn about you, begin with YOU.

- **Brainstorm:** Set a timer for 15 minutes and make a list of your strengths and outstanding characteristics. Focus on strengths of personality, not things you've done. For example, you are responsible (not an "Eagle Scout") or committed (not "played basketball"). If you keep drifting toward events rather than characteristics, make a second list of the things you've done, places you've been, accomplishments you're proud of; use them for the activities section of your application.
- **Discover Your Strengths:** Do a little research about yourself: ask parents, friends, and teachers what your strengths are.
- **Create a "Self-Outline":** Now, next to each trait, list 5 or 6 pieces of evidence from your life - things you've been or done - that prove your point.
- **Find Patterns and Connections:** Look for patterns in the material you've brainstormed. Group similar ideas and events together. For example, does your passion for numbers show up in your performance in the state math competition and your summer job at the computer store? Was basketball about sports or about friendships? When else have you stuck with the hard work to be with people who matter to you?

2.) Drafting:

Now it's time to get down to the actual writing. Write your essay in three basic parts: introduction, body, and conclusion. The introduction gives your reader an idea of your essay's content. It can shrink when you need to be concise. One vivid sentence might do: "My favorite science project was a complete failure." The body presents the evidence that supports your main idea. Use narration and incident to show rather than tell. The conclusion can be brief as well, a few sentences to nail down the meaning of the events and incidents you've described. An application essay doesn't need to read like an essay about *The Bluest Eye* or the Congress of Vienna, but thinking in terms of these three traditional parts is a good way to organize your main points.

There are three basic essay styles you should consider:

- **Standard Essay:** Take 2 or 3 points from your self-outline, give a paragraph to each, & make sure you provide plenty of evidence. Choose things not apparent from the rest of your application or "light up" some of the activities & experiences listed there.
- **Less-Is-More Essay:** In this format, you focus on a single interesting point about yourself. It works well for brief essays of a paragraph or so.
- **Narrative Essay:** A narrative essay tells a short and vivid story. Omit the introduction, write one or two narrative paragraphs that grab and engage the reader's attention, then explain what this little tale reveals about you.

3.) Editing:

When you have a good final draft, it's time to make final improvements to your draft, find and correct any errors, and get someone else to give you feedback. Remember, you are your best editor. No one can speak for you; your own words and ideas are your best bet.

- **Let It Cool:** Take a break from your work and come back to it in a few days. Does your main idea come across clearly? Do you prove your points with specific details? Is your essay easy to read aloud?
- **Feedback Time:** Have someone you like and trust (but someone who will tell you the truth) read your essay. Ask them to tell you what they think you're trying to convey. Did they get it right?
- **Edit Down:** Your language should be simple, direct, and clear. This is a personal essay, not a term paper. Make every word count (e.g., if you wrote "in society today," consider changing that to "now").
- **Proofread Two More Times:** Careless spelling, errors in grammar, awkward language, or fuzzy logic will make your essay memorable - in a bad way.

COLLEGE ESSAY BRAINSTORMING FORM

One of the best methods of brainstorming is to begin with a grand list of potential topics and slowly let the best rise to the top. In order to generate a laundry list of important people, events, accomplishments and activities in your life, fill in the worksheet below. As you go through this lesson, you will begin to separate the good ideas from the bad.

1. If you were writing your autobiography right now, what would be five to ten events or things that would have to be included? It will be easiest to think over your life chronologically.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

2. List five adjectives or personality traits that characterize you. List them here:

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 5. _____ | |

3. List five accomplishments you have made over the last five years. (Do not limit yourself to accomplishments for which you have been formally recognized since the most interesting essays are often based on accomplishments that may have seemed insignificant at the time but become crucial when placed in the context of your life.

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 5. _____ | |

4. List three to five things on which you consider yourself very knowledgeable.

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 5. _____ | |
-

5. What are your most important extracurricular or community activities?

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 5. _____ | |
-

6. List 5 people whom you respect and admire. They can be real or fictional, dead or alive.

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 5. _____ | |
-

7. What is your favorite movie or book? _____

8. Who is your favorite musician? _____

9. List two times in life when you failed miserably and two times when you were a fantastic success.

Miserable Failures:

Fantastic Successes:

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 1. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 2. _____ |
-

10. Ask your parents for five events in your life that they will always remember.

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 5. _____ | |

11. List four of your favorite things and four of your least favorite. These can include activities, places, objects, virtues, etc.

Favorites:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Least Favorites:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

College Essay

Brainstorming Worksheet

Writing a college essay can seem daunting at first, but it doesn't have to be. By taking the time to brainstorm, outline, and draft, you can craft a strong college essay that stands out.

Essay Prompt:	Broad Topic	Broad Topic	Broad Topic
	Example/Anecdote	Example/Anecdote	Example/Anecdote
	Key Points	Key Points	Key Points

Letters of Recommendation



Why do colleges require letters of recommendation?

- They want to learn more about you as a student and as a citizen in your community.

What are the different types of recommendations?

- Counselor - provides an overall picture of the student in and out of the classroom. The counselors write for each student, so no extra steps needed to secure this.
- Teacher - provides details about who you are as a learner in their classroom.
- Supplemental - optional if an additional person (coach, employer, clergy, etc.) knows you in a **very** different way than your teacher(s) and counselor.

How many teacher letters will I need?

- Most colleges require 1, and some colleges require 2 teacher letters
- Some require 0
- Don't ask more than 2!

Who should I ask?

- Some colleges specify from which subjects (certain majors may require recommendations from specific subject areas) but most are open to any classroom teacher you have had.
- Junior year core subject area teachers are best because they have worked with you the most recently. If you would prefer a sophomore teacher, that's okay, but make sure you have stayed in touch with them since sophomore year (as a coach, club advisor, etc.).
- You must have been in that teacher's class as a student.

Some Dos and Don'ts

- Try to stick with junior year core classes; you can choose any core subject.*
- If you need 2 teachers:
 - you can pick an elective class if that is an area you plan to pursue in college (ex. art, music, theater)*
 - you can pick a sophomore year teacher if you have stayed in touch with that person (through a club, sport, etc.)*
- Pay attention to individual college requirements.
- You don't need to ask your counselor for a recommendation - we are already planning to write for you!
- You don't need a supplemental letter of recommendation.

** as long as the school doesn't specify otherwise*

When should I ask?

- You can start reaching out to your top choice teacher(s) in person now, but be sure to review our guidelines below first:
 - Open with a respectful and formal greeting/closing.
 - Mention the major/program that you are applying to (if you know).
 - Clearly state that you are requesting a college letter of recommendation.
 - Share the reason you are asking this teacher in particular.
 - Offer any pertinent details about yourself or the class.
 - Be sure to note that the letter won't need to be completed until the fall.
 - Some teachers may respond, asking to speak with you to gather more information or ask you to complete a form for them. Be sure to offer the information they need to write a good letter for you.
 - You can ask 2 teachers now if you know that you will be applying to schools that require 2 teacher recs.

What's next?

- In the fall you will confirm with the teacher(s) who have agreed to write on your behalf. You should confirm with your teachers at least three weeks prior to your earliest deadline.
- After you get verbal confirmation, your counselor will show you how to input the request into Naviance.

Do I get to read my letters of rec?

- The short answer is no.
- The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. You will be asked in the fall whether or not you will waive your FERPA rights.
 - **Why should a student waive their FERPA rights?** Waiving your right allows colleges to know that you do not intend to read your recommendations, which helps reassure colleges that the letters are candid and truthful. Some recommenders may refuse to write a letter for you unless you waive your rights. Students are strongly encouraged to waive their FERPA rights.

Don't forget to say Thank You!

What if I want a supplemental letter of recommendation?

- A recommendation from someone who has not taught you would be considered an optional *supplemental* letter.
- Most students do **NOT** ask for a supplemental letter.
- If you believe that person would add a different perspective from your other letters of recommendation then you may ask that person to also write on your behalf.
- Even if a coach/club advisor is also a teacher at FLHS they do not count as a teacher recommendation if you have never been a student in their class.
- The process for a supplemental letter is different and does not involve Naviance. Those requests are most typically done through your Common Application account in the fall. Please see your counselor for more details.

How do I get my counselor to write a letter of recommendation for me?

- Counselors will write on behalf of every senior.
- No formal request needs to be made.
- Parents will be sent a "Brag Sheet" via email and students will access a "Student Questionnaire" via Google Classroom. These items are instrumental in a counselor writing a comprehensive letter of recommendation.

Please list your teachers from the last 2 years:				
English (10)	World (10)	Math (10)	Science (10)	World Lang (10)
English (11)	US History (11)	Math (11)	Science (11)	World Lang (11)
Elective (10)	Elective (10)	Elective (11)	Elective (11)	
Circle above up to 5 teachers that know you well <u>as a student</u> .				
1st choice for a teacher recommendation:				
If a 2nd recommendation is needed, who will be the second teacher :				
Why is this teacher(s) a good choice?				
What do you want this teacher(s) to highlight about you?				

Financial Aid

The Basics: Need-Based Aid vs. Merit-Based Aid

What is Need-based Aid? Financial aid that comes in the form of grants and loans to cover the cost of college based on your family's income and ability to afford college.	What is Merit-based Aid? Scholarships that are given to a student (most often regardless of income) based on a student's strength as an applicant or based on their accomplishments. Can be based on grades, athletics, special talents, leadership, etc.
How do I know if my family qualifies for Need-based Aid? <i>Complete a Net Price Calculator:</i> - Complete the Net Price Calculator on each school's website - Or you can complete a general one at: https://studentaid.gov/aid-estimator/ - Or at: https://myintuition.org/ - A Net Price Calculator will help your family determine if you will qualify for Need-based Aid? - AND - it will show you what a typical financial aid package will look like for you at a particular school?	How do I qualify for Merit-based Aid? - Each scholarship program will have different requirements and criteria. - Scholarships can be due at any time - but most applications will be completed during senior year after college applications are complete
Where does Need-based Aid come from? - The US Government (i.e. Pell Grants, and Government loans) - NY State (i.e. TAP grants and others) - Individual colleges	Where does Merit-based Aid come from? - Most merit aid comes directly from individual colleges - State/National Scholarships - Local Scholarships - Company Scholarships
How do I apply? - FAFSA Application is required by ALL colleges to be considered for need-based aid - The CSS PROFILE application is additionally required by some schools for need-based aid - NY State TAP application is required for students who plan to attend a college located in the state of NY	How do I apply? - Look at websites regarding merit-based scholarship programs - some require a separate application and some will automatically consider students - Scholarship Search Engines: - Naviance: http://www.naviance.com - Fast Web: https://www.fastweb.com/college-scholarships - Big Future through College Board: https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search - Going Merry: https://www.goingmerry.com/ - Local Scholarship packet comes out December of senior year - Company Scholarships: check with your parents to see if their workplaces offer one

Basic Financial Aid Terms:

Need-blind – a school is need-blind with regard to financial aid if they do not look at a student's financial need when making an admissions decision with regard to that student.

Need-aware – a school is need-aware if they do look at a student's financial need when making an admissions decision.

HEOP/EOP – stands for Higher Education Opportunities Program, or Educational Opportunities Program. The funding for both programs is the same, however HEOP refers to private schools in NY State, while EOP refers to public schools in NY State. To be considered for this program students must prove both economic and educational disadvantage. If accepted a student will receive special services and special funding to that institution. A summer "bridge" program is often included to help transition the HEOP/EOP students to life at college. If a school has a HEOP/EOP program a student who meets the economic and educational requirements may apply to schools that might normally be considered reach schools.

iDoc – a part of the CSS Profile, iDoc is a service that collects a family's financial documents and distributes them to institutions on behalf of the student.

FAFSA Submission Summary (formerly SAR: Student Aid Report) – a summary of information provided on FAFSA used in determining student eligibility for Federal Student Aid.

Student Aid Index (formerly EFC) – the estimated amount of money a college assumes a family can contribute towards post-secondary education. The total tuition of a school minus the SAI determines the financial need for a student.

New York State Scholarship Opportunities:

(1) Excelsior Program (Public NY Colleges)

- **Eligibility:** An applicant must be a resident of NYS; have a combined federal adjusted gross income of \$125,000 or less; be pursuing an undergraduate degree at a NYS public (SUNY or CUNY) college.
- **Award Amount:** A recipient may receive up to the resident tuition rate charged by SUNY or CUNY. Scholarship is for tuition only and does not apply to Room and Board.

(2) NY STEM Incentive Program (Public NY Colleges)

- **Eligibility:** An applicant must be a NYS resident; be enrolled full time at a public college located in NYS; be ranked in the top 10 percent of their graduating class; be matriculated in an approved undergraduate program leading to a degree in Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics. There is no income restriction on the STEM Incentive Program.
- **Award Amount:** An annual award up to the annual SUNY tuition charged to NYS residents.

(3) Enhanced Tuition Award (Private NY Colleges - the private equivalent to Excelsior)

- **Eligibility:** An applicant must be a resident of NYS; have a combined federal adjusted gross income of \$125,000 or less; be pursuing an undergraduate degree at a participating private colleges located in NYS.
- **Award Amount:** Recipients of Enhanced Tuition Awards will generally receive \$6,000 through a combination of their TAP award, ETA award and a match from their private college.

(4) DREAM Act

- **Eligibility:** The Senator José Peralta New York State DREAM Act gives undocumented students access to NYS administered grants and scholarships that support their higher education cost.
- **Award Amount:** Varies

If Financial Aid is a main consideration for college make sure your prospective list includes SUNY/CUNY options and a number of safety/scholarship schools!

Junior – Cost of College Worksheet

	SUNY:	Out of State Public:	Private:	Private:
Initial Total Cost (Tuition, Room & Board, Fees)	(~ Range: _____) \$	(~ Range: _____) \$	(~ Range: _____) \$	(~ Range: _____) \$
Need-Based Aid	SAI (Student Aid Index) (How much your family can pay for 1 year)	\$	\$	\$
	Financial Aid Package	\$	\$	\$
	Final Cost	\$	\$	\$
Did the financial aid package “meet full need”?				
Were all the financial aid packages comparably “good”?				
Merit-Based Aid	Grants/Scholarships (Institutional or outside)	\$	\$	\$

Key Terms:		
Net Price Calculator	FAFSA	CSS/Profile
Loan	Grant	Merit-Based Aid
Meet 100% of Demonstrated Need	Need Blind	Need Aware

College Interviews

A college interview provides a college with an opportunity to give you more information about the school and answer any questions. In addition, the interview gives the college a chance to learn more about you, your interests, and how you'll be able to contribute to the school.

Are they required? Very few colleges require interviews, although a fair number offer optional or recommended ones. These are typically highly selective or small private colleges. Most large public universities don't even offer interviews because there are simply too many applicants.

How do I know? Check a college's website or contact its admissions office to determine whether interviews are offered and how to schedule one. Interviews can be on-campus, usually with an admissions representative, or off-campus near where you live, usually with an alumnus of the college.

What if an interview is optional? If you have the option of getting interviewed, do it. It's to your benefit to take advantage of an opportunity to interview because it shows the school that you're genuinely interested in attending. And demonstrating interest can greatly help your chances of admission. Finally, the interview gives the school another chance to get to know you outside of what's in your application.

Interview Tips

1. Bring specific questions.

Your interviewer will expect you to ask some questions about the school and talk about why you want to go there. Put some energy into coming up with questions with answers that cannot be easily found on their website.

2. Practice, practice practice...

Being interviewed is a skill, and it requires practice. Sit down with one of your parents, a teacher, your school counselor, or a friend and have him or her ask you their best college interview questions. Answer them honestly and seriously. Then ask your "interviewer" how you came across. You'll also get better after each college interview, so try to arrange your schedule so that your last interviews are with the schools you care about most.

3. Common college interview questions.

Interviewers tend to ask about the same topics. Common interview topics include: .

1. Why do you want to attend this college/university? (Hint: Specific examples are always key!)
2. What's your favorite subject in high school?
3. What do you want to study in college?
4. What do you enjoy doing when you're not in class?
5. What are three interesting things about you that I wouldn't know from your application?
6. What's an example of an obstacle, a failure, or a mistake that you learned from?

4. Be yourself...

Remember, the key to getting admitted (and being happy at college) is finding your best fit school. You want to be yourself so that the person interviewing you can discern what you would add to the campus community. Before your interview, think about why the school appeals to you, what you want to study, and what you might do after graduation.

5. ...but be your best self.

You have many sides, so showcase the side of yourself that is professional, mature and poised. Don't show up looking like you just peeled yourself off the couch—wear what makes you feel comfortable and confident. Smile, and remember your interviewer wants the interview to go well too!

6. Stop worrying about the clock.

Most interviews run approximately 30 minutes to an hour. Students are sometimes told that the sign of a good interview is a long one. But on-campus interviews are usually scheduled back-to-back, and off-campus interviews are usually performed by alumni who are working professionals—so your interviewer is likely on a tight schedule. If you notice them checking the time, it's not (necessarily) because they think you're boring.

7. Be thankful.

Send a [thank-you note](#). If there's something about the interview that was helpful to you, let your interviewer know. If you connected with your interviewer over a book, common experience, or a band you're both into, then mention it! Otherwise, simply express your continued interest and thank your interviewer for taking the time to meet with you.

Virtual College Interviews



More and more colleges are opting for virtual interview experiences. As with any requirement, we strongly suggest that you check with each college's website to ensure that you are aware of their policies regarding the college interview. As before, some are required, some are optional, and some schools will not offer an interview opportunity. Some must be requested by you, and others might be offered by admissions after you apply. Bottom line, check the requirements of each school!

Please read the handout provided on the Google Classroom or in your Group Guidance packet for tips on the college interview. When doing a **virtual interview** consider these additional recommendations:

1. Carefully Select your Setting:

- When considering the location/room you will conduct your interview from, make sure you have an appropriate backdrop. Make sure your area is free of background noise. Prior to your interview day, check the lighting in the room.
- Please make sure everyone in your house is aware of your interview and request to have them remain quiet and away from your interview location.
- Random things are going to happen; your dog may have to let you know that a squirrel is in the yard, or the doorbell may ring. Do not get flustered, just roll with it.

2. Know the Device you're Using:

- Understand how to adjust the volume, camera, and screen.
- Be sure the device is charged and that you have the necessary cables if you need to connect to an outlet.
- When Wi-Fi isn't reliable, check to see if your phone can be used as a hotspot.

3. Prepare:

- Keep a list of possible questions for your interviewer that are specific to that college.
- Practice with a friend on a virtual platform so you both can practice using your skills in this format.
- As always, be yourself. The individuals on the other side of the camera are trying to get to know you as much as they want you to get to know them and understand their campus and needs.

4. Just Before the Interview:

- Keep the questions you plan to ask in view.
- Turn off your home and/or cell phone ringer(s) so you will not be disturbed.
- Double-check the time, and be aware of time zone differences.
- Test out the virtual platform ahead of time to make sure you know how it works.
- Dress as you would in an interview: a polo or nice shirt with pants or skirt is always a good look.
- Have water available; you will be talking quite a bit (but you should not be chewing gum, or eating during the interview!).
- Be ready early, just as you should always be for any interview.
- Close all other applications on the computer.

5. During the Interview:

- Look at the device's camera rather than your screen. (Think of the camera as being your interviewer; make eye contact.)
- Remember to nod and smile.
- Show your knowledge and etiquette by not interrupting and using appropriate language.
- If you can't hear clearly, as sometimes happens, apologize to the interviewer, and ask them to repeat the question.
- Should you get disconnected, wait a few minutes for the interviewer to call back. If that does not happen, initiate a new connection yourself.

6. After the Interview:

- Be sure to send a thank-you email to your interviewer within 24 hours of your interview.

College Interview Questions

PREPARE FOR COMMON QUESTIONS:

Tell me about yourself.

Tips: This is often how an interviewer will begin. Make sure your answer includes: something personal, something academic, and something extracurricular. Your answer will often dictate the next series of questions.

Your notes:

What are you interested in studying?

Tips: Interviewers want to see what lights you up intellectually. Note the subjects you're passionate about, and don't be afraid to get nerdy! Think about your background and what inspires your interest in the subjects you care about.

Your notes:

What are your personal interests?

Tips: The college wants to know what matters to you and what you'll bring to their community. Consider if you could only do two activities, what would they be? Talk about specific accomplishments you've made in those activities.

Your notes:

What are your biggest strengths?

Tips: When you answer this question, choose your top three strengths and share examples of each one in action. Elaborate on your answer and share what each strength has allowed you to do in your life.

Your notes:

What is a challenge you've faced?

Tips: This is a chance for colleges to learn more about you and to better understand how you deal with obstacles. Turn a challenge into a positive by discussing what you would have done differently or how it helped you grow.

Your notes:

Why are you interested in this college?

Tips: Your interviewer wants to see that you've done your homework. Talk about how the college's mission, academic programs, or campus life match up with your own values and interests. Share how you've imagined yourself as an active participant in the college.

Your notes:

Where do you see yourself in 5/10 years?

Tips: You don't need a perfect plan. Just show your interviewer that you've put some thought into your future. If you have a dream career and pathway, share it. If not, discuss the person you hope to be, the values you want to be living by, or the impact you want to have.

Your notes:

What's a book you enjoyed recently? / What three books would you take to a desert island? / Describe a literary character you admire?

Tips: This is a chance to showcase your personality, curiosity, and an interest you haven't mentioned. Choose a books/character that impacted you, and be prepared to share why. Warning: Some interviewers will specifically ask about a book you read outside the classroom.

Your notes:

Do you have any questions for me?

Tips: The answer to this is always YES! Here are some suggestions:

1. What is your favorite thing about the school?
2. If you could change one thing about the school, what would it be?
3. What do students like most about the school?
4. I have read about _____ major. Please tell me more.
5. What were the social and cultural highlights last year?
6. Are there special activities for freshmen?
7. What happens on a typical weekend?
8. Please tell me more about _____ (specific interest, team, club, etc.).
9. Please tell me more about the neighborhood surrounding the college.
10. What courses should I be sure to take if I enroll here?

Your notes:

PREPARE FOR UNCOMMON QUESTIONS:

Question	Notes
<i>What sets you apart from others?</i>	
<i>What would you change about your high school?</i>	
<i>If your teachers were to describe you, what words would they use?</i>	
<i>What would you do if you didn't attend college next year?</i>	
<i>What do you do when you're having trouble solving a problem?</i>	
<i>What qualities do you look for in friends?</i>	
<i>What are you grateful for?</i>	
<i>How have you left your mark on your community?</i>	
<i>What's your leadership style?</i>	
<i>If you could meet anyone, dead or alive, who would it be?</i>	
<i>Do you have a personal hero?</i>	
<i>What would you change about yourself?</i>	
<i>What did you do this past summer?</i>	
<i>What are your thoughts on a hot topic at your school?</i>	
<i>Tell me about a person or event that significantly changed you.</i>	
<i>What would you do to improve school?</i>	
<i>What is the most difficult situation you have had to face?</i>	
<i>Describe the courses you have enjoyed the most?</i>	
<i>Describe your favorite teacher?</i>	
<i>How would others describe your role in the school community? Describe a typical day at school.</i>	
<i>Who do you admire? Why?</i>	
<i>Describe a good decision you have made for yourself recently.</i>	

Junior Spring Checklist

- ☐ Make your **individual post-secondary meeting** with your school counselor
 - Schedule at least 1 student meeting
 - Schedule a family meeting after the student meeting (if desired)
 - Students with an IEP should also schedule a meeting with the transition counselor
- ☐ **Explore Colleges & Demonstrate Interest**
 - Attend In-person or Virtual Campus Tours and Information Sessions; be sure to register when available Demonstrating Interest
 - Open and read emails sent from colleges that you are exploring (as they may track this)
 - Other ways to demonstrate interest/research: *email admissions counselors, explore admissions section of college websites, optional interviews, sign up for mailing lists, etc.*
- ☐ **Narrow Down College List**
 - Keep your list accurate in Naviance
 - Make sure you have a range of targets, reaches, & safeties (remember that safeties are our “scholarship schools”)
 - What Colleges Look for in Students Handout
 - Make sure you have at least 1 (non-reach) SUNY if financial aid is a consideration
- ☐ **Brainstorm Common App Essay Ideas**
 - Common App prompts & College Essay Guidelines

- ☐ Update **Resume** Draft
 - Resume Handout
 - Refer to the samples for ideas on formatting and content
- ☐ Take your Spring **Exams**
 - SAT www.collegeboard.org (free prep on Bluebook App & Khan Academy)
 - ACT www.act.org (free prep at Kaplan)
- ☐ Ask 1 (or 2 if needed) Teachers for a **Letter of Rec**
 - Complete any information requested by teachers
 - Follow up with teachers this fall
 - Juniors Letters of Recommendation Handout
- ☐ **Complete Student Questionnaire by 5/1**
(through Google Doc found in Classroom)
 - Required for counselor letter of recommendation
 - You can also remind your parents to complete the brag sheet for you!
- ☐ Attend a **Financial Aid** event (parents)
 - Highly recommended for families interested in financial aid
 - Online SUNY Financial Aid events and HESC Financial Aid events
 - Use the MyinTuition calculator to see estimated financial aid

Remember: All college handouts are in our **Group Guidance Classroom**