

Staples High School
School Counseling Department

2026-27 GUIDE TO POST-HIGH SCHOOL PLANNING AND COLLEGE APPLICATIONS



Mission Statement:

The Staples High School community inspires learning,
fosters integrity, and nurtures empathy

Staples High School
70 North Ave., Westport, CT 06880
203-341-1201

The Westport Public School System affirms non-discriminatory practices in employment and in educational opportunity.

In compliance with Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Westport Public Schools do not discriminate in employment or in educational opportunity on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, marital status, race, color, creed, religion, national origin, age, ancestry, learning and/or physical disability, or past or present history of mental disorder.

Complaint Procedures:

1. File complaint with Principal; copy to coordinator (see below).
2. If not satisfied with Principal's resolution, you may appeal to Coordinator.
3. Next level appeal is to Superintendent.
4. Next level appeal is to Board of Education.

Superintendent of Schools

Thomas Scarice
Westport Public Schools
110 Myrtle Avenue
Westport, CT 06880
203-341-1025

Title VII and IX Coordinator

John Bayers, Assistant
Superintendent for Human
Resources & General Administration
Westport Public Schools
110 Myrtle Avenue
Westport, CT, 06880
203-341-1004

Title VI and Title 504 Coordinator

Michael Rizzo, Assistant Superintendent
for Pupil Personnel Services
Westport Public Schools
110 Myrtle Avenue
Westport, CT 06880
203-341-1250

**Title IX Compliance Officers,
Staples High School**

Christine Cincotta, Class of 2030
James Farnen, Class of 2027
Micah Lawrence, Class of 2028
Patrick Micinilio, Class of 2029

An Introduction from the SHS Counseling Department

The Staples High School Counseling Department follows a developmentally appropriate post-high school planning timeline, starting in ninth and tenth grade with introductory programs in classrooms, small groups, and individual conversations between students and their school counselors. In December of junior year, students participate in counselor led group activities where they learn about the criteria for developing a college list based on individual fit. Students also perform a college search with their criteria in mind using our college planning software program, Scoir. In January, we hold our *College Planning Night for Juniors and Families* covering various aspects of the search and application process.

Juniors and their families are encouraged to schedule an appointment to meet with their school counselor second semester. These meetings typically include the following: reviewing the transcript, graduation requirements, and senior year course selection; developing an appropriate standardized test schedule; and discussing college and career goals. Knowing that college is not the immediate next step for all students, we may discuss options such as employment, the military, a gap year, or PG year. Juniors attend various workshops and activities with school counselors in the spring to follow up on the post-high school planning process and tasks that would be beneficial for students to complete prior to the start of senior year.

Early in September of senior year, students and their families receive information explaining the college application, teacher recommendation, counselor recommendation, and transcript request process. While specific details are presented at that time, instructions and all required forms are available on the SHS Counseling website and can be worked on over the summer between junior and senior years.

We offer programming geared toward financial aid and fit in the college selection process. We hold a *College Admission Testing Presentation* with a local test prep agency and college admission panels with representatives from a variety of institutions every year. We also hold programs for student-athletes, visual and performing arts students, students with disabilities, international admissions, preparing students for the college transition, and *Finding Your Path* for students considering two-year colleges, technical schools, gap year programs, the military, and other post-high school possibilities. *Spark Your Future* is a career exploration series featuring Staples alumni working in various fields.

Your junior and senior years are filled with excitement, hard work, and many important decisions about your future. The School Counseling Department and College and Career Center staff are here to assist you and your family, and we wish you all the best in this process.

School Counseling Department Philosophy

The Staples High School Counseling Department values every student. Our philosophy is predicated on the belief that each student is a developing, capable, and unique individual who will learn from experience and grow personally and educationally throughout adolescence. We believe helping students to understand themselves will assist them in making sound decisions today and in their future.

School Counseling Department Mission Statement

The Staples High School Counseling Department supports our school's mission to "inspire learning, foster integrity and nurture empathy." Toward that end, we strive to provide each student with a developmentally appropriate program that fosters an understanding of, and appreciation for, one's unique self. Based on the American School Counseling Association model, our counseling services are proactive, developmental, and responsive to the individual needs of every student. We cultivate balance, strength, direction, and resilience, as we support each student on their own unique path. Our specific services, delivered by way of individual and group meetings, are geared toward enabling each student to develop the intrapersonal and interpersonal skills necessary for them to achieve their goals and lead successful adult lives in an increasingly complex and diverse society.

School Counseling Staff Directory

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shs.westportps.org
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<p>September</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ <i>Attend College Financial Aid Application Night</i>
<p>October & November</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Take PSAT/NMSQT ❑ Review PSAT/NMSQT results ❑ Register for AP exams ❑ <i>Attend Navigating the College Search</i> ❑ Consider informal campus visits to colleges
<p>December</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ College fit and list-building Connections lessons ❑ Register for Khan Academy for free online SAT prep ❑ Update resume/activity list ❑ Parents/guardians attend Scoir Workshop



January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Attend <i>College Planning Night for Juniors and Families</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Attend <i>Understanding College Financial Aid and Paying for College</i> program <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a preliminary list of colleges <input type="checkbox"/> Plan appropriate testing schedule; register for SAT and/or ACT <input type="checkbox"/> Review <i>Program of Studies</i> and consider courses for senior year
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Plan senior year courses with school counselor <input type="checkbox"/> Plan college visits with family <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule individual family meeting with school counselor
March & April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Take state-required SAT <input type="checkbox"/> Continue college visits <input type="checkbox"/> Begin financial aid research through the Federal Student Aid Estimator and Net Price Calculators <input type="checkbox"/> Attend specialized programs including <i>Prospective College Athlete Night for Students and Families</i>, <i>College Night for the Visual and Performing Arts</i>, <i>College Transition for Students With Disabilities</i> program, and <i>International Admissions Panel</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Attend <i>Preparing Students' Mental Health for College</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Attend <i>College Admission Testing Presentation</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Request 1-2 teacher recommendations and complete required questionnaires
May & June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Attend <i>College Admission Panel</i> program <input type="checkbox"/> Distribute <i>Reference Forms for Counselor Recommendation</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Attend <i>Finding Your Path: Exploring Post-High School Options</i> program <input type="checkbox"/> College application and personal essay brainstorming classroom and Connections lessons
Summer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Attend Summer College Essay and Application Workshop <input type="checkbox"/> Brainstorm essay topics and write initial essay draft <input type="checkbox"/> Start college applications <input type="checkbox"/> Continue college visits <input type="checkbox"/> Create calendar or organizational spreadsheet for applications <input type="checkbox"/> Complete <i>Counselor Recommendation Questionnaires (Student and Parent/Guardian)</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Develop resume, portfolio, or other reflection of special talent, as advised <input type="checkbox"/> For prospective Division I or II student-athletes, register with NCAA

September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> College application procedures and information presented to students <input type="checkbox"/> Parents/Guardians attend <i>College Application Procedures and Information Presentation</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Students schedule individual post-high school planning meetings with school counselor <input type="checkbox"/> Register for SAT and/or ACT if appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Meet with college representatives in the College & Career Center <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule remaining college visits and interviews <input type="checkbox"/> Finalize college list <input type="checkbox"/> Attend <i>Financial Aid Application Night</i> presentation <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to revise personal essay; seek feedback from school counselor or teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Review your transcript for accuracy <input type="checkbox"/> Request transcripts and recommendations four weeks before application deadlines <input type="checkbox"/> For prospective Division I or II athletes, register with NCAA and send official transcript and test scores (if applicable)
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Complete early applications and essays (if applicable) <input type="checkbox"/> Request official SAT and/or ACT scores to be sent to the colleges you're applying to (if applicable) <input type="checkbox"/> Finalize resume, portfolio, or other reflection of special talent as advised <input type="checkbox"/> File FAFSA online <input type="checkbox"/> Check if your colleges require CSS Profile Form or institutional financial aid forms and complete if required <input type="checkbox"/> Check with colleges regarding institutional scholarships
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> If required, request 1st quarter grades to go to early decision/early action/rolling colleges <input type="checkbox"/> Write thank you notes to Staples staff who have written your letters of recommendation <input type="checkbox"/> Early applicants: confirm colleges received all application materials <input type="checkbox"/> Explore scholarship opportunities <input type="checkbox"/> Access college and career center for assistance with financial aid applications <input type="checkbox"/> Register for May AP exams
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Complete regular decision applications <input type="checkbox"/> Inform your school counselor of early admission decisions <input type="checkbox"/> Update your admission decisions in Scoir <input type="checkbox"/> If admitted to your early decision college, withdraw other applications

January & February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Check messages from SHS Counseling and SHS Counseling Newsletter for information about local scholarships <input type="checkbox"/> Attend College and Career Center Scholarships Workshop
March & April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Review your admission decisions and financial aid offers with parents and school counselor and consider campus visits <input type="checkbox"/> If you have been placed on a waitlist, follow up appropriately <input type="checkbox"/> Make final decisions; send deposit by May 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Inform colleges that you will not be attending <input type="checkbox"/> Access College and Career Center for assistance with reviewing financial aid awards <input type="checkbox"/> Apply for local scholarships
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Take AP exams and request scores to be sent to the college you will be attending <input type="checkbox"/> Complete Post-High School Information Survey <input type="checkbox"/> Update admission decisions in Scoir and inform your school counselor <input type="checkbox"/> For students with an IEP or 504 plan, contact disabilities office for college you are attending to request accommodations <input type="checkbox"/> Participate in Senior Internship Program
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> GRADUATION!!!! Good luck!!!! <input type="checkbox"/> Request official transcript for any dual enrollment courses taken through UConn, SCSU, or CT State Community College to be sent to the college you will be attending



It is most important for every student to take an appropriately rigorous and personally challenging academic program. One reason is that the high school transcript is the single most important factor in the college admission process.

Admission committees assess a student's transcript based on the course selection, level of courses, grades earned, and the GPA (grade point average).

When researching colleges, be aware there are specific requirements that students must follow. Some colleges may require additional courses in performing, fine, practical and human arts, which provide an important dimension to a student's educational experience. For example, the University of California system requires a full-year course (two semesters) of Theater, Music, or Visual Arts, and several of the southern public flagship universities have structured requirements to consider.

Admission standards vary based on the type of institution and its level of selectivity. Generally, the more selective an institution, the more that institution will demand from its applicants. Colleges may change admission requirements from year to year; obtain specific information directly from the college about its standards and policies.

Staples Transcript and GPA

The transcript contains two GPAs (Grade Point Averages): Unweighted GPA and Weighted GPA. Both GPAs are calculated on a 4.0 scale. Full details can be found in the [Student Handbook](#) or [Program of Studies](#).

Through the end of junior year, the GPAs are calculated based on final grades for completed courses. Courses in progress are also listed on the transcript, without a grade. After first semester of senior year is completed, a seventh-semester GPA is calculated for seniors only and reported to colleges on the mid-year transcript. Staples does not assign class rank.

Students and families can view all previous courses and grades on the "Grade History" page in the PowerSchool student/parent portal. All students and families are emailed a copy of their unofficial transcript at the completion of each semester. If you need an official transcript sent prior to the college application process in senior year, visit the Transcripts page on the [SHS Counseling website](#) or contact Mrs. Susan Fugitt, Registrar.

For more information, watch our [Understanding the Report Card, Transcript, and GPA video](#).

The School Profile is a comprehensive document describing the Westport community, Staples statistics, our grading system, and course offerings. Below is a sample of the Staples High School Profile, which is updated each fall and sent to colleges along with your transcript. The School Profile can be downloaded from the [SHS Counseling Website](#).



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CEEB / ACT Code 070-920

COMMUNITY

Westport is a shoreline town in Fairfield County one hour from New York City with a population of 27,282 and median household income of \$250,001. The community is 79% white, 5% Asian, 9% Hispanic, 2% Black, and 5% Other, including American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and two or more races. Families and the community demonstrate strong support for the school system, which also includes two middle schools grades 6-8, five elementary schools grades K-5, and one pre-school. Per pupil expenditure was \$25,576.

SCHOOL OFFICIALS

Thomas Scarice, *Superintendent of Schools*
 Stafford W. Thomas, Jr., *Principal*
 Christine Cincotta, *Assistant Principal*
 James Farnen, *Assistant Principal*
 Micah Lawrence, *Assistant Principal*
 Patrick Micinilio, *Assistant Principal*
 Rosemarie Ampha, *Assistant Principal for Special Education*

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Aerial photo courtesy of Brandon Main, Class of 2021

Staples High School | 2025-26 School Profile

Staples High School, founded in 1884, is a comprehensive public high school grades 9–12 with an enrollment of 1,600 students and 200 faculty members. The single public high school serving the town of Westport, Staples is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges and consistently ranked as one of the top high schools in Connecticut. Forty varsity athletic teams compete in the Fairfield County Interscholastic Athletic Conference (FCIAC). There is active participation in vibrant art, music, theater, and media programs and over 100 extracurricular activities. While the majority of graduates ultimately attend a four-year college, Staples honors all pathways to success and offers a range of programs to meet the academic and personal needs of students.

TRANSCRIPT + GRADING

Staples High School does not rank students. Two grade point averages are calculated on a 4.0 scale: Unweighted GPA and Weighted GPA, as detailed below. Both include grades in all courses taken at Staples, including academic, elective, and Health & Physical Education courses. For transfer students, the previous school courses, credits, and pass/fail grades are listed on the Staples transcript. Transfer transcripts are attached to the Staples transcript as separate documents. Previous school letter grades are not included in the Staples GPAs.

Unweighted GPA

	A+	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	FWF
All Courses	4.33	4.00	3.67	3.33	3.00	2.67	2.33	2.00	1.67	1.33	1.00	0.67	0.00

Weighted GPA

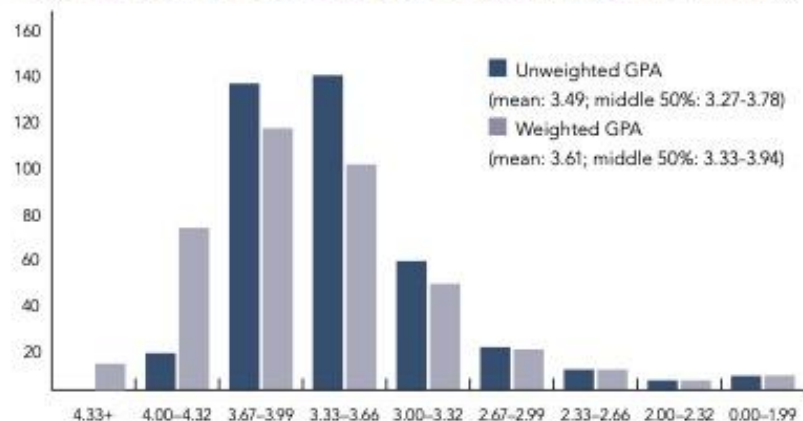
	A+	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	FWF
College Level	5.00	4.67	4.33	4.00	3.67	3.33	3.00	2.67	2.33	2.00	1.67	1.33	0.00
Honors	4.67	4.33	4.00	3.67	3.33	3.00	2.67	2.33	2.00	1.67	1.33	1.00	0.00
College & Career Prep	4.33	4.00	3.67	3.33	3.00	2.67	2.33	2.00	1.67	1.33	1.00	0.67	0.00

College Level Weight: Advanced Placement courses, dual enrollment courses, Calculus BC Plus, Multivariable Calculus, and Differential Equations

Honors Weight: Honors courses

College & Career Prep Weight: All other courses from all subject areas, including A (advanced college prep), B (college prep), and C level academic, non-leveled elective, and Health & Physical Education courses

CLASS OF 2026 6TH SEMESTER GPA DISTRIBUTION [416 STUDENTS]



Highest Final Unweighted) GPA / Class of 2025 4.32
Highest Final Weighted) GPA / Class of 2025 4.66

Staples High School | 2025-26 School Profile

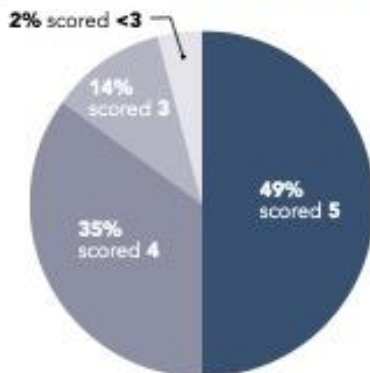
GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

<i>Humanities</i>	
English	4.0
Social Studies	3.0
Visual + Performing Arts	1.0
Open Humanities	1.0
<i>Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math</i>	
Math	3.0
Science	3.0
Open STEAM	3.0
World Languages	2.0
Health + Physical Education	2.5
Mastery-Based Diploma Assessment (MBDA)*	1.0
Additional Credits	2.5
Total Credits	26.0

*Students create a portfolio to demonstrate skill mastery and reflection in four domain areas (Collaborators, Communicators, Critical Thinkers, and Creators) through learning experiences embedded in their courses.

STANDARDIZED TESTING

Advanced Placement Exam Results
In spring 2025, 607 students took a total of 1,437 AP exams. The mean score was 4.3.



ACT Results (2024-25 school year)

	Middle 50%	Mean
Composite	27-32	29.1
English	26-35	30.3
Math	26-32	28.2
Reading	25-34	29.3
Science	25-32	28.3

SAT Results (Class of 2025)

	Middle 50%	Mean
Total	1110-1390	1239
ERW	560-690	624
Math	540-690	615

Class of 2025 Recognitions

National Merit Scholars	1
National Merit Finalists	11
National Merit Commended Students	23
National African-American Recognition	5
National Hispanic Recognition	17
AP Scholars	32
AP Scholars with Honor	28
AP Scholars with Distinction	145

PROGRAM OFFERINGS

Advanced Courses (26 AP, 42 Honors, 7 UConn ECE, 2 SCSU Early College)

English

English 9 Honors
English 10 Honors
AP English Language
AP English Literature
Mythology & Bible Honors
Seminar in Academic Writing and Multimodal Composition (UConn ECE)
Shakespeare Honors

Math

Geometry Honors
Algebra 2 Honors
Pre-Calculus Honors
Calculus Honors
AP Calculus AB
AP Calculus BC
AP Statistics
Calculus BC Plus*
Multivariable Calculus*
Differential Equations*

Science

Biology Honors
Chemistry Honors
Physics Honors
AP Biology
AP Chemistry

AP Computer Science A
AP Computer Science Principles
AP Environmental Science
AP Physics 1
AP Physics C: Mechanics & E&M
Advanced Forensics (option for SCSU Early College)
Scientific Research Honors (option for SCSU Early College)

Social Studies

Global Themes Honors
U.S. History Honors
AP European History
AP Macro/Microeconomics
AP Psychology
AP U.S. Government & Politics
AP U.S. History
AP World History: Modern
Anthropology (option for UConn ECE)
Introduction to Human Rights (formerly Contemporary World Studies--UConn ECE)

Visual + Performing Arts

Digital Design Honors (Motion)
Digital Design Honors (Print)
Photography Honors
Studio Portfolio Honors

AP Art & Design
AP Music Theory
Honors Option For All Music Ensembles
Pop Music and Diversity in American Society (option for UConn ECE)

World Languages

French 2, 3, 4, 5 Honors
AP French Language (option for UConn ECE)
German 2, 3, 4, 5 Honors
AP German Language (option for UConn ECE)
Italian 2, 3 Honors
Italian 4 Honors (option for UConn ECE)
Latin 2, 3, 4 Honors
AP Latin
Mandarin Chinese 2, 3, 4, 5 Honors
AP Chinese Language & Culture
Spanish 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 Honors
AP Spanish Language
AP Spanish Literature

*college level weight in Weighted GPA

- For course descriptions, refer to: shs.westportps.org/teaching-and-learning/program-of-studies.
- Accelerated Science is a two-year college preparatory course utilizing a multidisciplinary perspective and including physics, chemistry, biology, and Earth and space science.
- College credit is available through the University of Connecticut Early College Experience (ECE) and Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU) Early College programs. These courses are weighted at the college level in the Weighted GPA.
- Students may take courses at Connecticut State Community College through the High School Partnership (HSP) program. HSP courses are weighted at the college level in the Weighted GPA.
- Students may focus on an area of interest beyond the traditional curriculum through an Independent Learning Experience (ILE). A significant personal investment and independence are expected from the student. ILEs are graded pass/fail and noted on the student's transcript.
- Advanced art and media courses may be taken multiple times for credit with teacher approval.
- Through the Connecticut State Seal of Biliteracy, students are recognized who have attained an Intermediate Mid or higher level of proficiency in speaking, writing, listening, and reading comprehension in two or more languages (including studying four years of English).

CLASS OF 2025 FUTURE PLANS

405 graduates attending 153 different post-secondary institutions

94.1% Four-year Colleges

1.7% Two-year Colleges

2.0% PG / Vocational / Other Higher Education

1.2% Gap Year

0.9% Employment / Other

The mission of the Westport Public Schools is to prepare all students to reach their full potential as lifelong learners and socially responsible contributors to our global community.

Two-Year Colleges

You may choose to earn an associate's degree at a two-year institution, which is designed to prepare you for a job in fields such as business, health, technology, or public service, or to transfer after your first two years to a four-year institution. Connecticut State Community College is a public, two-year degree granting institution consisting of twelve campuses located throughout the state. Local campuses include Gateway (New Haven), Norwalk, and Housatonic (Bridgeport). Students select a "home" campus, but may take classes at any campus, based on convenience and course availability.

Transfer Programs:

Through the [Guaranteed Admissions Program](#) (GAP), graduates of Connecticut State Community College who earn an associate's degree and have at least a 3.0 grade point average (3.3 GPA for business) are guaranteed admission to the University of Connecticut's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; College of Agriculture, Health, and Natural Resources; or The School of Business.

Additional transfer options are available through the [Connecticut Guarantee](#). In this program, students with an associate's degree from Connecticut State Community College and a qualifying GPA receive guaranteed transfer credits and junior standing to nine different independent institutions including Albertus Magnus College, Goodwin University, Mitchell College, Quinnipiac University, Sacred Heart University, University of Bridgeport, University of Hartford, University of New Haven, and University of Saint Joseph.

Funding:

The [Mary Ann Handley Award](#) covers the gap between the federal and state grants a student receives, and the community college tuition and mandatory fees. To be eligible, students must reside in Connecticut and be enrolled in a degree or credit-bearing certificate program (carrying at least six credits). To be considered for this funding, students must also complete the FAFSA.

Four-Year Colleges and Universities

Four-year colleges and universities lead to a bachelor's degree in a specific area of study, which can prepare students for a profession or graduate study. There are generally more extensive admission requirements than two-year colleges. Some four-year institutions are focused on visual and performing arts or technical areas.

For more information related to each of these post-high school options, visit the [Post-High School Planning](#) page on the SHS Counseling website!

Private Vocational Trade and Technical Schools

A number of privately-owned schools provide vocational training. Areas of specialization include automotive, culinary, plumbing, electrical, cosmetology, and medical and technical training. These schools help students develop skills for a specific career.

Postgraduate (PG) Year

A PG year is a transition year between high school and college that allows a student access to the resources and academic preparation of a boarding school. It can be beneficial for strengthening academic skills, participating in sports and other co-curricular activities, preparing for admission testing, and providing a chance to mature. Over 150 schools worldwide offer PG programs. Admission standards vary, as do the objectives of the programs themselves.

Gap Year

A gap year allows students another opportunity for personal growth after high school. Successful gap year experiences start with a well-developed plan and include personal goals. Some exciting and valuable programs include internships in the community, leadership training, and structured travel/education. It is advisable to complete the college application process and defer matriculation for one year.

Armed Services

Opportunities in education and training are available in all branches of the Armed Services. Your options include the Air Force, Army, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard, National Guard, and U.S. Merchant Marines.

Employment/Apprenticeships

Some students may choose to go directly into the work force. Resources for pursuing this path are available through College and Career Center.

Research and Selection of a College

The most important part of this process is identifying colleges that align with your goals and where you will grow and thrive. As you explore options, consider four key areas: **fit** (academic, social, personal), **value** (cost), **outcomes** (post-graduation results), and **engagement** (how students take advantage of opportunities).

A common misconception is that there is one “perfect” college. In reality, there are many places that may be right for you. The process becomes more manageable when you collaborate with your school counselor and take advantage of the resources available through the School Counseling Office and the College and Career Center

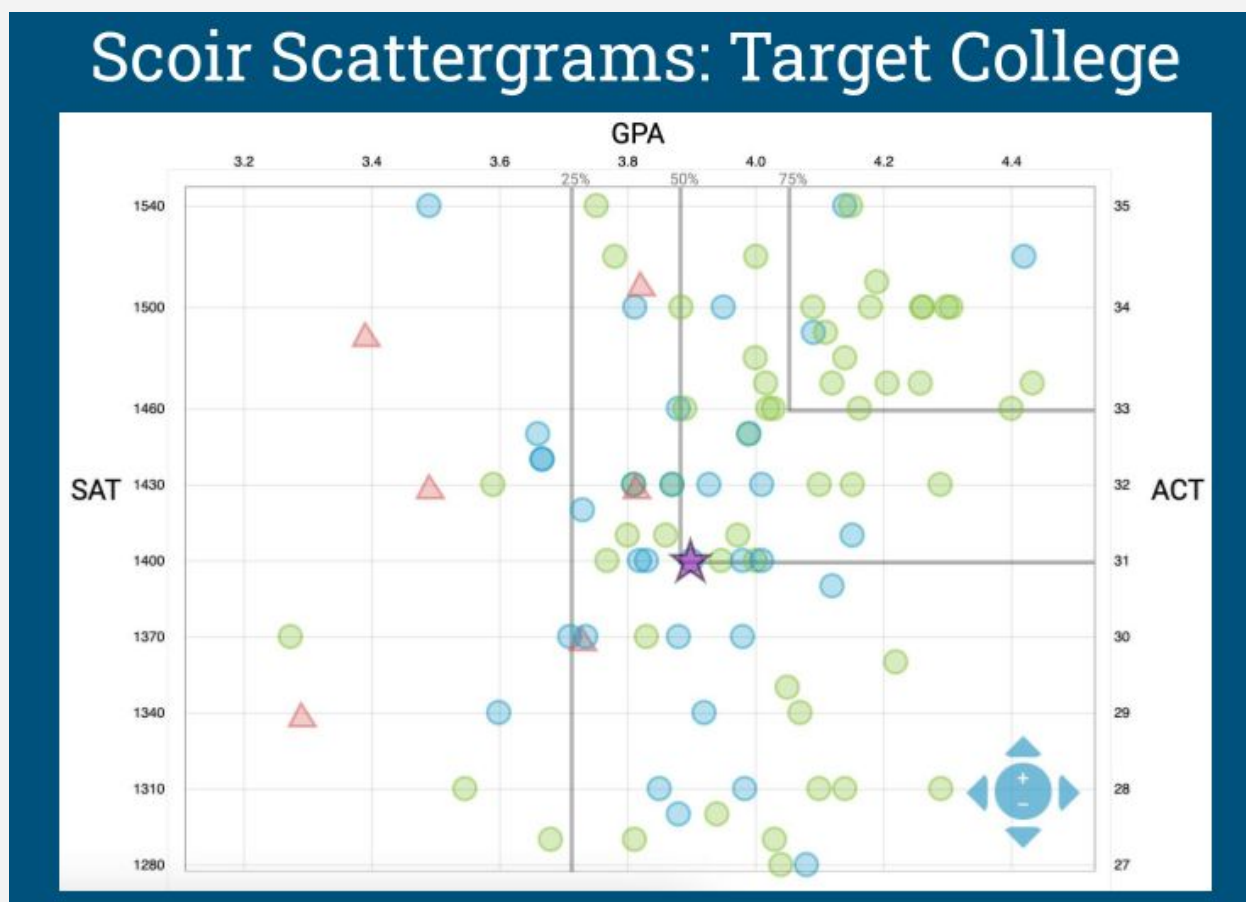
When researching colleges, there are a wide variety of factors to consider, ranging from size and location to extracurricular activities and career preparation. To assist in the process, we developed the [SHS Counseling Guide for Finding a College That is a Good Fit](#).

[Scoil](#) is a web-based program for college and career planning for students and families. Students and families are able to:

- Perform a college search and create a college list
- Access college profiles and websites
- Compare GPA, standardized test scores, and other statistics to actual historical data for Staples students who have applied in the past
- View college representative visit schedules

Scoil is used to send school materials to colleges including transcripts, counselor recommendations, and teacher recommendations.

Scattergrams are one of the primary features of Scoir. Scattergrams are used to gauge whether a college is a reach, target, or likely for admission. Students can compare their GPA and test scores to the profile of previous Staples applicants. Below is an example of a scattergram for what can be considered a target college for this student, since the student's GPA and test scores are close to the average accepted profile for this college. Watch our video to help with [Understanding Scoir Scattergrams](#).



● Accepted
 ▲ Not Accepted
 ● Waitlisted
 ● Deferred
 ★ Guaranteed Transfer

The purpose of the college visit is to assess whether that institution is a good fit for you. Visit as many of the colleges on your list as realistically possible. Students are permitted two days per school year to visit colleges or other post-high school options. Check the college website for instructions to schedule a visit, including tours, information sessions, and interviews. In addition to the official admission visit, we encourage families to leave time to explore the nearby area and talk informally with students on campus.

Special Considerations for Competitive Majors

While most colleges do not require students to declare a major until the end of sophomore year, in some cases, usually at large universities, students will apply directly into a major. Majors such as computer science, engineering, nursing, and business are extremely popular and spaces are limited. If you are interested in applying to one of these more selective majors, we encourage you to utilize this [resource](#) including specific questions that you can ask when you are visiting colleges.

If You Cannot Visit

Sometimes it is not realistically possible for you to visit a college campus. You can still get the feel of a college by talking to recent graduates or current students from this area. The School Counseling Department keeps a database of recent Staples graduates attending college; visit the College and Career Center for help with connecting with one of these students. You can also inquire about alumni interviews, college fairs, regional events, and meet college representatives during meetings in the fall of senior year. Be mindful of any colleges that track a student's demonstrated interest in the admission process, and if you cannot visit campus, take advantage of other opportunities to learn about the college and demonstrate interest.

Online Research Tools

There are numerous tools for investigating colleges and gathering information to determine which may be the right fit for you in lieu of a campus visit. Take notes as you go along, which will come in handy for applications and essays down the road. Here are some tips:

- Take virtual campus tours.
- Explore majors and classes you are interested in pursuing. Contact professors or department representatives for more information.
- Read college newspapers and alumni newsletters.
- Check colleges' social media accounts, particularly ones not operated by the admission office, to see what's on students' minds and learn about campus culture and organizations you are interested in joining.

Whether visiting campuses in person or exploring options online, there are many factors to consider and questions to ask. To support this process, we developed the [SHS Counseling Guide for Finding a College That is a Good Fit](#).

Colleges and universities have varying admission practices. Current information pertaining to the policies of an individual college are found on its website and in its publications.

Application plans include the following:

Early Action (EA)

Students apply and receive a decision well in advance of the institution's regular response date. Application deadlines are typically in October, November, or December. Students admitted under EA are not obligated to accept the offer of admission or submit a deposit prior to May 1. A student may apply to other colleges.

Restrictive Early Action (REA) / Single Choice Early Action

Offered by only a small number of institutions, students apply to an institution of preference and receive a decision well in advance of the institution's regular response date. Application deadlines are typically in November. There are restrictions on students' other early applications articulated on their applications and websites. Students admitted under REA are not obligated to accept the offer of admission or submit a deposit prior to May 1.

Early Decision

Students make a commitment to a first-choice institution where, if admitted, they will enroll. Students may apply to other institutions, but may have only one ED application pending at any time. The institution will notify the applicant of the decision within 1-2 months. If accepted ED, the student must withdraw all other pending applications. There are some colleges that offer ED I and ED II. The only difference is deadline dates; ED I deadlines are typically in November, and ED II deadlines are typically in January.

Regular Decision

A student submits an application by a specified date, often in January or February, but could be earlier in the admission cycle. A student may apply to other institutions without restriction.

Rolling Admission

An institution reviews applications as they are completed on a first come, first served basis and renders admission decisions to students throughout the admission cycle. A student may apply to other institutions without restriction.

Direct Admissions

Some colleges proactively offer admission to students based on achieving a certain GPA in high school. If a student chooses to accept the offer of admission, they would complete a streamlined application typically waiving fees, essays, and letters of recommendation.

Open Admissions

Students are accepted upon application in Open Admissions (usually community colleges).

Visit the [SHS Counseling website](#) for information and required forms related to requesting transcripts and recommendations in senior year. Instructions are updated in the summer each year.



Teacher Recommendations

The college application process often requires one or two letters of recommendation from academic teachers. Read each college's application instructions carefully to determine recommendation requirements. The purpose of the teacher recommendation is to describe their experience with the student in their class and give colleges an idea of how a student is likely to perform academically. Colleges are interested in various qualities including a student's work ethic, motivation, creativity, and capacity for growth. Teacher recommendations are confidential and not shared with students, parents, or counselors.

Junior Year:

Any student planning to apply to a four-year college should ask one or two teachers for a recommendation in spring of junior year. Choose teacher(s) who know you well to write recommendations for you, preferably junior year teachers. Take the time to schedule an appointment and ask the teacher in person.

By the end of the school year, students should complete for each teacher either the Teacher Recommendation Questionnaire from the Forms page on the [SHS Counseling website](#) or the teacher's own questionnaire. The student's college list does not need to be set until senior year; only background information about the student and his/her experience in the class is provided through these questionnaires.

Teacher recommendations are sent to colleges through Scoir. We will provide instructions to follow at the start of senior year.

The college application process often requires a letter of recommendation from your school counselor. Whereas the purpose of the teacher recommendation is to focus on your individual experience in a specific class, the counselor recommendation discusses your personal qualities, character, background, activities, and your broad academic profile. Counselor recommendations are confidential and not shared with students or parents. In order to write a thorough recommendation, your counselor will need completed Counselor Recommendation Questionnaires from the student and parent/guardian(s) and an updated resume or activity list. Reference Forms for Counselor Recommendations are also encouraged and helpful to the counselor.

Counselor Recommendation Questionnaire (Student): The purpose of the student's Counselor Recommendation Questionnaire is to provide detailed information to your counselor that they can utilize when writing your college recommendation. This document must be completed prior to the transcript request. Only your school counselor will access this document. The Counselor Recommendation Questionnaire requires students to respond to a series of open-ended reflective questions that take time to complete thoughtfully. Students should also be sure that their resume or activity list is updated with extracurricular activities, employment, community service, and summer experiences and email it to their school counselor.

Counselor Recommendation Questionnaire (Parent/Guardian): The purpose of the parent/guardian's Counselor Recommendation Questionnaire is to provide a description of your child that the counselor can refer to when writing their college recommendation. Any specifics you can offer including examples and anecdotes are extremely useful. This document must be completed prior to the student making a transcript request. Only your child's school counselor will access this document. The Counselor Recommendation Questionnaire requires the parent/guardian(s) to respond to a series of open-ended reflective questions about their child, experiences in school, and family background, and it takes time to complete thoughtfully.

Reference Form for Counselor Recommendation: Reference Forms are helpful to your school counselor in writing your letter of recommendation. This form is not sent to colleges and is not a substitution for teacher letters of recommendation. Students are encouraged to distribute this form to a coach, club advisor, employer, or any other pertinent outside reference. This form can also be used for teachers other than those already writing a college recommendation letter. Reference Forms are available on the [Forms](#) page on the SHS Counseling website. Completed forms are returned to Staples registrar, Mrs. Fugitt, to be passed along to the student's school counselor.

Supplemental Recommendations

Most students submit only what is required. Some colleges accept a supplemental recommendation beyond what it has required. This extra letter should provide different or additional context and is rarely from a third Staples teacher. A supplemental letter might come from a coach, employer, club advisor, or anyone who might know you as a result of a unique talent or from an outside activity. Students may assign a recommender who is not a Staples staff member through the [Common Application](#) or the recommender can email or mail a hard copy of their recommendation directly to the colleges.

Standardized testing is only part of the information that represents you. Many colleges and universities are test-optional; however, some require applicants to submit scores from either the SAT or the ACT. Test titles and descriptions are shown below.

PSAT/NMSQT (National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test)

The PSAT/NMSQT test is administered by College Board and given in October to juniors. The PSAT is a useful indicator of aptitude as well as the basis for eligibility toward the National Merit Scholarship program. Students receive scores in Evidenced-Based Reading & Writing and Math, a total (sum) score, and Selection Index, which is used exclusively for National Merit competition. PSAT scores are not used in the college admission process.

ACT

The ACT currently consists of English, Mathematics, Reading, and optional Science and Writing sections. Students receive a separate score for each section plus a composite score. Students can submit "superscored" score reports that list the strongest section scores across multiple test administrations. While the Science section is optional, some colleges may require it of students who wish to submit ACT scores. Virtually no colleges require the Writing section. Check with individual colleges to understand their policy.

SAT

The SAT consists of Evidenced-Based Reading & Writing and Math sections. Depending on the college's requirements, students may be able to choose which test administration date(s) to send. Check with individual colleges to understand their policy.

Advanced Placement (AP) Exams

AP Exams are given at the high school in May based on college-level courses. Registration takes place in the fall. In most cases, there is no need to send official AP scores from College Board to the college until after the student has made his or her final decision where to enroll. The scores are primarily used for college placement, credit, or advanced standing. Students may choose to self-report scores on their applications. Check with each individual college regarding their policy.

English Proficiency Testing

Colleges and universities may require international students and English language learners to demonstrate English language proficiency. The most commonly accepted proficiency tests are:

[TOEFL \(Test of English as a Foreign Language\)](#): The TOEFL is taken on a computer in a test center, consists of four sections (reading, listening, speaking and writing), and lasts just under two hours.

[IELTS \(International English Language Testing System\)](#): The IELTS Academic test can be taken in a test center on paper or on a computer and can also be taken online at home. The listening, reading and writing sections are completed on the same day with no breaks. The speaking section may be scheduled up to one week before or after the other tests. The total test time is two hours and forty-five minutes.

[Duolingo English Test](#): The Duolingo English Test is taken on a computer, on demand, from anywhere with a reliable internet connection and is one hour in length.

Which Tests to Take

Early in second semester, juniors should discuss with their school counselor which tests to take and an appropriate timeline. As a general guideline, if you are planning to apply to college, you should take the SAT and/or the ACT 2-3 times. The best preparation for scoring well is to read regularly, do your homework, and take a strong high school program.

Standardized Testing with Accommodations

Students who receive accommodations at Staples through an IEP or 504 plan may request accommodations. There are deadlines established by the College Board and ACT for requesting accommodations; requests will not be accepted after the deadlines. More details, a timeline to follow, and forms can be found on the Standardized Testing page on the [SHS Counseling website](#).

Reporting Scores

During senior year, students request to have their scores sent from the testing companies when required by colleges to which they are applying. Staples does not release official test scores, and they are not reported on the transcript. Some colleges allow students to self-report test scores on their application. Colleges set their own testing requirements, which can be found on their respective websites.

Test-Optional Colleges

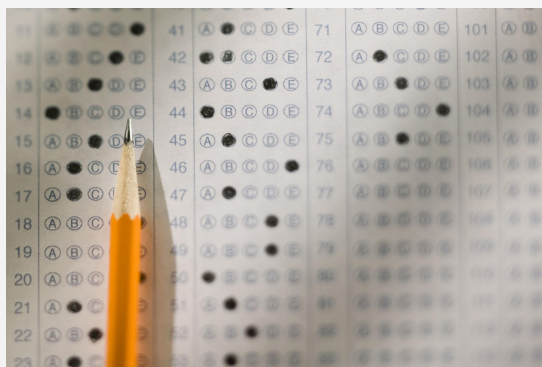
There are many colleges that do not require standardized test scores in their application process. A complete list of those colleges can be found at www.fairtest.org.

2026 - 27 Test Dates and Registration

The ACT and SAT are given on specific Saturdays throughout the calendar year. Visit the [ACT](#) and [College Board](#) websites for test dates and registration. Be sure you use your full legal name when registering. The statewide SAT administration will be held in March 2027. Students do not need to register for this test.

Staples is not an ACT test site for standard Saturday administration or National Extended Time testing or an SAT test site for standard Saturday administration or 50% extended time.

For students with disabilities requiring Special (school-based) Testing on the ACT or School-Based Testing on the SAT, Staples is a test site for only some test dates. Space is limited; priority will be given to students in the current senior class.



There are three main types of applications: [The Common Application](#), [Apply With Scoir](#), and school-specific applications. The college's website will list which application(s) it accepts. If a college offers a choice of applications, we generally encourage students to use the Common Application. Colleges will not differentiate between use of its own application and the Common Application or Apply With Scoir.

Students need to remain organized and be aware of necessary supplements and deadline dates including an Early Decision Agreement if applying ED. More specific and detailed information can be found on the Common Application, Apply With Scoir, and colleges' websites.

The SHS Counseling Department has developed in-depth guides for students to utilize when completing their college applications, found in Schoology, handouts, and messages from the SHS Counseling Department.

Application Tips

- Begin well in advance of the deadline.
- See Schoology/handouts for application tip guides and follow directions carefully.
- If you have an intended major, list it. Otherwise, choose "Undecided" .
- When asked to list activities, remember to also include out of school commitments.
- Describe activities clearly including purpose, commitment, and level of participation.
- If the application does not provide adequate space to thoroughly explain your activities or achievements, you may use the "Additional Information" section. Consult with your school counselor as to what information, if any, to include.
- Use Google Docs to complete your personal essay and writing supplements, then copy and paste into the appropriate box on the online application.
- Don't rely on spellcheck. Proofread yourself, then ask an adult.
- Review your entire application before you submit the final version.
- Be sure to send any supplemental material if required.
- After submitting your application, look for email confirmation that your application has been received and if there are any additional requirements, such as the STARS.
- When used ethically and responsibly, AI can be a beneficial tool for students to use in the college admission process. Universities vary in their policies around the use of AI, but several advise students in ways similar to [UConn](#) and [Georgia Tech](#).

On most applications, students respond to one of several open-ended essay questions. Application essay questions have no right or wrong answers. It is the content of the essay and how you organize and support your thoughts that are most important. Your essay should serve as a reflection of who you are and provide evidence of your personality and experiences that are not reflected in other parts of your application. School counselors and English teachers engage students in an essay brainstorming activity at the end of junior year. Staples also offers a summer college application and essay workshop in August.

<u>ESSAY DOs</u>	<u>ESSAY DON'Ts</u>
<p><i>Write in the voice of a teenager.</i> This is what the colleges expect and want.</p> <p><i>Answer the question.</i> Write an essay that explicitly addresses the question asked.</p> <p><i>Write about a topic you genuinely care about,</i> not simply one that just sounds impressive. It will not come across as sincere.</p> <p><i>Describe feelings</i> as well as actions. Be thoughtful and reflective.</p> <p><i>Use examples, anecdotes, and/or specific details.</i> Try to tap into all five senses.</p> <p><i>Share</i> your essay with your school counselor prior to submission in a timely manner.</p>	<p><i>Don't write about what you think admission officers want to hear.</i></p> <p><i>Don't just write about where you have been or what you have done.</i> Reflect on what your experiences say about you as a person.</p> <p><i>Don't complain about your circumstances or make excuses.</i> It is acceptable to write about a challenge or obstacle. However, what is important to the reader is how you were shaped by the experience in a positive manner.</p> <p><i>Don't submit an essay that contains any individual college's name.</i> Proofread carefully.</p>

Important Note: If you are considering using AI as a thought partner for brainstorming or constructive feedback, be sure to review each college's specific policies and ensure your final work reflects your own voice and ideas.

Supplemental and School Specific Questions

A number of colleges ask for responses to additional questions. Take the time to review your "My Colleges" section within the Common Application for each college to identify the supplemental questions. Answer these questions thoughtfully. Carefully proofread your responses. The effort and quality of these responses should be comparable to that of your main essay. Supplemental questions for your admissions cycle will be updated after August 1. It is advised to wait until this time to begin working on your responses.

While it is typically not required to submit a formal resume as part of your college application, you will provide information regarding your activities, experiences, and accomplishments throughout high school on your application and share an activity list or resume with your school counselor.

We have provided a brief sample of an activity list below that students will begin during a classroom lesson with school counselors in sophomore year and continue to update throughout high school. This is one format option; you should develop your activity list/resume according to your individual needs and preferences.

Example 1

- **Activity Type**
Journalism / Publication
- **Position/Leadership description**
News Editor (12), Staff writer (10, 11)
- **Organization name**
Inklings Newspaper
- **Describe this activity, including what you accomplished and any recognition you received**
Member of award-winning high school newspaper; participate in story generation, writing, copy editing, graphics production & layout.
- **Participation grade levels**

<input type="checkbox"/> Grade 9	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grade 11
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grade 10	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grade 12
- **Times of Participation**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> During school year	<input type="checkbox"/> During school break
	<input type="checkbox"/> Full year
- **Hours spent per week:** 10 hours
- **Weeks spent per year:** 40 weeks

Example 2

- **Activity Type**
Family responsibility
- **Position/Leadership description**
Babysitting younger sibling
- **Organization name**
N/A
- **Describe this activity, including what you accomplished and any recognition you received**
After school, I am the caretaker for my two younger siblings until my parents return from work. I make them a snack, help them transition to working on homework, and stay on task.
- **Participation grade levels**

<input type="checkbox"/> Grade 9	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grade 11
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grade 10	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grade 12
- **Times of Participation**

<input type="checkbox"/> During school year	<input type="checkbox"/> During school break
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Full year
- **Hours spent per week:** 12
- **Weeks spent per year:** 52

The purpose of an interview is to enable you to make a direct personal impression on an admission representative. It is a chance for the college to learn about you and for you to learn about the college. Check with each college to determine if interviews are offered.

Some colleges may offer the option to submit a video interview as part of the application. Colleges cooperate with any number of companies to offer this service, one widely used being Glimpse from InitialView. Please be advised that InitialView charges a fee for this service. If you have questions about how to approach this option, contact your school counselor or Ms. Zeigler in the College and Career Center.

Interview Tips

- Research the college before your interview.
- Prepare to answer and ask questions. Having a list of questions is suggested. Avoid asking obvious questions with answers contained on the website.
- Bring a copy of your transcript and/or activity list/resume.
- Arrive a few minutes early. Manners and appearances matter – dress appropriately.
- Be sure to shake the interviewer’s hand and maintain good eye contact.
- Be yourself at all times.
- Follow up with a thank you note or email to your interviewer.

Questions You Could Be Asked:

1. Why are you interested in this college?
2. What do you do for fun?
3. Describe your academic strengths and weaknesses.
4. Which one of your activities has given you the most satisfaction?
5. What have you enjoyed most about your high school years?
6. What book have you enjoyed the most in the last year and why?
7. Which academic course has been your favorite? Your least favorite? Why?
8. Is your academic record an accurate gauge of your abilities and potential?
9. Talk about your activities outside of school.
10. What do you plan to study in college?

Questions You Could Ask:

1. How do you help freshmen adjust?
2. How would you describe the classroom environment?
3. What is the availability of professors?
4. What are the opportunities for undergraduate research?
5. Do you have internships available?
6. Are there community service opportunities?
7. When do I have to declare a major?
8. Describe the advising system, before and after you declare your major.
9. If you need help, where do you go?
10. How would you describe the social climate on campus?

Application Components

Student Sends:

Application/Essay & Fee
Supplemental Essay(s) *(if required)*

Portfolio *(if required)*

STARS *(if required)*

Standardized Test Scores
(if using - requested through College Board/ACT websites)

SHS Counseling Dept. Sends Through Scolor:

(requested by student):

Transcript *(includes all senior courses)*

Counselor Recommendation

School Profile

1st Quarter Grades *(if requested)*

Mid-Year Grades *(sent automatically)*

Final Grades *(sent automatically)*

Teacher Sends Through Scolor:

Teacher Recommendation

College or University

**Does not matter what is received first*

Checking Your Application Status

Students may submit their application when completed even if other materials haven't yet been sent.

It is ultimately the student's responsibility to be sure that all application materials have been received by the colleges. In order to allow time for the college admission offices to process materials, we recommend the following protocol two weeks after the deadline has passed.

- Check student portal (if available).
- If the college does not have a portal or the portal indicates that materials are missing, call the admission office to verify the information is up to date.
- If an email is received from the college indicating materials are missing, call the admission office to verify the information is up to date.
- See your school counselor with any questions.

Accepted: The student is admitted to the college. Most colleges require a response and deposit by May 1.

Denied: The student has not met the criteria for admission or in the case of highly selective colleges, the student is admissible, but there are too few available spaces to accept all of the admissible applicants.

Deferred: The college determines that more information (including first semester senior year grades) is needed to make a final decision, and the student's application is now part of the regular decision pool.

Waitlisted: The college deems that the student is admissible; however, due to enrollment size, the student cannot be offered admission at that time. It is critical for a student to express their interest directly to the institution.

Some colleges will offer other admission decisions such as Conditional Acceptance, First Semester/Year Abroad, Guaranteed Transfer, Spring, or Summer Term Admission. The details of these decisions vary by college. Talk to your school counselor for more information about your individual admissions results.



The [NCAA](#) establishes rules on eligibility, recruiting and financial aid. There are three membership divisions: Division I, II and III. Institutions are members of a division according to the size and scope of their athletic programs and whether they provide athletic scholarships.

For more information regarding college athletics, refer to our, [Athletics in the College Admissions Process](#) guide.

Division I and Division II

If you wish to participate in Division I or II athletics, you must be certified by the NCAA Eligibility Center. Students must:

1. Starting in the spring of junior year, register online with the NCAA.
2. In the fall of senior year, submit an *NCAA Transcript Release Form* to Mrs. Fugitt, registrar. This form is available for download on the NCAA or SHS Counseling websites.
3. Your final transcript will be sent to the NCAA automatically once you've made the request in the fall.

All student-athletes must have completed 16 core courses in high school, including:

- 4 years of English (*Advanced Journalism, Critical Analysis of Film & Literature, Food in Literature, Graphic Narratives & Visual Literacies, and ESOL are not approved by NCAA*)
- 3 years of Mathematics (*Applied Math, Geometry C, Algebra 2 C, Financial Algebra, Accounting, Personal Financial Management, and Financial Decision Making are not approved by NCAA*)
- 2 years of Natural or Physical Science (*3-D Design & Engineering, Animal Behavior, Applied Algorithmic Design, Creative Technological Solutions to Real-World Problems, Embedded Systems Programming, Horticulture, Materials & Design Science, Medical Terminology, and Mobile App Development are not approved by NCAA*)
- 1 additional year of English, Mathematics or Natural or Physical Science
- 2 years of Social Science (Social Studies)
- 4 years of additional courses (*from any area above, non-doctrinal religion/philosophy or World Language*)
 - Note: Spanish 1B, 1C, 2B, 2C, 3B, and 4B are approved for .5 units only

Division III

It is not necessary to be certified by the NCAA if you are playing Division III athletics.

If you are thinking about applying to be a visual or performing arts major, there are often additional requirements. You may be required to submit a portfolio or perform an audition. Read and follow the specific directions of each institution. Talk with your school counselor and visual or performing arts teachers at Staples for assistance. The following websites also may be helpful to you in your search and application process:

NACAC Resources: nacacnet.org/charting-your-path-to-an-arts-degree/

National Portfolio Day: nationalportfolioday.org

International Universities

There is a growing interest in attending universities outside the US. Many Staples graduates have chosen to pursue undergraduate degrees abroad in countries such as Canada, The United Kingdom, and Ireland. There are many reasons that students and families might consider international universities including financial, admissions transparency, accelerated timeline, ability to jump right into a major, and the opportunity to improve language and cultural competence.

For more information, see the [SHS Counseling Resource Guide for International Admissions](#).

U.S. Services and Academies

The U.S. service academies represent some of the country's best colleges, and all tuition, fees, room, and board are paid in exchange for five years of active duty upon graduation. If you're considering applying to an academy, there is a thorough procedure you must follow. Because of the extraordinary competition for academy selection, students are encouraged to apply to other colleges as well and inquire about any ROTC (Reserve Officers Training Corps) opportunities.

United State Air Force Academy (Colorado Springs, CO): www.usafa.af.mil

United States Coast Guard Academy (New London, CT): www.uscga.edu

United States Merchant Marine Academy (Kings Point, NY): www.usmma.edu

United States Military Academy (West Point, NY): www.usma.edu

United States Naval Academy (Annapolis, MD): www.usna.edu

Starting in the spring of junior year as information becomes available online, fill out the Pre-Candidate Questionnaire for each of the academies to which you are interested in applying. At the same time you begin the application process to the academy itself, request information about a nomination from a Connecticut congressional representative or other eligible nominator. Check the U.S. Service Academies page on the [SHS Counseling website](#) for more information.

It is a family decision as to whether or not to disclose that their child has special needs. If you choose to do so, it is the responsibility of the student to self-identify, provide accurate and thorough documentation, and request reasonable accommodations.

Documentation requirements and criteria for determining eligibility for services may differ from college to college. Specific documentation requirements should be explored at each college's website.

Accommodations at the college level are based on the colleges' review of documentation, not necessarily what the high school has provided on 504 plans or IEPs.

For more information regarding students with special needs, please refer to our guide, [*College Planning for Students with an IEP or 504.*](#)

In order to determine the level of support necessary at the post-high school level, the family may consider the following:

- Student's level of independence completing coursework in school and at home
- Number of Study Skills periods
- Number and level of academic courses in high school
- Modifications provided in the classroom
- Student's independent living skills and emotional maturity

Levels of Services Available to Students with Special Needs Attending College

1. General Tutorial Services: least comprehensive of the three categories and often available to all students on campus.
2. Coordinated Services/Self-Directed Programs: less structured support is available to the student, usually through the office of disability services.
3. Comprehensive/Structured Programs: extensive support is offered to students. A student's disability may be considered and given special consideration during the admissions process.

Some students may not be ready to manage the academic and social expectations of a typical college, even with structured support in place. For those students, a transitional experience that will provide academic and/or vocational skills may be more appropriate. Transitional programs can be based on a college campus or in another setting.

Financial aid comes in four basic forms. Most financial aid packages offer a combination of the following:

1. Loans must be repaid with interest.
2. Grants are need-based and do not have to be repaid.
3. Scholarships are merit-based and do not have to be repaid. Most are awarded through the general admission process; some scholarships require an additional application.
4. College Work Study allows the student to work on campus to contribute toward expenses.

Follow these tips:

- Discuss your family's financial situation in regards to paying for college with your child early in the post-high school planning process.
- Attend the *Understanding College Financial Aid and Paying for College* program in January and the *Financial Aid Application Night* in September.
- Use the College Affordability Worksheet developed in consultation with Bill Smith of ScholarFITS to assist with planning ([google doc](#) / [spreadsheet](#) version).
- Identify colleges where you might receive aid and make sure to include a range of affordable colleges on your list.
- Use the [Net Price Calculator](#) to estimate the full, four-year cost of attending particular colleges (found on the financial aid office website for each participating college or [College Board](#) website).
- Research the deadlines and required forms for each college to which you are applying.
- Complete the [FAFSA](#) as soon as possible. Use your most recently completed tax returns. If your child is applying for federal aid to pay for college beginning the fall of 2027, you will be submitting your tax returns from the 2025 fiscal year.
- In addition to the FAFSA, some colleges (mostly private) also require the submission of the [CSS Profile Form](#) or their own institutional form.
- Ultimately, all financial aid decisions are made by the individual college; therefore, it is necessary for you to work with the financial aid office at each college to which your child is applying.

Connecticut FAFSA Graduation Requirement

Starting with the Class of 2027, all families will be required to either submit the FAFSA or complete a waiver as a high school graduation requirement. Additional information to come regarding this new requirement.

There is no single source for all scholarship information available. Therefore, it is important to reach out to your place of employment, clubs, and organizations, which may also provide awards.

Scholarship notices received by Staples are added to the [SHS Scholarship Resources](#) document regularly and published in the SHS Counseling Newsletter. Families should access these resources on a frequent basis since they are continuously being updated.

Colleges may have an earlier priority application deadline to be considered for scholarships. Check the college's website for such deadlines.

The College and Career Center offers a workshop and individual support on an ongoing basis to assist students with searching and applying for scholarships.

[Staples Tuition Grants](#) (STG) provides financial assistance to qualified seniors and graduates who continue their education. Families must demonstrate need through a completed FAFSA. As the single largest distributor of tuition grant dollars in Westport, STG is responsible for disbursing funds contributed by over one hundred individuals, PTAs, civic organizations, local businesses, trusts, and private foundations. Information and applications are available online during senior year.



If the fees for submitting college applications, taking standardized tests, or sending test scores presents a true financial hardship for your family, please have your child see his/her school counselor.

The College and Career Center is designed to assist students and families with all aspects of the post-high school planning process. It is located adjacent to the School Counseling Office and open every day from 8:00 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. Staff will assist you with online college and post-high school options research. To inquire about College and Career Center services, students can stop by any period and parents/guardians can call Sandra Zeigler at 203-341-1886.

College and Career Center Programs and Resources:

- Career inventories and college search
- Finding Your Path: Exploring Post-High School Options
- Spark Your Future career exploration webinar series
- College representative visits
- Community college tours
- Assistance with college applications
- Personal essay and interview assistance
- Financial aid and scholarship workshops and information
- Resume support
- Gap year, military, and PG year information
- Community service information
- Summer programs information

SHS College Application Guides

The Counseling Department has developed a series of application guides, updated annually, specifically for Staples students.

- [SHS Counseling Tips for Completing the Common Application](#)
- [SHS Counseling Tips for Applying with Scoir](#)
- [SHS Counseling Tips for Completing the UC Application](#)
- [SHS Counseling Tips for Completing the UCAS Application](#)
- [SHS Counseling Tips for Completing the Self-Reported Transcript and Academic Record \(STARS\)](#)

Post-High School Planning Websites

Below are websites that students and families can reference in the college search and application process.

- shs.westportps.org/departments/counseling: SHS Counseling programs, forms, and information
- commonapp.org: Common Application for Undergraduate College Admission
- commonblackcollegeapp.com: Common Application for HBCU institutions
- bigfuture.collegeboard.org: College and career search tools and resources
- appily.com/colleges: College search and scholarships tool
- nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator: Statistics from U.S. Department of Education
- unigo.com: Extensive college and scholarship search tool
- collegeexpress.com: Detailed college profiles and scholarship matching
- bls.gov/ooh: Occupational Outlook Handbook to research hundreds of careers

Standardized Testing

- actstudent.org: ACT test information
- collegeboard.org: SAT, AP, and PSAT information
- fairtest.org: List of test-optional colleges and universities
- toefl.org: Test of English as a Foreign Language
- ielts.org/ielts-usa: International English Language Testing System
- englishtest.duolingo.com: Duolingo English Test

Standardized Test Prep

- khanacademy.org/digital-sat Partnered with College Board to provide thousands of practice questions, videos, lessons, and study and test-taking tips and strategies for free
- act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services: A comprehensive guide to the ACT, including timed practice tests
- mytutor.com: Summit Educational Group is a trusted provider of comprehensive standardized test preparation; they deliver our College Admission Testing presentation for students and families every spring.
- compassprep.com: Trusted provider of comprehensive test preparation

Financial Aid

- studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa: Free Application for Federal Student Aid
- cssprofile.collegeboard.org/: CSS Financial Aid Profile
- bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college: College Board financial aid information
- salliemae.com/: Private student loan database
- studentaid.gov/: A multitude of resources regarding the financial aid process
- fafsact.org/: Local assistance with completing FAFSA
- ecmc.org/: The College Place - Connecticut is a college access center that provides free resources and assistance with paying for college
- staplestuitiongrants.org/: Staples Tuition Grants provides need-based aid to Staples High School students

Scholarship Search Tools

- fastweb.com
- appily.com/scholarships
- collegexpress.com
- bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search
- careeronestop.org
- scholarships.com
- collegescholarships.org
- questbridge.org

Students with Disabilities

- ldaamerica.org: Learning Disabilities Association of America offers support and resources for parents of students with disabilities
- thinkcollege.net: Lists college options for students with intellectual disabilities
- ldonline.org/indepth/college: Advice on creating a successful post-secondary education experience for students with learning disabilities and/or AD/HD
- nclld.org: National Center for Learning Disabilities
- greatschools.org/gk/articles/college-resources-for-students: Offers resources for students with learning disabilities and/or AD/HD
- chadd.org: An excellent resource for students with AD/HD

Other Considerations and Special Populations

- web3.ncaa.org/ecwr3: Helpful information regarding NCAA eligibility
- d3sports.com: Tracks Division III sports
- playnaia.org: For students considering playing for a college that is part of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics
- njcaa.org: National Junior College Athletic Association
- americanuniabroad.com: Private American universities outside of the US that are regionally accredited and participate in federal financial aid programs
- ucas.com: The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service is the application platform for applying to university in the UK
- hbcuconnect.com/colleges: Provides detailed profiles of all historically Black colleges and universities
- hillel.org/student-experience: A guide to Jewish life on college campuses
- [Campus Q](#): Free resources for LGBTQ+ students and their counselors
- ctcl.org: Colleges that Change Lives, an organization founded by Lauren Pope, promotes college access and student engagement
- ope.ed.gov/campusafety: Explores campus safety issues

Visit the [SHS Counseling website](#) for extensive information on gap year and post-graduate programs, applying to the U.S. service academies, and athletics in the college admission process.