Senior Parent Information Night:
The College Application Process

September 2, 2026

Westonka
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Tonight's Topics

- Direct Admissions MN details
- Immediate reminders for senior year
- College application Timelines
- College application Specifics

Not sure if a 4 year college track is right for your student?

ICATT Apprenticeship Program: helps manufacturers and companies attack the talent shortage with a sustainable solution that provides a pipeline of talent.

Luther Technical Training Center: fast track technical training center that focuses on automotive technology. Leads to Master Technician certification.

Dunwoody Monthly Open Houses: experience what a vocational school experience would look like

Hennepin Technical College Weekly Tours: available at both campuses

Minneapolis College Open House: experience community college and vocational opportunities

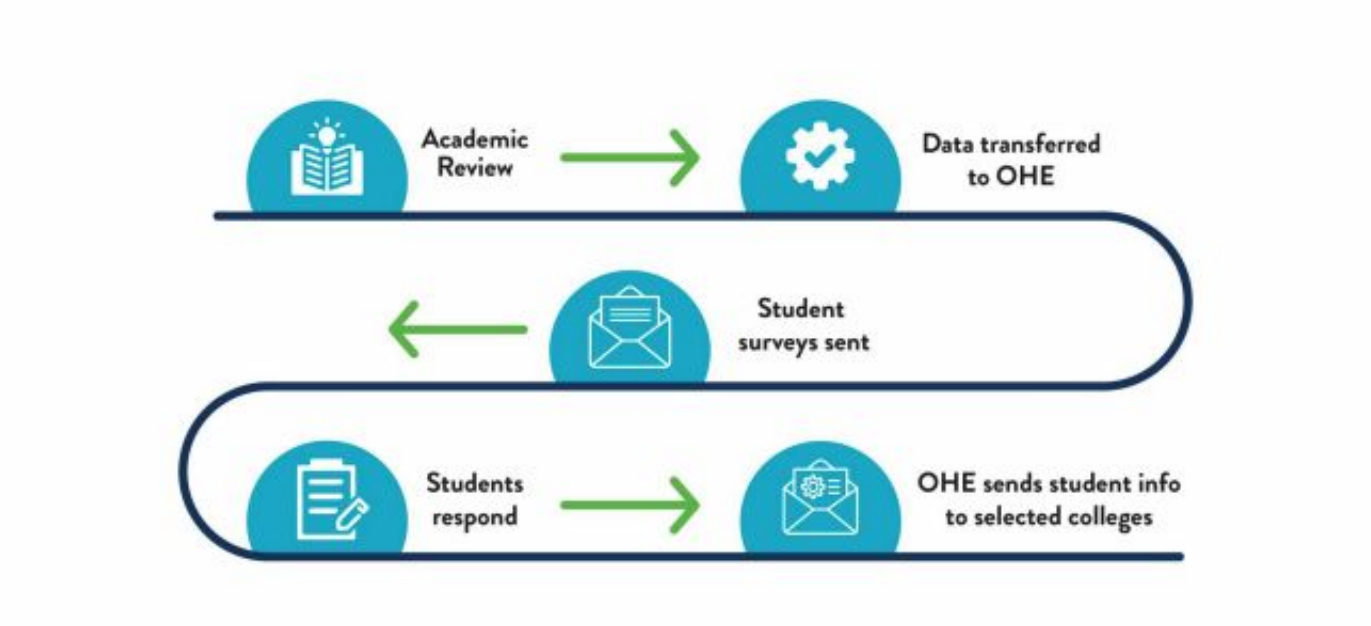
Direct Admissions Minnesota: OFFICE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Direct Admissions: Overview

- Minnesota's proactive admissions program
- The most comprehensive direct admissions model in the US
- Program goals:
  - Reduce anxiety around "will I get in?"
  - Close attainment gaps
  - Promote a college-going culture throughout the state
  - Increase the number of students enrolling in college immediately after high school
  - Show students that they have access to a certificate, associate degree, or bachelor's degree if they choose to further their education
  - Increase the number of students staying in Minnesota for college
  - Connect students, families, and schools with colleges and universities earlier, giving families time to consider their options and plan
- Increase knowledge and awareness of options around college affordability to high school seniors

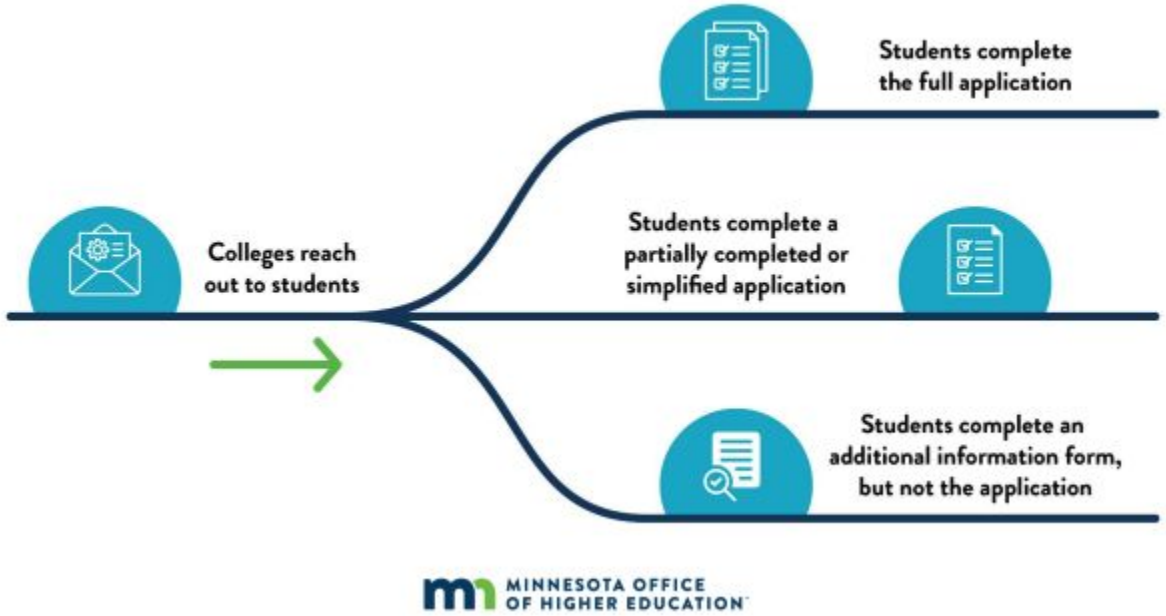


Direct Admissions Minnesota: At a Glance



MINNESOTA OFFICE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Direct Admissions Minnesota: At a Glance



Direct Admissions Minnesota

- Families received an “opt-out” form last week
- High school will submit required information to the MN Office of Higher Education
- Qualified seniors will receive an email offering automatic admission based on academic record at participating colleges/universities (50+) in Minnesota
- Students will use the links in the email to learn more about colleges on their list.
- Students will complete the survey at the end of the email to identify colleges they would like to be directly admitted to
- Colleges will proactively reach out via email to communicate next steps

Direct Admissions Minnesota

- Even though students have been directly admitted, they will still need to complete each college's application process (outlined in the email) by the deadlines to secure their spot.
- If students are interested in postsecondary institutions that are not on their personalized list, they will want to follow the standard application process for the schools they are interested in.
- Check email regularly. Follow instructions thoroughly.
- Resources:
  - Direct Admission Student Center
  - List of Participating MN Colleges
  - Higher Ed MN College Search Tool

Immediate Reminders

- **College Admission Testing**
  - Check prospective colleges for admission testing requirements (ACT, SAT)
  - ACT: www.act.org
  - SAT: www.collegeboard.org
  - Can take multiple times
  - Take advantage of option to send scores to college free of charge through registration process
- **College rep visits throughout the fall at WHS**
  - Students can sign up to visit with a rep; visits are typically scheduled during WIN

ACT and College Admissions

- Most colleges are test optional through class of 2027; students should check the college website for specific information
- Students should consider test submission rates even at test optional schools
- If students do not submit an ACT, they should assume that other parts (rigor, GPA, activities) will weigh more heavily in the admission decision.
- Students should consider “traditional ACT requirements” when deciding if they should include their ACT score. If it will help their application, they should include it.

ACT and College Admissions

	University of Wisconsin, Madison	University of Minnesota, Twin Cities	Iowa State
Submit %	41	42	57
Average ACT	31	29	25

Timeline through first semester senior year:

- **Now:** Continue to complete college visits (virtually or in person), take ACT, refine list of colleges
- **Now:** Check transcript. Make sure all high school graduation requirements are accounted for.
- **Now:** Applications are open - review requirements and begin the process. Note deadlines.

Timeline through first semester senior year:

- **September-October:** complete and submit applications (early deadlines)
- **October 1:** FAFSA opens: Please see FAFSA.GOV for instructional videos on how to complete.
- **November-March**: Await admissions decisions and confirm enrollment/housing
- **February:** Local Scholarship Applications

What makes an application complete?

- Application submitted
- Application fee paid
- Transcript sent (through Parchment)*
- Standardized test scores sent
- CSS profile if required by school (you should check their websites for requirements)

***Students using the Common Application do not need to send a transcript through Parchment**

Be aware of different deadlines:

Rolling Decision: Applications will be reviewed as they are accepted.

Regular Decision: Applications are due on a certain date and reviewed in no particular order.

Early Action: Students apply by certain date and are guaranteed a decision by a certain date.

Restrictive Early Action: Non-binding application plan that allows you to apply early while NOT applying early to other schools.

Early Decision: Apply by a certain date and get a decision by a certain date. THIS IS BINDING. Upon Acceptance, the student must withdraw all other application at other institutions.

Different Types of Applications

- **Institutional Application:** published by the college or university only for that particular college or college system (e.g. Wisconsin or Minnesota university system (except UMTC). Typically found under “admissions” on college website.
- **Common Application:** a general application that many colleges use for admission. General information is shareable but colleges might have supplemental requirements.

Common Application

- Available at www.commonapp.org
- Need to respond to at least 1 of 7 essay topics
- Supplemental application materials available once students “assign colleges” to their account
- Secondary School Report (completed by counselor). Will include official high school transcript
- Teacher Evaluation Form (teacher will get an email when they are assigned)
- Counselor Form (counselor will get an email when they are assigned)
- Application Guide for First-Year Students - resource

Essays

- An opportunity to bring the applicant to life and share what is NOT in other areas of the application
- Recommended to stay away from talking about a sport/activity unless you are going to talk about a specific personal characteristic or skill that was developed
- Students should be comfortable with doing multiple drafts and digging into the “micro” aspects of things
- How does this narrative make you standout against other applicants and contribute to their campus

Supplements:

In addition to your personal statement, you may be asked to submit and additional short/long essay answering a specific question.

University of Wisconsin, Madison

Tell us why you decided to apply to the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In addition, please include why you are interested in studying the major(s) you have selected. If you selected undecided please describe your areas of possible academic interest. (you may enter up to 650 words). *

University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

Tell us about your academic and career interests.

The U of M has 8 freshman-admitting colleges and more than 150 majors. Please share a few words about what you'd like to study in college, career paths that interest you, or your favorite subjects in school.

Letters of Recommendation

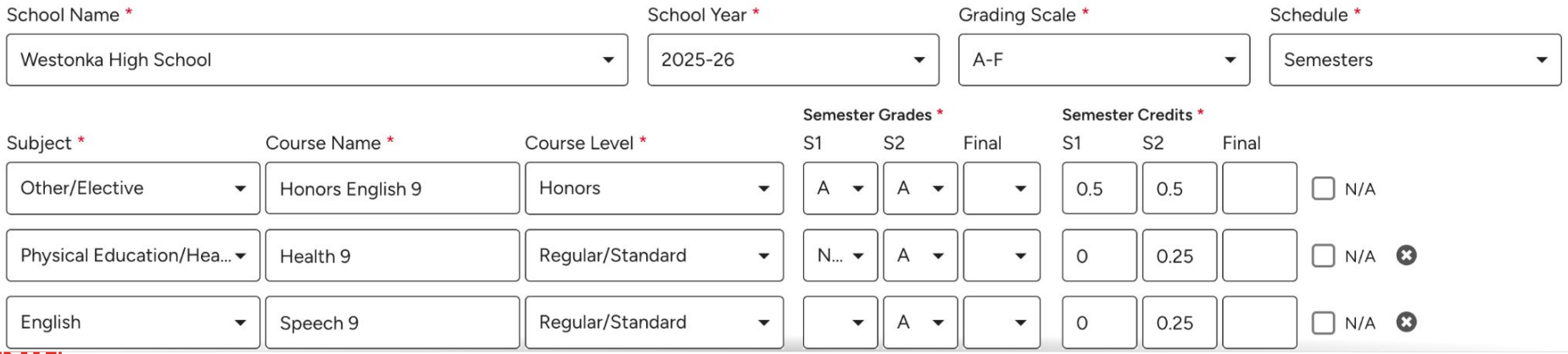
- Not all colleges require a recommendation: check before asking
- Recommendation form: might be required INSTEAD of a letter
- Give recommender at least two weeks to write a letter or complete form
- Request in person with a "Recommendation Form" available for reference (should be done before assigned in Common App)
- Thank the recommender via a thank you note
- Brainstorm with your student about core teachers they have had that would make good recommenders for their possible area of study

Education Section of Common App

- **Class of 2027:** 162 Students
- **WHS does not report rank:** Select None
- **GPA Reporting Scale:** 4.0
- Unweighted
- If a student enrolled a PSEO or CIS course, they should select that in the “colleges and universities” section and then identify those schools
- Current or Most Recent Year Courses: Students must provide an accurate senior year schedule. If anything changes they need to contact the college

Courses & Grades

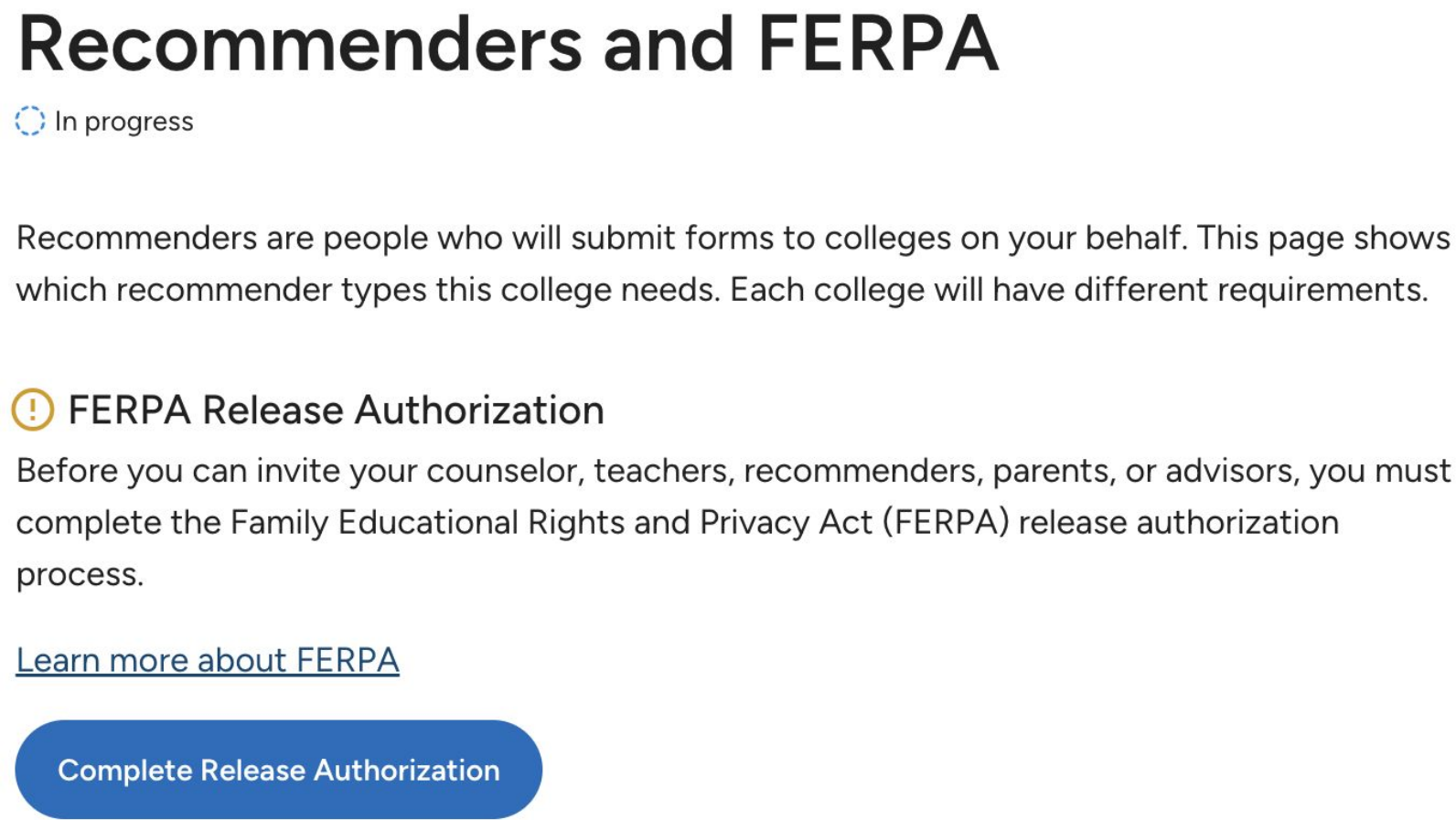
- Students need to access a copy of their transcript through Skyward: it's stored in the Portfolio



Courses & Grades

- Grading Scale: A-F
- Schedule: Semesters
- Subject: General Subject
- Course Name: Copy directly from transcript
- Report no final grade and no final credit

Recommenders and FERPA



Recommenders and FERPA

- Read the instructions carefully
- Once you have completed the waiver, you can add counselor or teachers
- PLEASE use @westonka.k12.mn.us email for all recommenders.
  - kampat@westonka.k12.mn.us
  - baumanna@westonka.k12.mn.us

Opportunities for Additional Help:

September 16: All senior English classes
September 24 WIN (CCC): Common App Help Session: Focusing on Activities Statements
September 29 WIN (CCC): Common App Help Session: Essay Support
October 13 WIN (CCC): Application Support Session
October 22 WIN (CCC): Application Support Session

Counselors available by appointment as well!

Free Application for Federal Student Aid: FAFSA

- FAFSA opens up on October 1st
- Colleges use the FAFSA to determine how much financial aid students are eligible to receive: grants, scholarships, work-study funds and loans
- Families must apply for aid every year
- Every contributor (student and parents) will need to set up a Studentaid.gov account to complete their portion of the online form
- Step by step instructions on how to complete the FAFSA
- Help center available

CSS Profile

- The CSS Profile is an online application used by colleges and scholarship programs to award non-federal institutional aid.
- Complete different process from the FAFSA.
    - Can take longer and will ask for more information
- Common Post-Secondary Users: Ivy League, Selective Liberal Arts Colleges, University of Michigan, UVA, UNC. Check complete list here

KEEP AN EYE ON DEADLINES

There are a variety of deadlines for admission, honors programs, scholarships and financial aid. Schools typically do a good job providing this information on their website and through follow up emails. **Seniors need to keep track of these communications from the colleges.**

- Consider using an entirely new email just for college applications
- Create a folder for just college communications that can be sorted through later

Want to stay informed and get involved in the Westonka Senior Party Planning?

Join the GroupMe

Thank you!

Westonka
PUBLIC SCHOOLS