Welcome to Senior Year!



- You've worked hard to get here—congrats!
- Remember: There are MANY paths after high school (college, military, apprenticeships, gap year, employment)
- For today we are going to spend time focusing on the college application process step by step.
- At the very end we will make sure you know what resources you have if college is not the path you are taking.



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Your IHS Counseling Team

- **A-Cha:** Hilde Tzemos (tzemosh@issaquah.wednet.edu)
- **Che-Gal:** Marlena Vasquez (vasquezm@issaquah.wednet.edu)
- **Gam-J:** Rachel Auffant (auffantr@issaquah.wednet.edu)
- **K-Mb:** Jessica Langsted (langstedj@issaquah.wednet.edu)
- **Mc-P:** Melanie Bonanno (bonannom@issaquah.wednet.edu)
- **Q-St:** Nadine Leach (leachn@issaquah.wednet.edu)
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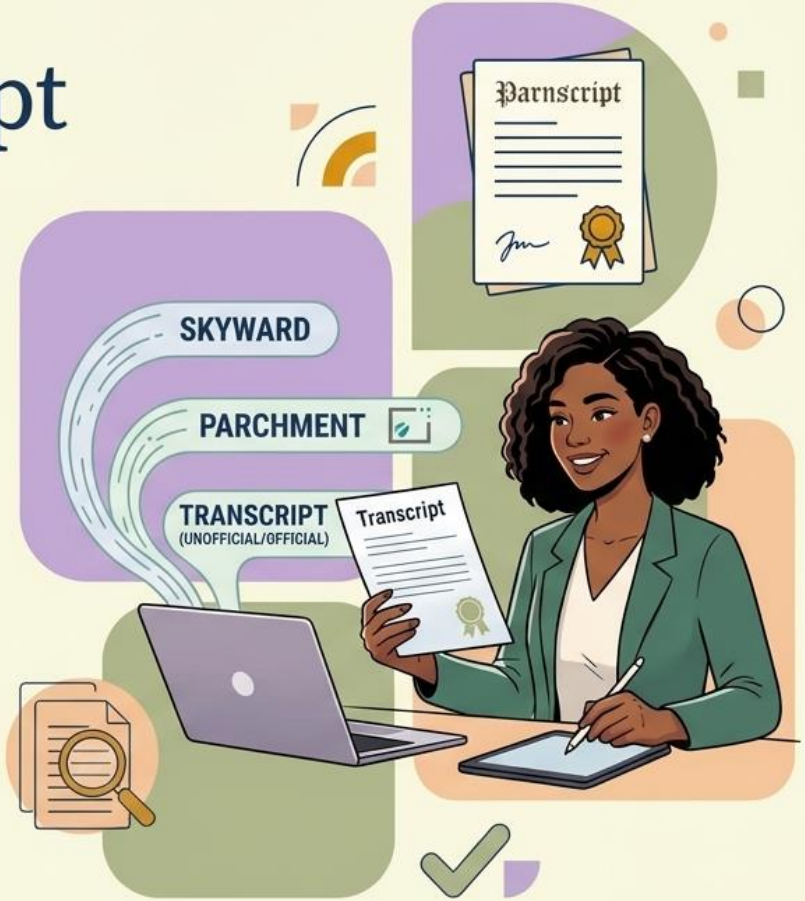
Additional team members:

- Ms. Lipsen (welcome desk & transcript access)
- Ms. **Benedict** (Registrar, Transcript edits)
- Ms. Pike (Data Processor)

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Step 1: Your Transcript

- New this year: Students can access an unofficial copy of your transcript in your Skyward Account under Portfolio
- We still want all seniors to have a Parchment account (see Ms. Lipsen for your code). You **WILL** need this to send your final official copy in June (and in the future)
- Review for accuracy! (Grade bumps, grade improvement, summer classes, etc)
- If applying to schools on Common App – your COUNSELOR will upload. Anywhere not on Common App, you may need to order directly from Parchment.



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September-October: Set Up for Application Success

Finalize your college list

Research fit, culture, programs, and deadlines

Common App & FERPA

Create Common App account + waive FERPA rights

Counselor Invitation

Invite your counselor as “Counselor” (not “Advisor”)

Essay Brainstorming

Start brainstorming your personal statement essay

Attend Rep Visits

Attend College & Career Center rep visits

College App Work Time

Join us in Room 2103 every Wednesday and FLEX during October



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Understanding Application Types & Portals



- **Common App:** Used by 900+ colleges (one app, multiple schools)



- **Coalition/Scoir:** Alternative platform for some schools



- **UC System:** Separate application for California schools



- **School-Specific:** MIT, CWU have their own



- **Community Colleges:** Individual or WA State Board application (typically apply in late spring)

There may be additional portals, these are the most common

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Key Application Deadlines to Know



Regular Decision (RD)

- Typical deadline: **Jan. 1–15**
- **Non-binding**
- Apply to multiple colleges
- Decisions typically **March–April**
- Usually respond by **May 1**

Early Action (EA)

- Typical deadline: **Nov. 1–15**
- **Non-binding**
- Apply early + receive an earlier decision
- Can usually apply to other colleges
- Decisions typically **Dec.–Jan.**

Restrictive/Single-Choice Early Action (REA/SCEA)

- Typical deadline: **Nov. 1**
- **Non-binding**
- Early application with restrictions on applying early elsewhere
- Often used by highly selective colleges
- Decisions typically **Dec.**



Early Decision (ED/ED I)

- Typical deadline: **Nov. 1**
- **Binding** 🔒 — if admitted, student agrees to attend
- Student may apply ED to **only one college**
- Must withdraw other applications if admitted
- Decisions typically **Dec.**

⚠️ **Understand financial aid implications before applying**



Early Decision II (ED II)

- Typical deadline: **Jan. 1–15**
- **Binding**, just like ED 🔒
- Later opportunity to apply ED if student did not apply ED I
- Decisions typically **Feb.**

Rolling Admission

- **No single deadline** (or a later final deadline)
- Applications reviewed as they are received
- Decisions often made within **weeks**
- Applying earlier can be advantageous if space/scholarships are limited

'Key Terms'

- **Binding** = If admitted, you are committed to attend 🔒
- **Non-binding** = You can choose whether to attend ✓
- **Application deadline** = Date application must be submitted
- **Priority deadline** = Earlier date for priority consideration (often scholarships/housing)
- **Enrollment deadline** = Date you must accept an offer, typically **May 1**

There is no "best" application plan for everyone. Choose based on college fit, readiness, finances, and the specific college's rules—not simply because an application is labeled "early."

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University of Washington *Special Info*



Key Dates



Application opens: August 15, 2026
Common App deadline: **November 15, 2026**
STARS deadline: **November 22, 2026**
Admission decisions: March 1–15, 2027

What to Know

Apply through the **Common App**
No SAT/ACT required
Required: Common App personal essay + academic information
Students indicate a first-choice major (and may list a second choice)
No letters of recommendation required

BIG CHANGE THIS YEAR: STARS



- UW is moving courses & grades out of the Common App
- All first-year applicants—including Running Start students—must complete STARS (Self-reported Transcript and Academic Record System)
- Students access STARS after submitting the Common App
- STARS submission deadline: **November 22**
- Start early! Students can begin entering coursework before applications are submitted.



Student Reminder



Two-step process: 1. Submit Common App → 2. Complete & submit STARS.
Missing STARS means the application will be incomplete.

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What Goes Into Your Application?

- Personal Information (Contact, family, residency, etc.)
- Academic Record (Courses, grades, GPA)
- Activities & Involvement (Clubs, sports, work, volunteering, family responsibilities)
- Honors & Awards (Academic and other significant recognition)
- Essays (Personal statement + college-specific supplemental essays)
- Letters of Recommendation (Teachers and/or counselor, if required)
- Test Scores (SAT/ACT, if required or submitted)
- College-Specific Questions (Major, academic interests, short answers, etc.)
- Supporting Materials (Transcripts, portfolios, auditions, or other requirements as applicable)

Not every college requires every component—always check each college's specific requirements.

Every part of your application should highlight a different part of you.

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Writing Essays That Stand Out

- Focus on small moments with big meaning, not grand achievements
- Show your values and growth, not just what you did

- Use YOUR voice—not ChatGPT, not a professional writer
- Answer the actual question being asked



Get feedback, but keep it authentic to YOU

Check out "Johns Hopkins Essays That Work" for examples

Use AI appropriately - "evaluate my essay from the perspective of a College Admissions rep"

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Common Mistakes to Avoid



Waiting until the last minute to start applications

Not proofreading (typos = careless impression)

Ignoring supplemental essays or using generic responses

Writing a resume in essay form—tell a story instead

Forgetting to list ALL schools (up to 20) on FAFSA -even if undecided

Letting senior grades slip—colleges see mid-year reports!



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WHO DOES WHAT?

YOU:

- Review your transcript - access in Skyward, activate Parchment account
- Complete applications, essays, and activities sections
- Invite your Counselor to Common App/communicate/2 weeks min notice for Letter of Rec
- Apply for FAFSA/WASFA by early October
- Order final transcript to your chosen school at year's end
- Read your emails!

YOUR COUNSELOR:

- Uploads resume, school profile, & school report
- Writes letters of rec (if required, 2 weeks notice!)
- Signs ED agreements and fee waivers after discussion with student
- Sends mid-year reports by Feb 12

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Financial Aid: FAFSA & WASFA

- **FAFSA** opens **Oct 1**—apply early for best aid packages
- You AND parent need **FSA IDs** (takes 4-5 days to process)
- List **ALL schools** you're considering (**up to 20**), even if not applied yet
- **WASFA** for students ineligible for federal aid (citizenship/immigration status)
- Types of aid: Grants (free!), loans (borrowed), work-study (earned)







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Resources at Your Fingertips

College & Career Center (Library):
Lindsay Eberhardt & Jenny Wang

SchooLinks:
Skills assessment & career matchmaker

Big Future (College Board):
Compare colleges, majors, costs

IHS College & Career Website:
Scholarships, rep visits, dual credit info

Wednesday College App Work Time:
Drop-in support in Room 2103, Flex in Oct and 11/4

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IHS
COLLEGE & CAREER CENTER
PRESENTS

COLLEGE CON 2026

October 14th

6:00 - 8:00 PM
in the Issaquah High School Commons

700 2nd Ave SE
Issaquah, WA 98027

6 PM to 8 PM
College Fair with Over 50 College and University Admissions Representatives

6:15 PM to 7 PM - In The Theatre
Finding The Right Fit College
presented by UC Davis

7:15 PM to 8 PM - In The Theatre
College Essay Writing
presented by Reed College

OPEN TO ALL ISD HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS!

@ihscollegeandcareer

ISSAQUAH ICE CREAM TRIKE

**
Mark
Your
Calendar
**

WSU

Instant Decision Day

***Class of 2027!* On October 21st join the College & Career Team and our WSU Admissions Counselor to find out if you have what it takes to be a WSU Cougar. Simply fill out an application and receive your admission decision on the spot!**

Registration is Required

But wait... college isn't the path I'm choosing!

Each year, about 15–20% of IHS graduates choose a path other than a 4-year college. There are many ways to build a career, gain experience, serve others, and pursue your goals.



Trades & Apprenticeships – Skilled trades, apprenticeships, technical training



Mission / Faith-Based Service – Mission and service opportunities



Military – Military careers, service opportunities, education benefits



Workforce – Employment, career exploration, and job training



Gap Year / Service – Travel, work, service, or personal growth



2-Year / Technical Programs – Certificates, associate degrees, and career-focused programs

How IHS Can Help

Meet with your IHS counselor and/or Career Specialist

Explore career assessments and post-high-school resources

Learn about apprenticeships, training programs, military, service, and employment

Get help creating a plan for your next step

Your path is your own. IHS counselors and your College & Career Center team are here to support you—whatever you choose.

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Getting Help When You Need It

Drop in:

Before school, lunch, or after school for quick questions

Schedule appointment:

Use Bookings Links (posted on counseling page)

Email (and MEET!) your counselor:

We are here to help with lists, essays, questions

College & Career Center:

ihscollegeandcareer@issaquah.wednet.edu

Don’t do this alone—use your your support system!



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Appendix: Application Resources

Your IHS resources—where to find answers and get support

🔎 Explore

- IHS Counseling Page: https://bit.ly/IHScounseling
- College & Career Center: https://bit.ly/IHS-CCC
- School Profile: https://bit.ly/IHSprofile2027
- Find answers to FAQs such as **“Does IHS weight GPAs?”** and **“What is the size of the Class of 2027?”**

📝 Application Support

- Counselor Letters of Recommendation: https://bit.ly/4cCnxSU
- Application help: Drop-in **Flex support in October** or make an appointment with the **College & Career Center**
- Transcript questions/access: Contact **Ms. Lipsen in the Counseling Office**

✍️ Essay Support

- Start with the many free resources available online
- College & Career Center Essay Resources: https://bit.ly/4yyVxrS
- There are also many helpful **college-admissions/essay accounts on Instagram**

💡 **Remember:** You have people and resources at IHS to help you navigate the process—use them!

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Counseling College App info



College & Career Center



Counseling Appointments



College & Career Events & Rep Visits

