

Middletown High School
Guidance Department



Instruction
Guide
for
Parents of
College-Bound
Students

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Why Should My Student Go To College?



Beginning the process of thinking about your student going to college can be overwhelming. Some things to think about when considering sending your student to college are:

- A college degree offers your student a wider variety of job options.
- Of all the job openings between now and 2016 that pay more than \$15 per hour, about 70 per cent will require some college.
- Over a lifetime, a college graduate will earn on average \$1 million dollars more than a high school graduate.
- College graduates typically have better access to health care than those with only a high school diploma.
- A person who graduates from college is more likely to own a home than someone with a high school diploma.

Once you believe that college will offer your student opportunities in life that they would not otherwise be able to achieve, there are some simple things that you can do to help them be prepared.

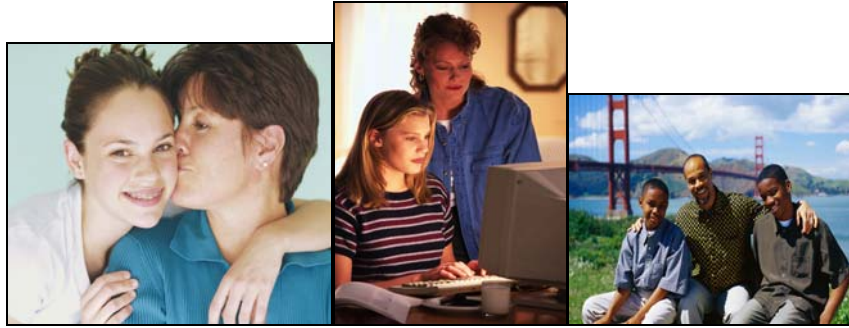
Start early. No matter how young your student is, it is never too early to begin planning for college and talking with your student about it.

Be clear. Communicate your expectations to your student about his or her behavior and performance in school.

Talk. Have frequent conversations with your student about schoolwork, goals and the importance of education.

Encourage. Motivate your student to try new activities, volunteer in the community and succeed in school. Studies have shown that students involved in school activities enjoy school more and do better academically. Extra activities at school help students make new friends, gain confidence and new skills and have fun!

Being an Informed and Involved Parent



Being an informed and involved parent is vital to your student's future success in graduating high school and attending college. The following suggestions and information will help you to help your student achieve their goals:

- Parent events are planned by the school to provide important information to help your student succeed. Attending these events shows your student that his or her education is important to you. If you are unable to attend, see if another responsible adult can go in your place to bring you the information, or get the information from another parent that did attend the event.
- At the beginning of each term, sit down with your student and set some academic goals. Setting academic goals will give your student something specific to work toward in school. Examples of academic goals are:
 - Read at least one book each week.
 - Get at least a B on every math quiz.
 - Hand in all English homework on time.
 - Spend at least 30 minutes every week studying for tests.
- Have a school calendar at home. All schools have a calendar that shows when the school will be closed for holidays and vacations. It also will show when parent conferences are and when each term begins and ends.
- Know your student's school counselor and teachers and how to contact them. Introduce yourself at a student event. You don't have to wait for them to contact you. Teachers and counselors are responsible for helping students achieve success. You must be your student's advocate.

- School counselors are responsible for monitoring student academic success and answering questions about school or other difficult situations. Counselors also help your student schedule the classes they want to take. Be sure that your student takes classes that prepare them to be a successful college student.
- Review all report cards. Contact your school to find out when they will be sent out.
- Talk with your student about his or her teachers to see how each of them may want your student to keep track of their assignments. Tell your student that you will regularly review his or her planner to check on assignments.
- Have your student clean out and organize his or her backpack once a week. This will help them turn in assignments on time.
- Insist that your student attend school every day, unless sick. If your student will be absent from school for more than a day, contact his or her teachers to see if work can be picked up for your student to work on while at home.
- Make sure your student's top priority is school work above sports and working a job.

Attend as many parent-teacher conferences as you are able. Here are some questions you can ask to get the most out of these meetings:

- Q. Is my student's homework completed accurately and turned in on time?
- Q. Is my student working to his or her potential?
- Q. Is my student respectful of other students and adults in class?
- Q. Does my student participate and pay attention in class?
- Q. Does my student come to class prepared?
- Q. What are my student's strengths and weaknesses? How can I help him or her improve?
- Q. Is my student taking the classes that will prepare him or her for college-level work? If not, why not?

High School Graduation Requirements and Testing



To graduate from MHS, students in the Classes of 2009-2012 must fulfill all course and graduation requirements. In keeping with state and district standards, MHS offers three possible diplomas: Local Diploma, Regents Diploma and Advanced Regents Diploma. Students who have difficulty achieving a score of 65% or higher on one or more Regents exams may graduate with a Local Diploma if the student's parent or guardian, guidance counselor and the high school principal are all in agreement. However, the Class of 2011 will be the last class eligible for a Local Diploma. All students are expected to challenge themselves and are encouraged to work toward a Regents Diploma.

Curriculum: Required subjects (22 units)

English—4 units
History—4 units
Science—3 units
Mathematics—3 units
Physical Education—.5 unit per year
Health/Parenting—.5 unit
Art/Music—1 unit
Foreign Language—1 unit
Electives—3.5 units

Grading System: Numeric grades

Highest Mark: 100

Passing Mark: 65

If your student has the ability to challenge him or herself and to work hard, talk with the school counselor about **“Advanced Placement (AP) Classes.”** AP Classes are higher level courses students can take in high school. Your student can earn college credit for these classes if he or she scores high enough on the final exam for the course.

Tests are a normal part of school. There are many ways you can help your student be a successful test taker:

- Talk about tests in a very positive way, even if you had negative experiences yourself in school. Your student will pick up on your attitude about test taking.
- Remind your student that tests are meant to measure how well he or she understands a particular subject.
- Help your student prepare for his or her tests far in advance. Here are some ways to do that:
 - At the beginning of each week, ask which tests or quizzes are coming up. Help your student plan to study each day for each test.
 - Review any reading or notes your student has on the subject.
 - Make sure your student gets plenty of sleep the day before and eats breakfast the morning of the test.
 - Have your student read aloud or write down key points. Writing or saying these will help him or her remember them during the test.
 - Have your student explain his or her notes to you in his or her own words. If your student can do this, he or she probably understands the concept.
 - Remind your student the day of the test to be confident of what he or she knows and take a few deep breaths before starting the test.

Tests your student may encounter in high school:

College Preparation Tests:

PLAN: Measures academic development in preparation for the ACT and explores career options.

PSAT: Measures academic development in preparation for the SAT and may qualify students for the National Merit Scholarship Program.

College Admission Tests:

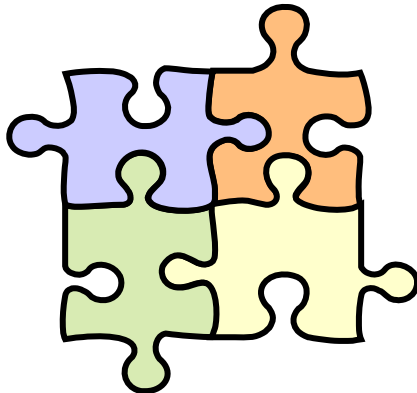
Most four-year colleges and universities require admission tests scores from applicants and accept the ACT or SAT. You must register and pay for these tests in advance. Some tests have the option to waive the registration fee. Your student takes the test outside of the regular school day, usually on a Saturday.

ACT: Tests English, reading, writing, math and science reasoning skills. (www.actstudent.org)

SAT: Tests verbal and math reasoning abilities and writing skills. (www.collegeboard.com/sat)

If English is not your student's first language, he or she may be required to take the TOEFL (www.toefl.org), which tests the ability of non-native speakers of English to understand and use North American English.

High School – Year by Year



Your Freshman

Freshman year is an exciting time for your child (and you!)—new school, new friends, and challenging new classes. Though your child has a lot going on, it's important that together you start to plan for the future.

The phrase "college preparation" may bring to mind images of campus visits, college applications and the SAT®. But these days, college prep involves much more, and it starts earlier than junior year. Review your child's college options now. Learn what resources the high school has to offer and encourage your child to take advantage of them.

Fall

- Your child should meet with her high school counselor and be sure to:
 - Find out what courses the school offers, the graduation requirements, and how the grading system works.
 - Make sure he's enrolled in strong college preparatory classes.
 - Learn what extracurricular activities are available.
- Help your child create a four-year schedule of recommended classes that meet the basic requirements for high school graduation and college admission. Colleges prefer four years of English, history, math, science, and a foreign language.
- Your child should also select meaningful electives, Advanced Placement Program® courses if appropriate, and other academics in which he shows an interest.

- Just like his/her academic schedule, help your child plan a four-year extracurricular and athletic activity schedule. Encourage them to stick with commitments.
- Honors-level students may consider taking the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®). Though most students take the PSAT/NMSQT in the fall of their junior year, students who are very academically focused and have excelled in honors programs may want to take the test as freshmen. Taking the test can help your child assess strengths and weaknesses, which will help when taking the test in the future.
- Encourage your child to read, read, and read some more. Reading develops interests, expands knowledge, and improves vocabulary and reading comprehension skills needed for college and for standardized tests.

Winter

- Together with your child, review how they're doing in each of their key subject areas. Encourage them to keep up the good work, and help them set goals for improvement in weaker subjects. Learn how you can help your child develop good homework skills.
- Motivate your child to keep up with independent reading. Get your child a subscription to the *New York Times* or other newspaper.
- Your child should meet with school counselors and teachers about taking SAT Subject Tests™ such as U.S. History, Biology E/M, and Literature in their strong subjects this spring.
- Get informed about college costs. Explore your family's options for financing your child's college education and learn how financial aid works.

Spring

- Now is the time for your child to start looking for a summer job, internship, or volunteer opportunity. The summer is a good time to learn more about an area in which they're interested. For example, being a camp counselor can give a student who's interested in teaching a taste of what to expect.
- Your child can check with his school counselor and search online for summer learning programs offered to high school students at colleges and other institutions.

Your Sophomore

Now that your sophomore is in the swing of things, it's time to put the pedal to the metal and get serious on building up academics. From taking challenging electives to discovering extracurricular activities, there are many important steps your child should take this year.

Fall

- Your child should review their four-year academic schedule with his school counselor. He may want to ask questions such as:
 - Am I fulfilling my minimum requirements for college admissions?
 - Are the electives I'm enrolled in challenging enough?
- Help your child update their four-year extracurricular and athletic activity schedule. Encourage them to think about new sports, instruments, or other activities they may be interested in exploring.
- Contact the school counselor about whether or not your child should register for the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®), given in October.
- Meet with your child's teachers for a brief chat at the beginning of the school year.

Winter

- Read the latest news on today's college costs and how financial aid works.
- Use the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) Calculator (<http://www.finaid.org/calculators/finaidestimate.phtml>) to estimate how much your family can reasonably be expected to pay toward college.
- Use the College Savings Calculator (http://apps.collegeboard.com/fincalc/college_savings.jsp) to see how much money your family will need for college, whether you're on track to save enough, and what you need to do to reach your goal.

- Read! Read! Read! Remember, reading helps prepare your child academically for college, while developing his interests, expanding his knowledge, and improving his vocabulary and reading comprehension skills needed for college and for standardized tests, such as the PSAT/NMSQT, SAT[®], and SAT Subject Tests[™].

Spring

- Many colleges require or recommend one or more of the SAT Subject Tests for admission or placement. Your child can take SAT Subject Tests when they have successfully completed the corresponding course in high school study (B+ average or better). They should talk to their teachers and counselor about which tests to take.
- Encourage your child to keep up the good work in subjects they're strong in, and help them set goals for improvement in weaker areas.
- Your child should meet with a school counselor to discuss possible AP[®] courses to take during junior year.
- Encourage your child to start making summer plans. Consider jobs, internships, volunteer opportunities, or athletic programs.
- Your child can check with a school counselor and search online for summer learning programs offered to high school students at colleges and other institutions.

Summer

- Your child should finalize summer plans.
- Help your child register online early for fall SAT tests.
- Review your child's summer reading list. Ask teachers for recommendations. Encourage them to read at least four books this summer.

Your Junior

Junior year is a whirlwind of activity, from studying for SAT® tests and AP® Exams to considering colleges to apply to and visiting campuses. On top of all that, it's important that your child keeps up good grades and continues to participate in extracurricular activities. To keep on track, follow the action items listed for each season below.

September

- This year the PSAT/NMSQT® counts! Taking it can qualify your child to receive a National Merit Scholarship. Be sure your child is signed up to take the PSAT/NMSQT this October.
- Your child should pick up a copy of the PSAT/NMSQT Student Guide at the school's guidance office, and take the enclosed practice test. For further practice, your child should use the online PSAT/NMSQT Preparation Center.
- Encourage your child to meet with the school counselor to compare the academic requirements for each of their target schools and their own course schedule. If necessary, they should adjust their schedule.

October

- Your child takes the PSAT/NMSQT. Be sure they check 'yes' for Student Search Service® to hear from colleges and scholarships.
- Your child should visit the SAT Preparation Center™ to take a free practice test and get materials to focus their practice where they need it most.
- Take your child to college fairs in your area.

November

- Fall is a good time to start the college search! Encourage your child to brainstorm a list of characteristics that are important to them (e.g., location, size). By plugging criteria into College Search your child can find schools that suit their needs. They should contact the colleges to request applications and financial aid information.
- Help your child identify test requirements for their target schools, including scores for the SAT, SAT Subject Tests™, ACT, and others. Their PSAT/NMSQT scores can give them an idea of what they would score on the SAT and help them focus their practice for it.

- Tap resources at your child's high school, in the community, and online to learn how your family can finance your child's target colleges. Learn about today's college costs and how financial aid works.
- Use the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) Calculator to estimate how much your family will be expected to pay.

December

- Help your child register online for the SAT and SAT Subject Tests, which are offered several times during the year. Many colleges require or recommend one to three Subject Tests for admission or placement. If your child is planning to apply early decision, they should be sure to complete required tests by the end of junior year.
- Encourage your child to find out about college firsthand from friends who are home from college for the holidays.

January

- Help your child organize a file for college brochures and information. Before you know it, they'll start pouring in.
- Use an online Scholarship Search to find aid that matches your child's skills and interests. Talk to the school counselor with your child about local scholarship opportunities.

February

- Your child can visit the SAT Preparation Center to focus their practice for upcoming SAT tests.
- Plan to visit college campuses with your child this spring while classes are in session. Schedule interviews with admissions officers.

March

- Most students take the SAT in spring of junior year and/or fall of senior year. Help your child register online for spring and summer SAT tests.
- Your child should meet with their counselor to discuss AP courses to take senior year. They may want to consider taking a course at a local college, especially if they're interested in a subject for which their school doesn't offer AP courses.

- Now is a great time for your child to start looking for a summer job, internship, or volunteer opportunity. Real-world experience can give your child a preview of careers in which they are interested. This may help them focus their studies in college and when they're selecting a major.
- Encourage your child to meet with their school counselor and search online for summer learning programs offered to high school students at colleges.

April

- AP Exams are in May. Encourage your child to visit the AP Prep Center for tips and prep materials.
- Attend local college fairs with your child.
- If applicable, your child should prepare writing samples, portfolios, audition tapes, and other material for the fall application season.

May

- Your child can take SAT Subject Tests when they have successfully completed the corresponding high school course (B+ average or better).
- Help your child make a resume of their accomplishments, activities, and work experience.
- Suggest to your child that they start a summer reading list. They may want to ask his teachers for ideas.

Summer

- Visit college campuses with your student. Call ahead for tour and open house schedules.
- If your child is planning to take the SAT in the fall, they should register online now.
- Discuss different college majors with your child that relate to their interests and career goals.
- By the end of summer, your child should narrow their college list to five to eight schools. The list should include "safety" schools as well as "reach" and "match" schools.

- Help your child prepare drafts of application essays for their target schools.
- If your child plans on competing in Division I or Division II college sports and wants to be eligible to be recruited by colleges, they must register with the NCAA Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse.
- Together with your child, mark a calendar with important application and financial aid dates and deadlines for senior year.

Your Senior

Where did the years go? In the blink of an eye, it seems, your freshman turned into a senior, and is now knee-deep in the college application process. Perhaps the most important advice you can give your child when entering senior year is that it really does count! Contrary to popular belief, senior grades do matter even after you've gotten into the college of your choice. So, don't let your student catch senioritis. Especially important this year is staying organized and meeting application deadlines.

September

- Your child may opt to take the SAT® again to aim for higher scores. Help him/her register online for fall tests.
- Your child should request applications, brochures, and financial aid information from the admissions offices of the colleges to which they're applying.
- Make campus visits to as many of the colleges on your child's list as possible this fall. To get a feel for the campus, encourage your child to talk to students, take a tour, sit in on a class and try to stay overnight in a dorm. Be sure to schedule an admissions interview and meet with a financial aid officer.
- Help your child review admissions requirements for each college to which they are applying. You can do this online with College Search. He/she should check in with their counselor to review their transcript and confirm that they're meeting all the required academic and testing requirements. If necessary, he/she should adjust their course schedule. They should also talk to their counselor about financial aid options and local scholarships.
- Have your child request application materials for targeted scholarships and grants, and confirm that they meet the eligibility requirements for each program.

October

- My College List can help your child manage his/her list of schools online, compare them side-by-side at a glance, and track requirements and their application for each college.
- It's time for your child to ask teachers, counselors, coaches, and other mentors to write recommendation letters.

- Is your child applying early decision or early action? If so, be careful to meet all application deadlines. Most fall in October or November.
- Your child should work on college application essays.
- Some colleges and scholarship programs require the CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE® application. Visit PROFILE Online to learn more and to submit your application online. Get help tackling the PROFILE.
- Encourage your child to use a scholarship search and to ask counselors about local scholarships.

November

- Encourage your child to practice college interviews with trusted family members or friends.
- Review your child's completed school and scholarship applications and essays to make sure they're error-free and clear. You may want to have another person review them, too. Note that many scholarship application deadlines are in December.

December

- Your child should complete and send in college applications and scholarship applications this month.
- Get a copy of the Free Application of Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or, after January 1, complete the FAFSA online at www.fafsa.ed.gov. Get help tackling the FAFSA.
- Male students who will be 18 at the time they complete the FAFSA must register with Selective Service.
- Have your child send SAT scores online to the colleges on their list.

January

- Submit the FAFSA as soon as possible after January 1. Complete the FAFSA online at www.fafsa.ed.gov.
- Colleges like to see strong second semester grades, so advise your child to avoid senioritis.

February

- Most priority financial aid deadlines fall in February. Complete the necessary aid forms, including FAFSA and CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE. Keep copies of everything that you send.
- About four weeks after mailing in your child's FAFSA, you'll receive the Student Aid Report (SAR). Review it for accuracy.
- Attend Financial Aid Night with your child at their school.

March

- Encourage your child to start looking for a summer opportunity—either a job, internship, or volunteer opportunity. Real-world experience can give your child a preview of careers in which they're interested. This may help them to focus their studies in college and when they're selecting a major.

April

- Most admission decisions and financial aid award letters arrive this month. You and your child should read each carefully, and note all reply deadlines.
- Review financial aid packages.
- Send the enrollment form and deposit check to the college your child will attend.
- Your child should notify the other colleges to which they were accepted of their decision.
- If waitlisted by a college, encourage your child to contact the admission director to reiterate her interest in the school.
- If not admitted to any of the colleges to which they applied, your child should see their counselor immediately.
- Your child should concentrate on studying for May AP® Exams. They can earn credit or advanced placement at many colleges with a qualifying grade. Visit the AP Prep Center.

May

- AP Exams are administered the first two weeks in May. Your child should have their scores sent to their final-choice college.
- If it will be difficult for your family to pay the Expected Family Contribution for the semester, it's time to start pursuing alternatives such as parent loans or private loans to close the financial aid gap.
- Taking SAT Subject Tests™ may enable your child to place out of freshman academic requirements or help placement in advanced classes.
- Have your child send thank-you notes to teachers and other mentors who wrote recommendations.

Summer

- A final transcript should be sent to your child's college.
- Encourage your child to finalize summer plans.
- Have your child send thank-you notes to scholarship programs that have given aid.
- Notify the financial aid office of your child's college about any scholarships they have been offered.
- Give your child a chance to relax and enjoy themselves this summer. They've earned it!
- Help your child start packing.

BEWARE SENIORITIS!



Help your child make their senior year count! They have worked hard for three years taking tests, completing projects and preparing for college admission. When senior year rolls around, some students just want to get through college applications and relax before they head off to the college of their choice. Taking it easy senior year may be a nice break for your child, but it is likely to do more harm than good.

- As many as half of all college students do not have adequate academic preparation and are required to take remedial courses.
- More than one-quarter of the freshman at four-year colleges and nearly half of those at two-year colleges do not even make it to their sophomore year.

College admissions officers pay close attention to senior year performance. Many students mistakenly believe that prepping for college ends after the eleventh grade. However, the senior year—the entire senior year—is actually of particular interest to colleges. Many college applications (including the Common Application) require your child to list his/her senior courses, including information about course levels and credit hours. It will be very obvious to the admissions officers if her/she has decided to take the year off. Many colleges also include as part of the application a form called the “mid-year grade report.” Your child’s counselor completes this for with first-half grades and sends it to the college. It then becomes a crucial part of the application folder.

Many college acceptance letters include warnings to students such as “your admission is contingent on your continued successful performance.” This means that colleges reserve the right to deny your child admission should their senior year grades drop. Your child’s senior year is their opportunity to strengthen skills and broaden experiences in school and out, and to prepare for all the challenges that lie ahead.

Your child should take the most rigorous courses available and be sure to continue taking college-track subjects. They should consider AP college courses which can earn credit at many colleges.

Your child's continued involvement in activities, sports and volunteer work will help him/her stay active and focused through their final year. In addition a great internship or career-focused job opportunity can help motivate your child to start considering their career options.

Is College Right for Your Child?



How to Weigh the Pros and Cons

For some parents, sending a child to college may seem impossible or even ill-advised. College is expensive. The application process seems bewildering. Is it really worth it, especially if your child has no idea what career she wants?

A College Education Creates Earning Power

The resounding answer is yes. Research shows that people with college degrees have more job choices and earn more money. In fact, according to U.S. Census Bureau statistics, those with a bachelor's degree earn over 60 percent more on average than those with a high school diploma. Over a lifetime, the gap in earning potential between a high school diploma and a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree is more than \$800,000.

College Teaches Essential Thinking Skills

Many jobs today depend on brain power, not muscle power. In fact, the government predicts that 18.7 million of the 18.9 million new jobs expected in the next decade will be in service industries—including professionals of all kinds—not manufacturing.

Today, 9 out of 10 people change jobs at least twice in a career, often switching to fields that are brand new. Technology advances so rapidly that it is difficult to predict what kinds of new opportunities will be available to your child. But a college education will provide the critical thinking and reasoning skills to succeed in an ever-changing world.

Misperceptions parents may have about college:

College is too expensive.

Many people share this misperception. While college costs are rising, one survey found people overestimated tuition at public colleges by two to three times. Not only are colleges less expensive than most believe, there is more than \$168 billion in financial aid available. Almost two-thirds of full-time students received grant aid in 2007-08, and since most financial aid is need-based, the more help you need, the more you're likely to get. You will need to look beyond the "sticker price" schools advertise and explore the aid options to determine what you will really pay. Given that your child will likely earn more with a college degree, you can consider this money an investment in her future.

I didn't go to college, so I can't send my child.

College can give your child opportunities you may not have had, and you don't have to be an expert to help them get there. A counselor at your child's high school will help you and your child select and apply to the schools that are right for them. Ask the counselor about college fairs, where representatives introduce schools, and about writing to schools for information. You should also plan to try to visit a few schools.

College is a waste if my child doesn't have a career plan.

Many students have no idea what they want to study when they enroll in college. Most four-year schools require a broad course plan in English, humanities, science, and math that will help your child learn about and decide on areas of study. Again, a high school counselor can provide strategies to help your child focus on a field of interest.

My child did poorly in high school, so she won't get into college.

Higher-education opportunities exist for just about everyone. Four-year colleges and universities offer Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) or Bachelor of Science (B.S.) degrees. Community, technical, and junior colleges offer programs that are two years or shorter, awarding an associate's degree. Some have open enrollment policies, meaning a high school diploma or equivalent is all that's required. Some emphasize training in specific fields, such as computer technician; others offer a general academic program. There are literally thousands of schools and programs of study to choose from. Many colleges also have programs that can help your child develop successful study habits and improve skills.

My child won't fit in at college.

With so many high school students continuing their educations, colleges are filled with people from many different backgrounds. Colleges often have support networks and associations, such as an African American club or Korean study group, which can help your child find people with similar needs and interests. Part of your child's education will be interacting with people of various cultures, making her better prepared for the world after college.

Later is okay, too.

Even with your encouragement, however, your child may not be ready to start college. Perhaps they say they need a break from years of schooling. The idea of time off between high school and college can be worrisome for parents. It raises fears your child will never get the degree so crucial to success. In fact, experts say most teenagers who take time off do go on to college—and they're usually better, more motivated students than their peers.

If your child says they need a break, consider together how they might spend the time, whether gaining job experience, volunteering, or traveling. Colleges will ask for an account of how this time was spent. A year full of rich, mind-expanding experiences will help a student's chances of admission, even if they have a poor high school record. Another option is to go through the college selection process and then defer for a year once accepted, an arrangement most colleges allow.

The Bottom Line

A college education can mean more money, more job choices, and greater knowledge for your child. While you can't make the decision about college for them, you can help them understand the opportunities and discover the education plan that's right for them

Decisions, Decisions!



Help your child choose

The waiting is over and your child got in! Of course, if your child has been accepted to more than one college, she will have to choose. Here are some tips to help support your child during the final decision-making process:

- **Prioritize college characteristics**
Your child should start with some soul-searching to determine what they really want in a college. They should create a list of college characteristics and then rank these characteristics in order of importance.
- **Visit college campuses.**
Visiting a college campus can help break a deadlock if your child can't decide between two colleges. At this point, a campus visit should be less about the facts and figures and more about whether your child "clicks" with a particular college. Your child should ask "Will I be happy here? Can I picture myself going to school here?" Your child can get a feel for the school by talking to students, sitting in on a class and dining in the cafeteria.
- **Compare financial aid award packages.**
If your child received offers of financial aid, you should compare the total amount of aid awarded, the family share of costs and the percentage of gift aid (grants and scholarships) vs. self-help aid (work-study and loans) for up to four schools, side by side.

- **Include your child in college financing discussions.**
If family finances or other circumstances will affect the decision, let your child know up front. They should be aware of any sacrifices, financial or otherwise, that will be required to make college a reality. Decisions about financial aid, such as whether to take a student loan or work-study job, should be made as a family.
- **Decide and reply.**
Once your child has made a decision, they should send in their acceptance letter before the reply deadline. Be sure your child informs the other schools that offered admission that they will not be attending. This will free up places for other students.
- **Support your child's decision.**
For many families, this is the first adult decision a child will make. Be there with advice and support, but remember that your child should be more than capable of making this decision on their own. Your child will be attending the college and is, therefore, responsible for their education.

Don't feel pressured to find that one perfect school. Many colleges fit the bill. The right college is one at which your child will feel happiest and be prepared for a lifetime of learning and success.

Community Colleges



Community colleges were developed, and still exist, for two major purposes. The first is to serve as a bridge from high school to college by providing courses for transfer toward a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) Degree or Bachelor of Science Degree (B.S.). Four out of ten college-bound, high school graduates start their college education this way.

The second function of Community colleges is to prepare students for the job market by offering entry-level career training, as well as courses for adult students who want to upgrade their skills for workforce re-entry or advancement.

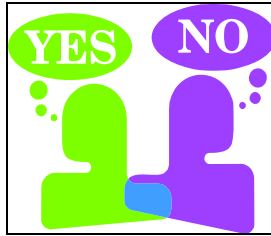
Why Attend a Community College:

- **Your family is tight on funds**—Community colleges cost significantly less (particularly for state residents) than state or private colleges and universities. This means that they can be a cost-effective way for your child to complete the first two years of college. The money saved by going to a community college and living at home can help pay for the last two years at a four-year college or university.
- **Your child isn't sure about going to college**—Maybe your child would like to begin by aiming for a two-year associates degree and decide later whether they would like to pursue a bachelor's degree. taking classes toward an Associate of Arts (A.A.) degree, for example, would give them a feel for the type of education they would get at a liberal arts college.
- **Your child isn't sure about what kind of program they would like to pursue**—Many people enter college without a clear idea of what they want to focus on. At a community college, your child can explore different subject areas before committing to a program, without have to be so concerned about his finances. To assist with the career decision-making process, many community colleges offer intensive guidance counseling that can help your child assess his abilities, interests, and educational options. Plus, your child may be able to take a wider array of courses (including both liberal arts and career-oriented) than at a four-year institution, making it easier to check out many different options in one place.

- **Your child has been out of school or their GPA isn't so great, and they want to build their skills before transferring to a four year college or university**—Whereas many four-year colleges and universities have selection criteria for attendance, such as a minimum required GPA, community colleges are open to everyone. If your child wants to pursue college-level coursework but isn't academically ready, community colleges offer classes and one-on-one tutoring to help students strengthen their basic skills. Keep in mind that the average class size at most community colleges is significantly smaller than at public, four-year universities.
- **Your child would like to undertake a career oriented degree, such as a fashion design or computer certification program**—Programs like these are often not available at four-year institutions. If your child is thinking of seeking employment after finishing up at community college, there are several possible routes to take. Your child can earn an Associates Degree. However, if your child wants to take courses in a specialized area of study, but doesn't want to spend the time necessary to earn an associate's degree, many community colleges have certificate options that provide intensive training in a specialized field like computer-assisted drafting, food service technology or paralegal studies. These certificates usually take six months to a year to complete.
- **Your child works and needs a flexible schedule**—At four year colleges, course schedules are geared primarily toward full-time, traditional students who take classes during the day. At community colleges, the student population tends to be highly diverse with regard to age, experience, family background, socioeconomic level and employment status. Course schedules are developed with attention to the variable needs of both part-time and full-time students, so classes are usually offered throughout the day and evening, and sometimes on weekends.

Your child will have a more satisfying experience at a community college if he researches the program in advance. Find out which programs are strongest, what the student transfer rates are and what student support services are available. There are many ways your child can pursue his education, but the programs vary among colleges and it is up for them to find the right match. They should make an appointment with their counselor who can be a helpful resource in deciding if community college is the right place for your child to begin his college career.

Rejected, Wait-Listed, Accepted?



Parents may be more upset than their children over receiving a “letter of denial,” as colleges call them. Parents may want to shield their children from rejection, but it is best to let their child receive and process admissions news from colleges. Parents can help put admissions decisions in perspective.

Rejected?—Your child may read rejection from a school as an indication that he doesn’t have what it takes to succeed. You can reassure him that admissions decisions are not a judgment from society. Colleges have many reasons for rejecting students and there is always an aspect of randomness in the process. Neither parents nor children should treat rejection as a personal failure. Student merit is not the only factor in a school’s decision. Schools also must address their own needs for a diverse population or for strength on sports teams or in specific degree programs.

What to do if your child isn’t accepted anywhere. – If your child hasn’t gotten into any of the schools they have applied to, this can occur when students apply only to very selective schools or too few schools, or if senior grades falter. This is certainly not the end of the world and just requires some re-evaluation. Your child can still apply to schools whose deadlines haven’t passed. If circumstances such as test scores or grades have changed, check with the admissions office at the school to find out if they can reapply. Seek advice from their guidance counselor. Colleges do make mistakes and a student can appeal an admissions decision, but these appeals are rarely successful. Finally, your child might consider attending community college and transferring to the school of their choice.

Wait-Listed?—Colleges build a waiting list of students to ensure full freshman classes; they have to assume some percentage of accepted students won't enroll. This system benefits the schools, but it's hard on students and parents. If your child gets a waiting list notice, encourage them to decide whether they really want to attend the school before they remain on the list. If they are accepted, they will only get a few days to decide. Also, investigate the conditions attached to being wait-listed; your child may lose priority housing or financial aid options.

How to move up and off the waiting list.—Schools sometimes rank waiting lists. The higher your child ranks on the list, the better the chances of being accepted. Being wait-listed means the school has already determined your child has the academic credentials; so non-academic factors are more likely to sway admissions officials. Encourage your child to send a compelling letter explaining why they want to attend that school. They can indicate that if accepted they will enroll, but such a promise should only be made if they are absolutely certain. They can also enlist the help of an alumnus and their high school guidance counselor. Encourage your child to schedule a second interview with admissions officials.

Schools will not decide who will be admitted off the waiting list until the May 1st decision deadline has passed. So, you will need to prepare for your child to attend another school by filling out the paperwork and sending in a deposit. If your child is accepted off the waiting list, you will forfeit your deposit at the first school and be required to submit a deposit to the second.

Accepted?—Research shows that 9 out of 10 students get into their first or second choice college, so it's likely that your child will soon see the fat envelopes piling up. Encourage your child to take time deciding which college to attend. Your child definitely shouldn't make a final choice until they have heard from every college they applied to, and they're probably not required to make any decision until the May 1st deadline.

Review college criteria, compare aid awards and make the final decision!—Your child should review college selection criteria, comparing schools to determine how they match up with their requirements for size, distance, extra-curricular activities and other factors. They should determine which school best meets the your, and theirs, financial needs. Now it is decision time! If your child is having a hard time choosing, don't hedge your bets by sending a deposit to more than one school. This is unfair to admission officials and wait-listed students. It can also result in an acceptance being rescinded. Some schools share information and check for double depositing. Soon the acceptance letter will be in the mail. The other colleges should get short thank-you notes declining their invitation to attend. Before you know it, the agonies of the college application process will be over and the adventure of freshman year begun. You have provided important support and groundwork along the way, helping to ensure that whatever school attended, your child is on the right road to success.

Choosing a College Major



Some students start college knowing exactly what they would like to major in. Others don't know what to major in, or have a career goal but no knowledge of what majors will get them there. Most find themselves switching majors during college.

As a parent, it can be unnerving to watch your child go through this decision-making process. It is helpful to remember that, unless your child has been declaring her intention to be a doctor or an archaeologist since they were in the sandbox, a few changes along the way are very normal for students today.

Here are some questions your child should consider, now matter where they fall in this range:

What is a College Major?

Students are required to major in a specific academic subject (or professional field) to demonstrate sustained, high-level work in one field. Depending on the college, your child might major in two fields, have a major and a minor or even create their own major.

When should my child declare a Major?

At most colleges, students aren't required to declare a major until the end of their sophomore year. If your child is in a two-year degree program, they will probably select a major at the start because the course of study is much shorter.

How does my child choose?

First and second year students usually take more general courses while they try to decide on a major. After this initial "shopping" period, coursework becomes more focused and specific. Your child should make sure that genuine interest is there. Choosing a major by process of elimination could take a while. Your child should take courses in subject that appeal to them and then they should focus on one that will

interest and motivate them. They will do better and the motivation can continue through college and into a job.

What if my child wants to go to Grad School?

If your child thinks law school, medical school or another professional school is in their future, many schools offer pre-professional advising programs (such as pre-med and pre-law). These programs are not majors and participants still need to declare a major. As long as your child fulfills the prerequisites for admission to grad school, it really doesn't matter what they major in.

Does my child's major dictate their profession?

Sometimes this can be true. If a student chooses a major like nursing, accounting or engineering, they are learning a specific trade and will likely continue with that. Most majors, however, prepare students for a range of duties that they will be trained to handle once they graduate. For most students, picking a major is not the same as picking a career. It will be up to your child to go with what they like.

Your child does not have to go through this process alone. Choosing a major is usually done with the help of academic and peer advisors.

Financial Aid



College costs continue to escalate and more and more families are looking toward financial aid as a means to defray college expenses. Each year millions, probably billions, of dollars in financial aid are available. The only way to find out if you are eligible for any of this aid is to apply. Several informative pamphlets on financial aid will be made available to senior parents in September and a financial aid workshop will be held in the fall.

College costs are usually met through a combination of family contribution and need-based aid which is comprised of a grant and a “self-help” component (a combination of a low-interest loan and a job during the school year.) Who determines family contribution? Financial aid experts have come up with a “uniform methodology” to analyze family resources. Given specific information on income, assets, debts, etc. the agencies involved determine the amount parents can be expected to pay. (This figure will vary slightly from school to school based on the cost of college, additional information received and other factors.) In addition, students are expected to work during the summer to provide a certain amount of money toward their own education. The sum of these two amounts makes up the total contribution to the school. Outside scholarship or various forms of loan and funding will make up the remainder of a fully funded “financial aid package.”

Financial Aid and Scholarship

Financial aid is assistance based solely on need (the family's ability or inability to pay versus the cost of attending college). To determine the amount of need, a college requires your family to submit several forms. The first of these is FAFSA, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. As it states in its title, there is no charge for this application. It is the means of eligibility for all federal grants and loans and is required for all institutions.

The CSS Student Aid Profile is required by many institutions and requests additional information. There is a fee for each college to which this information will be sent. Check the requirements of each institution to see if the Profile is needed.

The TAP, the Tuition Assistance Program, provides grants and loans for all residents of New York State who attend college in state. There is a separate TAP application or you may use the FAFSA.

Many colleges also have their own financial aid application in addition to the above forms. It will be included with all other application materials and may have a deadline different from the rest of your application.

Please note that all federal and state forms may not be mailed prior to January 1st of your senior year.

These forms must be filled out and filed each year you are requesting aid from the government and your institution.

If a college is "full-funding," it will offer a financial aid package (grant, loan and work/study) which will absorb the difference between the scholarship agency's computed family contribution and the college's student-budget (tuition, room, board, transportation, books, etc.) Since college costs vary, the amount of your financial aid package may also vary from college to college. The only constant will be the expected and approximate amount of family contribution.

Some schools choose to stretch their financial aid dollars through a policy known as "gapping." This means that they will not fully meet the total need of a family, but rather come as close to a family's need as they can. Instead, the school leaves a gap of funds for which the family is responsible. If you think you need financial aid, be certain to ask questions about a school's financial aid policy. Some schools will have both policies

depending on the percentage of students needing aid and the competitiveness of the applicant.

In contrast to financial aid, scholarships (or “no need funding”) are not based on need but are awards in recognition of outstanding talent. These scholarships are extremely competitive and difficult to obtain. Areas such as leadership, academics, music, art and athletics are frequently among those singled out for scholarship awards.

If you will be filing an application for financial aid/scholarship, you should process your application and financial forms as early as possible. Be sure to meet all deadlines since schools legitimately run out of funds informed decision unless you receive a financial aid package at the time of your acceptance.

For further information please visit the following websites:

Free Application for Federal Student Aid: www.FAFSA.ed.gov

CSS Profile: www.profileonline.collegeboard.com

Financial Aid Terms



AWARD LETTER

The letter sent from the college or university's Office of Student financial Assistance indicating how much financial aid and the types of financial aid the student qualifies for during the academic year.

CAMPUS BASED FINANCIAL AID

Federal funds, which are controlled by the college or university, and are distributed to those students who qualify for financial assistance. This program includes work-study and the Educational Opportunity Program Grant.

COLLEGE WORK STUDY

Government-support financial aid programs coordinated through financial aid offices. An eligible student (based on need) may work part-time while attending college more than half time, generally in a college-related job.

FEDERAL PARENT LOAN FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS (PLUS)

A loan for parents who have dependent students in school. Parents can borrow a sum of money equal to the cost of education less financial aid received. Parents begin making payments 30-60 days after they receive the loan and must make payments of at least \$50 per month. Parents may take up to 10 years to repay the loan.

FEDERAL PELL GRANTS

Financial assistance, awarded by the Federal Government on the basis of need, designed to provide the foundation of an aid package for post-secondary education. The Pell Grant may be used toward tuition, room and board, books or other educational costs and requires no repayment.

FEDERAL PERKINS LOAN

A low interest loan that students may borrow from to assist in meeting the cost of a college education.

FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID (FAFSA)

A form used by colleges to gain information about a student's total family income, assets and expenses used for federal based programs.

GRANTS

Money awarded for higher education, which does not have to be repaid.

PROFILE

A form used by the College Scholarship Service to gain information about the student's total family income, assets and expenses. The CSS analyzes this information to assess the family's potential contribution toward college expenses.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Money awarded for achievement in: academics, leadership, citizenship and/or athletics. Money is usually applied to post-high school education. Check in the Guidance Office for available scholarship programs.

STUDENT LOANS

Money loaned for higher education through either state or federal funds, private banks or the college itself. There are a number of pamphlets available explaining the kinds of loans and student eligibility.

SUBSIDIZED STRATFORD LOAN

A Federally subsidized, low interest loan made by a bank or credit union or savings and loan association, which has a maximum of \$2,625.00 for the first year. Borrowers must show need through the FAFSA and/or CSS Profile. Repayment starts six months after graduation or upon leaving college.

TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TAP)

A grant program based on tuition costs and family income available to New York State residents for study within the State.

UNSUBSIDIZED STRATFORD LOAN

Unsubsidized loan available to all students regardless of need. Interest on loan payment while student is attending college. All other features of the program are the same as the Subsidized Stratford Loan.

Financial Aid and Internet Resources



- **International Education Financial Aid** (www.iefaf.org) provides a comprehensive database of financial aid information for the students who wish to study in a foreign country.
- **Fin Aid! The Smart Student guide to Financial Aid** (www.finaid.org) is probably the most complete source of financial aid information on the Internet. The CSS Profile and FAFSA can be downloaded from this site. A calculator allows families to estimate their Expected Family Contribution when financing college. “Ask the Advisor” lets individuals email specific questions about financial aid to the over 300 financial aid administrators who have volunteered their response time.
- **FastWeb** (www.fastweb.com) has one of the largest databases of scholarship information available on the internet. First time users will need to set up a personalized FastWeb account and then complete a six-step personalized profile. The Student’s profile is matched to specific scholarships. Whenever a new scholarship match is found, it is updated in the student’s personal FastWeb mailbox.
- **Hispanic College Fund** (www.hispanicfund.org) is a non-profit corporation that provides scholarships for deserving Hispanic students who intend to pursue a business major.
- **College is Possible** (www.collegeispossible.org) provides an overview of different forms of financial aid (federal grants and loans, federal work study, TRIO programs), as well as state sponsored and institutional aid and how to take advantage of education tax benefits.
- **New York State Financial Aid Administrators Association** (www.NYSFAA.org) provides information on financial aid, how to apply, planning calendar and minority and athletic scholarship searches

Preparing for your Child's Move to College



The day will arrive when it is time to say goodbye. You may be surprised by your strong reactions, given all the months you have had to prepare. Some parents worry about expressing this sadness, afraid to overburden their child. It's okay to show these emotions. It's important to let your child know that though you will miss them, you are happy about this new adventure. This can reassure your child of strong home ties and help them deal with their own feelings. Despite the difficulties, you should all be proud. After all, this is the moment you have been working toward—when your child begins life on their own.

Spring of senior year is a good time to start teaching your child new skills for college. If you haven't already done so, teach them how to balance a check book and keep track of credit card and other bills. Show them how to do the laundry and provide them with some basic housecleaning tips. Teach them a few simple recipes. These activities can help both you and your child feel you are working constructively toward college.

Now is also your chance to plan for how you will spend all that luxurious free time you will have once your teenager is off to college! You could take up an activity you have always been interested in, but have never had the time for. Dr. Andrea Van Steenhouse, author of *Empty Nest....Full Heart, the Journey from Home to College* suggests that parents talk with friends who've been through the same transition and learn how they coped. This is also a tough time for siblings anticipating a new family order. They will need to say good-bye to the college student in their own ways, and they will need your attention and reassurances too.

Before the departure day comes, negotiate expectations for getting to college and staying connected once there. Does your child want you to accompany him on the trip to school? If so, how long should you stay? Should you help them unpack and move in? Setting up a call schedule is important. You may expect to hear from your child every week; they may think every two weeks is adequate. Be sure to clarify these expectations in advance.

Off to College Checklist



Kitchen Needs:

- Plastic Bowl and Cup
- Coffee Cup
- Fork, knife and spoon
- Can/bottle opener
- Chip clips

Room Needs/Storage:

- Bedside lamp
- Alarm clock/clock radio
- Wastepaper basket
- Milk crates or other sturdy storage cubes (a collapsible crate also comes in handy for carrying laundry or other things)
- Stacking Baskets
- Under-the-bed storage trays
- Lots of hangars
- Desk lamp
- Fan
- Drying rack
- Adhesive hooks, tacky adhesive and mounting tape
- Bulletin board and push pins
- Dry erase wall calendar/board
- Toolkit

Electronics:

- Computer and printer
- Phone cord/Ethernet cord for computer
- Headphones
- Surge protector
- Extension cords
- Three, two-prong adapters
- Phone (check with roommate(s) to avoid duplication). It should be cordless, with multiple message boxes in the answering machine, unless you are using voice mail.
- MP3 or portable CD player (great to use at gym)

Linens/Laundry Supplies:

- Sheets and pillowcases (2 sets). Check with school for size needed—some college twin beds are extra long.
- Towels (Three of each: bath, hand and face)
- Pillows (2)
- Headrest pillow
- Mattress Pad
- Blankets (2)
- Comforter and duvet cover (makes laundering easier)
- Clothes hangars (wire takes up less space, plastic are easier on your clothes.
- Laundry bag/basket
- Laundry marking pen
- Laundry stain remover
- Roll(s) of quarters
- Quarter dispenser
- Lint brush
- Sewing kit

Toiletries/Misc.

- Pepto Bismol®
- Imodium®
- Aspirin or Ibuprofen
- Vitamin C
- Neosporin®
- Band-Aid® Bandages
- Cough drops
- Shower tote
- Shampoo and conditioner
- Hair styling products
- Bath and face soap
- Traveling soap containers
- Toothpaste and toothbrush
- Dental floss
- Comb/brush
- Tweezers
- Nail clippers
- Hair dryer
- Razor and shaving cream
- Lotion and/or facial moisturizer
- Q-tips®

Office/Desk Supplies:

- CD-ROMS/Memory Sticks
- Phone/address book
- Assignment book
- Heavy-duty stapler and staples
- Printer paper
- Pens and pencils
- Pencil holder and sharpener
- Notebooks
- Pocket folders
- Labels of various sizes
- 3x5 cards
- Post-it® notes
- Paper clips
- Rubber bands

- Scissors
- Highlighter Pens (multiple colors)
- Ruler
- Stackable desk trays (at least 4)
- Hanging files or folders
- Dictionary and Thesaurus
- Stamps/envelopes

These can be purchased upon arrival:

- Paper towels
- Trash bags
- Lightbulbs
- All-purpose cleaner
- Ziploc® bags
- Kitchen storage containers
- Laundry detergent (tablets are easier to manage)
- Fabric softener (sheets are easiest to manage)
- Dish soap
- Wet wipes
- Tissues

Clothing Guidelines:

- 21 pairs of underwear
- 21 pairs of socks (more if your child plays sports)
- 7 pairs of pants/jeans
- 14 shirts/blouses
- 2 sets of sweats
- Pajamas
- Slippers and/or flip flops
- Light/heavy jackets
- Gloves/scarf/hat (if appropriate)
- 1 pair of boots
- 2 pairs of sneakers or comfortable/walking shoes
- 1 pair of dress shoes
- 1 set business attire
- 1 set semi-formal attire (optional)

Shared items (Check with roommate(s) to avoid duplication:

- Audio Equipment
- TV and VCR/DVD player
- Coffee maker/hot pot
- Microwave/toaster oven
- Small refrigerator
- Area rug
- Camera
- Posters/art

Homesickness—How to Help Your Child



While your child was counting down the days until they left for college, you were doing a countdown of your own, one tinged with sadness because your "baby" was leaving. On the fourth day of their independence, something strange happened. They called, crying, saying they were homesick and wanted to come home. You prepared yourself for hearing stories about their meeting all kinds of new people and even staying out much too late, but you never prepared yourself for this.

How Did This Happen?

Don't panic. Homesickness is a very common reaction for a first-year student to have. Keep in mind that even though your child was really excited to go away to college, they just moved away from everything comfortable and familiar. Freshmen are in a strange place where they may not know anyone. They are living with strangers, trying to find their classes, doing their own laundry, and eating food that isn't quite home cooking.

In addition, in high school, your child may have been a big fish. Now the pond is exponentially larger, and they probably feel very small. That is a lot of change to manage overnight, and your child is bound to feel overwhelmed and to miss their old life. However, you can rest assured that homesickness is almost always temporary.

What You Can Do?

Now the 500 miles between you and your child feel more like 500,000. "What can I do? I'm so far away," you think. In fact, there's a lot you can do to help. Here are a few strategies to help your child adjust.

- **Validate your child's feelings:** Tell your child that you understand and agree that it must be hard. While telling them not to worry because everything will be okay may be true in the end, it will help

them more to know that you agree this is a big deal and that you understand it is really difficult.

- **Let your child vent:** Your child is meeting new people and having many new experiences and may be overwhelmed. One of the most important steps to working through homesickness is talking about the feelings this difficult period brings. If you think your child needs to vent, ask questions to prompt them, but if they don't want to share, don't push it. This may only make them feel more overwhelmed. Just let your child know that you are available if they want to talk.
- **Tell your child that homesickness is normal:** Your child may think they are the only one feeling homesick. Let them know that they are not alone. Even the kids down the hall who are always laughing and who seem to be doing great probably have moments when they feel homesick.
- **Encourage your child to seek out campus resources:** Suggest that your child talk to a resident advisor or a university counselor who is trained to talk about feelings of homesickness.

More Strategies to Relieve Homesickness

While homesickness often cures itself, you can suggest several other strategies to hasten the process.

- **Create a home away from home:** While you aren't there physically, you, other family members, and friends should be there in photos decorating your child's dorm room.
- **Phone-home night:** Set up a specific day and time each week to talk to your child. While your child knows that they can always call you in times of distress, it will help to know that they have a constant in their life that they can count on in this time of uncertainty and instability.
- **Communicate often and in different ways:** In addition to phone-home night, make sure that you email and snail mail often. Everyone who's away at school loves to receive mail and small packages. Send clippings from your home newspaper, photos, and home-cooked desserts. Encourage your child to talk to their high school friends about how they are coping.

- **Encourage your child to make friends:** Suggest that your child go to dinner at the cafeteria with a roommate or someone on their floor. Tell them to attend dorm activities and campus clubs. If they follow your suggestions, they are likely to meet people with similar interests. The more social opportunities your child seeks out, the better their chances of meeting people and feeling more comfortable in their new surroundings.

Adjusting to college life takes time. The best thing you can do is be supportive and tell your child that you miss them too. Before you know it, the homesickness will have dissipated to the point that they will be calling to say that they are not going to make it home after all, because they are doing something with friends at school. Then your challenge will be managing your disappointment, but that's a separate topic.

College Prep Glossary

College Admissions from A to Z

What in the world is a FAFSA? What's the difference between EA and ED? If you're asking yourself these questions, your child is probably in the middle of the college admissions process. From AP® to ROTC, it probably seems to you that the college admissions folks have a language all their own. So, if you're wondering whether the NMSQT is a test or a furry animal, this glossary is for you.

Accreditation

Official recognition that a college, university, or trade school has met the standards of a regional or national association.

Advanced Placement Program® (AP®)

Gives motivated high school students the opportunity to take college-level courses in a high school setting. Thousands of colleges worldwide award credit or advanced placement to students with a qualifying grade on AP Exams. AP Exams are graded 1 to 5, with 5 as the highest.

American College Test (ACT)

The ACT is a college entrance exam administered by the American College Testing Corporation that measures educational development in English, mathematics, social studies, and the natural sciences. Scores are reported as 1 to 36, with 36 as the highest. Most colleges accept scores from either the ACT or SAT®.

Articulation

An agreement between a two-year and four-year college within the same state that allows a two-year college student automatic admission to a four-year college if she completes required courses.

Arts and Sciences

A college course of study that includes the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, mathematics, foreign languages, and fine arts.

Associate's Degree

Awarded by a college or university after satisfactory completion of a two-year program of study.

Award Letter

A document issued to a student financial aid recipient that indicates the type, amount, and disbursement dates of the funds awarded for various financial aid programs.

Bachelor's Degree

Awarded by a four-year college or university after satisfactory completion of a program of study.

Campus-Based Aid

Financial assistance for students and their families administered by a college. Funds, regardless of their source, are awarded to students by the college's financial aid office, and not by a state, federal, or private agency.

Candidates Reply Date Agreement (CRDA)

Allows a student to defer attendance decisions at participating colleges until May 1. This agreement gives students time to get responses from most of the colleges they have applied to before making a decision on one.

College Board

A national nonprofit membership association whose mission is to prepare, inspire, and connect students to college and opportunity. The College Board administers the PSAT/NMSQT[®], SAT Reasoning Test[™], SAT Subject Tests[™], Advanced Placement Program[®] (AP[®]), CLEP[®], College Scholarship Service[®] (CSS[®]), and CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE[®].

College-Level Examination Program[®] (CLEP[®])

A credit-by-examination program that helps students of all ages earn college degrees faster by getting credit for what they already know. By receiving a satisfactory score, a student can earn from 3 to 12 college credits toward a college degree for each CLEP she takes, depending on the exam subject.

College Scholarship Service[®] (CSS[®])

A service of the College Board that assists postsecondary institutions, state scholarship programs, and other organizations in the equitable distribution of student financial aid funds by measuring a family's financial strength and analyzing its ability to contribute to college costs.

Common Application

A standard application form accepted by more than 300 selective colleges in lieu of their own form. Available in high school guidance offices and online.

Consortium

A group of colleges or universities that offer joint programs that allow students to share facilities and course offerings at member campuses. Consortia are generally made up of neighboring schools.

Cooperative Work-Study Education

A full-time paid employment related to a student's field of study. The student alternates between work and full-time study. As a result, the bachelor's program usually takes five years to complete.

CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE®

A financial aid form produced by the College Board required for students seeking aid at approximately 10 percent of the nation's four-year colleges (including the most highly selective institutions).

Deferral

When a student's application for early decision or early action is postponed, and will be considered with the regular applicant pool.

Deferred Admission

Allows an accepted student to postpone admission for one year.

Demonstrated Need

The difference between the family contribution as established on the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) and the total cost of attending college.

Early Action (EA)

A program that gives special consideration to a student who applies for admission by a specified date, usually in early fall. Students are not obligated to enroll if admitted (also known as early notification).

Early Decision (ED)

A program that gives special consideration to a student who applies for admission by a specified date, usually in early fall. Students are obligated to enroll if admitted, and to withdraw applications from other institutions.

Educational Testing Service (ETS)

A nonprofit organization that develops college entrance tests, including the SAT and SAT Subject Tests, for the College Board.

Expected Family Contribution (EFC)

The amount a family can reasonably be expected to pay for one year of college.

529 Savings Plans

A state-operated investment plan that gives families a federal tax-free way to save money for college. Officially known as qualified tuition programs (QTPs).

4-1-4 System

An academic calendar consisting of two semesters made up of four months each, with a short winter term of one month in between.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

The need analysis form produced by the U.S. Department of Education that is required for students seeking aid by nearly all colleges and universities.

Grade Point Average (GPA)

Indicates a student's overall scholastic performance. It is computed by assigning a point value to each grade.

Greek System

Fraternities and sororities on campus, whose names originate from letters in the Greek alphabet.

Humanities

Courses focusing on human culture, including philosophy, foreign language, religion, and literature.

Independent Study

Allows a student to earn credit through self-designed coursework, which is usually planned and evaluated by a faculty member.

Legacy

An applicant whose parents or grandparents are graduates of the college or university to which she is applying.

Liberal Arts

A course of study that includes humanities, social science, natural sciences, mathematics, foreign languages, and fine arts.

Major

Area of concentration in a particular field of study. Usually students specialize in their majors during their junior and senior years at college.

National Merit Scholarship Program

A scholarship program based mostly on scores from the PSAT/NMSQT. Each year, National Merit students receive scholarships ranging from several hundred dollars to full costs of attendance.

Need-Blind Admissions

A policy in which colleges make admissions decisions without taking into account an applicant's financial circumstances. Schools that subscribe to this policy do not necessarily offer aid to meet the full need of an accepted applicant.

Open Admissions

Schools that take any high school graduate until all the openings are filled. Almost all two-year colleges have an open admissions policy.

Preferential Packaging

A policy in which the most desirable applicants get the best financial aid packages.

PROFILE

A financial aid form produced by the College Board required for students seeking aid at approximately 10 percent of the nation's four-year colleges (including the most highly selective institutions).

PSAT/NMSQT®

The Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test is a standardized test that provides firsthand practice for the SAT® and SAT Subject Tests™. It also gives students a chance to qualify for National Merit Scholarship Corporation's (NMSC) scholarship programs.

Quarter System

Divides the nine-month academic calendar into three equal parts of approximately 12 weeks each. Summer sessions, if any, are usually the same length.

Registrar

College official who registers students and collects fees. The registrar may also be responsible for keeping permanent records, maintaining student files, and forwarding copies of students' transcripts to employers and schools.

Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC)

Combines military education with college study leading to the bachelor's degree. For students who commit themselves to future service in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, or Coast Guard, there is usually an offer of financial aid. Not all schools offer ROTC.

Residency Requirements

Length of time stipulated by colleges or universities that students must spend on campus taking courses. The term also refers to time families or students must reside in a state before being considered eligible for state aid.

Rolling Admissions

Admissions procedure by which the college considers each student's application as soon as all the required credentials have been received (e.g., school record, test scores). The college usually notifies applicants of its decision without delay.

SAT® (SAT Reasoning Test™)

A 3 hour and 45 minute exam that measures the critical thinking skills needed for academic success in college. It measures skills in three areas: critical reading, mathematics, and writing.

SAT Subject Tests™

One hour, primarily multiple-choice tests that measure achievement in specific subject areas.

Semester System

Divides the academic year into two equal segments of approximately 18 weeks each. Summer sessions are shorter, but require more intensive study.

Student Aid Report (SAR)

The form sent to families in response to submission of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) indicating the Expected Family Contribution (EFC).

Student Search Service® (SSS®)

A free information service for students who take the PSAT/NMSQT, SAT, or AP Exams. By participating in Student Search Service, students let colleges, universities, and scholarship programs know they are interested in hearing from them.

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)

An exam required by almost all U.S. colleges and universities for students whose principal language is not English. The test is made up of three multiple choice sections: listening comprehension, structure and written expression, and reading comprehension.

3-2 Program

A program offering students three years of study in a liberal arts field followed by two years of professional or specialized study (e.g., engineering, teaching, nursing, business administration). The student is awarded two degrees upon successful completion of the program.

Transcript

Official record of a student's coursework at a school or college. A high school transcript is generally required as part of the college application process.

Trimesters

An academic calendar that is divided into three equal terms or semesters.

Tuition Tax Credits

Allow you to subtract, on a dollar-for-dollar basis, the amount of the credit from your total federal income tax bill.

Undergraduate

A college student earning a bachelor's degree.

Waitlist

A list of applicants who may be considered for acceptance if there is still space after admitted students have decided whether or not they'll attend.

Work-Study

A federally funded program in which students take campus jobs as part of their financial aid package. To participate in a work-study program, students must complete the FAFSA.

Yield

Percentage of accepted applicants who enroll at a college.



Ann Hall
Director of Guidance Services and Programs
Middletown High School

Information compiled in this guide was obtained from:

Minnesota Office of Higher Education
www.getreadyforcollege.org

College Board
www.collegeboard.com