



**INFORMATION PACKET
2019-2020**

**Your
College Search
and
Career Options**

CHOOSING A CAREER

The three steps in choosing a career are: 1) self-assessment; 2) investigating career options; and 3) making a match.

Choosing a career is difficult because there are so many factors that need to be taken into consideration. On one hand, there is you, a unique individual with specific interests, abilities, and aptitudes. On the other hand, there are the hundreds of career fields from which you can choose. The challenge is to find a career that you will not only find interesting and rewarding, but one that will also capitalize on your strengths and talents.

Investigating career options: Once you have identified some career areas in which you are interested, learn as much as you can about the choices in that field. There are three ways to investigate a career; read, talk to people, and get some first-hand experience. It is also a good idea to find out which careers are in demand.

Making a match: Most people change careers several times during their lives. No career path is permanent or irreversible. What seems to be right today may not be right tomorrow. Make your career and educational choices based on who you are today, but know that you can decide to choose a different path in the future.

Six Post-High school options: Most careers require at least some education or training beyond high school. One career may require four years of college while another may require a six-month program at a technical school. In most cases, your career choice will determine which of the following options is the most appropriate:

- Four Year Colleges / Universities
- Two Year Colleges / Community Colleges
- One Year Certificate Programs
- Career and Technical Schools
- The Military
- Employment

Four Year College / University

A bachelor's degree can open doors, provide status, and prepare students for financially rewarding careers. All colleges hope to attract bright, well prepared students. Colleges vary greatly in their majors offered, admission policies, and costs.

Four year colleges want students to have both a broad-based education, and an education in a specific subject area, or major. Since many of the general education courses are taken during freshman year, "undecided" students can use their first year of college to fulfill general education requirements and to decide on a major.

Entrance requirements vary greatly. Colleges that have an open admission policy will accept most high school graduates who apply. At the other end are highly selective colleges. Students accepted at highly selective colleges usually have high ACT and/or SAT scores and high GPA's (Grade Point Averages).

The student who has not taken several of the recommended college prep courses may want to start at a community college and then transfer to a four year college after a year or two.

Two Year College / Community College

Two year colleges provide affordable, career-oriented programs which enable students to begin their careers after only one or two years of college. Students completing one-year programs receive certificates or diplomas, and students completing two year programs earn associate degrees. Students may also start their education at a community college, and then transfer to a four year college to earn a bachelor's degree.

Generally, students do not need to have followed a college preparatory program in high school in order to be accepted at a two year college. Also, two year colleges may not require the SAT or ACT, the two standardized achievement tests required by four-year colleges. Two year colleges may, however, require that students take a placement test before registering for classes in order to determine appropriate class placement.

CHOOSING A CAREER cont.

The Military

The military offers qualified high school graduates a good salary and free job training. The military also provides structure as well as opportunities for career advancement and travel. The United States military is the nations' single largest employer. It offers training and employment in over 2,000 job specialties, 76% of which have civilian counterparts.

In order to enlist in the military, students generally must be high school graduates, earn a minimum score on the ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery), and be of good character.

Career and Technical Schools

Career and Technical schools offer students short-term training in a wide variety of career fields. The programs that they offer vary greatly. Some career and technical school programs last only a few weeks while others take up to two years to complete.

Employment

High school graduates with no vocational training will probably find that they have limited career options. In most cases they will find that they will not be making much more than minimum wage, and their opportunities for advancement are limited. On the other hand, businesses are always anxious to find employees who are hard-working, polite, punctual, well-groomed, and able to get along well with others. Of course, a student who has specific talent or skills can be very valuable to an employer.

Students who choose employment as their post-high school option should have a five-year plan. This will help ensure that they do not get trapped in a dead-end job. These students should also realize that they can go back to school anytime, even if it is only to take a course or two. High school counselors will be happy to provide information on educational opportunities at any stage of your life.

College and Career Information

College Board: www.collegeboard.com
Higher Ed. Svcs: www.hesc.com
U.S. News: www.usnews.com
Petersons: www.petersons.com
College Zone: www.kaplan.com
College View: www.collegeview.com
All About College: www.allaboutcollege.com
Guidance Direct: www.guidancedirect.com

Employment Information

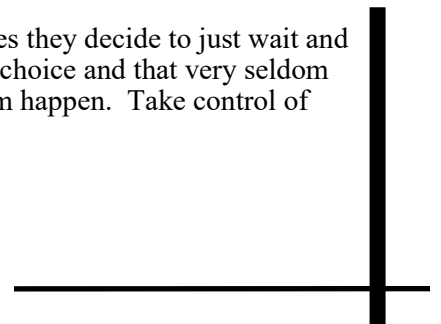
US Dept. of Labor: www.bls.gov
Occupational Outlook handbook: www.bls.gov/oco/
SLC One Stop Career Center: www.slconestop.com
Job Corps: www.jobcorps.dol.gov
Civil Service / state: www.cs.state.ny.us
Civil Service / county: www.co.st-lawrence.ny.us

Financial Information

FAFSA: www.fafsa.ed.gov
NASFAA: www.finaid.org
Fast web: www.fastweb.com
Sallie Mae: www.salliemae.com
HESC: www.hesc.com

FINAL WORDS

Sometimes when people are confused about what to do, they do nothing. Sometimes they decide to just wait and see what "comes along". These people later realize that doing nothing is in itself a choice and that very seldom does anything worthwhile "come along". Things happen for people who make them happen. Take control of your life, make a plan, and work hard. Your future begins now!



SENIOR YEAR TIMETABLE

FALL

Senior conferences: Arrange a conference with your guidance counselor with the aim of refining your post-high school plans. **We require at least one conference with each senior.**

College visits: Try to visit while school is in session. Tour, meet with admissions for an interview if necessary. Open houses are often now.

SAT/ACT: If you are planning on college, you should plan to take the fall SAT/ACT or both, even if you tested last spring. Many colleges and universities give students the option of reporting the best scores from any number of tests from either testing program. Fall dates will be available in the Guidance Office later this spring.

* SAT Subject Tests may be required or suggested by certain highly selective institutions. Your counselor can help you determine if this applies to you.

Letters of Recommendation: Seniors should ask at least two teachers from the academic “core” areas, character references are also frequently requested. Give at least two weeks notice when asking for a recommendation.

Application Process: Continue to research information on colleges in which you have the greatest interest. The computer programs, counselors and catalogs in the Guidance Office will be of help.

Narrow your list to a workable size and gather information. Be very aware of specific or suggested deadlines.

Attend college fairs in Ogdensburg and/or Canton and meet with admissions counselors who come to meet with seniors in the Guidance Office.

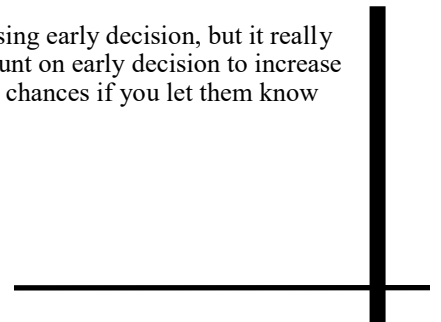
Before Thanksgiving, determine your final list. Work on and refine college essays, if necessary. Be sure that you have viable alternatives in case your first choice does not work out.

The majority of applications are submitted online via the Common Application at www.commonapp.org or the SUNY application at www.suny.edu. The Common Application is a single online application that can be submitted to many public and private colleges across the country. The SUNY Application is exclusively limited to colleges within the State University of New York system (SUNY).

Should I apply for early decision: Early decision plans are for students who have evaluated their college choices at an early date, have determined a first choice, and want to settle their college decision early. The rule for early decision is simple: use it only if you’re certain of the college that you want to attend. If you decided to apply for early decision, understand that you are entering a binding agreement with the college. If you are admitted, you will attend and pay a non-refundable commitment deposit up front and withdraw your applications at all other colleges. Therefore, if you are not absolutely certain that you want to attend a particular college, you should opt for early action (you still find out early, but it’s non-binding) or regular decision.

A couple of caveats: if your senior grades or SAT/ACT scores will help your chances, early decision probably isn’t for you. If financial aid is a major consideration, you will only be able to get an estimate of your financial aid package rather than a firm offer, if you apply for early decision. Further, if the final aid package is insufficient to meet your needs, you must begin the admission and financial aid process all over again at a very late date, since you withdrew all your other college applications. Prospects at such a late date are probably very limited. You should keep these factors in mind when making your decisions.

Some colleges will say that students have a better chance of admission if they apply early using early decision, but it really depends upon the applicant pool and how selective the college is overall. You shouldn’t count on early decision to increase your chances of admission, but if you are sure that this college is the one, it won’t hurt your chances if you let them know that you care enough to make this early commitment.



SENIOR YEAR TIMETABLE

LATE FALL

Beware of deadlines for your applications. Be certain that appropriate forms are given to your counselor and teachers writing recommendations. (Make sure you give plenty of time for them to process your request). Before the end of the first semester review your list of applications and make certain that all materials have been sent. The Common Application and SUNY Application websites date and time stamp all materials received for ease and efficiency in tracking. With an increase in online applications has come an increase in online traffic. Keep in mind, waiting until a deadline can result in increased processing difficulties as websites become overburdened with high user volume. Students should apply well in advance of deadlines in order to avoid technical difficulties.

WINTER

Financial Aid deadlines: The FAFSA may be filed online at www.fasfa.ed.gov anytime after Jan. 1, however, check the recommendations or requirements for your specific application. Basically, the sooner you file the required application, the greater will be the availability of aid. *It is a good policy to check early to see if the school you are interested in requires a PROFILE. This form, available online, usually must be filed early. * Watch for Massena's Financial Aid Night, it is usually in January.

EOP/HEOP: These federal programs exist to help students who may have financial or scholastic barriers gain access to higher education. Students must qualify according to economic and academic criteria. See your counselor for details.

Transcripts: Colleges generally require mid-year transcripts and grades. If they provide a form, be sure that you give it to your counselor. Your college of choice will also request a final transcript. Be sure to let the Guidance Office know what school you will be attending.

LATE WINTER/EARLY SPRING

Scholarships: The Guidance Office is responsible for many local scholarships. Brochures will be available at the beginning of the school year. They will list various local scholarship opportunities. Listings of the scholarships being offered are posted in the Guidance Office and Main Office monthly. Be sure to check in the Guidance Office for applications.

Final Choices: Consider your choices and weigh all options. After making your final decision, inform your college and mail in your deposit. Notify the schools that you will not be attending as well. You will still have important decisions concerning financial aid award letters, housing and class selection. Keep in close contact with your college and with your high school counselor if you need assistance.

Students with disabilities: Most colleges offer assistance to students with disabilities. Students who are interested in receiving assistance should make contact with the appropriate office on campus. Before graduation, students should forward a copy of their most current IEP or 504 plan and psychological report to that office. Students will also be referred in their senior year to ACCES-VR (an adult service agency that can provide financial and academic assistance for individuals with disabilities seeking higher education and/or employment). MCS resource room teachers will assist you in these processes.



COLLEGE SEARCH

Where to start? First make a list of the variables that go into selecting a college, then decide how important each one is to you. Here are items to consider in making a first list of colleges that might fit. Rank these in order of importance to you if you were to decide on your imaginary college.

Academic Rigor: Colleges range from highly selective to open enrollment. Although this is difficult to measure, some people gauge a school's academic toughness by its students average scores on the SAT or ACT, as well as the average GPA of the incoming Freshmen class. Are you interested in being challenged by students who score higher than you or would you like to be more typical of all students? An excellent source for assisting you in this task is the Profile for the entering freshman class, which any admission office should be able to provide to you. Its graphics provide statistical data—ranges of SAT and ACT scores as well as GPA's and rank in class. Compare your scores to the college's averages.

Location: Usually the key factor here is distance from home. How far from home do you want to be? Do you see college as an opportunity to flee the nest or would you be more comfortable being closer to home? Location can also be a factor in geography and climate if that matters to you.

Size: Would you feel more comfortable in a small school or mingling with the masses in a very large setting? Are small classes with more individual instruction a desirable factor? Could you accept huge classes for a wider variety of activities, culture, social life? Remember that there is not necessarily any correlation between college and class size.

Setting: What role does the size of the community play? Does city life appeal to you or are you a small town person? This decision could impact your free time activities.

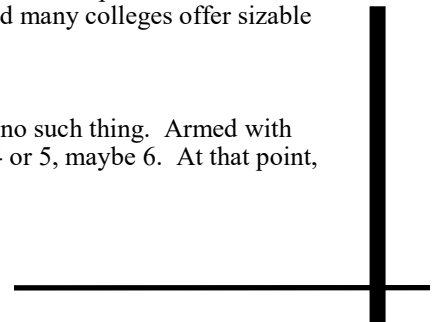
Majors: This is very important if you already know what you want to study. If you're undecided, at least consider the possibilities. You can decide later how heavily to weigh a college's academic offerings. Many colleges don't require students to select a major until their second or third year. If you do have a few ideas for majors, it doesn't hurt to look for a college that covers all options.

Housing: Want to live on campus or would you want to commute from home each day? Most colleges can be classified as either residential or commuter with at least two thirds of their students in one of the two categories. Is it important?

Students: Would you like an even balance between the sexes or would you like to live on campus where your sex dominates? Is racial and ethnic diversity important? How about geographic diversity? Some colleges get more than 90% of their students from their own state; some draw from all over the world.

Cost: How much you can pay certainly will be important, but for now put this at the bottom of your list. At this stage it should not be an overriding concern. Find the colleges that fit you best, regardless of cost, and compare their financial aid offers. Two points to remember: most students don't pay the published tuition cost and many colleges offer sizable tuition discounts to lure students they really want.

Finding A Fit: You are not looking for the single "right" college because there probably is no such thing. Armed with your list of important items to consider, you will gradually narrow the field from 3200 to 4 or 5, maybe 6. At that point, often, the visit is the key factor in ranking your top choices.



WRITING YOUR COLLEGE ESSAY

Advice from a Dean of College Admissions:

Focus on one aspect of yourself. If you try to cover too many topics in your essay, you'll end up with a resume of activities and attributes that doesn't tell me as much about you as an in-depth look at one project or passion.

Be genuine. Don't try to impress me, because I've heard it all. Just tell me what is important to you.

Consider a mundane topic. Sometimes it's the simple things in life that make the best essays. Some of my favorites have included essays that reflect on the daily subway ride to school, or what the family goldfish observed from the fishbowl perched on the family kitchen table. It doesn't have to be a life-changing event to be interesting and informative.

Don't rely on "how to" books. Use them to get your creative juices flowing, but don't adhere too rigidly to their formulas, and definitely don't use their examples topics. While there are always exceptions, the "what my room says about me" essay is way overdone.

Share your opinions, but avoid anything too risky or controversial. Your essay will be read by a diverse group of individuals from a wide range of backgrounds, so try to appeal to the broadest audience possible.

Tell a good story. Show me why you are passionate; don't tell me you are. Show me that you have overcome great difficulty; don't start your essay with "I have overcome great difficulties."

Don't repeat what is already in your application. If you go to a performing arts school and all of your extracurricular activities and awards relate to dance, don't write about how much you love dancing. Tell me something I couldn't know just from reading the other parts of your application.

Finally, don't forget about the supplements. The supplement questions are very important, you should plan to spend as much time on them as you do on your essay. A well-written essay won't help if your supplement answers are sloppy and uninformative.



LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Whom should I ask?

Read the application carefully. Often colleges request letters of recommendation from an academic teacher (sometimes a specific discipline) and/or your school counselor. If a non-specified academic teacher is requested, your English or math teachers usually make good candidates. Also, you should use a teacher from junior year, or a current teacher if they have known you long enough to form an opinion. It is best not to go back too far, as colleges want current perspectives on their potential candidates. You can get a recommendation from a teacher who's also been involved with you outside the classroom, but unless a college specifically requests it, don't use a coach or someone who can't speak to your academic achievements and potential.

When should I ask?

Make sure to give your recommendation writers plenty of time—at least one month before letters are due—to complete and send your recommendations, but as with anything, the earlier the better.

How can I get the best possible recommendations?

Talk to your recommendation writers. For teachers, it's important that they focus on your academic talents and accomplishments within their classroom, because that's what colleges are looking for in teacher recommendations. Talk to them about what you remember about their class and your participation in it. Highlight a particular incident, paper, or anything else that might help them provide anecdotal information and specific examples of your achievement, rather than just vague praise.

It's also important that you spend time talking with your counselor and ensure they know about your plans, accomplishments, and involvements. You may want to provide him/her with a brief resume of your activities and goals; a resume can provide the best overview of your high school involvement and contributions. Also, if there is some aspect of your transcript that needs explaining—perhaps low grades during sophomore year—it's helpful to talk with your counselor to explain why and how you've changed and improved.

HELPFUL TIPS:

Don't be shy. Teachers and counselors are usually happy to help you, as long as you respect their time constraints.

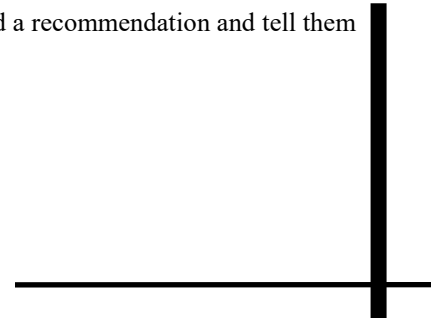
Include:

- ◆ Recommendation form
- ◆ A current transcript
- ◆ Provide teachers and counselors with deadlines for each recommendation that you are requesting, especially noting the earliest deadline.
- ◆ Waive your right to view recommendation letters. This gives more credibility to the recommendation in the eyes of the college.

Typically, you know your teachers well enough to know who can provide favorable reviews of your accomplishments. If in doubt, don't hesitate to ask if they feel comfortable writing a recommendation. In some cases, you may have no choice as to who to use, but when you do, make the best choice possible.

Follow up with your recommendation writers a week or so prior to your first deadline, to ensure recommendations have been completed or to see if they need additional information from you.

Once you have decided which college to attend, write thank-you notes to everyone who provided a recommendation and tell them where you've decided to go to college. Be sure to do this before you leave high school.



COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMS

To many people filling in tiny ovals on the SAT or ACT answer sheets is a standard rite of passage for high-school juniors. Of course, preparing for those tests is a standard ritual, too, but it doesn't have to start as late as junior year.

When to Begin SAT or ACT Prep:

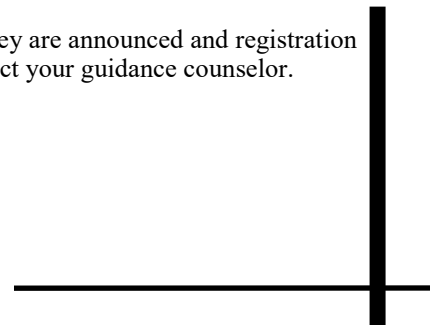
Students learn some of what they need for the college entrance exams in their high-school classes, but not everything. This is particularly true of the SAT, which tests problem-solving skills (unlike the ACT, which is more content-based). A good SAT/ACT prep program gives you test taking skills you might not get in school. Starting test prep in 10th grade—or a year before you take the tests—can be a huge advantage. At the very least, students should begin preparing for each test three months before they take it.

1. **Better scores.** Taking the SAT a second time can raise your score 50 points, but SAT prep can likely raise your score 150 points or more.
2. **Better PSAT scores.** SAT prep should help you prepare for the PSAT too. Since this test is available to you sophomore year you can't study for the SAT three months out and be ready for the PSAT. There are real advantages to doing well on this testing.
3. **Potential scholarships.** Taking the PSAT in the fall of your junior year (but only in your junior year) can put you in the running for the National Merit Scholarship Award. Unlike other scholarships, you don't have to hunt this one down and apply; all you have to do is get a good score on the PSAT.
4. **Better colleges.** Starting test prep early leads to better test scores, and better test scores lead to better colleges, which leads to...
5. **Better financial aid.** Top colleges offer the best financial aid, which is a big bonus when you're battling sky-high college costs. Of course, you generally need good SAT or ACT scores to land at the best colleges.
6. **Not buckling under the pressure of standardized tests.** As states shift to standardized tests (Michigan has made the ACT a graduation requirement) to measure everything from student improvement to teacher effectiveness, you'll know what to do. You won't panic under the weight of important year-end tests. By preparing for the college entrance exams early, you'll be ready for your state's standardized test when you need to be.

Additional Benefits of SAT and ACT Prep

Besides being ready for several of the most important tests in your high-school career, you'll find benefits in the classroom, too. SAT and ACT prep lets you work on areas where you need help and review subjects you might have forgotten. Prep work keeps you focused on your educational and college goals. It's hard to forget what you're working for when you spend your time working on it. A good prep program keeps you organized, determined and focused on your goals. It also puts you ahead of the competition in one of the most important contests you'll ever be in—your future.

Prep classes can become available through Clarkson and/or St. Lawrence-Lewis Boces. They are announced and registration information would then be available in the guidance office. For any questions, please contact your guidance counselor.



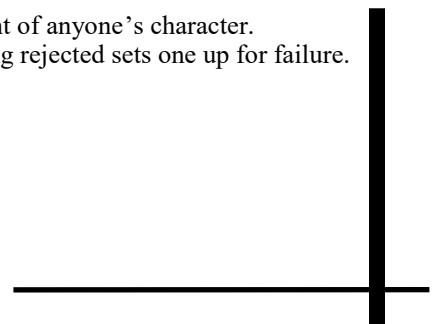
ADMISSION TIPS FOR PARENTS

Top ten admissions tips for parents:

College admission is a lot of work and can be a lot of stress: visiting schools, taking standardized tests, filling out applications and financial aid forms, then waiting, and waiting for those acceptance letters to arrive. When you have a child going through the process you want to help, you may even want to take charge. What is an appropriate level of involvement and what should your role be?

You can help your child get into college without becoming a helicopter parent, without losing your sanity, and without straining your relationship with your son or daughter. The following tips will help you get through the admissions process:

1. Determine how much help and guidance your child wants. Don't assume. Ask directly about how they envision the process, what they expect from themselves, and what they expect from you.
2. Get educated. The college admissions process has changed since we went through it, and is affected by many factors, including today's economic hard times. A great place to start is with the book *College Admission: From Application to Acceptance* (Three Rivers Press, 2012).
3. Provide access to information about colleges. Don't rely solely on school websites—they're primarily marketing tools. Sites such as collegeboard.com and Peterson.com offer basic information plus unbiased views.
4. Help plan trips to visit schools. What you can do: set an itinerary, book the hotel, gas up the car, pack your suitcase. What you can't do: choose all the schools, call to arrange interviews, or call to make a reservation on a tour or at an information session.
5. Fill out the FASFA. This form is needed for any kind of financial aid, requires a tax return and other information your student doesn't have, and should be completed even if you think you won't qualify for aid. Go to fasfa.gov to learn more.
6. Don't nag, belittle, or otherwise engage in negative interactions. There's enough stress in junior and senior year—be the refuge from it, not an addition to it.
7. Be realistic. Your son or daughter should be applying to at least one safety (high probability of acceptance), one match (reasonable probability) and one reach (medium to low probability-but who knows?) school. You can suggest or guide him or her to choices that meet the mix.
8. Keep track of deadlines if your student needs help. Creating a calendar with important dates (deadlines for applications, teacher recommendations, transcript requests, financial aid requests, etc.) at the beginning of the application process is useful.
9. Do some homework. Most applications require students to exhibit knowledge of the school, much as you are expected to know about a company when on a job interview. If requested, you can help in this area by researching on the internet, and finding out if there are alumni in your area who conduct informational interviews. Do not contact schools directly, though.
10. Maintain perspective. The college admissions process is not a reward for or indictment of anyone's character. Getting into the college of one's dreams doesn't assure future success any more than getting rejected sets one up for failure. Remind your son or daughter of this as often as necessary.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How many college applications should I do?

This is a matter of personal choice, but we recommend 3 to 5. It is a good idea to select some schools which fit your ability and at least one which you feel is “safe”.

When should I apply?

Every college has its own deadlines. You must begin early enough to be sure not to miss any opportunities. Applications for first choice schools should be in by Thanksgiving. Christmas break is a good time for all others. Watch your deadlines.

Should I apply for Early Decision:

This is appropriate only for certain students under certain circumstances. Every college has slightly different rules. See information regarding early decision described earlier in this publication.

What should I expect on a campus visit or interview?

Visiting your college is a critical part of the decision process. You need to know if the environment feels comfortable since it will be your “home” for a number of years. A visit should include a tour of academic, residential, athletic, and dining facilities. An interview is an opportunity for the interviewer and the interviewee to assess the “fit” for a particular college.

What is the CSS Profile?

The Profile is a pre-financial aid questionnaire required by some four year colleges. It must be filed early in the fall of your senior year.

Should I take challenging courses my senior year at the risk of lowering my overall average?

YES! Colleges are as concerned with the quality of your courses as they are with your grades. MCS now “weights” the final average in IB courses to address this issue.

Speaking of grades, do colleges look at second semester:

ABSOLUTELY! Changes in grades can cause colleges to rethink their decision. Colleges reserve the right to revoke an admission decision if a student's academic “picture” changes.

How can I test my interest in a specific career?

The Guidance Direct website can help you to match strengths, interests and values with potential colleges and careers. Counselors can also assist you with a shadowing experience in your chosen field.

How do I find out about scholarships?

There are many websites which can lead you to scholarship opportunities. Beginning in January, local scholarship information is distributed regularly by our office. Get one of our scholarship brochures to follow. Watch for notices posted in our office and in our Main office.

What if I am interested in the Military?

Recruiters visit our school regularly all year long. They are the best source of information. Your counselor can help you with names and numbers for recruiters from each branch of the service.

Should I take the SAT Subject Test?

This depends entirely on the colleges you select. The college catalogs and your counselor can help you. This is information you will want to know early in your search process.

What do I do with my completed college application?

Check it carefully for accuracy, preferably with a counselor or parent and then submit. Please inform us immediately. There is additional information we must supply to the college.

Who should I ask for letters of recommendation?

Letters of recommendation should come from people who know you well. Teachers are best for academic recommendations, and pastors, employers or coaches can be used for more general letters. You will need to give each person plenty of time before potential deadlines.

