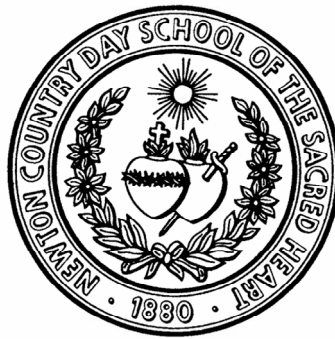


Newton Country Day School of the Sacred Heart



College Guidance Handbook Class of 2009

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Introduction

The Newton Country Day School College Guidance Handbook has been prepared in order to orient Juniors and Seniors to the complex and exciting process of college selection and application. The Handbook provides definite guidelines and schedules that will help students comprehend the many issues and challenges they will face in their last years of high school. In short, the following pages serve as a road map that will guide students as they embark on the transition from high school to college. It will be helpful only to the extent that each student takes advantage of the information it contains. The book does not replace the help of the College Guidance Office. However, it does provide answers to frequently-asked questions; it can help students organize their thoughts about college; and in general, it can eliminate much confusion *if* students take the time to read it and incorporate its recommendations into their college planning.

To make wise choices for the future means to be intelligently informed. A wise decision is based on self-knowledge and an awareness of the opportunities that are best suited to the person. If students can find such wise direction in this Handbook, then its main function will have been accomplished.

Planning For College

College planning is a family affair. It is important that parents and students discuss together the choice of colleges and plan together the steps necessary to get into college. As one of the first major decisions that a young adult makes regarding her future, college selection is challenging, but interesting and rewarding as well.

Each student should avail herself of the help and resources offered through the Guidance Office. Students are expected to seek out advice and to take advantage of resources available to them. It is only through active research, reflection and exploration that students will be assured of finding the college that suits them best. Clearly, when it comes time to plan the next stages in a student's academic future, parental involvement is crucial.

Future planning, especially for college, must be realistic. During the college research process, keep colleges' entrance requirements in mind. Read college catalogues carefully and make note of the specific requirements for those on the college list. This step can save a great deal of disappointment.

The College Selection Process

For parents and students, the college selection process can be exciting, puzzling, threatening, and exhausting! It is further complicated by various deadlines, testing requirements, application procedures, and by expectations of family, friends, and teachers.

The following timeline has been developed to help each student keep all of these factors in perspective and to stay organized during the college application process.

College Planning Calendar for Juniors and Seniors

The calendar on the following pages lists the activities, deadlines, and responsibilities that each student will have to take care of as she prepares for college.

Junior Year

January:

- Group meeting with parents of Juniors re: college selection process.
- January 29: Registration deadline for March 1 SAT I.

February:

- Parent Questionnaire distributed.
- Naviance (<http://connection.naviance.com/ncds>) passwords for students and parents distributed.
- Parents can begin scheduling appointments with the College Guidance Office.
Note: Parents should only schedule a meeting after they have completed the Parent Questionnaire and their daughter has met individually with the College Guidance Office.
- Juniors may begin requesting material from college admissions offices.
- Juniors should begin reading college guides, catalogues, and web sites.
- Juniors are encouraged to pursue a variety of constructive summer plans (i.e. exchange programs, volunteer work, summer enrichment courses, work experience, internships, etc.). There are many challenging and exciting programs open to high school rising Seniors; many programs are advertised in the NCDS library.

March:

- March 7. Registration deadline for the April 12 ACT.
- Juniors continue making individual appointments with the College Guidance Office.
- Students should visit colleges over Spring Break!
- Juniors should continue pursuing their summer plans.

April:

- April 1. Registration deadline for the May 3 SAT I/II.
- Juniors continue making individual appointments with the College Guidance Counselor.
- April 8 & 9: Juniors are encouraged to attend the National College Fair at the Bayside Expo Center.
- April 12 ACT.
- Group meeting with Juniors to discuss SAT II exams (formerly known as Achievement Tests) and Teacher Recommendations.
- April 27. Juniors are encouraged to attend the BISCCA College Fair at Milton Academy.

May:

- May 6. Registration deadline for the June 7 SAT I/II.
- May 9. Registration deadline for the June 14 ACT.
- May 3: SAT I/II.
- Juniors will receive summer college guidance assignment.
- Students meet with the College Guidance Office to explore college options and to discuss senior year course selection.
- Juniors should contact colleges they plan to visit to arrange tours and interviews. If a student plans to pursue athletics, the arts, or a particular major, she should request a meeting with someone in that area.

Summer:

- June 7: SAT I/II.
- June 14: ACT
- Visit colleges. (*You should plan most of your college visits for the summer because the Fall is an especially hectic time of the school year.*)
- Complete College Guidance summer assignment!
- Complete Common Application.
- Juniors should explore financial aid and scholarship opportunities. A visit to the Higher Education Information Center at the Boston Public Library is highly recommended.
- Parents should consult NCDS website for recommended summer reading on college process.

Senior Year

It is important that Senior year shows a sincere and sustained effort throughout the whole year. At every college, acceptance is contingent upon the student's maintaining or improving her level of achievement. The institutions retain the prerogative to withdraw the tentative acceptance if the student demonstrates a marked drop in performance.

More specific deadlines and detailed information on submitting applications will be distributed in September!

September:

- Seniors meet with College Guidance Office to discuss college list, visits, interviews, etc.
- Seniors register for the October and November SATs and the October ACTs.
- Senior Group begins!
- Seniors attend college representative presentations at NCDS.

October:

- SAT I/II
- October 25: ACT.
- Seniors register for the December 1 SAT I/II tests.
- All applications for Early Decision/Early Action with November deadlines will be completed and forms submitted to College Guidance at least two weeks prior to deadline.
- Seniors continue to attend college presentations at NCDS.
- Seniors should continue exploring financial aid and scholarship opportunities.

November:

- Financial Aid Information Night for parents.
- SAT I/II.
- All applications for December deadlines will be completed and forms submitted to College Guidance at least two weeks prior to deadline.
- The CSS Profile registration packet (for financial aid) is available online.

December:

- SAT I/II
- December 13: ACT
- Seniors should submit forms to College Guidance Office for colleges with deadlines in January or later.
- Free Applications for Financial Scholarship Assistance (FAFSA) are available in the College Guidance Office.
- Students should register for the CSS Profile by mid-December once final college lists are completed.

January:

- **Time to recommit to Senior year studies!** Although applications have been sent, all colleges will receive senior grades in February.
- File the FAFSA after January 1.
- Seniors should begin thinking about their summer plans. There are many challenging and exciting programs open to recent high school graduates.

February:

- Inform College Guidance Office of all admissions decisions and scholarship awards as they arrive.

April:

- Inform the College Guidance Office of all admissions decisions and scholarship awards.
- Begin final decision-making based on offers of admission and financial aid.
- Seniors complete Senior Projects (April-May).

May:

- Students make decision on where they will attend and send in one deposit--due May 1, Candidate's Reply Date.
- Advise College Guidance Office of plans to remain active on wait lists.

June:

Graduation !

The College Search

Students should begin actively thinking about college in their Junior year. Look over college handbooks in the College Guidance office, talk with friends and family who are now in college, and attend the informal sessions with college admissions officers who come to NCDS. Remember, the more information that is gathered, the better the chances of making a realistic and suitable list of college possibilities. Geographic location should be considered as well as the size of the school.

Be sure that high school course selection supports college and career plans. As Newton Country Day is a college preparatory school, its courses are designed to prepare students to meet admissions requirements. However, each student should make sure that elective courses will strengthen her record and prepare her more fully for a particular major field and program of interest. Ongoing conversations with the College Guidance Office and her academic adviser regarding academic and extracurricular records are helpful to this process.

Starting in the Junior year, each student will meet with College Guidance to discuss her interests and preferences for colleges. Within a week or two of this preliminary meeting, College Guidance will provide a preliminary list of colleges for the student to research and potentially visit over Spring Break. Following some research and visits, the student will meet again to revise and edit her list, and College Guidance will assist in creating a more comprehensive list for each student to pursue over the summer. These lists are constantly evolving, and as new information is received--either qualitative ("I really didn't like the South") or quantitative (updated grades and testing), the lists will change.

At the start of Senior year, the meetings with College Guidance will become more focused, and the college lists will also become narrower. In the fall of Senior year, each student's list will be divided into three categories: Reach, Possible, and Likely. From this list, the student will decide to which colleges she will apply. College Guidance will review this list prior to the student mailing any applications.

Resources

Students are encouraged to drop in to the College Guidance Office or schedule an appointment. Parents are also welcome to schedule appointments to meet with the College Guidance Office. Also, students should discuss their college selection process with their academic advisers who may serve as an added resource to them during this time.

Resource Materials

The internet is the most timely and efficient way to learn about a specific college. Visit the college's website, read the school's newspapers, contact a faculty member with questions about their department, learn about when you can visit the campus--the information you can gather is almost limitless. In addition, the College Guidance Office has many resources on hand to assist the student during the selection and application process. The following resources are recommended in particular:

College Viewbooks and Catalogues: (also available online)

- Viewbooks provide a look at a college's general program (i.e. student life, programs of study, photographs of the campus, etc.) The Viewbooks are arranged alphabetically in the College Guidance Office.
- Catalogues provide a more in-depth look at courses of study, admissions requirements, and tuition and fees.

General Resource Catalogs and Handbooks: Library & Guidance Office

- Barron's/Peterson's College Guide Books
- Peterson's Competitive Colleges
- Guide to Colleges with Learning Disability Programs
- College Money Handbook
- Index of Majors
- Colleges in New England

Higher Education Information Center at the Boston Public Library 1-877-ED-AID-4U

The HEIC offers free information and advice on higher education, financial aid and careers. Services available at the HEIC include:

- Counseling on school selection and paying for educational costs;
- Assistance with completing admission and financial aid applications;
- Computerized college and scholarship search systems.
- No appointment is needed and all services are free.

World Wide Web Sites

There are many terrific internet resources that offer information on different stages of the college search process. Some good ones to try are:

Exploring College Options:

<http://www.collegeboard.org>
<http://www.petersons.com>
<http://www.collegeview.com>
<http://www.collegenet.com>

Exploring Financial Aid:

<http://www.finaid.org>
<http://www.collegeboard.org>
<http://www.salliemae.com>
<http://www.fastweb.com>

<http://www.yahoo.com/education/college-entrance>

Student Athletes: <http://www.ncaa.org/cbsa/>

The College Visit and Interview

Suggestions for College Visits

College visits and interviews tend to help students clarify the features they want in the college they eventually will attend. Some colleges require an interview as part of the admission process but most do not.

Though many colleges will state that their interviews are non-evaluative (i.e. the interview will not be considered as part of the application portfolio), no admissions officer will forget an engaging and stimulating conversation with a potential applicant. We recommend that students make every effort to visit the colleges that top their "short list." When it comes time to deliberate different students' applications, it helps admissions officers advocate for a particular student if they can put a face and a personality to the written materials before them.

When making an appointment for a college visit, keep the following suggestions in mind:

1. If possible, the student should plan a time when NCDS is not in session, but college is, preferably the summer before Senior year begins.
2. The student requests a definite date and time in her inquiry, and an alternate if the original time is unavailable.
3. The Admissions Office should be notified as soon as possible if student will be late or will miss a scheduled appointment.
4. It is recommended that the student visit while the college is in session so that she will be able to talk not only with the admissions officers but also with the students who attend the college.
5. One can get a good sense of the student body by eating in the college snack bar or dining hall. It is also a good idea to visit classes.
6. Avoid a nonscheduled "drop in" to an admissions office. However, if an opportunity to visit a college at the last minute presents itself, the student should be courteous and understanding about what the Admissions staff is able to accommodate. Sometimes the student may join a tour; rarely, the student may find that an interview time is available due to a cancellation. Nevertheless, "dropping in" is discouraged and is not a productive way to visit a college.
7. If the student would like to see a coach or a faculty member in an area of interest, she should mention that when she calls. Colleges do their best to accommodate the student.

Timetable for College Visits

1. Begin visiting colleges during your Junior year.
2. Visit as many colleges as possible during the summer before your Senior year.
3. The student should return in the fall to those schools she was most interested in for a day of visiting classes, talking with students, and staying overnight, if possible.
4. In order for the student to have the best choices, a good rule of thumb is to call 4-6 weeks ahead of time. College interviews and tour spots fill up remarkably quickly. The more popular colleges are full through January, and they stop scheduling interviews by August.
5. It is always nice to visit when a college is in session but the demands of the Senior fall term do not always make that practical or possible. A summer visit is generally more relaxed. Not only does the student have more time but the Admissions staff often does also. Save the return, comprehensive, overnight visit for the student's very favorite few. While overnight lodging and class visits are being offered at more and more colleges, not all do so. Do not assume that this option is available.

Below is a list of colleges to which recent classes have applied. This might be a good place to begin. You can also ask current Seniors what they liked and disliked about particular colleges.

American University	Goucher College	Saint Anselm College
Amherst College	Grinnell College	Saint Joseph's University
Assumption College	Hamilton College	St. Michael's College
Bard College	Hampshire College	Salve Regina University
Barnard College	Harvard College	Santa Clara University
Bates College	Haverford College	Sarah Lawrence College
Beloit College	Hobart and William Smith Colleges	U. of Scranton
Bentley College	Hofstra University	Simmons College
Boston College	College of the Holy Cross	Skidmore College
Boston University	Howard University	Smith College
Bowdoin College	Johns Hopkins University	University of Southern California
Brandeis University	Kenyon College	Spelman College
Brown University	Lafayette College	St. John's College
Bryant University	Lehigh College	St. Lawrence University
Bucknell University	Lesley University	St. Mary's College of Maryland
Carleton College	Lewis and Clark College	Stanford University
Carnegie Mellon University	Loyola College in Maryland	Stonehill College
Catholic University	Loyola University, Chicago	Suffolk University
Chatham College	Macalester College	Swarthmore College
University of Chicago	Manhattanville College	Sweet Briar College
Claremont McKenna College	U. of Maryland, College Park	Syracuse University
Clark University	U. Mass., Amherst	Trinity College
Colby College	Miami University	Tufts University
Colgate University	University of Miami	Tulane University
University of Colorado at Denver	University of Michigan	Union College
Colorado College	Mount Holyoke College	Vassar College
Columbia University	Muhlenberg College	University of Vermont
Connecticut College	New York University	Villanova University
Cornell University	U. of N. Carolina, Chapel Hill	University of Virginia
Curry College	Northeastern University	Wake Forest University
Dartmouth College	Northwestern University	Washington and Lee University
Dickenson College	U. of Notre Dame	Washington University in St. Louis
Duke University	Oberlin College	Wellesley College
Eckerd College	U. of Pennsylvania	Wesleyan University
Elon University	U. of Pittsburgh	Wheaton College
Emmanuel College	Pitzer College	Willamette University
Emory College	Plymouth State University	College of William and Mary
Endicott College	Providence College	Williams College
Fairfield University	Quinnipiac University	U. of Wisconsin, Madison
Fordham University	Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute	Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Franklin & Marshall College	U. of Rhode Island	Yale University
George Washington University	University of Richmond	
Georgetown University	University of Rochester	
Georgia Tech	Roger Williams University	
Gettysburg College	Sacred Heart University	

An Outline of the Interview Process

1. The student should learn as much as possible about the college before her visit. She should be prepared both to answer and ask questions.
2. The student should give some advance thought to the things she wants to look for and ask about. It is acceptable to bring a list of questions to the interview. **Do not ask questions in the interview which can be easily answered by reading the viewbook!**
3. The student should go to the interview alone rather than with a friend. Parents go along for the tour but they do not participate in the Admissions interview. Parents sometimes are invited to speak with the officer following the interview.
4. The student should arrive on time or be a few minutes early.
5. The student should be herself at all times: honest, sincere, and interested.
6. The student should know her background and experience and be prepared to present it in an organized manner. An opening question may be: "Tell me about yourself."
7. The student should be prepared to state why she has chosen this particular college and what she expects to get out of four years there. Hint: Read about the college in advance. Read the literature published by the college, and read the summary in a college guide like Peterson's or Fiske's (both available in the College Guidance Office).
8. The student should be prepared to answer questions about SAT scores, recent grades, and courses she has taken. She should be prepared to talk about the weaker points of her record (a poor term or grade, etc.).
9. Some tips while interviewing: Smile! Speak distinctly. Look at the interviewer when speaking. Try to have a good time.
10. The student should state and defend opinions only if asked. She should not be argumentative. If she doesn't know something, she should admit it and not try to bluff.
11. The student should dress neatly and attractively. Above all, be comfortable.
12. Interviews are meant to be informative for both parties. The student should relax and try to get as much out of the interview as she puts into it.
13. Thank the interviewer for his or her time and consideration.
14. A well-crafted thank you note should be sent when the student returns home.

Some Questions to Ask at the College Visit:

1. What are the strongest departments in the college? What are the most popular majors?
2. What is the average class size? For freshmen? For upperclassmen?
3. What percentage of the freshman class returns for sophomore year? (This gives the student an idea of how many people feel positively about their freshman experience.)
4. How does the student compare academically with the students already attending this school?
5. What do students do after they graduate? Do they go on to postgraduate studies? What percentage is employed upon graduation?
6. What kinds of cultural, sports, and literary events are offered on campus?
7. Must one join specific organizations to be a part of campus life or is there room to be included in other ways? What are the year's biggest social events at this college?
8. What percentage of students remains on campus during the weekends?
9. What kinds of living accommodations are available? Dorms? Foreign language houses? Private apartments? What percentage of students lives in each? Is on-campus housing required for any students?
10. Can freshmen select their own roommates?
11. Are sports available for the average player? Ask about specific activities of interest.
12. What kind of student is generally the most successful/happy at this college?
14. If a student were to be happy here, at what other colleges would she be likely to succeed?
15. What percentage of the students receives financial aid? Are admissions need-blind? (If a college has need-blind admissions it means that they do not take financial ability into account in their admissions decisions.)
16. How much importance is placed on social activities and other extra-curricular activities?
17. What forms of Campus Safety are available?
18. How large is the library? Is it open-stack to freshman? Is it open-stack to any undergraduate? What are its special features or resources?
19. What support services are available to students? General counseling? Post- graduation planning? Free health care? Tutoring if needed? Help finding off- campus employment during the school year and during the summer? Junior year abroad or at another US institution?

20. Are cultural facilities such as musical instruments, movie or video cameras, "little" magazines and so forth easily available on a relatively informal basis to undergraduates?
21. What is the institutional policy and commitment to ethnic and cultural diversity? What percentage of the student body are students of color? What percent are international? From what geographic regions do the college's students tend to come?
22. What are the "hot" issues on campus lately?

Questions that Students are Often Asked at a College Interview:

The following are examples of questions generally asked at college interviews. Students should be prepared to discuss the weak points in their records. A good strategy is to talk about weaknesses in terms of a lesson learned (Although the grade was disappointing, it taught you to....).

1. How did you first hear about _____ college? Why do you want to attend this college?
2. What are your priorities in selecting a college?
3. Are you applying elsewhere? If so, where and which school is your first choice? (You should always say that the school you are visiting is your first choice; if you have doubts, frame your response so that it emphasizes all that you like about this college.)
4. What are you interested in majoring in _____ ?
5. What are your academic strengths and weaknesses?
6. What kinds of things do you do outside of school?
7. What accomplishments have you achieved or activities have you participated in that have had a particular effect on you and your life?
8. Which one of your activities has given you the most satisfaction?
9. What is the most significant contribution you have made to your school and/or community?
10. What will you contribute to this community?
11. Where do you see yourself in four years? In 10 years? In 20 years?
12. What is your family like? Do you have strong relationships with family members? (Be honest, but remember that you are not obligated to "tell all.")
13. What do you like about your high school? What would you change?
14. If you had high school to do over again, would you do anything differently?
15. Discuss your most stimulating intellectual experience.
16. What books, magazines, and newspapers do you read outside of school? (Be prepared to talk at length about something you read or saw recently.)
17. Tell me about something you really have wanted which you had to go after on your own.
18. Have you ever thought of not going to college? What would you do?

Interview follow-up:

The student should take notes on the interview and the college as soon as possible after the appointment.

- a. Likes
- b. Dislikes
- c. Important points to remember
- d. Name and title of interviewer
- e. Follow-up questions

The student should write a thank-you note to the interviewer that:

- a. Shows thoughtfulness, courtesy, and maturity.
- b. Reinforces the Admissions Officer's memory of you as an individual.
- c. Refers to one or two specifics from your conversation. This document will become part of your application file. Such details in a letter will help the interviewer remember you when it comes time to make admissions decisions.

College Visit Summary Sheet

After your visit, take a moment to write your responses to the issues contained here. Do this for each college visited and then compare your summaries for each. Photocopy this sheet as needed in order to have one for each college you visit.

College Name _____ Date of Visit _____

QUESTIONS

STUDENT BODY: Impressions of student body in terms of appearance, style, degree of interest, enthusiasm, diversity of their social, religious, ethnic background.

ACADEMIC FACTORS: How serious about learning are staff members and students; how good are the facilities; how varied the curriculum; how strict are the requirements?

CAMPUS & SOCIAL LIFE: How complete are dorms, dining rooms, student center, cultural center, athletic facilities; how active is the social life; is it a suitcase or commuter school?

OVERALL IMPRESSIONS: What did you like least and most; what seemed different or special about it; would you fit in here?

RATING: On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being the top grade), rate the college on the basis of your interest in it.

1 2 3 4 5

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS/QUESTIONS/COMMENTS:

The College Application Process

Course Recommendations for Senior Year

Through the first three years of high school, students are busy taking courses that meet the school's distribution requirements -- four years of English, three years of foreign language, science, and math, and various history, art, and physical education requirements. By the Senior year, however, many students have the freedom to choose among elective courses in various fields -- these electives round out a student's credit requirements for graduation.

Many students are tempted to take it easy during their Senior year -- to avoid the difficult courses in math and science, or to forego another year of foreign language. Obviously, yielding to that temptation does nothing for a student's application to college. A recent article in *The New York Times* notes:

"Admissions officers are becoming increasingly conservative in the way they look at an applicant's high school transcript. 'Meat and potato' courses are the order of the day. English, math, science, foreign language, and history in a five-course curriculum will bring a smile to any officer's face."

Students should understand these concrete reasons for continuing to take the harder courses during their Senior year.

Even so, in some cases there are good reasons for a student not to take a fourth year of science, math, or foreign language. When it is clear that a student is not avoiding such courses, but actively pursuing other courses that are pertinent to a possible college major, there is no stigma attached to this choice. Sometimes, it may happen that a student is so weak in mathematics, for example, that an advanced course in the Senior year would not be appropriate.

Students are encouraged to speak with the College Guidance Office in the Spring of their Junior years regarding their course selection for Senior year.

Steps in Applying to College

1. Requesting an application

The student should obtain application packages from colleges on her list. It is advisable to do so during the summer preceding Senior year or as soon as possible after returning to school in the fall of Senior year. Students may call or write to college Admissions offices.

2. Deadline Dates and Admissions Policies

When the student receives the application forms, she can begin the task of supplying the information the colleges request. An application fee of \$20-\$70 is usually required for each application and this fee is non-refundable, even if the application is rejected. Fee waivers are available from the Guidance Counselor if the family meets certain economic guidelines. Some colleges waive the application fee if a student applies online.

Seniors should watch deadline dates specified by each college. In most instances, college applications should be sent in as soon as possible. On occasion, deadline dates for applying are no more than a guideline: a college may actually stop accepting applications earlier than its final date if it fills its class or particular program before then; or a college may continue to accept applications beyond the deadline if it still has room for more students.

3. Completing the Application

Colleges are not alike and application forms may vary significantly. An increasing number of four-year institutions accept the Common Application. The Common Application may be downloaded via the website www.commonapp.org. **Note: many schools that use the Common Application also require additional supplements.**

4. How do Colleges Learn about applicants?

A college or university typically collects four different kinds of information about its applicants:

The Application -- This serves the purpose of identifying the student to the college through personal data (name, address, high school, etc.) and narratives (the personal statement). We recommend that students type their applications, though careful printing is acceptable.

SAT or ACT Scores -- They should be sent directly to colleges from the testing agency. Many colleges will accept scores only if they are sent directly from ETS (the Educational Testing Service) or ACT (American College Testing). For more information, see the section entitled "Admissions Testing/ Standardized Tests."

The Transcript -- Courses taken from grades 9-12 are supplied to colleges. In addition to a record of grades, the transcript shows the student's school activities and academic honors. College Guidance sends transcripts to colleges.

The School Recommendation Statement -- Though colleges place great emphasis on a student's academic record through four years of high school, other factors are also important. The letter of recommendation from the College Guidance Office will be meaningful and decisive. These letters will be sent to the schools directly from the College Guidance Office.

Steps in Applying to College continued . . .

Letters of Recommendation -- Most colleges request that classroom teachers assess an applicant's ability. In April of Junior year, students will ask teachers for recommendation letters. These letters will be sent to the schools directly from the College Guidance office. Recommendations from others (community leaders, influential friends, etc.) should be sent only after the student has conferred with the College Guidance Office.

For Students Pursuing NCAA Division I or II Athletics

A student should first discuss with her coach whether she would be competitive on the Division I or II level. She should then contact College Guidance and the Director of Athletics who will set up a special meeting to review the procedure for athletic recruitment. Note that all students who wish to compete on this level must register with the NCAA Clearinghouse.

For Students with Learning Disabilities

Students with disabilities must decide with their parents and advisers whether or not to self-disclose their disabilities to admissions committees. By law, admissions committees may take learning disabilities into consideration only if the applicant herself has notified the college. To do so, the applicant must have undergone psychological testing with a qualified professional, and the testing results must be included with her application materials.

Students should determine in advance of applying whether or not a college offers special services for students with disabilities, and whether students who are self-disclosing disabilities must complete any additional materials. NCDS strongly recommends as well that students who choose this route write an additional letter that addresses their disabilities directly, and considers how these disabilities have influenced their academic records, and what strategies students have employed to overcome these challenges. Finally, students must notify the College Guidance Office if they are self-disclosing any disabilities.

The College Essay

Most college-bound students approach the task of writing a personal essay for college admissions with some trepidation and a few questions: How important is the essay? What do colleges look for? How is it used? Who reads it? The following facts and tips may put the essay into perspective and help you produce your best effort.

The essay is the student's opportunity to take charge of the information the college receives about her and to provide information that does not appear in grades, test scores, and other materials. It allows the student to reveal her intelligence, talent, sense of humor, enthusiasm, maturity, creativity, expressiveness, sincerity, and writing ability -- traits that count heavily in the admissions evaluation.

What do colleges look for?

- Whatever your topic, it should reflect your true concerns and perspective. As you consider topics with whatever mix of seriousness, humor, confidence, or confusion, remember that the search for material to write about is an extension of the normal process of thoughtful reflection; it does not take place in some artificial, purely academic realm. Simply sorting out your thoughts, thinking, talking with friends, or daydreaming often leads to useful topics.
- Be ready to surprise yourself; your best writing and thinking may come from unexpected sources. A short passage in a long essay you carefully planned may include material far stronger than the rest and/or a whole new, productive direction. Be flexible; don't carry out your plan while overlooking unexpected ideas or writing with greater freshness or potential.
- Your prose style should be as impressive as the content of your essay. Write clearly; don't inflate your style. Use a thesaurus only to search for a more exact or accurate word; avoid language you wouldn't normally use.
- Some applicants underestimate the quality of their ideas. There's nothing more frustrating than believing that none of your topics are good enough, but this belief is seldom justified. In fact, some of the best application essays stem from common events or experiences; what is remarkable is the writer's treatment of the topic. An idea may only seem "bad" because you haven't yet begun the draft that brings it to life. If several topics seem at all promising, pick one and begin writing. Even an unsuccessful draft may eventually lead you to your final product.
- Having a good idea for an essay is not the same as having finished the essay. Great topics will not excuse technical faults, uneven development, stylistic awkwardness, or other problems. Sometimes ideas that seem great in the abstract may really be gimmicks. Be objective about your topic; for example, does your draft stand up to multiple readings? Does it reveal a substantial insight about yourself or your world view? Is it witty, or touching? If so, your essay's foundation is probably strong.*

* This section has been excerpted from *College Bound*, a publication of the Center for Talented Youth at The Johns Hopkins University (Baltimore, MD: 1993), 36.

What Kinds of Essay Questions Can Be Found on College Applications?

In its essay directions, a college may ask the student to do one or more of the following:

DESCRIBE your uniqueness as a person or tell something about yourself that can't be learned from other information in your application.

DISCUSS something that has contributed significantly to your growth.

COMMENT on your goals and aspirations and tell how you expect the college to help meet them.

EXPRESS your imagination, originality, opinions, or feelings on a specific topic.

Whatever the topic, the care and attention the student gives it will express the level of her motivation and how much she cares about the college.

The following questions are taken from recent college applications:

1. Why have you selected _____ as a possible school for you? How do you expect _____ to help you achieve your personal and career goals?
2. At times in our lives there comes a moment when we learn something about ourselves or about others that we did not know before. Such epiphanies or flashes of revelation can have a lasting impact on us. Write about an experience like this in your life, and what you learned either about yourself or others because of it.
3. The Arts can have a profound impact on our lives and the way we live them. Select a painting, film, play, book, or any other form of artistic impression that you consider to be truly extraordinary. Explain in detail why you feel this way.
4. Evaluate a significant experience or achievement that has special meaning to you.
5. Discuss some issue of personal, local or national concern and its importance to you.
6. Indicate a person who has had a significant influence on you, and describe that influence.
7. Choose a character in fiction with whom you identify, and explain why.
8. Describe a risk that you have taken and discuss its impact on your life.
9. Write an essay of no more than 500 words on any subject that interests you.

Application Checklist

You might find the following checklist useful in keeping track of application steps. Note that the transcript, teacher recommendations and school counselor's letter and report will be mailed by the College Guidance office directly to each college.

COLLEGE APPLICATION CHECKLIST

College Name						
Application Due Date Part I						
Application Due Date Part II						
Interview Arranged						
Interview Completed						
SAT I/II Scores sent by the College Board						
Essay Written						
Essay reviewed by College Counselor						
Essay Revised and Completed						
Application Completed						
Application Reviewed by College Counselor						
Application Mailed						

When Will The College Let The Student Know If She Has Been Admitted?

After the student has filed her application and has arranged to have her latest SAT or ACT scores sent to the college, there is little to do but wait until the college admissions office makes its final decision. When and how quickly the student hears from the admissions office depends on the pattern they use to notify their applicants. The majority of institutions use one or more of the following: candidates reply date agreement, deferred admission, early action, early decision, and rolling admission.

Early Action*

A non-binding early plan is one in which a student submits her application before the regular deadline, and receives an admissions decision early. If admitted, she will not have to notify the college of her intention to attend until May 1.

Early Decision*

This plan is offered for applicants who are sure of the college they want to attend and are likely to be accepted or deferred by that college. If a student applies Early Decision to a college, she is obligated to attend that college if she is accepted. If accepted, she must withdraw her applications from all other colleges.

Rolling Admission

Some colleges follow the procedure of considering each student's application as soon as the student's application is complete. They will notify the applicant of their decision without delay. Colleges that follow this practice may make and announce their admissions decisions continuously over several months, in contrast to the practice of other colleges which accumulate applications until the deadline and announce all their decisions at the same time. **With Rolling Admissions it is best to apply as early as possible.**

Candidates Reply Date Agreement

A college subscribing to this agreement will not require any applicant offered admission as a freshman to notify it of her decision to attend before May 1. The purpose of the agreement is to give applicants time to hear from all the colleges they have applied to before they have to make a commitment to any one of them.

Deferred Admission

The practice of most colleges whereby a school will permit students to postpone enrollment for one year after acceptance.

***These are generally accepted definitions for Early Action and Early Decision. Students should read each college's definition for its individual policies.**

Standardized Tests/ College Boards

The most current information is summarized below concerning the major tests used for college admissions:

PRELIMINARY SCHOLASTIC APTITUDE TEST/NATIONAL MERIT

SCHOLARSHIP QUALIFYING TEST (PSAT/NMSQT) This test is given in October to all Freshmen, Sophomores and Juniors. It is a two-hour version of the three hour SAT and is given at our school. The test has three sections: Verbal, Mathematics, and Writing. The purpose of the test is to acquaint students with College Board exams and to obtain an estimate of how students will perform on the required admissions tests. This same test is also used as the qualifying test to determine which Juniors will become semi- finalists in the National Merit Scholarship competition.

COLLEGE BOARD EXAMINATIONS (CEEB)

These tests are officially known as the College Entrance Examination Board tests. There are two main tests: The SCHOLASTIC APTITUDE TEST (SAT I) and the SAT II's (formerly known as ACHIEVEMENT TESTS).

THE AMERICAN COLLEGE TESTING PROGRAM (ACT)

Most colleges require that students submit either SAT scores or ACT scores. This test can best be explained as another "brand" of college entrance examination. Some students (approximately one third) find that they score better on the ACT than on the SAT, as it assesses school subject-based material. The exam is divided into four parts: English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science Reasoning.

A Few Helpful Suggestions about Standardized Testing:

Juniors are encouraged to take the SAT I during the Spring of their Junior year (in either March or May). This serves as good practice for retaking the test in the fall and assessing whether the students want to pursue tutoring options over the summer prior to her Senior year. Although it is not generally necessary, a Junior may wish to take one or more SAT II Subject Tests. This is particularly true for a subject that a student may not be continuing the following year or has completed an Advanced Placement level course in the subject. It is a good idea to take the test while the material is still fresh in her memory.

During the Senior year it is recommended that all take the October or November SAT I examination. Many colleges want the results of tests taken in the Senior year; moreover, the Senior year scores are often a little higher than Junior year scores.

SAT I/ACT

Most colleges require that students take the CEEB SAT or the ACT. The SAT is a three-hour test that covers two areas: Verbal, Mathematical, and writing aptitudes. The scores in each of these areas range from 200-800. The ACT is a three-hour test that covers four areas: English, Mathematics, Reading, Science Reasoning, and an optional Writing section. It yields four subject scores, and one composite score ranging from 1-36 (average score is 18). Both the SAT I and the ACT have changed their formats recently to include the writing section and colleges have revised their admissions requirements to accommodate these revised tests. Please be sure to check the specific requirements of each individual college to which a student is applying.

SAT II

In addition to requiring the SAT or ACT examination, many colleges also want a student to take one or more SAT II's (formerly known as Achievement Tests). These tests are used mainly for placement and are only required by the most selective colleges. They are one hour in length and are designed to show how much a student has learned in a specific subject: Physics, English, Language, American History, etc.

How to Arrange to Take College Board Examinations

College Board Examinations are given seven times during the year: October, November, December, January, April, May, and June. These tests are always administered on Saturdays, frequently on the first Saturday of the month. A student may register to take the exams at any designated test center but she must indicate her choice on the application form. The most efficient way to register for the SAT is online at www.collegeboard.com. A student may either take the SAT I or one or more SAT II Subject Tests on any of the testing dates but, again, she must indicate her choice on the application form.

- Be sure to include a check for the examination fee and make sure that you have recorded the NCDS code number (221530) on the application form. The school will not receive the test results if our code is not on the application.
- The registration fee covers the cost for sending test scores to four colleges. We recommend that students do fill in this section.

Shortly before the testing date, the student will receive the admission ticket in the mail. This ticket should be brought to the test center on the day of the exam. Students should report for testing by 8:15 am and should bring with them school ID, a few #2 pencils and erasers.

The results of the College Board examinations are mailed directly to the student's home address about six weeks after the test. Copies of the results are also sent to NCDS for our records and to the colleges that the student has designated on her registration form.

THE AMERICAN COLLEGE TESTING PROGRAM (ACT)

Some colleges require or recommend the American College Test instead of the College Board Examinations. Another "brand" of college entrance examination, the ACT is similar to the SAT. A few colleges (mainly in the South and the Midwest) require that a student take the ACT. Some students find that they score better on the ACT than on the SAT. According to recent studies, approximately one third of students who take both tests score better on the ACT, one third of students score in the same range, and one third of students score worse. A battery of tests in four areas: English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science Reasoning, it yields one composite score ranging from 1-36 (Average score is 18). The ACT is given six times during the school year. Applications and further information about the ACT program are available in the Guidance Office.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT PROGRAM

The Advanced Placement Program is a cooperative enterprise between the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB), high schools, and colleges to provide an extra challenge to high school and college students with special interests and abilities. The program allows students to receive college credit for courses in various subjects while still in high school. AP Exams are available in 26 areas and are offered at Newton in May. The examinations receive grades between 1-5. Every college has a different policy about advanced placement credits. Students decide whether or not to submit their results to a college.

Additional Testing Information

TEST SCORES

In order to request your test scores you need the following:

- Your social security number
- Your name & address
- The names of the colleges to which you want your scores sent.

<u>College Board</u> tel. no.: 1-800-SAT-SCORE (for SAT I & II and AP scores) Check, Visa or MasterCard \$6.50 per report sent.	<u>ACT</u> tel. no.: 319/ 337-1270 Visa or MasterCard only. Regular Mailed Report=\$7; Priority Report=\$10
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You can also request scores by going online at www.collegeboard.com or www.actstudent.org

Eligibility for Non-Standard Testing (Extended-time testing)

Per the Admission Testing Program, to be eligible for extended-time testing students must:

- Have a current Individualized Education Plan (IEP) on file at Newton Country Day School;
or
- Have on file two signed documents based on recent test results obtained from the following: physician, psychologist, child study team or learning disability specialist. The two documents cannot be from the same source.

The IEP or the two signed documents must state the nature and effect of the disability, the tests used in the diagnosis, and the need for special testing arrangements.

Students who are eligible for extended-time testing must notify the Director of College Guidance in order to complete a special application. A minimum of six weeks is required for ETS and ACT to process these requests.

SAT PREPARATION COURSES

There are a number of ways to prepare for the SAT. Some involve only the investment of time on the student's part, while others are quite costly. Students generally "feel" better when they have participated in some preparation; they may take sample tests or purchase one of the many SAT preparation books on the market (available in any bookstore). Based on research, the average effects of SAT prep or coaching are small; however, students who participated in some type of preparation on their own did better than those who did nothing. Something to keep in mind: a solid academic performance over four years in high school will be more impressive to a college admissions professional than an extra 40 points on the SAT.

Financial Aid

For many students and their families, the greatest problem involved in post- secondary education is not what school to attend or how to get in, but rather how to pay for this education.

In searching for a college, students should not limit their choices because of the apparent high price of a particular institution. All colleges that the student feels would offer her the best academic program and a correspondingly comfortable environment should be considered regardless of price.

All colleges, through use of their own funds, try to make it possible for any student to attend, regardless of financial circumstances. In addition, the federal government and many states provide grants, low-interest loans, and work/study opportunities. Local groups, companies, and unions will also offer aid, in the form of either grants or loans, to students from a specific community.

Students and parents should investigate closely the colleges to which they apply. Write specifically for information about their financial aid programs and ask for all applications and forms required. Students who anticipate requiring financial aid should ask admissions officers point-blank if that college practices need-blind admissions. Many colleges will not indicate this in their literature, so the question will have to be asked directly.

Once a student is accepted to a college and she has applied for financial aid, the college will then award a financial package. A financial aid package is the combination of funds needed to make-up the difference between a higher-priced college and a lower-priced college enabling students to choose the best college for them regardless of price.

Keep in mind that families with low incomes are not the only ones eligible for financial aid. The needs of middle income and upper income families are also taken into account by most colleges. Factors such as family size, children in college, assets, etc. are all considered.

Colleges and universities have generally agreed on how to determine what each family can contribute to college education. General guidelines are as follows (some students will need to complete two forms):

- Students must complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) to apply for federal Title IV student aid programs (Pell Grants, Stafford Loans, College Work-Study, etc.).
- Many U.S. colleges employ the CSS Profile form to gain additional information to determine applicants' eligibility for non-Title IV funds. Students may begin completing the CSS Profile during the fall of their Senior year.
- In order to qualify for federal student aid a student must be a:
 - U.S. citizen;
 - U.S. national;
 - U.S. permanent resident who has an I-151, I-551, or I-551C (Alien Registration Receipt Card).

Financial Aid Terms*

Need Defined as the "annual costs of attendance in college minus the annual financial contribution of the family."

Annual Costs of Attendance

Comprised of tuition and required fees, room and board, books and supplies, personal expenses (like laundry, dry cleaning, etc.) and a travel allowance for two round-trips from home to college.

Family Contribution

Comprised of the dollar amount which the parents can afford to pay (Parent's Contribution) and the dollar amount that the student can afford (Student's Contribution).

Federal Methodology

This annually regulated formula determines federal eligibility. It is used by the government to assess the incomes and some of the assets of both the parents and the child. It attempts to ensure that families of the same size and economic circumstances are expected to contribute the same dollar amount for college costs.

* These terms are taken from *College Bound*, a publication of the Center for Talented Youth at The Johns Hopkins University (Baltimore, MD: 1993), 51-52.

U.S. Department of Education Student Financial Assistance Programs

The U.S. Department of Education publishes annually a helpful document entitled *The Student Guide: Financial Aid from the U.S. Department of Education*. The information that follows is excerpted from *The Student Guide*.

Students and parents interested in learning more about federal aid programs can contact the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243). The Information Center will:

- Assist with completing the federal student aid application;
- Tell callers whether a college participates in the federal student aid programs, and that college's default rate (refers to the percentage of students who attended the college, took out federal student loans, and later went into default);
- Explain federal student aid eligibility requirements and the process of determining financial need and awarding aid;
- Send federal student aid publications to callers.

Higher Education Information Center at the Boston Public Library

1-877-ED-AID-4U

Students are encouraged to take advantage of the Financial Aid services available at the HEIC in downtown Boston. As noted above, the HEIC offers free information and advice on higher education, financial aid and careers. Services available at the HEIC include:

- Counseling on school selection and paying for educational costs;
- Assistance with completing admission and financial aid applications;
- Computerized college and scholarship search systems;
- No appointment is needed and all services are free.