

# College Guide

HAMILTON SOUTHEASTERN HIGH SCHOOL  
GUIDE TO COLLEGE PLANNING



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## Planning for Parents of Freshman and Sophomores

It may seem early to start thinking about getting your child ready for college, but it really isn't — important groundwork should take place in ninth and tenth grade. Here's a list to help you make sure your child is on the right track.

Create a four-year high school plan. Once your child is settled into ninth grade, introduce the idea of preparing an overall plan for high school that relates to his or her goals.

- Make sure you and your child know what high school courses are required by colleges, and that your child's ninth-grade courses are on the right track.
- Map out when these courses should be taken.
- Familiarize yourself with the various levels of courses offered by your child's school.

Start your child thinking about careers. Encourage your child to develop a tentative career goal. Of course it will change—often—but it's the thought process that counts.

- Help your child to identify interests—likes and dislikes—not just in academics but in all areas. This will help your child focus on goals.
- Encourage your child to discuss career options with others, such as the school counselor, teachers, recent college graduates who are working, professionals in the community, etc.

Suggest extracurricular activities. Encourage your child to actively take part in a sport, school club, music or drama group, or community volunteer activity.

- Remember that colleges would rather see real involvement in one activity than a loose connection to several activities.
- If your child may want to play sports in college, research the National College Athletic Association eligibility requirements. The NCAA requires completion of certain core courses; you can find the specifics at [www.ncaaclearinghouse.net](http://www.ncaaclearinghouse.net).

Meet with the school counselor. The school counselor knows how to help your child get the most out of high school. Make sure your child has an opportunity during the school year to discuss post-high school plans with the school counselor.

- You should participate in this meeting too.

Save for college. It's still not too late to start a college savings plan, if you haven't already. Every little bit helps!

- Investigate state financial aid programs and 529 plans
- Obtain a social security number for your child if you don't already have one. This is often required for applications, testing, scholars

**Don't miss our Freshman/Sophomore Parent College Information Night!**

**This is held in October every year.**

## Junior Year Checklist

### Fall

- Start exploring your after high school possibilities. Write down your abilities, preferences, and personal qualities.
- Begin your college search through recommended internet sites and reference guides available in the Guidance Office or CCA office.
- Explore careers and majors available in Naviance
- Talk with friends, family, and teachers about their career experiences.
- Discuss your possibilities with your high school counselor.
- Use Fall Break to visit colleges.
- Attend local and regional college fairs, presentations of visiting college representatives both within the high school and in the metropolitan area.
- Take the PSAT given at HSE in October during school. Prepare for this by taking the practice test provided in class before the test or visit [CollegeBoard.org](http://CollegeBoard.org) and check out their resources for PSAT

“Destiny is not a matter of chance; it is a matter of choice. It is not a thing to be waited for; it is a thing to be achieved.”

*-William Jennings Brian*

## Winter

- Review your PSAT report with answer key provided to determine your weaknesses. College Board will help you develop a study plan—available through their website.
- Find lists of colleges, majors, and careers right for you through Roadtrip Nation powered by College Board at <https://collegeboard.roadtripnation.com> or on Naviance.
- During Winter Break find out the real scoop on college from your friends who have come home from campus.
  - Plan on taking the SAT and/or ACT sometime during the Spring. Test dates and registration deadlines are available in the Guidance Office or online. Practice tests are available in the Guidance Office or at [CollegeBoard.org](http://CollegeBoard.org).
  - SAT prep classes are available at an additional cost-check with Guidance if you are interested.
  - Begin planning visits to colleges of interest to you. Juniors have one day they may take as a planned college visit day. Call the HSE attendance office at least 2 days in advance. Spring Break or Summer Break is also a good time to explore campuses. Appointments can be made by contacting the admissions offices at universities.

*Don't miss Sophomore/Junior  
Parent College Information Night!  
This is held in January every year.*

## Spring

- Take the SAT and/or ACT test.
- Review your senior year class schedule with your counselor. Challenge yourself with honors and AP classes and continue ongoing studies such as world languages.
- Arrange enriching summer activities, including volunteering, getting an interesting job or internship, and enrolling in summer classes at colleges.
- Create and maintain a personal resume to use in the upcoming year for college and scholarship applications.
- If you are hoping to play a sport in college, talk to your coach and ask for help in meeting college coaches. Register for Initial-Eligibility with the National Collegiate Athletic Association at [www.ncaaeligibilitycenter.org](http://www.ncaaeligibilitycenter.org).
- Make sure you know your Naviance log in information.
- Listen for announcements from Guidance about scholarships open to juniors. An updated list of scholarships will be listed on Naviance.
- Attend essay writing session in May and sign up for the College Application Workshop which will be held in August before your senior year starts.

## Summer

- Visit prospective college campuses and take campus tours.
- Schedule interviews with admission counselors at colleges you're serious about.
- Request applications and financial aid information from these colleges.
- Check important dates; some universities have early deadlines or rolling admissions.
- Ask your summer employer for a recommendation letter on letterhead that you can use during your senior year for applications. (Don't forget to say thank you!)

Refer to Senior Information Sheet sent to you during the summer .



## Senior Year Checklist

### Fall

- Students attend the College Application Workshop in August.
- Visit colleges of interest and/or attend college representative presentations at HSEHS. You can see the full schedule of college representatives coming to HSE and sign up on Naviance or in the CCA office.

- Use Naviance to request transcripts, letters of recommendation, and to let the guidance office know that you have submitted your college applications.
- Get required recommendation letters (allow two weeks). Follow up with a “Thank you” note.
- Write first drafts of application essays and ask teachers, parents, and friends to read and critique them.
- Complete your Senior Meeting with your counselor (September). Double check you have met your requirements for your diploma track.
- Take the SAT/ACT in September, October or November if still needed.
- Start your scholarship search - see Naviance and recommended web sites.
- Complete your FAFSA form by the required date.
- Make sure the counseling office has sent any required 7th semester transcripts to colleges.

Don't miss Senior Parent College Information Night! This is held in August every year.

Remember to attend the Financial Aid Meeting held in October each year.

## Senior Year Checklist

Spring

- Tell every college you applied to of your acceptance or rejection of offers of admission or financial aid by May 1. It is just as important to tell colleges you are not attending as it is to let them know you will attend.
- Send your initial deposit to the college you choose. Don't delay on locking in your residence hall preferences.
- Fill out your senior exit survey in Naviance. Include all scholarships offered to you.

## Summer

- Tell the Guidance Department where to send your final transcripts.
- Finalize financial aid awards paperwork.
- Read all orientation materials provided by your chosen university.
- Start gathering items needed for your freshman year of college. Pay attention to the recommendations from your school on how to handle the first year of college.



## College Resources for Students and Families

### General Websites

ACT, Inc. [www.act.org](http://www.act.org) –The website for information on the ACT, including registration, test dates, etc.



Campus Tours: Virtual College Tours [www.campustours.com](http://www.campustours.com) – Virtual tours with still pictures and descriptions, webcams, campus maps, and videos of hundreds of colleges throughout the United States. Provides a first look at colleges.



The College Board [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) – A complete site, with college and scholarship searches, information about the SAT and SAT Subject Tests, and other material pertaining to the college search and application process. Easy-to-use college search feature.



eCampusTours.com [www.ecampustours.com](http://www.ecampustours.com) – Virtual tours of colleges. Useful for its 360-degree views of dorm rooms and other buildings.

NCAA Eligibility Center [www.ncaaeligibilitycenter.org](http://www.ncaaeligibilitycenter.org) – Official NCAA website that gives details of student-eligibility requirements to play NCAA sports. Watch this site for changes in eligibility; students can print the “Guide for the College-Bound Student Athlete.”



Petersons Education Portal [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com) – An all-purpose site including a college search, as well as information about summer programs, summer camps, and jobs. The site asks you to register before using some of the search engines and other resources, but there is no registration fee. There is a charge for some of the services provided.



U.S. Department of Education [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov) – The federal government’s website is easy to use and an excellent source of information on financial aid, much of it in Spanish as well as English.

## Financial Aid Websites

The College Board [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) – Has a scholarship search, a loan calculator, and an online application form for the CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE form, which is required by some colleges.

FAFSA on the Web [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) – The website for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. This form must be submitted in the senior year (after October 1 and by March 10) for families applying for need-based aid. Students may complete it electronically at this site.



FastWeb [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com) – Extensive information on merit- and need-based scholarships and aid.

FinAid! [www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org) – Good site for information about types of financial aid and applying for financial aid.

Merit Aid [www.meritAid.com](http://www.meritAid.com) - - Aid offered by colleges and universities specific to their campuses.

## The College Admission Process in 4 Steps

## Step 1—Prepare

- Talk—talk with your family, your school and college and career counselors, coaches, and anyone else who has served as a positive role model for you about your hopes, dreams, aspirations, fears, and desires for your future
- Learn—get engaged with your learning process. Take courses that are rigorous and challenging for you. A strong academic performance in high school demonstrates to a college you are ready for the academic challenges you will face there.
- Participate—get involved! Join clubs and take part in a few extracurricular activities. Strive to become a leader in that activity. Colleges want to see that you were engaged in high school and that you will enrich the college experience for others.
- Plan—sit down and make a plan for what you need to be doing between now and graduation. Write down deadlines for your plan and commit to it.



## Step 2— Research

- Learn as much as you can about schools that interest you to discover if they are right for you. You should strive to learn a lot more than just whether or not they offer the major that you are interested in. Empower yourself by having the necessary information to make knowledgeable decisions.
- You should ask questions such as:
  - How much does it cost to attend and would I qualify for financial aid?
  - What types of financial aid are available?

-What activities and clubs are available?

-What are the housing options?

-Will this college help with placement once I graduate?

-Distance from home?

-What are the available majors and classes?

-Location of the school?

## Step 3— Applying

- Do not miss deadlines. Sit down and put your deadlines on a calendar that you can visually follow as the year progresses.
- Get help from your parents for filling out FAFSA and/or additional financial aid forms. Be aware that financial aid procedures can differ from school to school. Again that list of deadlines will help!

## Step 4— Deciding

- Once the admission offices have notified you of their decisions, you need to make your decision as to which school you will attend. This is a big decision, and an important one. Take your time, and use all of the information that you have gathered to make the choice that is best for you.
- Once you have decided, notify the colleges that you will not attend and request to have your application closed
- If you're having trouble deciding you may want to consider:
  - If you have received financial aid offers, compare them carefully. Determine exactly what your out-of-pocket cost to attend will be.
  - Attend prospective student events at the colleges to which you were admitted
  - Talk to your family, your counselors, and those you trust
  - If you have been offered a spot on a college's Wait List, learn what you need to do to be an active member of the Wait List



National Association for  
College Admission Counseling  
*Guiding the way to higher education*

## How can parents help their children in the post-secondary process?

What are the first steps?

1. Planning for college can start as early as middle school.
2. Talk with your child's counselor or teacher about your child's options after high school.
3. Keep and use this guide to be sure that your child is taking the right courses.
4. Encourage your child to study and take competitive courses.
5. Be involved in school activities. Go to parents' nights and conferences, and meet with your child's teachers.
6. Be sure your child is taking the most difficult courses he or she can handle so that college and career choices are open.
7. Encourage your child to participate in school, community and church activities.

What should my child do?

1. Your child's ability to read, write and use a computer is the most important and basic skill needed for the future.

2. Your child needs a firm foundation in rigorous, high level math and English courses.
3. Your child should take advantage of courses offered in science, social studies, foreign languages and performing arts.
4. Your child must learn good study habits.
5. Your child should consider what he or she wants to do after high school and discuss options with the school counselor or teachers.

What can I as a parent do?

1. Believe in your child's abilities.
2. Take an interest in what your child is studying and his other homework.
3. Help your child remain focused at school.
4. Visit the school and schedule conferences.
5. The courses your child takes and the grades he or she now receives have a lot to do with what your child can do after high school.
6. Work with your child on the development of his or her schedule of courses.
7. Create a quiet place for your child to study.

## The Keys to College Visits

### Checklist for a Campus Visit

A campus visit is highly recommended. Before you visit the campus, consider some of the options below. It is also important to develop a list of questions and plan specific activities in order to accomplish your goals.

- | Meet with an admission counselor.
- | Verify admission requirements (tests and high school preparation).
- | Discuss your chances for success in certain programs.
- | Find out how to apply.
- | Request a viewbook and other publications.
- | Determine college costs.
- | Ask about financial aid opportunities, as well as deadlines, forms required, etc.
- | Meet with faculty in department of your intended major.
- | Ask questions about academic requirements offerings.
- style, and academic atmosphere.
- | Ask about the placement record for graduates in the field you might study.
- | Identify career planning services for undergraduates.
- | Tour the campus (be sure to check out the residence halls, library, etc.).
- | Talk to students about the general academic environment and the amount and kind of study necessary for success.
- | Find out what student activities (clubs, organizations, intramurals, etc.) are available and about campus life in terms of dating and social activities.
- | Investigate transportation options.
- | Check out campus media including radio stations, newspapers, bulletin boards, campus blogs, etc.

### Possible Questions to ask during your visit:

- What are the best reasons to go to this college?
- What do you love about this college?
- What does this college do to promote student involvement in campus groups, extracurricular activities, or volunteerism?
- What it like to go from high school to college?

## Rank Characteristics in Order of Importance

Choosing a college is a big decision, and an important one! Make sure you sit down and take the time to go over which factors related to your educational future are the most important to you. Consider some of these questions to help you make your decision:

1. Which of these aspects are things I feel I must have to be comfortable at college?
2. On which factors am I flexible?
3. What do I want to accomplish at college?
4. Is there specific training or educational experiences that I need to ensure my college can offer?

- Academic program/major available
- Type of school
- Admission policy
- Cost
- Opportunities
- Location
- Size of enrollment
- Reputation
- Affiliation (public, private-independent, private-church related)
- Accreditation by a special organization
- Campus activities/social clubs
- Support services
- Type of community
- Minority representation
- Gender ratio
- Specialized programs for students with disabilities
- Athletic program
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## Tips for Letters of Recommendation

**When to ask**—The earlier the better! A good rule of thumb is to ask at least one month before your earliest application deadline. Keep in mind that teachers and counselors have busy schedules and may be writing multiple letters of recommendation, so give them more than enough time to write a thoughtful letter for you.

**Whom to ask**—Be sure to follow the specific guidelines provided by the college regarding letters of recommendation, often they specifically want a letter from a teacher, counselor, or both. If you're considering a specific major, it might be advantageous for you to ask for a letter from a teacher of that related subject. Try to get letters from teachers you had your junior and senior year, because colleges want a current perspective on their potential candidates. Also, try to choose a teacher or counselor who can speak to your potential inside and outside of the classroom.

**How to help**—Be sure to let the teacher/counselor know well in advance when you need your letter by. Make it easy for them to give positive, detailed information about your achievements and your potential by providing them with a resume or a "brag sheet" for reference. Information you should provide: *special circumstances, living situations, or relevant family aspects that have had a significant impact on your life, strengths, extracurricular activities, academic goals, leadership experience, how you have served your community, challenges you have faced and overcome*. Follow up with teacher/ counselor and ask if there is any additional information they may need to write the best letter for you.

## Tips for the College Essay

### 8 Key Points That Admission Officers Look For:

- A command of the basics of good writing
- A direct answer to the essay question
- A strong opening paragraph that captures the reader's interest
- A comprehensive argument or narrative—make your point and stick to it
- A style that is comfortable for you and that is appropriate for the subject matter
- Correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling
- Correct data—check your facts, dates, and names
- Succinctness— pay attention to the recommended length

College Board\*\*

### What the Essay can do for your application:

- Demonstrate your writing ability, a key component of success in college
- Show that you have thought carefully about where you are applying and why you are a good match for the college, in your own words
- Explain your commitment to learning and that you are willing and able to be a contributing member to that college community

### Things to Keep in Mind:

- Revise, revise, revise! This process will help you develop a strong opening and a solid direction, and refine what you are trying to express
- Show, don't tell—Give readers such convincing evidence they will come to the conclusion that you want. Provide detailed examples instead of providing a list of things
- Be authentic— don't stress trying to write what you think they are looking for— just showcase who you are
- Just get started!- Writing a meaningful and powerful essay will be a long process, give yourself ample time to draft and revise

Dear Parent,

I am pleased to introduce Naviance, a service designed especially for students and families. Naviance is a comprehensive website that you and your child can use to help in making plans about courses, colleges, and careers. Naviance is also the service that we use in our office to track and analyze data about college and career plans, so it provides up-to-date information that's specific to our school.

Naviance will allow you and your child to:

Get involved in the planning and advising process - Build a resume, complete online surveys, and manage timelines and deadlines for making decisions about colleges and careers.

Research colleges - Compare GPA, standardized test scores, and other statistics to actual historical data from our school for students who have applied and been admitted in the past.

Research careers - Research hundreds of careers and career clusters, and take career assessments like the Do What You Are® test.

Create plans for the future - Build course plans, create goals and to-dos, and complete tasks assigned to you by the school to better prepare yourself for your future college and career goals.

Naviance also lets us share information with you and your child about upcoming meetings and events, local scholarship opportunities, and other resources for college and career information.

Students have Naviance accounts set up for them automatically. The username or email address is their school email address and their password is their six digit student number. They can connect to Naviance through Clever.

We hope that you will find this resource helpful. If you have further questions about Naviance, please contact us.

Nancy Herndon, College Counselor

Hamilton Southeastern High School