



# COLLEGE ADMISSIONS HANDBOOK

*Nancy A. LeBlanc*  
Guidance Counselor - Lead  
Class of 2023 (A-L)  
Phone: 781-925-3000  
[nleblanc@town.hull.ma.us](mailto:nleblanc@town.hull.ma.us)

*Daniel O'Donnell*  
Guidance Counselor  
Class of 2023 (M-Z)  
Phone: 781-925-3000  
[dodonnell@town.hull.ma.us](mailto:dodonnell@town.hull.ma.us)

HHS CEEB Code: 221072

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION	3-4
II.	CALENDAR FOR JUNIORS AND SENIORS	5-6
III.	CHOOSING A COLLEGE	7
IV.	TESTING FOR COLLEGE ADMISSIONS	8
V.	THE COLLEGE APPLICATION	9
VI.	COLLEGE DEADLINES	10
VII.	THE COLLEGE INTERVIEW	11
VIII.	FINANCIAL AID	12
IX.	HELPFUL WEBSITES	15

## I. INTRODUCTION

This planning guide helps you and your parents/guardians in conjunction with your school counselor. There will also be individual meetings and advising classes to support your planning process. The following general suggestions are made to help you prepare for your education beyond high school:

### 1. **KNOW YOURSELF**

Achievement, abilities, interests, ambitions, and values are important factors to be considered in setting your goals. You can complete interest and strength surveys on Naviance and MassCIS. A High School Organizer form is provided at the end of this packet to help. Junior and senior advising classes will also have assignments and activities, which will help you think about your interests and goals.

### 2. **GET GOOD GRADES**

It is critical that you get the best grades you can. While some colleges will accept students with lower grades, a student's chances for admission to a college are better when the academic record is strong. *Colleges consistently say grades and the difficulty of classes are the most important factors in admission.*

### 3. **VISIT COLLEGES**

Sign up for campus tours and open houses. Spend time visiting classes, labs, dorms, the student center, athletic complex, and dining facilities. Talk with a professor if possible. Eat a regular meal on campus. Talk with current students about what they like and don't like about the college. Check out the library and other special buildings like academic services, medical clinic, and campus security. Find out what life is like on the weekends. To do all or most of this, plan on spending the better part of a day on campus to conduct a thorough college visit. Finally, ask yourself - "*Can I picture myself at this college?*" and "*What did I like and dislike at this college?*"

### 4. **EXPLORE OCCUPATIONS**

Find out as much as possible about various occupations that interest you. If possible, get some experience! Consult with people in these fields. Go on a job shadow. Attend career programs sponsored by the school and/or community. Research online and take advantage of your Naviance website account. The BLS (Bureau of Labor Statistics) OOH (Occupational Outlook Handbook) is an excellent tool for exploration: [BLS Occupational Outlook Handbook](#)

### 5. **BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT CHOOSING YOUR COURSES**

Your school counselor will ensure that you take the necessary courses that colleges will be looking for, however it is important for you to be involved in your own schedule! If there is a class that aligns with your career interest, or can help you explore a potential career, talk to your counselor about getting it on your schedule!

### 6. **LEARN HOW TO BE A GOOD STUDENT**

Develop good study habits and learn your learning style. This includes how to take notes, time management, study skills, and organization. Strive to improve your study habits as you progress through high school.

### 7. **BECOME A WELL-ROUNDED INDIVIDUAL**

Develop hobbies and outside interests. Get involved in the school's student life organization, join a sport's team, aim for leadership positions, become a member of community organizations and clubs, participate in activities at your place of worship, get to know people with similar interests, and attend workshops.

### 8. **SELECT YOUR COLLEGE OR VOCATIONAL SCHOOL**

Investigate the schools that offer the types of programs you desire (based on your interests and what you have found out about the related jobs and careers). Consult with people who have attended these institutions such as friends, relatives, or college representatives. Learn about the academic expectations in your selected major. Attend college information programs conducted by admissions representatives from all types of schools.

9. **LEARN ABOUT COLLEGE ACCEPTANCE**

Talk with your counselor or consult written materials to learn about the requirements for various colleges. Each college's application process is different. Know the application procedures and deadlines established by each college. Review the Common Application at [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org)

10. **PREPARE YOUR APPLICATION MATERIALS EARLY**

Make a list of all your activities, awards, and accomplishments. Think about which teachers you want to ask to write you a letter of recommendation. Take the Common Application assignment in Junior Advising seriously. It will help you *tremendously* as a senior!

11. **PLAN YOUR FINANCES**

Parents and students should become knowledgeable about financing a college education. Consideration should be given to federal, state and local sources of financial assistance. Be sure the sources used are current and up-to-date. Begin applying for scholarships during your junior year. Attend [MEFA virtual events](#)

12. **USE NAVIANCE AND ENGAGE IN ADVISORY**

Take full advantage of Advising class. Use your Naviance account to explore colleges and careers.



## II. TIMELINES

### Junior Year

#### **September-November**

- Research opportunities to learn more about different careers and colleges (college fairs, online career surveys, etc.)
- Utilize Naviance to explore careers, majors, and colleges
- Take the PSAT/NMSQT at FRCS

#### **December-February**

- Compare PSAT and Pre ACT scores to determine which test you will want to take
- Begin thinking about criteria for ideal college
- Research scholarship opportunities (through work, the town where you live/attend school, public libraries, local organizations and the Internet scholarship searches)
- Engage in the course planning process for your senior year. Think about taking classes that will challenge you (colleges look at the rigor of your courses, plus you can get a GPA bump with honors, AP, and Dual Enrollment) You also want to look for classes that will relate to your potential college major (ask your school counselor!)
- Learn about and consider applying to one or more special programs for senior year including: Honors, AP, Dual Enrollment, Virtual High School, and Senior Independent Enrichment
- Begin looking into college tours/visits (students can receive excused absences for college visits)
- Sign up for the March SAT by early February, if you are choosing to take that test
- Request a fee waiver from your school counselor, if you qualify
- Engage in Khan Academy practice during Advising

#### **March-June**

- Complete the Common Application during Advising
- Work on your personal essay during Advising & English
- Take AP exams in May
- Take the SAT or ACT (March, April, May and/or June)
- Request, from two teachers, letters of recommendation
- Continue to visit colleges
- Complete the questionnaire that your school counselor will use to write your recommendation letter

#### **Junior Year Summer**

- Consider a summer job to earn savings for college expenses, and/or find a summer experience that aligns with your educational/career interest (internship, job shadowing)
- Consider volunteering, or joining an activity that will expand your horizons
- If you have not already done so, begin discussing how you/your family plans to pay for college

## Senior Year

### August-September

- Register for the October or November SAT or ACT
- Update Naviance to reflect the colleges which you will be applying to, and double (triple!) check selected deadlines
- Prepare a list of all deadlines and necessary materials for the schools to which you are applying. There are many parts to the college application process, so organization will be key! Use whatever system works best for you such as a google doc or spreadsheet, or a planner
- Utilize add/drop period to ensure that you are in a schedule that has appropriate rigor

### October-November

- Have your college list narrowed down to 5-8 schools
- Take the SAT or ACT
- Learn which financial aid forms your college will require you to complete (particularly the CSS profile, which can be found on collegeboard.org)
- Complete FAFSA
- Complete CSS Profile (if applicable)
- If applying "early action" (typically with deadlines of 11/1 or 11/15), have all application materials completed and ready for submission
- If applying "early action" be sure to put teacher recommendation requests in Naviance *at least* two weeks prior to your earliest deadline

### December-February

- Begin researching and applying for scholarships
- Continue to work hard in all classes (colleges will often recalculate your GPA to include current senior grades)
- Fill out the FAFSA using prior year tax information (suggested in October/November, but *required* by February)
- Make plans for follow up visits or to attend Accepted Student events at colleges

### March - June

- Review your Student Aid Report (SAR) and if necessary, submit corrections.
- Review the financial aid packages from the colleges to which you were accepted. Begin discussing which college will be the best financial fit for you and your family
- Commit to a college by May 1st (be sure to put a deposit down to secure your spot!)
- Ensure that you have met all FRCS/state graduation requirements, and complete your senior portfolio

### III. CHOOSING WHICH COLLEGES TO APPLY TO

#### Answer these guiding questions:

- What major am I looking for?
  - *Does this school offer my major?*
- What type of college do I want to attend?
  - *A two-year school or a four-year school? A school with a religious affiliation? An HBCU?*
- What size school do I want?
  - *Small (4,000 or fewer)    Mid-sized (4,000-13,000 students)    Large (greater than 13,000 students)*
- Where do I want to be?
  - *Within driving distance of home? In another state?*
- What type of surrounding location do I want?
  - *A large city? A small city? Somewhere quiet?*
- What do I want on campus?
  - *Co-ed? Greek life? Certain clubs or sports? Academic support center?*
- What special program or opportunities would I like?
  - *Internships? Study abroad? Co-op?*

In deciding which colleges you want to attend, you should first evaluate yourself to determine your wants and needs. Then you can consider criteria to be met by the colleges in which you are interested: academics, size, location, student/faculty ratio, co-ed/single sex, extracurricular programs, social opportunities, cost, financial aid, career counseling, academic competition, private/public, religious affiliation, HBCU, etc.

As a general rule, it is advised that students build a balanced list of 5-8 schools to which they will apply. The way to balance a list is to ensure that the list includes multiple of Target, Safety, and Reach schools (see below for details)

**Fit** This is most important. Only apply to schools that “fit” your criteria (major, location etc.). You’ll be paying a lot of money, for tuition and probably room and board, so it only makes sense to apply where you will be excited to learn and to live during your time in college.

**Consideration should be given for financial fit, academic fit, and extra-curricular fit.**

**Reach** The student’s academic record and credentials may not qualify him or her for admission. For a school to be considered an academic reach, their GPA will be below the average accepted GPA. This group is therefore called a “reach” school. Financial costs can make a school a reach for families as well.

**Target** Schools in which the probability of admission is high based on the school’s high rate of admission. The student’s SAT/ACT scores and GPA are in line with the numbers the college or university typically admit. These are categorized as a “target” school.

**Safety** Schools that have most of the features a student desires and at which the probability of admission is highly likely. Schools in this category are called “safety” schools.

#### IV. TESTING FOR COLLEGE ADMISSIONS

Standardized tests are one of the many factors colleges use in making admissions decisions. This testing is used to determine the probability of a student's academic success in college. The most widely utilized and accepted college entrance tests are the SAT and ACT. **Please speak with your School Counselor if you believe 1) you will be eligible for a testing fee waiver or 2) You will qualify for accommodations on your standardized test.**

It is recommended that students test twice; Once in the Spring of their junior year and once in the Fall of their senior year. While many schools are choosing to be test optional (meaning you will not be penalized in any way for not submitting test scores), some programs may be very competitive and therefore require standardized testing scores. This is why it is important to research not only your colleges that you plan to apply to, but also the programs to which you will be applying.

1. **PSAT/NMSQT** ([www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org))  
*The PSAT/NMSQT is an October practice test for juniors designed to give you an idea of the procedures, questions, and a scope of the SAT. Detailed results are reported in a way that helps you to see your strengths and weaknesses. Approximately 15,000 of the 1.5 million students who take PSAT/NMSQT each year will be designated as National Merit Semifinalists.*
2. **SAT** ([www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org))  
*The SAT measures reading, writing, and mathematical abilities. The SAT is administered by College Board, and it is given at specific test centers throughout the year. It is required or recommended by many colleges as part of the admissions process.*
3. **ACT** ([www.act.org](http://www.act.org))  
*The ACT tests English, Reading, Mathematics, and Sciences. ACT also has an optional writing test. While very similar to the SAT, ACT differs because it has a science test and optional writing test.*

**Hull High School CEEB CODE: 221072 - (For both SAT and ACT testing)**





## V. THE COLLEGE APPLICATION

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

1. Application (Common App)
  - a. Be sure to spend time completing your application. Check, double check, and have someone else check for spelling and grammatical errors
  - b. Spend time working on your personal essay and supplemental essays. This is your chance to have your voice come through. It allows colleges to 'see' you, as a person, on their campus!
2. The Transcript
  - a. Grades (more specifically progression over time) and rigor of your courses are by far the most important part of your application
  - b. If you faced extenuating circumstances that affected your academic performance, be sure to let your school counselor know ASAP so they can include that information in their letter of recommendation
3. SAT/ACT Scores
  - a. You will be able to self-report your scores through Common App. Be accurate! You will eventually have to send the official score to your college
4. The Counselor's Letter
  - a. Help your counselor get to know you! Stop by and say hello! Keep your counselor in the loop!
  - b. Most importantly, be sure to complete the questionnaire so your counselor can write a detailed letter for you
5. Teacher Letters of Recommendation
  - a. Carefully consider which two teachers will write you a great letter
  - b. Did you connect well with a teacher? Did you grow a lot as a learner in a certain class? Did you take a class in the realm of your potential major? Those teachers may be great options for a letter



## VI. COLLEGE DEADLINES

### *Early Decision, Early Action, Regular, and Rolling Admission: What's the Difference?*

Deciding which deadline to apply to college is a choice every potential college student needs to make. You should have facts available on each to help make an informed selection. Hundreds of colleges offer early application options, so your first-choice school could very well begin accepting applications in November of your senior year. Getting materials in ahead of the pack may seem like an easy choice, but may not be the ideal one, as each option comes with its own set of guidelines.

**Early Decision (ED)**- Very few students apply ED. This is a great option for a student who is without a doubt confident that this school is the *perfect* fit for them. In terms of fit, ensuring that this school is a good financial fit is critical. When you apply ED, you are signing a legal agreement that states that if you are accepted to that school, that you will withdraw all other college applications and attend that school. It is critical that you and your family go into this without any doubts. If you have no doubts that the school is a perfect fit, then this route can be very advantageous to your admissions decision.

**Early Action (EA)**- Early action is similar to early decision in the sense that you will be able to get your applications in early, however it is not legally binding. Getting your application in early can make you a more competitive applicant, and is advantageous for students who are applying to competitive programs. For both EA and ED, you will receive your admissions decision prior to Winter break.

**Restrictive Early Action (REA)**- Restrictive early action is also non-binding. The difference between REA and EA is that if you apply REA to a school, you may not apply early action to any other schools.

**Regular Decision (RD)**- Regular Decision deadlines are typically in January and February (with January 1st being the most common deadline). If you feel as though you want to have more time to boost your GPA or finish your application, then consider applying RD.

**Rolling Admissions**- This option provides the most flexibility for students when it comes to deadlines. Colleges with rolling admissions accept applications throughout senior year and accept students on a rolling basis. You will find out if you were admitted or rejected several weeks after you applied, which makes the choice of when to apply especially advantageous when comparing other deadlines and organizing your overall application requirements.



## VII. THE COLLEGE INTERVIEW

In a world that is becoming increasingly technology-centered, it is easy to undermine the value of a face-to-face conversation. Participating in an interview at a college or university can be highly advantageous. This allows admissions officers to get to know you as more than just a piece of paper! Look on the college's website to see if they are offering interview opportunities, and sign up for one! You may even want to call or email to ask if that school is offering interviews.

### *Tips for a successful college interview*

- Show up on time
- Dress professionally
- Practice good body language (good posture, eye contact, not fidgeting, a strong handshake)
  - ◆ Start practicing this in day-to-day conversation with family and friends
- Be yourself! Don't go into this thinking that you need to come across as the most amazing person on the planet. The goal of this interview is to let the admissions representative know who *you* are
- Come prepared with thoughtful questions
  - ◆ As with any interview, doing your research ahead of time will allow you to show up with questions
  - ◆ Try to avoid asking questions that could easily be answered by looking on the college's website

### *Questions College Admissions Representatives may ask you*

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Why are you interested in attending this school?
3. What major(s) are you interested in here?
4. What is your learning style?
5. What are your strengths as a learner?
6. What are your challenges as a learner?
7. Where do you see yourself \_\_ years from now?
8. What was your high school experience like?
9. What are you looking to gain from your college experience?
10. Whom do you admire most?
11. Have you read any good books lately?
12. Why do you want to go to college?
13. What career are you interested in pursuing?
14. What do you do for fun?
15. Name a time you faced a challenge or obstacle, and how you got through it.



## VIII. FINANCIAL AID

Many families are understandably concerned about meeting college costs. Every student is encouraged to apply for financial aid, even if his or her family has the resources to pay the entire cost. **Completing FAFSA is required to be eligible for both federal and state loans. It can also be required by colleges to be considered for any financial aid.**

IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER TWO THINGS ABOUT FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid):

1. The form is the student's, meaning questions such as "what is your name?" are asking information about the student. There is a separate section for parent/guardian information.
2. FAFSA is used by government to calculate how much money each family is expected to pay toward college. This is called the Expected Family Contribution (EFC). The FAFSA is not used to decide how much financial aid a family will receive from colleges. Individual colleges determine a student's financial aid after they receive the EFC.

For CSS Profile, students should check which [colleges require the CSS profile](#) on College Board's website.

Students should pursue *all* avenues of aid, prioritizing money that does not need to be repaid (grants and scholarships). Most institutions award financial aid as a "package". Financial aid "packages" are made up of:

1. A combination of scholarships or grants
2. Loans (to be paid back, with interest, when the student leaves college), and
3. Campus jobs/work study (sometimes related to a student's field of study)

The earliest FAFSA can be submitted is October 1<sup>st</sup> of a student's senior year. Parents and students will use 1040 forms from the previous tax season. The general recommendation is to complete the online application as early as possible, and especially in the same timeline as you submit college applications. First, create an FSA-ID number for student and only 1 parent. **Many colleges also require their own financial aid forms in addition to FAFSA, so be sure to check with each college's financial aid office.**

**Colleges are required to provide a financial aid estimator to help families predict cost of attendance. A generic net price calculator is available at <https://collegecost.ed.gov/net-price>. Many colleges have developed their own, and can be found on the college's financial aid website.**

It is recommended that families begin planning their finances as early as possible. Do not wait until senior year!

MEFA (The Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority) is an excellent resource for planning how to finance college. They run live, virtual events throughout the school year. <https://www.mefa.org/events>



## IX. Helpful Websites

<http://www.collegeboard.org>

Register for SAT; fill out the CSS PROFILE

<http://www.act.org>

Register for ACT

<http://www.commonapp.org>

Main college application

<http://www.naviance.com>

When connected to Common App, allows counselor to send supporting documents (transcripts, recommendations)  
Excellent resource for self-exploration surveys, career research, college research

<http://masscis.intocareers.org>

MA sponsored site with information on careers

<https://www.bls.gov/ooh>

Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook  
Detailed information about careers, training, wages, and labor forecasts. Use A-Z Index to look up careers

[www.studentaid.gov](http://www.studentaid.gov)

Free Application for Federal Student Aid site

<http://www.finaid.org>

Financial Aid Information Page

<http://www.mefa.org>

Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority- Resource to learn about funding college. Many free, live webinars

<http://www.princetonreview.com>

College support

<http://www.ncaa.org>

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)  
NCAA information for college-bound student athletes. Academic eligibility, recruiting

[www.meritaid.com](http://www.meritaid.com)

Website that organizes scholarships awarded by colleges and universities