

Navigating High School and the College Application Process

CASE Meeting
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Transitioning to HS

The Middle School Years

- GT kids get to dabble in a lot of different activities
- It's a great time to explore your interests
- Can participate in fine arts and athletics with careful budgeting of time

High School – Trying to Find the Right Balance

Academics

- Trying to excel in academics plus participate in athletics AND fine arts is difficult
- It's exhausting and doesn't leave much room for down time
- HW load is heavier than at WAVE (not harder, just heavier)

Extracurricular

- Athletics – your child will have meets or games during or after school. Will have to make up missed class work, tests, quizzes
- Debate team – meets during entire school day
- After school rehearsals for band, athletics, orchestra, etc.

Clubs/Social Activities

- Multitudes of clubs and many more opportunities than in MS
- Sporting events, Homecoming, dances, other school-sponsored activities

Community Service

- Be sure to get your NHS service hours before your sophomore year. 16 hours required in order to apply for NHS.
- Be sure to get a letter from the organization for your volunteer hours (on letterhead)
- Some clubs require service hours (Math NHS, Science NHS, to name a few)
- Ongoing community service hours are important on your college application

Other Words of Advice

- Read the Educational Planning Guide (EPG)
- Contact your campus Dean of Instruction if your student needs help planning his/her academic path
- Go to your campus course selection fair! These are usually in early Feb. before course selection sheets are due.
- Have your student take the PSAT as a freshman and sophomore (math prerequisite – Geometry or higher)
- Attend CCISD's Clear to College in July (even freshman parents)
- Attend your school's grade-level parent night (in Sept.)
- Attend the CCISD College Fair Nov. 12 at Clear Falls HS. Freshman and above encouraged to attend. The Houston National College Fair is Feb. 12 at the NRG Center (formerly Reliant Center)
- Find out about paying for college; attend the CCISD Financial Aid Night Dec. 10

Even More Advice...Make Connections in HS!

Things are different on every campus; therefore, it's important to:

- Find someone to connect with whose child is a year ahead of yours (former WAVE parent, booster club parent, athletics parent, band parent, etc.)
- Encourage your 9th grader (or 10th grader, etc.) to make connections with an older, wiser student (10th, 11th, or 12th grader). Great way to find out about classes your student might want to take.
- Talk to coaches, sponsors, directors, and parents on YOUR campus. UIL teams and organizations vary on every campus.

Start Documenting!

Students need to document the following starting the day after they graduate 8th grade:

- All extracurricular activities
- Honors and awards (NHS, Superintendent's Scholar, contests, competitions, etc.)
- Community service hours
- Summer school
- Jobs, internships, camps

A spreadsheet or Naviance is the best way to compile all this information. Document hours spent, dates of events, and detailed description of each entry. Want anyone reading your resume to understand your activities and accomplishments.

Documenting as you go will make the college application process much smoother in the long run!

Preparing for the Future – College!

Begin with the End in Mind

The High School Years

What is your student's goal?

To help meet that goal, is your student

- Taking full advantage of academic opportunities?
- Doing his/her best on grades and test scores?

Parents' goal: find the best match for your child's future

Colleges expect these things:

- High test scores (SAT or ACT)
- Academic rigor
- GPA/grades
- Clubs/sports/fine arts
- Community service
- Rank is important for TX public schools (top 7% UT, top 10% A&M)
- Numbers 1 and 2 are the top considerations for highly selective universities.
- Highly selective universities also require 2 SAT subject tests (typically 1 math/science and 1 humanities)

A Word on Texas Graduation Plans

- Old plan vs. new, less rigorous plan?
- Stick with the 4x4, including LOTE
- Admissions offices for Texas universities are not changing their admission requirements

The College Visit

- Start visiting colleges the summer after sophomore year (earlier is good, too!)
- Visit colleges when you're on vacation
- Narrow down your college search
 - Large public university
 - Small public university
 - Private university
 - Ivy League
 - In the city (UT?)
 - Or a college town in a small urban area (A&M?)
 - Going on to graduate school? May want to go to a public university for undergraduate, save the Ivy League for graduate school

The College Visit (cont.)

- Once your child decides which kind of university and location (city or college town), use collegeboard.com to search for other universities that meet his/her requirements
- Schedule campus tours and attend info sessions; get the insider's view on what they're looking for in the application.
- Also contact academic department, honors college, athletic coaches, fine arts department, etc., to arrange a personal visit with faculty while you're on campus.

When Selecting Colleges – What is Most Important to You?

- Academic scholarships? (\$!)
- Prestige?
- Positioning for a future career?

If money is important to you:

- Check out Princeton Review's Best 379 Colleges 2015 to see which colleges give non-need based aid
- Whether or not a school offers merit-based scholarships can be a deciding factor
- Find out if the college gives academic scholarships. Some do not.
- Ivy Leagues – as expected, no non-need based aid
- Check public colleges for out-of-state tuition waivers. They are out there but you have to do your research!

Prestige

- Are college rankings (overall and by department) important to you?
- If so, check out the college rankings for your field of interest
- Do you want to attend a college with athletics teams that compete at the conference level? Not all colleges have football teams.

Positioning for a Future Career

- Ask the university which industries/companies come to the school to recruit
- Ask where their students go to graduate school after getting their undergraduate degree

Applications – the earlier the better!

Applies to both public and private universities

- October/November – early decision or early action deadline.
 - check to make sure decision is nonbinding
 - if you wait until the regular date, the quota may be filled and you will be waitlisted
- For out-of-state public colleges, you must submit your application by the early deadline (Oct.-Nov. 15) in order to be considered for scholarships
- Parents - might have to stay on your child's back to get essays written and applications in
- Essays are an essential piece of the college application, especially for highly selective colleges. They want to know about you in your own words, not in your parents' words or about your parents.

Applications (cont.)

- Additional essay(s) may be needed for honors college
- Be choosy with your teacher recommendations:
 - ask a teacher from your junior or senior years to write your recommendation
 - the ideal teacher would be one who can't wait to write a recommendation for you.
 - this teacher needs to be someone you know, have conversations with, etc. so that they can answer "what would this student be like in a classroom at X University?"
- If an Ivy League is your goal – look into using a college selection planner

Applications (cont.)

- Put together a resume with academic accomplishments, honors & awards
- Use Naviance , your spreadsheet, or the common application to make your resume
- Update your resume regularly, starting freshman year.
- Counselor and teacher recommendations will be based on the information you input into Naviance.
- Parents – do not forget to do your parent brag sheet in Naviance!

Applying to Highly Selective Colleges

Info based on Harvard and Yale campus visits summer 2013

- Need to have stellar academics (Harvard also wants to see excellence and talent in an extracurricular)
- The essay is an essential piece of your application! They want to see the “essence of you” distilled into your essay
- Having a passion (and excelling in that area) is very important
- Want to see what you did with the resources you had in HS (i.e., did you take advantage of the educational opportunities at your school?)

Acceptances and Merit/Financial Aid Offers

- Offers come in spring semester of senior year
- Have several offers to choose from, especially if \$ is important to you.