

College Planning Essentials for Rising Seniors

As your junior year in high school comes to a close, you are probably getting excited (and nervous!) about your senior year. Spending time with close friends, senior prom, and graduating will have great payoff. But with all this excitement comes a lot of stress – the college application process. Remember, it is never too early to start planning for college and if you haven't already, now is the time. Use these pieces of advice to help you stay on track this summer:

Prepare for the SAT

You may have already taken the SAT, but if you aren't happy with your scores, you can take it again. How much time did you spend studying for the exam? Practicing for this test prepares you for what to expect and teaches you to use your time efficiently. There are many free tools online and at your local library to help you study. Start at sat.collegeboard.org/practice. Just a few points could mean the difference between receiving a scholarship and not receiving one as SAT scores are a major factor many colleges consider when awarding merit based aid.

Visit College Campuses

Even though during the summer, most students are gone, there are usually some campus tours and information sessions. Summer is also an ideal time for parents and students when schedules are usually more flexible. Visit and tell me about it!

PARTICIPATE IN

INTERESTING ACTIVITIES

SUMMER VACATION IS A TIME TO ACT ON INTERESTS THROUGH INTERNSHIPS, VOLUNTEER WORK, CLUBS OR PAID POSITIONS. DON'T WASTE THIS TIME STAYING UP LATE AND SLEEPING UNTIL LUNCHTIME.

Have a question?

Email your counselor:
jglenn@bordentown.k12.nj.us
sashton@bordentown.k12.nj.us
mleusner@bordentown.k12.nj.us

THINK ABOUT YOUR CAREER INTERESTS

YOU MAY HAVE HEARD THAT GOING TO COLLEGE IS A TIME FOR YOU TO EXPLORE PERSONAL INTERESTS AND DECIDE WHAT YOU WANT TO DO. BUT WITH COLLEGE COSTS ON THE RISE, IT MAY BE BEST TO GET STARTED ON THIS STEP BEFORE YOU DECIDE WHERE TO APPLY AND ENROLL. HAVING AN HONEST IDEA OF WHAT YOU ARE LIKELY TO MAKE AFTER GRADUATION CAN HELP YOU MAKE A WISE DECISION ABOUT HOW MUCH IS OKAY TO BORROW FOR COLLEGE AND WHAT YOUR RETURN ON INVESTMENT WILL BE.

Develop a Preliminary List of Colleges

Now is the time to really work on your college list. While you have the time, call, write or use the Internet to investigate schools and request information. Get the list down to a manageable number. (Save these on a list in Naviance under 'my colleges'.) Add prospective colleges to your Naviance list. Request information from colleges you are considering and begin organizing files. This is very easy to do on Naviance. The Naviance college pages also list deadlines, required financial aid forms, etc. It's a good time to become familiar with the information available on these pages. You could begin to develop a simple timeline of deadlines for each school.

Email Ms Ashton if you need help logging on to Naviance!

•Naviance: <https://connection.naviance.com/family-connection/auth/login/?hsid=bordentownreghs> •Common Application: www.commonapp.org
•SAT: www.collegeboard.com •ACT: www.act.org •Financial Aid: www.fafsa.ed.gov •Athletic recruiting: www.ncaa.org

Discuss your college budget with family

Before you get your hopes set on the perfect school, have an earnest conversation with your parents about what is affordable for your family. Remember, the sticker price of a college isn't necessarily what you will pay to go there. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau offers a financial aid comparison tool at www.consumerfinance.gov/payingforcollege that will help you determine the net cost of going to a particular school. Colleges also provide a net price calculator to help you get an idea of the average financial aid offer. Use these tools during your conversation.

Write an Admission Essay

Almost all colleges are going to require essays of some sort. They usually fall into one of three categories – academic, non-academic and/or personal. You will have a rough draft to work from if you prepare a generic essay in advance that can be tailored to different college applications. Use some of the essays from the Common Application for ideas and practice. Start to think about what you want to write about. View example college essay questions on line. The essay is your chance to let your personality shine and tell the college something they don't know about you through your application. Remember to make your story unique and to use your personal voice. Proofread and edit, again and again. Don't let another student get your spot because of a typo or spelling error on your essay. The Common Application essay length will continue to be capped at 650 words.

The 2014-2015 Common App essay prompts are as follows:

- Some students have a background or story that is so central to their identity that they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
- Recount an incident or time when you experienced failure. How did it affect you, and what lessons did you learn? Reflect on a time when you challenged a belief or idea. What prompted you to act? Would you make the same decision again?
- Describe a place or environment where you are perfectly content. What do you do or experience there, and why is it meaningful to you?
- Discuss an accomplishment or event, formal or informal, that marked your transition from childhood to adulthood within your culture, community, or family.

Get a summer job

And more importantly, don't spend every penny you make! Putting away hundreds, or even thousands, of dollars from a summer job can significantly reduce the amount you need to borrow for college. Savings from a summer job can help you fund costs like books, personal expenses, or even tuition & fees. When looking at the high sticker price of a college education, it may be easy to think that a few hundred dollars won't make a difference. But it will!

Save, save, save!

Read!
READ

Keep a summer journal

A journal can help you think about who you are and what you want your future college experience to be like. It can also give you seed

Think about Teacher Recommendations

Colleges vary in the number (if any) of letters of recommendations they require. Bordentown Regional recommends students request 1 teacher recommendation. A second teacher recommendation can be requested if a college requires 2. Formal requests are made directly by the student to the teacher. Student will provide the teacher with:

- *Student's current transcript*
- *Student's resume*
- *Student Contribution Form (available in Guidance)*

Construct an activities resume

By September. An activities resume is an important supplement to an application and is useful in an interview. An activities resume should be provided to your counselor and to anyone who will be writing a letter of recommendation.

The Naviance "Resume" link in the "about me" tab is a great way to construct a new resume.

Begin your Scholarship Search:

Use books and web-based services to begin a search for private money.

PLAN TO TAKE SAT, ACT, SAT II

HOPEFULLY YOU HAVE TAKEN THE SAT AND/OR ACT ALREADY. IF NOT, OR YOU PLAN TO TAKE THEM AGAIN, BE SURE TO KNOW THE FALL SCHEDULE. REGISTRATION FOR THE OCTOBER TEST IS USUALLY WITHIN THE FIRST WEEK OF SCHOOL. IF YOU DIDN'T TAKE THE SAT IN MAY/JUNE, THEN STUDY FOR THEM OVER THE SUMMER AND TAKE THEM IN THE FALL. TRY TO SET ASIDE SOME TIME TO STUDY ON YOUR OWN AND TO TAKE PRACTICE TESTS.

REGISTER FOR SAT AND SUBJECT TESTS ONLINE AT WWW.COLLEGEBOARD.COM OR ACT AT WWW.ACT.ORG . BORDENTOWN REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL CODE (CEEB): 310140.