

NORTHAMPTON AREA HIGH SCHOOL

Guidance Handbook for Parents and Students

“Northampton Area School District is dedicated to educating and developing responsible citizens who learn from the past, listen to the present, and lead our future.”

Dear Northampton Parents,

The Northampton High School Guidance staff is dedicated to helping each and every student reach his or her fullest potential. School counselors work with students in a variety of areas including academics, career development as well as personal and social development.

We encourage parents to work together with the school and maintain open lines of communication regarding student progress toward graduation. By working together we can ensure that each student will meet his or her goals.

NAHS Counselors

Counselor Assignments

The counselors are divided by class with Ms. Thrash and Ms. Rupp managing the special education and gifted students. Counselors follow their class through all four years. Please refer to the high school's website for current assignments.

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Help Your Child Succeed

- Encourage independent reading and writing throughout your child's school career
- Encourage independent problem solving
- Provide a good place to study
- Help with time management skills
- Help your child set goals
- Monitor academic progress
- Encourage participation in a variety of activities
- Identify abilities and interests
- Explore career and college options
- If your child has a special interest or talent (e.g., music, math, dance, art, etc.), try to arrange enrichment opportunities through classes, camps, or private mentoring
- Plan meaningful summer activities

We recognize that as our students develop and mature, they may need support. Our counselors provide confidential services for individual students or in group settings. Areas of focus include academic, career, and personal/social needs. Contact your counselor or the guidance secretary for more information.

Academic Advising

Graduation Requirements

Students must fulfill credit requirements in order to be eligible to graduate on time. Counselors work closely with students and conduct annual credit checks to ensure that all students are meeting graduation requirements.

Course Selection

The high school offers a wide range of courses in a variety of subjects and levels. Some specific options include:

- Honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses
- Vocational-Technical programming
- College preparatory coursework
- College coursework (Concurrent Enrollment)

Students are encouraged to meet with their counselor to develop a schedule that is well-rounded and applicable for the individual student in order to help them succeed.

Procedure for Course Selection is as follows:

1. Students will receive a copy of the Program of Studies Book during scheduling.
2. Students will schedule classes on-line, print out course selection sheet, obtain required signatures and return course selection sheet to his/her guidance counselor.
3. 1st year vo-tech students need to complete a vo-tech application and submit this with the course selection sheet.
4. When students receive their schedule they are encouraged to review their courses. Contact the guidance office immediately if any major courses (English, Math, Science, Social Studies) are missing.
5. Students who desire a schedule change must follow schedule change procedures that are included with the printed schedule the student receives.

Tutoring

Counselors recognize that students may struggle academically at times or in certain classes. Students may see their counselor if they desire tutoring services. Counselors will attempt to find peer tutors when possible or provide contact names for tutors that can be hired outside of school.

Gifted and Special Education/Support Services

Counselors assist in identifying students who may benefit from gifted, special education or support services. They will make referrals to the school psychologist for evaluations when needed and help to coordinate services. Parents are encouraged to contact counselors if they have concerns about their child's school performance or feel that a school-based evaluation is necessary.

Graduation Project

The Northampton Area High School Graduation Project is a requirement for graduation. Each student has the responsibility to develop a comprehensive written and oral project selecting one of the Graduation Project Options. Each student will demonstrate that he or she has the ability to "apply, analyze, synthesize and evaluate information and communicate significant knowledge and understanding" (PA Chapter 4 Rules and Regulations).

The Graduation Project topic will be of high interest to the student and will foster creativity. Knowledge gained through the project will be meaningful and challenging to assist the student in preparing for post-secondary education and/or career planning. The project will be of the highest quality to demonstrate personal achievement and intellectual development in the student's area of interest.

The students will complete the Graduation Project by the end of their junior year. It is the students' responsibility to meet all the requirements to be successful before their senior year. **The Graduation Project is a graduation requirement. In order to receive a diploma and participate in the graduation ceremony, each student must "successfully" complete the Graduation Project.**

Project Options include:

Option A – Research Paper:

- Minimum five (5) page Research Paper with 4 or 5 works cited
- MLA format
- Written Component Assessment Form
- Research Paper and Final Documentation Form submitted to advisor on the assigned date
- Oral Presentation – 4 to 10 minutes with visual media (video, cassette, chart, photos, and/or Power Point)

Option B – Career Research: Interview/Shadowing (4 – 6 hours):

- Time Log/Journal of 1 interview and shadowing experience
- Minimum three (3) page "I" research paper with 2 works cited

- MLA format
- Written Component Assessment Form
- Time Log/Journal, Interview Questions/Responses, Research Paper, and the Documentation Form submitted to advisor on the assigned date.
- Oral Presentation – 4 to 10 minutes with visual media (video, cassette, chart, photos, and/or Power Point)

Option C – Community Service (30 hours):

- Time Log/Journal of Community Service experience
- Minimum three (3) page “I” research paper with 2 works cited
- MLA format
- Written Component Assessment Form
- Time Log/Journal, Research Paper and the Documentation Form submitted to advisor on the assigned date.
- Oral Presentation – 4 to 10 minutes with visual media (video, cassette, chart, photos, and/or Power Point)

Option D – Creative Work Activity (6 – 10 hours):

- Time Log/Journal of Creative Work experience
- Minimum three (3) page “I” research paper with 2 works cited
- MLA format
- Written Component Assessment Form
- Time Log/Journal, Research Paper and the Documentation Form submitted to advisor on the assigned date.
- Oral Presentation – 4 to 10 minutes with visual media (video, cassette, chart, photos, and/or Power Point)

Option E – Cultural Study Activity (4 – 6 hours):

- Time Log/Journal of 1 person interview
- Minimum three (3) page “I” research paper with 2 works cited
- MLA format
- Written Component Assessment Form
- Time Log/Journal, Interview Questions/Responses, Research Paper, and the Documentation Form submitted to advisor on the assigned date.
- Oral Presentation – 4 to 10 minutes with visual media (video, cassette, chart, photos, and/or Power Point)

Option F – Ice Cubed Project from BAVTS

- Successful Completion of the Vocational-Technical 10th and 11th grades Written and Oral Components of the Ice Cubed Project

- Administration will be responsible for recording the successful completion of this option

****Forms for all options are available under Guidance Services on the NAHS website and in the Main Office.**

Personal/Social Issues

Counselors recognize that adolescence is sometimes difficult and students may encounter stressors at home, in school, or with peers. Counselors are available if students need help dealing with any personal problems they may be having. Support options for students may include:

- Individual Counseling
- Group Counseling
- Referral to the Student Assistance Program (SAP)
- Referral to outside services or counseling/community agencies

College, Career, and Post-Secondary Planning

Counselors are available to help students plan for life after school, whether students plan to go to a college or trade school, enter the military, or enter the workforce. Many options exist for students, and they are encouraged to meet with their counselor throughout high school to explore opportunities and plan coursework in accordance with individual future goals. Northampton Area High School follows the Career Pathways model for career exploration and development and curriculum planning.

CAREER PATHWAYS

Career Pathways is a comprehensive program of career awareness, exploration, and preparation/application. K-12 in nature, Career Pathways establishes a curriculum with two different, yet equal, programs of study. Both the “Traditional Academic” pathway and the “Technical Academic” pathway offer a rigorous, practical education which helps students focus on a non-binding career cluster in high school and guides them in the selection of course sequences necessary to achieve their educational and career objectives. Northampton’s goal is to meet the individual needs of students while, at the same time, preparing them to find success as an adult.

The Career Pathways program aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To raise the level of learning and meaning for all students
2. To prepare all students for lifelong learning
3. To provide for an improved system of counseling and management for students
4. To provide for flexibility in career choice and focus in course planning

How Does Career Pathways Work?

By the middle of eighth grade, students will have been introduced to the four broad career clusters that form the basis of the Career Pathways model.

They are as follows:

1. Arts and Humanities
2. Business and Communication Technology
3. Industrial and Engineering Technology
4. Health Sciences and Human Services

Students will then choose their academic focus by enrolling in the “Traditional Academic” program, which is for students whose plans include study at a traditional four-year college or university, junior college, or community college, or the “Technical Academic” program, which is for students whose interests lie in the pursuit of a career through study at a vocational-technical school, trade school, business school, or initial entry into the world of work. Students will then focus on a flexible career plan within their chosen path.

Within the core curriculum of the “Traditional Academic” and “Technical Academic” programs is a list of electives within the four career clusters from which students will choose. If at any time throughout high school the student changes his or her mind about a pathway or cluster, Career Pathways offers the flexibility for students to redirect their course of study.

Traditional Academic Pathway

The Traditional Academic curriculum is designed for the student who wishes to pursue a career that requires four or more years of education at a college or university. Students who select the Traditional Academic curriculum should elect subjects necessary to satisfy college entrance requirements. The term “college” is used to include junior colleges, nursing schools, technical institutes, and other institutions of higher education.

Students who are planning to enter a four-year college or university must realize that entrance requirements as well as graduation requirements vary with each institution. It is important that college bound students begin to study college catalogs and consult with their counselors in the sophomore year. It is imperative that students continue their study of mathematics, science, and foreign languages to challenge the limits of their ability and not to meet the minimum requirements of any one college. Every college admissions committee looks favorably upon the student who has studied in subjects beyond minimum requirements. Many colleges will exempt students from basic required courses when the high school records indicate advanced study, and the students indicate proficiency by special examination. In addition to wise course selection, high academic achievement is an essential requirement for college admission.

Criteria are listed as prerequisites for entrance to the most challenging courses. All students must meet established criteria for gifted/high potential, honors and advanced placement course offerings.

Technical Academic Pathway

The Technical Academic curriculum is designed for the student who wishes to pursue a career that requires specialized career and technical training and a two-year technical or occupational field, or who desire to pursue college or further post secondary education are eligible to apply to the Bethlehem Area Vocational Technical School (BAVTS) for admission to the program of their choice. This application for admission is completed during the second semester of ninth grade.

Accepted students spend one-half of the educational day at the Bethlehem Area Vocational Technical School, the other half of the day is spent at Northampton Area High School where students fulfill most academic requirements.

Exploring Options.....

Career Options

Choosing a career and determining how to prepare for that career can be very difficult. Your child needs you to help him/her explore and evaluate his/her career and educational options.

- Identify abilities and interests: help your child to see how his/her interests, strengths, and personality traits can be assets in the right career. A career interest inventory is available on-line at www.careercruising.com. Students should see Mrs. Stout in Guidance if they need a password.
- Explore career options: if your child is interested in reading about a career, go to www.bls.gov/oco/ or www.careercruising.com.

Educational Options

We encourage all students to pursue post high school education/training. Make sure that your child understands the importance of getting a good education and strongly encourage your child to continue his/her education after high school. In many cases, students can prepare for today's high demand career fields by attending a community college or technical school.

- Vocational and Technological Programs in high school: these programs are particularly appropriate for students who prefer a more practical, "hands-on" approach to learning.
- Four-year Colleges: These schools vary greatly in their size, costs, and admission policies and in the majors they offer.
- Community Colleges: many of these schools do not require that a student has a college preparatory background, nor do they require SAT testing. Community colleges provide affordable, career-oriented programs that enable students to begin their careers after two years of college or less. Business, law enforcement, real estate, and engineering technology are just a few of the careers that students can prepare for by going to a community college. Students may also begin their education at a two-year college and then transfer to a four-year college to complete their bachelor's degree.

- Career Schools: these schools offer short-term training programs in a wide variety of career fields. While some programs last only a few weeks, others take up to two years to complete. Make sure that the school is accredited.

Armed Services Options

The military offers qualified high school graduates free job training, opportunities for career advancement and travel. For more information, go to www.military.com. Students who are interested in the military can choose to meet with a recruiter at the high school to get more information. Recruiters are available from each of the military branches: Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines.

Students who plan to enlist in any branch of the armed services will also need to take the ASVAB test. More information on this test, where to take it, and how to prepare, can be obtained from the student's guidance counselor.

College-bound students can also consider joining the military through an ROTC program on campus. These programs can assist greatly with college costs through a scholarship that is given in exchange for a commitment to military services upon graduation.

In addition, talented students may want to consider applying to one of the service academies, such as West Point or the Naval Academy. Admission at these academies is extremely competitive. Interested students are encouraged to start the process early in their high school career and see their counselor for more information.

What Students Need To Do When Applying To College

Admission Criteria:

Colleges use some, if not all, of the information listed below when determining whether or not to accept an applicant. Individual colleges may differ in what information they require and how they use it to evaluate an applicant.

- Grade Point Average (GPA)
- Class Rank
- Difficulty of courses
- Test scores (SATs or ACTs)
- Recommendations
- Activities/awards
- Personal essays
- Interviews

Grade Point Average

A student's grade point average (GPA) is the average of a student's grades, starting with the freshman year. Colleges generally consider a student's GPA in a college preparatory program to be the most important criteria for college admission.

Class Rank

Class rank indicates where a student stands academically in relation to the other members of his/her graduating class. Class rank is often presented with the student's place in the class followed by the total number of students in the class (e.g., 44/151). The student who has the highest GPA is number one; the student with the second highest GPA is number two, etc. Rank can be important when applying for scholarships because many scholarships stipulate that a student must be in the top 10% (or 20%, etc.) of his/her class.

Transcript

A transcript is a document that details a student's academic achievement in high school. A transcript contains the following information:

- Courses, grades, and credits for each grade level completed, beginning with grade 9.
- Current yearly and cumulative GPA and class rank
- SAT (or ACT scores)

All college applications request that an official transcript be submitted with the application. An official transcript must have a signature and the school seal verifying its authenticity. An unofficial transcript is the same as an official transcript except there is no official signature or seal. A transcript is also usually required when a student applies for a scholarship. You may request an unofficial transcript for personal use by contacting the guidance office.

School Profile

A Northampton Area High School Profile is included with each transcript. Our profile includes an explanation of our grading system and how the GPA and class rank are calculated, the curriculum available, the percentage of students who attend post-secondary institutions and other post-secondary options, school size, class size and the average SAT scores of the previous graduating class.

Admissions Essay

Some colleges require an applicant to write an essay as part of the application. This essay can clearly affect your chances of acceptance, especially at top-tier schools, where it almost goes without saying that students' grades and test scores are outstanding and their accomplishments are extraordinary. As you prepare your essay, keep the following in mind:

- Be yourself: the essay gives the admissions officers a personalized sense of you – an image that mere numbers cannot convey.
- Do revise
- Do proofread – twice
- Don't be gimmicky
- Don't wait until the last minute: When you're done, put your essay aside for a week and then go back to it with greater objectivity.

Interview Dos and Don'ts

The interview can be a prospective school's only opportunity to evaluate you face to face. So be prepared. Here's what you need to know:

- Dress appropriately: Clean and presentable is the way to go. Don't let the way you look hurt your chances of getting in.
- Do your homework: Before the interview, check the college's website; then ask informed questions.
- Read two recent books: Be ready to discuss them. Chances are that you'll be asked what you've read lately.
- Be on time.
- Make eye contact.
- Be passionate: Figure out what you're passionate about and find a way to talk about it.
- Be specific.
- Don't get too personal.
- Shake hands before and after the interview.
- Write a thank-you note and mail it the next day.

Courses Recommended For College Admission

Four-year colleges recommend that students complete certain college preparatory courses while in high school. These include a minimum of:

- 4 years of English
- 4 years of social studies
- 4 years of math, (including Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II and Pre-Calculus or Mathematical Applications)
- 4 years of science (with lab experience)
- 2-3 years of the same foreign language or 2 years each of 2 different foreign languages

Students without these courses may be required to take remedial and/or additional courses at college. Such suggested preparation will vary from college to college. The most competitive colleges expect that applicants will select the most challenging courses available.

Freshman Year Preparation

During the freshman year, students begin to build their official transcript. The transcript is the official document on which all of a student's grades, coursework, honors, and awards are documented. During freshman year, the main goals are for students to select a career pathway and to begin to explore careers within that pathway.

Sophomore Year Preparation and Checklist

Classes chosen in grade 10 often determine which courses (and course levels) your child will be qualified to take in the important junior and senior years. If your child was taking college preparatory classes in 9th grade, they should continue doing so and try to get the highest grades they can. They should also continue their involvement in a variety of activities. They also need to look for ways to further develop their talents and skills. Also consider having them take the PSAT in October. The PSAT is a practice test for the SAT. It is primarily for juniors, but some sophomores take it for practice.

Summer:

- Make sure your child has a job or participates in constructive activities throughout the summer. Summer study, jobs and volunteer work always rate high with admission officials.
- If your child has a career goal in mind; help organize a “shadow day” where he or she spends time with someone at work in that field. A job shadow experience can be used as part of the Graduation Project.
- The Internet provides excellent college entrance information. Summer is a good time for students to check out some of the many sites available and bookmark favorites, without jeopardizing homework time.

Junior Year Preparation and Checklist

This year the college search process begins in earnest. Exploration and testing should help you and your child to start developing a list of target schools by spring. Poor grades will not be as easily forgiven as those from previous years, and colleges will look for commitment and accomplishment outside of the classroom.

Juniors are encouraged to attend college fairs. NHS holds an annual College/Financial Aid night each September. Representatives from over 30 colleges and trade schools are in attendance and there is also a financial aid presentation. Northampton Area Community College also sponsors a college night every year, usually sometime in October. More than 150 colleges, technical schools and universities as well as representatives of the military recruiting services attend this event. It is an excellent opportunity to gather basic information about schools that fit into your future educational plans.

Keep in mind that your junior year is the last complete set of grades that the college or technical school admission committee will see on your transcript. Your junior year rank and GPA are two very important pieces of information on your applications. You will be applying during the first semester of your senior year and your senior grades are generally not yet available to the admissions people.

September:

- Contact the guidance office about information and registration for the PSAT
- Attend the NHS college night and request a pass to meet with college representatives when they visit the school.
- Obtain a Social Security number for your child, if you have not previously done so

October:

- Mark the date for the PSAT on your calendar
- Remind your child to read the PSAT Student Bulletin and to try the practice questions and practice test
- Schedule a trip to visit colleges
- Are first semester classes going well?

December:

- You receive PSAT scores shortly before Christmas break. Review scores and determine area(s) of additional preparation prior to the SAT. Contact the guidance office
- Evaluate different SAT prep options, as needed
- Begin thinking about possible target colleges, with test results in mind
- Take a preliminary look at financial aid forms just to see what you'll need by this time next year

January:

- Evaluate academic progress so far. Are grades up to par? Are course levels on target? Do study habits need improvement?
- Is your child participating in extracurricular activities? If not, reevaluate.
- Mark projected SAT test dates on calendar. Also mark registration deadlines. NHS offers the SAT in May and the registration deadline is at the end of March.
- Begin thinking about worthwhile summer plans (job, study, camp, volunteer work, travel, etc.)

February:

- Discuss possible course selections for next school year

March:

- Consider and plan spring vacation college visits
- Begin listing target colleges in a "college" notebook

- Visit college websites. Start calling, writing or e-mailing target colleges to request publications.
- Register for the May SAT at NHS
- Register for May AP exams with the guidance office, if appropriate
- Register on line with the NCAA Clearinghouse if you plan on participating in Division I or Division II college athletics. See your guidance counselor with any questions.
- Oversee registration for next fall's classes and activities. Urge your child to select the most challenging classes possible.

May/June:

- Finalize summer plans
- Develop a summer reading list

Summer:

- Make sure your child has a job or participates in constructive activities throughout the summer. Summer study, jobs and volunteer work always rate high with admission officials.
- Consider and plan summer and fall college visits
- Request publications for additional target colleges
- Plan and execute supplemental submissions such as audition tapes and art slides/portfolios, if required and/or appropriate
- If your child has a career goal in mind; help organize a "shadow day" where he or she spends time with someone at work in that field.
- The Internet provides excellent college entrance information. Summer is a good time for students to check out some of the many sites available and bookmark favorites, without jeopardizing homework time.
- Review and update target college list. Include pros and cons. Make tentative plans for all visits.

Senior Year Preparation and Checklist

The senior year is when everything comes together. It is also the year in which students see the rewards of their hard work and planning.

September:

- Discuss plans and goals for the months ahead; pros and cons of target schools
- Contact the guidance office about college fairs in the area and college representatives' visits to the school
- Look ahead to SAT registration deadlines, if needed
- Begin work on college applications and the Admissions essay, if necessary
- Visit more college websites
- Determine if your child will be using online or paper applications. If it's the latter, make sure you have them or request them.
- Ask teachers for letters of recommendation as needed. Junior or senior year teachers in the intended field of study are preferable.

October:

- Discuss Early Decision, Early Action and Single-Choice Early Action options – deadlines usually fall on Nov 1 or Nov 15
- Help your child create a master schedule of application and financial aid due dates
- Complete applications if applying to schools with a rolling admissions policy
- Visit colleges. Include interviews on campus (or with local alumni representatives), if appropriate
- If the school(s) you are interested in require the CSS/Financial Aid Profile, begin applying online at www.profileonline.collegeboard.com
- Are first semester classes going well?

November:

- Remind your child about early application deadlines as needed
- Check up on application completion. Volunteer to proofread

December:

- Get financial aid material from guidance office and the internet. Attend planning workshops/financial aid workshops, if available
- Early Decision, Early Action and Single-Choice Early Action letters start arriving this month. Check with individual school to confirm dates.
- Remind your child about completion of all applications due in January or February

May:

- Make sure your child takes AP exams, if appropriate
- Stay aware of housing choices, etc. When will forms be mailed? Should your child be investigating living situation options? When is freshman orientation? When is course registration?

June:

- Organize a file to keep track of summer mailings from the college. Categories may include orientation, housing, course registration and finances.
- Consider summer school for those who want to accelerate or place out of requirements. Always check with colleges first to make sure credits will count. Get permission in writing when it's questionable.
- If you plan to compete in Division I or Division II college sports, have your transcript sent to the NCAA Clearinghouse. For more information, go to www.ncaaclearinghouse.net
- Make sure that a final high school transcript is sent to the college your child will attend.

College Testing

Extensive planning should go into your child's testing schedule. The following tests may be considered:

PSAT/NMSQT – (Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test) – a practice test for the SAT which is also used to determine National Merit semifinalists. It is given each October to juniors and to some sophomores.

SAT I: Reasoning Tests – (Scholastic Assessment Test) – a college entrance examination generally taken in the spring of the junior year and possibly in the fall of the senior year. Students receive a Critical Reading, a Math and a Writing score. Basic and advanced math concepts (including Algebra II) are tested, as are basic grammar and usage. Critical Reading and Math are divided into three sections each. Writing is divided into an essay section and two multiple-choice sections.

Registration bulletins as well as preparation booklets are available in the guidance office. Most students select to register online. The High School Code is requested when registering. **Our High School Code is : 393035.** There are numerous books, computer programs and preparation courses available. The best preparation for this test is a strong, challenging course load throughout the high school years. The SAT is offered in October, November, December, January, March, or April, May and June, although it is offered here at NHS only in October and May.

Approximately one week to ten days before the test date, students who registered by mail will receive an admission ticket to enter the SAT test along with instructions. Students who register online should print out their admission ticket; they will not receive one in the mail. Students must bring picture identification in order to be admitted to the test. This test is given on Saturday morning and takes approximately four hours. Scores are received approximately three weeks after the test date.

ACT – (American College Test) – a college entrance examination used widely in the Midwest. It is generally taken during the junior and/or senior year. Students receive scores in English, Reading, Math, and Science Reasoning, as well as a Composite score. Some colleges will accept the SAT or the ACT.

SAT II – Subject Tests – one-hour exams in subjects that include English and math as well as foreign languages, history and natural sciences. The tests measure a student's knowledge of specific subjects, and his/her ability to apply that knowledge. These tests

are required by some but not all colleges. Generally, the more competitive colleges require applicants to take one or more of these tests for admission and/or placement. Registration Bulletins and preparation booklets are available in the guidance office.

AP Exam – (Advanced Placement) – AP Courses offer students three benefits: an added challenge in the classroom, an extra credential to impress college admissions staff and the chance to earn college credits if they score well on the AP exams. Students receive a score of 1-5. Colleges each have different score requirements. To find out if the college you are interested in awards college credit and for what minimum score, go online to: www.collegeboard.com/ap/creditpolicy

NCAA Requirements

Division II: Athletes planning to enter college in 2005 or after must have 14 core courses to be eligible to practice, play and receive financial aid.

Division I only: Athletes planning to enter college in 2008 or after must have 16 core courses to be eligible to practice, play and receive financial aid.

Athletes must also meet specific academic criteria. In Division II, the minimum core GPA is 2.0 and the minimum SAT score is 820 (verbal and math sections only). In Division I, the core GPA/SAT score is on a sliding scale. A student with the minimum GPA will need a higher test score, and the student with a minimum test score will need a higher GPA.

Students must take specific approved “core” courses in order to meet NCAA eligibility requirements. It is important athletes be aware of these NCAA requirements and plan their course and testing to meet these criteria.

Core courses: English, math, natural/physical science, social science, foreign language or nondoctrinal religion/philosophy. See list of specific NCAA approved core courses on eligibility website.

Recruiting the Prospective College Athlete

Each year, the National Collegiate Athletic Association prints a booklet, and provides a website, for the high school athlete explaining eligibility. To initiate the eligibility process, you will need to register with the NCAA Clearinghouse. This should be done at the end of your junior year.

Be sure to read the information about maintaining your eligibility in the event you are a recruited athlete. The NCAA is serious about recruiting violations. Ignorance of these NCAA rules can cost you a sports scholarship. The NCAA is unhappy with coaches who violate recruiting policies and can declare you ineligible to participate in collegiate sports should you unknowingly break one of their recruiting guidelines.

Your high school coach is another source of information to you; however, it is your responsibility to know the rules. Remember that rules may change from year to year, so you need to stay up to date. Students should keep their guidance counselor informed of intentions to play sports in college so that counselors can work with students to ensure that they are meeting eligibility requirements.

Choosing the Right College

Choosing a college is a very subjective process. There are many factors to consider when trying to decide which college is right for you. There is no one college that is the “right” or “best” school for a particular major. Two students both endeavoring to study engineering in college will each have their own “best” college based on their personal criteria. When doing a college search, consider the following factors:

- Location
- Size
- Admission requirements/ Selectivity
- Available majors
- Sports/Clubs/Organizations
- Cost
- Public vs. Private
- Reputation

It is imperative that students think about what factors are most important to them when they begin a college search. For example, if a student prefers a classroom similar to high school in which there typically aren't more than 30 students in a class, then a large school such as Penn State Main Campus is not the best choice despite its academic reputation in a particular field of study.

Once you have determined what is important to you and your child, begin your search for the schools that meet your criteria. There are many excellent websites that can assist you in your search. Contact the admissions offices and ask to be placed on mailing lists so you will receive information pertaining to visitation days and upcoming events. Visitations, preview days, or open houses can be informative as they are held specifically for prospective students. They may provide opportunities to visit a class, tour the campus, and give information on specific majors and financial aid. You may also call to schedule an individual appointment, especially if there is something on your child's academic record you would like to explain.

Things to look for on your campus visit:

- *The Dorms:* Would I be comfortable living here?
- *Popular Classes:* Are they too large (i.e., easy to get into) or too small?

- *Honors program:* What unique opportunities does the school have for qualified students?
- *Academic & Administrative Offices:* Is the staff friendly? Are they eager to answer questions? Are the professors available to speak with students?
- *Financial Aid Office:* What scholarship opportunities are available?
- *Student Union:* Is it bustling with activity? Do students seem happy?
- *Library:* What are the hours of operation?
- *Cafeteria:* Do they offer a good variety of foods and cater to special needs?
- *Career Center:* Are there sufficient and interesting jobs posted?
- *Students:* Are they friendly? Interesting? Are they people I'd feel comfortable around?
- *Local Hangouts:* Would I be able to unwind here?
- *Other concerns to address may include:* Campus safety and the number of teaching assistants teaching classes/labs in place of professors.

Northampton Area High School College Application Procedure

- Completed college applications must be received in the guidance office for processing at least 5 days before the application deadline.
- Once you receive your application(s), read and follow the instructions very carefully.
- If you need recommendations, ask your teacher(s) in advance. Teachers should return completed recommendations to the student. If the teacher is not comfortable giving the student the letter of recommendation directly, the student should provide the teacher with a stamped, addressed envelope with which the recommendation can be sent directly to the school.
- You will be asked to fill out a recommendation questionnaire for your counselor.
- Your counselor will mail all materials to the institution; this includes copies of your transcript, test scores, recommendations, school profile, etc.
- If you file your college application electronically, you must inform the guidance office as soon as possible. Your application will not be complete until your official transcript is sent to the school.
- When you receive your college acceptance letter(s) and any scholarship letters, please inform the guidance office ASAP.

Note: Scholarship applications are to be handled in the same manner.

Sending the First Application

Make an appointment to meet with your Guidance Counselor. If you need teacher recommendations for your application(s), ask the teachers at least two weeks before the application deadline. You may have questions about admission, financial aid, declaring a major, applying with an “undecided” major and so on.

During your appointment, your counselor will:

1. Review your transcript
2. Ask you to complete a recommendation questionnaire

3. Explain to you what happens to your application and how it is processed at the high school
4. Remind you that all offers of admission are “Conditional”; that means once you accept an offer of admission, you must continue to get good grades, not drop courses, and so on. College admission committees frown on students who decide to start their summer vacation early. If your grades drop significantly, the offer of admission may be with drawn.
5. Explain how mid-year reports are often part of the process
6. Answer any questions you may have

Admission Options

Early Decision

You submit your application usually by November 1st. When you apply Early Decision, you sign a binding agreement that if your application is approved, you will attend the college and you will withdraw any other college applications you have sent.

Early Action

You submit your application usually by November 1st. When you apply Early Action, the college promises response before regular applicants. However, you make no promise to attend and you are free to apply to other schools.

Single-Choice Early Action

This is a new option offered by only a few institutions, including Harvard, Yale and Stanford. You agree to file only one early application, but are free to apply to as many colleges as you want under regular admission. This option is advantageous if you need to compare financial aid packages. Although you receive early notification of the college’s decision, you are not obligated to attend the school if accepted.

Rolling Admissions

Rolling Admission schools process applications on a first-come, first-served basis and notify students within a few weeks of receiving the application. It is best to apply to colleges with rolling admissions as early as possible in a student’s senior year, to maximize availability of enrollment slots.

Financial Aid

Most families find the whole process of applying for financial aid confusing and difficult. It doesn't have to be. Armed with the right information, you'll be able to get through the process. Even if you think you won't qualify for financial aid, apply anyway. Be sure to apply early: colleges tend to be more generous with the first few aid packages than they are with the last few.

Remember that you do not necessarily need to take the first financial aid package that is offered to you. You may be able to negotiate a better deal. The more desirable an applicant, the more likely for an offer of a better package with higher grants and scholarships and lower loans.

Financial Aid Forms

FAFSA – Information on how to apply will be mailed to your home if you took the SAT during your junior year. On-line applications are encouraged. If a paper application is needed, it must be requested. Every school you're seriously interested in should be named on this form and it should be filed after January 1st of your senior year. Be sure to read the instructions carefully and follow them exactly. Even if you are convinced that you won't get any financial aid, file the FAFSA anyway. Some campus based forms of financial aid (work study, paid internships, working in the library, helping in admissions, representing the college as a student ambassador, etc.) require you to have established financial need. The FAFSA is the document which most colleges (about 99.95%) will use as the "financial needs" document. This application establishes eligibility for all federal programs, including loan programs, and for some, institutional aid (aid based on funds from individual colleges). The FAFSA must be completed in order to be eligible for a federal Pell grant. The home page for the FAFSA is – <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>. Students and parents should also register for a PIN number at www.pin.edu.gov.

CSS/Financial Aid Profile – Some Colleges and universities, mostly private schools, require you to file the CSS. The Profile is a supplemental needs analysis document used to determine eligibility for private, nonfederal funds. You can begin the CSS filing process by going to <http://www.collegeboard.com> and registering. There is a registration fee for filing the CSS and an additional fee for each school to which you send information, so be sure that the school you want to attend requires the CSS. This form is completed starting in September of the senior year. You should file the FAFSA even if you file the CSS form.

Basic Financial Aid Terms

Grants – Grant aid is money you do not need to pay back to the school, state or federal government.

Scholarships – They are a form of grant aid – awarded for merit, such as academic achievement, outstanding talent or skill, and/or financial need.

Loans – Loans might come from the school, the state, the federal government, or the bank where parents/guardians have their checking and savings accounts. Unlike grants, however, loans must be repaid over time. Loans are considered financial aid and are part of the total financial aid package for the vast majority of students. When you read that a college can meet 80% of your financial need, that 80% figure could be composed entirely of loans. Of course, you will still need to come up with the other 20% to complete your enrollment.

EFC – This is the Expected Family Contribution, a number calculated to be what the financial aid wizard figures your family can afford for your education. Your EFC determines what colleges and government sources expect you to be able to pay. This number comes from the FAFSA so it is necessary to be as accurate as you can when completing the FAFSA.

SAR – The Student Aid Report is a document that comes to you after you file your FAFSA. You will need to be sure that the information on the SAR is 100% accurate (which the financial aid people call—verification).

Institutional Grants & Scholarships – Gift aid that is awarded by colleges from their own resources. This type of aid, awarded based on merit, need, or both, can be very competitive.

Merit-Based Aid – Usually competitive, this type of financial aid program determines eligibility by evaluating a student’s ability and/or potential based on academic records, athletic, or artistic ability. Individual characteristics such as ethnicity are sometimes considered.

Need-Based Aid – Aid based on a family’s resources.

Federal Methodology – This term identifies the series of decisions and calculations the federal government applies to the data found in your FAFSA. When all the numbers are plugged into the formula and all the figuring is completed, a three digit financial aid code

is attached to your file. It is this three digit code that all the colleges, universities, technical schools, trade schools, business colleges, etc., use to determine what type of financial aid you will receive, if any, and the amount of that aid. The theory that drives Federal Methodology is quite simple:

Total Costs – Expected Family Contribution = Financial Need

The difficulty most people have with financial aid is that just having financial need does not automatically mean that someone (the federal government, the state government, the post secondary school) will pay the financial need part while the family pays the EFC part. Grants and scholarships are free money that does not have to be paid back. Loans and work study jobs are considered self help. It makes sense to apply for grants and scholarships before taking out loans.

A college will put together a financial aid “package”. This package is a combination of grants, scholarships, loans, and/or work study. A package varies from college to college so it is important to compare financial aid packages.

Other ways to finance a college education include co-op programs and military programs. Money can be saved by attending a local community college and then transferring to a four-year college after one or two years. Not all students live on campus but commute to college, saving room and board expenses.

Types of Financial Aid

Federal Pell Grant – Grants intended to help the neediest students. Most middle-income families do not qualify.

Perkins Loan – Federal loans based on demonstrated need. Participating colleges make these 5% interest loans directly to students. Interest does not accrue while the student is in school, and repayment doesn’t begin until 9 months after graduation. The maximum award is \$4,000.00 annually.

Stafford Loan – Lending institutions provide these loans to students. Repayment of a Stafford loan begins after the student has graduated. The Subsidized Stafford Loan is for students with financial need. The Unsubsidized Stafford Loan is for students without financial need. (The government pays the interest on Subsidized Stafford Loans.)

PLUS Loan – Lending institutions provide these loans to parents. PLUS loans are not based on financial need and repayment begins within 60 days.

Subsidized Federal Stafford Loan – Need-based loans made by a bank, saving and loan, or some other lender. Interest doesn't accrue while the student is in school, and borrowers don't begin repayment until six months after graduation.

Unsubsidized Federal Stafford Loan – Loans similar to the Subsidized Federal Stafford Loans, except that eligibility is not based on need, and interest accrues while the borrower is in school.

National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent Grant Program (SMART)
– A specialized grant available for juniors and seniors majoring in physical, life or computer science, engineering, mathematics, technology or a critical foreign language. Students must be a Pell Grant recipient with a minimum 3.0 GPA. The maximum award is \$4,000.00 for each of the 3rd and 4th years of college.

Work-Study – A need-based financial aid program subsidizing jobs for eligible students. Work-study is awarded by colleges, and a portion of the funding comes from the federal or state government.

No College After High School – Now What?

Suppose you don't want to go to college, or at least figure at this point in your life college just isn't for you. This means that after you are graduated from high school, you're going to work for a living. Perhaps you've already lined up a job and figure that everything is set.

One of the most effective ways of finding a job is to tell all your friends and family members that you are looking for a job. The help wanted section in the newspaper is not a particularly good way to go looking for a job simply because the vast majority of jobs are never listed in the newspaper. As you cruise the Lehigh Valley, keep your eyes open and look about for help wanted signs. Opportunity often comes to you when you least expect it. Be ready to take advantage of every opportunity that comes your way.

If you don't have a resume, make one. Keep it current and make it look nice. Around March of your senior year, begin to mail your resume to potential employers. Tell potential employers that you are a high school student looking for a career, not just a job. Tell them you are young, ready to learn, and eager to do a good job for them.

You need to go into this world armed with an employment plan. Look beyond the weeks and months immediately following your graduation from high school. What do you want to be doing in two years, five years, ten years from now as far as work is concerned? How are you going to get from here to there?

Seek good advice from someone, anyone, you trust. If you want us to help, all you need to do is to come see us or make an appointment with the guidance secretary.

On behalf of the Northampton Area High School Guidance

*Department we thank you for your support and cooperation in helping
our students achieve their fullest potential.*

