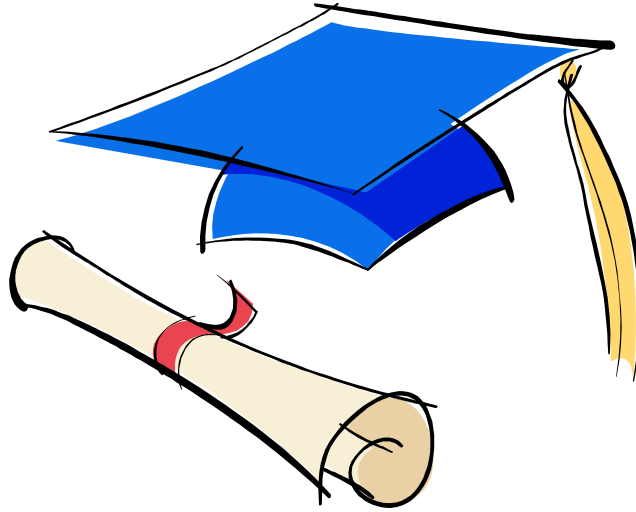


## Career and College Planning



# Quincy Public Schools Career and College Planning Guide

# Contents

## **Career Planning.....4**

Career focused education.....4	4
Tech Prep.....4	4
Career Assessments.....5	5
Naviance Family Connection.....5	5
Career Cruisin' .....6	6
MassCIS.....6	6
Choosing a career.....6	6

## **What To Do After High School.....7**

Apprenticeship programs.....7	7
College/University.....7	7
Military training.....7	7
Trade and technical training.....7	7
Work/Postsecondary education.....7	7

## **College Planning.....8**

Decision making.....8	8
Types of colleges.....8	8
Two-year and community colleges.....8	8
Four-year colleges and universities.....9	9

## **Applying.....9**

Tests.....9	9
Applications.....9	9
Recommendations.....9	9
Understanding admissions programs.....11	11
Early decision.....11	11
Early action.....11	11
Rolling Admissions.....11	11
Open enrollment.....12	12
Midyear admission.....12	12
Concurrent admission.....12	12
Sources of information.....12	12
Words of wisdom.....13	13
Debunking the myths.....13	13
Tests display your knowledge.....14	14

Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT).....14	14
SAT: Reasoning Test.....15	15
Subject Tests.....15	15
American College Test (ACT).....15	15
Advanced Placement Tests (AP).....16	16
TOEFL.....16	16
Sending your test scores.....16	16
How to market yourself.....16	16
College visits.....16	16
College interview.....16	16
Transcript and application.....17	17
Your part: Complete the application.....17	17
The school's part: Secondary school reports.....18	18
A word about college essays.....18	18
Hints about transcripts.....19	19
Letters of recommendation.....19	19
Notification about college decisions.....19	19
Financial aid and scholarships .....20	20
Federal grants, work study, and loans.....21	21
Financial aid application process.....21	21
Completing financial aid forms.....21	21
Applying for aid online.....21	21

## **Special Information for Athletes .....22**

## **A Quick College-Planning Guide for Students with Special Needs.....23**

# Career and College Planning

## Quincy Public Schools

### Student Support Services

#### Mission Statement & Beliefs

The Mission of Quincy Public Schools' Student Support Services is to provide a comprehensive program that will enhance each student's academic, career, and social/personal growth while maintaining a commitment to individual uniqueness and maximizing the development of human potential.

We believe that:

- All students can achieve to the best of their ability given proper instruction, access, and support, which recognizes individual differences and learning styles.
- Student success is accomplished through mutual respect, trust, and open communication.
- Development of the whole person, socially, physically, intellectually, and emotionally is imperative to success.
- Administrators, staff, parents, and community members are integral components to the success of our mission.

## What is Career Planning?

A career is not just an occupation or paid job. It is all the productive work, paid and unpaid, performed throughout a person's lifetime. This includes work at home and volunteer work in the community, as well as work for an employer. Career education is a joint effort of the home, school, and community to provide all students from pre-kindergarten through high school with opportunities to:

- learn about their interests, abilities, and aspirations
- become aware of and appreciate a range of career
- develop decision-making, job-seeking, and job-keeping skills

Career education is delivered to students in three ways: through the instructional program, through the guidance program, and through collaborative school/community programs.

Career education objectives are infused into the subject-area curricula, where they can most appropriately carry out the intent of both the subject-area and career education objectives.

Classroom instruction of career education is supported by school counselors, media center staff, college/career information coordinators, and members of the business community who provide career information to staff and students. Schools also plan career activities that serve as an introduction to the many types of careers available to students after graduation.

## What courses provide career-focused education?

Career experts predict that you will have at least five careers in your lifetime. New occupations are continually emerging. It is important to keep an open mind to career possibilities. As you select courses and attend classes, watch for opportunities to learn about emerging careers and trends in employment. The following is a listing of

programs and courses that will provide practical career information:

- Internships—a non-paid, one- to three-period career education class occurring in the workplace tied to a student's interest.
- Cooperative Education—a paid job linking school and work.
- Executive Internship—a non-paid semester spent working as a special assistant to a professional or business owner.
- Student Service Learning—opportunities designed to acquaint students with the purpose and rewards of providing volunteer service and investigating career options.

Get to know your guidance counselor. Your counselor is a resource for gathering career information. Make an appointment—before or after school or during study or lunch—to explore the resources available to you.

One resource in the guidance office is a computer search database of information on careers, two- and four-year colleges, and trade and technical schools. This program can be very useful to you as you explore your options.

Other opportunities that occur in schools and the community to broaden your understanding of careers include:

- service-learning activities
- career and job fairs
- shadow days in the business/corporate community
- school/business partnership activities
- guest speakers in all subject areas
- newsprint and magazine supplements about careers
- media/video presentations with a career focus
- career cluster activities
- Tech Prep

## Tech Prep

Tech Prep is a federally funded program committed to helping students with a wide variety of activities and opportunities to

explore college and career options. Students are encouraged to participate in workshops, pre-college placement testing, college courses, leadership training, college tours and seminars with college and career representatives in order to make choices that will lead to successful college and career experiences. Students who are enrolled in approved career and technology programs are eligible to join the Tech Prep program and participate in the career planning activities.



### **How is school related to the world of work?**

School is a workplace where learning is the project. What you do in school is a variation of what you will do as an adult at work. In school your reward may be promotion to the next level or a good grade. At work your reward may be a job promotion. You will be able to make more appropriate academic decisions if you can relate the subjects you take in school to certain career choices. For those subjects which are of particular interest to you, ask your teachers about the types of classes you need that would be related to your career interest. Ask your counselor to show you the Occupational Outlook Handbook to find:

- occupations in related fields
- career trends/growth areas
- work conditions and requirements
- workplace skills and training
- salary and earnings

### **Career assessments**

There are several types of career interest inventories and aptitude tests available to you in school. These may be administered in groups or individually. They help you learn more about yourself and help you make appropriate career decisions. Visit the guidance office to find out which tests are available. Counselors will discuss the results of your test(s) with you.

### **Naviance Family Connection**

Family Connection from Naviance offers a comprehensive website, which you can use from any internet connection, in making decisions about colleges and careers. Family Connection is linked with Workspace K12, which we use in the guidance office to track and analyze data about learning styles, college searches and career plans, so it provides up-to-date information that's specific to our school.

Family Connection will allow you to:

#### **Research your personal learning style –**

After completing the learning style inventory you will know what type of learner you are and how to use the information to improve your academic performance.

**Explore your personality type –** This information will guide you through the many career options that would match your interests and provide you with a link to colleges that will help get you there.

**Keep track of the process –** Build a résumé, complete on-line surveys, and manage timelines and deadlines for making decisions about colleges and careers.

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

Family Connection also lets us share information with you about upcoming meetings. The web address for

Family Connection for our school is <http://connection.naviance.com/nqhs>.

## **“Career Cruising”**

Career Cruising is a comprehensive program available in to Quincy Public Schools students to assist you in career decision making. Career Cruising also includes several different college search engines and a Portfolio section, where students can save career and college exploration and planning information and develop a résumé. See your counselor for additional information.

## **MassCIS**

Massachusetts Career Information System is a free on-line service which provides occupational and educational information to help make better-informed career and school choices. The web address is [www.masscis.intocareers.org](http://www.masscis.intocareers.org).

## **How to develop good decision-making skills**

As you are faced with an increasing number of choices, you will need to understand and practice good decision-making skills. The model below shows how to arrive at a decision by thinking it through beforehand.

## **Get to know yourself**

### **Identify your goal**

Focus on what you want to achieve and state that as your goal. The goal may be deciding what courses to take in school, what majors to study in college, what technical school to attend, or what job to take after high school.

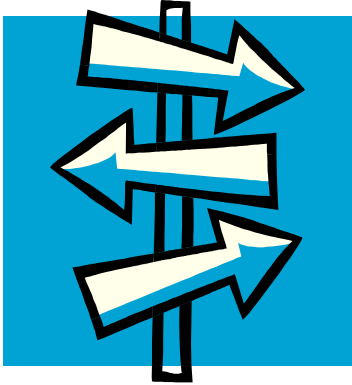
### **Gather information**

- Gather facts, ideas, and other information related to your decisions.
- Talk with people, read books, visit the career center and library, and use the Internet.
- Write down all the choices that appeal to you. Evaluate each alternative in terms of its consequences.

- Consider the possible effects of each choice.
- Ask yourself these questions:
  - Will I feel good about this choice?
  - How will my parents feel about it?
  - Will it be satisfying for me?
  - Will certain risks be involved?
  - Am I willing to take such risks?
  - How will I feel about this choice five years from now?
- List the advantages and disadvantages of each choice.
- Rank choices from highest to lowest, according to level of desirability of each choice.
- Make a choice and state that as your goal.
- Examine your choice.
- If you are not happy with your choice, start the decision-making process again.

## **Choosing a career**

You need to ask yourself, “Who am I?” You need to look at yourself in many different ways. You can look at yourself in a mirror. You can look at yourself through the eyes of your friends. You can look at yourself through your likes, dislikes, strengths, weaknesses, attitudes, values, and abilities. In order to plan for the future, you need to make choices based on what you find out about yourself. As you take career assessments and talk with your friends and family about the way they see you, you will learn some things about yourself that may make you happy. You will also discover some things you may want to change. If you find that some of the things you thought about yourself aren’t true anymore, you can recreate your self-image to be one that you like better each day.



## What To Do After High School

If you decide to continue your educational training, you may do so through the following:

### Apprenticeship programs

**An apprentice is a person who is:**

- at least 16 years old
- being trained on the job in a particular trade by a skilled worker under a planned program
- taking classroom instruction (through adult education, at a community college, or in regular school if on a part-time job)
- in training anywhere from one to six years (depending upon the trade—averaging three to four years)
  
- Employment is based on supply and demand
- The person wanting an apprenticeship may apply to and have a contract with one of the following:
  - An employer in the trade
  - The association of employers
  - The joint apprenticeship committee
  - The organization of employees registered with the apprenticeship council

For further information about specific apprenticeship programs, visit [www.mass.gov/dat](http://www.mass.gov/dat) or meet with your counselor.

### College/University

There are several types of colleges and universities. Your counselor will have additional resources to help you choose the right school to attend to pursue your career interests.

### Military training

You can learn about your chances for success in the military by taking the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB). This test is given free of charge at both QHS and NQHS. Check with your counselor for testing dates.

Men and women may enlist in all branches of the armed forces. Enlistment procedures are similar, but the services differ in length of enlistment and opportunities for specific training. Active military enlistments are available in the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard.

### Trade and technical training

Community colleges, adult education, and private schools have trade and technical training programs for high school graduates.

### Work/Postsecondary education

If you decide to get a job immediately after high school, you should:

- develop job-finding and job-keeping skills
- talk to a counselor or a career specialist about job possibilities
- talk with employers about combining work and a part-time college program, and/or apprenticeship, and investigate career-focused courses that match your interests



## College Planning

### Decision making

The choice of a college may be simple for one student who knows precisely where he or she wants to go and has the qualifications to get there. This student knows how to make it happen. Another student may find the process baffling and complicated. Both students should find this guide helpful.

College decision making is serious business, but it is not life's ultimate moment. It is one of a long series of decisions that will help to define you as you move toward adulthood. A calm, businesslike approach with a dash of humor will serve you better than a frenzied, frantic, doomsday outlook. Actually, this should be fun! You are doing something positive for yourself, and you should enjoy it!

Now for a few hints about how to make this important decision:

1. Know yourself well—your strengths and weaknesses, your likes and dislikes, your hopes and dreams. Understand and accept the evidence of your grades and test scores.
2. Research your options—the full range of postsecondary possibilities that may interest you. This aspect of decision making is worth the investment of your time and effort.
3. Consult the people who can help you evaluate the situation. These people may include parents, counselors,

teachers, relatives, friends, college representatives, financial aid experts, etc. Useful information sometimes comes from unexpected sources.

4. Choose where you will apply and attend college. Every school choice involves both plus and minus factors. In the end you will choose the available alternatives that seem to suit you best.

### Remember...

...as you consider various colleges, that there is no “best” college. There are only “right” colleges (often several of them) for the “right” students. Your task is to discover and choose a college that is “right” for you. This booklet will help you in your effort. Good luck!

## Types of colleges

### Two-year and community colleges

The more than 1,000 two-year colleges play increasingly diverse and important roles in American higher education. Many of the junior colleges are privately controlled; most of the larger institutions, frequently called community colleges are publicly financed. Community colleges are so called because they are designed to meet the needs of the residents of a certain geographical area. Junior and community colleges have two basic functions:

1. Preparing students for entry into a four-year college to complete the bachelor's program.
2. Preparing students to enter the world of work in a skilled professional or paraprofessional capacity.

Many two-year institutions fulfill both of these functions. Most of the two-year colleges grant the Associate of Arts (AA) degree or an appropriate professional certificate.

Academic guidance and employment placement services are features of most two-year colleges.

Two-year colleges vary widely in entrance requirements and cost. Candidates should investigate these matters carefully. Be sure to select courses that have credits that can be transferred to four-year colleges and universities.

In our city we are fortunate to have Quincy College, an excellent, comprehensive two-year college with campuses located in Quincy and Plymouth. Quincy College tuition is comparatively modest and financial aid is available.

### **Four-year colleges and universities**

There are more than 2,000 four-year colleges and universities in the United States. Some are publicly supported, others are privately financed. These institutions vary in admissions requirements, size, location, cost, affiliation, and countless other respects.

Four-year colleges offer professional, business, pre-professional, and many other programs. The most common undergraduate degrees are Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) and Bachelor of Science (B.S.).

Most four-year colleges provide dormitories for resident students. There is often additional available housing near the campus. Almost all colleges admit commuting students.

Four-year colleges are called universities if, in addition to undergraduate degrees, they offer graduate degrees.

### **Applying**

It helps to know something about how the admissions process works. Many colleges have more applicants than they have space for, and thus the admissions committee must come up with the “right” freshman class.



Some colleges will collect more data about you, others less. You will be sending information about yourself in your application. Your high school will provide you with your transcript and letters of recommendation if you request them. The college admissions staff will look at all the relevant data that they have about you and they will make their decision based on that data.

First and foremost, the college admissions people will evaluate your academic record. They will consider the difficulty and variety of the courses you took. They will note the grades you earned in various subjects, your cumulative grade point average (GPA), and your cumulative weighted grade point average (WGPA). There is a fuller discussion of the GPA and WGPA below. Your academic record is almost always the most important factor in college admissions. It is never too late to improve it. Senior-year grades are very important.

**Standardized test scores**—SAT, Subject Test, ACT—are also very important. Most students are quite used to standardized tests and have good test-taking skills. Before taking the test, some students familiarize themselves with the kinds of questions they will face and practice their test-taking skills.

**Counselor and teacher letter of recommendations** are often important factors. Some colleges do not ask for

teacher recommendations, and a few do not require any recommendations. You should let your counselor and teachers know about your activities, accomplishments, and aspirations—the kinds of things that will make a recommendation substantial. You should follow the college’s instructions, if any, in choosing teachers to recommend you. If there are no such instructions, you should pick from among your academic subject teachers in eleventh or twelfth grade.

**The application form** that you submit may help or hurt your chances substantially. A sloppy, ill-composed application may end your candidacy at a given college. Your essay(s) should be written *by you* in your best prose—no grammatical, spelling, punctuation, or stylistic errors. This calls for careful drafting and editing before you submit the final copy.

The guidance office offers an essay writing workshops in the fall of senior year. Senior English teachers are also an outstanding resource for essay proofreading.

Your non-academic activities and accomplishments, both in school and out, sometimes bear upon college admissions. This tends to be the situation more often with selective colleges and with more notable achievements. Be sure that you let the colleges know about your participation in school clubs and activities, athletics, leadership roles, community service, notable achievements, and jobs—both volunteer and paid. Colleges look for well-rounded, motivated, energetic people. Intensive participation in a few activities or projects usually is more significant than lesser involvement in a larger number. Be specific and detailed about important activities. Sometimes college representatives express interest in a student because of talent in a certain area such as football, soccer, or trombone. Please remember that such expressions of interest, while encouraging, do not in themselves amount to an offer of admission.



Now that you understand better what the college admissions people are looking for, you need to spend some time considering what you want in a college. Some of the questions below may raise important issues for you, others may not concern you as much. The important thing is to become stimulated to define what you’re looking for.

**1. “Where do I want my college to be?”**

City? Rural? New England? Mid-Atlantic? Mid-West? South? West? Foreign? Does it matter? (Remember to consider travel costs and distance from home.)

**2. “Where can I be sure of the availability of the programs that interest me?”**

There are many resources, including handbooks, college bulletins, and computer programs, for discovering college majors and specialties. Most students do not decide on a specialty and plan to begin with a broad liberal arts program.

**3. “What size college do I want?”**

Small? Medium? Large? Extra large? Does it matter to me?

**4. “Where would I feel at home and comfortable?”**

For some students the amount of personal and academic freedom or the amount of structure may be issues. Some students feel it is important that a significant number of people on campus share their religious or other important values. Some seek a school

with a diverse ethnic and racial population. Are any of these of concern to you?

### **5. “How about costs at a certain college?”**

The guidance office will provide you with valuable information and materials about financial support. Often, there is more financial support available than at first seems likely. It helps to do a little digging! There is more about this on page 19.

### **6. “Does a certain college meet my special needs?”**

Some students need support to help them deal effectively with specific learning problems; others may need programs and facilities adapted to their physical disability. Colleges vary widely in their ability to support persons with disabilities. There is more about this on page 23.

### **7. “What are my chances for admission to a particular college?”**

This question means taking a hard look at what do the colleges look for? Remember that it is fine to apply to a college or two that seem a bit of a long shot, but you should have some degree of realism supporting all of your applications. These questions are important examples of issues that may concern you. You need to face honestly and directly any concern you have about the choice of a college. One question most of you will face is this:

### **8. “To how many colleges should I apply?”**

There can be no definitive answer to this question, only a few guidelines. If you choose prudently and realistically, very few applications may be ample. If you apply frivolously and imprudently, many may be too few. In general, counselors urge students to cover a reasonable range of possibilities in their applications: 1) dearly desired, long-shot hopes; 2) solid fifty-fifty bets; and 3) comfortable, safe choices. Remember that it is very important that you apply to some college where you feel quite certain of admission. You should feel

comfortable about attending any school to which you apply.

## **Understanding admissions programs**

There are a number of admissions programs used by colleges and universities. Although these programs differ widely in specifics, some of them require you to do considerable planning well before the senior year.

Types of admissions programs are as follows:

**Early decision**—is an option in which students apply in November or December and learn of the decision on their application during December or January. This plan is suggested only for students who are academically strong and know that they want to attend a particular college. Early-decision candidates who are accepted are required to withdraw their application to other colleges and agree to matriculate at the college that accepts them. Students should not apply to more than one early-decision program and should understand clearly the commitment they are making.

**Early action**—differs from early decision in that students are not required to accept admission or withdraw other applications if accepted. Early action is offered chiefly by highly selective institutions.

**Rolling admissions**—means that a decision is made on your application almost immediately. Usually, within four to six weeks after your file is complete, you can expect to receive notice of the action taken. Sometimes colleges will establish a series of application deadlines and decision notification dates.

Very common, but without a distinctive name, is the practice of many colleges that requires all applications by a deadline date and then on a set date, usually months later

in the spring, notifies all candidates of their decision.

**Open enrollment**—a policy adopted by a number of institutions, which allows virtually all applicants to be accepted.

**Midyear admission**—an option some colleges are now offering to certain candidates, allowing them to start classes in the second semester rather than in the fall.

**Concurrent enrollment**—a program that will permit currently enrolled high school students to take a course or courses at the college.

## Sources of information

### Family Connection

Family Connection from Naviance offers a comprehensive website, which you can use from any internet connection, in making decisions about colleges and careers.

Family Connection also lets us share information with you about up-coming meetings. The web address for Family Connection for our school is

<http://connection.naviance.com/nqhs>

**Visits to college campuses.** More about this in College Visits, on page 16.

**College representative visits to our school.** A large number of representatives come each school year. Sign up on Family Connection to meet with those whose colleges interest you.

**Brochures, bulletins, and other information printed by the colleges.** This information is available in our career center or can be obtained by writing to the colleges.

**The Internet** contains links to a variety of sources of information about colleges, financial aid, scholarships, and testing.

**College directories**, commercially produced, are quick, usually reliable sources of information for the basic facts about colleges. The guidance office has copies of many of these, and some are sold in local bookstores.

**The Quincy Public Schools College Fair** is held in the fall of each year at one of the city's high schools. Please see your counselor for details.

**The 2009 QPS College Fair will be held at North Quincy High School on October 20, 2009 from 6:00 – 8:00 pm.**

---

---

## Words of Wisdom

- Be prepared for one of the busiest times of your life. The college admissions process can be hectic.
- Don't wait for the last minute to make college plans. The entire college admissions process is a long one. Many months of planning and research must take place before the actual application is submitted. Give yourself plenty of time to make the "proper" decision. This decision should be based on your aptitude, needs, and interests. Remember, a "proper" decision for you may not be the right one for your friend and vice versa.
- Read through applications and instructions before completing any forms. Retain copies of all completed forms.
- Seek advice from your school counselor. One of the most knowledgeable people regarding college admissions is right in your own school. Set up an appointment for your parents and yourself to meet with your counselor.
- Keep records of everything associated with the process: test score reports, information from colleges, and correspondence with colleges.
- Be aware of both school and college deadlines and be sure to file applications well in advance of the deadlines.
- Know your school College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) code.

**NQHS: 221660**



---

---

## Debunking the myths

### **Myth #1: The most expensive and prestigious colleges are the best.**

Fact: No school is the best for everyone. Some small and/or public colleges have programs that are as good as or better than those in more prestigious private colleges and are less expensive. Students should choose a

college/university based on their aptitude, needs, and interests and not just on the NAME.

### **Myth #2: SAT or ACT scores are the only basis for college selection.**

Fact: Most college admissions committees look at a number of different criteria (grades, test scores, extracurricular activities, and recommendations) when making selections. It is important that you try to do your very best in all the areas.

### **Myth #3: Don't worry about your senior year grades; your junior grades will get you admitted.**

Fact: Since your grade point average will be revised after the first semester of grade 12, your senior year is of great importance. Senior slump could be fatal. Remember, a final transcript is mailed to the college you will attend.

**Myth #4: Straight-A students are always accepted.**

Usually, the better the grades, the greater the number of options, but don't assume that a straight-A record is an automatic ticket of admission to a highly selective college. Top colleges have more valedictorians and straight-A students applying than they have spaces in their freshman classes. Apply to a range of schools.

**Myth #5: A student whose parents make average to above-average salaries should not apply for financial aid.**

Fact: The possibilities for financial aid will vary according to the college that a student chooses to attend. A student could very well receive financial aid at a high-priced college and be denied aid at a less costly one.

**Myth #6: It pays to get into the toughest college you can.**

Fact: Resist the pressure of prestige if you think you'll end up struggling to survive. Attend a college where you will be successful.

**Tests display your knowledge**

You really "make it happen" every day that you do a good job on your high school studies and activities. However, there are some special things that you must do right to put it all together for college admissions. Here are some of them.

Test-taking for college is a complicated, often baffling, and sometimes unpleasant business. Nothing can make it a joy, but since you must take some college-related tests, here is some of the information you need.

**A word about preparation classes for the SAT**

Many agencies sponsor programs for a fee, to help you improve your test

scores. There appears to be evidence that some programs have helped students to improve their scores somewhat, especially in the mathematics section. All in all, the choice about this kind of investment of time and money is yours.

Remember that tests are designed as an opportunity for you to display your knowledge. Learn good test-taking practices. If you have questions or anxieties about tests, talk them over with your counselor. The PSAT must be taken in the junior year if a student is to qualify for one of the many programs of the National Merit Scholarship Corporation.

*Note:* A student with a documented learning or other disability may want to make special exam arrangements. Options include extended timed tests, readers, or audiocassettes. Talk with your counselor or your special education teacher about the possibilities. There is more about this on page 23.

**Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT)**

This test is administered by our high school once each year, in October. The structure of the test is similar to that of the SAT. The test is divided into three segments—critical reading, mathematical, and writing skills. Scores on each part range from 20 to 80. This test is strongly recommended for juniors and is available to interested sophomores and freshmen. Juniors are eligible for the National Merit Scholarships, which are based on their PSAT scores. Scores are reported as a National Merit Selection Index. This index is derived by adding the critical reading, math, and writing skills scores (CR + M + W = Selection Index). National Merit Scholarship semifinalists

are determined by the Selection Index. Usually, to be ranked as a semifinalist, a student must have an index of 200 or more (this varies from year to year). Remember, the test must be writing proficiency, items covering advanced mathematics, a reading test that addresses inferential and reasoning skills, and a test designed to measure science reasoning. Registration is held in the guidance office.



## College Board Tests

### SAT: Reasoning Test

The test takes four hours, is primarily multiple choice, and measures critical reading, mathematical, and writing abilities. Scores range from 200 to 800 each. More detailed information is in the SAT registration bulletin or online at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com). Registration information, fee waivers and test schedules are available in the guidance office.

Almost every college candidate should take the SAT. Often called the College Boards, this instrument is used by most colleges as their admission test. This test is offered several times during the school year, and students are encouraged to take the test in the spring of their junior year. All interested students should plan to take it before Christmas of their senior year. Students planning to apply for Early Decision or Early Action should plan to complete all

required testing by the end of their junior year or early in their senior year.

### Subject Tests

These tests are sponsored by the CEEB and are administered in the following subjects: American History/Social Studies, Biology, Biology-Energy/Matter, Chemistry, Chinese, English Language Proficiency, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Latin, Literature, Mathematics-Level I and IC, Mathematics-Level IIC, Modern Hebrew, Physics, Spanish, World History, and Writing. Scores are reported in three digits ranging from 200 to 800. Not all colleges require Subject Test results. Subject Tests are best taken shortly after completing the subject(s) to which they relate. Students planning a mathematics test may be unsure whether to take the Level I or the Level II test. Those students should consult their mathematics teacher or counselor to help them resolve this matter.

### American College Tests (ACT)

This test is a curriculum-based test sponsored by the American College Testing Company and is used by some colleges in place of the SAT. It includes scores for English, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science Reasoning. Scores range from 0 to 36. College-bound students average between 18 and 21.

The ACT yields 12 scores—4 test scores, 1 composite score, and 7 sub-scores. In the ACT there is an increased emphasis on rhetorical skills in the measurement of writing proficiency, items covering advanced mathematics, a reading test that addresses inferential and reasoning skills, and a test designed to measure science reasoning. Students may register online at [www.act.org](http://www.act.org).

### **Advanced Placement Tests (AP)**

These tests usually are taken by high school students who are taking advanced or college-level course work in certain subjects. The tests are graded I through 5. Many colleges award credits to students who earn high scores, usually 3 to 5. Students decide whether or not to submit these test results to the college(s). Students enrolled in North Quincy High School Advanced Placement classes are required to take the Advanced Placement exam. Registration information is available in the guidance office

### **Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)**

The TOEFL is designed for students for whom English is not their native language and whose scores on the SAT would be affected by the language difference. Registration information is available online at [www.ets.org](http://www.ets.org).

### **Sending your test scores**

A testing reminder: Most colleges want test score reports sent directly to them from the testing company. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that this happens. If in doubt about procedures, seek help from your counselor.

For further information about any of these tests, see your counselor.

### **How to market yourself**

You have narrowed your choices. You have identified the colleges that may be right for you. Now you need to learn more about the colleges and perhaps to convince them that you are right for them.

### **College visits**

People seldom make major commitments sight unseen. How many people buy automobiles or expensive furniture without carefully comparing

several possibilities? The answer is, "hardly anyone." Yet, people sometimes enroll in a college that they have never seen. Even though you may apply to a college without visiting it, it is a mistake to commit yourself to enrolling there without a firsthand look. You cannot learn all about a college during a brief visit, but you can gain a perspective and a true sense of the college by being on campus.

### **Some hints about college visits**

- Try to arrange an appointment with the admissions officer. An interview may be advisable at this time. It will indicate to the college that you had enough interest to schedule a time to come. Do not, however, spend all or most of your available time at the admissions office.
- Try to visit when the college is in session. There is little you can learn from empty ivy-clad buildings and empty parking lots.
- If your parents accompany you, spend some of your time away from them with students of the college. Attend a class and/or have a meal with students. How do you feel with the students you meet? Remember that you will probably spend almost as much time socializing in college as you will with your studies.
- If possible, visit a professor or at least talk to a student in an area of your academic interest.
- Some colleges will arrange for you to spend a night in a dorm. Ask the admissions office how to schedule an overnight visit.
- Seniors are allowed four excused college visit absences with documentation.

### **College interview**

Some colleges may require or recommend that you interview with one of their representatives. Remember that, while you might feel anxious or threatened, the interview is really an

opportunity for you to shine and promote your chances. It is also an opportunity for you to get more information about a college.

The interviewer wants to learn whether or not the college and you would be a good match. The interviewer wants to get to know you, to sample some of your thoughts, and to get some idea of what appeals to you.

If you are not able to arrange an interview on campus, consider an interview with an alumnus. If you are interested in arranging an alumni interview, call or email the admissions office. Several colleges require alumni interviews regardless of whether or not you have had a campus interview.



### **Transcript and application**

After you have made a list of colleges that attract you, narrow the list, and be careful to include some college(s) where your credentials indicate that you have an excellent chance for admission. Your final list, probably no more than four or five choices long, should be only those colleges that you would be genuinely pleased to attend.

Write or email to the colleges months before the deadline for information. After you receive the materials from the colleges, you will be ready to take an important step—completing the college application.

The applications that you receive require that you perform certain tasks and that you alert your school to perform others. Let us consider this in detail.

### **Your part: Complete the application**

Completing the application is an important job. Set aside sufficient time to do this:

- If you are using a paper copy read the application thoroughly before you make a mark on it. Make a photocopy and do a run-through. When you fill it out, be neat. Type or write legibly—no smudges or blots.
- Most colleges encourage electronic applications. Before submitting an electronic application, print out a hard copy for your records and consult your counselor for assistance in reviewing it for accuracy.
- Answer all questions directly, clearly, and accurately. Seek help if you are not sure how to respond. Follow directions.
- If an essay is required, make sure that it is thoughtful and technically correct and that it says what you really mean. Make a rough copy before you write it on the form. Be sure to check the grammar, style, spelling, punctuation, and mechanics. Remember that this may be your only opportunity to impress the college in a personal way.
- You should take every opportunity that the application offers to let your light shine. Do not hesitate to reveal your interests and accomplishments. You may want to develop an extracurricular activities résumé.
- Be sure that the application is mailed or electronically submitted to the college well before the deadline. These deadlines come very early if you are applying for Early Decision or Early Action.
- Remember that it is to your advantage to be well acquainted with your counselor. If your counselor knows you well, he or she will be able to make more perceptive comments to the college about you.

## **The school's part: Secondary school reports**

- Every college requires its applicants to have a transcript submitted by the high school. When requested, your high school will send a record of your grades through the end of junior year, a list of your courses in progress, and your grade point average. High schools also include a school profile containing factual data about the school and some of the exceptional courses that it offers.
- Many colleges require a school recommendation, usually written by your counselor.
- Many colleges require a school report form to be completed by the school or counselor. Put your name and other information on the form and give it to your counselor. If there is no form and the application states that the college will request a transcript, inform your counselor so that school records will indicate that you have applied to that college when the request comes.
- If the college requires that the school reports be attached to your part of the application, be sure to complete all of your part before turning it in to your counselor. Also include any checks or other required sections so that the entire application may be processed.
- If electronic transcripts and/or recommendations will be submitted be sure to review these files with your counselor before they are submitted.
- At midyear, first-semester senior year grades are requested by colleges. Notify your counselor if the colleges you are applying to require midyear grades.

## **A word about college essays**

Here is a chance for you to do a self-examination and present yourself in an

honest and creative way. Your essay is a chance for you to “talk” with anyone who reads your application.

- Allow plenty of time.
- Brainstorm. Do a timeline or a personal map. Reread personal journals, diaries, papers, letters, or scrapbooks for topic ideas.
- Discuss possible topics with family, friends, teachers, or counselor.
- Find an article that catches your interest in a newspaper or magazine. Write down your reactions to the issues it raises.
- Be genuine. Do not try to present yourself in heroic or saintly terms.
- Don't be too modest; be confident, but not conceited or arrogant.
- Show a sense of humor.
- Show what you have learned from an experience. Show how it has affected or changed you. A negative experience might be a good subject. Show how you dealt with failure.
- Set yourself apart from others in some way. How are you unique? The admissions officers want to know who you are and what you are like.
- Be clever, but not cute. If a college requires two essays, you can take a greater risk with the second one. If you only submit one essay, generally it is better to be more straightforward.
- It is okay to read books on writing the college essay, but don't imitate what others have done.
- A well-written essay can help a borderline candidate or can make an average candidate stand out from the rest.
- Write more than you need. Put aside your rough draft for at least 24 hours.
- Capture attention early. Try starting in the middle. End with a strong impression of yourself, not just a summary of the essay.

- Reread and revise several times, selecting the details that best reveal your personality and values. Add new ideas. Rearrange parts of your essay.
- Be specific. Use concrete, not vague words.
- Be brief. If the college does not specify, try to keep your essay under 500 words.
- Review your essay scrupulously for correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar.
- Unless the college requires you to write in longhand, it is better to use a computer for the essay.
- Remember, be truthful, be yourself, be creative, and, in your final draft, be careful!



### Hints about transcripts

- See your counselor about the procedures for requesting a transcript.
- Ask your counselor what forms you need to complete and what fees you may need to pay for transcript mailings.
- Know and observe the time deadlines and procedures your school follows for submitting transcript requests and secondary school reports.
- Give your counselor all forms and requests well before the college deadlines. Remember, your counselor has many other student transcript requests to process.
- Allow sufficient lead time to meet your deadline.

### Letters of recommendation

Besides the counselor recommendation, many colleges also require other letters of recommendation, usually from teachers. Be sure to follow any guidelines that the college has about the selection of teachers to write the letters. When the choice is up to you, pick a teacher who knows you well and with whom you feel comfortable. Remember that writing recommendations is a difficult, time-consuming task. Approach the teacher in a polite, friendly manner. Make sure that you make the request long before any deadlines. Give the teacher any special forms the college provides or our high school form. Follow up with a verbal or written thank you when the teacher has sent the recommendation. It is generally not helpful to submit letters of recommendation that are not requested by the college. We recommend that you ask two teachers for a letter of recommendation.

### Notification about college decisions

Each college to which you apply will send you a letter indicating that you have been accepted, denied admission, or placed on the waiting list.

For early decision candidates, notification will usually come in mid-December, putting a welcome end to the application process for those who are accepted. For students who apply to schools using rolling admission, decisions may be made within a few weeks. For many students, the day of reckoning may be April 15.

Some of you, after you have heard from your colleges, must face a new, often difficult, decision. If more than one college has invited you to join them, you must decide which one is best for you. Many factors, frequently including financial aid offers, may influence your

choice. Be sure to advise your counselor of your final decision so final grades may be mailed to the college you have chosen.

**Early decision:**

**Acceptance/denial/deferral—**

If you are accepted under early decision, you should withdraw any applications that might have been filed at other colleges. If you are not accepted under early decision, you will usually be reconsidered for admission later in the school year. You should continue to look at other colleges. Once you determine that a college that has offered you admission is no longer a school you will attend, notify that college of your decision.

**Acceptance—**Most schools will give you several weeks to decide among the colleges to which you have been accepted. Observe all deadlines for notifying the college of your decision. Most acceptances are contingent on satisfactory completion of senior course work. Be aware that acceptances have been rescinded because of failure to maintain college standards in the second semester. Notify the schools that have accepted you to let them know that you will not be attending that school.

**Denial of admission—**If you are denied admission by all the schools to which you applied, consult with your counselor. Pursue less competitive or less well-known colleges, or possibly community or other colleges with open admission policies. Please do not become discouraged or give up. There are many excellent schools ready to meet your educational plans.

**Waiting list—**Find out what waiting list status means at the particular school concerned. Consult with your counselor about appropriate additional information that may influence your status on the

waiting list. Don't pin all your hopes on acceptance if you are on the waiting-list at the school. *Hold your place at a school where you have been accepted to safeguard your placement.*

When it comes time for the final decision, go with your instincts. In the end, the best choice is probably the college where you will feel most comfortable. Whatever your choice, you have the satisfaction of knowing that you have made it as wisely and as well as you could.



## Financial aid, scholarships, and awards

All seniors who are pursuing post-secondary education, whether college or private career school, should consider applying for financial aid. Talk with a financial aid officer at each college to which you are applying. Their expertise is free. Money for college is available regardless of academic, social, or financial background.

There are many sources of financial aid—cooperative education, merit-based, special interest and community scholarships, athletic, fine arts, other race grants and minority scholarships, and many others.

- Grants are awards of money that you do not have to pay back.
- Work-study gives you the chance to work and earn the money you need.

- Loans are borrowed money which you must repay with interest.
- Scholarships are available to students who apply and meet the terms of eligibility and are selected by the scholarship donors. Some *local* scholarship applications are available through the guidance office.

The United States Government is the single largest source of student financial aid for all permanent residents.

If one source of aid is denied, try another source. Keep trying and pay attention to deadlines. Remember that successful people share the quality of *persistence*.

### **Federal grants, work study, and loans**

**Federal Pell Grant**—A Pell Grant is an award to help undergraduates pay for their education after high school. Unlike loans, grants based on demonstrated financial need do not have to be repaid.

### **Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG)**—

FSEOG offers grants, Federal Work Study (FWS) offers jobs, and Perkins provides loans.

They all have some elements in common. You can go to school less than half time and still be eligible to receive aid. There is a limited amount of money available. Eligibility depends on financial need and availability of funds.

### **Federal Perkins Loan (National Direct Student Loan)**—

A Perkins Loan is a low-interest loan to help you pay for your education after high school. These loans are for both undergraduate and graduate students and are made through a school's financial aid office. Your school is your lender. You must repay this loan.

**Federal Stafford Loan**—is the new name for the Guaranteed Student Loan Program. Federal Stafford loans are low-interest loans made by a lender such as a bank, credit union, or savings and loan association. Sometimes a school acts as a lender. You must repay this loan. There are two types of Federal Stafford Loans—subsidized, for students who have demonstrated financial need, and unsubsidized, for those who have not demonstrated financial need.

**PLUS Loans**—are for parents who want to borrow money to help pay for their children's education. This loan provides additional funds for educational expenses and, like Federal Stafford loans, are made by a lender such as a bank, credit union, or savings and loan association. Ask at your bank about PLUS Loans.

### **Completing financial aid forms**

To initiate the financial aid process, you and your parents will possibly submit one or a combination of the following applications:

- The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
- College Scholarship Service (CSS) Financial Aid PROFILE
- State applications
- Institutional applications
- Private scholarship applications

The FAFSA, also available in Spanish, is a confidential document used to collect information for determining a student's need for financial aid. The FAFSA cannot be filed before January 1 of the year the student will be entering college.

There are three ways to complete and submit the FAFSA. You may choose to complete the FAFSA by:

- 1) downloading a .PDF version or

- 2) completing and submitting the FAFSA online at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov), or
- 3) call 1-800-801-0576 to have a paper copy mailed to you.

You may contact the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800/4-FED AID. Once filed the central processing office will make an estimate of your family's financial ability to contribute to the costs of education beyond high school. This estimate and a copy of the FAFSA are forwarded, at your request, to the Federal Pell Grant Program, state scholarship and grant programs, and financial aid officers at the colleges or other post-secondary institutions you specify on the form.

Some colleges or programs require students to complete the CSS/PROFILE. Check in the guidance office to determine which forms are required by the colleges you choose. While the FAFSA is processed at no cost to the student, there is a fee associated with CSS/PROFILE.

Some colleges also require applicants to submit their own institutional financial aid application in order to be considered for financial assistance. Check the application instructions carefully. To verify the information on the FAFSA, individual institutions may require a copy of parents' current 1040 tax form.

For state scholarships, unless otherwise specified, the completed FAFSA must be filed on or before March 1, but not before January 1 of the student's senior year.

FAFSA information is available in the guidance office, by mid-December.

**The QPS Financial Aid Night will be held at Quincy High School on January 7, 2010 at 7:00 pm.**

## **Special Information for Athletes (NCAA)**

Students who plan to participate in NCAA Division I or II college sports must register with the NCAA Clearinghouse online at [www.ncaaclearinghouse.net](http://www.ncaaclearinghouse.net). This website provides all of the necessary information regarding required high school coursework, grade point average and, S.A.T. scores. Registering with the NCAA allows the high school to release transcripts to NCAA and in turn allows the NCAA to release all academic information to colleges that request it. Please see your counselor for additional information.

# A Quick College-Planning Guide for Students with Special Needs

There are many factors to consider when selecting a college. In addition to exploring programs, location, size, cost, housing, career, and social opportunities, you also want to search for schools that offer the services you need to succeed academically. This guide is designed to help you with that search.

## **Advice for students with disabilities**

Talk with your counselor. It is important to determine the level of support services you will need in college—minimal support services or an extensive program. Your counselor also will assist with the process of assessing and determining a college's ability to meet your identified needs and how and with whom to initiate a dialogue about accommodations.

Special editions of the SAT and special exam arrangements are available for students with documented chronic illnesses or visual, hearing, physical, or learning disabilities. Students also are permitted to use certain aids. An extended testing time is given on regularly scheduled testing dates throughout the year. Ask your counselor for information.

Contact the disabled student services office or the academic advising office of each college you are considering. Learn about the kinds of services and support that are available for students with disabilities, the number of students being served, and the admission requirements for the programs. Visit the colleges you are considering.

Know and be able to articulate your strengths and weaknesses. Let the college know what compensating

techniques work best for you and what accommodations you may need.

Housing issues may be a problem. Educate the resident assistant on your hall. Talk to your roommate so that you are both comfortable about any accommodations you may need. Inform your resident assistant if there are roommate concerns.

## **Strategies for success**

Identify your needs and any services and/or accommodations you will need to enhance your ability to learn, live, manage health care and independence needs, participate in activities, and access resources on and off campus.

Set realistic goals and priorities for course work.

Keep only one calendar with all relevant dates and assignments, and be sure to keep appointments and deadlines.

Use a tape recorder during lectures. Selectively tape record key points using the "pause" switch.

Listen to the tape as soon after class as possible to refresh your memory, then reorganize your notes.

Make note of any questions you might have so that they can be answered before the next exam.

Sit toward the front of the classroom to maximize your eye contact and to reduce distraction.

Estimate how long a given class assignment will take, generally planning on two hours outside of class for every hour in class. Build in study breaks; fatigue is a big time-waster.

If you are having trouble, seek help early in the semester.

Plan for the transition of health care services to a provider at the college location, if needed.

### **Did You Know?**

IDEA, the “special education law” does not apply to higher education. Postsecondary institutions are not required to design special programs for students with disabilities, only to provide accommodations that allow for equal access to the regular program.

### **Develop self-awareness**

- Become familiar with how you learn best.
- Understand your strengths as well as your special needs.
- Know which compensatory strategies work for you and apply them to your learning.
- Build strengths and areas of interest through extracurricular activities, service learning projects, internships, or work experiences.

### **Practice self-advocacy**

- Prepare to assume responsibility for advocating for yourself in college by practicing while in high school.
- Attend your Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings and be an active participant.
- Use logical, clear, and positive language to communicate your successes and concerns.
- Learn to be comfortable describing to others how you learn most effectively, your disability, and your academic needs.

### **Prepare yourself well**

- Take the most challenging courses available to you and work hard in each of them.

- Talk with your counselor and teachers about the standardized tests you will need to take and plan a testing timeline.
- Consult with your counselor about whether or not you will qualify for accommodations on standardized tests, how and when to apply for those accommodations, and the testing plan that best meets your needs.

### **Explore options**

- Talk with your counselor to identify a list of 6 to 10 schools that interest you based on academic programs, admissions requirements, cost, financial aid opportunities, location, size, social activities, etc.
- Narrow the list by familiarizing yourself with the services each school can provide to special needs students.
- Visit the school, if possible, to get an impression of campus life, classes, residential facilities, etc.
- Contact the Disability Support Services Office to get your specific questions answered.
- Understand admissions requirements for the schools you have selected and be sure you are able to provide everything that is requested. You are not required to disclose your disability.
- Discuss with your counselor and your family whether or not you will share that information. Colleges may not use the disability as a basis for denying admission. On the other hand, they are under no obligation to alter their admissions requirements or standards for special needs students. You must meet the admissions criteria established by the school.
- Follow our high school’s application timeline to be sure all requirements are completed on time.
- GOOD LUCK!

