

Northbridge High School College Planning Handbook



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Welcome to College Counseling at Northbridge High School. The Guidance Department looks forward to working with you throughout the college process. The next few months will be an important time to reflect on your goals, values, interests, and abilities. This handbook should be used as a guide to help you along the way.

Now is the time to explore, expand, and experiment. Talk to professionals in careers you are considering, volunteer in programs related to your interests, and visit as many colleges as possible. After you have researched colleges, schedule an appointment with your counselor to review your preliminary list. We encourage you to use the checklist on page 18 and the rest of this guide as a resource. Good luck with your college search!

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Important Reminder: Please check the “guidance” link on the Northbridge High School’s website for monthly updates and important information and log in to your Naviance account on a regular basis. Parents should also do the same!

The website contains information or links to:

- Naviance - <http://connection.naviance.com/Northbridge>
- College Board - www.collegeboard.com
- Guidance Department Events
 - Financial Aid
 - Scholarships

Where to Find Information

Reference Materials—Gather more in-depth information about the colleges on your list from catalogs, videos, viewbooks, and guides available on the college’s website and in the Guidance Career Center.

Admission Offices—Contact colleges for more detailed information and applications and deadlines. You can request to have material or information sent to you by visiting college websites or calling admission offices.

College Fairs—A variety of college fairs and open houses are held locally each year.

College Visits—Visit as many colleges on your list as possible. Keep a record of your observations during each visit. Try to schedule an interview when possible, even if it is considered optional.

College Rep Visits—Meet with college reps when they visit NHS. This is an opportunity for

you to meet face to face with an admissions counselor, often the person who will make decisions regarding your application. This can be especially important if you are unable to visit the campus. Be prepared to ask questions, dress appropriately, make eye contact, and be enthusiastic in your interest. Students must sign up electronically on Naviance in order to attend the meetings.

The Internet—The Internet contains a wealth of information regarding the college search process.

<https://connection.naviance.com/Northbridge>

www.collegeboard.com

www.act.org

www.commonapp.org/

www.masscis.intocareers.org

www.princetonreview.com

www.fafsa.ed.gov

www.fastweb.com

When Developing Your List...

- ❖ Don’t let only one or two factors govern your choices.
- ❖ Don’t let any one individual be overly influential as you consider your choices. Your relationship with someone who attends, graduated from, or works for a specific college does not mean that you will be comfortable there.
- ❖ Don’t let a graduate school or program at the college you’re considering for undergraduate study influence your choice. Getting into Tufts University has nothing to do with getting into Tufts Medical School.
- ❖ Don’t apply to any college “just to see if I can get in.”
- ❖ Don’t select colleges solely on the basis of “prestige,” “mystique,” or somebody else’s vague idea of what makes a “good” college. Choose colleges that offer qualities, conditions, and characteristics that are right for you.
- ❖ Don’t take the selection of a “likely school” lightly. Finding a likely school that best meets your needs and interests can be the hardest part of your search. A safety isn’t a safety if you won’t go there!

College Visits

Tips for your Campus Visit

No publication, no matter how thorough, can give you a complete picture of a college or university. A campus visit is the best way to see yourself what a college is like!

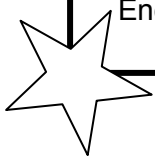
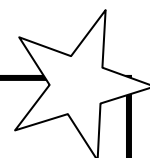
- Wear comfortable shoes! Be prepared to spend at least an hour walking around campus during your tour. You should be dressed neatly and comfortably.
- Scan the bulletin boards for announcements and messages; these bits of information can tell potential students a great deal about the atmosphere of a school.
- Seek comfort, not perfection. Before you leave the campus ask yourself: "Would I feel comfortable here?" Plan to visit no more than two colleges in one day. Allow enough time to see everything that is of interest to you (e.g., residence hall, library, laboratories, student center, cafeteria, and athletic facilities.)
- If at all possible, plan your visit when school is in session.
- Make prior arrangements to speak to someone in the admissions office and to take a tour. On holidays or in the summer, tours can require appointments. (If visits are during the school day get your College Visit Form signed so your absence will be excused.)
- Talk with students, faculty, admission staff members and financial aid officers.
- Eat a meal in the dining hall or student center. This gives you an opportunity to see students in their everyday setting.
- Bring your list of questions to ask on each college visit.

A Note to Parents

Most students find that the summer between junior and senior year is the most convenient time to visit colleges. We strongly encourage you to plan a few visits in the **spring** of junior year or fall of senior year.

Consider this: the cost of one year at a private college is more than the cost of most new cars. Just as you would not pick a car from a brochure, you would not choose a place where you intend to send your child for the next four years of your life without thorough investigation.

Remember, there is no substitute for first-hand experience. That said, it is also important that you try to step back a bit during these college visits. Encourage your son or daughter to do the talking and share your thoughts after the visit is over.



Before you begin visiting colleges, develop a list of common questions that you will ask at each college you visit. Below are some questions to ask your tour guide:

1. How large are your classes?
2. Who teaches these classes? (Graduate/teaching assistants or professors?)
3. When do you have to declare your major? What are the most popular majors? Is it relatively easy to change majors?
4. What are the strongest programs? The weakest?
5. How competitive is the student body?
6. How accessible is the faculty?
7. What is the weekend scene like? Are there a lot of options for socializing?
8. Where do many of the students come from? Is this a diverse student body?
9. Are some of the dorms much better than others? Do most of the students live on campus all four years?
10. Are the necessities accessible without a car? Are freshman allowed to have cars?
11. Which colleges overlap in applications with this one? Which colleges are most similar to this one?
12. What do you think is the greatest shortcoming of this college?
13. How's the food? What meal plans do you offer?
14. Where do people study? Are the dorms quiet?
15. Are the lab and computer facilities adequate for the number of students?
16. What would you change if you could to improve the college?
17. What support do you provide for students with disabilities?
18. Do I have to live on campus?
19. Where else did you apply to college?
20. Do you like it here?

If you make a chart to keep track of the answers to each of these questions, you will have an easier time comparing your options when you begin to narrow your list. Include cost, your impression of people, academic program, and facilities. For example: Name of school:

Name of School:					
Availability of major/academic interests:					
Class size:					
Size of School:					
Availability of extracurricular:					
Distance from home:					
Quality & availability					
Diversity of students:					
First year retention rates:					
Sports programs:					
Cost:					

Interviews

Many colleges no longer require on-campus interviews. Whenever possible, it is recommended that you take advantage of an interview option. Interviews give college admissions representatives an opportunity to learn more about your personality and interests.

Alumni Interviews: Many colleges enlist their alumni to help recruit candidates. These interviews can be conducted in the alumnus' home or another mutually agreed upon location. If you are interested in arranging an alumni interview, call, write, or email the admission office. Following the interview, the alumni representative will send an evaluation to the admission office for consideration along with your other credentials.

Group Interviews: Group interviews for students and parents are often conducted during college visits. An admission staff member presents a brief overview of the college's history, curricular offerings, and campus activities, and then allows prospective applicants to ask questions. Group interviews are designed as information sessions rather than evaluations of individual credentials.

Personal Interviews: Personal interviews are conducted by admissions' staff members and are designed primarily to evaluate a candidate rather than to provide information about the college. The importance of personal interviews in the final decision varies, but a strong interview may enhance your application.

What You Can Do To Prepare:

- ✓ Read all available material on the college beforehand. Do not ask questions that are answered in the material.
- ✓ Be prepared to comment on particular programs that combine your talents and interests.
- ✓ Be prepared for open-ended, general questions (e.g., "What would you like to talk about?" "Tell me about yourself.")
- ✓ Be prepared to ask questions. For example: "Do you offer internships? Do you offer job placement opportunities?"
- ✓ How much involvement do students have in governing the college and in policy making?
- ✓ How safe is your campus, especially for women?
- ✓ What opportunities are there for undergraduates to participate in research?

Sample Questions From College Admissions Interviewers:

- How do you like Northbridge High School? What has been the most positive experience you have had? The most negative? What would you like to change about Northbridge High School?
- What is your role in the school community? What would your teachers say about you as a person? As a student?
- What is the most significant contribution you have made to your school?
- What are you looking for in a college? How did you become interested in _____?
- What are your goals for the future?
- What has been your favorite subject in high school? Why?
- Which book have you read recently that was not for school?
- What are your reactions to some current event?

Writing Your College Essay

Introduction

If you are like most students, you see the college essay as another hurdle that you must jump on the way to being accepted at the college of your choice. In fact, the essay is not a hurdle but a *rare opportunity*; it is a chance for you to “talk” directly to the college’s admissions committee and to help them “see” you as thinking and feeling person, rather than simply a set of impersonal statistics. Except for the interview, it is your only chance to share your thoughts, insights, and opinions; to highlight your accomplishments; and to convey your maturity and outlook on life. If you see the college essay in this way—as an opportunity—then it is clearly worth the effort to put some extra time, thought, and energy into writing it.

Purpose of the Essay

The college essay is extremely important for two major reasons:

1. It enables the college admissions office to evaluate your communication skills. Through your essay they can assess the clarity of your thinking and your ability to convey your thoughts in written form.
2. It enables the admissions office to learn more about you as a person, beyond what grades and SAT/ACT scores can convey. A well-written essay can speak volumes about your attitudes, feelings, personal qualities, imagination, and creativity. For the admissions staff, it adds another important piece to the puzzle because it distinguishes you as an individual, different from any other student who is applying.

Choosing a Topic

The choice of a topic is frequently not an issue, because many colleges and universities will either give you a topic to write about or present several rather specific topics from which you must choose. Other colleges may simply “suggest” broad general topics or give you total freedom to write about something that interests or concerns you. Regardless of whether you must respond to a prescribed topic or come up with one of your own, here are a few general hints about the most effective way to approach your topic:

- Narrow your topic and try to be as specific and illustrative as possible.
- The easiest topic to write about is yourself. No one knows more about you than you. Since one important purpose of the essay is self-revelation, it is no place to be shy or modest, although you should not exaggerate. If you choose to write about yourself, remember that little incidents and facts are often the most revealing of character and outlook.
- Do not be afraid to write about something you think is a little different. A unique topic or approach is often refreshing to the college admissions officer who has been reading applications all day. Further, an unusual or off-beat essay is an excellent way to show your creativity.

Preparing to Write

Before actually sitting down to write a first draft of your essay, spend some time organizing your thoughts. Develop a framework for your essay so it will have a smooth and logical progression from one idea or incident to the next. Consider your purpose in writing, what you want to convey, and the tone that you think is most appropriate for the topic. Decide on a style that is comfortable for you, not one that you think the college admissions committee prefers. Finally, remember that organizing your thoughts and deciding on a framework does not mean you must be overly rigid at the start: leave room for flexibility and creativity as you actually begin writing.

Writing the Essay

You do not have to get it right the first time! Instead, write the first draft of your essay with the main focus on content—communicating your thoughts. Then set it aside for a day or two, reread it with a fresh perspective, and make any necessary changes. This is also the point at which you should consider matters of organization, style, grammar, spelling, and tone. Once you have rewritten your first draft, you may wish to try it out on your family, friends, English teacher, or guidance counselor. While the final product and final “voice” should be yours, they may be able to offer helpful suggestions for technical or other improvements.

Within this general outline for actually writing the essay, there are some “do’s” and “don’ts” which I would like to highlight:

Do’s

- Do think “small” and write about something that you know about.
- Do reveal yourself in your writing.
- Do show rather than tell. By giving examples and illustrating your topic, you help bring it to life.
- Do write in your own “voice” and style.

Don’ts

- Don’t write what you think others want to read.
- Don’t exaggerate or write to impress.
- Don’t use a flowery, inflated, or pretentious style.
- Don’t neglect the technical part of your essay (grammar, spelling, sentence structure).
- Don’t ramble—say what you have to say and conclude.

Your college essay, along with your high school record and standardized test scores, and extracurricular involvement will provide the basis upon which the college makes its admissions decision. A thoughtful, well-written essay can affect in a very positive way that final decision. Keep this in mind and take full advantage of the opportunity which the college essay affords you.

Standardized Tests

Standardized testing is an important factor in admission decisions at most colleges and especially at highly selective colleges and universities.

SAT Reasoning Test

The SAT Reasoning Test measures students' critical reading, writing, and mathematical abilities that are necessary for academic success in college. All students should take the SAT Reasoning Test in the spring of their junior year. Many students elect to retake the SAT Reasoning Test again during the fall of their senior year. College admissions will focus on a student's highest score on the math, critical reading, and writing section from all test dates. The writing section of the SAT Reasoning Test is fairly new and most colleges are looking at it for placement purposes rather than as an admissions factor. For example, if a student scores well on the writing section of the SAT, if admitted into that college, he/she may be able to enroll in English Composition II instead of English Composition I. Again, more competitive colleges may now be using it as an admissions factor, so be sure to check with the admissions office or a college representative from each college.

SAT Subject Tests

In addition to the SAT Reasoning Test, more competitive colleges require students to take a minimum of two SAT Subject Tests for admission into their college. The SAT Subject Tests are one-hour tests measuring achievement in a variety of subject areas. Check the requirements of the colleges you are considering. You may register for up to three Subject Tests on any single test date.

Students may take multiple SAT Subject Tests or SAT Reasoning Tests during their high school years. The scores become a part of the student's cumulative College Board testing record. When a student releases test scores to a college, this cumulative record is sent. All scores from all test dates are included unless a student chooses to participate in "score choice". Score Choice is a new program that the College Board has implemented where students can choose to only send their scores from one particular testing date. This is advantageous if the student's highest scores in each section are all from the same testing date. If the student took the SAT's multiple times and scores varied then the student should not participate in score choice so colleges will receive their highest set of scores in each section.

ACT

The ACT (American College Tests) is a measurement of aptitude and achievement in one single test. The test consists of four subject areas: English, mathematics, reading, and science reasoning. Most colleges will now accept either the ACT or SAT. The ACT also offers an optional Writing Test. Check directly with the institutions you are considering to find out their requirements, or ask your high school counselor which Test Option you should take. Please visit the website, www.actstudent.org for a list of institutions that have provided information about whether they require, recommend, or do not need results from the ACT Writing Test. Consult ACT's list before you register so you will know which Test Option to select.



**TIP: Memorize the Northbridge High School CEEB CODE:22385
You will need this number each time you register for an exam.**

Description of the ACT

The ACT is a set of four multiple-choice tests which cover English, mathematics, reading, and science. The ACT also offers an optional Writing Test.

Test	Content		
English	75 questions	45 minutes	Standard written English and rhetorical skills.
Mathematics	60 questions	60 minutes	Mathematical skills students have typically acquired in courses taken up to the beginning of grade 12.
Reading	40 questions	35 minutes	Measures reading comprehension.
Science	40 questions	35 minutes	Measures the interpretation, analysis, evaluation, reasoning, and problem-solving skills required in the natural sciences.
Optional Writing Test	1 prompt	30 minutes	Measures writing skills emphasized in high school English classes and in entry-level college composition courses.

2011-2012 ACT Test Dates:

Test Date	Registration Deadline	(Late Fee Required)
September 10, 2011	August 12, 2011	August 13 – 26, 2011
October 22, 2011	September 16, 2011	September 17 – 30, 2011
December 10, 2011	November 4, 2011	November 5 – 18, 2011
February 11, 2012	January 13, 2012	January 14 – 20, 2012
April 14, 2012	March 9, 2012	March 10 – 23, 2012
June 9, 2012	May 4, 2012	May 5 – 18, 2012

TOEFL

Any student whose first language is not English and has been in the United States for fewer than six years should consider take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL).

Non-Standard Testing for Students with Disabilities

Any student who has a diagnosed and properly documented learning disability or physical handicap should consider non-standard testing. The College Board offers extended time and other accommodations for those who qualify. Students who believe they qualify for non-standard testing administration should meet with their counselor for specific information about registration.

Test Preparation

The best preparation for standardized testing is through familiarization. Students can become familiar with standardized testing by taking the PSAT sophomore and junior year. When students receive their PSAT scores they will receive a copy of the used test booklet, answers, and an answer key. Students should review this information and identify strengths and weaknesses. The College Board has several helpful publications, which are available in the Guidance Office: *Taking the SAT Reasoning Test and Taking the SAT Subject Tests*. Practice can also improve scores. Students may prepare by practicing math problems, studying vocabulary words, and reading. SAT prep courses or individual tutoring can also be helpful for some students.

The SAT Reasoning Test™

Assessing Reasoning Skills and College Readiness

The SAT Reasoning Test™ is the most widely used and most rigorously researched college admissions test in history. Virtually every college in the United States accepts the SAT® as a measure of the critical thinking skills students need for academic success in college. The SAT assesses how well students analyze and solve problems—skills learned in school that are needed in college. The test also provides an independent measure of a student’s college readiness that is standardized across all students, schools, and communities, providing a common and objective scale for comparison.

Critical Reading

The critical reading section measures a student’s ability to identify genre, relationships among parts of a text, cause and effect, rhetorical devices, and comparative arguments. Questions assess such reading skills as identifying main and supporting ideas, determining the meaning of words, understanding authors’ purposes, and understanding the structure and function of sentences. Reading passages are taken from different fields, including natural sciences, humanities, social sciences, and literary fiction. Sentence completion questions primarily measure reasoning and vocabulary.

Time:

70 min. (two 25-min. sections and one 20-min. section)

Question Types:

Passage-based reading and sentence completion

Score:

200-800

Mathematics

The mathematics section measures a student’s knowledge of mathematical concepts and reasoning skills. It includes topics typically covered in three years of college-preparatory mathematics, such as exponential growth, absolute value, functional notation, linear functions, manipulations with exponents, and properties of tangent lines. Students are asked to apply concepts they have learned to solve unfamiliar problems in flexible ways, often with real-world applications.

Time

70 min. (two 25-min. sections and one 20-min. section)

Question Types

Multiple-choice questions and student-produced responses

Content

Number and operations; algebra and functions; geometry; statistics,

probability, and data analysis

Score

200-800

Writing

The writing section measures a student’s mastery of Standard Written English. The essay, which is always the first question on the SAT, measures a student’s skill in developing and expressing a point of view on an issue. The multiple-choice questions assess the ability to use language in a clear, coherent manner and to improve a piece of writing through revision and editing. Questions ask students to recognize sentence errors, to choose the best version of a piece of writing, and to improve paragraphs.

Time

60 min. (two 25-min. sections and one 10-min. section)

Question Types

Multiple choice questions (35 min.) and student-written essay (25 min.)

Score

200-800

The SAT Subject Tests™

Assessing Mastery of Languages, Mathematics, Sciences, History, and English

The SAT Subject Tests™ are designed to measure students' knowledge and skills in particular subject areas, as well as their ability to apply that knowledge. The tests are independent of any particular textbook or method of instruction, and many colleges use them for admissions, for course placement, and to advise students about course selection.

Taking the SAT Reasoning Test and Subject Tests

The SAT Reasoning Test is administered seven times in a school year in the United States, beginning in October, and six times a year internationally. All Subject Tests except world languages and World History are given six times a year (all dates below except March). Language Tests with Listening are given only in November. Visit collegeboard.com or review the *SAT Registration Booklet* for more information about specific Subject Tests.

2011-2012 Anticipated SAT Saturday and Sunday Test Dates (US only)

- October 1 and 2, 2011
- November 5 and 6, 2011
- December 3 and 4, 2011
- January 28 and 29, 2012
- March 10 and 11, 2012
- May 5 and 6, 2012
- June 2 and 3, 2012

Reminders for Testing

- Check your college's test requirements. What is the latest testing date the college will accept?
- Allow three to four weeks for colleges to receive your scores after the test date.
- You cannot take both the SAT Reasoning Test and SAT Subject Tests on the same day.
- Check the back of your registration bulletin regarding SAT Subject Tests. Not all subject tests are offered on all test dates.

If you are applying under an early notification plan (Early Decision or Early Action), you will need to have completed all of your testing by the end of October of your senior year. Although you may take the November tests and have them "rushed", colleges may not review them before they make a decision about your application.

You are responsible for registering for all standardized tests. Fee waivers are available in the Guidance Office for any student that receives reduced or free lunch.

Registration Fees	
SAT	\$47
SAT Subject Tests	
Basic registration fee (per registration)	\$21
Language with Listening Tests	add \$21
All other SAT Subject Tests	add \$10

Registration Fees	
Additional Processing Fees (add to total test fees)	
Register by phone (available only if you have registered before)	\$13
Change test, test date or test center fee	\$24
Late fee (U.S. and U.S. territories)	\$24
Standby fee	\$41
International processing fee (per registration) Security surcharge to test in India and Pakistan	\$28 add \$24
Receiving Scores	
Scores received online	no charge
Scores received by phone (per call)	\$13
Scores received by mail	no charge
Sending Scores	
Score report requests at registration. (Students can select the four score report requests included in the registration up until 11:59 p.m. on the Monday nine days after the published test date. Score reports selected after that are subject to the regular score report fee.)	Four included at no charge
Additional score report requests Score report fee (per report) — refundable if absent on test day Request to rush (per order) — refundable if absent on test day Request for old reports — Search fee (per order)	\$10 add \$29 add \$24

Free Online Resources for Students

- SAT Preparation Center™, with test-taking approaches, practice questions, sample essays, and an official practice test. *Includes* answer explanations and a personalized score report. www.collegeboard.com/satprep

ADMISSIONS FACTORS

Students often ask which criteria are most important to college admission committees. The following represents a list of factors that will likely determine your chances of admission:

1. Grades/Grade Point Average
2. Class Rank
3. Rigor of Academic Program
4. SAT Reasoning Test/ACT Scores
5. SAT Subject Test Scores, if required
6. Special Talents
7. Personal Essay
8. Recommendations
9. Interview
10. Extracurricular Activities (including athletic, employment, clubs and summer activities)

The emphasis placed on each factor will vary among colleges. Students should remember that the final selection process is based upon the goals of a specific college community. Some colleges, particularly the very selective schools, are trying to “build” a balanced freshmen class that will allow them to have a range of athletic teams, organizations, and student backgrounds. Information about the importance of various criteria can be found in college view books. Some schools have very specific admission requirements set by state public accrediting boards. The following are requirements for admission to Massachusetts’ public universities and colleges.

MASSACHUSETTS STATE COLLEGES AND UMASS MINIMUM ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS

The admissions standards for the state colleges and UMass emphasize a strong academic high school background so that students enter college ready to learn. These standards represent minimum requirements; meeting them does not guarantee admission, since campus officials consider a wide range of factors in admissions decisions. Students shall have fulfilled all requirements for the high school diploma or its equivalent upon enrollment. *It is important to note that admissions standards for the state’s community colleges differ. Community colleges may admit any high school graduate or GED recipient.*

Freshman Applicants

The admissions standards for freshmen applicants have two main parts:

1. 16 required academic courses.
2. A minimum required grade point average (GPA) earned in college preparatory courses completed at the time of application.

Applicants must also submit an SAT or ACT score (directly from collegeboard.com or actstudent.org).

Academic Course Requirement:

Sixteen college preparatory courses distributed as follows are required. (A course is equivalent to one full school year of study. Courses count toward the distribution only if passed.)

- ◆ English 4 courses
- ◆ Mathematics 3 courses (Algebra 1 & II and Geometry or Trigonometry, or comparable coursework)
- ◆ Sciences 3 courses (including 2 courses with laboratory work)
- ◆ Social Sciences 2 courses (including 1 course in U.S. History)
- ◆ Foreign Languages 2 courses (in a single language)
- ◆ Electives 2 courses (from the above subjects or from the Arts & Humanities or Computer Sciences)

Minimum Required Grade Point Average (GPA):

The GPA must be achieved based on all college preparatory courses completed at the time of application and should be weighted for accelerated (Honors or Advanced Placement) courses. The required minimum weighted high school GPA is 3.0 for the four-year public campuses.

State College GPA

3.0

University GPA

3.0

Note:

Northbridge currently utilizes a 5.5 scale. Your GPA will be re-calculated on a 4.0 scale by college admissions counselors.

SPECIAL TALENTS

Music and Theater in the Application Process

The following information is intended as a guide for students who have demonstrated a special talent in music or theater. We encourage students to create a recorded audio or videotape and a short resume outlining musical and/or dramatic achievements. Creating this tape and resume will showcase your musical/dramatic abilities and help set you apart from many other applicants.

Some points to remember:

- College drama and music program requirements vary. Please check carefully regarding each school's audition procedure. In most cases, auditions will take place in February or March. Some schools offer regional auditions in New York or Boston. The earlier you register, the better, as spaces will fill up quickly. If you do not intend to major in music or theater, but wish to showcase past achievements, you may send an audio or videotape.
- The tape should be professionally recorded with high quality equipment.
- Choose your pieces wisely. Some schools will specify required genres; select pieces that will show your talent in the best light. Choose a variety of pieces to demonstrate different abilities.
- Send the tape to the college admission office as well as the school's music/theater department. Enclose a letter and the resume outlining your past achievements.

Athletics Recruitment and the College Process

NCAA CLEARINGHOUSE

The NCAA Clearinghouse was established for both recruiting and determining eligibility for Division I and II student-athletes. **All student-athletes interested in Division I or II programs are encouraged to complete clearinghouse registration at the end of their junior year.** Those interested in making official visits (expenses paid) should register at **www.ncaaclearinghouse.net**. The Clearinghouse certifies that you have completed a required core of academic courses. Check with your counselor if you have any questions about requirements.

To compete and receive scholarships at a NCAA Division I or II school, you must complete 14 approved core courses and meet the new Core GPA/Test Score Index. More information on student-athlete eligibility and registration can be found at **www.ncaaclearinghouse.net**.

We recommend the following for students interested in college athletics:

- Talk to your coach at Northbridge High School about the schools you are considering and enlist his/her suggestions. Ask him/her which division of college athletics is appropriate for you.
- Contact the college coaches directly. (If they are pursuing you, you may hear from them after July 1 before your senior year.) You may want to send them an athletic resume and/or videotape and set up a visit to meet with the coach.

- Coaches have varying degrees of involvement in the admission process so it is important to understand to what extent they are able and willing to support you in the process. A coach's goal is to build the best team possible. While there is no guarantee that the admissions committee will admit all candidates on a coach's list, they will take academic and personal factors into consideration. Prospective athletic applicants should always be skeptical of coaches' promises. **The admission committee makes admission decisions, not the coaches.**
- It is important that you keep your counselor posted throughout the process about all communications with college coaches. Our work as your advocate is strengthened if we know which college coaches seem most interested in you. If coaches make unfounded promises to you or ask you to commit when you are not ready to do so, we can often intervene by contacting admission officers.

Art Portfolios and the Application Process

Any student applying to an art school, or who intends to major in art at the college level, will be required to submit a portfolio as part of the application process. For students who plan to apply to a college as an art major, the format of a typical portfolio is as follows: (Students should plan on taking Studio Art Honors in order to assist with this process.)

- Most colleges will require a selection of slides documenting your work, usually no more than twenty submitted in a slide file page.
- Each slide should be labeled with your name and a number which corresponds to a **typed** list accompanying your slides. The list should have a title for each slide, identification of the media, an indication of size, and a brief description of the project or work.
- You should also include a brief (half page, typed) artist's statement which describes your interests and accomplishments in the visual arts.
- Other formats are possible, including electronic portfolios and submission, depending on the scope and type of your work and the college you are considering. Consult your art teachers and the admissions offices of your target colleges.

GAP YEAR

As college admissions have become increasingly competitive, a number of students opt to defer college admission and explore other avenues for a year before attending college. Many colleges support this idea—Harvard even encourages students to take a year off before entering college or even during college. The following list of programs highlights a few of the options available, including two services that match students with appropriate options. The Guidance Department has a more thorough list available for students interested in investigating this opportunity.

AFS International Programs, Inc.

Provides intercultural learning opportunities with the aim of promoting a more just and peaceful world. Students age 18 and over work in over 50 countries in community service organizations or businesses in countries abroad while learning new skills, the language and culture.

• Telephone: (212) 299-9000 • Website: <http://www.afs.org>

City Year

Putting idealism to work—City Year, and AmeriCorps program, is a national service organization which unites young adults, ages 17-24, from diverse racial, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds for a demanding year of full-time community service, leadership development, and civic engagement.

• Telephone: (617) 927-2600 • Website: <http://www.cityyear.org>

National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS)

NOLS is a wilderness education school offering expedition courses in eight countries from ten days to a full semester in length. Students learn leadership skills, wilderness first aid, and outdoor skills while learning about responsible outdoor recreation.

• Telephone: (307) 332-5300 • Website: <http://www.nols.edu/NOLSHome.html>

School for Field Studies, Environmental Field Studies Abroad

Students will conduct hands-on, community-focused environmental fieldwork on programs in Australia, Canada, Kenya, Costa Rica, Mexico, and the British West Indies. • Telephone: (800) 989-4418 • Website: <http://www.fieldstudies.org>

The Experiment in International Living

An international nonprofit organization promoting intercultural learning through home stays, educational group travel, study abroad, language training au pair, and other cultural immersion programs in over 25 countries.

• Telephone: (800) 345-2929 • Website: <http://www.experiment.org>

The Center for Interim Programs

Founded in 1980, with offices in Massachusetts and Colorado, Interim is a service that enables people to pursue structured alternatives to formal education or work by matching clients' interests with over 2,500 internships, volunteer positions and cultural study programs worldwide.

• Telephone: (617) 547-0980 • Website: <http://www.interimprograms.com>

Time Out Associates

A service that works with individual clients to search for options for summers, semesters, and full year experiences. Clients include high school and college students looking for a break before taking the next step.

• Telephone: (617) 698-8977 • Website: <http://www.timeoutassociates.com>

Spring/Summer Checklist for the College Process for Juniors

Listed below are some essential things that should be accomplished before the start of your senior year:

Spring of Junior Year

- Do college research on Naviance -<http://connection.naviance.com/northbridge>
- Create a list of “prospective colleges” you wish to apply to and enter that list into Naviance under “my colleges”
- Register for the SAT Reasoning Test for the May (or June) test date
(For those applying to very competitive schools - Register for the SAT Subject Tests for the June test date (or for the fall of your senior year))
- Visit www.collegeboard.com for advice and tips on SAT’s and college information
- Visit schools on your “prospective colleges” list – take a campus tour; meet with an admissions representative; talk to current students...etc.
- Attention all student athletes interested in playing Division I or II programs:**
Complete NCAA Clearinghouse on-line registration at www.ncaaclearinghouse.net

Summer of Junior Year

- Narrow your list of “prospective colleges” to at least 6-8 schools you plan to apply to in the Fall of your senior year
- Complete and save applications on-line for each college you plan to apply to (do not send yet.)
- Complete and save the common application on-line if any schools on your final “prospective colleges” list accept the common application (do not send yet)
*Download and complete any supplement forms required by each college in addition to the Common Application
- Compose a rough draft of a college admissions essay
(Be sure to check each college’s application for essay topics – see page 7 in Handbook)
- Visit www.fastweb.com to research free scholarship opportunities (Some require essays or projects)
- Do community service work; secure a part-time job – build your college resume`
- Register for the SAT Reasoning Test again for the October test date

**Fall of senior year – Meet with your guidance counselor!!
The more you do now the less stressed you will be senior year!
*Preparation and planning are the keys to success!***