

FIORELLO H. LAGUARDIA HIGH SCHOOL OF MUSIC & ART AND PERFORMING ARTS



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JUNIOR COLLEGE NEWSLETTER No. 1

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Welcome to the college process at LaGuardia. We are sending this newsletter prior to our first meeting to give you an overview of some of the details that will be discussed and to raise awareness about parts of the process that may be new to you or different from your experience with an older sibling. If you have specific questions you would like us to address, please send them to Dr. Suh and we will address them at the meeting, sparksuh@schools.nyc.gov. Personal, child specific questions should be addressed to your school counselor.

SCHOOL NEWS- NOTES FROM THE GUIDANCE SUITE

Wednesday, October 4. **College Planning for Juniors I.** 6:00 PM in the Concert Hall

Thursday, October 19. **College Night for Juniors II.** 6:00 PM in the Concert Hall

Tuesday, December 19. **JUNIORS- All About Me** survey Opens (Naviance)

Thursday, March 1. **College Planning Night for Juniors III.** 6:00 in the Concert Hall

Week of March 5- **College Kick Off Week for Juniors!** Various locations.

Wednesday, March 28. **College and Conservatory Fair at LaG.** 6:00 PM

SAT and SAT Subject Test Dates for 2017-18

Test Date	Registration Deadline
October 7	September 8
November 4	October 5
December 2	November 2

ACT Test Dates for 2017-18

Test Date	Registration Deadline
October 28	September 22
December 9	November 3

Factors in Admissions Decisions

While colleges, on average, pay attention to the same types of factors, some colleges pay more attention to some factors than others. Your high school grades are the #1 factor in the college admission decision.

College Size

- Small colleges—Have a more “holistic” application review process, meaning they pay more attention to all of the facets of your application.
- Large colleges—Have a more “mechanical” application review process, meaning numbers (GPA, test scores) play a significant role in determining your initial qualification. In the case of open-admission or near-open admission colleges, that may be the extent of the process. At more selective large colleges, the initial qualification may be followed by a more holistic review of qualified applicants.
- Selective colleges—Both large and small selective colleges (meaning that the colleges accept fewer than half of students who apply) have a more “holistic” application review process.

Grades and GPAs

About two-thirds of high schools weight their GPAs for students who take college preparatory courses. To account for different grading scales among high schools, more than half of colleges recalculate applicants’ GPAs to standardize them.

Class Rank

More than one-third of high schools do not report class rank information to colleges. Accordingly, colleges have de-emphasized class rank as a factor in the admission decision over the past decade.

Essays

Do colleges take extra steps to catch cheating or plagiarism on essays? Many colleges that require essays will scrutinize essays that they believe have been forged, borrowed, or heavily edited or influenced by someone other than the applicant. In fact, some colleges have instituted their own verification processes, while others have contracted with businesses that double check essays for plagiarism. Given that many colleges view the essay as an indicator of a student’s interest in attending, it does not pay to have someone else write your essay.

Other Factors that Colleges May Consider

In order to shape their classes, colleges may consider other factors for admission, including a student’s geographic location (especially for public universities), whether a student is the first in their family to go to college (for access purposes), a student’s race or ethnicity (for diversity purposes), a student’s relation to alumni (for the purposes of development and community-sustenance), and gender (for purposes of reflecting the population).

What Are Colleges Looking For?

As you look at Naviance re: college scattergrams and average acceptance GPA's- please remember that data can be misleading. A GPA of 92 with a slew of AP courses is not the same as a GPA of 92 with none (or one or two). This is information I shared with junior families (and Dr. Suh can share with you). One also cannot see that colleges are increasingly becoming more selective. Data points from six years ago are not the same as the last two years.

We do not send ANY SAT, SATII, ACT or TOEFL test scores to colleges. Many competitive colleges are score optional. That said...

Colleges, especially the highly selective colleges care more about **course rigor**; colleges which are most selective (Ivy League, public Ivies and near Ivy) consider both but absent course rigor, the ACT/SAT is moot.

Specifically, re: LaG- They know and appreciate that we are a dual mission school and that our students are often overextended with after school rehearsals, productions and projects (especially our tech students) and we are judged independently of other schools- on our own merit.

At LaG, **the most** selective colleges are looking for the top ten percent or so of the class who **ALSO have** a total of 6 or 10 AP classes and at least five AP scores of mostly 5's. [At Science where I was AP and Dir. Of College Counseling, they were looking for way more and an INTEL/Westinghouse or some such project!]

Course rigor trumps standardized test scores EVERY time. Which is why one hears of so many students with perfect scores (1600 or 36) being denied. Although one grade will not keep a student from a successful application, more than one course grade below 90 MAY, several will. They have so many applicants with top courses, top grades, great AP or IB scores, etc. that unless there is an institutional initiative they are filling, it is highly unusual for an exception to be made. And those students are also athletes, artists, political activists, and otherwise involved in all the activities that will make their college a vibrant community.

We encourage students to take courses in which they have a genuine interest. Then, apply to institutions they are interested in attending. Do their best on the applications and take it from there. Be sure one has academic AND financial back-up that they would be happy to attend and please do not turn yourselves inside out to gain admission to a specific college. Because, with all is said and done, there are no guarantees of admission unless there is a building with your name on it.

You will see we do very well, and our students and families are happy during their years at LaG and beyond.

Common Application vs Coalition Application

Purdue University, From the Vice Provost:

As a member of the new Coalition for Access, Affordability, and Success, Purdue will now have two application options for future freshmen and transfer students. Beginning August 1, students will be able to apply to Purdue using either the Coalition Application or Common Application.

The Coalition and Common applications are similar in that students can complete one application and use it to apply to multiple institutions. In addition, they both allow institutions to ask unique questions the individual institutions need for application review but which aren't included within the standard form.

There are also some differences:

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The Common Application has about 600-member institutions while the Coalition Application has about 90. Each includes member institutions that use the respective application exclusively. With the Common Application, counselors at Naviance Schools can submit transcripts and other required documents to universities directly through Naviance. With the Coalition Application, schools may provide documents as they do now for non-Common App schools or they can upload electronic documents to the student's account in a virtual "sealed envelope," which the student can then submit electronically to the institutions of their choice.

The Coalition Application includes a virtual "locker," a private storage area where students can save any material they think might be helpful to them when they're ready to apply for college – papers, artwork, projects, videos, music, etc. They can also share individual items in their locker with trusted mentors, counselors or others from whom they want personal guidance or feedback. With the Coalition Application, students can begin establishing their online profile and using the virtual locker as early as 9th grade.

We advise students to select the application that works best for them based on the schools to which they plan to apply. You may be aware that Coalition resources are now available for you and your students. The [Coalition website](http://www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org) [<http://www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org>] includes easy-to-use [videos and tutorials for school administrators](#) as well as a ["how-it-works" video for students](#). Students may begin to create an online profile and add material to their locker now. If they choose to, they can use their locker as storage for future college planning whether or not they ever use the Coalition App to apply to colleges.

How to start your college search

So now you know when to start your college search, but do you know how?! Before you jump on to any of those [online college search tools](#), you need to do a few things first.

Know yourself

Every college search should start with the same basic activity: sitting down with your computer or a piece of paper and brainstorming. If you could create your perfect college, what would it be like? What's important to you? Don't worry about any obstacles—just write. Think about location, distance from home, size, type of school, majors or other academic programs, social life, extracurricular options, athletic/music/theater opportunities, etc. (We cover this in detail in the next section.) If you have problems getting started, talk to your parents, friends, and family about their college search experience. Ask them what they liked and disliked about their college and what their deciding factors were.

You also need to ask yourself some tough questions: Are you shy or outgoing? Do you like to play it safe or take calculated risks? Do you like to participate in classroom discussions, or are you more of a listener? Are you the type of student who can work independently or do you need more individual attention from your teachers? In short, *who are you?*

Knowing your personality, your strengths and weaknesses, the things that excite you or make you nervous, and your appetite for risk: these are difficult questions, but they are vital for finding the best-fit college for you.

Attend one or two college fairs

College fairs are often high school students' first taste of the college admission experience. They're big and loud and exciting and overwhelming—but [they're a great way to dive into the college search process](#). If there is a National College Fair in your area, go to it, because there will be lots of schools there. ([You'll find a list of college fairs here.](#)) Talk to as many college representatives as possible and ask informed questions. Stop at the schools you've never heard of before. Gather as much literature (and swag!) as your arms can carry, and have fun “shopping” for a college.

Let colleges come to you

“A representative from So and So University will be at our High School on such and such a day.” Sound familiar? Go to these information sessions if you have lunch, even if you’ve never heard of the college or university. It’s a great way to learn about all of your options and establish personal connections with the people who decide whether to admit or deny applicants.

Visit a starter college

Campus visits are an incredibly important part of your college search (we cover them in more detail later in this guide). However, if you’re just starting and aren’t quite sure what you’re looking for in a college, spend an hour or two walking around the closest campus—even if you’re certain it’s not the right college for you. It can get your imagination going and help you gather your thoughts. (And who knows? It might end up being a good college fit for you after all!)

Read your mail and email!!

You probably are (or soon will be) getting a lot of mail from colleges and universities AND YOUR COUNSELOR! Don’t just throw it away. On some rainy Saturday when the pile has gotten quite big, make three piles: yes, maybe, and no. It’s nice to see all the opportunities you have! Think about visiting some schools in the “yes” pile.

Finally, from the beginning of your college search process to the end, remember that people want to help you—guidance counselors, family, friends, teachers, coaches, mentors, and more. So, when you need some help, ask for it.

What to look for in your colleges (courtesy of College Xpress)

Finding your college match boils down to one question: does this college have what you're looking for?

As you can imagine, there are a lot of factors to consider when researching schools, making your college lists, and choosing your final college. And every student's needs and wants will be different. However, the categories below apply to just about everyone. They're extensive, but you want to make the most informed college choice possible, and going through these college search criteria will help you do that.

Remember, when the college match is clearly right on your end, the admission committee may be better able to see you as their kind of student too—and they may be more likely to admit you and perhaps offer a more competitive financial aid package.

Also keep in mind you can easily disregard things that aren't relevant to you and add other criteria that are important. You should take your own "personal inventory" of your top college considerations in the following categories:

- Academics and majors
- Cost, financial aid, and affordability
- Location and distance from home
- Campus community and social life
- Athletics and other extracurriculars
- Size
- Selectivity
- Career services and other support
- Public or private?

As you conduct your college search, keep these categories and questions in mind to determine the fit and feel of a school, as well as how it can best serve your educational and career goals.

Academics and majors

You are enrolling in college to eventually get a degree, so it's probably not surprising that academics are one of the most important parts of your college search. But if you don't know what you want to study, there's no reason to freak out! Lots of students enter college undecided. In fact, many institutions *want* you to spend the first year or two exploring your academic options—and there's a good chance you'll change your major anyway.

Instead of focusing on schools that have the major you want (or think you want), consider college academics in a broader way. Look for schools that have a good representation of your interests, making it easier for you to choose or change your major later on. (If you're truly unsure, you should avoid small, specialized colleges; that way you won't limit your future academic decisions to a small selection of programs.) Also think about the college's academic "personality" and how it meshes with what you want: Are you looking for a research-driven institution? Small discussion-based classes? A thriving arts scene? All of the above?

A good way to narrow down your academic interests is to think about which classes and activities you enjoy most. Focus on the subjects you're passionate about, but also think about your least favorite classes and activities. Determining which subjects you love (or hate) can eliminate some colleges right off the bat. Another strategy is to consider your end career goal and work backwards. What is your dream job? Find out who some of the top professionals are in that field and learn where they went to school and what they studied.

In addition to majors, you should also consider how distinguished the academic departments are, the success of the school's graduates, and what the overall learning environment is like. Ask about opportunities for research, internships, and mentoring, which can give you a significant leg up in your job search. It's also a good idea to check out the campus facilities; are the labs, art studios, and other resources up-to-date and fully equipped? Experience with the latest technology will always serve you well.

Questions to ask

- Does the college have the major(s) I'm considering as well as several good backups in case I change my mind?
- What is the academic reputation of the college? What about the reputation of my major(s) in particular?
- What are the professors like? What are they known for, and what have they accomplished?
- What is the "on-time," four-year graduation rate?
- What is the freshman-to-sophomore retention rate?
- What is the average class size for introductory courses? For advanced courses?
- What is the student-faculty ratio overall and in my potential major(s)?
- What kind of accreditation does the school hold? What about my possible major(s)?
- What are the academic facilities, libraries, and labs like?
- What kind of research opportunities—not just in the sciences—exist on campus?
- Does the school have an honors college?
- Can I study abroad?
- Does the school have a writing center or other tutoring programs?

Cost, financial aid, and affordability

It can be a big mistake to start your college search by excluding certain schools because they have an expensive price tag (or **to assume you cannot afford to go to college at all**). Of course, for most students and their families, college affordability will weigh heavily on their decision-making process.

However, the initial "sticker price" you see (tuition, fees, room, board, books, etc.) will seldom be the final price you pay. Most colleges and universities realize they need to help students afford their education. And financial aid changes *everything*. In fact, you might find the fancy school that seemed out of reach is actually your most affordable option once you get their **financial aid award letter**.

College students receive financial support through a wide range of sources, such as academic scholarships, special ability awards (for musical talents, athletics, leadership), diversity grants (multicultural, ethnic background), or on-campus employment (work-study). Students also receive money based on the results of their **FAFSA** (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) and/or the CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE (College Scholarship Service by the College Board).

Also, pay attention to the freshman-to-sophomore retention rate and the four-year graduation rate in your college cost research, because they often signify a school's true value. For example, a "cheaper" school may be less of a bargain if a low percentage of students actually graduate in four years. And a more expensive school with a higher four-year graduation rate may actually be the better value.

On your [college search spreadsheet](#), list financial stats like tuition and other costs for all your schools, along with the average financial aid package (you can update the spreadsheet with your actual financial aid award after you get your acceptance and financial aid letters). That way you'll have lots of data points to look at when making your final college choice. A choice you and your family can afford.

Questions to ask

- What percentage of students receives financial aid, and how much on average?
- What percentage of students graduates with debt, and how much on average?
- Does financial aid include loans?
- Is the school need-blind or need-aware in admission?
- How many years does it typically take students to graduate (because each year is another year of tuition, plus financial aid and scholarships might not extend beyond four years)?
- What kinds of college scholarships are available to students (awarded by academic achievement, through college departments, etc.)?
- What kinds of work-study opportunities are there?

Location and distance from home

Your college experience hardly stops at the edge of campus.

What type of college location is best for you? In a big city, you'll have access to exciting activities, from concerts, theater, and art exhibits to shopping and nightlife. However, if you prefer starry nights to city lights, you might be happier at a more rural school. Looking for the best of both worlds? Consider a suburban school with easy access to the city. Maybe you want to go far away, or maybe you want to stay close to home—perhaps even live at home and commute. Whatever your preferences, make sure they're part of your college search!

Questions to ask

- Do I want to attend college in a rural, suburban, or urban area?
- Do I want to be far away and on my own or close enough to travel home on the weekends?
- What is the weather typically like during the academic year?
- What kinds of recreational opportunities and amenities (like grocery stores) are in the area?
- What is the transportation system for students who don't have a car on campus?
- What is the crime rate typically like in the area?
- What are the area's employment opportunities like for students looking for internships and part-time jobs as well as recent grads looking for full-time positions?

- How big is the school's campus in terms of acreage (an important consideration if your classes and/or dorm are far apart!)?
- Can I live off campus? Or if I want to stay on campus, is housing available all four years?
- What is the “town-gown” relationship like between the college and surrounding community?
- What is the average cost of living and general quality of life?

Campus community and social life

In addition to nailing down a general location, it's important to consider the type of campus “vibe” you want. Are you seeking an intense research university? What about a school with **bleed-the-school-colors spirit**? (Or maybe spirit fingers aren't really your style?) Do you wish to attend an institution affiliated with a religion or with a strong commitment to athletics, Greek life, or the arts?

The campus atmosphere will likely be an important part of your happiness at school—and that can have a profound impact on your college career. Happy students are more likely to graduate, so spend some time thinking about what makes you happy, and look for colleges with opportunities that match.

Questions to ask

- What is the social scene like on campus?
- How do students spend their free time on campus and off?
- What kind of reputation do students have?
- How many students live on campus full time?
- How many stay on campus during the weekends?
- How many are on campus during breaks?
- What kinds of fun things are available to students through the school and in the community?
- How friendly and welcoming do the students and staff seem?

Athletics and other extracurriculars

A lot of your time in college will be spent in activities outside the classroom. These extracurriculars span virtually every interest you can imagine, from academic clubs to cultural groups to theater troupes to intramural sports. Extracurriculars can also help you figure out what major is right for you or if you're on the right career track. And you can gain all kinds of useful skills from joining extracurriculars, from teamwork to creative problem solving (among other things employers like to see).

If you're serious about sports, athletics can add a whole new dimension to your college search too. Student-athletes should start by realistically assessing their abilities and considering which schools are most likely to give them a team jersey. Talk to the coaches at your high school and at the colleges you're interested in and ask them to evaluate your chances of being **formally recruited for your sport**.

Questions to ask

- Does the college offer what I'm looking for when I'm not in class?
- What kinds of extracurricular opportunities exist on campus in art, music, theater, community service, athletics, etc.?

- How many students participate in extracurriculars?
- Are there clubs or pre-professional associations related to my major(s) or intended career?
- Can students start their own clubs? How easy is it to do?
- What is the athletic recruitment process like?
- What athletic conference and division is the school?

Size

Large university, small college, or something in between: what's the right choice for you? Big schools offer a wide variety of courses and majors, but the bureaucracy can be daunting and professors may be less accessible. A smaller student body generally means a lower student-faculty ratio, but course offerings and activities may be more limited. (However, it's also totally possible that you'll find a large university that feels tight-knit or a small school with a huge number of academic and extracurricular offerings...)

Think about your current high school. If you attend a small school with kids you've known forever, do you find it comforting or boring? Conversely, if you go to a large urban or suburban high school, do you enjoy the hustle and bustle, or do you feel overwhelmed? Some students thrive in colleges that offer small, discussion-based classes where students and professors are on a first-name basis; others prefer large lecture halls where they can soak up the basics and then go to study on their own. To find a college that matches your learning style, ask about average class sizes, especially for the subjects you're most interested in. Find out as much as you can about how classes are structured all four years and how the size of the college or university might factor into your overall experience.

Questions to ask

- What is the overall student body population and in the academic programs that interest me?
- What is the overall average class size and in the academic programs that interest me?
- What is the overall student-faculty ratio and in the academic programs that interest me?
- Are most courses taught through lectures, or are there opportunities for interaction and discussion?

Selectivity

Highly selective colleges get a lot of attention for their single-digit admit rates, but here is the great news about college admission: the vast majority of colleges and universities accept well over 50% of their applicants, and they offer high-quality academic and extracurricular experiences. The odds are very much in your favor in identifying a handful of schools that are likely to admit you.

You should also seek out colleges all along the **safety, reach, and match spectrum** for you. We discuss this in more detail in the "How to make your college list" section, but, basically, this means doing some research on how your grade point average, standardized test scores, and high school curriculum (IB, AP, honors, etc.) measure up against the "average" incoming first-year student at your colleges. (Additionally, most universities will consider your involvement in extracurricular activities, including any leadership positions, community service, or part-time employment.) Your high school's counseling office or admission representatives from the colleges you are considering can also help give you a fair assessment of how good a fit your academic record is for a particular institution.

Questions to ask

- What is the average admitted student's academic profile like, and how does it compare to mine?
- Is this school a safety, reach, or realistic option for me?
- Does the school take a holistic approach to admission decisions?

Career services and other campus support

For many students, college success means tutoring. Others might need counseling for dealing with homesickness or other emotional issues. And most college students need at least some guidance as they conduct their first internship and job searches. That's why colleges and universities have ample resources to support you throughout your time on campus—and often long after you graduate.

Questions to ask

- How will the school help me determine and achieve my career goals?
- What is their postgraduate job placement rate like (in positions related to students' degrees)?
- What does the career services office offer?
- What kinds of experiential education opportunities, such as internships, co-ops, and volunteering, exist on and around campus?
- What academic services are available, such as tutoring?
- What health and wellness services are available, such as mental health counseling and fitness facilities?
- Are any of these services available after graduation?

Public or private?

A lot of students think they need to pick right away whether they will go to a public or private college. And that will certainly slash your options significantly if you focus your college search on just one or the other. But the thing is, you may find there are more similarities between public and private colleges than there are differences.

Obviously, a big consideration is cost, and it's true that public state schools usually charge less for tuition than private schools, especially for in-state residents. But private colleges often offer more financial aid, which might offset the difference in cost.

Then there's school size. While state universities have a reputation for larger student bodies, classes, and student-faculty ratios, don't base your college search decisions on this generalization. Many public schools offer a personal, student-centered environment that's comparable to smaller private colleges. You can find public colleges with tight-knit liberal arts programs and private schools with huge, raucous athletic programs. So, in the interest of finding the right-fit college for you, you may want to keep your options open (at least at first). You might be surprised by what you find.

Does PSAT prep make any sense? By Evan Wessler

When I think about PSAT prep, I am reminded of Judge Alex Kozinski's closing line at the end of his ruling in *Mattel, Inc. v. MCA Records, Inc.*: "The parties are advised to chill."

Let's start by laying out the facts. For the vast majority of students, the utility of the PSAT is twofold. First and foremost, the PSAT exposes them to the style, structure, and content of a major standardized college admissions exam (the SAT). For most students, the PSAT will be their first experience dealing with this type of test. In turn, this will allow them to establish baseline scores and to familiarize themselves with a test format they'll face in the future. Second, the PSAT provides the highest-performing students with a chance to achieve glory and a small financial award through the National Merit Scholarship Corporation.

As parents and students have become ever more concerned with test scores, they have begun to seek test prep for just about every exam. Naturally, PSAT prep has become a thing. But, with the best interests of already stressed students in mind, is it necessary?

It depends on how you define *prep*. What students *don't* need is 30 hours of intense course instruction or private tutoring with homework assignments and multiple full-length practice exams. This is, quite simply, overkill.

What students should seek, however, is a resource through which they can learn about what's on the PSAT, including the question content and time constraints. This will allow students to mitigate the nerves associated with being dropped into an otherwise unfamiliar situation, and thus to perform at their best on test day. When students take a little time to look through a sample exam, work through questions, and learn some basic strategies, they dramatically increase their chances of walking away from the PSAT with a positive, growth-oriented mindset. This can contribute significantly to success on the SAT (or ACT) later on.

What about those high-achieving students whose goal it is to win a National Merit Scholarship? On the part of you, the counselor, it's helpful to foster realistic expectations. Of the 1.6 million students who take the PSAT annually, 50,000 (a little over 3% of test-taking juniors) are "commended" or achieve "semifinalist" status—they get a feather in their cap for achieving a great PSAT score. After several rounds of winnowing, only 15,000 (about 1% of test-taking juniors) are designated as "finalists", and then only 7,500 (about only 0.5% of test-taking juniors) actually win a merit scholarship. Attaining any level of recognition is noteworthy, and high-level students should be encouraged to maintain this as a goal. Actually, winning a scholarship, though, is very difficult: many factors on top of a stellar PSAT score affect who wins. (See [here](#) for full details.) So even those students whose goal it is to crush the PSAT ought to know that they shouldn't go over the top with their prep: the cost/benefit analysis shows that the added stress and time commitment just aren't worth it.

As counselors, you can help students acquire the proper materials like [official practice exams](#). You can also have discussions with students about the real value the PSAT provides: the opportunity to see where one stands and to set a plan for the future. If your students see the PSAT as a simple chance to get the ball rolling on their standardized admissions tests, everyone wins.

Evan Wessler is VP Education of Method Test Prep.

5 Tips for your juniors that can help them get into College [by Jessica Yeager](#)

Here are some key tips from [Business Insider](#) that your Juniors can use to prepare for getting into a great college:

1. **Prepare for the PSAT:** The number one test you should be focusing your student on this fall is the [PSAT](#), the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. The primary test date is a little over a month away, so your student doesn't have a ton of time to study. Make sure they go through practice exams. If they need it, look for a tutor or class for them to feel really prepared. The absolute best thing you can do for them is to make sure they understand a good PSAT score could potentially mean a full ride to their dream college, so they should take the test seriously.

2. **Create a preliminary college list:** Junior year is a great time to talk with your students about what colleges they might want to apply to next year. Even though the list might change, having options now can give your student some schools to visit to start making connections.

The most important thing to keep in mind when walking your student through creating a college list is to make sure it's balanced. It should have a good mix of safety, match, and reach schools for both acceptance and cost. For example, a good rule of thumb for a safety school is that your student's SAT or ACT score is above the 75th percentile for the school and their family can easily afford it.

3. **Grades this year have a big impact:** Junior year is usually super busy with harder classes, but it's really important that your student's grades don't slip. This will be the last full year of grades on their transcript. They need to be good! Make sure if your student needs help to keep their grades up, they're getting it. That can be from you, a teacher, a tutor. It doesn't matter as long as they're getting the help they need and keeping those grades up.
4. **Connect with teachers for recommendations:** Often teachers from junior year end up being the best teacher recommendations for your student's college application. That's one of the other reasons doing well junior year is so important. Talk with your student about which teachers and classes they like best. Encourage them to ask questions in class and go to office hours. Then at the end of the year, they will be in a great position to ask the teacher for a recommendation for their college applications.

5. **Look for outside extracurricular activities:** Junior year is a great time for your student to really explore their interests outside of the classroom. Help them look into research and community service opportunities even jobs and internships. A lot of parents and students worry that junior year is too late to start a club or extracurricular activity, but it isn't.

This article was written by Jessica Yeager on Business Insider. *She is a graduate of Harvard and MIT with over ten years of tutoring experience. As a senior in high school, she gained acceptance to Harvard, MIT, Yale, Stanford, Cornell, and Columbia. She is the founder of Impress the Ivies and host of the Dream College Summit. Her students have gotten into elite schools, like Harvard and Carnegie Mellon, and received over \$180,000 in scholarships.*

Apps available to help your students with their college search by Sue Shellenbarger

The Wall Street Journal recently published an article on apps available that might help your students with their college search.

Here is a quick summary:

1. The iOS app, Admittedly quizzes users on their preferences for such factors as walkability or weather. (Admittedly recently launched on the web as myOptions.)
2. The College Fair, a mobile app launched in 2016 under the name Schoold, asks users for academic and personal data, then claims to use Netflix-like algorithms to fine-tune college lists. The app also posts whimsical rankings such as "Beyonce's Short List" of schools the pop star might like, and "Places Where the Professors Know Your Name."
3. An extensive website called BigFuture, by the nonprofit college-planning concern The College Board, has helpful tools linking students' interests with potential majors, careers and colleges.
4. Naviance has an app that helps students plan on where to apply to college. The Naviance program, owned by the Cincinnati-based education software company Hobsons, offers a wealth of college- and career-planning tools, but it's available only to students whose schools subscribe, including about 40% of U.S. public high-school students. It's well-known for its 'scatterplots—dot diagrams charting the grades and test scores of students from the same high school who applied to a particular college in the past and showing whether they

were admitted. Seeing where your grades and test scores appear in relation to others' helps students estimate their chances of admission.

5. A unique website called [AdmitSee](#), founded in 2013 by two law-school students, allows users who buy a monthly subscription to see advice and essays from students currently enrolled at schools of interest.
6. A free Pittsburgh-based site called [Niche](#) posts Yelp-like college reviews and rankings. Users can find students' answers to questions they might not ask on a campus tour.
7. [Parchment](#), a site that stores users' transcripts, test scores and other credentials, creates scatterplots showing admission odds, using data from past Parchment users. But it's transparent about the reliability of its projections, including a confidence rating based on the past accuracy of its projections for that school, says Matthew Pittinsky, CEO of the Scottsdale, Ariz., company and co-founder of the education software company [Blackboard Inc.](#)

The complete article authored by Sue Shellenbarger can be found here: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/college-search-quandary-theres-an-app-for-that-1505832484>

SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION

Recommended favorite Scholarship Search websites for students and parents:

Fast web

Scholly-(it's an app)

[Scholarships.com](#)

[Scholarshipexperts.com](#)

[Finaid.org](#)

[Zinch.com](#)

Cappex

75,000 Apply for State College Scholarships (Excelsior), but Many Won't Qualify

NY Times 8/25/2017 David Chen

This spring, when Gov. [Andrew M. Cuomo](#) won [approval for his groundbreaking Excelsior Scholarship](#) program to make college tuition-free for some students at New York's public colleges and universities, the state anticipated that 23,000 people would benefit, sharing \$87 million in funding. Instead, 75,000 people applied.

And that means, in a program designed to help make higher education more affordable and accessible, roughly two-thirds of those who applied won't get help. In some cases, that is because their families exceeded the income cap, which is \$100,000 for families this year, rising to \$125,000 by 2019. **But others did not have good enough grades to qualify, or their schooling had been interrupted in the past for work or personal reasons.**

But while the idea of continued enrollment was mentioned when the scholarships were announced, some people have been surprised to learn that the requirement was retroactive and are now heartbroken. READ
MORE:<https://mobile.nytimes.com/2017/08/25/nyregion/excelsior-college-scholarship-program-new-york.html>

COLLEGE OPEN HOUSES

Open House pages for the fall have been finalized. Spring Open Houses will be added in January.

COLLEGE OPEN HOUSE LISTS FOR NJ, DC, DE, MD, NY, PA & VA:

New Jersey College Open Houses link: <http://njsca.org/college-open-houses>

Pennsylvania College Open Houses link: <http://njsca.org/pa-open-houses>

Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New York and Virginia College Open Houses link: <http://njsca.org/de-dc-md-ny-va-open-houses>