

# POST HIGH SCHOOL PLANNING GUIDE

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## What is Post High School Planning?

Each year, 85% of Mohawk Trail graduates plan to attend college immediately after high school. 60% begin at a four-year college with the goal of earning a bachelor's degree. 25% begin at a two-year college, with the goal of earning an associate degree or transferring to a four-year college. The other 15% of Mohawk Trail graduates take advantage of a variety of other opportunities including military service, workforce, post-graduate (PG) and gap-year programs.

The road to these decisions starts the minute Mohawk trail welcomes you to your 9th grade year.

Using the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education My Career and Academic plan model (MyCAP), school counselors begin helping you with the post high school planning process. You are exposed to developmentally appropriate career and college readiness lessons three to four times a year to prepare you to make future decisions based upon your interests, values and skills, and to make sure you are college and career ready. In the broadest sense, "college and career ready" means that students will graduate high school with sufficient knowledge and skills to pursue their aspirations, whatever these aspirations may be. According to a recent report from the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce, 65% of all jobs in the U.S. economy will require education and training beyond high school. Thirty-five percent of job openings will require a bachelor's degree, thirty percent will require some college or an associate degree, thirty-five percent will not require education beyond high school. Given that most occupations require some specialized training after high school, to be college and career ready means that students are prepared with the knowledge and skills to pursue additional education and training beyond high school, ideally leading to a certificate, licensure, an associate degree or a bachelor's degree.

School counselors will provide students with the information and guidance to prepare for and access any of these post high school opportunities through the MyCAP process, and utilize these tools as your future plan is refined leading up to senior year. Much of this plan is administered and maintained through the web based MASSCIS (Massachusetts career information system). Students are introduced to career and college readiness lessons four times a year through classroom lessons. Additionally, each 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grade student has one or more individual meetings with either Ms. Ruggeri or Ms. Neuenschwander.

## WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON POST HIGH SCHOOL OPTIONS?

1. Two year community college or technical college - awards 9 month to 1 year certificates or 2 year **Associate's degrees** with the ability to transfer all credits to a Massachusetts State college or University
2. Four year college - awards or **Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Arts degrees**
3. [Gap Year](#) - a year to work, travel or volunteer
4. Military or Military Academy (requires a Senator recommendation) - Air Force, Army, Marines, Navy
5. Work - entering the workforce after high school can help students determine their next step
6. Apprenticeships - If you are interested in a skilled trade the Unions are a great place for training

### Junior Meeting

Through this one to one meeting with Ms. Newuenschwander, students will review all of their completed career readiness lessons and develop an individual plan for their post high school journey.

This meeting takes place between December - February of their Junior year. The following information is reviewed during this one to one meeting:

- Transcript and graduation requirements
- Career interests - what post high school education does this career require?
- Course Planning for senior year
- Activities/athletics/awards/honors/skills/volunteer
- PSAT Scores and SAT testing Dates
- Khan Academy review for SAT
- Development of a college list using MASSCIS

## THE COLLEGE SEARCH PROCESS

If you have reached this point in your post high school planning and want to apply to a four year college, please answer these two questions as they will be useful when writing your college essays and in college interviews:

**Why do I want to go to college?**

**What opportunities do I want this experience to provide in the future?**

There are many factors included in building a list of colleges you will apply to in the fall of your senior year. Answering the questions above is a great place to start. It is also helpful to have a general idea of some majors you may be interested in pursuing, even if you have five or ten. Here are some other ways to narrow your search:

**Location** (state, urban, suburban, rural, small town setting)

**Size**

**Majors/Programs**

**Selectivity**

**Reach** - colleges where your grades and test scores are below the average

**Target** - colleges where your grades/test scores align with students admitted

**Likely** - colleges where your grades and test scores are above the average admitted students

**Sports/activities offered**

Even after answering all these questions you may have a large list of colleges to sort. This will not be a final list. It will change as you visit colleges and find out more information about what you like and do not like. Late fall of your senior year the list should be more final. Below is a link to a checklist that will also help you with this process and a spreadsheet to keep you organized.

[Building a college list](#)

[College Research Spreadsheet](#)

## COLLEGE ADMISSION TESTING

### THE SAT

The SAT and ACT are the two college admission tests that all colleges in the United States accept. Most students from Mohawk Trail take the SAT. The SAT consists of two scores EWR (evidence based reading and writing) and Math. These tests are given nationally 7 Saturdays a year and students need to register for this test through their collegeboard account at [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org). Mohawk Trail is allowed to give the

SAT during the school day twice yearly, once in October and once in April. These in school testing opportunities will be announced and students will sign up in the Student Services Office.

Most four-year colleges require applicants to submit SAT and/or ACT scores as part of the application process. A recent development by many colleges involves 'Self-Reported' scores. Colleges using this plan will allow a student to report their scores on their college application and only request an official test transcript from the testing agency if the student intends to attend that college. A growing number of colleges are "test optional". Information about test optional colleges and universities can be found on the FairTest website: [www.fairtest.org](http://www.fairtest.org). For a list of colleges that will take self-reported scores: <https://www.compassprep.com/self-reporting-test-scores/>

Additionally, a few colleges require the [SAT Subject tests](#) which are also given through the College Board, 7 times a year on Saturday mornings. You can take up to three Subject Tests during one test date. You cannot take the SAT and the subject tests on the same test date. You must indicate which SAT Subject Tests you plan to take when you register. However, you may change which test(s) you actually take on test day — except for Language with Listening tests. The Language with Listening tests are always given in the first hour of testing. Only one listening test can be taken per test date and are only offered once a year, in November.

### **Why would you take the SAT Subject tests?**

- Some colleges will grant an exemption from (or grant credit for) a freshman course requirement if a student does well on a particular Subject Test.
- SAT Subject Tests can help students place into the right level course once they get to college.

\*A few extremely selective colleges require or recommend these test to apply

\*It is a good way to highlight an academic strength specifically if you were unable to take an AP class in a subject below at Mohawk Trail . Subject tests differ from AP exams as AP exams test college work. Subject tests use high school curriculum and use this to measure your preparedness for college work

There are 20 SAT Subject Tests in five subject areas (English, Math, Science, Social Students and World Language) and they can be taken throughout grades 9-12 when you complete a prerequisite course:

TEST	When to take the test
Literature	After junior or senior english
US History	After AP or US History honors
World History	After AP World or World History 2

Mathematics 1 or 2	After precalculus
Biology	After AP Biology or Biology 2
Chemistry	After AP Chemistry or Honors Chemistry
Physics	After AP Physics or Honors Physics
French with listening	After level 4/5
Spanish with listening	After level 4/5

## AP EXAM SCORES

If you have taken AP classes and exams in high school you will want to find out the AP testing policy of the colleges you are applying to. AP tests are scored on a 1-5 scale with 5 being the highest score and 1 the lowest. Every college has their own policy around how they use the AP scores and many will recognize a score of 3 or above on AP exams. Some colleges use the scores for placement out of lower level courses and others may give you actual college credit for these scores. You may self report AP scores to be considered in your application for admission or just send scores to the college you will be attending.

## THE COLLEGE ACTIVITIES LIST

Colleges want to know how you have spent your time in high school and why you chose those activities (athletics, clubs, volunteer, work) you did and how you have contributed to your school and the greater community. Colleges look at your extracurricular activities as reflective of your interests and values, they are far more concerned with understanding how you are using your time when you are not in school than judging your choices\*. Extracurricular activities illustrate two things: your **impact** and **influence**. Longevity, commitment and investment are key factors when examining a student's activities. You do not have to be involved in everything just make a commitment to something you value and enjoy.

**IMPACT** - highlight through your activities how you have impacted something within the school or community. Example not just showing up for a meeting but assisting the club in activities or events that engage students through leadership or volunteer involvement

**INFLUENCE** - Have you influenced others through your athletic teams, clubs, volunteering, work etc. Can you illustrate this influence through the description in your application.

## **AWARDS/HONORS**

There is also a place on the college application for indicating what awards (book awards, academic awards etc) and honors (national honor society, honor roll) you have received.

## **ATHLETIC RESUMES**

If you are interested in playing Division I or Division II athletics in college you will need to have an athletic resume you can email to coaches with the highlights of your athletic career. This resume is going to provide prospective coaches with a profile of your academics, appropriate statistics for your sports, honors, awards, tournaments and other events you have played in or been invited to. I have a [template](#) for this resume. 99% of athletes need to market themselves to coaches in order to play sports in college.

You will also need to register with the [NCAA clearinghouse](#) your junior year.

## **THE COLLEGE VISIT**

Visiting colleges is the best part of the college research process. This is when you get to shop for what you are looking for in a college, the location, physical campus feel, classrooms, dining halls, dormitories, staff and professors and student community. This is also a great way to let the admissions office know of your “demonstrated interest” in this college, as some colleges keep track of the amount of times you reach out to them.

**WHEN TO VISIT:** When you are ready, if that is the fall of your junior year or later in the spring of your junior year into the fall of senior year. If you feel ready to visit the time spent on campus will be more valuable. Do try to visit during the week when students are on campus and in classes. If the college offers an interview, ALWAYS take that opportunity. This is a your time to provide information about yourself that may not come through in your application.

**HOW TO VISIT:** Many colleges have official visit days and students sign up for these visits on-line through the college website. If a college allows you sit in on a class, DO THIS! Try to visit no more than two colleges in a day.

**WHAT TO ASK:**

1. How does the student faculty ratio vary from freshman to senior Year classes?
2. How does the graduation rate vary by major? What is the job or graduate school placement rate for your most popular majors or the one you are interested in?
3. How easy is it to double major?
4. What percentage of students participate in internships or study

- abroad programs?
5. What resources do you have on campus to support students transitioning to college?
  6. What makes this college different from other colleges?
  7. What are some of the most exciting things that happen on campus?
  8. What do you wish you would have known coming here?
  9. How has this college set you up for success in the future?
  10. Other questions about your unique interests

Also, try to eat in the dining hall, talk to students, sit in on a class, stop by your academic department of interest, meet with coaches or music directors, and pick up a student newspaper. ENJOY THIS TIME TO FIGURE OUT YOUR FIT.

### **THE COLLEGE INTERVIEW**

There are many colleges that will grant interviews either on campus with an admissions representative or in your local library with an alumni, either way if you have the opportunity to interview it is highly recommended. The purpose of these interviews is for the college to gain another facet of you to add to your application. Here is what they are looking for:

1. Be prepared - know something about the college, be able to speak about why you are applying to this college, what specific academic or other program interests you
2. Information about your interests and values that is not explained in your application. What motivates you? Why did you participate in the activities you did and what did you learn? You will want to expand upon experiences that tell them what you know about yourself, learned about yourself and what you hope to accomplish in college.
3. They want you to do well and understand that this is probably one of your first interviews. They are looking for other aspects of your personality that do not come through in any other portion of the application.

### **HOW TO PREPARE:**

1. Practice interviewing with parents, friends, your School Counselor, or employers. Anyone that will ask you questions about why you want to go to college.
2. Get a copy of your transcript to share with the interviewer and a copy of your activities list.
3. Make sure you know where on campus you need to be for the interview and show up early.
4. Dress appropriately for an interview. No T-shirts with slogans and no hats.
5. Practice a firm handshake.

## SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO PRACTICE:

1. What is the most significant contribution you have made to your school?
2. If I visited your school, what would I find is your role in the school community?
3. What would teachers say are your greatest strengths as a person and as a student?
4. What do you like about your high school?
5. What would you change about your high school?
6. What has been your favorite subject and why?
7. What three adjectives would your friends use to describe you and why?
8. What are some of your personal and career goals for the future?
9. What do you enjoy doing in your free time?
10. How have you spent your summers?
11. What events would you say have been crucial to your life thus far? People?
12. Why are you interested in our college?
13. What do you think you will contribute to this college?
14. Do you have any heros?
15. Where and when do you find yourself stimulated intellectually?

## QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK;

1. What are the greatest strengths of the college?
2. How does the admission office judge whether a student is a good fit?
3. What are the most important campus issues to students at this college?
4. According to students, what is the most difficult course offered on campus?
5. How close are the students and faculty here?

## HOW TO APPLY TO COLLEGE: THE APPLICATION PROCESS

### Types of application deadlines:

Early Decision - The deadline is November 1st and you are notified of a decision by December 15th. Under this binding agreement you can only apply to one college in this time frame. If you are accepted you are obligated to attend unless the college cannot accommodate your financial need.

Early Action - The deadline is November 1st and you are notified of a decision by December 15th. Students can apply to as many colleges early as you would like.

Single choice early action - Very few colleges offer this deadline. You apply by November 1st to one college but unlike Early Decision it is not a binding agreement and you are not obligated to attend.

Regular - Deadlines vary from January 1st to March 1st based upon the college to which you apply. Students are typically notified of a decision by April 15th.

Rolling - There is no deadline and the admissions office is always accepting applications. Decisions are usually made and students are notified within six weeks of the application being submitted.

## **PARTS OF THE APPLICATION**

Demographic information (address, parents information, sibling information, high school attended)

Activities, Athletics, leadership, awards and honors

Transcript

Essays - 1 primary essay, some colleges require supplemental essays

SAT/ACT Scores (this varies by college)

2 teacher recommendations (this varies by college)

1 School Counselor recommendation (this varies by college)

Application fee (waivers are available through the Common Application and Ms. Neuenschwander for those that qualify)

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **TEACHERS**

Many colleges require one or two recommendations from junior year teachers. You will want to select teachers you feel can comment on your strengths as a student and classroom participant. You do not have to select the teacher of the class you earned your best grade but maybe the teacher of the class where you struggled, worked hard and overcame an obstacle. Please ask teachers at the end of your junior year face to face not in an email. You can ask them if they feel comfortable writing a recommendation for you. Please find out what teachers need from you to write this recommendation, usually a copy of a resume.

Remind teachers in the fall of your senior year and provide any information they request. If you are using the Common Application you will invite them as recommenders by sending them an email invite. If your colleges do not use the Common Application, you will need to find out from the colleges how they require recommenders to submit recommendations and then inform your teachers of this process.

### **SCHOOL COUNSELOR**

Please let Ms. Neuenschwander know two weeks prior or more to the college deadline for submitting recommendations. The following forms must be filled out on that same timeline.

[Student Brag Sheet](#)

[Parent Brag Sheet](#)

## THE COLLEGE ESSAY

### [35 College Essay Tips](#)

In addition to figuring out what colleges you want to apply to, the college essay is one of the more difficult parts of the application process. This essay provides context of who you are as a person and the colleges rely on this to help them determine if you are a good fit for their campus.

#### **How many essays do I need to write?**

Every college is different so you need to find out from the specific colleges you are applying to. Colleges using the Common Application and many others want one primary essay and then more selective colleges will require you to answer supplemental questions specifically about their college.

#### **Here are the Common Application Essay Prompts for 20-21:**

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma - anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?

7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

How to start:

1. Pick one question that immediately you can think of a topic to write about
2. Brainstorm different topics
3. Write about one of those topics until you can write no more
4. Set it aside for a few days
5. Revisit and decide if you like portions of the writing and start editing if not start the process over
6. Make sure your opening paragraph will grab their attention
7. Re-read your essay and ask yourself why did you write this? What does it say about you
8. It is fine to change your topic or write multiple topics until you find the one that represents your voice and story

What are the colleges looking for?

1. That you can communicate feeling through your writing and tell them something about yourself, provide a context to understand you
2. They want to learn something new and deeper than what they have already been able to discover about you as a student
3. What inspires and excites you
4. This part of the application provides the most depth to your application
5. Did you answer the question you chose

Other Tips:

Have a few people, parent/guardian, a teacher, or a counselor read your essay and give their impression of what message you are trying to convey.

## [CRAFTING GREAT COLLEGE ESSAYS](#)

### **HOW TO APPLY TO COLLEGE**

After you have finalized your college list you will need to find out what type of application the college uses for admission. Over 800 colleges use the **Common Application**. This means you fill out this application one time and send it to the different colleges you are applying to that accept this application. The remainder of the colleges may have their own application list on their website. Below are the directions to apply using the COMMON APPLICATION

1. Fill out the application - [Commonapp.org](http://Commonapp.org)
2. Invite recommenders

Once you have filled out the application you will need to **invite your recommenders via email**. . You invite recommenders in the Common

Application using the recommenders email. Then you need to identify them as recommenders for the colleges you want them to send their recommendation to. Use the same process for the School Counselor recommendation.

3. Invite School Counselor as a recommender  
Please submit my email [sneuenschwander@mtrsd.org](mailto:sneuenschwander@mtrsd.org) as the School Counselor recommender. **When I submit my recommendation I will also submit your academic transcript**
4. Write essays and supplemental essays  
Most colleges require one essay that is typically 600 words (the common application essay choices above), many colleges will also require supplemental essays that are shorter, around 250 words. You are required to know what essays the colleges you are applying to require. There are many people at Mohawk Trail to help you with the essay process, starting in the spring of your junior year. Mr. Sussbauer is available to help you brainstorm essay ideas and edit them along the way.
5. Send official SAT scores to your colleges if required to do so, some colleges let you self report SAT scores in the Common Application
6. Submit your application - if you need fee waivers see Ms. Neuenschwander

Submitting your transcript and recommendations to colleges **not using** the Common Application:

If some of your colleges do not use the Common Application then you will need to fill out the [Transcript Request Form](#) and give this to Ms. Dupree. She will then email or send your transcript to the requested colleges. If you want recommendations sent to colleges you will need to find out from the college if they would like them mailed or emailed and provide this information to teachers when you ask them to write a recommendation for you.

Congratulations, you have applied to college, next up Financial Aid

Source:

*The Truth about College Admission*, Brennan Barnard, Rick Clark