

Understanding the Admissions Process

By the time you are a junior in high school, you should be thinking about your options after high school. Many students choose to further their education, and if you are among that group, begin to narrow down your top choices of schools to attend. It is important to pay careful attention to each school's admissions process.

When the school's admissions office receives your application, they will first look at your academic record including the classes you took and the level of difficulty, your grade point average, and test scores. It is not necessary to have excelled in every area; you may not have a high class rank but have taken challenging courses. Most colleges will take that into consideration. Colleges will look at scores from standardized tests, such as the SAT and ACT that measure your verbal and math abilities and compare them to the abilities of students across the country.

Many schools will not look solely at your academic records, but will also examine your extracurricular activities, looking for well-rounded students. However, don't spread yourself over too many activities to simply pad your resume. It is better to focus on a few activities and perhaps take on a leadership position.

Two additional things are important to ensure that you choose a school you like and that you are successful in gaining admission to that school. (1) You should plan visits to the schools you are interested in early in your selection process to help narrow your choices. (2) Spend plenty of time talking with your representatives at the schools you are visiting and ask questions about admissions procedures, financial aid, and any deadlines you need to meet. Remember, the admission representatives are there to help you.

By the time you begin your senior year, you should have a clear idea of which schools you are most interested in attending.