

LMSD Senior College and Career Planning Handbook

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MONTHLY REMINDERS

SEPTEMBER

- Meet with your counselor after the opening 2 weeks, if you have colleges on your list with early fall deadlines.
- Register to attend college visits to LMHS and HHS - check Naviance for the schedule, get your teacher's permission and set a reminder.
- Narrow your list to no more than 8-10 colleges and add them to "Colleges I'm Applying to" in Naviance.
- Stay organized and be aware of your preferred deadlines and the manner in which you will apply (Common Application or other method)—ensure deadlines are correctly noted in your Naviance list.
- Set up your account and start your Common Application.
- Work on and make final revisions to your college essay.
- If needed, register for the October/November SAT or ACT tests.
- Attend the College Application Evening programs: September 19 at LMHS and September 28 at HHS.
- Add your teacher recommenders to your Naviance account and keep them aware of your deadlines.

OCTOBER

- Take SAT/ACT tests, as needed.
- **Turn in a Transcript Release Form to the Registrar at either LMHS or HHS, at least 3 weeks before the deadline.**
- Start your (FAFSA) beginning October 1 if you are applying for Financial Aid. This is recommended for all students regardless if you think you will qualify or not.
- Check on the additional requirements when applying for financial aid, such as the CSS Profile, a College Board Form required in addition to the FAFSA by some colleges.
- Attend the NACAC Philadelphia College Fair held at the Convention Center on Sunday, October 30th to speak with representatives from a wide range of colleges.

NOVEMBER

- Take SAT/ACT tests as needed.
- Submit your completed applications by their due dates. Counselors will send all school documents separately.
- Early Decision and Early Action candidates may have to submit first marking period grades as required by the colleges. Grades will be available in mid- November and you should notify your counselor if you want them sent.

DECEMBER

- Take SAT/ACT tests as needed — this will be the last opportunity until the spring of 2023.
- Bring the Transcript Release Form to the Counseling Office in early December for all Regular Decision January 1 application deadlines if you have not already done so.
- Explore scholarship opportunities and stay organized with winter and spring scholarship application requirements and deadlines.
- Expect to hear from Early Decision colleges, if accepted, you are expected to deposit right away and commit to going.
- Expect to hear from Early Action colleges by Winter Break or early January. You do not have to make a decision until May 1 and/or submit a deposit until May 1. You should only deposit to 1 college or university, so wait as long as you need to in order to make the best choice.

JANUARY

- Stay organized with your school work and complete assignments on time for grade reports that will need to be sent to your regular decision or deferred early applications
- Request a mid-year grade report by following the instructions sent in mid-January by the school counseling office.
- Expect to begin receiving decision letters and document the decision in Naviance. If deferred or waitlisted, follow the instructions to continue to express interest if desired.

FEBRUARY

- Continue to complete applications and notify counselors of any additional colleges added to your list, you must keep your Naviance list up to date and accurate.
- Complete the Midyear Grade Request Form if you need your midyear grades sent,
- Be aware of FAFSA form submission deadlines—the earlier you submit this, the more need-based aid you may be offered by a college.

MARCH/APRIL

- Colleges will be releasing decisions and notifying you electronically whether or not you have been admitted. It is possible to receive an acceptance, denial, or waitlist. It is also possible to be offered a January (Semester 2 start) acceptance or guaranteed transfer in a year acceptance.
- Be clear with your response and only remain on a waitlist if you see yourself going there.

MAY

- Deposit by May 1 to the one college you plan on attending. If you have been waitlisted, you must deposit at a school that you have been accepted to by May 1 and you can later withdraw if you are accepted from the waitlist.

TEST OPTIONAL, TEST BLIND, TEST FLEXIBLE

Simply put, test optional colleges let students decide whether or not they want to submit test scores with their application. Most test-optional schools will consider SAT and ACT scores if they are submitted but focus on other factors they believe are stronger predictors of a student's potential.

The pandemic forced many colleges to adopt test-optional policies for at least the high school graduating Class of 2021. Some colleges announced multi-year test-optional pilots; others implemented temporary test-optional policies or were test-optional for only some groups of students or academic programs. Penn State University will remain test optional through 2023. Hopefully, other colleges will follow suit sooner rather than later so that students have ample time to plan and study for tests.

The idea of being test optional became mainstream once COVID-19 began wreaking havoc on the world, but it's actually been around for a while—since 1969. Before the pandemic took hold, more than 1,000 colleges and universities were already evaluating students' applications without the presence of test scores.

So, how will you know whether a college you're researching is test optional or not? You can search for the standardized testing policy on college websites or it will be under requirements for admission.

Test-blind admissions is exactly what it sounds like: whether or not a student decides to send their test scores, they won't be considered as part of the application evaluation.

Test blind schools are not nearly as common as test optional ones, but COVID-19 has led to more colleges and universities to adopt test blind policies. Prior to the pandemic, only a handful of schools were test blind. Now, there are more than 50 that have decided to not consider test scores throughout the admissions process. This is happening because admissions offices are seeing how difficult it is for certain students to test. Instead of leaving it optional – and letting those who can't test feel like they're at a disadvantage (even though they wouldn't be) -- they've taken testing completely off the table.

If you're not a good standardized test-taker but don't want to simply not submit a test score, there are test flexible schools. Test flexible colleges or universities allow students to choose which type of test (or tests) they'd like to submit with their application. If students want to submit the SAT or ACT, they're welcome to do so. Other options include an International Baccalaureate exam or an Advanced Placement test. SAT Subject Tests were previously an option before the College Board discontinued them on January 19, 2021.

COUNSELING DEPARTMENT PROGRAMMING
 2022-23 LOCATION DETAILS DELIVERED PRIOR TO EVENT.

Event Name	Date	Time
College Application Process, LMHS, (for Seniors and families)	9/19/2022	7:00 PM
College Application Process, HHS	9/28/2022	7:00 PM
Coffee and Conversation	9/28/2022	7:30 AM
Financial Aid Overview (Virtual)	10/06/2022	7:00 PM
FAFSA Completion Night (for Seniors - virtual)	10/18/2022	7:00 PM
Evening Coffee and Conversation	11/03/2022	6:00 PM, LMHS, 6:30PM HHS
Post High School Planning for Juniors (LMHS)	11/14/2022	7:00 PM
Post High School Planning for Juniors (HHS)	11/15/2022	7:00 PM
College Admissions Round Table (Virtual)	11/30/2022	7:00 PM
PSAT's: You Took Them, Now What? (virtual)	12/07/2022	7:00 PM
Navigating High School and Planning for the Future (9th graders and families)	12/13/2022	7:00 PM
Coffee and Conversation (Virtual)	12/15/2022	7:30 AM
HHS Naviance (before Course Selection Night)	2/1/2023	6:30 PM
LMHS Naviance (before Course Selection Night)	2/2/2023	6:00 PM
Coffee and Conversation (Virtual)	2/9/2023	7:30 AM
Special Interests Round Table	2/15/2023	7:00 PM
Evening Coffee and Conversation	2/23/2023	6:00 PM
(Elementary families) Financial Planning for College	3/9/2023	7:00 PM
Coffee and Conversation (virtual)	4/13/2023	7:30 AM
Career and College Readiness for 8th grade families (virtual)	4/18/2022	7:00 PM
Career Symposium	TBD	TBD

COLLEGE INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

Interviews may be an important element for your college admission process. Colleges may recommend or require an interview as part of their application process. Here are some suggestions to prepare for an interview:

1. Make an appointment by contacting the Office of Admissions in advance
2. Be prepared!
 - ⤴ Research the college prior to your interview
 - ⤴ Write down questions you would like to ask
3. Be on time! Allow plenty of time for travel to your destination
4. Types of interviews
 - ⤴ Informative interviews - an opportunity to ask questions about the college
 - ⤴ Qualitative interviews - the admission counselor asks questions in order to determine the right fit
 - ⤴ Alumni interviews are with graduates and may feel less formal and an opportunity to have a dialog
5. What is the interviewer looking for?
 - ⤴ Your interest, sincerity, and enthusiasm for their college
 - ⤴ Academic strengths and areas that may need improving
 - ⤴ Ability to work with others and leadership qualities
 - ⤴ Unique and unusual talents and experiences
6. While at the interview-what to do?
 - ⤴ Be yourself; try and be relaxed and friendly
 - ⤴ Dress appropriately-business casual, no jeans
 - ⤴ Have good eye contact with the interviewer and listen thoughtfully
 - ⤴ Obtain an unofficial copy of your LMSD transcript and bring a resume with you, or if virtual, be able to speak about your courses and activities
 - ⤴ At conclusion, thank the interviewer, and be sure to ask for their email address
7. After the interview, record some notes on your impressions. Write a thank you note or thank you email. Include any unanswered questions that you may have since the meeting. You have no idea the impression that can make and while it is a simple thing to do, so many people do not do it so you will make a great impression.

DO'S AND DON'T S OF ESSAY WRITING

DO'S

- ⤴ Tell your own story...everyone has one, what is yours?
- ⤴ Have a personal touch and try to evoke an emotion in the reader. It is easier to make someone cry than laugh.
- ⤴ Make the essay clear.
- ⤴ Use your own words, not words to impress the reader.
- ⤴ Organize your thoughts and grab the reader's attention in the opening paragraph.
- ⤴ Follow the directions! If the application asks for 650 words, that is what it means...the ability to follow directions is something that will go a long way with the admission staff.
- ⤴ Spend time on the supplemental essays, especially within The Common Application. College admission professionals state quite clearly that the supplemental essay can separate you from the next applicant.
- ⤴ Proofread, proofread and proofread some more. Ask someone else to proof your essay; it is very hard to proof your own writing!
- ⤴ Review the College Essay Writing workshop Power Point and recording on the LMSD School Counseling website under Programs 2022-23.

DON'TS

- ⤴ Don't embellish, be honest.
- ⤴ Don't be too scripted, rather make the essay genuine and sincere.
- ⤴ Don't try and be too funny...it's challenging to write a funny essay.
- ⤴ Don't be too personal-the reader does not need to know everything about your life.
- ⤴ Don't exceed the limit of the essay-again, it is the attention to detail that the admission staff is looking for.
- ⤴ Don't send the wrong essay to the wrong college! No one wants to read the essay meant for another school! In other words, do not personalize the essay by stating any college name.

APPLYING FOR FINANCIAL AID

To apply for Federal financial aid, families must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA. Some schools also use the FAFSA to determine eligibility for their own scholarships and grants. The FAFSA is available October 1 and uses your prior-prior year's taxes, so for the Fall of 2022 you will use taxes from the 2020 tax year.

The FAFSA uses your asset and income information, as well as your student's, to calculate your expected family contribution, or EFC. This is the minimum amount that your family will be expected to contribute toward your child's education during the following year.

The CSS Profile, administered by The College Board, is the application more selective colleges and scholarship programs use to determine eligibility for their own institutional dollars.

Key differences between FAFSA and the CSS Profile

The CSS Profile generally requires more information than the FAFSA and weighs income and assets differently.

For instance:

- ✕ Unlike the FAFSA, the CSS Profile often asks for the non-custodial parent's financial information in cases of divorce and separation.
- ✕ The FAFSA excludes the value of small businesses and nonqualified annuities, as well as your primary residence's home equity, from aid calculations. The CSS Profile asks about such assets.
- ✕ The FAFSA considers gifts made to parents, including grandparents who want to help with college costs, as assets which get more favorable treatment in determining aid eligibility than income. On the CSS Profile, such gifts are generally considered income.

Schools that use the CSS Profile also collect additional information is meant to help financial aid officers better understand your family's ability to pay for college, not hurt your child's aid eligibility.

It is important to be proactive in the college-financing process. Understanding how a college will view your finances for financial aid purposes will give you confidence in selecting schools that you can afford.

TRANSCRIPT RELEASE FORM

This form is required to be signed by student and a parent at least fifteen (15) school days in advance of the earliest application deadline listed below and provides your permission to release the transcript to all colleges or universities that you have documented in your "Colleges I'm Applying to" list in Naviance and listed below. For every college you add later in the school year, you must submit a new TRF and you must also update your Naviance "Colleges I'm Applying to" list.

BEFORE TURNING IN YOUR TRANSCRIPT REQUESTS, COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING:

- _____ List each college in the **Colleges I'm Applying To** tab in Naviance.
- _____ List any Common Application colleges in your Common Application account.
- _____ Match your Common Application account with Naviance.

In accordance with the Federal Educational Rights to Privacy Act (FERPA) of parents and students, the following signed consent is necessary in order for Lower Merion School District to release student records:

The undersigned hereby consents to the release of all educational records about the student (identifying data, birth date, academic work completed, level of achievement, grades, and attendance), letters of recommendation, and such other information as may be requested. _____ YES _____ NO

The undersigned hereby consents to the release of disciplinary records as requested by the post-secondary educational institution application process including all suspensions, removals, and expulsions. _____ YES _____ NO*

* If "no" is marked on this form, the high school will indicate this lack of consent on the student's application and the student and parent will be responsible for the decision of the post-secondary educational institution to process the application without this information.

Note: I understand that I am responsible for sending my SAT or ACT scores either through the Common Application and self-reporting process or directly from the testing company to the college/university.

Student Name (Please Print)

Student Signature

Date

Guardian Signature – **Only required ONCE for the 2021-22 school year**

Date

COLLEGE	APPLICATION DEADLINE	APPLICATION TYPE (Circle One)
_____	_____	EA / ED / Rolling / Regular / REA
_____	_____	EA / ED / Rolling / Regular / REA
_____	_____	EA / ED / Rolling / Regular / REA
_____	_____	EA / ED / Rolling / Regular / REA
_____	_____	EA / ED / Rolling / Regular / REA
_____	_____	EA / ED / Rolling / Regular / REA
_____	_____	EA / ED / Rolling / Regular / REA
_____	_____	EA / ED / Rolling / Regular / REA
_____	_____	EA / ED / Rolling / Regular / REA
_____	_____	EA / ED / Rolling / Regular / REA

If a college doesn't accept electronic transcripts, a stamped, addressed 9"X12" envelope is needed. If the below symbol shows in Naviance, an envelope is needed.

1st Quarter Grades Request Form

This form is to remind you that grades are not automatically sent to your colleges.

IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO:

1. Supply the Counseling Office with this form listing the colleges to which you applied that require or request your first marking period grades.
2. Only provide an e-mail or FAX # if the college does not accept electronic submissions.
3. Turn this form into the registrar in the Counseling Office, by **Friday, November 11, 2022.**

STUDENT NAME: _____

COUNSELOR: _____

Please send my first quarter grades to the following schools:

	COLLEGE	FAX NUMBER or EMAIL ADDRESS
1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____
7.	_____	_____
8.	_____	_____