

Portage Central High School Counseling Office Newsletter
College Applications Fall 2010

The purpose of this handout is to familiarize you with the step-by-step procedures in the college admission process that is followed by the Portage Central High School Counseling Department.

Before Applying

Be sure to continue with discussion of your future plans with your parents and individual counselor, who will be happy to assist you and your parents in helping to make the most appropriate college choices.

Complete and return the Student Brag Sheets, along with a summary of your high school activities for your counselor's reference.

On-line Applications

Go to the web-site of your college or university choice. Follow directions to apply on-line. One commonly used application is the Common Application, found at www.commonapp.org. The University of Michigan is now using this application, for example.

Remember that all colleges require an official transcript. We have a new service called Docufide that will send your transcript electronically to the colleges you apply. Please see Docufide handout. Extras will be on the counter in the Counseling Office.

You will also have to notify your counselor, who will fill out a portion of your college application. Be sure to put in the appropriate e-mail addresses:

A, B, M, N,	Mrs. Sinke	ksinke@portageps.org
C-E, O-R	Mrs. Jepson	ljepson@portageps.org
F, S-Z	Ms. Kelly	ckelly@portageps.org
G-L	Mrs. Scott	mscott@portageps.org

We will send test scores from your test card to your colleges. Many colleges require that official test scores are forwarded from ACT or SAT. Please be sure to follow the policy of your college admissions office. It will be your responsibility to order test scores from the testing services, if your college requires scores to be sent. (MSU and U of M require official scores sent from ACT www.act.org and SAT www.collegeboard.com .)

A word of advice: Download and print a copy of the application for your records.

Mailing Hard Copies of Applications

Remember: Neatness counts. You only have one chance to make a first impression!

Make a photocopy of each application and complete you work on those copies.

After careful proofreading for errors, transfer the information onto the original application. Write clearly in ink. Pencil will not be accepted.

Type all essays or short answer questions (unless otherwise instructed) on a separate sheet of paper. Be certain to type your name, address, and social security number on every additional page. On the original application, type or neatly print Please See Attached Sheet on the space provided for the writing sample.

It is advisable to make a photocopy of your completed, original application for safekeeping.

Follow the college's application directions carefully regarding materials to be sent.

Staple all checks to the application. It is helpful to include your name on the memo portion of the check as a means of further identification.

Complete your application very carefully; it represents you, and makes an impression on the Admissions Office.

Remember that all colleges require an official transcript. We have a new service called Docufide that will send your transcript electronically to the colleges you apply. Please see Docufide handout. Extras will be on the counter in the Counseling Office.

Turn in the hard copy of your application to Mrs. King. She will send an official copy of your transcript through Docufide, along with your application, to the college admissions office.

College Application Hints Or Survival Skills For Seniors and Parents

Students:

Be positive. Remember, it is called an admissions office not a rejections office. Colleges look for reasons to admit, not reject students.

Be realistic. Discuss with your counselor the relative selectivity of the colleges on your list. Categorize them as reach, target, or safety. use your energy to write the best application you can.

Can you fail an interview? Interviews at most schools are conversations, not tests. Be yourself. Dress appropriately. You will be fine.

Set your priorities and let go of the least important ones!

Your college choice is an evolving one. Choices change. Your number one choice in September may not be a finalist in May. It is OK to change. The best college decision is one you really feel comfortable with. Remember, the best college for you is not necessarily the most selective school.

Avoid the holiday rush! Try to finish applications before the holidays.

The Counseling Office requires **five (5) working days** to process applications, so be well aware of your deadlines.

Letter of denial. There will be some; it is not personal. You are a good person - remember that. Discuss your remaining choices with your counselor and parents. By working together you can look forward to a happy, successful college career.

Parents:

Parents frequently worry about their child so much that it may appear that they are the college applicant. This is a personal learning process that your child needs to experience. (You may see unusual behavior: slamming doors, outbursts, hibernating in their room or putting off the application.) We have found that supportive parents prepare their students for a better adjustment to the stress of the college application process.

The application process is a fearful time because students realize they are preparing to leave home, friends, and friendly surroundings.

For the first time students are opening their achievements, personality, and academic records to evaluation - will they be good enough? How will they be judged?

Parents think about how will they manage the disappointment. How will their son/daughter react to denial? It is important to remember the human side of this issue. It does not ever change who you are, so keep the line of communication open.

If a student has been realistic in his/her choices, there should be more acceptances than rejections.

The Essay

Follow all directions on the application form.

Relax and start early.

Write down ideas! Keep an open mind. Use many sources to get ideas.

Write about yourself. BE YOURSELF. College admissions representatives have shown an uncanny ability to detect an unoriginal essay.

Read your essay out loud to yourself. Hearing it is another way to make sure it sounds correct. Give your essay to someone else to read.

Keep copies of everything. You may be able to use one essay for two or more schools. *Just be sure to change the name of the school, so that it matches where you are sending the application!*

You should rewrite your essay many times until you are satisfied.

Colleges use the essay to judge ability to write effectively, get insight into your personality, your emotions, and your character. It becomes another piece of the college application puzzle.

Even if your college application says (or implies) that the essay is optional, consider it mandatory. You are in a competitive situation. Do not give another applicant an advantage by opting not to write the essay.

Notes on College Application Essays

1. The importance of the essay for colleges:

- a. To provide an opportunity for the student to come alive on the page.
- b. to judge the depth of a student's understanding of intellectual or social issues, quality and freshness of mind, highlighting of issues referred to skeletally elsewhere in application.
- c. To show writing style, technical correctness, fluency (sentence structure and variety, paragraph construction/unity, vocabulary, metaphorical versus concrete language, etc.)

2. Subject: Anything of real interest to the student. It should highlight another part of the college application.

- a. Autobiographical: Be careful of the obvious - How my trip to France taught me independence. But if reflective (travel, significant personal struggle, or family experience,) this can be a very impressive subject.
- b. Social/Political: This ought to be tied to previous student interests. An essay on devotion to environmentalism as an abstract idea carries little weight.
- c. Intellectual interests: Response to works of a particular author, research in certain areas, places where the student has outgrown and reached beyond his/her curriculum.
- d. Point of View: Do not be too controversial.

3. Format:

- a. Neat, readable, typed, or, if indicated by the college, handwritten.
- b. Physically prepared by student him/herself. (not by dad's/mom's secretary, even as typed -- it raised doubts about editorial input.)

4. For weak writers/poor scorers:

- a. Take great care; start in September-October; rewrite frequently.
- b. Send one to three extra writing samples: in and out-of-class work, with teacher comments.

6. Essay evaluation: Often as a confirmation of a decision if other credentials are clear. An essay can be a powerful tipper in close cases, especially with very strong or very poor essays. Warning: Admissions representatives pay careful attention. As eventual consumers, they are vociferous complainers about admitting students with dull or error riddled essays. They also check Internet essays and books on writing college essays. A quick way to be denied admission is to use someone else's essay.

Letters of Recommendation

To have more than 3- 4 letters will be overkill! Be selective and discuss with your counselor the best choices and then see those people. Follow the directions in the application. Please do not send extra letters, as they often are not considered. If the application asks for 2 letters, send just 2 letters.

Contact teachers early. Be sure to schedule an appointment to discuss your needs and ask them if they can help you. Generally speaking, the letters of recommendation should come from core area teachers. The counselors will fill out the portion that is designated for counselor feedback, which would include the letter of recommendation that may be needed from the counselor. When you are asked for letters of recommendation, this means a letter from core teachers and others specified on the application i.e. Minister, coach, employer, etc. Be sure to tell them if you are applying early and where you are applying. Have all of this written (typed) for them. Be sure to indicate to each teacher details about your background. Discuss with them your participation in their class. The teachers may give a copy of the letter of recommendation to the Counseling Office. It is standard protocol to send a letter directly to the college without your seeing the letter.

Follow-up with your teachers every week or so. Your applications will not be considered until your letters of recommendation are turned in to the college.

A letter of recommendation from an employer is helpful if it is insightful and personalized. General recommendations are of little value.

A letter from a religious leader needs to demonstrate some insightful information about the student's commitment, leadership, moral qualities. Choose with great care.

Your counselor will compose a letter based upon personal contact with the student and impressions. Be sure to complete your Student Brag Sheet and Activity Summary Sheet and discuss it with your counselor.

After teacher, employer, or other sources have written letters, thank them personally for their time and efforts on your behalf. Remember, to receive a letter of recommendation is a privilege, not a right.

Brag sheets, activity summaries, and transcripts should be for counselors only. teacher recommendations should be based on your performance in that particular teacher's class.