

ST. PAUL CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL



Navigating the College Process



Kicking off the College Process

Believe it or not, here you are a junior in high school already! It's now time to start thinking about your future after St. Paul and what you would like that to look like. We are excited to help guide you through this process and will be here to help you every step of the way!

This resource will serve as your guide to the college process from beginning to end. Topics include:

- College Application Process Timeline
- Terms & Tools You Need to Know
- SAT and ACT Dates and Registration Deadlines
- Fee Waivers
- SAT vs ACT
- Junior College Planning Meetings
- College Search Resources
- Student, Parent, Counselor Responsibilities
- Application Types
- College Essay
- Financially Affording College
- Resources

Finding the college that best fits you and making you feel confident and prepared in the application process is our goal. Again, the school counseling department is here to help you and are available any time to meet or answer questions you may have, so please feel free to reach out.

Yours truly,

James J. Cooper
Dean of Academic Life
jcooper@spchs.com
860-584-0911 ext. 412

College Process Calendar

JUNIOR YEAR

SEPTEMBER-NOVEMBER

- Attend college admission representative visits at St. Paul.

NOVEMBER – DECEMBER

- Attend Junior College Night with your parent/guardian on Thursday, December 7.
- **Complete “SPCHS Junior Personal Reflection” in Naviance by January 3rd** (link for Naviance is on the St. Paul website home page, under the academic tab. Once on Naviance, the questionnaire can be found under the “about me” tab, “surveys to take”).
 - **This is mandatory and needs to be completed in order to have your Junior Planning Meeting scheduled and your counselor letter of recommendation written next year.**
- Conduct a college search using Naviance or another search engine such as College Board using the filters you identified in the “SPCHS Junior Personal Reflection.” Visit individual college websites for additional details.
- In Naviance, click the College Tab, then “colleges I’m thinking about” link, start a list of colleges that interest you; [check requirements on their websites](#) (testing, selectivity, majors, etc.).
- Use Naviance (Careers tab) and College Board Big Future (<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org>) to continue researching potential career interests.
- Consider beginning to visit/tour colleges or explore virtually.

JANUARY – FEBRUARY

- **Junior College Planning Meetings will be scheduled upon the completion of the SPCHS Junior Personal Reflection Form on Naviance. First appointments will take place in the Late Winter/Early Spring. Parents are strongly encouraged to attend either in-person or virtually.**
- Meet with your school counselor at any point when you have additional questions
- Discuss colleges and finances with your parent/guardian (Use Net Price Calculators to get realistic costs. <https://collegecost.ed.gov/net-price>)
- Visit/tour college campuses
- Enroll in the SAT prep course offered at St. Paul, or practice using your personalized study plan in Khan Academy or your College Board QuickStart™ account.
 - Kaplan and Princeton Review also offer online help
 - Tunxis Community College offers an online course
- International students need to prepare for and take the TOEFL.

- Develop the first draft of your resume using SP Resume Template or on Naviance using the Resume Builder.
- If you plan to play a sport at a Division I or II school, make sure you have registered with the NCAA Eligibility Center www.eligibilitycenter.org AND make sure your school counselor and Mr. Cooper is aware you have registered.
 - Use corecoursegpa.com to track your eligibility.
 - School ID: 070082
 - School Code: 700298950

MARCH – APRIL

- **Ask two teachers for a letter of recommendation; provide them with your resume and Junior Personal Reflection Form for Teachers NO LATER THAN April 28th.**
- Register online for the April ACT and/or May SAT (St. Paul is a test site) ****We strongly recommend taking the SATs for the first time in May or June of Junior year. Students can take both the ACT and SAT or either one. Speak to your school counselor about this topic.**
- Use April vacation to schedule appointments to visit/tour colleges.
- Update your list of potential schools in Naviance’s “colleges I’m thinking about” section.
- Let the finance office/your school counselor know about any need for financial assistance for SAT or college applications fees.

MAY– JUNE

- Update your resume and email it to your school counselor by the end of the school year.
- Visit/tour more colleges; refine your college list in Naviance’s “colleges I’m thinking about” section.
- Take the SATs and/or ACTs; International students should register for T.O.E.F.L. exam.
- Prepare thoroughly for final exams at St. Paul.
- Plan a productive summer: work, shadow/internship enrichment opportunities, service that relates to your interests, etc.

SENIOR YEAR

JULY-AUGUST

- View and use the application instructional PowerPoint emailed out at the end of the year prior to returning to school.
- Open a Common Application account over the summer (after August 1st) if at least one of your schools is a Common App member – begin working on your application.
- Write your college essay (choose one of the Common App topics)
 - St. Paul offers a one week college essay writing workshop session during multiple weeks in the Summer
- Check which of your Common Application schools require supplements (i.e. additional essays) by adding colleges you are interested in to your college list.
- Continue to prep for the SATs and/or ACTs; International Students prep and register for the T.O.E.F.L. exam.
- Visit/tour more colleges; continue to refine your college list.
- Pursue those productive summer activities.

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER

- Ask your school counselor and/or English teacher to help you review your college essay for content and proofreading.
- Attend college admission representative visits at St. Paul. Even if you have visited, applied, etc. It is an opportunity for you to meet face to face with the person reading your application.
- Decide which deadline (Early Decision, Early Action, Regular Decision) you are going to apply for. Pay attention to dates.
- Fill out the transcript request form for your School Counselor.
- Attend open houses and other events at colleges.
- F.A.F.S.A. online application opens October 1.
- Take the SAT or ACT if you haven't taken it yet or feel you can improve your scores.
- Send in your applications by the appropriate deadline of your choice.
- If you would like your first quarter grades sent to your colleges, request them from your school counselor.

NOVEMBER-JANUARY

- Send in your applications by the appropriate deadline of your choice.
- When you receive your admissions decisions, please make your school counselor aware.
- Continue to work hard and do well academically as your mid-year grades are sent to all of the colleges you apply to.
- Send in your F.A.F.S.A. by February 1st.
- Start to think of where you would like to enroll for college based on your acceptances.
- Utilize Naviance to search for/apply for appropriate community scholarships to help bolster financial aid packages offered by colleges you have been accepted to.

FEBRUARY-APRIL

- Attend accepted student days at your colleges.
- **Send in your deposit to the school you have chosen to attend by May 1st.**
- Sign up for freshman/new student orientation dates at your school.
- Schedule a placement exam if required by your school.
- Inform your school counselor of your college choice.
 - Fill out the End of Senior Year Form
- Continue to do well academically and end your high school career on a strong note!

Terms and Tools you Need to Know in the College Process

Common App- An application tool used by more than 900 schools across the world. You fill out your information one time and then send it off to all of the schools you are applying to. You can use their website or the mobile app.

Naviance- A college and career exploration tool used by St. Paul's school counselors. For career exploration we give the students personality assessments related to careers and have them explore different career paths. For college exploration we use the platform for students to perform college searches, create a list and ultimately what we use to send students' application materials. Parents can also have an account linked to their child's to use these tools as well.

F.A.F.S.A.- Acronym for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. It is a free tool to apply for all of the types of federal student aid to help pay for college.

C.S.S. Profile- Acronym for the College Scholarship Service Profile. It is a paid platform that allows a student to apply for non-federal financial aid. Only some private colleges require this.

High School Transcript- An official document from St. Paul which lists all of the courses you have taken at St. Paul including your quarter and final grades. It also lists your absences for each year, your GPA and class rank. If you have transferred into St. Paul from another high school, the transcript(s) from that school(s) will remain separate from the student's St. Paul transcript and will be transmitted with all college applications.

Test Optional School- This means that a college does not require standardized test scores to be sent in for the admissions process. You can choose whether or not you want to send them. Rule of thumb: if your score is at or above their average, send them. If it is below, do not send them.

Super Score- This is the highest score you receive on the SAT by combining the best score from different sections from different test dates. For example, I scored a 680 Math and 600 English in August but then a 680 Math and 620 English in October. I can combine my highest scores from these two test dates for a Super Score.

Acceptance Deferred- An admissions decision that means you are put back into the regular decision applicant pool. Your application will be reviewed again before a decision is made.

Wait List- An admissions decision that means you have not yet been officially accepted, however it does not mean you are denied. If a space opens for you in their class they will alert you that you have been moved off of the wait list and are accepted.

SAT vs ACT: Which Test is Right for You?

	SAT	ACT
Why Take It	Colleges use SAT scores for admissions and merit-based scholarships.	Colleges use ACT scores for admissions and merit-based scholarships.
Test Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading • Writing & Language • Math • Essay (Optional) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English • Math • Reading • Science Reasoning • Essay (Optional)
Length	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 hours (without essay) • 3 hours, 50 minutes (with essay) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 hours, 55 minutes (without essay) • 3 hours, 40 minutes (with essay)
Reading	5 reading passages	4 reading passages
Science	None	1 science section testing your critical thinking skills (not your specific science knowledge)
Math	Covers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arithmetic • Algebra I & II • Geometry, Trigonometry and Data Analysis 	Covers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arithmetic • Algebra I & II • Geometry, Trigonometry, and Probability & Statistics
Calculator Policy	Some math questions don't allow you to use a calculator.	You can use a calculator on all math questions.
Essays	Optional. The essay will test your comprehension of a source text.	Optional. The essay will test how well you evaluate & analyze complex issues.
How It's Scored	Scored on a scale of 400–1600	Scored on a scale of 1–36

Should I Take the ACT or SAT?

Students are increasingly taking both the SAT and ACT. Changes made to the SAT in 2016 have made it easier than ever to prep for both tests concurrently — and earn competitive scores on both!

The best way to decide if taking the SAT, ACT, or both tests is right for you is to take a timed full-length practice test of each type. Since the content and style of the SAT and ACT are very similar, factors like how you handle time pressure and what types of questions you find most challenging can help you determine which test is a better fit. (www.princetonreview.com)

Test Date	Normal Deadline	Late Registration
October 7, 2023 (SAT)*	September 7, 2023	September 26, 2023
October 28, 2023 (ACT)	September 22, 2023	October 6, 2023
November 4, 2023 (SAT)	October 5, 2023	October 24, 2023
December 2, 2023 (SAT)	November 2, 2023	November 21, 2023
December 9, 2023 (ACT)	November 3, 2023	November 17, 2023
February 10, 2024 (ACT)	January 5, 2024	January 19, 2024
March 9, 2024 (SAT)	February 23, 2024	February 27, 2024
April 13, 2024 (ACT)	March 8, 2024	March 22, 2024
May 4, 2024 (SAT)*	April 19, 2024	April 23, 2024
June 1, 2024 (SAT)	May 16, 2024	May 21, 2024
June 8, 2024 (ACT)	May 3, 2024	May 17, 2024
July 13, 2024* (ACT)	June 7, 2024	June 21, 2024

*St. Paul is a test center for this date

SAT moves to digital format

Fee Waiver Eligibility for SAT/AP Exam fees

A fee reduction is available to families who meet The College Board's income guidelines or qualifying alternative (see below). The following table lists annual family incomes by family size, at 185 percent of the poverty level. If the student's family's income did not exceed the amount listed in the appropriate row and column, he or she qualifies for an AP Exam fee reduction. This eligibility is established by the USDA Child Nutrition Programs: Income Eligibility Guideline. **If you feel you qualify for the fee reduction, please contact the Finance Office.**

Qualifying Alternatives:

- The student is enrolled in a federal, state, or local program that aids students from low-income families (e.g., Federal TRIO programs such as Upward Bound).
- The student's family receives public assistance.
- The student lives in a federally subsidized public housing or a foster home or is homeless.
- The student is a ward of the state or an orphan.

Junior College Planning Meetings

During the months of February, March and April we will be holding our Junior College Planning Meetings. These meetings are held before or after school with students and parents. During these meetings we will discuss each student's individual post high-school plan. If a parent requests a virtual meeting, one can be accommodated.

The following topics will be discussed:

- College search criteria (What size school do you like? Do you like a city or suburban campus? How selective of a school are you looking for? What options do you have in pursuing higher education? etc.)
- Standardized testing
- Possible majors student is interested in
- Student, parent and counselor responsibilities
- Current GPA
- Athletics, if applicable
- Scattergram info for possible schools
- Senior course selection
- Application process

Your school counselor will reach out via email to schedule a Junior College Planning Meeting with you **after** you complete your Junior Personal Reflection on Naviance. This reflection is due **January 3rd, 2024**. To complete the survey follow these steps:

-Log in to Naviance

-Click on “About Me”

-Click “Surveys From Your School”

-Click on the Junior Personal Reflection and fill it out completely.

College Search Resource List

- **Guidebooks**

- *Objective:* The College Handbook; Peterson’s Guide to Four Year Colleges; Chronical Four Year Data Book
- *Subjective:* The Fiske Guide to Colleges, Rugg’s Recommendations on the Colleges, The Insider’s Guide, Niche.com

- **College and University Websites**

- **The College Board Website (www.bigfuture.org)**

- **Naviance: access website from SPCHS home page under “Academics” tab**

- **Collegescorecard.ed.gov**

- **Experiences of others:** St. Paul Alumni, Professionals in the Community, Relatives, Graduate Schools (from which undergraduate schools/programs do they seek applications?)

- **Your School Counselor and College Representative Visits to SPCHS in the Fall**

- **Sample questions to ask when attending a college visit/tour:**

- Does the college/university have your prospective major? Can they tell you more about it?
- What is the average class size?
- Are there core curriculum requirements including a world language requirement?
- What academic supports are available?
- Are students assigned an academic advisor?

- o How much financial need does your school meet?
- o What do students do for fun?
- o Do most students live on campus? Do most students stay on campus on the weekends?
- o What are the school's main events or traditions?
- o Can freshmen have a car on campus?
- o What meal plans are available for students?
- o Are internship opportunities available? Does the school assist with that? What programs does the university/college offer to match students with employers in the student's field of study?
- o Is there a career center?
- o What are some examples of the student body's school spirit?
- o What opportunities are there to get involved on campus?

Responsibilities of the Student, Family, & Counselor throughout the College Search Process

Student:

- Complete the Junior Personal Reflection on Naviance **January 3, 2024.**
- Request Letters of Recommendation from two teachers by **April 28, 2024.**
- Input the teacher letter of recommendation requests in Naviance.
- Update your “Colleges I’m Thinking About” list in Naviance.
- Create your resume and send it to your school counselor by the end of the school year.
- Write your college essay over the summer
- Prospective Division I and II athletes only: Register with the N.C.A.A. Eligibility Center. Go to www.eligibilitycenter.org to register.
- Fill out your application on Common App and/or directly through your schools.
- Match your Common App account to your Naviance account and fill out the FERPA Waiver.
- Fill out the transcript request form for your school counselor at least two weeks before your deadlines.
- Send your SAT and/or ACT scores to your prospective colleges through the College Board.
- Make sure your F.A.F.S.A. and C.S.S. profile are completed.
- Check your emails!
- Request your first quarter grades from the school counseling office if you would like them to be sent to your colleges.
- Forward your school counselor your admissions decisions.

Family:

- Facilitate visits to prospective colleges.
- Assist with F.A.F.S.A. and C.S.S. profile which opens on October 1st each year.

School Counselor:

- Assist students with college applications.
- Send transcripts (initial, mid-year and final) and teacher letters of recommendation to colleges through Naviance.
- Send out first quarter grades if they are requested.

Types of Application Deadlines

Colleges offer a few different types of application deadlines so you will need to review your possibilities and decide which one is right for you. Below you will find descriptions of each and their pros and cons.

Early Action- A **NON-BINDING** option where deadlines range from November 1st-December 15th. You can apply to all of your schools this way, or only some, it is up to you. One of the positives of applying this way is that you usually get your admission decision at the end of December or early January. You can also be deferred into the regular decision pool. Another advantage of this is that there is usually more merit aid available to be given out.

Early Decision- A **BINDING** option that you are only allowed to use at ONE school. This option should only be used if you are 100% sure you would like to attend a school, no matter what your financial aid package looks like. There is a contract you have to sign stating that you will attend the school if you are accepted and that you will withdraw all of your other applications. A positive of this is it will alert the admissions department their school is the one you want to attend which can be in your favor. A negative of this is it can impact you and your family financially.

Regular Decision- These are a school's hard deadline on when you have to apply. They range anywhere from January-May. Please be aware of your schools' deadline. Most of these admissions decisions will reach you in March or April. This deadline is for students who don't feel ready to apply in the Fall or need more time to visit and finalize their college list. A positive of this is it gives students more time to complete the application process. A negative of this is because you hear back later in the year, you have less time to decide where you'd like to attend before the May 1 deposit deadline.

Rolling Admission- This option does not have a definite deadline. Rather, the school accepts applications as they come in. They read them in batches and send out decisions every few weeks.

Writing Your College Essay

We recommend that all students write their college essay over the summer going into senior year, regardless of when they are planning to apply. It is an opportune time as there is minimal school work, less school commitments happening and overall more free time. Each summer St. Paul offers a college essay workshop where students attend for one week, for a few hours each day and leave with a completed essay. It is worth it if you can attend!

Recent feedback we have been receiving from college admissions counselors is that the college essay is now more important than ever. With most schools becoming test-optional, they really want to learn more about the students through their essay. Our best advice is to pick the topic you know you can write the best essay on. It does not have to be about a struggle, but rather could be about something positive you have experienced. Either way, the essay should tell someone who doesn't know you, more about who you are.

Here is a list of prompts to get you started:

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. Reflect on something that someone has done for you that has made you happy or thankful in a surprising way. How has this gratitude affected or motivated you?
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 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.

(www.commonapp.org)

Financially Affording College

The best place to start is by doing research and deciding as a family what you can afford. Each year in the Fall we host a financial aid night with a presentation given by Craig Breitsprecher, a financial advisor. This year's event is scheduled for Thursday, October 25, 2023 at 6:30 P.M. More in depth information from him can be found here: <https://www.thrivepointfinancial.com/webinar-series>

To have a more realistic idea of what a school can typically cost you can use each school's Net Price Calculator. The Net Price Calculator is a tool that students and parents can use to estimate their "net price" to attend a particular college or university. Net price is the difference between the "sticker" price (full cost) to attend a specific college minus any grants and/or scholarships for which students may be eligible. Sticker price does not always include direct charges (fees, room & board) and indirect costs (books and supplies, personal expenses). <https://collegecost.ed.gov/net-price>

Types of Financial Aid

Grants- A grant is a form of financial aid that doesn't have to be repaid (unless, for example, you withdraw from school and owe a refund). A variety of federal grants are available, including Pell Grants, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG), Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grants, and Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grants.

Scholarships- Many nonprofit and private organizations offer scholarships to help students pay for college or career school. This type of free money, which is sometimes based on academic merit, talent, or a particular area of study, can make a real difference in helping you manage your education expenses. Most colleges offer students merit scholarships with their acceptance packages. This is a "discount" from the cost of attendance and does not need to be paid back. It is determined solely on a student's academic record and each college awards them differently.

Work-Study Jobs- The Federal Work-Study Program allows you to earn money to pay for school by working part-time at your college.

Loans- When you receive a student loan, you are borrowing money to attend a college or career school. You must repay the loan as well as interest that accrues. It is important to understand your repayment options so you can successfully repay your loan.