

Livingston High School

School Counseling Department

The Post-Secondary Search Process: An Overview of the Junior Year



2020-2021

October 2020

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The Post-secondary Search Process

The transition from high school to post-secondary programs is a time filled with excitement and opportunity. Remember, post-secondary planning is a process with a beginning, middle, and end. It requires planning, searching and finally applying. An important component of this process is maintaining patience and mindfulness: it is a process that takes time, and also deserves time to research, explore, process, reflect and then make decisions. Approaching your post-secondary search process with this perspective will lead to better decision making. Because this process is very personal, it must begin with self-reflection. You must consider many things about yourself: goals, values, strengths, weaknesses, interests and rationale for your decision making. Then, consider the many criteria you will use in choosing which post-secondary option to pursue and what specific institutions to explore that is the right fit for you.

Throughout the process, one of your best resources is your school counselor. Your school counselor knows the various steps in the post-secondary planning, searching and application process and can help you establish your goals and benchmarks in navigating through the planning, searching and application processes. Just as important, your counselor can help you better understand yourself, your abilities, interests, and your needs.

Remember, the counseling staff at Livingston High School is dedicated to helping you fulfill your post-secondary planning process. Your school counselor can assist you with self-reflection, post-secondary exploration, analysis of post-secondary goals as well as successfully making progress toward finalizing the programs you apply to as a senior. Within the school counseling office are resources available to you including college booklets, financial aid information, military and technical school information and more to help assist you in your post-secondary search. In addition, all students should utilize the search features, information and resources available in Naviance Student. All of these resources are designed to make your post-secondary search efficient and effective.

Finally, should you need more detailed information on any of the topics discussed in this guide please contact your school counselor directly to discuss your questions and navigate this process.

Know Yourself And What You Want From A College

Click [here](#) to make a copy of this reflection tool for yourself!

Even before you speak with your counselor, begin to draw up a list of questions that will affect your plans.

- What are my strengths? What are my interests?
- How do I learn best? (Lectures, note-taking, group discussion, visual, auditory, hands-on, project-based learning etc.)
- What were my favorite classes? Why? How do I respond to different teaching styles? Does competition encourage me to try my best?
- Am I interested in liberal arts institutions, or do I want to specialize in a career or major such as business, art, or pre-med? Do I want a two-or four-year institution?
- Do I want to stay near home, or am I prepared to visit my family only a few times a year? Am I interested in a certain locale: urban, small, town or rural?
- Do I want to attend a small or large institution? Am I interested in a diverse student body? Do I like to be with a more homogeneous group?
- Do my grades qualify to be considered by a very selective school? What is my current GPA? Do I want a demanding academic environment? Do I plan to go to graduate school? Am I comfortable with a curriculum that offers a great deal of independent study? Do my study needs require more specialized facilities (how do I learn best)?
- Do I prefer on-campus or off-campus housing? Am I interested in fraternities or sororities? How important are intramural or intercollegiate sports? Do I want a campus that offers many cultural events, on and off campus?
- How important will costs be in my final choice? What kind of financial assistance will I need? Are opportunities for part-time jobs important? What qualifications do I have for scholarships?
- Am I interested in internships or in studying abroad? Do I want to do this more than once in college? Will this work with the intended area of study I wish to pursue?

You will not be able to answer all of these questions by yourself or all at one time; these are reflection questions to continue to ask yourself, discuss as a family and with your school counselor. College representatives, your school counselor, and your family can help you to find honest answers and guide your thinking.

Discuss the answers to these questions with your school counselor in relation to your academic profile (courses, grades, test scores and activities). Using the information from these discussions, you and your school counselor can begin to develop a list of colleges that meet your needs and expectations.

Commonly Used Terms

College Degrees

- Associate Degree** The degree awarded after the successful completion of a two-year program, usually at a community college.
- Bachelor's Degree** The degree awarded after the successful completion of a four-year program of study at a college or university.
- Masters Degree** The degree awarded at the completion of the first post-graduate program.
- Doctoral Degree** The degree awarded after intensive study in a particular field such as philosophy (Ph.D.), Medicine (M.D.), Education (E.D.) or Law (J.D.).

College Calendars

- Semester System** The most common calendar, where the academic year is divided into two relatively equal periods of approximately 16 weeks.
- Trimester System** A calendar which divides the academic year into three equal periods.
- Quarter System** Similar to the Trimester System, but usually includes a fourth, summer session.
- 4-1-4 System** A system where students carry four courses during the fall session, one course during the "January Term" (sometimes in an off-campus situation), and four courses in the spring session.
- Three-Two Program** A combined degree program at two cooperating institutions, the first three years at an undergraduate school and the final two years at an institution providing specialized study; degrees are awarded from both.

Admission Plans

- Matriculation** Enrollment into a college as a degree candidate.
- Early Admission** Admission to a college following completion of the junior year of high school.
- Early Decision (ED)** A plan where students apply in the early fall of their senior year and notification is typically sent by mid December; if accepted, a "commitment to attend" form is usually required along with withdrawal of all other college applications. A student may apply to only one college under Early Decision.
- Early Action (EA)** Similar to Early Decision except that if accepted, the applicant is **not** committed to attend the institution and other applications may still be submitted.
- Early Action (SC)** Single Choice Early Action is a great benefit program for those schools that offer it; it is non-binding, students find out typically before the holiday break, but students are not allowed to apply to any other school early.

Restrictive EA Restrictive Early Action is a non-binding early application option for students who have completed a thorough college search. Applicants agree not to apply to any other private college/university under an Early Action, Restrictive Early Action, Early Decision or Early Notification program. Applicants may apply to other colleges and universities under their Regular Decision option

Wait List A response to applicant indicating that his/her application is acceptable, but the school has reached its limit of accepted students. Wait listed students may be admitted after May 1st, if space becomes available.

Deferred Admission An admissions plan whereby a student applies to a college and is notified of acceptance but chooses to take a year off before beginning school. Such a decision requires the approval of the college.

Application Terms

Official Transcript An official transcript is one that bears the high school seal and is sent **directly** from the high school to the college.

Common Application A generic application form that can be completed and used for many different colleges.

Secondary School Report A form required by colleges to be filled out by the counselor. This form is included in the “package” that is sent by the LHS Counseling Office to colleges or universities. The “package” also includes an official transcript, counselor letter of recommendation, grading scale and a school profile. Standardized test scores are not included.

Testing Terminology

Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test (PSAT)

Test is taken in the fall of a student’s sophomore or junior year in preparation for the SAT. The PSAT score serves as the basis for selection of National Merit Scholars (only students in their junior year can qualify) who receive public recognition and financial awards.

Scholastic Assessment Tests (SAT)

Tests are given on specific dates throughout the year as determined by College Board at specified locations and may be required by colleges for admission. The sections include Reading, Writing and Language and Math with an optional Essay. Score is out of 1600: 800 for Math, 800 for Evidence-Based Reading and Writing. Optional Essay receives a separate score. Sub-scores and insight scores available.

SAT Subject Tests

Tests are given in specific high school subjects and scored from 200-800 to demonstrate level of accomplishment. A number of colleges may require these tests in addition to the SAT.

American College Test (ACT)

A four-part test consisting of English, Mathematics, Reading and Science and may be required by colleges for admission. Individual and composite scores range from 1 to 36.

Advanced Placement Examination (AP)

Subject-oriented college level tests given in May, and usually taken by high school students completing advanced placement courses; college credit usually granted based on scores (1 is low and 5 is high), enabling students to pursue further study in a field or shorten their college career.

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)

An exam used in conjunction with or as a substitute for the SAT or ACT for students whose native language is not English.

College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB)

More commonly called the "College Board" this organization regulates the Admission Testing Program which includes the Scholastic Assessment Tests and the Advanced Placement Tests.

CEEB Code or School Code

The code number by which a college can identify each high school. Livingston High School's code is 310705.

Educational Testing Service (ETS)

Educational Testing Service is the operational phase of many College Board programs, including development and administration of all testing programs. ETS is a separate, independently governed non-profit organization.

FAFSA

Free Application for Federal Student Aid -Federal student aid is financial assistance that is available through the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Federal Student Aid.

CSS PROFILE

College Scholarship Service Profile is a scholarship and financial aid application that is available online and only required by some institutions.

How To Visit/Interview At A College

There is no better way to learn about the educational program, facilities, spirit, and atmosphere of a college than to visit the campus, particularly when the college is in session.

Your college visit should help you do the following:

- Learn firsthand what college admissions people expect of you
- Experience the academic atmosphere of the college
- See where you are going to eat, sleep, study, attend classes, worship, and take part in recreation
- Talk with other students
- Observe firsthand the kind of community where the college is located
- Evaluate your college needs-what students wear, how they furnish their rooms, and what the bookstore offers

When To Visit

The spring of the junior year, summer between junior and senior year and the fall of the senior year are the most appropriate times to make your visits.

Plan your visits when colleges are in session so you will get an idea of day-to-day college life. A Homecoming Weekend may give you a glamorized picture.

If you want an on-campus or virtual interview, contact the Admissions Office to schedule. It may be necessary to schedule your interview well in advance for the highly selective colleges.

How To Prepare For A College Visit

- Call the college or visit the college website to sign up for a guided tour and information session.
- Research the college so that you will have the basic information in mind and will be able to ask informed and specific questions.
- Talk to at least two or three college students while on campus; get their points of view about academic and social life.
- Meet with Advisors and faculty to learn directly about classes, programs and opportunities.

Interview Tips

- For your first interview, do not go to your first-choice college. Try to visit your first-choice college after you have had the experience of being interviewed and feel more confident.
- When you go for your interview, be respectably dressed. Dress in good taste, as if you were going for a job interview.

- Be certain to get the name of the person who interviews you; as soon as you get home, write a thank you card or email.
- Know the names and authors of books you have read recently in English and/or history. Be prepared to make informed comments about these pieces of literature. Be informed of current events and major issues in the world.
- Be honest and sincere with your interviewer. The interviewer really does want to get to know you.
- Be sure to have questions for the interviewer.
- Be prepared to respond to, "Tell me about yourself."

What Should I Try To Learn About Each College?

As you tour each campus, some questions you might keep in mind are listed below:

Instructional Programs & Facilities

- What courses are required of all entering freshmen?
- How adequate are the instructional facilities for the department or major area of study in which you are interested?
- Are the laboratory facilities adequate?
- Do freshmen have an opportunity to take at least some courses with the major professors?
- What is the typical class size for freshmen? For upperclassmen?
- What are the library facilities?
- Is there a cooperative work experience program in the department in which you are interested?
- May qualified upperclassmen transfer at the end of two or three years to a specialized program such as engineering, law, dentistry, art, forestry, etc?
- What is the geographic composition of the student body? Is it more or less difficult for students from your area to gain admission?
- What opportunities are there for internships, research and study abroad?

Campus & Buildings

- Does the campus appeal to you? Is it relatively easy or difficult to get around?
- Is it near the local community? Is there access to stores and other facilities? If not, are the campus facilities adequate?
- Do the students of the college take pride in a clean and well-ordered campus?

Housing & Dining Facilities

- Where do freshmen live?
- What furnishings will you need to bring?
- Are the study facilities satisfactory to you?
- What are the dining room arrangements? How many meals a week are included?
- Can special diets be arranged for students who need them?
- Is there a good snack bar or other “eating and meeting” place on or near the campus?

Advisement & Health Services

- What members of the college staff are available to discuss personal problems, vocational plans, academic adjustments, and choice of courses?
- What health services are provided on campus? In hospitals?
- What part-time job opportunities are available?

Religious Facilities

- Is there a house of worship of your denomination accessible?
- Are there religious social organizations available on campus?

Social & Recreational Facilities

- Will the social centers or student union meet your needs?
- Are there fraternities and sororities on campus? What percentage of students belong to these groups?
- What are the major school-sponsored activities?

A Student's Guide To Letters Of Recommendation

Who To Ask

Most colleges/universities ask for one to three letters of recommendation. Some may specify which subject area teachers are preferred, some may allow you to send letters from any adult who knows you well; be sure to examine each application carefully to see what each school requires, then make a plan. Please ask the same two or three teachers to write the recommendation for all of your schools.

Teachers

Count on asking two teachers who know you well. The Common Application Teacher Evaluation form asks about intellectual promise, enthusiasm, and initiative, as well as such specifics as "written expression of ideas," "effective class discussion" and "disciplined work habits." Think about which teachers might respond most positively and specifically to these questions and who might write the best letter. If possible, ask two teachers who know you in different ways and can address different strengths and dimensions to your personality. Teachers do not have to be from AP or Honors classes and they do not have to be teachers from classes in which you got an A; sometimes the teacher who knows you worked very hard and overcame obstacles to earn a lower grade can say the most wonderful things about you! If you know what you will study in college, you can ask teachers in related subjects but this is not required.

School Counselor

Your School Counselor is honored and happy to write a letter and complete counselor or school report forms on your behalf. Be sure to have completed the "Student Brag Sheet" in Naviance before you give these forms to your counselor. Please know that you do not need to provide these school report forms, unless the materials cannot be sent to the college through Naviance.

Additional References

Some schools allow supplemental references from coaches, employers, club advisors, supervisors of your volunteer service, etc. Other schools discourage them. If a school states that a reference is "optional," consider it a requirement and send one. Recommendations from prominent citizens or celebrities who do not know you will not help your case; in fact, admissions officials often view these letters negatively.

When To Ask

Teachers at LHS can get an overwhelming number of requests for letters of recommendation and many teachers have their own systems in place for managing requests. Toward the end of junior year, approach the teachers you are considering requesting a letter from and ask if they are able to write a recommendation for you and if they have any requirements to help support them in this endeavor. You should also request the teacher(s) through Naviance. Once complete, you will need to fill out a Teacher Recommendation Form, found in Naviance. This information will be discussed in further detail when you meet individually with your School Counselor in the spring of your junior year. Some teachers prefer requests in writing, some may have an informational form to fill out, some may want to know far in advance, etc. Understanding what a teacher wants and then doing it will definitely benefit you.

How To Ask

In the spring of junior year, formally ask the teacher to write you a letter of recommendation. Have a conversation with the teacher, in person. It is not recommended to send an email to the teacher, during a fire drill, during class, while the teacher is busy at lunch duty or any time when many other students are present. Find a quiet time, before or after school, when the teacher can talk one-on-one with you and consider your request thoughtfully. Don't walk in with forms in hand, assuming he or she will say yes. Ask first.

Remember, teachers may limit the number of letters they will write, so if you're among the last to ask, they may not be able to accommodate your request.

Once You've Asked

Make a list of dates by which recommendations must be submitted. Are you applying early decision or early action? The forms might be due as early as October. A month before the first deadline is a good time to give the teachers the forms and envelopes they will need. Remember, teachers are busy, with many demands on their time, and with papers continuously flowing into and out of their lives. Anything you can do to help organize these papers makes a good impression and helps ensure your letters are submitted on time. It is not pushy to kindly follow up with the teacher of a deadline a week before it arrives; if the date has slipped his or her mind, you will both be glad of the reminder.

If the teacher has a system they would like you to follow, please follow it. If the teacher does not, here are some guidelines:

- Email the teacher with the completed Teacher Brag Sheet.
- You could even visit your teacher in senior year and give the teacher a folder with this brag sheet and the list of all of the schools you are applying to, with the college's application deadlines included.
- Any school that may require a teacher letter to be mailed, will require providing the teacher with a business-sized envelope with the name and address of the admissions office and postage already on the envelope. One stamp on the envelope will suffice.
- Remember to thank your teacher for taking the time to support you in your post-secondary application process! And to keep them informed as you hear from programs, and ultimately make your decision!

Good luck! As always, reach out to your School Counselor for any questions!

Resources

College Search

ACT	Official site of the ACT, which includes college search, online applications, advice and timelines, financial aid information and estimator, and information on the ACT.
Collegeboard	Comprehensive site sponsored by the College Board; links to many other sites.
The Common Application	Official site of the common application where you can download the application, view the list of participating colleges, and get application information.
The Coalition Application	The Coalition for Access, Affordability, and Success was developed to improve the college application process for all students as they search for and apply to their perfect college. The platform provides a single, centralized toolkit for students to organize, build, and refine their applications to numerous institutions.
Princeton Review	Site includes a college search, online applications, test prep, financial aid and scholarship information, advice and information about the company's courses and publications.
NACAC	Sponsored by the National Association for College Admission Counseling, a free program designed to help students and parents navigate the college search, admission, and financial aid processes
Petersons	Site of the company that publishes the guidebooks; includes a college search, information on financial aid, test prep information, online applications, and college information.

Scholarships & Financial Aid

FAFSA	Online application and information for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid
HESAA	Higher Education Student Assistance Authority
Fastweb	Comprehensive, free scholarship search service
Naviance	Scholarship page of LHS Naviance website
LHS School Counseling Newsletter	Posted on the LHS School Counseling website (Fall, Winter and Spring editions)

College Admission Testing

School Codes: CEEB Code - 310705

SAT Test Center #: 31445

ACT Test Center Code: 238730

Student State ID # located on transcript

(Please make sure you include our CEEB Code on all tests so that Livingston receives a copy of your scores)

[SAT](#)

The SAT is a three-hour and forty-five-minute test that measures critical reading, writing, and mathematical reasoning skills students have developed over time and skills they need to be successful academically.

The essay will always be the first section of the SAT, and the 10-minute multiple-choice writing section will always be the final section. The remaining eight 25-minute sections can appear in any order, as can the two 20-minute sections. Test takers sitting next to each other in the same testing session may have test books with entirely different sections.

Each section of the SAT is scored on a scale of 200-800, and the writing section will contain two sub scores. The SAT is typically taken by high school juniors and seniors. It is administered seven times a year in the U.S., Puerto Rico and U.S. Territories, and six times a year overseas.

[SAT Subject Tests](#)

The SAT II is a one hour examination which measures the student's level of achievement in certain subject areas. Some colleges require or recommend up to three SAT II's for admission and/or placement. Students can take up to three SAT Subject Tests on one test administration.

[ACT](#)

The ACT is a four part, two hour and forty minute test of the skills needed to succeed in college work. It deals more with skills rather than specific subject matter. It tests in the following four areas: English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science Reasoning.

College Application Responsibilities

The college application process is a collaborative effort among the students, parents, and school counseling personnel. The list below is a guideline to the general responsibilities of this process.

School Counseling Office Responsibilities

High School Supporting Documentation:

- Secondary School Report (SSR)
- School counselor recommendation
- Official transcript
- Senior year grades (senior “snapshot,” formerly Marking Period 1 Report Card)
- [LHS School Profile](#)

The School Counseling Department will send the supporting documentation listed above.

Student & Parent Responsibilities

- Complete and submit applications
- Arrange for teacher recommendations
- Arrange for SAT scores to be sent directly from College Board or ACT scores to be sent directly from ACT
- Submit the application electronically
- Complete financial aid and scholarship applications
- Complete on Naviance:
 - Student Brag Street
 - Parents’ Point of View
 - FERPA Consent

For each college to which you are applying, complete a **Request to Submit Application Materials** and return to your counselor (the appropriate material will be discussed in the fall at the senior college presentation).

Allow at least **15 school days** before the college’s application deadline.

Making The Most Of A College Visit & Career Fair

Before The Fair

- Print labels with your name, address, high school and year of graduation. This will save you time in filling out information cards.
- Spend time determining which type of school best suits you!
- Look over the list of colleges attending that evening and decide which schools to visit first, and then find schools about which you want to learn more.
- Bring a small notebook in case you want to write down any information from your conversation with the representatives. **Record the representatives contact information!**
- Plan to bring a bag or backpack to carry all of the material you collect.
- Make a plan to bring a parent/guardian because they will be involved in your research and decisions.

Questions For The Representatives

- What makes your school unique?
- What is your school best-known for?
- What don't you like about your college?
- What do you like best about your school?
- What are you looking for in a prospective student?
- What percentage of your students remains at your institution for the full four years?
- What did your last freshmen class look like statistically? SATs, GPA?
- What are your most popular majors? What degrees do you offer?
- Are interviews required? How can I set up an interview?
- What percentage of students lives on campus?
- What is the social atmosphere? What are some of the organizations and clubs that I could join? What kinds of sports and extracurricular activities are offered?
- What is the percentage of minority students?
- What kind of academic support is available? Tutors, learning labs, writing centers?

- What types of aid do you offer? What percentage of the students receives aid? Is aid academic or need based?
- How do I find out about grants and scholarships offered by your school?
- What percentage of students works? How easy is it to obtain a job/internship on campus?
- How do you assign faculty advisors?
- How large is the city or town?
- What is your policy with Advanced Placement Courses?
- How large are freshmen classes? Who teaches these classes- graduate assistants or permanent staff?

After The College & Career Fair

- Discuss with your parents your general impressions of the schools with whom you spoke.
- File the material you gathered so that you can locate it easily.
- Plan to visit the campuses and take an official tour of the schools you found particularly interesting.

Staying Organized using the LHS Digital Toolkit

This is an online collection of lessons to further support your post-secondary search and application process! Lessons include:

- Searching for colleges online
- Creating your resume
- Asking someone to be a reference/recommender
- Organizing college information and your applications in google sheets

For senior year, additional resources include:

- Drafting your college essay
- Preparing for a college interview
- Preparing for the FAFSA (financial aid application)

To access this toolkit, [visit the site here](#)

- Click “Sign in” in the top right
- Sign in with your Google account
- Click “I am a student”
- Click “Join a class” and enter class code: **wxx434**