

KENTUCKY COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL



COLLEGE COUNSELING HANDBOOK

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KENTUCKY COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL

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KCD College Counseling Web site: www.kcd.org/counseling.htm

College Counseling Philosophy

KCD's COLLEGE COUNSELING PROGRAM provides our families with individualized guidance and support throughout the process of choosing and applying to colleges. We understand that each family has unique concerns and expectations, and our counselors can help direct students to colleges and universities that are appropriate to their needs.

About the Program

KCD's college counseling program is distinguished by a high level of individual attention, the experience and knowledge of its counselors, and the structured guidance that the counseling office provides to students.

1. **Individual attention.** Our counselors meet individually with each student throughout the college search and admission process. This individual attention

means that our counselors get to know each student and are able to make recommendations based on his or her unique concerns and expectations.

2. **Experience.** Our counselors have extensive experience in teaching, college admission, financial aid, and athletic recruitment. Their in-depth knowledge of the admissions process provides students with invaluable insights into the admission process, the application presentation and essay, the financial aid process, and more.
3. **Knowledge.** Each of our counselors spends time each year visiting college campuses. This first-hand knowledge enables them not only to recommend a range of schools that may meet the student's individual needs, interests, and abilities, but also to maintain strong relations with admission officers at a variety of colleges and universities
4. **Structured guidance.** Our counselors provide step-by-step guidance over the course of each student's high school career. Students generally make their initial contact with our counselors to discuss course selections during their freshman and sophomore years. Every junior student meets a number of times with one or both of our counselors, and these contacts become much more frequent during the application period during the student's senior year

Meet the Counselors

Danny Easley joined KCD as director of college counseling in 2007. Mr. Easley earned his bachelor's degree in government and his master's in education from the University of Notre Dame. Most recently, Mr. Easley served as the associate director of admissions at the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, Georgia, where he was responsible for supervising and coordinating the functions of the Office of Undergraduate

Admission. Before joining Georgia Tech, he worked as an admission counselor at Millsaps College in Jackson, Mississippi. Mr. Easley has served as a member of the Coca-Cola Scholarship Program Review Committee as well as a charter member of the Georgia ACT Advisory Board. He is a member of the National Association of College Admission Counseling, the Southern Association of College Admission Counseling, and the Kentucky Association for Secondary and College Admission Counseling.

George Jansing has served as college counselor at KCD since 1986 and has directed the program since 1990. His emphasis is always on providing families with information that is current, reliable, and appropriate to their individual needs and interests. During his tenure, over 70 percent of our graduates have been admitted to their "first-choice" colleges. Each year, Mr. Jansing makes personal visits to a number of campuses and professional conferences to develop and maintain good relations between KCD and a wide range of colleges and universities. He is a member of the National Association for College Admission Counseling, the Southern Association for College Admission Counseling, and the Kentucky Association for Secondary and College Admission Counseling, where he has made numerous conference presentations. Mr. Jansing is also a member of the KCD English department and has classroom experience with most KCD students, which enhances his awareness of their academic strengths and concerns.

Timelines

Freshman Year

All Year: Work as hard as you can in your classes. Earn the best grades of which you are capable.

Get involved in extracurricular activities—athletics, clubs, community service. See where your interests lie and make yourself an active member of our school community.

February: Tell your parents about the college counseling meeting for parents of students in grades 8–10. Parents—please attend!

March: When planning your schedule for sophomore year, sign up for advanced classes as appropriate.

Sophomore Year

- All Year:** Continue to work as hard as you can in your classes. Earn the best grades of which you are capable.
Continue your involvement in extracurricular activities—athletics, clubs, community service. Consider trying something new this year or taking on a leadership role in an activity.
- Sept.–Oct.:** Take advantage of opportunities that KCD offers for preparation for the PSAT. You will get practice time in some of your classes. The school will also offer a weekend preparation class.
- October:** Try your best on the PSAT, even though it is only truly a practice test for you. You will be able to assess your areas of strength and your needs for improvement when you receive your results.
Attend the KCD College Fair with your parents.
- February:** Attend the sophomore/junior college planning workshop.
- March:** When planning your schedule for junior year, sign up for Advanced Placement and advanced classes as appropriate.

Junior Year

- All Year:** Continue to work as hard as you can in your classes. Earn the best grades of which you are capable.
Continue your involvement in extracurricular activities, especially by taking on leadership roles.
- Sept.–Nov.:** Attend meetings with representatives of colleges who visit KCD.

- Sept.–Oct.:** Take advantage of opportunities that KCD offers for preparation for the PSAT. You will get practice time in some of your classes. The school will also offer a weekend preparation class.
- October:** Attend the KCD College Fair with your parents.
Take the PSAT.
- December:** Register for the January SAT.
Do a few practice tests this month as you prepare for the SAT.
Attend the college counseling meeting with your parents.
Hear KCD grads tell about college life at Rap Day.
- January:** Take the SAT. Get a high score!
- January–May:** Meet with your college counselor for a first interview and further planning. Establish good communication about your search with your counselor. Establish your five–six top priorities for your search.
Research colleges and universities in which you have some interest.
Plan campus visits, tour, and interview arrangements.
Research and register for summer programs.
- February:** Plan your senior year schedule with the help of your college counselor, your advisor, and your parents. Take courses that show colleges that you are willing to challenge yourself and to take high levels of courses offered at KCD as appropriate.
Register for the March SAT.
Attend the sophomore/junior college planning workshop.
- March:** Take the SAT.

Register for the May SAT or SAT Subject Tests. If you take the SAT Subject Tests, consider registering for the maximum of three exams for the test date.

Register for the April ACT.

Do a couple of practice tests as you prepare to take the ACT for the first time.

Visit colleges during Spring Break.

April: Take the ACT. Score high!

May–June: Take the SAT or SAT Subject Tests.

Take AP exams for your junior year courses.

Prepare diligently for your KCD final exams. These are important!

With your counselor, complete a list of 6–12 college possibilities.

Summer: Plan more college visits. When you visit colleges, take notes!

Request applications and admission materials.

Participate in summer programs.

Senior Year

All Year: Continue to work as hard as you can in your classes. Earn the best grades of which you are capable.

Continue your involvement in extracurricular activities, especially by taking on leadership roles.

Keep your counselor informed of your list of schools, scholarships for which you will apply, and other developments. Communication is the key to getting everything done well and on time!

Sept.–Oct.: Meet with your counselor to discuss your summer college visits and to revise your list of schools.

Review your transcript.

Register for retakes of the SAT, SAT Subject Tests, and ACT if necessary.

Start to work on any essays you have to write as part of your applications. Give yourself plenty of time to brainstorm, draft, share your drafts with your counselor, and revise more than once.

Sept.–Nov.: Work hard. First trimester grades matter—a lot!

Meet with representatives of colleges who visit KCD.

Complete your Application Checklist, noting all important deadlines for applications and scholarships in particular. Make a plan for completing everything well in advance of the deadlines.

Start looking for scholarships.

October: Attend the KCD College Fair. Bring your parents!

Contact teachers about writing recommendations. Say “thank you!”

Retake the SAT, ACT, and SAT Subject Tests if necessary.

Complete Early Action/Early Decision applications.

November: Mail Early Action/Early Decision applications, which typically have an application deadline of Nov. 1 or Nov. 15.

Retake the SAT, ACT, and SAT Subject Tests if necessary.

Complete Regular Decision applications.

December: Obtain financial aid forms from your counselor.

Complete Regular Decision applications.

January–March: File financial aid forms.

April: Receive responses from colleges.

Timelines

April–May: Meet with your counselor to discuss your options.
Make a final decision and send a deposit to that school.
Notify all other colleges of your decision.
Write “thank you” notes to teachers and counselors.

June: Graduate! Congratulations!

Testing

The PSAT

THE PSAT IS A MAJOR EVENT in the early part of your junior year. Originally, this test was intended as a preparation for the SAT, which you will take later on, and that is still its primary purpose. KCD also administers the PSAT to sophomores as a practice opportunity.

Content

Reading Comprehension
Math
Writing Skills (no timed essay)

Registration

KCD will register you.

Registration Fee

KCD will cover this cost for the PSAT only.

Test Date

See Appendix A, “Testing,” for the date of this year’s test.

Location

The test will be held at KCD.

Scoring

Scores are calculated using the following formula:

Correct Answer = +1 point

Incorrect Answer = $-\frac{1}{4}$ point

No Response = No effect either way

Standard Score

Your standard score is calculated by ranking you with all those who took the test in the country. Your standard score for each section will fall between 20 and 80.

Uses for the PSAT

The Selection Index: The National Merit Scholarship Foundation uses the PSAT as an entry standard for its scholarship program. To calculate your Selection Index for this competition, simply add your Verbal, Math, and Writing Skills scores.

There is no sure way to predict what Selection Index will qualify a student as a National Merit Semifinalist. However, it is likely that a Selection Index of 206 or higher will be necessary.

Practice: Other than the Selection Index, your PSAT score is used for very little, so don’t get too worked up about it. For most students, the PSAT simply provides an opportunity to practice for the SAT in actual test-taking conditions. Colleges do not require you to report your PSAT score.

College Entrance Examinations

Grading practices vary a great deal from one high school to another. As a result, colleges often like to consider other criteria in evaluating applicants. The SAT and the ACT are two nationally standardized tests that provide an idea of how a student stacks up in relation to all the other students nationwide. Most colleges will allow a student to present either test—or both of them—as part of the admission process. Your counselor is the best source of advice on this question.

The SAT

This test, in one form or another, has been administered for over fifty years by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) in Princeton, New Jersey. It is described as a test of your ability to perform academic work at the college level. It is not an I.Q. test. Find out everything you need to know at www.collegeboard.com. Your counselors also have information booklets and practice books available in the College Counseling Office.

Content

Reading Comprehension

Math

Writing Skills (including a timed essay)

Registration And Test Dates

You must register yourself for this test. You can do so online at www.collegeboard.com or by mailing a registration form, which is available in the College Counseling Office.

See Appendix A, “Testing,” for this year’s and next year’s testing dates.

Registration Fees

See Appendix A, “Testing,” for information on this year’s fees.

Location

The test is administered at various locations throughout Louisville and southern Indiana. The College Board will assign you a location.

Scoring

Raw scores are calculated using the following formula:

Correct Answer = +1 point

Incorrect Answer = $-\frac{1}{4}$ point or $\frac{1}{3}$ point, depending on the section

No Response = No effect either way

Scaled Score: Your scaled score is calculated by comparing your raw score with those earned by the 1.5 million other students taking the test on the same test date and with scores of previous years. Your scaled score for each section will fall between 200 and 800.

Statistically, roughly 65 percent of the scaled scores fall into the middle range, and about 17 percent will fall at either the high or the low extremes. The lowest group is assigned standardized scores of 200–400, the middle group with scores of 400–600, and the upper extreme with scores of 600–800. Female and male students score about the same on the Verbal part; however, there has always been about a 40-point difference on the math test, in favor of male students.

The ACT

The ACT is administered by the American College Testing Program, with headquarters in Iowa City, Iowa. Whereas the SAT attempts to measure a student's aptitude for learning, the ACT is somewhat more interested in how much a student has already learned. Find out everything that you need to know about the ACT test at www.act.org. Your counselors also have information

booklets and practice books available in the College Counseling Office.

At Kentucky Country Day School, somewhere around 60 percent of our students take the ACT. Some students find that they do markedly better on either the SAT or the ACT, so it's probably worth taking both tests. To figure which test score is higher, consult a conversion chart, such as the one available through the College Board at

<http://www.collegeboard.com/sat/cbsenior/html/statoof.html>

Content

English
Mathematics
Reading
Science Reasoning
Optional Timed Writing.

The Timed Writing component was added to the ACT on February of 2005. For information on which colleges are requiring the optional writing portion of the ACT, visit

<http://actrs19.act.org/app3/writPrefRM/>

Registration And Test Dates

You must register yourself for this test. You can do so online at www.act.org or by mailing a registration form, which is available in the College Counseling Office.

See Appendix A, "Testing," for this year's and next year's testing dates.

Registration Fees

See Appendix A for information on this year's fees.

Location

The test is given at various locations throughout Louisville and southern Indiana. ACT will assign you a location.

Scoring

Scores are calculated according to the following formula:

Correct Answer = +1 point

Incorrect Answer = No effect

No Response = Answer them all! There's no penalty!

Subscores: Each of the four sections receives a score ranging from 1–36 points.

Composite Score: This is the average of the four subscores. The highest score possible is a 36, with the national average being around 21.

The SAT Subject Tests

As a supplement to the SAT, ETS offers the SAT Subject Tests. These are one-hour tests in just about every subject covered in a high school curriculum, from English composition to Spanish literature to studio art. Subject tests are offered in twenty areas. The purpose of these tests is to demonstrate how much a student has learned in each discipline. Many universities require from one to three SAT Subject Tests. You can take up to three SAT Subject Tests on a particular test date, but you cannot take SAT Subject Tests on the same date when you take the SAT. At KCD, we generally recommend that you take SAT Subject Tests after the end of your junior year.

Content

A full list of subjects is available online at

<http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/about/SATII.html>

Registration And Test Dates

You must register yourself for these tests. You can do so online at www.collegeboard.com or by mailing a registration form, which is available in the College Counseling Office. Not all subjects are available on all test dates. Details are available at

<http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/calenfees/calensubj.htm>

See Appendix A for this year's and next year's testing dates.

Registration Fees

See Appendix A for information on this year's fees.

Location

The test is given at various locations throughout Louisville and southern Indiana. The College Board will assign you a location.

Scoring

Raw scores: raw scores are calculated according to the following formula:

Correct Answer = +1 point

Incorrect Answer = $-\frac{1}{4}$ point or $\frac{1}{3}$ point, depending on the section

No Response = No effect either way

Scaled scores: Scaled scores are calculated by comparing your raw score with those earned by other students taking the test on the same test date and with scores of previous years. Your scaled score for each test will fall between 200 and 800.

National averages vary a great deal for these tests, so that the 50th percentile on the English test is around 520, while in physics, it is over 600.

Reporting Your Scores

Whether you take the SAT and SAT Subject Tests or the ACT, it is your responsibility to ensure that the scores are properly submitted to the colleges. Many colleges will accept a report of scores as they appear on your KCD transcript; others require a report sent directly from the testing agency.

When you register to take one of these tests, you are allowed to request that your scores be sent directly to three or four colleges, without paying an additional fee. Later on, you will have to pay \$9.50 per SAT score report and \$8.50 per ACT score report.

There are a couple of things to consider about sending your scores. First, if you ask the testing agency to report them, the report will include all of your previous scores, some of which may not be so good. Second, if you take both the SAT and then the ACT, we can choose the better score before reporting either to the colleges, but only if you have not already requested the testing agency to report them directly.

Test Preparation

There is a very wide range of these programs. Some of them require a quite significant commitment of time and money; some do not. About half of KCD parents, given the choice, decide to enroll their children in one or another of these preparation programs.

Our opinion of this whole process revolves around three issues. First, we are quite concerned about the perception among some families that a test prep course will somehow make up for poor scholastic performance or that a course can substitute for everyday class work. A student who is struggling in his courses at KCD is ill advised to take on several additional hours of SAT or ACT tutoring.

Second, some students and parents seem to view the prep course as a kind of lottery, in which some lucky winners will get very high SAT or ACT scores without

much real effort on their part. The process simply doesn't work that way.

Most importantly, we wonder what a young person might otherwise be doing with the time spent on an SAT or ACT prep course. We believe strongly that KCD is a place where young people should be playing on sports teams, singing in the chorale, acting in the school plays, or taking part in any of a whole range of activities that are important aspects of high school life. We wonder if it is wise to spend all one's time trying to get into college, if one must sacrifice the many joys of being in high school in order to achieve this aim.

With all these concerns in mind, we do not endorse any specific SAT preparation course. We do offer preparation here at school; in English and in math classes, SAT and ACT test materials are often used. We also offer small group sessions on the weekends before a test date, and sometimes KCD teachers take on private tutoring. In all of these options, our objective is to provide solid instruction without intruding too much into a student's already limited time and energy. Your counselor can provide the details of these tutoring plans if you are interested.

Family Connection

KCD's COLLEGE COUNSELING OFFICE offers an on-line college counseling program for students and their families. Family Connection is a tool that provides a link between college counselors, students, and parents to improve college and career planning. Family Connection provides many key features that will help students stay organized throughout the college search and admissions process.

Key features include

- a customized and individualized college planning and advising Web site;
- college and career planning resources;
- an online college search linked with KCD's application history;
- graphs, scholarships, course catalogs, and other college related information;
- interactive surveys.

Family Connection

To access Family Connection, students and parents will need a personal access code, which your counselor will provide in the student's sophomore year. You can use that code to register for your own Family Connection account. Starting in the junior year, students will be expected to check their Family Connection account regularly in order to update their profile, check important information, and maintain their prospective college list.

The College Search

Consider Your Priorities

BEFORE YOU EVEN START LOOKING at specific colleges and universities, you should spend a good bit of time considering factors that are important when you think about the right colleges for you.

First, be practical and recognize the obvious. If you have all Ds so far at KCD, we can safely rule out Stanford. If you hate cold weather, we can skip Bowdoin. If you can't exist without seeing your family at least once a week, then Southern Methodist University is probably out. In other words, before you can choose a college, you have to look at yourself.

There are a number of factors you should keep in mind when considering a school, including the following list of questions.

Location

If you look at a map of the United States and place the point of a compass in the center of Louisville, you can draw a circle that will pass through Nashville and which will come close to passing through Indianapolis, St. Louis, and Oxford, Ohio.

Roughly speaking, every college within this circle can be reached by car easily, and anyone attending one of these colleges can drive home to Louisville at almost any time. Those outside the circle, on the other hand, require a good deal more planning and effort. This is a crucial distinction. How much will it matter to you if you can't drive home very often? How much will it matter to your parents? This is the first, and probably the hardest, question that your family must confront.

Geography/Climate

Do you want to have a full change of seasons each year? Or would you like to live in a place that is warm year round? Would you instead prefer a place with a colder climate than that of Louisville?

Would you like to have the opportunity to do certain kinds of outdoor activities, such as hiking in the mountains, skiing, or taking part in water sports?

Type of College

Is it likely you will want to study at a university, where many, many degree programs are available, or at a college, with probably fewer programs?

What is the academic calendar like? Would you like to study in thirteen-week semesters or six-week quarters? When does the academic year begin and end?

Do you want to attend a college that operates under an honor system?

Student Body

What percent of the students live in the residence halls?
What percent commute?

How diverse is the student body in terms of geography, race, and ethnicity?

What percent of the freshmen return for their sophomore years?

What percent of them graduate within five years?

What percent go on to graduate school?

Curriculum and Majors

How many courses are required, and how many are elective?

Will I have to pass a calculus course? A literature course?

Will I get credit for my Advanced Placement courses?

Housing

What types of residence hall accommodations are available?

What eating options are offered?

Who is on campus during weekends?

What are the fraternity and sorority houses like?

Facilities

How accessible is the library?

What recreational options exist?

Where are the computers? Do the residence halls have wireless Internet access?

What health services are available?

Advising

Who will help me pick courses and schedule my program?

Who will help me with personal problems?

Who will help me find a job when I graduate?

Selectivity

What is the range of SAT or ACT scores in the freshman class? How do my scores compare?

Am I willing to attend if my scores are among the lowest?

How many applicants are there each year? How many of those who are accepted actually attend? Where else do they apply?

Costs

Does the college pledge to meet 100% of my need, if I am accepted?

Does the college offer merit-based aid? How is this aid integrated into a financial aid package?

How realistic is the college's estimate of a student's annual cost of attendance?

Am I willing to graduate with a sizable student loan balance?

Safety

What has been the college's experience in recent years with crime, especially violent crime?

What precautions are being taken?

Would I be afraid to walk across this campus at midnight?

Campus Climate

Does the college have a particular political climate? Does the student body?

How do my own views compare with the dominant climate of the campus?

Special Programs

Does the college have a study abroad program? How many students are involved?

Does the college have an honors program? What are the criteria for admission? What special opportunities are available through this program?

Athletics and Extracurricular Activities

Does the college have a team for the sport or sports that I am interested in playing? What division is this sport? Would I have a chance to play on this team?

Does the college have a club for an activity in which I hope to continue my involvement? Does the college have a club for a new interest that I intend to pursue in college?

Research Your Options

After you have considered a wide variety of priorities, your college counselor can help you to pinpoint your five or six top priorities. Keep these top items in mind as you begin the next major step in your college search: researching colleges and universities. We recommend that you use a chart to organize information about schools as you conduct your research. A sample chart can be found at the end of this book.

Your overall goal is to learn as much as you can about as many colleges as possible. Though this might initially seem to be a daunting task, you are lucky to have many resources to consult for this information.

Resources in the College Counseling Office

Viewbooks: We also have an extensive collection of viewbooks and catalogues from numerous colleges and universities, together with various other publications that the colleges use to inform you about themselves.

Reference books: These references include *351 Best Colleges*, *The Princeton Review*, and *The College Board's Book of Majors*. We also have many reference books to help you prepare for SATs and the ACT, as well as guidebooks about writing college essays.

Web Sites of Colleges and Universities

Colleges and universities know that often the first place where you will turn to learn about a school is its Web site. As a result, you will find a wealth of information about a school on its Web site. You can find out the history of the school, its mission, and its demographics. You can learn about what majors the school offers and even look at course listings. You can often check out the academic credentials of the most recent freshman class at the school. And, of course, you can find out much more. It might take you a little time to find exactly what you are looking for because every site is different, but in the meantime you will learn a lot about the school. If you have a question and can't find an answer to it on the Web site, then you have the perfect question to ask an admission representative when you meet with him or her in person or chat through e-mail or by phone.

Other Online Resources

Many resources exist online to give you information about specific schools and to help you compare schools. These resources include several quality search engines.

The College Board

<http://www.collegeboard.com/csearch/>

CollegeNET

http://www.collegenet.com/about/index_html

Colleges that Change Lives

<http://www.ctcl.com/index.php>

Peterson's

<http://www.petersons.com>

The Princeton Review

<http://www.princetonreview.com/college/research/default.asp>

The Women's College Coalition

<http://www.womenscolleges.org/>

Your College Counselor

Your KCD college counselors can suggest schools that might interest you and answer questions you have about schools in which you already have an interest. You will have a series of meetings with your counselor during your junior and senior years of high school as you build a potential list of schools, narrow that list, and then prepare your applications. Consult the "Timelines" section of this booklet for more detail about your work with your counselor.

Narrow the Field

As you conduct all of your research, you will probably discover that a rather large number of colleges can fulfill most or all of your expectations. That's good!

However, you probably don't want to apply to all of these colleges. The average KCD student applies to about four or five colleges, and that's probably a good number for you to consider. To narrow your choices, you'll have to go places and ask people. Ask your counselor! Ask any friends you have who attend these colleges. Ask

your uncles and aunts—anybody who knows anything about these places. Ask the college representatives who visit KCD each fall. Best of all, go to the campus and ask the people who live there. Read the next section to learn more about these methods of learning about schools.

Visits from College Representatives

Generally from September through November, representatives from approximately forty to fifty colleges and universities will visit our school to tell you about their institutions. These meetings, which are held in the College Counseling conference room, give you the opportunity to learn about a school from someone directly involved in its admission process. You also have a valuable opportunity to ask questions about the school.

To see a list of the schools that sent representatives to KCD during this year, go to the College Representative Visit page on the KCD Web site at

http://www.kcd.org/counseling_rep.htm

College Fair

In October of each year, KCD hosts a College Fair for all of the independent schools in Louisville. Held in our Upper School, the College Fair gives you the chance to talk with representatives from close to one hundred colleges and universities. Typically, representatives from the College Board and KHEAA, also known as The Student Loan People, are also available to provide information and answer questions. We encourage both you and your parents to attend the College Fair.

To view a list of colleges and universities that attended the fair this year, go to the following page on the KCD Web site at

http://www.kcd.org/counseling_fair.htm

Campus visits

Nothing in the entire college selection process makes a bigger impression than the day you visit the campus. For better or worse, many, many young people either fall in love with a college or decide they hate it, based on a few hours spent wandering around looking at unfamiliar buildings. Obviously, this isn't the recommended approach. Here are several tips toward making your campus visit a productive and enjoyable experience:

- Make your plans as far in advance as you can. In order to set up a student host and any appointments that are necessary, you'll have to plan your visit early. Give the college at least three to four weeks' notice.
- If you are going to miss a school day for the visit, be sure to fill out the College Visit Form, which is available from the Upper School Secretary. This form must be submitted at least a week in advance.
- Try to arrange a visit in which you arrive on a day when classes are in session, spend the night in a dormitory, and then see a little of what the place is like on the weekend. If there are currently Kentucky Country Day School grads on a campus, your counselor can assist in contacting one of them as a guide. Otherwise, the college admission office can arrange for your tour guide and your accommodations.
- Eat your meals where the students eat. The old saying about an army traveling on its stomach applies to college students just as much. Ask people about the meal plan—how much variety there is, how many choices of meals, and so on. This is a good way to strike up a conversation with a stranger, because ev-

ery college student in the world likes to talk about the food.

- Think of the facilities you might want to use if you were a student, and be sure to look these over in particular. Lots of colleges have elaborate exercise complexes, with pools, indoor tennis courts, bowling alleys, and so on. See what they have that you like. If you're interested in science, ask to see the labs, and ask people what equipment is available. Even if you can't stay overnight, be sure to see the inside of a residence hall. Don't be shocked; your room at home probably doesn't look that great either. However, some college residence halls are just awful, and you don't want to find that out too late.
- Read the campus newspaper and any bulletin boards you pass. You'll discover a good bit about the general tenor of activities in this way.
- Take notes. You may visit half a dozen colleges before your senior year is over, and you would be surprised how hard it is to remember specific things about any of them unless you write things down.
- Finally, absolutely, positively, without fail, send the Admission Counselor a thank-you note. If you forget to note down his or her name, your counselor can supply it. But don't fail to write the note.

Interview

Quite often, a campus visit will include a brief meeting with one of the admissions counselors. This might be an "interview"—but, more than likely, it isn't. Very few colleges use formal interviews anymore as an integral part of their admission procedures. Those that do require one usually do not require that a student travel to the campus for an interview. The vast majority of interviews are held in the student's hometown with a recent alum of the college, probably someone who has little other contact with the admission office.

Whether you have an interview on campus or with a local alum, you should keep certain things in mind:

- The interviewer is at least as anxious to interest you in the college as you are in making a good impression yourself. This is a two-way street.
- Prepare yourself for certain topics that are sure to come up in the interview. You will probably be asked how you became interested in the college, for example. You will be asked what you expect to study while there and what your present interests are.
- Don't make up things on the spot, and don't be afraid to say that you don't know something. There is absolutely nothing wrong in stating that you don't know yet what you might major in, but it is ill-advised to attempt to spontaneously decide on a major just because the question was asked.
- Prepare a few questions of your own, and not things that you could just as well have learned by reading the viewbook. Don't ask if the college has a field hockey team, for example; you should already know that. However, there is nothing wrong with asking how much time a varsity hockey player might need to spend away from campus during the season or what academic support the school provides for its student-athletes.
- Consider running a mock interview with your counselor, who can give particularized remarks about your approach.
- Arrive at the interview well in advance of the appointed time. Give yourself a chance to relax before you have to start. Dress neatly and appropriately. Everyone you meet on campus may be in rags and purple hair, but that doesn't mean the interviewer will want to see you look like that.
- Send a "thank-you" note to your interviewer. This must happen without fail. This means you'll need to remember his or her name, and that means you'll

have to write it down. You won't remember two days later, even though you think you will. If you feel uncertain about what to say in the note, your parents or your counselor can help. The critical points are brevity and sincerity.

- Remember that as a Kentucky Country Day student, you are probably just as well educated and just as articulate as anyone this college will be interviewing. So don't go into the experience thinking of yourself as the underdog, because you aren't.

A Few Final Tips

Deciding on which colleges you might apply to is a little like picking a date for the prom. You may think you are considering every possible angle before you decide, but there are always going to be important factors that you can never foresee. Keep in mind that there really isn't just one person with whom you could enjoy the prom—there are probably several. Similarly, there is no one “right” college for you. Lots of colleges offer what you're looking for; you just have to find them.

And finally, the prom doesn't last forever, and neither does your obligation to a college. If you choose a college, enroll, and then realize you've made a big mistake, you don't have to suffer through four years there. You can go somewhere else the next year, and your KCD counselors will help with the transfer process.

In choosing colleges, then, keep a realistic perspective. You can't predict everything, you can't control everything, but you're not committed for life.

And one last thing. When you do go to the prom, a certain amount depends on your date, but most of the responsibility for your happiness depends on you—on what attitude you take and how much you try to make the prom a success. It's the same with choosing a college. The biggest factor of all is you!

The Selection Process

Preparing Yourself to be a Candidate for Admission

AT A SCHOOL SUCH AS KCD, many students hope to attend colleges whose admission policies are highly selective. Georgetown University, for example, regularly receives fifteen applications for each one place in its freshman class.

As a result, some colleges can be very particular about which students they admit. Their reasons can be very broad, such as a desire to have at least one freshman from each of the fifty states, or they can be very narrow, such as a need for female cross country runners.

You should be aware, therefore, that the process of making admission decisions at a selective college involves many factors that are beyond your control. However, there are certain steps you can take now that will strongly improve your admission standing.

- Earn the best grades of which you are capable. This is the single most impressive thing you can do to improve your college admission chances. If you look around at your fellow students and their work habits, you will quickly recognize that students who earn mostly Bs and As generally take a different approach to their studies. In general, these students have developed consistent work habits, they use their time effectively, and they take a mature interest in their coursework. College admission officers are, of course, well aware of this distinction, so they are much more likely to admit students with better grades. Good grades in tough courses is the formula for success, no matter what college you mention. It is also the best predictor of success at the college level.
- Take the most challenging course load you can handle. Everyone isn't able to cope with two or three AP courses successfully, but many KCD students do have this ability, and selective colleges are particularly interested in this aspect of your record. Students often ask if they should take "Advanced" level courses even if they don't make all As. The short answer is that this is a good idea even if you don't make an A in every class. Of course, you should discuss your schedule carefully with your advisor, your college counselor, and your parents each year so that you can craft a challenging schedule appropriate to your abilities and interests.
- Take the SAT and ACT during your junior year. Most colleges require either an SAT score or an ACT score as part of your application for admission. These scores are an important component of your application, so you should practice before you take the exam. Scores matter because they are generally an accurate gauge of student success in college.
- Prepare for the SAT or ACT by doing well in your classes, particularly your English and mathematics classes because the test focuses on content and skills

in these areas. However, it is unwise to assume that a strong SAT or ACT score will make up for a weak academic record. It won't. Some students find that they perform significantly better in one test format than the other. Because most colleges accept either type of score, it might be a good idea to take both tests and see which score you would like to use.

- Get involved in extracurricular activities. Colleges consider your extracurricular involvement, especially if these activities extend over a significant length of time and if you have achieved a degree of expertise that we can document in some way. Joining a club in your senior year isn't worth much, but being an Ambassador for three years is a sign of maturity and dedication that colleges value highly. Similarly, taking a trip to Europe may be quite educational, but working for two summers in a wilderness camp tells more about you and your ability to deal with challenges.

Another activity you might consider is attending a summer educational program on a college campus. These programs vary in length from two weeks to as many as six weeks. They also vary in the amount of actual work you are expected to do, from camp style programs to full-scale college level courses. These are excellent opportunities to meet other young people from around the world and to see what it's like to live on a college campus. Your college counselors maintain a large collection of materials about these programs.

- Get to know your teachers, advisor, coaches, and employers in order to lay the foundation for your recommendations. Letters from teachers and counselors seem to carry more weight at smaller colleges than at larger ones. A strong recommendation will not make up for glaring inadequacies on your transcript, but a teacher may tip the scales in your favor by explaining something about the nature of a course in which you have struggled.

Letters from relatives or employers who know you very well and can point to specific personal traits that you possess will be beneficial. However, you don't want a generalized letter from someone who doesn't really know you personally, even if that person claims to have some sort of special influence with a college.

- Prepare your applications with care and thought. Although colleges expect the work of eighteen-year-old minds and not that of professional writers, you still need to offer a thoughtful, detailed, and neat application that has been carefully proofread by both you and at least one adult. The amount of time and effort that you devote to your application, including the essays, will show through and have some weight with the Admission Office.

Types of Applicants from the College Admissions Perspective

The process by which colleges decide which applications to accept is a complicated one. There are a number of categories into which applicants fall, and not all of these relate to the academic credentials of the student.

The Brainy Students: These students have truly outstanding academic records—top 2 percent SATs, virtually all As, and excellent recommendations from the counselor and teachers. These students are the kind for which every college is looking. It's usually easy for the college to say "yes" to one of these applicants.

The Talented Students: These students have admissible academic credentials and something special in addition. These include prospective varsity athletes, symphony-level musicians, published writers, commercial quality photographers, and the like. All colleges like these stu-

dents and hope to enrich their campus environment with them.

Legacies: Most colleges define "legacy" candidates as children of alumni and alumnae. Having an uncle who spent a couple of years on campus after World War II is not enough. A subcategory here includes children of parents who are major interests of the college's development office.

Minority Applicants: Minorities affect the admission policies of every college in America, whether positively or negatively. A Hispanic student, for example, may be quite in demand at a college in Minnesota but at something of a disadvantage at a school in Florida. Some colleges watch closely the male-female balance within their student populations, and it is often an important factor in making admission decisions. There is also such a thing as a geographical minority, in the sense that a student from Kentucky is probably more valued for his hometown at a West Coast college than at an Atlantic Coast college.

General Applicants: This category includes everybody else, and at most colleges, this is the largest and, therefore, the most competitive category. At some colleges, ironically, it may be the smallest category but still be the most competitive. Think about that one for a minute.

It is interesting to realize that the proportions of each category will differ greatly from one college to another. The "General" category, for instance, probably makes up a very large wedge of the pie at most state universities, but it is certainly very small at someplace like Williams College.

In addition, many students will belong to more than one group simultaneously, and these students' chances are enhanced greatly. Probably a Native American Olympic level sprinter whose father controls a major philanthropic organization and whose SATs are above 1500 will have plenty of colleges on her trail.

The Application

Tips for Success

THERE ARE OVER 3,500 COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES in the United States. Though there are not necessarily 3,500 unique application forms, you will be surprised by how different the applications are. Some will require little more than your name, address, and phone number, while some will ask you to write a whole series of essays. Recognizing this variety of formats and expectations, here are some tips on completing your applications successfully.

Practice and Proofread your Application

Whatever notification option you choose, there are several things you should know about your application. First, it really doesn't matter whether you type or handwrite these forms, as long as the result is legible. No college expects your application to be professionally prepared,

and many will think less of you for having an outsider do your work for you.

Still, though, you want your application to be as neat as possible. One handy tip is to photocopy the application before you fill it in. Use the photocopy as a dry run, so that you will discover any tricky spots before you get to the real thing.

For any parts of the application that ask for lists, you should feel free to add an extra page if the space provided is too small. The key point is legibility.

It is also good to photocopy the completed application for later reference. If you have ever seen the inside of a college mailroom, you will be on your guard against lost mail.

If you plan to apply electronically (see below), take advantage of the feature that allows you to work on your application and save it as a draft before actually submitting it. You can take the time to consider your responses for the application and to print a copy of your application to proofread. Give your counselor a copy of the application to proofread as well before you actually hit the “send” button. Furthermore, print a copy of your final submission and confirmation page just in case there is a problem with the electronic submission; you don’t want to start over.

Types of Applications

In recent years, well over half of the students sent in some form of early application. Approximately one-third of these seniors applied in either an “Early Decision” or an “Early Action” program; the others simply mailed in their “regular” applications quite a long time before the usual deadline, or they applied in “Rolling” admissions. In addition, many seniors used some combination of “Early” and “Regular” application programs.

As you can see from all this, there are many ways to approach the timing of your application. Trying to

decide which is best for you can be tricky, so let’s go through each format one at a time, focusing on the advantages of each one.

Paper Versus Electronic Application

More and more colleges encourage students to apply electronically. Unless a school states explicitly that you must apply electronically, either form of submission is equally acceptable.

Apply either through the postal mail or electronically. If you apply electronically and then send the paper copy as a “backup,” the school will create two files for you, and confusion will ensue. The colleges and universities will send you an e-mail confirmation if you apply electronically, so you will know if the application was actually received by the school.

Colleges typically make all of their application materials available on their Web sites. You can access the electronic application through the college’s Web site, from which you will also submit your application. You can also usually download and print the paper versions of the applications.

Around four hundred private colleges across the country have agreed to share a common form, which they accept in lieu of their own form. The advantage to you is obvious: fill out the application one time and send it as many times as you need.

The Common Application is also available online at www.commonapp.org. You can either apply electronically or access forms to download and print. The Common Application Web site also has very useful information about the schools that accept the Common Application, including a list of these schools, the basic data on each school, required supplements to the Common Application, and deadlines. You can even find links to the Web sites of the member institutions through the Common Application Web site.

Rolling Admission Applications

The college or university will begin to send acceptances (and rejections) as soon as the applications reach their office. Most state universities operate in this way, and more and more private colleges are beginning to use it.

Advantages of Rolling Admission

Admission Criteria: Admission decisions made in this format are usually made by comparing the applicant's credentials to a predetermined set of criteria. If you meet these criteria, then you will be accepted. In other types of applications, your credentials are instead compared with the credentials of the other applicants.

Quick Notification: The decision usually reaches you in five to six weeks, depending upon when in the school year you send your application. If you apply in October or November, for example, you will almost certainly know the answer before the holiday vacation. If you wait until February to apply, however, you may have to wait several extra weeks, because this is the peak time for admission officers and it will take them a little longer to process your application.

Nonbinding Offers: Offers of admission through rolling admission applications are nonbinding. This means that even though you are applying early in the application season, you are not required to accept the offer of admission if it is made. In fact, you are not required to make a decision until May 1, which is the date by which you must accept one offer of admission somewhere and make your deposit to that institution. If you're just crazy about the University of North Carolina, for example, but you know you are a borderline case for admission, it will definitely be helpful to know one way or the other by early in December. Or, let's say that you like UNC, but you also want to try some other colleges. It's good to know that, even if you are admitted in December, you still have until May 1 to make up your mind.

Disadvantages of Rolling Admissions

Timeline: The only disadvantage is that you have to start the entire application process early in your senior year so you can mail everything by the first part of November. If you play a fall sport, that may pose some problems for you.

Regular Decision Applications

The college gives you a fixed deadline for sending in your application and a fixed date for its response. Often, the application is due by January 15 or February 1, and the reply will come on April 1. However, some schools have lately moved up their Regular Decision deadlines to January 1 or even December 1 or December 15, particularly if you want to be considered for merit scholarships. Make sure you note each school's deadline because of this variety. No matter when the application deadline is, you still have until May 1 to make up your mind. Virtually every college and university will have a Regular Decision deadline.

Advantages of Regular Decision

Timeline: You don't have to rush during the fall trimester to prepare a Regular Decision application. In some cases, you can finish these applications after Holiday Break.

Nonbinding Offers: Because you are using the basic application deadline for the school, you are not declaring that this school is your "first choice." You are not bound to accept an admission offer.

Disadvantages of Regular Decision

Response Date: Unlike when you apply through Rolling Admissions, Early Action, or Early Decision (all of which usually provide earlier notification dates), you will not likely receive a response from the Admission Office until April 1.

Early Decision Applications

You send in the application early, often by November 1 or 15, and you are then notified in mid-December.

In an “Early Decision” case, you agree that, if you are accepted, you will withdraw all of your other applications, send in your deposit, and show up in the fall to begin classes. You can see that this system is very desirable from the college’s point of view because it is assured that it will get as many students as the number to whom they offer Early Decision contracts, and more and more colleges use it.

Advantages of Early Decision

Top Choice: By choosing to apply through Early Decision admissions, you declare that a school is your top choice. If you feel extremely confident that you have found a school that fits your most important priorities very well, then this type of application might be for you.

Response Date: You will know the college’s decision before you begin Holiday Break of your senior year. Knowing early provides some students relief during a time that can at times be stressful.

Admission Rates: Most colleges using this system admit people at a somewhat higher rate during the early period than during the regular period. Also, colleges seem to admit more and more of their freshman class positions during the early period. At these colleges, there is good reason to place yourself into the early pool rather than wait for the later selections.

Disadvantages of Early Decision

Binding Response: If you receive an Early Decision offer of admission, you are obligated to withdraw all other applications and to accept the offer. There are no exceptions. Students sometimes feel very confident about a school when the Early Decision deadline occurs but then change their minds later in the academic year for a variety of reasons, including learning about another

interesting school, finding out additional information about the Early Decision school, or wanting to stay closer to home or go farther from home for college. If you tend to change your mind, then Early Decision might not be for you.

Timeline: Early Decision applicants must be willing to get started on applications right away at the beginning of the senior year, if not earlier. It takes a lot of effort and good time management skills to determine that you want to apply through Early Decision and then complete that application by November 1.

Strength of Applicant Pool: The early pool of applications is usually stronger, overall, than the regular pool. This is especially true at the twenty or so most selective institutions in the country. For these few colleges and universities, there appears to be little advantage to applying early. In our experience at KCD, we have not seen anyone admitted to these selective institutions during the early period who would not have also been admitted during the regular period.

Lack of Comparison for Financial Aid Packages: Because you are required to withdraw other applications if you are admitted through an Early Decision program, you never get the chance to compare financial aid packages that might be offered to you by various colleges if you applied to more than one. If financial aid is a priority for your family, then Early Decision might not be the best option for you.

Early Action Applications

A variation of the Early Decision format, Early Action means that the acceptance is binding upon the college, but not on the student. You still apply early in the application season, but you are not obligated to accept the offer of admission or to withdraw other applications. Even so, colleges offering this option strongly discourage students from applying to other institutions until a deci-

sion is reached on the early application. This application option is also sometimes called Priority Decision.

Advantages of Early Action

All of those listed for Early Decision applications.

Nonbinding Response: As explained above, you are not obligated to accept the offer of admission, as you are with Early Decision.

Disadvantages of Early Action

All of those listed for Early Decision applications, with the exception of the binding response.

To sum it all up, then, here are a few guidelines. First, if you apply early—in whatever form—you’ll probably be finished with the application process by January 1 in your senior year. Perhaps that is a priority for you; perhaps not. Second, if you just want to get some idea of your admissibility to highly selective places, consider a rolling admission application or an Early Action application. Either one will give you the signal you’re looking for without committing you to attend.

Finally, if you’re thinking about Early Decision primarily as a way of improving your admission chances, you are probably on the right track at the majority of colleges. However, at the most selective ones, such as Brown, Dartmouth, and Princeton, the advantage of applying early is negligible.

Your Transcript

Q: Do I have a right to see my transcript?

A: Absolutely! In fact, we encourage all KCD students to review their transcripts carefully. The best time to do this is probably during the fall of your senior year, so that any discrepancies can be rectified before we begin mailing transcripts to colleges. Your college counselor will

provide you with a copy of your transcript at the beginning of your senior year or any time you request one.

Q: Do I send my own transcript with my application?

A: No. Your college counselor will mail your updated transcript as part of the Secondary School Report component of your application. You are responsible, however, for completing the biographical data at the top of each of the Secondary School Report forms and submitting them to your counselor at least several weeks in advance of the application deadline so that your counselor has adequate time to prepare your materials.

Q: How do “weighted” grades affect my transcript?

A: There is often confusion about this issue. At KCD, as at most college preparatory schools, we award quality points based on two factors: the level of difficulty of the course and the grade the student earns in the course. Some students conclude from this that a B in an Advanced Placement course is equivalent to an A in another course. In terms of their GPA, they’re right (almost) because a B in an Advanced Placement course will earn 3.67 quality points in contrast to the 3 points earned for a regular course. However, in the Academic Record part of your transcript, a grade of B will appear, regardless of the level of the course, if that is the grade the instructor awarded to you. Please note, also, that weighted quality points are only awarded for grades of C and higher.

Q: What courses go into my GPA?

A: We think it is unfair to compare a grade earned at another high school, or at a college, with a grade earned at KCD, and we do not do so. Therefore, we include all courses you attempt at KCD, but no others, in computing your KCD grade point average. If you transferred from another school, or if you took a class in summer school, or if you earned credit in a college program of some sort, we will include transcripts from those institutions, but those grades will not enter into the calculation of your GPA.

Q: How do you make this calculation?

A: We award quality points for each grade you earn. We currently use a four-point scale, and we include the entire academic record in grades nine through twelve at KCD. A chart of quality points can be found below.

GPA Calculation Chart

Grade	Quality Points		
	Regular Class	Advanced Class	Advanced Placement Class
A+	4.33	4.67	5.0
A	4.0	4.33	4.67
A-	3.67	4.0	4.33
B+	3.33	3.67	4.0
B	3.0	3.33	3.67
B-	2.67	3.0	3.33
C+	2.33	2.67	3.0
C	2.0	2.33	2.67
C-	1.67	1.67	1.67
D+	1.33	1.33	1.33
D	1.0	1.0	1.0
D-	0.7	0.7	0.7
F	0	0	0

Q: What about my trimester grades?

A: Credit for a course is awarded only at the completion of that course. We do not give credit for a year-long course until the end of the year; therefore, we do not list on your transcript any trimester grades you earn in a year-long course.

In the case of a trimester-long course, the trimester grade is in fact the final grade for that course, so

we do put those grades on your transcript and award 1/3 credit.

Q: Do all of my SAT scores go onto my transcript?

A: On the section of the transcript entitled Standardized Test Results, we include SAT, ACT, and/or SAT Subject Tests results that strengthen your college admission profile. In other words, we use discretion in these cases.

Q: Why doesn't KCD rank its students?

A: For the majority of our students, ranking would not enhance their admission profile. For example, a student with an SAT score of 1230 might rank in the second half of our class because our median SAT score is usually a bit higher than that. However, in the context of all high school students applying to colleges in the nation, a score of 1230 ranks somewhere in the top 25 percent. As a result, for us to rank this student by KCD norms would indeed be a disservice.

On the other hand, occasionally when we deal with the most selective colleges and universities, a specific rank is expected or strongly advised. In these cases, we communicate directly, by phone, with the admission officer. Obviously, we will never allow this policy to hinder our students' admissions prospects in any way.

Q: How can a college judge how strong KCD's program really is?

A: The most effective method, of course, is to send KCD graduates to a college and let their academic performance make the point for us. Historically, any college that has seen a good number of KCD graduates come onto its campus will be impressed.

Second, the KCD college counselors visit with the admission officers at all sorts of colleges and universities, and this sort of one-to-one communication is a very powerful tool.

Finally, along with every transcript we send out, we enclose a supplement known as the School Profile,

which describes KCD in terms of certain statistical norms and lists the colleges our graduates have entered in recent years. We think this document provides a concise but meaningful introduction to the level of scholastic performance that KCD fosters. A copy of this year's School Profile is included in the folder at the back of this book.

Your Essays

If your college asks for a writing sample or essay of some sort, you should first realize why they do so. In many cases, they simply want to see if you can express yourself in coherent sentences and paragraphs. As a KCD student, chances are you will look very good on this score. The other purpose is to learn about you in a way that the statistics and other data on your transcript don't reveal. Overall, they want to see that you have mature reflections to offer about your life experiences.

Your counselor can help you with choosing a topic and in critiquing your approach in a general way. As far as spelling and grammar and other writing mechanics, you can ask someone to help on those. However, make the essays your own work! Don't allow anyone else to write them for you!

There is a great deal of advice available on the subject of writing college essays, most of which can be distilled into a few tips:

- The essay is supposed to be the work of someone your age, not a Nobel Prize winner. Don't try to use big words to sound intelligent.
- A small subject, thoroughly developed, is usually more compelling to the reader than a broad range of subjects developed only superficially. If you made a tour of Europe and want to write about it, you are wiser to describe one experience than to summarize everything you saw and did.

- Sincerity is better than trickery. Admission officers welcome straightforward, honest essays more than those that attempt to dazzle the reader with extraneous gimmicks such as cartoons, colored inks, or pseudo-humor.
- Take these essays seriously. They probably won't make up for the Ds on your transcript, if you have any, but the essays may draw attention to your candidacy in a way no other part of the application can.

Your Résumé

Most applications require you to list your extracurricular activities, athletics involvement, honors/awards, community service, and work experience. Sometimes students find that the form does not provide enough room to list everything. In this case, you can always submit a separate résumé with your application. On the form, just write, *Please see attached résumé* so that the admission counselors know where to look for your information.

On the résumé, it is best to list your biographical data at the top (name, address, phone number, e-mail address, and Social Security number). The information on the remainder of the document should be divided into categories, such as those listed above. If you like, you can add a personal statement at the bottom of the résumé in which you provide information that the data doesn't show, such as why you switched schools during high school, why one trimester or year shows an unexpected fluctuation in your grades, or anything else that is a priority for you. Your college counselor can provide a sample résumé at your request.

The Application Fee

These range from zero to around \$60 or sometimes slightly higher. If the fee poses a significant financial burden on a student, most colleges will waive it if the school counselor is able to certify the student's need. Ask your counselor. Some colleges will waive the application fee if you apply electronically; you should be able to determine whether this waiver exists through the college's undergraduate admission Web page.

If you are sending the fee, be sure to staple the check to the application. One of the leading headaches in college admission is misplaced checks. If you apply electronically, you will probably have the option to pay online by credit card; doing so usually requires that you print and send a signature page confirming your identity. Most schools allow you to pay by check even if you submit electronically, though a few require a credit card number to finalize the submission process.

Teacher Recommendations

Nowadays, teacher recommendations play a role in the admission decisions at fewer colleges than before; however, at these colleges they play a very significant role indeed. KCD teachers write many, many letters of recommendation every year, and these letters reflect many hours of thought and effort on their part. So, when you ask a teacher to do one, remember that you are asking a considerable favor.

No teacher will knowingly write an unfavorable letter about you. If a teacher doesn't honestly feel that he or she can enthusiastically support your application, that teacher will refer you to someone else.

How to Choose and Ask a Teacher for a Recommendation

You should choose a teacher in whose class you did well and with whom you had a good working relationship. Ideally, this teacher will know you outside of just the time you spent in his or her class. It's not necessary that the teacher has also been your coach or your advisor. Rather, the teacher should know what your study skills, work habits, and character are like.

If the teacher agrees to write in your behalf, you should expect to spend some time with him or her, discussing your plans and credentials. You might also tell the teacher why you decided to ask him or her for the recommendation so that you demonstrate that you have given your selection careful thought. Don't ever leave a form in a teacher's mailbox with a note, thinking that is all you need to do. Although the teacher's primary responsibility in writing the recommendation is to represent what kind of student you were in his or her class, it is still a good idea to give the teacher a copy of your resume, which allows the teacher to keep your entire record (academic and extracurricular) in mind when writing the recommendation.

Most teachers will write their letters on KCD stationery rather than directly on forms provided by the college. These letters are then kept by your counselor, to be mailed along with your applications. A few teachers prefer to mail their letters directly to the college, and they have that right. In these cases, you should provide a stamped envelope addressed to the college.

Teachers will typically be asked to do two things for a recommendation:

- Write a response to a question about your record and personal traits.
- Rate these same items on a checklist.

A Typical Ratings Format

A typical ratings format can be found in the chart on the facing page. A typical prompt might ask, “Compared to other college-bound students whom you have taught, check how you would rate this student in terms of academic skills and potential.”

A Typical Teacher Evaluation Question

“Please feel free to write whatever you think is important about this student, including a description of academic and personal characteristics. We are particularly interested in the candidate’s intellectual promise, motivation, relative maturity, integrity, independence, originality, initiative, leadership potential, capacity for growth, special talents, and enthusiasm. We welcome information that will help us to differentiate this student from others.”

A Few Tips

- It is very hard for a teacher to accept a situation in which a student behaves in one way before the recommendation is written and then quite differently after it is mailed. Some teachers have even written addenda to their earlier letters, if a student’s performance and demeanor change extensively.
- After the teachers have completed letters of recommendation for you, some “thank you” is mandatory on your part, usually in the form of a personal note. In addition, keep your teachers apprised of your application results. If they care enough to write a letter, then they care about the results!

Secondary School Report

The Secondary School Report consists of four main items:

- A ratings chart, which asks for an appraisal of your maturity, academic readiness, character, reaction to setbacks, and other subjective factors.

A Typical Ratings Format

	No basis	Below average	Average	Good (above average)	Very good (well above average)	Excellent (top 10%)	One of the top few encountered in my career
Creative, original thought							
Motivation							
Independence, initiative							
Intellectual ability							
Academic achievement							
Written expression of ideas							
Effective class discussion							
Disciplined work habits							
Potential for growth							
Summary evaluation							

Signature _____

Date _____

The Application

- An extensive narrative written by the counselor that seeks to highlight your strengths and to present you as a desirable candidate for admission.
- Your high school academic transcript.
- The KCD School Profile.

In addition to having your input, the counselor will consult with your teachers and coaches, perhaps with your employers, or with anyone else who can shed some positive light on your personality and accomplishments in preparing to complete the Secondary School Report form and to write the letter of recommendation. Typically the counselor will print the letter as a separate document on KCD letterhead, which is widely accepted by colleges.

As mentioned earlier in this booklet, your counselor will usually include your teacher recommendations in the mailing of the Secondary School Report as well.

In the chart on the facing page you will find an example of the questions on a typical Secondary School Report ratings chart.

The following is an example of a typical prompt for the counselor's letter about the student: "Please write a summary report on the applicant addressing such areas as intellectual/academic abilities, extracurricular activities, and special circumstances. Feel free to use the section provided, or enclose a separate letter."

Privacy

Most recommendation forms (for both teacher recommendations and counselor recommendations) include a reminder to the student of his or her rights under law to learn about the information in recommendation letters. There is also usually a place for the student to sign, indicating whether he or she wishes to waive this right. The controlling law is the Buckley Amendment to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974. Your counselor can provide further information on this issue.

A Typical Secondary School Ratings Chart

General Ratings: In making the following ratings, please keep in mind that they will be used to compare this student with his or her entire class. Please check the single most appropriate box.

	No basis	Average or below	Good	Excellent (top 10%)	One of the top few encountered in my career
Academic motivation					
Academic creativity					
Academic self-discipline					
Academic growth and potential					
Leadership					
Self-confidence					
Sense of humor					
Concern for others					
Energy					
Emotional maturity					
Reaction to setbacks					
Respect accorded by faculty					

Mid-Year Grades

Because nearly all applications are mailed before the end of the second trimester and therefore do not show the grades you earn during most of your senior year, most colleges include a supplemental form for us to use in notifying them of how you're doing as the year goes on. We do not always send these exactly at mid-year, because we operate on a trimester system; however, these grades and subsequent counselor comments can add significantly to your record. Typically we send these grades between mid-January and early February. If you have applied through an Early Decision or Early Action option, sometimes a school will ask us to report your first trimester grades for your senior year during their review process.

Financial Aid

JUST ABOUT EVERY FAMILY needs to be concerned about the expenses of a college education. At the majority of private institutions, annual costs exceed \$30,000, and some state universities cost over \$20,000.

Dealing with financial issues effectively begins with a basic distinction between need-based aid and merit-based aid.

Need-Based Financial Aid

Nearly every college—public or private—offers need-based financial aid. The first step to understanding need-based financial aid is understanding the terms involved.

Cost of Attendance: Financial aid officers have varying methods for estimating the Cost of Attendance, but most include tuition, room, board, books and supplies, various fees, and some travel allowance.

Financial Aid

Family Contribution: The Family Contribution is determined by a federally mandated formula and financial data supplied by a family. Your counselor can provide forms and information about the Free Application for Federal Student Aid Form (FAFSA) and the Financial Aid Form Profile.

Demonstrated Need: This amount is determined by subtracting the Family Contribution from the student's Cost of Attendance. Think of the calculation this way:

$$\text{Demonstrated Need} = \text{Cost of Attendance} - \text{Family Contribution}$$

Some colleges promise to meet 100 percent of the student's Demonstrated Need. However, most can no longer make this claim.

The need-based financial aid package offered by a college will include three elements:

- Grants (either college or government sponsored and not requiring repayment)
- Low-interest loans (to the student or to the parents or both)
- Some form of part-time job (work-study).

Merit-Based Financial Aid

About 50 percent of all colleges in the country offer this form of aid, and there are many other sources as well, such as the National Merit Scholarship Foundation, the Coca-Cola Corporation, the Aid Association for Lutherans, and so on. In essence, this form of aid is given to a student regardless of his or her family financial circumstances and is usually determined by objective criteria such as SAT scores, high school GPA, performance on a competitive exam, or service in some designated

Financial Aid Awarded by Family Income for the Class of 2011

Parent Income	Admitted applicants who applied for aid	Number who demonstrated need	Number whose award met 100% of their need	Average total award*	Average grant**	Range of awards
\$0–24,999	35	34	34	\$43,732	\$42,182	\$1,550–49,751
\$25,000–49,999	98	95	95	\$44,672	\$43,122	\$1,550–51,488
\$50,000–74,999	98	93	93	\$38,439	\$36,889	\$1,550–49,139
\$75,000–99,999	90	88	88	\$32,330	\$30,780	\$1,550–45,851
\$100,000–124,999	86	77	77	\$28,642	\$27,092	\$1,550–46,101
\$125,000+	258	112	112	\$17,854	\$16,304	\$1,550–42,021
Totals/Averages	665	499	499	\$35,100	\$33,450	\$1,550–47,800

Note: This table reflects averages by income level only, including nontaxable income. The size of an award is also affected by family size, number in college, family assets, and other considerations. Those eligible at higher income levels usually have more than one child in college. International applicants are not included in these figures.

* Includes jobs and grants

** Includes grant aid from institutional, federal, state, and other sources

activity. It is what many people mean when they refer to “winning a scholarship.”

Some colleges and universities require a separate application for merit scholarships, while others automatically consider every student who applies to the school. When you are researching schools, be sure to note how you apply for merit-based aid as well as any deadlines for applying. Keep in mind that often the deadline for applying for merit-based aid is earlier than the Regular Decision deadline. You might have to apply as early as December 1 in order to be considered for merit-based aid, even if the Regular Decision deadline is not until January or February.

Although some merit-based awards involve large amounts of money, most winners receive smaller amounts, often \$1,000 or less.

There is a popular belief that merit awards are relatively easy to obtain and that some of these awards are available to almost any student who applies. The reality is quite different. Merit awards are highly competitive, and most of them are earmarked for students with very clearly defined traits.

In addition, financial aid officers sometimes count merit awards as a part of the student’s Demonstrated Need. This policy leaves the loan and work-study portions of the student’s financial aid package unchanged, despite the merit awards. From a “bottom-line” point of view, then, the award may offer little benefit to the family.

It is fair to say, then, that need-based awards make up the vast bulk of all financial aid available, and this is the source most families should pursue actively. Merit-based awards are available, and your counselor can help in your search for them. However, it is extremely unwise for any family to make college plans that depend primarily on merit-based aid.

The Forms

The documents you will use to apply for need based financial aid begin with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which is all you’ll need at most public universities. Most private institutions, however, will also require you to complete the Financial Aid Profile, and a few colleges will also have their own specialized forms.

You can obtain the FAFSA and the Profile from your college counselors. They are generally available beginning in December. Specialized forms for individual colleges are usually available online and are included in the application packet.

The Final Decision

Types of Responses from Colleges

IF YOU APPLIED during the regular application period, you will probably learn of the colleges' decisions in April. There are three possibilities, each one with its own set of choices for you to consider.

Acceptances

First, you may have been accepted at some or all of the colleges you hoped to attend. The customary manner of indicating your intention to matriculate is the sending of a deposit—often around \$250. The accepted date for such deposits is May 1.

The National Association for College Admissions Counseling, which oversees admission practices nationwide, has several specific policies about this issue of deposits. First, families are strongly discouraged from sending deposits to more than one college. If there is a

compelling reason why, at this late date, you still can't decide which college you prefer, then you must contact the colleges and explain your circumstances. However, do not send multiple deposits.

Second, in cases where the financial aid package will be the determining factor in your college choice, the colleges may not attempt in any way to hurry you into sending a deposit before the nationally agreed upon acceptance date. This holds true even if you are offered a large merit scholarship of some sort; you still have the right to wait until May 1 to send a deposit.

Once you have sent a deposit, it is expected that you will matriculate, with one exception: if you are a Wait List candidate at one college, you may send a deposit to another institution and still expect to have that deposit refunded if you are subsequently taken at the first college.

In any case, you should officially decline any acceptances you receive from colleges where you do not plan to enroll. Bear in mind that these colleges have accepted you, while placing other students on Wait Lists. The sooner they know about your plans, the sooner they can begin to accept people from their Wait Lists. As a matter of simple courtesy, then, you should notify immediately any college that you know you won't be attending. You can make this notification through an e-mail message or a short note written to the representative with whom you have been working in the Office of Admission or to the Dean of Admission.

Denials

The second possible outcome is that you may be denied admission. Unless some sort of clear-cut mistake has occurred, it is very rare that a denial decision is ever reversed. You have the right to ask the college for an explanation of their decision, and your counselor will be quite willing to make this request for you. However, particularly at very selective institutions, the reasons your application was rejected may have little or nothing to do with your

academic credentials, your character, or anything else over which you have control. Often the reasons are demographic, geographic, or something equally impossible to predict.

If you are rejected by all the colleges you have applied to, all is not lost. Every year, many colleges accept applications in April and May, and we have had some success with institutions during this "second chance" round.

Deferrals

If you apply to a college through an Early Decision or Early Action plan, the school might respond with a "deferral" decision. This means that although you have not yet been admitted to the college, your application will be considered as part of the "Regular Admission" pool. If you receive this decision, you should work with your counselor to analyze why you were not yet granted admission and to make a plan for improving this part of your credentials if possible.

Wait Lists

For everyone involved, the Wait List decision is the hardest to cope with. Some colleges use their Wait List option extensively, as a tool for increasing their yield of acceptances, while some colleges report that they haven't accepted anyone off the Wait List for decades. Many use this option as a way of fulfilling the various demographic and ethnic goals of their institutions.

If you are told you are on a Wait List, you should contact your counselor immediately and expect to keep close contact until the situation is resolved. This is one time when the college, frankly, has all the cards, and you have very little choice other than, simply, to wait.

Notifications

Your Acceptance of an Offer: As mentioned earlier, you should notify the college or university that you plan to attend of your acceptance. At this point, you will also make a deposit to that institution.

Your Other Schools: As also mentioned, you should notify in writing other schools from which you have received offers of admission that you are not accepting the offer.

Your Counselor: Your counselor needs to know which school you have chosen in order to send your final transcript to that school at the end of your senior year. KCD also keeps records of applications, admission decisions, and places our students actually decide to go.

Your Recommenders: It is common courtesy to notify teachers and other people (adults, close family friends, etc.) who have written letters of recommendation and support for your candidacy that you have decided to attend a particular institution.

Our Results

WE ARE PROUD OF THE RECORD our graduates have achieved over the years in admissions to selective colleges. Admission officers know that KCD students will arrive on campus with a solid scholastic background, strong positive motivation, and a degree of poise and self assurance. As a result, our applications are welcomed and actively sought by colleges and universities all over the country.

Q: How many applications does the average senior send off?

A: The average number is four or five, but this number varies widely. Every year, there are some students who send only one application, and there are usually some who send as many as fifteen.

Q: How many are accepted and how many are rejected?

A: Our experience, over the last five years, is that between 75 and 85 percent of our seniors' applications will meet with positive responses, which means they will be accepted or else put on a wait list. This is a fairly high num-

ber, because KCD students often apply to highly selective colleges, which often have acceptance rates of 20 percent or lower.

Q: How many seniors are accepted by their "first choice" colleges?

A: Usually about 75 percent of our seniors report that they were accepted by the college they considered their "first choice." Many seniors never identify a "first choice" until after they receive their acceptances, however, so this is a fairly subjective matter.

Q: What colleges are the most popular?

A: Over the last five years, we have sent applications to over 120 different colleges and universities. We believe this diversity of choices is one of the greatest assets of our counseling program.

Acceptance and Matriculation Data

Data on college acceptance and matriculation over the last five years can be found on our Web site.

Appendix A: Testing

The ACT

2009–2010 ACT Test Dates

Test Date	Registration Deadline	Late Registration Deadline
Sept. 12, 2009	Aug. 7, 2009	Aug. 21, 2009
Oct. 24, 2009	Sept. 18, 2009	Oct. 2, 2009
Dec. 12, 2009	Nov. 6, 2009	Nov. 20, 2009
Feb. 6, 2010	Jan. 5, 2010	Jan. 15, 2010
Apr. 10, 2010	Mar. 5, 2010	Mar. 19, 2010
June 12, 2010	May 7, 2010	May 21, 2010

Registration Fees

Regular Registration: \$32 (includes reporting of scores to up to four colleges requested at registration)

Optional Writing Test: \$15

Late Fee: \$21

Standby Testing on Test Date: \$41

The PSAT

The PSAT will be held on October 14, 2009.

The SAT

Registration and Test Dates

You must register yourself for this test. You can do so online at www.collegeboard.com or by mailing a registration form, which is available in the College Counseling Office.

2009–2010 SAT and SAT Subject Tests Dates

Test Date	Registration Deadline	Late Registration Deadline
Oct. 10, 2009	Sept. 9, 2009	Sept. 25, 2009
Nov. 7, 2009	Oct. 1, 2009	Oct. 15, 2009
Dec. 5, 2009	Oct. 30, 2009	Nov. 13, 2009
Jan. 23, 2009	Dec. 15, 2009	Dec. 30, 2009
Mar. 13, 2010*	Feb. 4, 2010	Feb. 18, 2010
May 1, 2010	Mar. 25, 2010	Apr. 8, 2010
June 5, 2010	Apr. 29, 2010	May 13, 2010

*SAT only.

2010–2011 SAT Test Dates

Dates for the 2010–2011 SAT were not available at the time of publication. Please check www.collegeboard.com for the dates.

SAT Registration Fees

Regular Registration: \$45 (includes reporting of scores to up to four colleges requested at registration)

Late Fee: \$23

Standby Testing: \$38

SAT Subject Test Registration Fees

Basic Registration: \$20

Language Test with Listening: \$20

All other subjects: \$9

Late Fee: \$23

Standby Testing: \$38



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