



JEWISH COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL
OF THE BAY

College And Gap-Year Advising Handbook 2026-27

CEEB Code: 052984

Greetings from JCHS College and Gap-Year Advising!

As with all parts of our educational program, college advising at JCHS is fused with intentional values rooted in our tradition - we guide students to exercise courage (Ometz Lev), develop perspective and wisdom (Hochma), and pursue peace at home (Shalom Bayit). We hope to inspire students to know themselves and seek high aspirations while also sustaining their most valuable relationships.

The college search is a long-term project that is different for each student, and college advising supports families every step of the way through workshops, class meetings, and individual appointments. The process begins in earnest during the second half of junior year, but everything a JCHS student does up until then lays the foundation for a successful search.

In addition to group sessions and one-on-one meetings, I offer this handbook to put some structure on an activity that can sometimes seem chaotic. It should serve as a guide to orient families to college admission generally, as well as to provide assistance in tackling the multiple tasks leading up to college enrollment specifically. It outlines the basic steps to follow through each year of high school, and also answers frequently asked questions to prepare students for a successful college admission journey.

While this handbook is a comprehensive guide, it is not meant to serve as a replacement for personalized advising. JCHS families are encouraged to be in touch as questions and concerns arise, especially in the junior and senior years of high school. I look forward to guiding you through this process and hope the enclosed information is useful along the way!

Warmly,

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About Ms. Cook: With close to thirty years of experience in college admission counseling, Lauren is a Past-President of the Western Association for College Admission Counseling (WACAC) and an active member of the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), the Bay Area Independent School College Counselor consortium (BAISCC), and the Association of College Counselors in Independent Schools (ACCIS). Lauren holds a bachelor's degree from Mount Holyoke and a master's degree in education from Northeastern.

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COLLEGE ADVISING TIMELINE

The choices you make during your time at JCHS contribute to the larger personal narrative that you present to colleges in your senior year. Prior to 11th grade college preparation is simple but important; in 11th and 12th grades college preparation becomes more complex. The following timelines provide a year-by-year guide to keep you on target.

9th Grade

- ❑ Check out all the JCHS has to offer – get involved, make relationships with your advisor and Class Dean, try something new!
- ❑ Perform to the best of your ability in your courses – all four years of high school count towards college admission.
- ❑ Parents are invited to attend introductory college financial planning workshops with College Money Method.
- ❑ Select 10th grade courses that are both challenging and appropriate.
- ❑ Plan a meaningful summer activity.

10th Grade

FALL

- ❑ Stretch yourself academically, intellectually and extracurricularly – if you didn't try something new as a 9th grader, jump in this year!
- ❑ 10th graders typically take the PSAT in October. The test provides practice, does not require preparation, and your results will not be shared with any colleges. If you need or wonder if you need test accommodations, see one of the Co-Deans of Learning Support.
- ❑ Consider checking out college advising resources like the *Fiske Guide to Colleges*. Begin to explore colleges online through sites like [BigFuture](#) and [CampusReel](#).
- ❑ Parents are invited to attend introductory and more specialized college financial planning workshops with College Money Method.

SPRING

- ❑ Select 11th grade courses that are both challenging and appropriate.
- ❑ Prepare for and take AP exams, if applicable.
- ❑ Make meaningful plans for the summer. Activities might include employment, volunteer opportunities, course work, travel, college visits and/or summer camp.

11th Grade

FALL

- ❑ Investigate college advising resources, and visit local campuses during weekends and school breaks to better determine your likes and dislikes. Think about yourself, your goals, and what factors are important to you.
- ❑ Attend college visits through JCHS. Visit schedules are posted in SCOIR and on the college advising website and bulletin board. Students must request permission from faculty to miss class 24 hours in advance of a college visit.
- ❑ 11th graders take the PSAT in October, and results from the test determine qualification for the National Merit Scholarship Program. If you need (or wonder if you need) test accommodations, see one of the Co-Deans of Learning Support.
- ❑ Take the practice ACT provided by JCHS. The results of this test, combined with the PSAT, help students determine if testing will be a part of their college process, and if so, allow families to create a testing plan.
- ❑ Perform at your best in your JCHS classes, as colleges place heavy emphasis on 11th and 12th grades. Bookmark a few of your strongest academic papers (with teacher comments and grades) for use with college applications – some may ask for samples of your written work.
- ❑ Stay involved with several extracurricular activities.
- ❑ Parents are invited to attend college financial planning workshops with College Money Method throughout the year.

WINTER

- ❑ Attend the College Search Kick-Off– the official start to the college admission process.
 - ❑ Both students and parents are asked to complete a college advising questionnaire before students schedule their initial college advising meeting with Ms. Cook.
 - ❑ Conduct an initial college advising meeting with Ms. Cook to discuss individual colleges, testing, recommendation letters, and other items relevant to the launch of the college search.
 - ❑ Select 12th grade courses that are both challenging and appropriate.
 - ❑ Begin making meaningful summer plans.
 - ❑ In January, register for the SAT and/or ACT (if applicable) – register early for your first-choice location, and determine how you will prepare for each test. For Sunday testing options see Ms. Cook, for accommodations speak with one of the Co-Deans of Learning Support.
 - ❑ Attend a USA Gap Year Fair and/or the Israel Gap Year Fair (in LA) to begin exploring gap options, where applicable. JCHS encourages each student to consider this option.
-

SPRING

- ❑ Individual college advising meetings are available with Ms. Cook throughout the spring to discuss summer activities, the college list, college visits, and so forth.
- ❑ Take first round of standardized tests, if applicable (ACT or SAT).
- ❑ Continue to research colleges, planning campus visits during school breaks and adding yourself to the mailing lists of any institutions of interest.
- ❑ Draft your first Common Application essay in an end-of-year unit for your English class.
- ❑ Determine which two JCHS academic teachers to ask for letters of recommendation and make requests before the end of the school year.
- ❑ Attend the annual Case Studies Program jointly sponsored by ten local independent schools in late April, as well as NACAC and WACAC-sponsored college fairs across the Bay Area.

SUMMER

- ❑ If you are an athlete planning to play at the Division I or Division II level, register with the NCAA Eligibility Center when your junior year transcript becomes available.
- ❑ If applicable, decide whether to retake the SAT and/or ACT in the fall and spend time prepping. Registration should occur in June or July.
- ❑ Keep Ms. Cook apprised of your thinking around college visits and begin to narrow your list. Aim to have only 10-15 colleges you are “Following” in SCOIR by the start of 12th grade. Family appointments are available at JCHS throughout the summer with advance notice.
- ❑ Continue work on essay drafts, send to Ms. Cook for review.
- ❑ Attend the Senior College Workshop provided by JCHS in August. Rising seniors practice interviewing, review essay drafts with college representatives, and have general college admission questions addressed.
- ❑ Make a calendar of due dates and required forms for colleges to which you may apply.

12th Grade

LATE SUMMER

- ❑ Attend the Senior College Workshop at JCHS.
- ❑ Discuss your list of 10-15 colleges with your parents and Ms. Cook. Eventually choose around 10; consider whether you will apply Early Decision (a binding agreement) or Early Action (a non-binding early notification) to any schools.
- ❑ If applicable, register for any final standardized testing. October dates are typically the last opportunity for ED/EA candidates to improve scores before deadlines.

SEPTEMBER

- ❑ Resist senioritis! First semester grades will be a factor in most college admission decisions.
- ❑ Attend college visits through JCHS. Visit schedules are posted on the college advising website and in SCOIR. Students must request permission from faculty to miss class 24 hours in advance of a college visit.
- ❑ Narrow your list down to around 10 schools to which you plan to apply and add them to your “Applying” list in SCOIR.
- ❑ Work on applications: complete essays, supplements, and interview requirements; keep SCOIR updated.
- ❑ Watch videos and/or attend open work time on completing the Common, UC, and CSU applications with Ms. Cook.
- ❑ Parents are invited to college financial planning workshops with College Money Method throughout the year.

OCTOBER

- ❑ College application lists should be finalized and entered in SCOIR by September 30.
- ❑ CSU filing period: applications may be submitted between Oct 1 and Nov 30.
- ❑ Take the SAT or ACT as appropriate. Last chance for ED/EA candidates, and remember to order scores at least *two weeks* before application deadlines.
- ❑ ED/EA candidates finalize essays and supplements.
- ❑ Families may begin filling out the FAFSA and CSS Profile (where applicable) on October 1. Parents are advised to complete Net Price Calculators on each college’s financial aid website to receive an estimated family contribution (what you can expect to pay at an individual school).

NOVEMBER

- ❑ UC filing period: applications may be submitted between Nov 1 and Nov 30.
- ❑ Early applications typically due by November 1 and/or November 15.
- ❑ Submit the FAFSA and gather other financial aid paperwork (CSS Profile, if applicable). Review scholarship opportunities.
- ❑ Explore gap options online and with JCHS gap visitors, begin gap applications.

DECEMBER

- ❑ Continue to work on applications, even if you've applied early somewhere. Finalize essays and supplements, begin sending Regular Decision applications.
- ❑ Early Decision and Early Action notifications typically sent from mid-December to late-January.
- ❑ Submit the FAFSA and gather other financial aid paperwork (CSS Profile, if applicable). Review scholarship opportunities, submit gap applications (if applicable).

JANUARY

- ❑ Mid-year reports sent by College Advising (except for UCs/CSUs; not required).
- ❑ Submit the FAFSA and gather other financial aid paperwork (CSS Profile, if applicable). If applicable, begin applying for scholarships.
- ❑ Check the status of applications to ensure that they are considered complete.
- ❑ Stay focused on academic work, grades still matter!
- ❑ Thank faculty who wrote your recommendation letters.

FEBRUARY

- ❑ Attend a USA Gap Year Fair, submit gap applications (if applicable).
- ❑ Families receive Student Aid Report (SAR) from FAFSA; review and make corrections as needed. Apply for JCF scholarships if applicable.

SPRING

- ❑ Regular decisions released throughout the month of March.
- ❑ Attend admitted student programs to finalize your college selection.
- ❑ Pay a tuition deposit at one college by May 1, even if you are on a wait list. Inform Ms. Cook of your final choice, notify all colleges of your final decision.

TRANSCRIPT AND CURRICULUM

Colleges look for students with the preparation and potential to succeed, making your transcript the most important credential through which they evaluate your academic record. There is no magic formula for getting into college, so during the JCHS course selection period you should consult with your advisor and Ms. Cook to construct a curriculum that is right for you. Chosen wisely, your courses should develop your intellectual interests – not create unnecessary stress.

Each student's curricular choices should start with JCHS graduation requirements, as they meet or exceed minimum eligibility requirements for college admission. The following chart delineates requirements for graduation and UC/CSU eligibility, as well as suggestions for other selective colleges. Keep in mind that for the most selective institutions, you should *exceed* minimum requirements. Take advantage of JCHS' rich and varied offerings, and take risks along the way!

	JCHS Graduation Requirements	UC/CSU Minimum Course Requirements*	Non-UC Suggested Course Requirements**
English	4 years	4 years*	4 years
History/Social Science	2 years including United States History and one history elective	2 years; additional courses strengthen an application (some JS courses count towards history)*	3-4 years
Mathematics	3 years through Algebra II	3 years required; additional courses strengthen an application*	3-4 years taken in grades 9-12; through Precalculus or Statistics
Science	3 years including Physics, Chemistry and Biology	2 years of a lab science required; additional courses strengthen an application*	3-4 years of a lab science
Jewish Studies	6 courses including 4 core and 2 electives	-	-
World Language	2 years through level three (3 years recommended)	2 years of the same language taken at the high school level; additional courses strengthen an application*	3-4 years of the same language taken in grades 9-12
Visual and Performing Arts	1 year of a core course	1 year in an arts discipline; additional courses strengthen an application*	1-2 years (or more) according to interest
Required Seminars	2 years: Freshman Seminar/Health, Keystone	-	-
Electives	Available in all areas, additional courses strengthen an application	1 year in "a-f" subject area required; additional courses strengthen an application (some JS courses are considered electives)*	Take according to interest and schedule in any of the above areas

Additional JCHS requirements include PE credits, participation in Tefillah, and completion of community engagement hours.

*See specific "a-g" subject [requirements](#) for the UCs

** Direct questions about your interests and how they relate to college admission to Ms. Cook.

Career Exploration and Self-Discovery Tools

Some students have concrete ideas about what they want to study in college and/or engage in for a career, while others remain open to multiple options – or have no idea! This section compiles reliable, student-friendly tools to help students explore work styles, majors, and careers when they are unsure of what they want to pursue. These resources are best used as **starting points for reflections and conversation**, not as definitive answers.

Before jumping into assessments, take a few moments to think about the following prompts:

Environment: Where do you feel most “in your zone?” Examples include in a quiet room doing a single task, in a busy, high-energy location with lots of people, outdoors, doing something with hands-on movement, on a screen, doing some kind of digital puzzle, game, or technical work, or onstage/as the center of attention, performing or leading a group.

Legacy: What kind of impact do you want to have on the world? What morals, ethics, or values are important to you as you live your life?

Deal-breakers: What are you NOT interested in doing? Examples include repetitive tasks, persuading people/public speaking, engaging with medical issues or blood, or spending eight hours a day at a desk.

Also consider limiting your immediate goals to the *beginning* of your career, or the first 1-3 years post-undergraduate education. Where do you want to *start*? What skill sets do you want to develop in college to begin your professional journey?

Self-Discovery Tools

Now take some tests! All these tools are free for students to use for basic results. Some offer premium upgrades, but the free versions can provide substantial value for career and personality exploration.

16Personalities: A popular and accessible Myers-Briggs Type Indicator personality profile to understand strengths and work preferences.

DISC Assessment: DISC is a personal development framework that can help you understand what drives you and others. DISC is an acronym for four basic behavior styles: Drive, Influence, Support, and Clarity.

CareerOneStop Values Matcher: Here you'll learn about work values and identify the ones that are most important to you.

Career Exploration Tools

After exploring personality traits, behavior styles, and/or work values, the following tools will help you discover various career paths and understand what might be a good fit.

O*NET Interest Profiler: A foundational discovery tool based on the Holland Codes (a taxonomy of interests based on a theory of careers and vocational choice).

[CareerOneStop Skills Matcher](#): Here you'll identify your skills and match them to careers that use them.

[TripleTen Career Aptitude Quiz](#): This site offers personalized tech career recommendations based on psychological frameworks.

Other resources:

[CareerOneStop Video Library](#): Career videos are organized into 16 clusters, or related types of work. Videos include career details such as tasks, work settings, education needed, and more.

[Roadtrip Nation](#): Archive of interviews showing non-linear career paths.

[College Board's BigFuture](#): Connects career interests to college majors and scholarships.

Tips for Using These Tools

- **Take Multiple Assessments** – Different tests may reveal different insights
- **Be Honest** – Answer authentically, not based on what sounds impressive
- **Look for Patterns** – Pay attention to common themes that emerge
- **Use As Starting Points** – These tools should prompt exploration, not final decisions
- **Follow Up with Continued Research** – Consider getting real-world exposure to certain fields through job shadowing, informational interviews, and/or summer programs
- **Extra Credit**: Look into how colleges on your list help you pursue your career goals - examples include [Ball State University](#), [Northwestern University](#)

STANDARDIZED TESTING

Standardized Tests Explained

The PSAT: The Preliminary SAT (PSAT) serves as preparation for the SAT. Students at JCHS typically take the PSAT twice: in October of 10th grade and again October of 11th grade. Scores from the 11th grade test are used to determine eligibility for the National Merit Scholarship Program. PSAT scores are not included in college applications.

The SAT: Offered seven times a year, the SAT consists of two main components: Evidenced Based Reading and Writing and Math. Most students will take their first SAT in May or June of the 11th grade, and again in the fall of 12th. Consult with Ms. Cook before deciding between the SAT and ACT; colleges accept both equally.

The ACT: Offered seven times a year, the ACT covers three skill areas: English, Math, Reading (with Science Reasoning as an optional fourth). JCHS offers a practice ACT in the winter of 11th grade – those scores are only seen by families and Ms. Cook to determine which test is a better. Most students will take their first ACT in April or June of the 11th grade, and again in the fall of 12th. Consult with Ms. Cook before deciding between the SAT and ACT.

AP Exams*: Advanced Placement (AP) exams allow students to demonstrate their competence in college-level AP courses through exams given at JCHS in May. Students earning passing scores may be granted higher course placement in college and/or some college credit, but credit is awarded at the discretion of the college the student attends. Scores of 4 or 5 may also strengthen an applicant's file. Advanced Placement is a product of the College Board.

**Some international universities require AP scores for admission to certain programs of study.*

SAT and ACT FAQs

****Test-optional Update (effective for the '26 – '27 academic year)***

The pandemic in 2020 disrupted the college admission testing process in profound ways. Most colleges and universities responded generously, and many have kept test optional (and in some cases, test free) policies. **Most notably, the UC and CSUs systems are entirely test-free.** That said, there are still institutions requiring scores for admission and/or merit aid, and a cluster of "Ivy Plus" schools have reinstituted testing requirements over the last few years. Ms. Cook is constantly monitoring the testing landscape and is available to answer questions as needed.

Should I take the SAT or ACT?

These are different tests that can appeal to students in different ways - students should familiarize themselves with the structure, content, and format of each test before deciding which one is the better fit. Students should take the PSAT and a practice ACT (both offered at JCHS in 11th grade) and then compare scores and experiences. It is recommended to assess fit before taking the official test.

When should I take the test for the first time?

Students should not take the official test for practice purposes. If a student is taking the SAT, the first sitting is typically March of 11th grade (unless during a journey, then aim for May). That

leaves multiple future dates open for further SAT testing. For students who prefer the ACT, typically April or June of 11th grade provide the best timing. Regardless of what SAT or ACT date students choose, be sure to register early to have the best selection of testing locations. *Students are responsible for registering themselves at www.collegeboard.org or www.act.org.*

Can I take the test on a Sunday?

Both the [SAT](#) and [ACT](#) allow students to sit for the test on Sundays. Early registration is also advisable as spots fill up fast; registration can be done online. Both tests may require a letter of support from JCHS for Sunday testing, which Ms. Cook can provide.

What if I need testing accommodations?

If students have learning support accommodations for the SAT or ACT, be aware that there are different steps to register. See the Dean of Learning Support for assistance.

When should I send my scores to colleges?

As a junior, *do not send any scores to colleges*; students should send scores when registering for their last senior test or at least two weeks before application deadlines. This allows students to submit only their highest sittings, and/or decide to exercise their right to suppress test scores under test-optional policies.

How many times should I take the test?

This decision will vary by student. There are several opportunities during 12th grade to retake the ACT (September, October, December) and/or the SAT (August, October, November, December). All of these dates will enable scores to arrive on time for most regular deadlines. If you will submit early applications, the October dates are typically the last opportunities to test.

What happens if my testing never results in scores I'm happy with?

Many colleges do not place a strong emphasis on standardized testing, and others do not require them at all. The website www.fairtest.org lists all test optional and test free schools – just be sure to read the fine print as policies can vary from school to school.

I am applying to schools abroad – do I still need to take standardized tests?

Yes! In fact, students who are planning to study abroad, especially in the UK, should plan to sit for as many tests (SAT, ACT, and AP Exams) as possible.

Test Prep FAQs

How do I prepare for the SAT or ACT?

Students choose to prepare for standardized tests in different ways. Some use free online resources, others choose to borrow free study guides from college advising. Some choose to work with a tutor one-on-one to target specific sections of a test, or to take a class focused on one test or another. The following companies are often recommended by JCHS families:

- Compass Prep (<http://www.compassprep.com/>)
- Khan Academy (free - <https://www.khanacademy.org/digital-sat>)
- Number2 (free – <https://www.number2.com>)
- Revolution Prep (<https://www.revolutionprep.com/>)

When should I start test prep?

- 9th, 10th, and first semester 11th graders are not advised to engage in test prep – studies show that student scores increase with age and educational development, so the best

test prep during this time is consistent effort in your daily classes. Ms. Cook *strongly* suggests that you wait until a few months before your first test (during the winter and spring of 11th grade) to do any official test prep. The experts all agree that, for students at schools like JCHS, standardized test prep should be a short and focused effort – typically over a 6-8 week period – not an ongoing task.

Questions to Ask of Test Prep Tutors and Companies

Ask:

- How much focus does the company place on hiring and training its teachers and tutors?
- Who are the teachers/tutors? How do you choose for me and why?
- What is the curriculum? What research and revision is done of the curriculum and how frequently?
- Does your method work? How well? What if it doesn't work?
- How will we know when I approach my "score ceiling?" (i.e., no amount of additional prep will have a significant effect on the score).

Avoid:

- Anyone who gives a 100% guarantee of a specific number of points for improvement, or anything that seems overstated
- Any company that presses you to sign up for more than what you need
- Following the crowd to the same tutor or company that "everyone" uses; do your own research
- Spending too much time on test prep – it should be a short and focused effort, not an ongoing task.

Insist on:

- A balanced curriculum: not too many test gimmicks; teaching should include content as well as strategy
- The product being tailored to you
- Current research and revision of tests and curriculum
- Buy-in from the student – this won't work if they don't want to invest time and energy

ADDITIONAL APPLICATION COMPONENTS

Essays

The essay is a critically important component of your application, and you should approach it with care. While your grades and scores demonstrate whether you are academically prepared, your essay tells admission officers more about you as a person and what might distinguish you from other qualified applicants. It should ideally give some insight into who you are, what you value, how you think, and what kind of community member you might be.

JCHS students draft their first essays during a special unit within their junior English courses. A successful essay is centered on the student, answers the question, stays within the stated word limit, and is clearly organized. Before submitting to colleges, essays should be reviewed by College Advising for feedback and editing. You may ask others to review your essays as well, but note that too many competing opinions can dilute your writing – you want to stay true to your own voice. Finally, it is unethical to have others write your essay – including generative AI! This must be your work, your thoughts, your story.

Writing Supplements

Some colleges request that students submit supplemental writing, often to learn more about you and why you may be a good match (or not) for their institution. Colleges may have their own unique supplements, often with multiple questions. The supplement requires care and should not be submitted hastily. Colleges often use supplements as a way to verify the authenticity of the applicant's longer essay; a significant disparity between the two raises a huge red flag. You should dedicate the same amount of time to this writing as you dedicate to your main essay.

Secondary School Report

Most private institutions require a report (submitted by JCHS) that is composed of your transcript, a school profile, and a personal recommendation from your college counselor. Ms. Cook will spend a great deal of time getting to know you through meetings, questionnaires, and faculty evaluations, and will present your abilities and accomplishments to colleges in the best possible light. The school profile provides additional contextual information for interpreting your courses and grades.

Teacher Recommendations

Most private colleges and some public institutions require one or two recommendations from faculty who have taught you during high school, ideally in one of the core academic subjects (humanities, math, science, world languages, or Jewish studies). Choose teachers who know the most about your performance in an academic setting, with whom you have a solid relationship, and in whose classroom you either excel or have made significant progress. Ms. Cook will provide counsel and instructions on when to make these requests.

Additional Recommendations

As a general rule, additional recommendations are welcome only if they say something new about you. They might be from a coach, rabbi, alumni of an institution, or employer who is able to provide insights that would be helpful to an admission committee. If you decide to ask someone to write an optional letter of recommendation, be sure to have them send their letter directly to Ms. Cook – not to the college – so that it is connected to all school documents submitted on your behalf. Always consult with Ms. Cook before asking someone to write an additional/optional recommendation for you.

Filling Out a College Application?

Answers to frequently asked questions for the Class of 2027:

Basic Data:

- JCHS School Code: 052984
- You enrolled in high school in August of 2023 and anticipate graduating on June 3, 2027.
- There are 41 students in your class. Your grades are on a 4.0 weighted scale, and JCHS does not rank students.
- Lauren Cook, Dean of College and Gap Year Advising, lcCook@jchsofthebay.org, 415-345-9777

Coursework:

- Keystone should be titled “Senior Independent Project.”
- Don’t forget to enter any summer school, online, or community college courses.

Honors/Activities:

- Few JCHS students have a robust listing under “Honors”– this is a place to list any notable awards, published work, or other items for which you’ve received recognition.
- There are 52 weeks in a calendar year, and roughly 36 weeks in a school year.
- Each athletic season lasts approximately 9-10 weeks.

UC Specific:

- The major(s) you select can have an impact – in some cases – on your chances of admission. Engineering and Computer Science are extremely competitive across all campuses. Business is also very competitive at Irvine, while Theater, Film and Music are very competitive at UCLA.
- If you have taken summer courses for credit, be sure to list them in either your **sophomore or junior year** so that they count towards the UC GPA. Example: if you took a class before sophomore year, list it in sophomore year. If you took a class after junior year, list it in junior year.

Interviews

Some colleges offer optional interviews that serve as recruitment tools, while others recommend or require interviews to evaluate you as a candidate. In either case, interviews are often considered a type of “demonstrated interest.” If a school is one of your top choices and offers interviews, consider scheduling one during your campus visit, online, or with a local representative in the Bay Area. They typically run under an hour, and may be conducted by an admission officer, a current student, or an alum of the institution. Only rising seniors should consider scheduling an interview.

Students should prepare in advance, and note that Ms. Cook is available for a “mock” interview so students can practice their questions and answers. A few things to keep in mind:

Anticipate Questions

- Why do you want to attend our college?
- What are your favorite academic subjects? Why?
- Describe your high school. If you could change anything, what would you change?
- Of all of your courses in high school, which was the most challenging? Why?
- With what extracurricular activities are you involved? Will you continue them in college?
- Do you have a vision of yourself five years from now? Ten years from now?
- What have you read recently that has affected your thinking?
- Who are your role models?
- Tell me about a situation in which you felt challenged. How did you handle it?
- Is there anything that we didn’t speak about that you feel is important to mention?

Ask Questions

- What do students love about your school?
- What is the academic climate like? (i.e. competitive, collaborative, stressful?)
- What issues are students concerned with? What “hot topics” are being addressed on campus?
- What is Jewish life like at your college?

Don’t Panic

If you are asked a question for which you have no answer, you can always say something like “That’s a great question. Could I think about it and email you?” It’s much better to say “let me think about that” than to fumble through a half-baked answer. And if you say you’ll get back to the interviewer, make sure that you do!

Other Tips

- Be on time! If you will be late or must cancel, call or email your interviewer in advance.
- Dress professionally
- Turn off your phone
- Don’t respond with a simple yes or no – elaborate on your answers.
- Relax and have fun – enjoy the opportunity to share who you are!
- Send a follow-up thank you note or email

CREATING A COLLEGE LIST

The key to a good college list is research and an open mind. Explore a wide range of schools before creating a list – research does not commit you to anything and will help inform your preferences (large vs. small, urban vs. suburban, single sex vs. coed). In the winter of 11th grade students meet with Ms. Cook to discuss preferences, and from that we'll create an initial list of 15-20 schools for consideration. By the summer between 11th and 12th grades, the list should refine to 10-15 schools that seem appropriate for your interests and abilities. In the fall of your senior year, you will finalize your list.

Students research colleges in any number of ways. The *Fiske Guide to Colleges* is an excellent resource for getting an objective, short description of a campus and its community, while websites like CampusReel show off institutions through a student's point of view. Ultimately, visiting a college gives the most comprehensive understanding of the campus, culture, and community. See pages 20-21 for advice on planning a visit.

Your final list needs to encompass an appropriate spectrum of selectivity, and include schools about which you feel *strongly* and *positively*. **If you cannot imagine being happy at a particular school, it should not be on your list.** Each list should ideally be comprised of two or three “likely” schools where your probability of acceptance is high, three or four “possible” schools where you are a good candidate and your chances of admission are solid, and two or three “reach” schools at which you would do well, but your probability of admission is relatively low.

With good planning, there is no need to apply to more than 10 schools. **This includes the University of California schools, to which you should not apply indiscriminately** – like all other colleges, if you apply to a UC campus it should be a school you have researched and ultimately feel is a good match.

Some students believe that applying to 15-20 schools will increase chances of admission. This increases the amount of work you must do and the cost of application fees, but doesn't increase your odds of being admitted. College admission may be unpredictable, but it is not a lottery.

What are the costs of applying to more than 10 schools?

- You lose quality time needed to do well in senior courses
- You fail to make individual schools aware of your genuine interest
- You do not have the time to do a good job with every application
- You spend more money than necessary
- You expose yourself to an increased amount of rejection

Senior year is an exciting time - you should enjoy it! Please think carefully before applying to more than 10 schools, and discuss your options with Ms. Cook if you are having trouble narrowing down your list.

INTRODUCTION TO SCOIR

SCOIR provides a suite of online college search resources to families. It also organizes the college search for students and College Advising, and is the primary way that Ms. Cook submits materials to colleges on a student's behalf. JCHS students create individual SCOIR accounts at the beginning of 11th grade, and parents are strongly encouraged to register an account linked to their student(s) at that time. Both students and parents are sent separate invitation emails from SCOIR, which require action within 72 hours.

Once students have active SCOIR accounts, they may get the most out of the platform by following these steps:

- **Download the SCOIR mobile app** in the App Store or Google Play, and enable Push Notifications to receive important alerts and messages from Ms. Cook.
- **Build your Profile.** In 'My Profile,' make sure your personal details and academic overview are accurate. You may add your activities, achievements, and a personal bio. This may help you establish an approach to your college applications, remind you what sets you apart from others, and make it easier to transfer information over to your college application. Keep this information up to date so you can use the SCOIR resume template, if needed! The more information you enter into SCOIR, the better Ms. Cook is able to support you throughout the college search process.
- **Explore, follow, and compare colleges.** Go to the 'College Search' tab and complete a Preference and Advanced Search. After you complete a search, explore colleges of interest and take advantage of the virtual tours, college wall, and college details to gain insight into each campus. In the winter of 11th grade, Ms. Cook will suggest additional colleges based on her knowledge of you, your interests, and your academic profile.
- **Build your list.** To keep track of colleges that interest you, make sure to "follow" them! You can access your Following list at any time, and also keep track of and review Counselor and Parent college suggestions.
- **Complete a character assessment and learn about best-fit careers.** Complete the PrinciplesYou questions under My Profile>Career Profile to gain insight your natural talents to make informed decisions about your future: <https://principlesyou.com/>. Note that this cannot be done on the app on a mobile device – it must be completed on a computer or laptop.

CAMPUS VISITS

Getting Started

As you begin the college search, you should investigate various types of schools to determine your basic campus preferences. Early on, colleges of similar types can serve as “proxies” for one another. Cal and UC Davis, for example, are reasonable proxies for large public universities like Washington or Michigan. Similarly, Stanford or Santa Clara can be good templates for medium-sized private schools like Wash U or American. You can determine a lot by making a few local visits first, then use that information to plan visits in another part of the country.

It’s most helpful if you can visit at least *five varied institutions* – fewer than that and the tendency is to “like them all,” but once you see five or more, you begin to develop preferences. The schools listed below are general suggestions once you are ready to experience other parts of the U.S. – they are roughly divided by size; those labeled “special interest” have distinctive approaches or specialize in particular academic areas. Finally, remember to visit schools with a range of selectivity. **Do not go all the way across the country to visit *only* the most selective colleges!**

Washington State:

Small: Evergreen State, University of Puget Sound, Whitman

Medium: Seattle University, Western Washington University

Large: University of Washington

Special interest: Cornish College of the Arts, Digipen Institute of Technology

Oregon:

Small: Lewis & Clark, Linfield, Reed, Willamette

Medium: Oregon State University, Southern Oregon University

Large: University of Oregon

Special interest: Oregon Institute of Technology, Pacific Northwest College of Art @ Willamette

Northern CA:

Small: Dominican University of California, St. Mary’s College, University of San Francisco

Medium: Santa Clara University, UC Santa Cruz, Sonoma State University, Stanford

Large: UC Berkeley, UC Davis, Sacramento State University

Special interest: Academy of Art University, Menlo College

Southern CA:

Small: Chapman, Claremont Colleges, Occidental, University of Redlands, Whittier

Medium: UC San Diego, UC Santa Barbara, USC

Large: Cal State Long Beach, UCLA, San Diego State

Special interest: California Institute of the Arts, Caltech

DC/VA/MD:

Small: Goucher College, Washington and Lee

Medium: American, George Washington, Johns Hopkins

Large: University of Maryland College Park, University of Virginia

Special interest: Saint John’s College, US Naval Academy

Greater NYC:

Small: Barnard, The New School, Sarah Lawrence

Medium: Fordham, Hofstra, SUNY Stony Brook

Large: Columbia, New York University, Rutgers

Special interest: Cooper Union, Fashion Institute of Technology, Jewish Theological Seminary

Boston and environs:

Small: Clark, Emerson, Wellesley

Medium: Brandeis, Brown, Harvard, Northeastern, Tufts

Large: Boston University

Special interest: Berklee College of Music, MIT, Olin College of Engineering

How to Visit a College Campus

It's ideal to see a campus when school is in session, but the majority of campus visits occur during the summer. You should avoid visiting during a college holiday or on a Sunday, however, as various buildings will often be locked or inaccessible. You are strongly encouraged to make a reservation. When planning a visit, you should register online 2-3 weeks in advance and plan to attend an info session and/or campus tour. Consider bringing a list of questions that cannot be answered online.

The info session and tour will likely take around two hours. If you have extra time or are hoping for a more in-depth look at a given institution, also consider the following:

- **Visit the Chabad or Hillel:** Ask the Admission Office where to find the center of Jewish life and visit. Ask questions about the Jewish experience on campus.
- **Visit a residence hall:** If residence halls are not included on the tour, ask Admission if you can visit one. If a formal visit is not available, try to visit one on your own or ask a current student if they would mind showing you a room (they remember what it is like to be a prospective student, and will often try to be helpful).
- **Ask to eat in a dining hall or student center:** If you are on campus during mealtime, ask where you can eat. This will be the food for the next four years of your life!
- **Visit the downtown:** Walk or drive through the downtown near the college. Does it appear to be thriving? Is transportation to and from campus convenient? If you keep kosher and there is not kosher dining on campus, what is available nearby?
- **Sit in on a class:** Many colleges will invite you to sit in on an actual class - this is a great way to get a sense of the level of instruction and quality of student discussion.
- **Stay in a dorm (advance reservation required):** Some colleges allow prospective students to stay overnight in a dorm room. While this can give you additional insight, know that student hosts can vary - don't let one person color your entire impression.
- **Interview (advance reservation often required):** While not every college offers interviews, if available at your top contenders you should consider scheduling one during your visit. See page 15 for interview advice, and note that interviews should only be conducted by rising seniors.

TIPS FOR ARTISTS AND ATHLETES

The needs of student athletes and visual or performing artists can require special expertise and attention in the college admission process. Students who wish to pursue these activities in college will have extra steps to follow when submitting applications, and these steps may require starting the college search process earlier than their peers.

Artists

Students who possess noteworthy talent in art, film, dance, drama, music and/or creative writing should consider enhancing their applications with auditions or portfolios. Many colleges accept these supplements and have specific guidelines for doing so. You will want to pay special attention to submission or audition guidelines, requirements, and deadlines. Ms. Cook and your private arts teachers can be helpful in exploring your options and preparing your materials.

Resources:

National Portfolio Day: <https://nationalportfolioday.org>

SlideRoom: <http://www.slideroom.com/>

Athletes

Students who have been active in athletics may want to continue playing sports in college. If you are considering playing at the varsity level, you will need to understand the differences between NCAA Division I, II, and III schools, and will need to learn and observe any NCAA requirements regarding the recruiting process for D-I and D-II sports. Top athletes should consult with their coaches and the JCHS Athletic Director about their talent level and potential programs.

Here is a summary of steps you should take to achieve eligibility:

Freshman and Sophomores:

- Earn the best grades you can
- Work hard to develop athletic skills
- Learn to balance school and sports

Juniors:

- Continue to work hard to earn top grades and develop athletic skills
- Contact coaches at the colleges you're most interested in
- When registering for the ACT or SAT, send scores to the Eligibility Center - code 9999
- At the end of the year, ask the Registrar to send your transcript to the Eligibility Center
- By the end of the school year register with the NCAA Eligibility Center:
<https://web3.ncaa.org/ecwr3/>

Seniors:

- Be honest and clear with coaches about your level of interest
- If you retake the ACT or SAT, continue sending scores to the Eligibility Center
- Make official visits to campuses, commit/apply in the fall to the program of your choice
- Continue to work hard to get the best grades possible, and stay healthy!

FINANCING A COLLEGE EDUCATION

Higher education is one of the most significant investments a family will make. This section is designed to introduce some basic terms and resources, and Ms. Cook is available to answer questions and make suggestions for further information. Note that College Advising partners with [College Money Method](#) to provide education on the financing process throughout the school year - parents are strongly encouraged to attend to learn the basics of the process, what colleges typically provide, and what forms are required for eligibility.

Financial Aid 101

Financial assistance comes in two basic forms: Need-Based Financial Aid, and Non-Need Based Financial Aid (or merit aid). The former depends on your family's ability to pay; the latter is more frequently tied to academic, athletic, or some other achievement or ability.

Need-based aid is determined by a "Federal Methodology" developed by the U.S. government, and the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) is the form you must submit in order to determine the amount your family can contribute to the cost of college. Many colleges and universities also require families to submit either the CSS (College Scholarship Service) Profile or a college-specific form, both of which seek additional financial information.

All JCHS families are strongly recommended to apply for federal financial aid even if you think you will not be eligible. There are a few reasons for this recommendation:

- You won't receive aid if you don't apply
- The threshold for private colleges to provide financial aid continues to increase – in some cases aid could be offered to a family making up to \$225,000 per year
- Some non-need-based scholarships *require* families to submit a FAFSA before consideration for merit aid (The University of California and Brandeis, for example) even though the scholarship may be awarded without regard to a student's financial situation.

For an early preview of what an individual college might offer, complete the "net price calculator" on a college's website – the federal government requires colleges to provide this tool for families. These calculators are often accurate for families with salaried parents; less so if a parent is self-employed.

Another resource is Wellesley College's "MyinTuition" cost estimator (used by several institutions beyond Wellesley), as it is widely regarded as a simpler tool: www.wellesley.edu/costestimator. Also keep in mind that aid may be higher at colleges for which you are an especially appealing candidate due to academic, athletic or artist talent.

Steps to Applying for Financial Assistance:

- I. Complete the 2027-2028 FAFSA online. The FAFSA requests "prior prior year" tax information, meaning that you submit 2025 taxes for 2027-2028 financial aid. There is no cost to submit the FAFSA. If you wish to attend a free FAFSA workshop, go to <https://www.cash4college.csac.ca.gov/> in the fall of 2026 and enter your home zip code to get a list of events in your area. Also note that Jewish Family and Children's

Services often sponsors winter workshops around the Bay Area related to college financial aid.

- II. Complete the CSS Profile, if applicable. You may access the 2027-2028 Profile form starting October 1 here: <https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org/>.
- III. After submitting the FAFSA (essential) and the CSS Profile (only if needed), then turn your attention to **Jewish organizations** that offer college scholarships or no-interest loans:
 - Hillel Jewish Scholarships Portal: <https://www.hillel.org/college-guide/hillel-scholarships/jewish-scholarships>
 - Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin, and Sonoma: <http://jewishfed.org/how-we-help/scholarships/college-scholarships>
 - Jewish Family and Children's Services: <https://www.jfcs.org/find-help/financial-assistance/financial-aid-center/>
 - Hebrew Free Loan Association: <https://www.hflasf.org/apply/loans-we-offer/student/>
 - Samuel Lemberg Scholarship Loan Fund: <https://samuellembergscholarshiploanfund.weebly.com/>
 - Financial Aid for Jewish Students: <http://www.collegescholarships.org/scholarships/jewish-students.htm>
 - American Jewish League (for study in Israel): <http://www.americanjewishleague.com/scholarships/>

Additional Resources:

- Consider schools in the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE), a program designed to offer out-of-state student tuition rates closer to in-state rates: www.wiche.edu/wue
- Check out [MeritAidGrids](#) for a clearinghouse of merit aid tables or graphs published by both public and private universities.
- First in your family to attend college? Look into some of these scholarships:
 - Horatio Alger Association: <https://scholars.horatioalger.org/about-our-scholarship-programs/>
 - I'm First: <http://www.imfirst.org/scholarship/>
- Review the following general sites for additional scholarship opportunities:
 - <https://www.appily.com/scholarships>
 - www.scholarships360.org

A Word of Warning:

There are many predatory organizations related to the college funding process. Be wary of solicitations requesting a fee for access to financial aid, and know that Ms. Cook is available for questions regarding reputable sources versus scams.

LEARNING SUPPORT

Over the last two decades, colleges and universities have substantially improved their services for students with learning needs. Students wanting support services should follow the same path as all prospective college students, with a few of the following additional considerations.

Questions to Ask Colleges

- What kind of support services does the school have for students with learning needs?
- Are there requirements (i.e., language, math) that may be difficult for the student to fulfill?
- Is there a specific learning services program on campus? Can you speak with the staff?
- Is there a writing lab? A study skills center? What instructional strategies are utilized?
- Is there a fee for utilizing support programs?

If you have an individualized learning plan at JCHS and are accustomed to certain instructional strategies or accommodations, please note that not all colleges offer similar levels of support. IDEA law emphasizes success for high school students, whereas ADA law for college students emphasizes access.

Telling Your Story

Students with learning needs are encouraged to become comfortable telling their story. Specifically, colleges appreciate when students can do the following:

- Articulate details about a specific learning diagnosis and preferences for learning
- Explain how learning needs have affected academic performance
- Address what accommodations and instructional strategies have proven successful
- Discuss what has been gained because of the learning style

Standardized Testing

Students with diagnoses for learning or health may be eligible to take the SAT or ACT with extended time or other accommodations. Current documentation (within the last three years) will be required to demonstrate the need for accommodations. Students who believe they may qualify should meet with the Dean of Learning Support during junior year to understand the necessary paperwork, which will be submitted in addition to the regular registration materials.

Select Colleges with Strong Learning Support

While many institutions provide support, the following colleges are known for having *exceptional* resources and have proven popular with JCHS families. Those with an * also have special fee-based centers, which provide even more enhanced services.

American University (DC)
Brown University (RI)
Clark University (MA)
Landmark College (VT)*

Muhlenberg College (PA)
Northeastern (MA)*
Skidmore College (NY)
University of Arizona*

University of Denver*
University of Michigan
University of Puget Sound
University of Southern CA

[A full database of “neurodiversity-friendly” colleges \(and other resources\) is available here.](#)

GAP YEAR OVERVIEW

What is a Gap Year?

A gap year is a natural break after high school for students who would like to explore interests before beginning another four-plus years of school. Historically, 20% of each graduating JCHS class has pursued a gap year. This time can help a student discover a passion, build self-confidence and independence, and explore opportunities through hands-on learning. Colleges often report that students who matriculate after taking a gap year are more mature, focused, and better able to articulate their observations in the classroom.

What happens during a Gap Year?

There are various ways to structure a gap year– you may engage in volunteer service, work, academic classes, an internship, language immersion, travel and more. It is not necessary to pay tuition to a “program” to participate in a gap year, but it is advised to have a gap year plan. Colleges will often ask about a student’s plan before granting a deferral of enrollment.

When should I apply to college?

If you are planning to take a gap year, it’s recommended that you still apply to college during your senior year. After you’ve been accepted, you will request to defer your enrollment – almost all colleges approve a one-year deferral. The application process is time-consuming and requires interaction with many different people, so it is best completed while still at JCHS.

Caution regarding UC and CSU:

The University of California (UC) and the California State University (CSU) systems generally do not grant deferments (with some exceptions). If you want to attend one of these institutions and take a gap year, you typically have three options:

- 1) Apply during your senior year, and after receiving admission request permission for a gap year. Requests are sometimes granted for religious exploration or military service; students must resubmit an application during the gap year to hold their place.
- 2) Apply during your senior year, then “enroll” as a student by attending an orientation (typically held during the summer before you enroll) or a summer or fall class. As an enrolled student, you may then request a yearlong leave of absence.
- 3) Apply during your gap year.

How do I know what path is right for me?

This is a personal question that will vary for each student, but some of the following questions are important to answer for yourself as you explore your gap year options:

- What do I want from my gap year?
- Will I spend the year on one activity, or shift between several?
- If I earn college credits, will my deferred institution consider me a transfer student?
- If considering a program, what is the history of the organization? How long have they been in existence?
- Is the organization a non-profit or a for-profit?
- Does the organization provide testimonials from former students?
- What are the total fees for the program? Is there an application fee? Cancellation policy?
- Do they offer financial assistance to participants?
- What type of health insurance do I need to cover emergencies?

Caution regarding UC and CSU:

If students earn college credit beyond the summer after graduation from high school, the UCs and CSUs will no longer view them as entering freshmen. Note that the UCs and CSUs accept very few lower-division transfers. So, students who earn college credit in the academic year after high school and want to attend the UC or CSU after their gap year will have a better chance of being admitted if they attend community college to complete their general education requirements (generally completed in two years), then transfer to a UC or CSU as a junior.

Below are some popular gap year program options. This list is by no means exhaustive – there is more information available online, though gap programs visiting JCHS each year, gap year fairs, and from JCHS faculty.

Popular Options in Israel:

Aardvark Israel: www.aardvarkisrael.com

Israel XP: <https://israelxp.com/>

Kivunim (a travel program based in Israel): <https://www.teenlife.com//gap/kivunim-gap-year/>

Kol Ami Mechina: <https://www.kolami.org.il/>

Masa Israel (umbrella org for many Israel options): www.masaisrael.org/gap-year

Nativ: www.nativ.org

Shalom Hartman Hevruta: <https://www.hartman.org.il/program/hevruta-gap-year-program/>

Young Judaea: <https://www.youngjudaea.org/yearcourse>

Popular General Options:

CIEE: www.ciee.org

NOLS: <https://www.nols.edu>

Outward Bound: www.outwardbound.org

Rustic Pathways: www.rusticpathways.com

Semester at Sea: www.semesteratsea.org

Where There Be Dragons: www.wheretherebedragons.com

Affordable Options:

General: Choose those with service components or run by large organizations (i.e. Americorps, Global Citizen Year)

Israel: Choose larger organizations like Aardvark or Young Judaea. Additional funding options are available for travel to Israel through Masa <https://www.masaisrael.org/funding/grants-scholarships/>

Resources:

[Gap Year Advice from the National Association of College Admission Counseling](#)

[Gap Year Association](#)

[Go Overseas](#)

ADVICE TO PARENTS

College admission has changed significantly since the days when most of us applied, due in equal measure to population increases, international competition, and increased marketing on the part of colleges and universities. Too often the message students receive is about chasing a brand name over finding the right fit, and the pressure and hype can make us lose sight of what is essential at JCHS: your child's education. Our mission is to educate students to seek excellence and balance, engage with the world around them, and lead rich, full lives. The college search should be an extension of that process, not a competition for entrance to the most "prestigious" institution possible.

While it is normal to experience some anxiety around a complex and expensive process, there are ways to minimize your stress. The following are a few suggestions for how to make the college search a positive, thoughtful experience:

- Be realistic about the process and your student's strengths and weaknesses.
- Listen attentively to your child – ask questions about what they think and feel; help them voice their anxieties and doubts.
- Know your limits around cost and distance and communicate those limits clearly to your child.
- Let your child take ownership of the process – be involved and provide guidance, but do not take over the research and applications.
- Be open to the possibilities. With some 4,000 colleges and universities in the US, you will not be familiar with all of them. Focus on finding the right fit, not the best-known school.
- Visit college campuses with your student but let them take the lead with questions. Don't be more memorable than your child!
- Keep your perspective. **College admission is not a reflection of your parenting or the worth of your student.** Admission decisions are made based on a wide range of factors, and we can only influence some of them.
- Be supportive and know that you have some power to control the angst around the process within your home. Don't talk about college every night at dinner!
- Stay in touch with Ms. Cook – I'm here to answer questions, guide the search and assist with applications.

Resources:

Challenge Success, a project of the Stanford Graduate School of Education that works with schools, families, and communities to embrace a broad definition of success:

<https://challengesuccess.org/>

Author Malcolm Gladwell's talk at Google's Zeitgeist Conference, on whether it's irrational or against our best interests to chase an association with an "elite" institution:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3UEwbRWFZVc>

A WORD ON INDEPENDENT COUNSELORS

The profession of independent counseling came into existence as the result of inadequate counseling resources at public high schools, but in more affluent areas has developed into a perceived need, fueled by some combination of media frenzy, parent anxiety, and social pressure. Some JCHS families wonder if they should hire the services of an independent counselor. While we understand the external pressures of the college search process and are sympathetic to special needs that may arise for some students, we believe that most JCHS students do not need such services.

The professional experience and training of Ms. Cook, combined with the support of the administration and faculty, ensure that JCHS students are receiving personalized, abundant, and accurate guidance throughout the college search process. Comprehensive counseling services – personalized support and a relationship with an experienced admission professional – are included in JCHS tuition.

JCHS College Advising provides focused, individual attention as well as small and large group sessions throughout the academic year for students and parents alike. Ms. Cook engages in ongoing professional development to stay fresh and knowledgeable about the college admission landscape, and has years of professional, selective college admission experience reading and evaluating thousands of applications.

Ms. Cook can function in a way that independent counselors cannot: with full access to school records, teachers, and coaches, she is the person contacted most frequently by colleges with questions about an applicant. She writes the recommendations that colleges require, she has a deep knowledge of JCHS, its curriculum, and its applicant history, and has professional relationships with college admission officers around the country through her two decades of work in college admission.

That said, employing an independent counselor will not hurt anyone's feelings, nor will it cause Ms. Cook to work with a student any differently. If you do employ an outside counselor, please let Ms. Cook know and grant permission for her to communicate with that person. We do not want students to feel uncomfortable receiving advice from their independent counselor *and* JCHS, or to feel as though they must keep the independent counselor a secret. In the end, we all want what is best for the student.

If you have further questions about whether to seek out the services of an independent counselor, please feel free to contact Ms. Cook. The following resources may also be useful, as any quality independent counselor will be a member of one (or all) of these organizations:

National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC): www.nacacnet.org

Independent Educational Consultants Association (IECA): www.iecaonline.com

Higher Education Consultants Association (HECA): <https://hecalive.org/>

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

A-G REQUIREMENTS: Courses required by the University of California and the California State University systems to be eligible for admission. See page 9 for more detail.

BLOCK PLAN: A curriculum based on one course at a time for periods of three to seven weeks. Examples: Cornell College, IA; Colorado College, CO.

CAL GRANT: A state grant awarded to students attending California colleges who meet GPA and family income requirements. To apply, families must complete the FAFSA and submit a GPA Verification Form (completed automatically by the JCHS Registrar for all students).

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY (CSU): A public system of twenty-three campuses across California. All the campuses offer undergraduate education.

CANDIDATE REPLY DATE: Typically, applicants must let colleges know their enrollment decision by May 1; also referred to as the “universal reply date.”

SCHOOL CODE: The code by which a college can identify a high school – JCHS is 052984.

COALITION FOR ACCESS, AFFORDABILITY, AND SUCCESS: 170+ colleges across the US that offer college planning tools and an online application. JCHS does not recommend applying through the Coalition app (now on SCOIR); all schools are also members of Common App.

COMMON APPLICATION: A generic application accepted by 1,100+ colleges. The student, counselor, and teacher portions need only be completed once, but note that many Common App schools also require college-specific supplements to the basic application.

CO-OP PROGRAM: A study and work system that allows students to gain practical experience related to their coursework. Examples: Drexel University (PA), Northeastern University (MA).

CORE CURRICULUM: A set of common courses required of all students at that college.

COST OF ATTENDANCE (COA): The total cost of one year at a specific college, including tuition, fees, room and board, books and supplies, travel, and other expenses. Colleges subtract your Expected Family Contribution from the Cost of Attendance to calculate financial need.

EARLY ACTION (EA): A non-binding admission plan allowing applicants who apply by an early deadline to receive early notification. There is no obligation to attend if admitted. Some colleges do not permit students to apply to more than one Early Action program (see REA below).

EARLY DECISION (ED): A binding admission plan for applicants who are sure a specific college is their first choice. Students apply and are notified early. An acceptance requires a commitment on the part of the student to attend that college or university.

ELIGIBILITY IN LOCAL CONTEXT (ELC): ELC status – students in the top 9% of their California high school – adds value to the UC application and is one of the 13 factors considered for admission.

FINANCIAL NEED: The amount of need-based financial aid a family qualifies to receive at each college.

IMPACTED PROGRAM: A term used mostly by the CSU and UC systems to indicate a campus or major that receives more applications than space available. Impacted program applicants normally must apply during a specified time, meet criteria, and participate in a competitive selection process.

IVY LEAGUE: An athletic conference formed in 1954 by eight institutions: Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, Princeton, University of Pennsylvania and Yale.

LEGACY: An applicant whose parents (or, in some cases sibling or other relative) attended the college to which s/he is applying. At some colleges, legacy status can influence admission.

LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE: An undergraduate institution that aims to impart a broad general knowledge and develop general intellectual capacities, in contrast to a professional, vocational, or technical curriculum. Pre-professional training may be available but is not emphasized.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGE ADMISSION COUNSELING (NACAC): A national organization committed to maintaining high standards to foster ethical and social responsibility among those involved in the college transition process.

NEED-BLIND ADMISSION: A procedure that some colleges follow, whereby they admit candidates based on academic and personal criteria alone, without considering financial need.

SCHOOL PROFILE: A document provided by high schools to colleges for determining contextual information about their applicants. Profiles include information about school philosophy, coursework, and colleges to which previous classes of students have matriculated.

STUDENT AID INDEX (SAI): An eligibility index number calculated from the FAFSA that a college's financial aid office uses to determine how much federal student aid a student would receive if they attended the school.

RESTRICTIVE EARLY ACTION: An admission policy adopted by several colleges whereby a student may apply to one of the colleges – and one only – for a non-binding Early Action decision. Schools that currently employ this policy include Harvard, Princeton, Stanford and Yale.

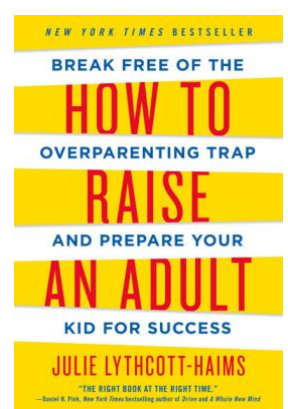
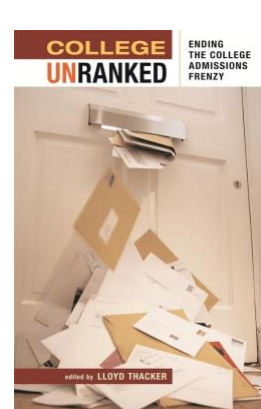
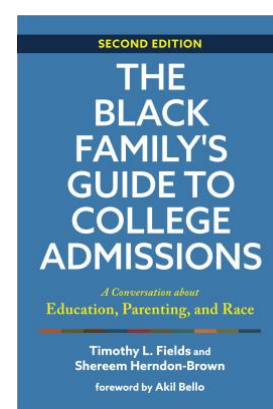
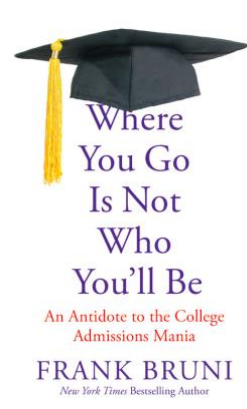
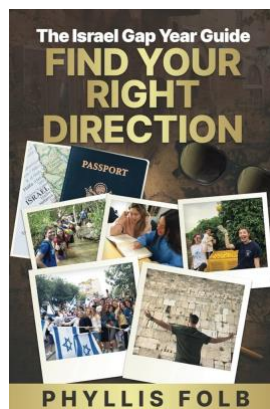
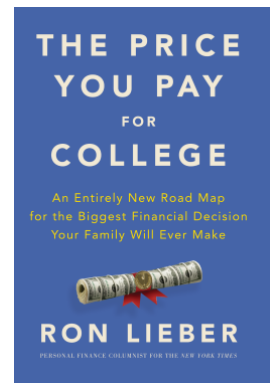
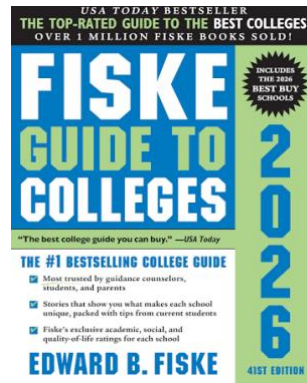
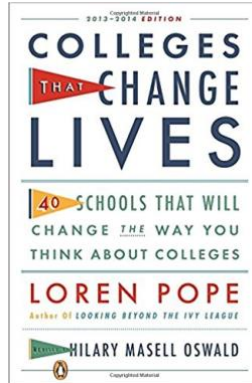
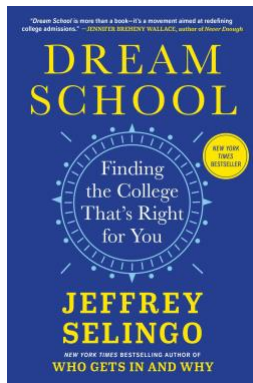
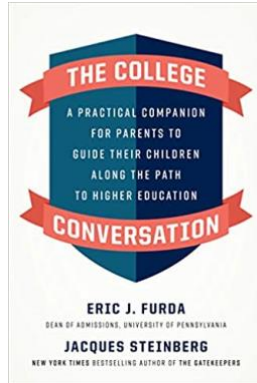
ROLLING ADMISSION: A procedure some colleges follow by considering each student's application when all required materials have been received, on a first-come first-served basis.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA (UC): A public system of ten campuses throughout California. Undergraduates may study at nine of the campuses, while the San Francisco campus is for graduate level health-related education only.

WAIT LIST: A list colleges maintain if they do not fill the first-year class. Wait list offers are typically made after May 1 and can potentially continue throughout the summer.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books



Helpful Websites for College Planning

Application Systems

The Common Application: www.commonapp.org

The UC System: <http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu>

The Cal State System: <https://www.calstate.edu/apply>

Financial Aid

California Student Aid Commission: www.csac.ca.gov

CSS Profile: cssprofile.collegeboard.org

FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid): www.fafsa.gov

General College Information

Big Future by The College Board: www.bigfuture.org

College Scorecard: collegescorecard.ed.gov

Fair Test: www.fairtest.org

Hillel International: www.hillel.org

Testing

ACT: www.act.org

SAT: <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat>

NOTES



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