



SUE LUSE,
one of our experts,
is a former high school
guidance counselor and
a certified educational
consultant.



SPECIAL SECTION

PREPPING FOR COLLEGE




If it's been decades since you took the ACT or the SAT, you may be daunted by the complexity of today's college selection process. We asked local education experts for advice on preparing for college. Here are eight tips to help your kids make the most of their high school experience to create their own competitive advantage. 

PHOTO BY KATHERINE HARRIS

+ **Twin Cities Prep Guide**

Trying to decide which school is right for your child? See our guide to Twin Cities prep schools at mspmag.com/prepschools.

1 WORK A PLAN

BEFORE YOU START ninth grade, map out a four-year plan to make the most of what your high school offers. Take a rigorous high school curriculum including four years of math, English, science, and social studies, and three to four years of a single foreign language. Take Advanced Placement and/or International Baccalaureate classes if your high school offers them. Consider taking extra classes and even college classes in subjects you are especially passionate about.



“I love helping busy teenagers and their families find their way through the college planning journey to what is hopefully the best destination for them. Along the way, I get to see the students mature, learn to make decisions, adhere to deadlines, build on their strengths, and use their potential to become independent young adults, ready to go off to college.”

SUE LUSE, CERTIFIED INDEPENDENT EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANT, MEMBER IECA, SUZANNE LUSE AND ASSOCIATES



“All students in the ninth to 12th grades have a weekly advising class with me where we cover college- and career-related topics.”

**KERRIE TROSETH, COLLEGE & CAREER COUNSELOR,
THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF MINNESOTA**

PENNANT PHOTOS BY KATHERINE HARRIS



“At Breck, students and families are assigned a college counselor in the fall of 10th grade, which allows the counselor to get to know each student in a deeper and more real way and help them grow.”

**JONATHAN NICHOLSON,
DIRECTOR OF COLLEGE
COUNSELING, BRECK SCHOOL**

2 MAKE THE GRADE



GRADES ARE ALWAYS important, but college admissions staff prefer to see slightly lower grades in rigorous programs than all As in

less challenging coursework. Admissions staff also like to see an upward trend in grades from ninth grade through 12th grade.



“When evaluating an applicant, we definitely consider the whole picture of a student. Academics are important, but we also look at their high school curriculum—whether they’ve taken AP classes, honors classes, and college prep classes. We also look at their involvement in athletics, performing arts, and other extracurricular activities, and any leadership positions.”

BRANDI DEFRIES, DIRECTOR OF ADMISSIONS, SAINT MARY’S UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

3 GET INVOLVED

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS

staff look for students who will get involved in high school activities and be leaders. Prepare by choosing high school activities that you can commit to during all four years, so that by the time you reach senior year, you're able to take on a leadership role. Carefully balance your time with academics, and do what you love!



"Our students are encouraged to explore a wide variety of activities during their freshman year and then narrow those choices over the years to those activities that really make them passionate and what they excel in."

RICHARD HARRIS, COLLEGE AND GUIDANCE COUNSELOR, MINNEHAHA ACADEMY



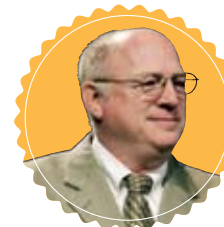
"It's very, very important that students are showing an interest and speaking up in class."

RICHARD HARRIS

4 BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS STAFF

are interested in your academic achievement, class participation, intellectual promise, integrity, and maturity. You'll need letters of recommendation to send to your colleges, so be sure to shine in your classes so your teachers get to know you. Spend time with guidance counselors, as they can help you do the best you can during high school and assist with the college admissions process.



"The more that teachers and counselors know a student, the more they can help them get into the college of their choice. Many schools require letters of recommendation, and their staff can tell when a teacher or counselor is really speaking to a student's abilities."

FRANK D. SACHS, DIRECTOR OF COLLEGE COUNSELING, THE BLAKE SCHOOL



5 FIND A CAUSE!

LOOK FOR A nonprofit organization that you care about and can commit time to during high school. It doesn't need to be a ton of time, because grades and high school activities are more important. Consider museums, hospitals, food shelves, homeless shelters, nursing homes, or animal shelters, or visit handsontwincities.org for more ideas.



"We strongly stress character education and community service. In ninth grade, the students get to develop their own service project and learn how to implement it."

KERRIE TROSETH, THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF MINNESOTA

"I believe that the rigorous coursework required by St. Paul Academy better prepares our students for the standardized college tests."

MARY HILL, DIRECTOR OF COLLEGE COUNSELING AND ACADEMIC PLANNING, ST. PAUL ACADEMY AND SUMMIT SCHOOL



6 ROCK THE ACT AND SAT



COLLEGE ADMISSIONS staff look for solid SAT and ACT scores, consistent with high school performance. Consider taking one or more of the many excellent test prep options including online, classes, or one-on-one tutoring. Take the PLAN® ACT preparation test in 10th grade and the PSAT (Preliminary SAT) test in 10th and 11th grades to get an early read on your scores. Remember to sign up for the SAT Subject Tests if colleges on your target list require them.

7 THINK AHEAD



BEFORE YOUR junior year, make a list of colleges that interest you. Visit collegeboard.org to learn about majors and minors and finaid.org and fastweb.com for information about financial aid and scholarships. Attend the National College Fair and presentations by college admissions counselors who visit your school. If possible, visit colleges to get a feel for the schools. Finalize your "apply list" and start working on your applications and essays in the summer before senior year.



"When we begin the earnest college process work in junior year, we find almost all our students have some ideas about what they're looking for."

ANNE PABST, CO-DIRECTOR OF COLLEGE COUNSELING, CONVENT OF THE VISITATION SCHOOL

8 ENJOY THE JO

HIGH SCHOOL IS a time for you to discover your strengths and interests and learn to adhere to deadlines and make decisions. Not everything you do in your free time should be for the sake of a college résumé. The most interesting college applicants have taken time to enjoy high school, explore their passions, and get to know themselves.



A SHORT LIST OF TOP-PERFORMING LOCAL PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS

- Central High School**
531 Morse St.,
Norwood Young
America, 952-467-
7100, raiders.central.
k12.mn.us

Eagan High School
4185 Braddock Tr.,
Eagan, 651-683-6900,
eagan.k12.mn.us

**East Ridge High
School**
4200 Pioneer Dr.,
Woodbury, 651-768-
2300, sowashco.k12.
mn.us

Edina High School
6754 Valley View Rd.,
Edina, 952-848-3800,
edina.k12.mn.us

Hopkins High School
2400 Lindbergh Dr.,
Minnetonka,
952-988-4500,
hopkinsschools.org

Irondale High School
2425 Long Lake Rd.,
New Brighton, 651-
621-6800, mounds
viewschools.org/
irondale

**Lakeville North High
School**
19600 Ipava Ave. W.,
Lakeville, 952-232-
3600, lnhs.isd194.k12.
mn.us

**Lakeville South High
School**
21135 Jacquard Ave.,
Lakeville, 952-232-
3300, lshs.isd194.k12.
mn.us

**Mahtomedi High
School**
8000 N. 75th St.,
Mahtomedi,
651-407-2100,
mahtomedi.k12.
mn.us



URNEY



“Take time with your application and, above all, be yourself. We know you’ve done good things in high school, and we want to hear about them in your own voice. The more we feel we know you, the easier it will be to determine if you are a good fit with St. Kate’s. Include a résumé or activity sheet detailing your extracurricular accomplishments, so we can see how you’ve been able to balance life with academics.”

JANE NORDHORN, DIRECTOR OF RECRUITMENT, ST. CATHERINE UNIVERSITY

- Maple Grove Senior High**
9800 Fernbrook Ln.
N., Maple Grove, 763-
391-8700, schools.
district279.org/mgsh

Minneapolis Public Schools
1250 Broadway Ave.
W., Mpls., 612-668-
0000, mpls.k12.
mn.us

Minnetonka High School
18301 Hwy. 7,
Minnetonka,
952-401-5700,
minnetonka.k12.
mn.us

Mounds View High School
1900 Lake Valentine
Rd., Arden Hills,
651-621-7100,
moundsview
schools.org

Orono High School
75 Old Crystal Bay Rd.
N., Long Lake, 952-
449-8400, orono.k12.
mn.us

Rosemount High School
3335 W. 142nd St.,
Rosemount,
651-423-7501,
district196.org/rhs

St. Paul Public Schools
360 Colborne St.,
St. Paul, 651-767-
8100, spps.org

School of Environmental Studies
12155 Johnny Cake
Ridge Rd., Apple
Valley, 952-431-8750,
district196.org/ses

Stillwater Area High School
5701 Stillwater Blvd.
N., Stillwater, 651-351-
8040, stillwater.k12.
mn.us

Wayzata High School
4955 Peony Ln.,
Plymouth, 763-745-
6600, wayzata.k12.
mn.us

White Bear Lake Area High School South Campus
3551 McKnight Rd.,
White Bear Lake, 651-
773-6200, whitebear.
k12.mn.us/south

Woodbury High School
2665 Woodline Dr.,
Woodbury, 651-768-
4400, sowashco.k12.
mn.us/whs