

## **Resources**

- CCISD course catalog is also an educational planning guide (online at ccisd.net)
- Princeton Review- Best 366 Colleges
- College Board – collegeboard.com

## **Things we did wrong**

- Did not take PreAP English freshman year
- Took French instead of Spanish – be sure to research your language choice if taking level 1 classes is part of your 4 year plan
- Did not understand the family involvement required for Debate
- Missed the registration date for the SAT

## **Things we did right**

- Set up a project management plan – these 4 years can be overwhelming; breaking it down really helped
- Went to see his counselor during a quiet time of the year
- Let him set up all the campus visits, interviews, etc.

## **Things we did right but way too late...**

- Read CCISD course catalog from cover to cover (I recommend you read it before you take that first HS course; for many that is spring of 7<sup>th</sup> grade)
- Set up regular meetings with your child and put it on the calendar like an appt
- Parent Brag Sheet and Student's Autobiographical Sketch – see below

## **Things I wish we had done differently**

- Go to Senior Parent night when your child is in 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> grade. See “What is a Parent Brag Sheet ...” below
- Plan on taking 2 SAT IIs, even if not sure you need them, immediately after completing the appropriate class
- Keep copies of writing samples, including a back up copy
- Start a spreadsheet right after 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduation; include the following; put on calendar to update information regularly
  - Awards-academic, athletic
  - Community service
  - Jobs
  - Dates
  - Contact information
  - Number of hours per week; weeks per year

## **Things to put on your calendar**

- Renew their driver's license on their 17<sup>th</sup> birthday and 18<sup>th</sup> birthdays; there are no reminders and you will need a VOE
- PSAT, SAT, ACT, SAT II and AP test dates **and** registration deadlines
- NHS application deadline – confirm number of service hours
- 2 weeks before college visits, get approval to avoid impact on exemptions from finals
- If applying early decision, get a copy of transcript as soon as you get back to school your senior year; check it for accuracy
- 20 days before your application deadline is your deadline for CLHS
- several days before your application deadline, go to the college center and confirm everything has been mailed

### **Thoughts about visits to college campuses**

Visit all your top choices. It does matter. Let the PSAT scores start the clock.

- Summer after sophomore year – visit different types of colleges even if you doubt they will go there
  - large vs. small
  - public vs. private
  - rural vs. urban
- Spring Junior year –
  - make a more concrete list based upon test scores,
  - visit 2 colleges and take classes, eat in the dining hall;
  - keep in mind that junior year grades are critical so make sure campus visits do not interfere with making the grades
- Summer after Junior year – visit as many as you can
- Fall Senior – take classes, spend the night if possible;
- Weather – consider whether you are visiting in prime season or normal conditions

### **Thoughts about Level 1 classes (PreAP, AP, G/T)**

#### Definitions.

- Pre AP – prepares student to take an AP class
- AP – prepares student to take the AP exam in that subject the following May.
  - See page 163 of the 2007-2008 CCISD course catalog for AP exam dates
  - See “Why Take an AP Exam?” below
- G/T – gifted

#### Balance

- Start in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Start by erring on the side of too many level 1 classes.
- Take at least one high school level course in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Intermediate school is the time to make some mistakes and learn from them while the cost is lower than HS
- Your goal is to find that elusive balance by junior year. This year is critical for colleges and you get to add the following exams to your already busy schedules.
  - PSAT
  - SAT
  - ACT
  - AP
- Grades – your child’s grades are the number one factor when making this decision. Note this only works if your child is doing all his own assignments, including typing papers and all projects. If all you are doing is providing supplies, time, space and support when questions arise, this should be a fairly accurate way to determine what they can handle.
  - If your child has a full level 1 load (such as Omega or WAVE) and is making all As and Bs, that’s great; keep in mind that a B in a level 1 course adds more grade points than an A in a level 2 course – see page 53 of the 2007-2008 CCISD course catalog
  - If not, you need to consider the effort expended and perhaps make some changes
- Free time – I consider “passive” play. If my son thinks he has enough to play Halo for 3 hours on a school night, maybe he should add another level 1 course to next year’s load. If every waking minute is spent exercising his body and educating his mind, perhaps we should reduce the number of level 1 courses.

- Teachers – if grades and free time don't provide a clear cut answer, the next step is to speak with teachers in the subjects of concern. Is lack of organization the problem? Or is it subject content?

#### Why does it matter

- Colleges are looking for students who have challenged themselves so your college options are expanded by level 1 classes. But remember, after removing Texas A&M and t.u., there are still 364 “best” colleges in the Princeton Review book I mentioned at the very top under resources. You will find one that works for your child. If you find the right balance for your child by junior year, you have a better chance of finding the best college as well. Your child's GPA and test scores will help you find a college at which he will be successful.
- Your child will be better prepared for college courses by taking level 1 classes so choose courses he may pursue in college. If science is not your child's thing, maybe PreAP Biology is not the best choice – and you can spend your spring relaxing instead of driving around looking for wild flowers! But if he loves science, think of the quality bonding time you will have with your teenager as you search for that last flower.

#### Why Take an AP Exam?

##### High School

- DAP – Distinguished Achievement Program – see pages 8-10 of the 2007-2008 CCISD course catalog
- Exemption from finals

##### College

- AP Exams are scored with a 1-5.
- Most colleges will give college credit for a 4 or a 5.
- Some give credit for a 3
- One college we visited only gave credit for a 5 in AP Psych
- One college we visited only gave credit for one exam in each subject area; ie: one English, one Science, one Social Studies, etc.

#### What is the Parent Brag Sheet and the Student Autobiographical Sketch?

82% of CLHS students go to college - meaning about 700 students applying to 5-10 colleges each are requesting information to be sent on their behalf. I wasn't surprised there would be a process in place to handle this volume. In September of senior year, there is a parent meeting with all the specifics. And September is a perfect time unless you are applying early decision. Here are some highlights:

- Parents must complete a Parent Brag Sheet
- Students must complete an Autobiographical Sketch
- You must turn in your request 20 days in advance of the college deadline
- I suggest asking your teacher if they will write a recommendation for you at least a week before that 20 day deadline. Some teachers will want additional information from you, such as samples of your writing, etc from the year you were their student.

For me, September 15<sup>th</sup> is the final due date for extended corporate tax returns and October 15<sup>th</sup> is the final due date for every other tax return. Throw in 3 long weekends of campus visits and an out of town wedding that were already scheduled and I doubt we did a very good job on that Parent Brag Sheet because one way or another it had to be done by the first week of October if he was going to make a November 1<sup>st</sup> early decision deadline. I could have given it the attention it deserved in July but I didn't know about it. I know now and you do too!

Good Luck!

PARENT "BRAG SHEET"

Sept. 2007

COLLEGE RECOMMENDATION  
RETURN TO COLLEGE CENTER (ROOM 600)

Name of Student:

1. What do you consider to be the outstanding accomplishments of your child during the past three to four years? Why did you select these as important?
2. In what areas has your child shown the most development and growth during the past three or four years?
3. What do you consider to be his outstanding personality traits?
4. If you had to describe your son in five adjectives, what would they be?

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Parent Signature

### **Autobiographical Sketch**

- 1. What are your academic interests, and which courses have you enjoyed the most?**
- 2. What are your long-range career goals?**
- 3. Which specific courses might you like to study in college? What majors are you considering?**
- 4. What do you feel is the ideal college environment for you? (size, location, specific city, social climate, etc.)**
- 5. What do you choose to learn when you can learn on your own? What do your choices show about your interests and the way you like to learn?**
- 6. Has any summer experience, work, or study been of significant importance to you? Please describe.**
- 7. Have you traveled or lived in different localities? Where? Comment on any significant travel experience(s).**
- 8. Is your high school academic record an accurate measure of your ability and potential? If not, what circumstances, if any, have interfered with your academic performance?**
- 9. What do you consider your strengths?**
- 10. What do you consider your weaknesses?**
- 11. What personal trait(s) are you most proud of? Describe a time when you exhibit this or these traits.**
- 12. What three words best describe you, and why do you think they are good descriptions? (Provide examples, anecdotes, etc)**
- 13. Describe a fear/obstacle that you have conquered, and how it has changed you.**
- 14. What is it like to be a member of your family? How do you perceive your role? Your rapport with family members? Is there anything unusual about your family – cultural background, shared interest and activities, travel, size crises, etc. – that has had a significant impact on your own interests and concern?**