



# 2024-25 Postsecondary Planning Guide



PROVIDED BY THE PTHS SCHOOL COUNSELING DEPARTMENT

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Welcome to Peters Township High School!

This resource has been developed as a guideline to help you navigate the post-secondary planning process. Naviance, a web-based career & college readiness program in which all PTHS students are enrolled, offers a comprehensive program for high school students that helps align student strengths and interests with post-secondary goals. At the beginning of 9<sup>th</sup> grade, students are introduced to Naviance through the Counseling Curriculum. After this lesson, parents will be prompted via email to activate their own accounts. Naviance is the name of the full program that the high school faculty utilizes. The parent and student portal is called "Family Student Connection".

Your counselor will meet with you throughout your high school career to support your ongoing growth and development towards a post-secondary plan that fits you as an individual. A suggested timeline of events regarding the postsecondary planning process is included within this planning guide and should be utilized from grade 9 - 12. This is an exciting time for any student and we highly recommend that you take advantage of the numerous opportunities for career exploration available to you through PTHS and the community. Good luck and have a great school year!

### **School Counselor Assignments for Grades 9-12**

<b><u>Counselor</u></b>	<b><u>Student Last Names</u></b>	<b><u>Email Addresses</u></b>	<b><u>Phone Extensions</u></b>
<b>Mrs. Patton</b>	A-C	<a href="mailto:pattona@pt-sd.org">pattona@pt-sd.org</a>	x8907
<b>Mrs. Wolf</b>	D-Hh	<a href="mailto:wolfc@pt-sd.org">wolfc@pt-sd.org</a>	x8910
<b>Ms. Simmons</b>	Hi-Mh	<a href="mailto:simmonsa@pt-sd.org">simmonsa@pt-sd.org</a>	x8909
<b>Mrs. Prinsen</b>	Mi-Se	<a href="mailto:prinsenh@pt-sd.org">prinsenh@pt-sd.org</a>	x8908
<b>Mr. Sudol</b>	Sf-Z	<a href="mailto:sudolj@pt-sd.org">sudolj@pt-sd.org</a>	x8906
<b>TBD</b>	Dean of College & Career Readiness		x8904
<b>Mrs. Vamossy</b>	Counseling Secretary	<a href="mailto:vamossyj@pt-sd.org">vamossyj@pt-sd.org</a>	x8006
<b>Mrs. Gobbie</b>	Part-Time Counseling Secretary	<a href="mailto:gobbiel@pt-sd.org">gobbiel@pt-sd.org</a>	x8007

### **SCHOOL INFORMATION**

Peters Township High School  
121 Rolling Hills Dr  
McMurray, PA 15317  
<http://www.ptsd.k12.pa.us/>  
724-941-6250 (office)  
CEEB CODE 390-535

## GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

To fulfill graduation requirements, students must earn a minimum of 26 credits.

Required credit distribution includes:

### PTHS Requirements

English	4.0 credits
Social Studies	4.0 credits
Science	4.0 credits
Math	4.0 credits
Arts & Humanities	1.0 credit
Personal Wellness	0.5 credit
Physical Ed	0.5 credit
Technology Course	0.5 credit
Electives	7.5 credits

### Typically Recommended by Colleges

4.0 credits in all four core subjects  
2.0 + credits in World Language

In addition to the credit requirement for graduation, students will need to demonstrate proficiency on the state approved Keystone Exams in Algebra I, Literature, and Biology or one of the other graduation [pathways](#). Our [Course Description Book](#) is updated annually and available on the high school website.

## GRADES

How to calculate final grades: [Final Grades](#)

How to calculate your Weighted GPA: [GPA](#)

Academic Award Levels: [Academic Awards & Honors](#)

## ACTIVITIES

Activities allow you to explore interests and expand your social circle, but they also serve as important resume builders. Colleges are looking for students whose resumes include activities a student is passionate about, community service hours, and leadership experiences. It is never too late to sign up! A list of school [Activities](#) and the names of sponsors can be found on the PTHS website.

## POSTSECONDARY OPTIONS

It's never too early to start thinking about your plans after graduation. Up to this point, your parents, teachers, and administrators have guided you along the path to adulthood. By the end of high school however, you will be expected to make a decision regarding which path is right for you. Some potential options to explore are:

- 2-year College
- 4-year College
- Trade/Technical School
- Employment
- Military

## SUGGESTED PLANNING TIMELINE

### TIMELINE: Grades 8 and 9

The following was created to be a general and flexible timeline. A student's own experiences will determine their readiness, as well as an appropriate timeline to reach their postsecondary goals.

#### GRADE 8: Spring

- Plan your course selections for grade 9 by meeting with teachers and counselors to determine appropriate placements.
- Set preliminary goals for high school.
- Consider course selections as a four-year plan or map of courses to graduation and beyond.
- Explore and select extra-curricular activities that interest you.
- Work on maintaining or improving your grades and study skills.

#### GRADE 9: Fall

- Activate your [Naviance Student](#) account during the career goal setting and exploration lessons provided by HS Counselors in-class.
- Build strong language/writing, mathematics, and critical thinking skills by taking challenging courses.
- Get assistance with academics as soon as you need it (NHS peer tutoring service, teacher tutoring, and referrals to outside tutors or agencies). Don't be afraid to ask for help!
- Get involved in at least one extracurricular activity if you aren't already.
- Begin building a resume utilizing the resume builder tool in Naviance Student.
- Set up [Khan Academy](#) account to begin practicing for PSAT and SAT testing.
- Register to take AP exams if taking a corresponding course.

#### GRADE 9: Winter/Spring

- Use Naviance Student to begin researching for career and postsecondary options. Road Trip Nation features career videos that are both entertaining & helpful!
- Plan your course selections for grade 10 by meeting with teachers and counselors to determine appropriate placements. Think about challenging yourself with an honors course or a new elective area.
- If applicable, learn about [Western Area Career & Technology Center](#). WACTC offers certified technical training programs & post-graduate job placements.
- Meet with your counselor during your TAM (Transitional Academic Meeting) to review your grades, goal setting activity, and discover what makes up a transcript. Set additional goals during this meeting for sophomore year & beyond.

#### GRADE 9: Summer

- Consider summer enrichment programs.
- Continue extracurricular activities & interests.
- Get involved in community service work.
- Complete summer assignments for any Honors/AP courses.

## TIMELINE: Grade 10

The following was created to be a general and flexible timeline. A student's own experiences will determine their readiness, as well as an appropriate timeline to reach their postsecondary goals.

### GRADE 10: Fall

- Concentrate on academic priorities, improving study skills, organization, and time management.
- Maintain involvement in at least one extracurricular activity and volunteer to lead a project or activity.
- Take the PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test) in October.
- Attend the annual South Hills College Fair.
- Register to take AP exams if taking a corresponding course.

### GRADE 10: Winter/Spring

- Plan your course selections for grade 11 by meeting with teachers and counselors to determine appropriate placements – taking both challenging core classes and diverse elective courses to investigate career interests.
- Begin considering post high school options.
- Sign up to take the ASVAB Exam to explore your skills, strengths and aptitude relating to careers. This assessment is a requirement to enlist in any military branch.
- Take Keystone Exams if applicable: [Keystone Exam Information](#)
- Take Advanced Placement exams in May, if taking corresponding AP courses.
- Consider enrollment for junior year in [CCBC's High School Academies](#) if applicable.

### GRADE 10: Summer

- Update your resume with additional activities, community service, and/or part time jobs.
- Consider summer enrichment programs related to a potential career interest.
- Continue extracurricular activities and community service work.
- Work to strengthen reading, writing, and math skills.
- Continue to practice for standardized testing by utilizing College Board or ACT's websites or other prep sites.
- Complete summer assignments for Honors/AP courses.

## TIMELINE: Grade 11

The following was created to be a general and flexible timeline. A student's own experiences will determine their readiness, as well as an appropriate timeline to reach their postsecondary goals.

**Junior year is an especially important and busy year.** You will have the opportunity to meet several college representatives who visit in the fall, practice for the SAT, and potentially qualify for the NMSQT (National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test) by taking the PSAT. During the second quarter, you and your parents will explore your future in more detail with a PIP (Post-Secondary Individualized Planning) meeting with your school counselor.

### AUGUST

- Set your academic goals for the year.
- Continue to improve your academic record and make significant contributions to extracurricular activities.
- Begin the college exploration process (This guide outlines specific steps further on).

### SEPTEMBER

- Check Naviance Student for visit dates from college/technical school representatives & sign up to attend (be sure to notify your classroom teacher & make arrangements to make up any missed work). Come prepared with questions.
- Look for College Financial Aid information nights offered at the Peters Township library & area high schools (offered throughout the fall).
- Register to take AP exams if taking a corresponding AP course.

## OCTOBER

- Attend the annual South Hills College Fair. It's typically held in October so check to see when/where it is being held during your junior year.
- Take the PSAT/NMSQT in October to be eligible for the National Merit Scholarship competition and as practice for the SAT exam.

## NOVEMBER

- Continue to strengthen standardized testing skills by utilizing [Khan Academy](#).
- Research the GPA/SAT/ACT scores necessary for admission to some potential colleges by utilizing the scattergram feature in Naviance. Determine ways you can more closely align yourself with the averages of PTHS students who were accepted in the past.

## DECEMBER

- Register for any spring SAT and/or ACT Tests you plan to take. Aim to take an SAT and/or ACT at least once by the end of your junior year. Remember that senior year offers you opportunities to test again but be aware of deadlines for college applications.
- Schedule/attend Junior PIP (Post-Secondary Individualized Plan) meeting with your counselor along with your parents/guardians.

## JANUARY

- Update your resume in Naviance if applicable to your college applications.
- Plan your course selections for senior year by meeting with teachers and counselors to determine appropriate placement and assure fulfillment of graduation requirements.
- Schedule/attend Junior PIP (Post-Secondary Individualized Plan) meeting with your counselor along with your parents/guardians.

## FEBRUARY

- Schedule/Attend Junior PIP (Post-Secondary Individualized Plan) meeting with your counselor along with your parents/guardians.
- Considering attending the annual PACAC College Fair held in downtown Pittsburgh.

## MARCH

- Sign up to take the ASVAB Test to explore your skills, strengths and aptitude relating to careers. This assessment is a requirement for enlistment in any military branch: [ASVAB](#)
- Senior course selection begins! Engage in conversations with your teachers, counselors, and parents for recommendations, considering your postsecondary goals.
- Use Naviance Student to research academic required/recommended courses for college acceptance.
- Think about which teachers you might ask to write your letters of recommendation for college admissions (Further details about letters of recommendation are included in this guide).
- Continue to refine your potential college interest list & use any scheduled breaks to visit colleges. Add colleges you are seriously considering to the "Colleges I'm Thinking About" list in Naviance.
- Take the SAT/ACT at least once during the Spring.

- Consider enrollment for senior year in [CCBC's High School Academies](#) if applicable.

## **APRIL**

- Add a second test date to your anticipated standardized testing schedule. Students are very busy in the spring and proper planning can alleviate stress and late registration fees.
- Assess where you stand in your courses & get academic help where necessary. 11th grade is your last chance to finalize your GPA and will be the last grades recorded on your transcript before application season. When you apply to colleges in the fall, this transcript is what they will see and largely base their decisions on.

## **MAY**

- Demonstrate proficiency on the Keystone Exams, if applicable: [Keystone Exam Information](#)
- Take AP Exam(s) if enrolled in corresponding AP courses & registered back in September.
- Take the SAT, if applicable.
- If you are considering playing a sport at the collegiate level, you need to register with the NCAA Eligibility Center: [NCAA Eligibility](#)
- Approach teachers/counselors to personally request a letter of recommendation. Once you have done so, make sure to add them as a recommender in Naviance (steps necessary are listed in the application section of this guide).

## **JUNE**

- Prepare for final exams & work with teachers to finalize your grade for each course.

## **GRADE 11: Summer**

- Format your resume for college & scholarship applications. Make sure it is up-to-date and highlights specific activities you are passionate about or have spent significant time on.
- Identify characteristics or “preferences” you want in a college and update your college list.
  1. Make an honest assessment of your academic and personal profile.
  2. Select a reasonable range of realistic and appropriate colleges to research based on academic requirements, majors offered, geographic area, size, financial considerations, athletics/extracurricular offerings, college philosophy/mission and your personal preferences. The “Super Match College Search” tool in Naviance is an excellent resource.
  3. Continue to research majors and possible career choices.
  4. Visit colleges, take tours, and request interviews when they are offered to prospective students.
- Research college essay prompts on Common Application and/or college web pages.
- Once you’ve decided on which colleges you’ll apply to, transfer the names of those colleges in Naviance from “Colleges I’m Thinking About” to “Colleges I’m Applying To”. From now on, any college you decide to apply to must be added to this list.



## **TIMELINE: Grade 12**

The following is meant to be a general timeline. A student's own experiences will determine their readiness as well as an appropriate timeline to reach their postsecondary goals.

### **GRADE 12: Fall**

- Counselors will be in English classrooms to present information about the college application process. This typically occurs during the first couple weeks of school. Ask questions and take notes!
- Continue to add schools to your "Colleges I'm Applying to" list and request transcripts via Naviance Student. Make sure to allow adequate time for transcript processing.
- Indicate teacher recommendations in Naviance Student and have a face-to-face conversation with teachers.
- If applying to college, consider the selectivity of the colleges in your final application list, making sure to have at least one selection from each admission level (Safety, Good Match, Reach).
- Look for College Financial Aid Nights offered at the Peters Township library & area high schools (offered throughout the fall)
- Look for information regarding the annual FAFSA Completion Night offered by the Counseling Dept in the fall.
- Consider early action/early decision options and plan accordingly for those deadlines.
- Attend the annual South Hills College Fair. It is held in the fall at various locations, so be sure to check when/where it is being held during your senior year.
- Submit college applications in advance of deadlines. Also keep in mind that it takes a college several days or even weeks to download your transcripts and add them to your admission file.
- Finish visiting colleges and scheduling interviews where appropriate.
- Repeat the SAT or ACT, if warranted.
- Maintain your grades and rigor of courses for first quarter/first semester and through to graduation, as they may still affect your college admissions.
- Investigate scholarship opportunities in Naviance.

### **GRADE 12: Winter/Spring**

- Apply for need-based and merit-based financial aid and compare aid award packages.
- Send tuition deposit to the school of your choice by May 1 (unless you've already accepted an early decision offer).
- Notify other school(s) that you decline their offers of admission, if applicable.
- Continue to apply for scholarships, especially through local and community organizations. Scholarships will be available all the way up through the end of senior year, so pay attention to the morning announcements and lists in Naviance. Apply to as many as you can before graduation!
- Take AP exams in May if applicable.
- Complete the Senior Exit Survey for your information to be included in the commencement program.
- Indicate in Naviance Student your college outcomes (accepted, waitlisted, deferred, denied).

## HOW DO I START A COLLEGE SEARCH?

### Step One: Self-Analysis (Needs and Wants)

The college search is about exploring who you are and your specific needs/wants before finding colleges that will meet your preferences and help you achieve your goals. It is important to devote time to research, conversations and visits when deciding which college(s) to consider. As with any major decision or significant purchase, the process should begin with self-analysis, defined goals, and solid research. Self-assessments can be difficult and sometimes uncomfortable, but it's the most important place to begin. Ask yourself the following questions which pertain to you as a person and student:

- What characteristics do you feel you must have to be comfortable at a college?
- On which factors are you flexible?
- What do you want to accomplish in college?
- Do you want to train for a specific job or get a wide-ranging education?
- If you have a major in mind, do the colleges you are considering specialize in that major?

It is often recommended to search for a college that "matches" your characteristics and to reduce the influence that rankings, such as those published by *U.S. News*, have on a student's college choice. Robert Morse, *U.S. News's* director of data research, says rankings, which are based on many factors such as graduation rates, should be just one component in a student's college search. Rankings are not the be-all, end-all: there are a variety of colleges that may be a good "fit" or that will deliver an excellent education regardless of published rankings systems.

### Step Two: Research Possibilities & Create a List:

Listed below are just some of the tools students have available to them through Naviance:

- **"Colleges I'm Thinking About" list:** as students complete their college research and find schools of interest, they can add them to the "Colleges I'm Thinking About" list in Naviance.
- **College Visits:** Naviance lists college visits that are upcoming to our HS. To view & sign up, a list is available on the student homepage under "What's New". Times & Dates of visits will be listed and interested students can sign up to attend or visit the counseling office for a pass.
- **SuperMatch™:** a category-based search that helps students find colleges that fit their preferences. Students select from a variety of college characteristics and rank their importance. As the student makes selections, the best-match colleges appear with information about why the college(s) is a good match. Students can save their searches and add colleges to the "Colleges I'm Thinking About" list from here.
- **College Match:** this tool matches students with similar colleges based on the colleges input by the student into the "Colleges I'm Thinking About" list. There are three components:
  - "Colleges Looking for Students Like You", which suggests colleges based on application qualifications.
  - "Colleges Other Students Like", which suggests colleges based on student information within the Naviance Network
  - "Colleges That Have Accepted Students Like You", which suggests colleges based on comparable PTHS student data & historical acceptances.
- **College Compare:** allows students to choose colleges from the Naviance database and compare admission scores and GPAs from past PTHS students who applied to the college.
- **Advanced College Search:** an advanced search tool that enables students to create searches that focus on college criteria that are important to them, such as costs, campus surroundings, available majors, etc. Students can save college searches.
- **College Resources:** provides a list of web resources about colleges, financial aid and other key topics in the college admissions process.

- **College Maps:** shows students where colleges are located based on specific search criteria. Students can obtain a list of colleges based on specific program availability or from data regarding past PTHS graduates.
- **Scattergrams:** visually shows students their data compared to past PTHS students' application results to that same college. If there is not enough data, the scattergram may not show results.
- **Enrichment Programs:** students can find enrichment programs entered in Naviance or those in the Naviance database of enrichment programs by browsing by letter or selecting a topic. Annual lists of summer enrichment opportunities will also be listed here.
- **College-Specific Scholarships:** shows students a list of scholarships that are specific to a college or university.
- **Scholarship Search:** a list of all the scholarships in your school or district database. Students can: filter scholarships by category, filter the list using the column names, view only the scholarships added or updated since the last visit. Students should check this list periodically throughout their junior & senior years to maximize the amount of money they can put towards college.
- **National Scholarship Search:** a service provided through a partnership with Sallie Mae. Students can edit their profiles to find matches, add scholarships to the "favorites" lists, or delete scholarships they don't want to apply for. This exposes students to a wider pool of scholarship opportunities.

## COLLEGE RESEARCH

As you begin your research, you should:

KEEP AN OPEN MIND: Although it's good to have some ideas in mind about which colleges will be right for you, stay open to all possibilities at the beginning of your search.

TALK TO PEOPLE WHO KNOW YOU: Tell parents, teachers, relatives, friends, and your school counselor about your goals, and ask if they can suggest colleges that may be a good fit for you.

DON'T LIMIT YOUR SEARCH: At the start of this process, you may want to rule out colleges because you think that they are too expensive or too hard to get into, but this may not be reality. Remember that financial aid can make college more affordable, and colleges typically consider more than just grades and test scores when considering applicants.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK: Once you have a list of schools, it's time to do some research. To learn more about the colleges you're considering, add the colleges to your Naviance Student account. Naviance provides a detailed profile for each college or university. Admissions profile and data (GPA & test scores), PTHS historical applicant data, college comparison charts and much more are available at your fingertips. Gathering this information early will allow you to form meaningful questions that will impress college admissions counselors during visits, college fairs and interviews.

## COLLEGES VISITS AT PTHS

It is important to make personal connections with a college you are interested in, so meeting with representatives of the school is a great start. Keep an open mind and take advantage of the wide variety of representatives who visit our school.

- They can give you first-hand information regarding the college's programs and give ideas on other colleges, parallel programs, or career opportunities after graduation.
- Many of the college representatives who visit our school are the same representatives who read your applications and could add significant input to admissions discussions. Be prepared to ask questions and make a good impression.
- Ultimately, the goal is to find the right fit at the end of this process. Students who match well with a college are more likely to be successful academically, emotionally & socially.
- Sign up for visits through your Naviance account or visit the counseling office.

## GOING ON A COLLEGE VISIT

Visiting a college campus helps you get a sense of what life at a college will be like. Visits also more easily help you determine whether that college is right for you, what you need to do to apply, and determine whether the college's courses & majors are what you want. On a visit, you may want to consider:

- Taking part in a group information session at the admission office
- Interviewing with an admissions officer
- Asking about Financial Aid processes
- Sitting in on a class that interests you. If classes aren't in session, ask to see a classroom.
- Meeting with a professor who teaches a subject or major that interests you.
- Talking to students about what they think of their classes and professors.
- Getting the names & business cards of people you meet so you can contact them later if you have questions.

In the search for a college that matches your personal and academic priorities, a visit provides a real-life connection beyond a website or brochure. A visit allows you and your family to consider personal preferences in housing, travel, food, health/medical concerns. Academic criteria and specifics are typically discussed further during a visit or interview, such as criteria for selective majors and other academic requirements not spelled out in general informational brochures. Scholarships and financial aid options are also typically discussion points with visiting candidates.

### GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR COLLEGE VISIT

- Decide where and how: arrange a family trip to involve your family in the process, especially if they will be helping you financially.
- Prepare for your visit: before you set out, get a map of the college campus and pick out places of interest. Call the college's admissions office to schedule a guided tour.
- Take your own tour: just wandering around the campus on your own or with friends can be the best way to get a feel for what this campus has to offer. If possible, eat in the cafeteria, sit in on a class, or attend an event on campus.
- Explore the facilities: finding the spots on campus where students gather or asking a student where the best places to eat are can give you a feel for the college's character. Visit the library and check out the gym/theater/dorms.
- Make connections: talk to current students. Ask the students nearby what they like best, or why they chose this college and what their classes are like. Some colleges even have programs where prospective students can spend the night in a dorm with a current student.
- Take notes: during your visit, write down some notes about your experience. Did you see anything you were excited about? Did you notice anything you have concerns about?

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What majors are offered and what are the course selection requirements?
- What is the average class size?
- Are there freshman orientation programs?
- What is the role and availability of academic advisors?
- Does the college have up-to-date technology and facilities? (For example: science labs, theatres, smart classrooms?)
- What are the operating hours of important places such as the library and computer labs?
- Are there tutors or facilities available for academic help?

## **POST VISIT FOLLOW-UP:**

- Make a pro and con list.
- Send a handwritten thank you note to a specific person (for example, the admissions tour guide, coach, admissions officer)

**JOB SHADOW:** Job Shadowing is a type of on-the-job training that allows an interested person to follow and closely observe an employee performing the role. A job shadow experience can be short or more intensive. It gives students the chance to try out their career interest to see whether it's a good fit.

**INTERNSHIPS & APPRENTICESHIPS:** An internship is short-term work experience offered by companies and other organizations for students to get entry-level exposure to a particular field or industry. This is a chance to "try on" the career you are curious about before committing yourself to it. Apprenticeships are similar in that they give you experience with the profession you are considering, but unlike internships, they are usually paid and lead to a certification in the field or an entry-level position within the organization.

## **APPLICATIONS, TRANSCRIPTS, TESTS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

Most applications are available online & admissions offices often prefer you access the online application. There are two basic types of applications which a student can use to apply to college:

1. Common Application – [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org)
2. School designated application (available directly on the school website)

Online applications are very convenient; however, you must be certain to **pay close attention to the directions and details of each application**. Each school will have specific application requirements and it is up to you to know and follow the directions for each application. You must complete your part of the application online and submit it directly to the institution by utilizing the application on the college's website or through the Common Application. In addition to submitting application materials, you must request to have your transcripts sent to each college you plan to apply to by utilizing Naviance Student. The Common Application's YouTube channel has a variety of resources to help guide students through each step of the process: [Common App How-To](#)

## **TRANSCRIPT REQUEST PROCEDURE**


Unless a student is 18 years of age, a parent or guardian must sign a Transcript Release Form. This should be completed during your junior year PIP meeting. A blank copy is attached to the end of this document.

### **Through Naviance/Family Connection (electronically):**

1. A signed transcript release form (available at the end of this guide) must be turned into the Counseling Office. This can be done during your junior year for the following school year. We cannot release your academic record without this document on file.
2. Begin your college application either through the Common Application or by utilizing the college's application on their website.
3. Using your Naviance student account, click on the "Colleges" menu. Scroll down to the "Colleges I'm Applying To" selection & click it.
4. Click the Add button (+ sign). The Add New College Application, Step 1 Add Application displays.
5. From "Which college are you applying to?" Use the drop-down or type the name of the desired college and select from the matches.
6. From "App Type" click the drop-down to identify your answer.
7. From "I'll submit my application?" Click the drop-down to identify your answer.

8. If you have already sent in your application, select the checkbox labeled I've submitted my application. If not, leave it unchecked.
9. Since we do not include test scores on our PTHS transcripts, leave the boxes under "What additional materials, if any, do you want included?" blank. Standardized test scores (SAT, ACT, AP Scores) must be sent directly from your account in [College Board](#) and/or [ACT](#).

It is very important to keep deadlines in mind when entering requests into Naviance Student. Supplemental documents are required by some schools. This could include a counselor recommendation, school report or resume. It is wise to submit your requests at least ten (10) days in advance to allow processing time. Even though these will be submitted electronically, your transcripts will not instantly appear on an Admission Officer's Desk. Once electronic transcripts are sent, they are downloaded by the college's registrar office, who then adds those documents into your admission file. This process could take days, even weeks, depending on the college & time of year you are applying. Once the college downloads your transcript, our office receives a receipt code. If you receive a message from the college indicating they have not received a transcript or another essential piece of the application, call the admissions office to check. Many times, these messages are automated, and the school has the documents or simply needs to check their online system to confirm their receipt.

**For paper copies:** For schools that will not accept electronic submissions, you will see a  in the "submissions" column in Naviance. We must submit these transcripts via postal mail.

1. Provide a 9x12 stamped envelope, with four stamps, addressed to the college or university.
2. Include any other supplemental documents that the school requires, including school report form, resume, etc.
3. Give the envelope/documents to the secretary in the counseling office well before the deadline.

### Self-Reported Academic Record

The Self-Reported Academic Record (SRAR/SSAR) allows applicants to record and submit courses, grades, and test scores as part of your college application to participating colleges and universities. Many colleges have moved to this system and expect their applicants to complete this portion before their application is considered "complete".

Since accuracy is critical, it's important to get a copy of your high school transcript to reference as you are completing the SRAR. We've linked instructions & help links for the two most popular SRAR colleges that our students apply to as an example of the expectations:

- [SRAR Tutorial from University of Pittsburgh](#)
- [SRAR Tutorial from Penn State](#)

## STANDARDIZED TESTS

In October, all 10th and 11th grade students will take the [PSAT/NMSQT](#). This is a practice SAT exam. For our 11th grade students, the score will count toward the National Merit Scholarship. No registration is necessary; all students will take the exam.

Please refer to the college application requirements regarding standardized test scores. The student is responsible for contacting the appropriate testing agency and having the scores sent. Colleges typically have differing standardized testing requirements for admission. Students should research the option(s) which is best for them and determine the appropriate test(s) based on admission requirements and personal preference. Keep in mind when planning your test date schedule to consider college deadlines, especially for early decision, early action and scholarship opportunities. Fee waivers that cover the costs of standardized tests are available through the School Counseling Office if financial need is demonstrated. IEP and 504 students who are registering for both the SAT and/or ACT may apply for special testing accommodations. Please see your counselor for specific information regarding the processes well in advance of the test date.

## What is Test Optional?

**Test Optional College:** students can decide whether they want to submit test scores with their application. Test-optional schools will only consider the SAT and ACT scores if they are submitted.

**Test-Flexible College:** students can submit other test scores in place of the SAT or ACT, such as Advanced Placement test scores.

**Test-Blind College:** the college or university will NOT consider test scores, even if they are submitted.

If a school has indicated they have a test optional admissions process, each applicant gets to choose whether to submit their ACT or SAT scores. In other words, submitting your test scores is not a requirement for admissions! While this policy applies to all applicants, still research the policy details to determine if the school recommends or requires SAT or ACT scores for certain scholarships, acceptance into an honors program, or a specific college/school within the University. With test-optional schools, consider if your scores strengthen your application. If you choose not to submit your scores, the admissions committee will put more weight on the other pieces of your application, so you'll want to make sure the rest of your application effectively highlights your strengths.

## How to Decide What's Best for You:

If the schools you are applying to have test-optional admissions, there are two main things to consider – should you take the standardized tests and should you send your scores?

- To Test or Not to Test: taking the SAT or ACT can help you make an informed decision on what to include in your application. When signing up for the test, make sure to select the option to see your scores before you determine whether to submit them to colleges. This can also help you decide if you want to retake the test to see if you can improve your performance.
- Submitting your Scores: After you have received your scores, you must decide if you want to apply with or without them. This decision is entirely individualized. In general, if you have high test scores, submitting them can potentially bolster your application. ***You might choose to submit your scores if:*** you believe your test scores accurately reflect your academic ability, your grades or another aspect of your application isn't as strong as you'd like, your scores are at or above the average scores of a school's most recent incoming class. ***You might decide to choose apply test optional if:*** you are unable to take the SAT/ACT for any reason, your scores do not meet your expectations or effectively demonstrate your abilities or potential, or you want the focus of your application that better showcase your skills and abilities.

Check out the [FairTest](#) website to determine what schools are testing optional.

## SCHOOL PROFILE

The school profile is a description of Peters Township High School used by colleges as a point of reference when evaluating our students' applications and transcripts. The school profile includes our GPA calculation explanation, AP and Honor course offerings and standardized test score statistics. This is automatically sent with each student's transcript.

## LETTER(S) OF RECOMMENDATION

Whether it is required for a college application or a scholarship, a letter of recommendation can be a vital part of a student's application. Schools have **different requirements** regarding recommendation letters, so you must follow the application directions. Typically, students can safely plan to request 2-3 letters of recommendation from high school teacher(s) who taught you in academic subjects and possibly an outside "character" reference to fulfill most college requirements.

### **Guidelines for Letters of Recommendation:**

- Consider asking your teachers for letters in May or June of your junior year. This gives your teachers time to plan and prepare while also giving you time to prepare a teacher recommendation form. Discuss the deadline when you talk to your teacher. Some teachers get many requests and may need additional time to complete your letter. We suggest allowing approximately 4 weeks from the date of your request to the deadline for submission.
- Early decision applications might require letters much earlier; you should plan accordingly.
- Pick a teacher with whom you've worked with closely so that they can comment on your academic growth, work ethic, and progress in that subject.
- Select a class in which you were successful, perhaps relates to a potential major, or in which you struggled but overcame an obstacle.

### **Requesting Teacher Letters of Recommendations through Naviance Student:**

#### **Steps:**

1. A.) Request your letter in person from your teacher and/or counselor, in person if possible. Provide a paper copy resume if requested by the teacher. B.) You **MUST** utilize Naviance Student to request letters of recommendation. Teachers will be able to send documents electronically as indicated by the icons. If you are using the Common Application, **DO NOT** invite the recommender via the Common Application website.
2. On the "Colleges" tab, click on "Letters of Recommendation".
3. Click on "Add Request". From the dropdown menu, find & select the name of the teacher who will be writing your letter. You can choose for them to send their letter to specific colleges or to all present & future colleges you will add.
4. A personal note may be added with additional information or instructions. Please indicate if you are submitting via Common Application.
5. Click "Submit Request" to send the request to the teacher. It is a good idea to confirm with your teacher that they received the request through Naviance.
6. Continue to update your teachers & counselors throughout application season to remind them about sending their letters & to let them know if you've added additional colleges to "Colleges I'm Applying To" since your last conversation & would like for them to send their letter to these additional colleges.

For requests from recommenders outside PTHS, you can request them through the "Other Recommenders" section under each college in Common App or provide them with the undergraduate office of admission's email address.

Naviance is only for PTHS staff to upload and send letters of recommendation.



## ESSAY OR PERSONAL STATEMENT

This is one of your best opportunities to be heard by the admissions committee & to honestly portray who you are. Therefore, setting aside adequate time to draft your personal thoughts and feelings is critical. The admissions committee is not only evaluating you by the content of your response, but also by your use of English and your ability to express yourself. It is recommended that you request your counselor or English teacher review your finished product prior to submission.

Key Points the Admission Officers Look for:

- A command of the basics of good writing
- A direct answer to the essay question
- A strong opening paragraph that captures the reader's attention
- A comprehensive argument or narrative: make your point and stick to it.
- A comfortable style that seems authentic & is appropriate for the subject matter.
- Correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling
- Correct data: check facts, dates, and names
- Succinctness: stay strictly within any guidelines regarding length

Things to keep in mind:

- Be authentic: Admissions officers can easily spot an essay that is too polished and not a student's own writing.
- Show don't tell: Give readers such convincing evidence that they come to the same conclusion you've come to. Provide detailed examples instead of listing things.
- Don't try to second guess the essay and write what you think they want to hear. Be honest, creative, and thoughtful. This is one way the admission committee can gauge who you are, how you think and if you are a good fit for their school. Prompts & questions are usually autobiographical in nature.
- Take creative risks but be sure it is done correctly. Feel free to appropriately display your sense of humor, intellectual curiosity, interesting experiences, or personal perspectives. Be who you are: if you are funny, be funny. If you aren't, don't try to be. Admissions officers read thousands of essays; it's refreshing when an applicant does something different. Just make sure it is appropriate & accomplishes the given task.
- Make sure the essay has been proofread and edited: it is a direct reflection of you.
- Use details from your college visit to specify how you would benefit from and contribute to their college community.

Remember that the admissions committee is trying to "get to know you" through your application, and the essay is considered one of the most valuable components. A neatly typed and authentic essay will communicate to admissions offices that your interest and abilities are genuine. The essay itself must be your own work, but you are encouraged to solicit constructive criticism of your grammar and written expression before submitting your application.

## SCHOLARSHIP PROTOCOL

All [scholarships](#) are posted and updated in Naviance Student. The Counseling Office will also send scholarship announcements and reminder emails through Naviance Student. Go to the Colleges Tab in Naviance and click on "Scholarship List" for an updated list.

**If the selection criteria require an official transcript or counselor evaluation & the student is responsible for submitting the application packet to the sponsor:**

- If the application requires an official transcript, we will provide it to you in a sealed envelope. Do not open the envelope, it must stay sealed to be considered "official".
- **Please be aware of deadlines.** Some applications may state "postmarked" while others must be submitted by the due date. It is the student's responsibility to plan accordingly and allow for up to ten days to prepare supplemental materials such as recommendation letters, etc. **This is especially important to consider around planned breaks from school when offices are closed.**

**For scholarships indicated "due into the School Counseling office":**

- If the sponsor prefers that the school collects the applications and pre-screen applicants, the scholarship application will indicate a hard date that the scholarship application will be due to the School Counseling office. The scholarship committee will follow criteria outlined by the sponsor that may include selecting one nominee to represent PTHS. If so, the scholarship committee will score each applicant with a rubric of designated selection criteria. Our office will coordinate and mail the application as well as the necessary supplemental components to complete the application. This may include an official transcript, counselor recommendation, principal verification, etc.

## COLLEGE TERMS

- **Associate degree:** Generally refers to a two- year degree; students may apply credits from a two- year program to a four-year program
- **Bachelor's degree:** Generally refers to a four-year degree
- **[The Common Application](#):** An application that many colleges subscribe to, which is completed online and can be submitted to apply to one or several colleges.
- **[Coalition for College Access Application](#):** An application that some colleges subscribe to, which is completed online and can be submitted to apply to one or several colleges
- **Deferral:** An EA or ED application may be deferred for review with the regular applicant pool.
- **Early Action (EA):** An application deadline as early as mid-October, which will generally provide a nonbinding response from the college by December 15th. Students may apply to multiple EA colleges. Early Action/Single Choice: A handful of colleges offer this option which restricts students to a single, non-binding EA application.
- **Early Decision (ED):** An application deadline as early as mid-October, which will generally provide a binding response from the college by December 15th. Students may apply to only one college ED. If accepted, a student must withdraw applications sent to all other colleges and attend that particular school.
- **Official Test Scores:** Standardized admissions testing (SAT's or ACT's) which students must request to be sent directly from the College Board or ACT to the college or university.
- **Regular decision:** This application will have a deadline and set time for review. Notification of a decision will generally arrive around the beginning of April.
- **Rolling Admissions:** Applications are reviewed according to the date by which completed materials are received. Submitting a rolling application early is advisable.

- **Supplements:** Schools may require, in addition to an electronic application, supplementary materials- Teacher Evaluation, School Report, Mid- Year Reports or an additional form for the student to complete
- **Undergraduate degree:** It is the first level of university degrees, for example, a Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Business Administration or Bachelor of Science. Higher levels of university degrees are masters and doctoral levels, also referred to as graduate degrees.
- **Wait list:** A regular applicant who cannot be offered acceptance at decision time but may be offered acceptance later.

## VOCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

- [Jobs for the Future:](#) Official Site- Creating Strategies for Educational and Economic Opportunity
- [BCTE- The Bureau of Career and Technical Education](#)
- [Education Planner:](#) One stop career and college-planning website for students
- [PA Statewide High Priority Occupations](#)
- [Team Pennsylvania Career Link:](#) Pennsylvania Career Link is a cooperative effort to provide con-stop delivery of career services to job seekers, employers and other interested individuals.

## TECHNICAL & TRADE PROGRAMS

- [Community College of Allegheny County Apprenticeship Programs](#)
- [Bidwell Training Center](#)
- [Penn Commercial Business & Technical School](#)
- [Pittsburgh Technical College](#)
- [Rosedale Technical College](#)
- [Douglas Education Center](#)
- [Western Area Career & Technology Center](#)
- [Community College of Beaver County High School Academies](#)

## WESTERN PA UNIONS

A comprehensive list of unions, apprenticeships, and opportunities are available on the [Builder's Guild of Western Pennsylvania's website](#).

## ON-THE-JOB TRAINING

- [Gismondi Job Training Program](#) provides broadband telecommunications for adults seeking employment in jobs that install, test, and troubleshoot infrastructure for telephone, television, or internet systems.
- [Lineworker Prep Program](#) (formerly known as EDT Boot Camp) is a partnership between Duquesne Light Company and CCAC.
- [UPMC Mercy: Ophthalmology Tech - Paid Training Program](#)
- [Pennsylvania Career Guide](#)
- [Job Corps](#)

## MILITARY OPTIONS

Several different opportunities exist for students interested in pursuing a military career or military service after graduation. Military academies offer a very selective and physically rigorous program for highly motivated students. The **five U.S. military academies** are the United States Military Academy (West Point), the United States Naval Academy, the United States Air Force Academy, the United States Coast Guard Academy and the United States Merchant Marine Academy. Military Academy candidates should begin the application process during EARLY SPRING OF JUNIOR YEAR!

- Meet eligibility requirements: Applicants must be citizens of the United States, at least 17 but younger than 23 by July 1 of the admission year, unmarried and without dependents, and not pregnant. Non-citizens may be eligible through a special agreement between the government of their country and the United States.
- Submit a preliminary application (also called a Candidate Questionnaire) in the spring of your junior year: Each academy makes this application available for completion or download online, or you can request that a copy be mailed to you.
- Apply for a nomination in the spring of your junior year: Every applicant must obtain an official nomination to qualify for admission to an academy. Those qualified to nominate candidates include the President and Vice President of the United States, U.S. Representatives and U.S. Senators.
  - Check your representatives' websites, which often contain nomination forms. You may also call the offices directly. CALL EARLY to begin this process, as representatives have a finite number of nominations; if you are too late in calling, you will not be able to pursue an academy application.
  - Be sure to provide all requested information far in advance of the deadline.
- Take the college admissions tests. The academies require high scores on the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) or the American College Test (ACT).
- Complete a thorough medical examination. All candidates must meet strict medical requirements to be considered for admission.
- Take the Candidate Fitness Assessment. Due to the rigorous nature of the academy programs, candidates must be in top physical condition. This assessment consists of physical tests designed to check your stamina and movement.
- Submit all academic documentation, letters of recommendation, and college admission test scores. The academy can decide once it has received every component of your application.

Please refer to each individual Academy's website for the most accurate and up-to-date information.

- [United States Military Academy](#) (West Point)
- [United States Air Force Academy](#)
- [United States Naval Academy](#) (Annapolis)
- [United States Merchant Marine Academy](#)
- [Coast Guard Academy](#)

**Non-Academy Military Options:** Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) is a college-based program for training commissioned officers of the United States armed forces. Under ROTC, a student may receive a competitive, merit-based scholarship, covering all or part of college tuition, in return for an obligation of active military service after graduation. ROTC students attend college like other students, but also receive basic military training and officer training for their chosen branch of service, through the ROTC unit at the college or university. The students participate in regular drills during the school year, and extended training activities during the summer. Terms of military service, scholarship applications, benefits of ROTC, participating postsecondary schools, and other details vary depending on the branch of ROTC in which a student participates.

- [Cadets in College: Top Majors for ROTC Students](#)

[Today's Military](#) is a comprehensive website providing valuable information and resources for individuals considering a military career, offering insights into various branches, career paths, benefits, and the overall experience of serving in the armed forces.

### **Military Enlistment**

- Students can contact a military recruiter and enter either Active Duty or Reserve (National Guard) upon receipt of their high school diploma or GED.

## **FINANCIAL AID TIPS**

College is usually more affordable than many families think, thanks to financial aid. The tips below can help you navigate the financial aid process and get the most money possible for college. For the most up-to-date information, visit the [federal student aid website](#).

- **Attend a financial aid presentation** at your local high school or library. Learning about the financial aid process as early as possible is very helpful.
- **Ask financial aid questions when you visit a college campus.** Ask the school representative if it's possible to visit the institution's financial aid office (if necessary, call ahead to make an appointment).
- **When in doubt, ask a financial aid professional.** Call the financial aid office of any college in your area when you have a question, even if your son or daughter does not plan to attend that institution. Financial aid officers can answer many general questions and are happy to help.
- **Keep all tax records and documents up to date.** If your financial situation changes (health issues, loss of job, etc.), alert your financial aid officer immediately. Income tax forms should be filed as soon as possible (preferably in January) to provide accurate data on financial aid forms. Some colleges have early February deadlines.
- **The FAFSA application includes a feature called the Data Retrieval Tool (DRT)** that allows you to transfer your tax return information to the FAFSA. Information is available on the FAFSA and IRS websites.

Need help with your FAFSA form? PHEAA (Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency) provides regional school assistants/representatives across the state of Pennsylvania. The Southwestern PA representative's contact information can be found at <http://www.pheaa.org/about/contact-us/pa-school-services.shtml#western>.

### **Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency**

- [PHEAA's website](#)
  - [Financial Aid Resources for Parents & Students](#)
  - [PA Student Aide Guide 2024-2025](#)