

Lewiston High School

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What are LHS policies and procedures regarding attendance, discipline, field trips, etc.?

See the [LHS Student Handbook 2004-2005 \(130K PDF file\)](#).

What is the most important factor that colleges consider when making admissions decisions?

The single most important part of any student's application is his or her official transcript. Colleges evaluate the high school record by looking at both grades and the rigor and total number of college preparatory courses taken by the student. At more selective colleges, other criteria—after the transcript—might include:

- Standardized test scores
- Counselor/teacher recommendations
- Ethnicity
- Application questions and essays
- Geographic location
- Personal interview

Alumni relationship
Activities outside the classroom
Major/college
Special talents and skills
Family's ability to pay

The weight assigned to these other factors varies greatly from one institution to another. However, there is universal agreement that a student's transcript—both grades and the rigor of courses taken—is absolutely the most influential part of any admission decision. At the most selective schools, where as many as 10 or 15 students are applying for each spot, the 'other' criteria may become more valuable in the admission decision simply because many of the applicants will possess outstanding academic qualifications.

What is the difference between Early Decision, Early Action, Regular Decision, and Rolling Admission?

Early Decision is the admission program that is binding/contractual in nature. Students sign an agreement and commit in advance to attend the Early Decision college if admitted under its early program. At many colleges, the deadline for receipt of the application is November 1 or 15, and the student is then notified (Accept, Deny, Defer) six weeks after the deadline. If accepted under an Early Decision plan, the student must withdraw all other applications at other colleges.

Early Action is an option on the same timetable as Early Decision, but the primary difference between the two programs is that Early Action is not a binding agreement; admitted students are not obligated to enroll. This option gives students flexibility in making a final decision because they are able to apply to multiple colleges and take the necessary time—visiting campuses, comparing financial aid offers, seeking opinions, and gathering other information—to make a definitive and confident college choice.

Regular Decision is the traditional process in which the student applies by the regular and final deadline (usually January 1 for most schools), and the institution responds with a decision by a specified date (usually April 1). Regular Action allows more time to complete multiple applications and also allows more time for the student's counselor to provide assistance and guidance throughout the decision-laden process. Regular Action is clearly beneficial for those students whose candidacies will be strengthened by senior year extracurricular achievements and an improved academic performance in the final two semesters.

Rolling Admission describes the application process in which an institution reviews applications as they are received and, if the application is complete, offers a non-binding decision to the student usually within two to five weeks of being reviewed. Students are not required to make a commitment until May 1 but are encouraged to do so as soon as a final decision is made. Rolling Admission is a process used primarily by large state universities where applications are reviewed on a continual basis up to a regular deadline. In some cases, institutions will accept students as long as openings remain in their class or up until the beginning of the school year, whichever comes first.

Should I apply Early Decision/Early Action? Will I have an advantage if I apply early?

Applying early, whether ED or EA, is first and foremost a commitment to a college that it is absolutely your number one choice. There are both advantages and potential disadvantages to applying early, and the decision is not one to be entered into without considering all other options. A student who indicates that he/she wants to apply "somewhere," without considering criteria that best match his/her academic interests, career goals, and personal needs is probably making a poor decision. The important questions to consider about applying early are:

- Have I carefully researched college opportunities over time and am I confident that _____ is my absolute first choice?
- Is the college the best match for my academic strengths, academic interests, and educational goals?
- Is it natural to envision myself as a student on this campus (for four years) more easily than at other colleges or universities?

- Is financial aid going to be a determining factor in my final decision about where to attend?
- Have I visited enough campuses to possess a strong frame of reference and comparison?
- Are my grades and standardized test scores equal to those of students who were accepted at the school during the prior admissions cycle?
- Will I have completed all standardized tests required for admission by the deadline? (November is usually the last SAT test date accepted by colleges with early deadlines.)
- Does the college meet all or most of the criteria I have set in seeking the best possible match?
- Have I done as much as possible—through written communication, visits, interview(s), contact with local representative(s)—to make it known to the college that I possess a thorough understanding of the college and that my interest in applying early is genuine?

Answering these questions should assist students in determining if they are in fact making an informed decision or one based on fear and misinformation. More colleges are offering early programs, and it appears that the number of students accepted under the early umbrella is climbing each year. It is no surprise that students are approaching the process with more anxiety and uncertainty than ever before. However, it should be noted that the higher acceptance rates for early admission candidates is a reflection of the remarkable strength of the early applicant pools, not of less rigorous admissions standards.

To how many colleges should I apply? What is the "average" number of applications submitted by LHS Students?

The average number of applications submitted by one student in any given year ranges from five to seven. In narrowing down options and developing a final list of key criteria, it is important for a student to seek as much variation as possible with his/her final number of applications. If a student is submitting six applications, then it might follow that one or two are "stretch" schools, two or three are "target" schools, and at least one application covers the "fallback" or "safety" category. In addition, within a group of six applications there might be distinct differences of cost, size, public vs. private, in-state vs. out-of-state, and other criteria that could diversify a student's range of options in the final outcome.

The final number of applications that you submit is up to you after consulting with your post-high school counselor. Students who submit an excessive number of applications tend to believe (erroneously) that this will give them more options in the long run. A high number of applications usually means that a student has not done the necessary research (including campus visits) required to develop key criteria and narrow his/her options. Applying to a large number of schools has been known to negatively impact a student's academic performance during senior year, and having a large number of acceptances in April usually makes the decision-making process more difficult, not easier, for a student and his/her family.

Where do I start in attempting to find the right match in a college? What should I do if I don't have a clue?

The beginning of the process in the junior year can seem like a daunting task when one considers that there are over 2,200 four-year schools in the United States. The diversity of the college world is unique and offers just about anything a student could possibly need for continuing his/her education ... and more. The first step, and perhaps the most difficult, in starting the process is an honest and thoughtful self-assessment. Before considering schools based on popularity, name recognition, and rankings—a mistake many students make—a student should begin to reflect on his/her own strengths and weaknesses, personal needs, and academic goals. What are you looking for in a college? In the process of developing criteria and looking at what criteria should play a defining role in your search, you may want to think about the following:

- What are you looking for in a college? Taking time to honestly evaluate your needs, strengths and weaknesses, and likes and dislikes is the first step toward making a good match. This should not be an easy or quick step. In fact, the process of true self-assessment may be the most difficult aspect of the college application process.

- Are your strengths and interests better suited for a large comprehensive university or a small liberal arts college?
- What are the relative merits of each for you?
- In what subjects or academic areas have you achieved the greatest success at Lewiston High School? Is there an area or subject that you would like to pursue as a major?
- Do you wish to be in an urban environment, rural setting, or suburban/college town? It is important to distinguish the merits of different environments and how the mix of learning, social, and cultural opportunities best fits with your interests and personality.
- Is there a particular region of the country where you would like to attend college? What are the advantages/disadvantages of being close to home or far from home? Try to avoid rigid thinking as you consider location, and refrain from judgments based on hearsay.
- Visiting a variety of campuses in different locations is the best way to know firsthand which colleges provide the best opportunities for you.
- What are the merits of attending a public university instead of a private college or university, and vice versa?
- What type of personality are you seeking in a college? For example, every college has a unique mix of progressive elements and tradition. Some colleges are intense while some are more relaxed; some are conservative and some are liberal; some are friendly and some are reserved; some are spirited and some are more serious.
- Once you've determined the criteria that are most important to you, the hard part is finding the right mix of personality in a college.
- Do I have enough talent as an athlete/artist/musician/dancer to receive special consideration from an admissions committee or a coach or director of the particular college? Your first step should be consulting with your coach or teacher and then discussing your goals with your college counselor.

These questions are a jumping off point. More questions are bound to surface as you visit campuses and begin to develop a reference and a sense of comparison. For more information visit the [LHS/LRTC Life After High School](#) web page for 7 pages of links leading to much more information.

What forms do I need to file for financial aid, and when do I file them?

Every applicant seeking need-based aid at any college must file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). This form is available in the Post-High School Counseling Office in the fall, or it can be filed online, but may not be filed until after January 1 of the senior year. Most schools recommend that the [FAFSA](#) be filed by February 15 in order to receive full consideration for all need-based aid.

The other form, required primarily by private colleges and universities, is the [CSS Financial Aid Profile](#), commonly referred to as simply "the profile." This form is available in the fall and should be filed as early as possible.

In addition to the [FAFSA \(www.fafsa.ed.gov\)](#) and the [CSS/Financial Aid Profile \(profileonline.collegeboard.com/index.jsp\)](#), many colleges also require families to complete their school's own aid form, referred to as an "institutional" form. The institutional form is generally completed and filed with the student's application.

If a college requests my semester grades prior to a final decision, do I need to request an official transcript? When are 7th semester grades/mid-year reports mailed?

Lewiston High School automatically sends semester grades to any college or university where a student has already submitted an application. Students do not have to request an official transcript at mid year. Updated transcripts are typically mailed within three weeks of the end of the first semester.

Is it necessary to take a test prep course for the ACT/SAT, and when is the best time to consider such a course?

It is not necessary that a student enroll in a preparatory course for either standardized test. In fact, students have numerous opportunities already available for practice and preparation. Both the PLAN and the PSAT/NMSQT can be used by students to prepare for the ACT and SAT test. There are free guides and practice tests, provided by the test sponsors, available in the Post-High School Office. And for the self-motivated student, there is a wealth of test-prep material available on disk, CD-ROM, on the Internet, or in book form at your local bookstore.

Coaching courses are not meant to help you develop the skills being measured. Instead, they try to help students demonstrate abilities they already possess. The insights and confidence that characterize the best standardized-test takers cannot be taught. Conversely, a prep course will be of no value to a student who lacks motivation.

If a student is still enthusiastic about a test prep course after considering all the alternatives, the best time to take the course is either before the first test—spring of junior year—or between the first and second times taking the test. Currently, Lewiston High School and Lewiston Adult Education are collaborating to provide test prep courses in the fall and spring of the 2004-2005 school year. Students completing the courses will earn credit on their high school transcript. Contact Lewiston Adult Education for more information (795-4141).

What should I do if a college notifies me that my application is incomplete due to missing information?

Do not panic. As a matter of procedure, colleges will sometimes generate a "missing credentials" postcard or letter after an application has been initially processed. This does not mean that your application will be denied or that you will now be at a disadvantage in the admissions process. It is advised that you contact the admissions office directly to determine if the missing information, usually test scores sent from the testing agencies, has arrived since the mailing of your notification. Remember, **Lewiston High School does not send official score reports to colleges/universities; it is the student's responsibility to request official score reports directly from the testing agencies.**

If, after checking with the college, you are still in doubt about missing information, please notify your post-high school counselor as soon as possible.

When is the best time to visit colleges?

The best time to make a first visit to a college is in the early fall, a time when most campuses are full of activity and filled with students. However, several considerations are important in determining the best time for you to visit colleges. Before finalizing a trip, identify where you are in the college search process; this determines your purpose for making a campus visit.

- Will your visits be used to look at various types of colleges?
- Are you visiting schools in an attempt to narrow down a compiled list and decide where to apply?
- Have you already applied to schools, and are you in the process of assessing what college will be the best fit if you are accepted?
- Have you already received an acceptance, and are you visiting at the school's invitation for an overnight stay on campus before making your final decision?

Colleges offer tours and interviews on a year-round basis. So for students who cannot find the time to visit during the junior year, summer is obviously the best time to begin visiting.

How do I send test scores to colleges?

Official test scores must be sent directly from the testing agencies. **Lewiston High School does not send official test scores to any colleges; this applies to both current and former students.** Additional score report forms may be obtained from the Testing Center (Room 221) or the Post-High School Counseling office (Room 201). A student may also request scores by phone (ACT: 319-337-1000 / SAT: 800-728-7267) or online at www.act.org and www.collegeboard.com.

What is an alumni Interview?

When a student is not able to visit a campus for an interview with an admissions counselor, an interview with an alumni interviewer can be arranged, usually through the college admissions office. The interview generally will take place at a location close to the student's home and the interviewer sends a report of the interview to the college with a recommendation about the student's suitability for the school. See information [below](#) about making the most of a campus visit and interview.

What if I am deferred?

A deferment means that the college is not willing to assure you an early decision place in the incoming freshman class but has not rejected your application outright. Your file will be reconsidered for admission along with those students who are applying in the regular pool of applicants. This is a sign, however, that your application may not meet their standards and you would be wise to apply elsewhere. There is absolutely no guarantee that you have a better chance being accepted in the regular admission pool.

What do I do if I get waitlisted?

If you are waitlisted, the college has placed your name on a list of an unknown number of candidates. The college has sent out its acceptance letters and is waiting to see how many students commit to joining their freshmen class. If not enough candidates commit but choose to go elsewhere, they may have some openings that they will fill from their wait list. Some schools in some years take no one from their wait list. Some schools routinely fill some slots from their wait list. You have no way of knowing where you are on the list, if they will use the list that year, or who and how they will choose from that list. Sometimes schools have used all their financial aid monies and have none left for their wait list candidates so, if financial aid is important to you, this may be a problem.

If you are waitlisted and want to attend that school, you can do the following:

- Immediately return the wait list form that states that you are still interested and, if offered a spot, you will attend.
 - Submit your second semester grades and other "updates" to make your application stronger.
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How can I make the most of a campus visit and interview?

Schools are happy to have you visit, but there are certain courtesies and preparations necessary to make your visit most worthwhile. The following are some suggestions:

- The best visits include seeing the school on days when you can see classes in session; spend a night in a residence hall; and talk with students, admissions officers, and faculty members in your area(s) of interest. Most of these can be arranged by calling or writing the admissions office two to three weeks in advance of your visit. (At highly selective school it may be necessary to request fall interviews as early as July or August.) Request a written confirmation of your visit and directions.
- If you are planning to spend some time on campus and wish to have an interview, arrange the interview near the end of your visit. Then you will have talked with students and seen areas firsthand that can help you in the interview.

- If your application is not on file at the school, obtain a copy of an unofficial transcript from the Guidance Office to take with you.
 - If your visit requires short notice (such as when you are traveling in an area near a school), call the admissions office ahead of time and ask if it would be possible to have a tour of the campus and at least speak briefly with an admissions officer.
 - Research the school before your visit. Facts such as the size of the school and general admissions requirements are available from reference books and files in the Guidance Office.
 - Visit the neighborhood in which the school is located. Look for transportation facilities and nearby community services (such as post office, store, laundromat, etc).
 - Read the campus newspaper to become informed of campus issues.
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What is the difference between the ACTs and the SATs?

The **SAT I (Reasoning Test)** is a test of verbal and mathematical reasoning skills that are related to how you will do academically in college. The SAT I does not measure other factors and abilities such as creativity, special talents, and motivation that may also help you do well in college. Members of the Class of 2004 were the last to take the old SAT; members of the Class of 2005 and all subsequent classes must take the “new” SAT that includes a written essay component and other changes. Visit www.collegeboard.com for more information.

The **ACT (American College Testing)** is the predominant testing program in the Midwest and in some parts of the South. If you are applying to a school in those areas, you may be required to take this test instead of the SAT I.

Most schools accept either the ACT or SAT. Some students find the ACT easier to take than the SAT.

How do I know if I have to take the TOEFL?

Students who were not born in the United States and for whom English is not their native language must take the TOEFL (The Test of English as a Foreign Language). Almost all colleges will require it. It is taken on a computer at a test center (Portland and Orono). Appointments must be made in advance. A TOEFL test prep course will be offered in the Fall of 2004.
