

# How Your Application is Evaluated

*Your application is much more than just your test scores. Test scores reflect only three hours of work. Your transcript, recommendations, and activities reflect three years of effort.*

## **School Record (Most Important)**

The first thing looked at is the transcript, evaluating the number of AP courses taken each year and the grades in those courses. Then the college determines how many AP courses were available to see how much the student has challenged him/herself.

Your school record includes not only the grades you earned but also the courses you took. AP courses indicate a student who is challenging him/herself rather than by just sliding through regular courses with good grades. Taking more than just the required courses is important (i.e., 4 years of math, 4 years of science, 4 years of social studies).

Improvement in grades is also important. Lower grades in 9th grade followed by improvement through 11th grade can offset those initial lower grades. The converse is also true. A downward shift from 9th grade onward can be a very negative factor in an admissions' decision.

## **Recommendations**

Recommendations provide information about you that is not included elsewhere in the applications. Make sure that the teachers you ask for recommendations know you. Get to know your teachers as well as your counselor so that they have a better picture of you. It seldom helps your application to submit recommendations from people who cannot speak of you academically. There is such a thing as "too many recommendations". Two teacher recommendations along with the Counselor Recommendation are just fine. Massive numbers of recommendations create a red flag.

## **Activities**

Avoid just listing activities. Use your activities to provide a picture of who you are. Sustained involvement over several years in one or a few activities is more important than having just joined lots of groups for shorter periods of time.

## **Test Scores**

Test scores are indeed used to compare and evaluate students but they are not necessarily the number one most important criteria for admission. Admissions officers say that it is generally only very high or very low scores that affect decisions (combined SAT Reasoning Test scores below 1050 or above 2100). It is better to concentrate on hard work in your courses that directly impacts the grades you earn.

### Testing Tips:

- Be rested when you take any admissions test.
- Eat a good breakfast before testing.
- Take a sweater in case the room is too cold
- A little review can make you familiar with the testing format (i.e., taking the sample tests) but don't become obsessed.

### Essays

This is the one part of the application you can control - do a good job. An essay permits you the opportunity to express yourself so take advantage of it. Your essay can be used to convey what makes you different from all of the thousands of students applying to a school. Use what makes you *you* to your benefit – write about it.

Even more important than what you write is how you write it. Have parents, teachers, friends, or your counselor read your essay for grammatical and expression proof reading. However, make sure that you do the writing. Check on page 21 for further suggestions on essay writing.

### Be Neat

Most applications can be submitted online. In many cases colleges prefer this. Many times the application fee is waived if the application is submitted online. If applying online be sure to print copies of all that you have submitted.

However, if you choose to use a paper application, make sure that you submit a neat and tidy application. Crossed out errors, coffee stains, using different colors in ink, or general sloppiness all send a message regarding you, the applicant - a message that you do not want to convey.

If you use a paper application rather than online, it is best to photocopy the application and make a rough draft before you work on the original. Make sure, however, to do your own work. Secretarial-perfect applications are not advised.

Use black ink unless otherwise told if you are doing a paper application. Word processed essays are usually acceptable (and preferred) but follow directions.