

Dream, Believe, Succeed!

A College Planning Handbook
for English Language Learners
and Their Families

Introduction



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Dear Students and Families:

Congratulations! If you are looking at this handbook it is because you are planning for the next step in your educational career. What an exciting time you are about to embark upon. We at the Office of English Language Learners wholeheartedly believe in your success ability to meet your goals and in your ultimate success. To help you navigate through the final years of high school, we have put together this handbook, which contains many valuable resources, including timelines to follow and websites to visit.

Remember that being multilingual is something to celebrate an asset: colleges and employers are looking for candidates who can communicate and perform in a global setting. We encourage you to be proactive about your future, and to prepare and think beyond high school graduation to college and graduate school.

We want you to be successful and that is why we created this handbook. Our future depends on your success. Be sure to refer back to this handbook and never hesitate to reach out to folks at your school like your guidance counselor, as the Department of Education very much wants to see you reach your goals.

Best of luck with your college and career pursuits!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A. Infante". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Angelica Infante
Chief Executive Officer,
NYCDOE Office of English Language Learners

Introduction

We have created this booklet for current¹ and former² English language learners (ELLs) and their families. The United States' school system is different from school systems in many other countries, and we want to help you understand what happens leading up to and following high school graduation. High school is a very important time, both for students who want to go to college and for those who are looking to get ready for the future workforce.

This handbook includes information about how to navigate New York City's school system as an ELL, high school graduation requirements, a timeline for college planning, tips on selecting a college or university, options for paying for college, and much more. We hope this handbook helps students achieve their dreams of a college degree and successful career.

To find additional information about preparing for college, we encourage you to log on to these DOE web pages:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/StudentSupport/GuidanceandCounseling/CollegeCareerSupport/default.htm> and <http://schools.nyc.gov/offices/opsr/default.htm>, which include additional college and career resources.

Additionally, if you come across an unfamiliar term, please refer to the glossary at the end of this handbook.

A special note to students who are reading this booklet with their parents:

Getting ready for college and your career after high school requires a personal commitment that will help maximize your potential. You must take charge of your learning and follow through with meeting high school and college requirements and deadlines. Along the way, we encourage you to seek help, not only from your parents, but also from your teachers, and your guidance/college counselors.

¹ An ELL is a student who needs additional support for English language development. This status is determined by the New York State LAB-R and NYSESLAT results.

² A former ELL is a student who had been enrolled in an ELL program, but has tested out of the program and is now taking all classes with native English speakers.

Navigating New York

If your child has been identified as an ELL, you have the right to choose one of three ELL programs (see below for more information about each program). By law, all ELLs must be provided with English as a Second Language (ESL) services at a minimum. If you choose to enroll your child in a bilingual program, you may want to speak with an enrollment center representative or with a school counselor and other school personnel to learn which schools offer these programs. Whichever program you choose, your child will receive the same curriculum as English-proficient students and will be responsible for learning the same information as his or her non-ELL peers.

Here is a description of the three ELL program choices:

| Transitional Bilingual Education | Dual Language Education | Freestanding English as a Second Language |
|--|--|---|
| Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) programs include all subject matter instruction in the students' native language and English, as well as intensive instruction in English as a Second Language. As the student develops English proficiency using the strengthened knowledge and academic skills acquired in the native language, instruction in English increases and native language instruction decreases. | Dual Language (DL) programs provide a certain amount of time of instruction in English and a certain amount of time of instruction in the native language (e.g., Spanish, Chinese, Haitian Creole) as determined by the program model. Students of the native language are taught alongside English-speaking students so that all students become bicultural and fluent in both languages. | Freestanding English as a Second Language (ESL) programs provide all language arts and subject matter instruction in English through the use of specific instructional strategies with supports in the native language. |

Visit <http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/ELL/default.htm> for more information about these program choices.

A special note to parents who are reading this booklet handbook with their children:

Using your native language, each day ask your child to tell you one thing he or she learned in school, and ask them to give you specifics. Then share something you learned that day. It is important that you support your child's education by demonstrating that learning does not stop once you leave the classroom.

Meet Helen Samuels

A student who moved to the United States as a 9th grader and graduated as the Brooklyn International High School salutatorian

Helen Samuels remembers her brother dropping her off outside the school building on her first day of summer school, because they didn't think that families were allowed in the building.

Helen said that after she got settled into her school routine and she began learning English, she felt that her listening skills were much stronger than her speaking skills. But over time, thanks to her good attitude and the support of her teachers, she

began to grow more confident. She explained, "[My teachers] didn't give me the answers, but they helped me to find the answers. So that is how I end[ed] up like this. ..." After graduating at the top of her Brooklyn International High School class in the fall of 2012, Helen enrolled in Trinity College.

Interesting facts about ELLs in New York City

41% of NYC public schools students come from a home where a language **other than English** is spoken.

During the 2011-12 school year, **14.4%** of public school students (a total of 150,053) **were ELLs**.

ELL students who have become proficient in English (i.e., former ELLs) **graduate at a higher rate** than students who are a part of the general student population.

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/ELL/default.htm>

High School Education at a Glance

High schools in the United States consist of four years of study, beginning in the 9th grade and ending upon the completion of the 12th grade. In order to be promoted to the next grade level, a student must earn “credits” by passing classes that relate to certain subject areas (English, science, math, etc.). Students must also pass Regents exams in specific subject areas as they progress through their courses. You can track your child’s progress toward completing these requirements by reviewing his or her high school transcript, which you can access 24-hours a day through the Department of Education’s Achievement Reporting and Innovation System (<https://arisparentlink.org/parentlink>).

High School Graduation Requirements: Credits³

Students must complete 44 credits of coursework in specific subject areas and pass the New York State Regents exams to graduate from high school. Regents exams are standardized tests that all New York State public school students must take before graduating from high school. Each exam focuses on a particular subject area (English, science, math, etc.). Students may earn either a Regents diploma or an Advanced Regents diploma depending on the courses and exams they complete. Students with disabilities may also earn a local diploma. Visit the DOE’s website for additional information on graduation requirement:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies/GraduationRequirements/default.htm>

| Subject | Regents Diploma | Advanced Regents Diploma |
|---|--|---|
| English | 8 credits | 8 credits |
| Social Studies | 8 credits distributed as follows: <i>4 in global history</i> <i>2 in US history</i> <i>1 in government</i> <i>1 in economics</i> | 8 credits distributed as follows <i>4 in global history</i> <i>2 in US history</i> <i>1 in government</i> <i>1 in economics</i> |
| Math | 6 credits | 6 credits |
| Science | 6 credits distributed as follows: <i>At least 2 credits in life science</i> <i>At least 2 credits in physical science</i> | 6 credits distributed as follows <i>At least 2 credits in life science</i> <i>At least 2 credits in physical science</i> |
| Language Other Than English (LOTE) | 2 credits | 6 credits |
| Visual Arts, Music, Dance, and/or Theater | 2 credits | 2 credits |
| Physical Education | 4 credits | 4 credits |
| Health | 1 credit | 1 credit |
| Elective Courses | 3 credits | 3 credits |

³ This data reflects DOE standards at the time of the Spring 2013 publication of this booklet.

Credits from classes taken outside the United States

Parents, if your child went to school in your country in 9th, 10th, 11th, or 12th grades, you should show his or her report card to a high school guidance counselor. Some coursework can be transferred into credits in the New York City school system; this will ensure that your child is placed in the appropriate grade level.

High School Graduation Requirements: Exams

In addition to earning credits, all students must pass five Regents exams with scores of 65 or higher in order to receive their high school diploma. Many Regents exams are provided in Chinese, Haitian Creole, Korean, Russian, and Spanish. Students who pass additional exams in math, science, and a language other than English (LOTE) can receive an Advanced Regents diploma. For additional information on the exam requirements for students with disabilities, visit this DOE website: <http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies/GraduationRequirements/default.htm>. See the chart below for more information about the specific Regents examinations required for high school students.

| Subject | Regents Diploma | Advanced Regents Diploma |
|------------------------------------|--|---|
| English | Comprehensive English Regents exam | Comprehensive English Regents exam |
| Social Studies | Global History Regents exam AND United States History and Government Regents exam | Global History Regents exam AND United States History and Global History Regents exam |
| Math | One of the following Math Regents exams: Integrated Algebra Geometry Algebra 2/Trigonometry | All of the following Math Regents exams: Integrated Algebra Geometry Algebra 2/Trigonometry |
| Science | One of the following Science Regents exams: Living Environment Earth Science Chemistry Physics | Living Environment Regents exams: AND One of the following Earth Science Chemistry Physics |
| Language Other Than English (LOTE) | No exam required | NYC LOTE exam |

Additional resources regarding the Regents and other exams can be found by visiting www.regentsreviewlive.net/ and www.regentsprep.org/.

It may not be too late to graduate

If you are a student who is between the ages of 15 and 21 who has fallen behind in credits, it is not too late to graduate. New York City has several schools and programs to help you get back on track to graduate and prepare for life after high school, whether in college, at work, or in a training program.

Transfer Schools - Students between 15 and 21 of age, who have completed one year of high school, are eligible to enroll in a Transfer School. The minimum age and number of credits required for entry varies by school. Students attend classes during the day to earn a high school diploma.

Young Adult Borough Centers – Students between 17.5 and 21 of age, who are in their fifth year of high school and have at least 17 credits, are eligible to enroll in a Young Adult Borough Center (YABC). Students attend late afternoon/evening classes to earn a high school diploma.

General Educational Development GED Programs – Students between the ages of 18 and 21 are eligible to enroll in a GED Plus program. Students can find a program offering full-day or evening classes and can attend school on either a full-time or part-time basis in order to earn a General Educational Development (GED) credential.

A TIP FOR PARENTS:

Your child’s bilingual skills will give him or her a competitive edge in the future job market. It is important to help and encourage your child to maintain his or her native language proficiency.

Meet Bernie St. Pierre

After a Massive Earthquake Ravaged His Hometown, he started Fresh in New York City

When a 7.0-magnitude earthquake hit Bernie St. Pierre’s home country of Haiti in 2010, his life was turned upside down. Two weeks later, at the age of 14, with no experience speaking English and with only some of his belongings, Bernie was forced to leave his hometown and move with his older sister to the United States. He moved in with his aunt in Queens, where he and his sister enrolled in the Humanities and the Arts High School (HAHS).

While at HAHS, Bernie studied hard to master the English language. “I was able to pick up English so quickly, thanks to the help of my teachers,” he said. “They were nurturing and patient with me. It was because of their support that I was able to pass my English Regents exam on my first try.” In fact, Bernie passed all of his required Regents in just two years.

Bernie missed his family dearly—his father is in Haiti—but they served as

his biggest source of his motivation. “I didn’t want to let my parents down—they were counting on me,” Bernie said. “I knew I had to be a role model for my younger brothers. I had to be brave and show them that anything is possible.”

Bernie’s perseverance and hard work helped him earn a diploma. He now attends Nassau Community College and is studying computer science.

For a full list of options for students who have fallen behind, visit www.goingforme.org.

What Happens After Graduation?

Many families come to the United States in pursuit of a better education for their children. It is important to keep in mind that a child's education does not stop in high school—it continues in postsecondary education. Postsecondary education refers to the learning that takes place at institutions where students can earn academic degrees or professional certifications, whether at a college, university, or trade school⁵. In this handbook, we will focus on the information that students need to help them enter a college or university.

Why is a college education important?

A college education provides students with the essential skills they need to compete in a global economy.

There are many good reasons to go to college. The most common reasons are:

- (1) Future financial security
- (2) Career freedom and flexibility
- (3) Adventure and challenge
- (4) Meeting new people and making connections

Education Pays

These 2009 U.S. Census Bureau figures compare the median annual income against the years someone has spent in school:

Did not finish high school = **\$18,432**

Graduated from high school = **\$26,776**

Completed some college or earned an associate degree = \$31,906

Earned a four-year bachelor's degree = **\$47,510**

Earned an advanced degree = **\$62,313**

Over time, a college graduate can earn double the income of someone who did not complete high school.

⁵ In this booklet, you will notice that we use the terms "college" and "university" interchangeably; generally speaking, in the United States, these terms mean the same thing. A trade school is different, as it is an institution that teaches skills and knowledge related to a specific job or career (like facilities management technology or paralegal studies).

U.S. Census data can be accessed at [//www.census.gov/prod/2012pubs/p20-566.pdf](http://www.census.gov/prod/2012pubs/p20-566.pdf).

What your child needs to do during high school to prepare for college

- When applying for college, schools will look at your child's grade point average ⁶ (GPA) during the first three years of high school. It is important for your child to stay focused and complete all assigned work to demonstrate his other ability to do well in all subject areas.
- Encourage your child to take challenging classes, such as honors and Advanced Placement (AP) classes: these demanding courses can show admissions officers that your child is prepared for the rigors of college.
- Ask your child to participate in extracurricular activities, such as joining a school club or volunteering with a community organization. These activities will not only help your child learn about communication and civic responsibilities, they can also help a college better understand your child's vision and abilities. This is particularly important for students who have recently immigrated, as they will learn more about the English language and American culture by interacting with others.

Bilingual skills translate into career and academic readiness skills

Did you know that when two candidates possess similar qualifications, the candidate who speaks two or more languages has a higher probability of getting a job than the person who speaks only one language? Professional fields that interact with the global economy, such as medicine and national security, desire staff members who are proficient in an additional language.

⁶A GPA is a number that reflects how well a student is doing in all of his/her classes: the lowest GPA a student can have is 0.0, while the highest (without doing honors or Advanced Placement work) is 4.0.

College/Career Readiness

Children from immigrant families may be the first in their families to have the opportunity to go to college. This is very exciting, but it is important to keep in mind that graduating from high school does not guarantee success in college. Students need to be prepared for the demanding courses in college.

What does it mean to exhibit academic behaviors?

Students must have a strong work ethic to be college ready. Students who perform well in college are those who maintain a positive attitude about the challenges of school, develop study habits that reflect the demands of the coursework, and use campus resources such as professors and advisors when they need help. Preparation for this comes years before someone is accepted into college. Parents play a major role in shaping their child's attitudes, beliefs, and expectations about the value and importance of education.

Time management and study skills are organizational tools that should help students develop academic success throughout their high school years and beyond:

| TIME MANAGEMENT | STUDY SKILLS |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Make "to do" lists.■ Use a planner to record assignments and due dates.■ Schedule short breaks when studying.■ Get enough sleep and eat properly.■ Begin assignments as soon as possible.■ Set long-term academic and personal goals. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Take notes and summarize main points from the day's lessons.■ Create an organized and quiet study environment.■ Don't be afraid to ask questions.■ Use study groups.■ Quiz yourself on the material.■ Do all homework and prepare for exams far in advance.■ Parent-specific: Attend parent conferences and PTA meetings.■ Parent-specific: Use the DOE's website, along with the sources/links found at the end of this handbook, to learn more about how you can support your child. |

The home environment should support these study practices. Parents should encourage their children to form good academic behaviors and help them turn these behaviors into habits. Families should talk regularly about the importance of going to college, and have a plan to get there.

For more information or advice about how you can help your child, read the New York Urban League guide published at: www.nyul.org/parentguide.

What are colleges looking for?

While many parents would like their children to go to college, they may not be aware of what it takes to get there. The following section provides information regarding the requirements for applying to college, as well as the types of colleges students can attend. Each school may request additional information (supplements) from applicants; some supplements are mandatory while others are optional.

Academic readiness

- **Transcript:** A transcript is a document that lists the courses a student has taken, when the class was taken, who the teacher was, and the grades the student earned. Colleges are interested in the classes a student has taken, as well as the grades he or she received. Keep in mind that a transcript that shows steady academic growth is a plus!
- **Senior Grades:** Although college acceptance is based on a student's 9th to 11th grade transcript, colleges look at performance during 12th grade very closely. Colleges can withdraw acceptance if there is a significant drop in grades during a student's senior year.
- **Standardized Exams:**

The SAT is a standardized examination that is accepted by most colleges. Offered seven times a year, the SAT is owned, published, and developed by the College Board, a nonprofit organization in the United States. New York City public schools offers *free* practice exams, like the Practice SAT ("PSAT"), to high school juniors. Talk to a school counselor to learn when the PSAT is being offered in your area.

Another popular standardized examination is the ACT exam. Like the SAT, the ACT is offered nationally, and is used by colleges as a tool to evaluate students' applications.

Students are commonly required to take the SAT I Reasoning Test or the ACT plus Writing. Some colleges may require students to take two SAT II Subject Tests to demonstrate subject area strengths. These tests are not only important for admission, but also for receiving merit scholarships.

Taking these exams can help a student demonstrate his or her English proficiency. *For example, for the City University of New York (CUNY), an SAT I verbal score of 480 or higher, critical reading score of 480 or higher, or an ACT English score of 20 or higher is enough for a student to demonstrate English proficiency.*

STUDENTS

Make sure to ask your high school counselor or the college admissions officers at the schools where you are applying what each application specifically requires.

Demonstration of English proficiency

Colleges want to be sure their students are ready for college-level work, and English proficiency is one of the important areas that they look for in an applicant's qualifications. Here are a few things that can be used to show English language proficiency:

- **Coursework:** To graduate from high school, ELLs must earn eight credits of English, which may include English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.
- **New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT):** During the spring of each school year, ELLs in grades K-12 take the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT), which is designed to measure language development. Passing this exam is one way to demonstrate English proficiency.

- **NYS English Regents exam:** To pass the English Regents exam, a student must earn a score of 65 or higher. However, certain colleges, including the City University of New York (CUNY), require students to earn a score of 75 or higher to demonstrate English proficiency.
- **SAT 1:** An SAT Critical Reading score of 480 or higher can demonstrate English proficiency.
- **TOEFL:** Colleges may require applicants who are recent immigrants to take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). This test, offered nationwide, evaluates a student’s ability to understand and use English in an academic environment.
- **Individual school exams:** In addition to the Regents exam and TOEFL, schools may offer English language learners individual entrance exams or place them in remedial classes.
 - For example, the State University of New York (SUNY) applicants who do not meet the minimum language proficiency through examinations may be offered “conditional admission” to select SUNY campuses; these students must successfully pass an English-proficiency class during their first year of college in order to stay enrolled.
 - Additionally, qualifying CUNY applicants who have not demonstrated a minimum proficiency in all subject areas can enroll in the University Skills Immersion Program (USIP), the Winter Immersion Program, or the Prelude to Success Program, in order to become academically college-ready.

Legal status

- **U.S. citizen or legal resident:** Students will be asked to provide proof of citizenship (with a passport) and/or residency (with a permanent residence or green card) when applying to college.
- **Undocumented students:** Undocumented students can apply to college. School policies regarding required documentation vary; some colleges do not require applicants to have a Social Security number, while other colleges will allow applicants to leave their response regarding their “Immigration Status” blank. Additionally, as will be discussed in the financial aid section of this booklet, undocumented students in New York may be eligible for in-state tuition at state-operated colleges, which can lift a heavy financial burden off of both applicants and their families. For example, the Hispanic Outlook Scholarship Fund offers scholarships to undocumented students.

Positive personal traits and qualities

- **Essay:** Most college applications require students to submit an essay based on influential experiences or people, or their own talents and interests. This essay is an opportunity for students to showcase their abilities and passions. Students can write about traveling, joining school clubs, or the unique experiences they’ve had being an English language learner. Many schools also require students to write additional essays—perhaps explaining why they would like to attend the college, or in response to questions asking for specific information about them. For each essay, applicants should write in their own words and address all of the question(s) posed in the essay prompt.
- **Extracurricular activities:** Competitive colleges are interested in more than just academics and want students who will add to their campus community. New York City offers so many opportunities to discover new interests and possible careers. Visit the New York City Department of Youth and Community Service’s webpage to find out about computer camps, science programs, performing arts programs, or whatever else may be of interest: www.nyc.gov/dycd.

An interest in college

Colleges like to see that applicants are interested in their campus, their students, and their faculty. Showing interest in a college can be done in a variety of ways:

- visit that college
- meet with a college representative and follow up with her/him
- attend a college open house
- join mailing lists; befriend the college on Facebook, or follow the school on Twitter
- interview with an admissions officer or alumni spokesperson

PARENTS:

Encourage your child to make use of his/her summer break and free time during the school year by participating in volunteer opportunities, sports, school clubs, employment, internships, etc.

STUDENTS:

As applicants it is important that you show that you have strengths outside of academics.

PARENTS:

There are books and online resources to help students write their essays. It is important to be encouraging throughout the writing process!

Timeline for College Planning

Gaining admission to a college in the United States is done through an application process. College admissions officers review each application and evaluate a student's transcript, standardized examination grades, essay, and supplementary materials.

Preparing for college can feel overwhelming for parents and students. Remember that counselors are the single biggest resource when it comes to preparedness. Parents and students should take a proactive approach in getting information from counselors; don't be afraid to schedule meetings with them well before you mail your applications.

When meeting with a counselor, here are some important questions to consider asking:

- (1) Who is responsible for sending students' applications to colleges, students or the school?
- (2) What are the different colleges' application deadlines?
- (3) How much does each application cost?

Meet Elizabeth Canela

Former ELL Who Went on to Earn a Master's Degree from Duke University

When Elizabeth Canela graduated with a master's degree from Duke University in 2012, her mother cried. Elizabeth was born in Brooklyn and raised in a Spanish-speaking home. She started school as an ELL. After exiting P.S. 94's ESL program in first grade, she entered a mainstream classroom but felt alienated and struggled. To help Elizabeth excel academically, her mother encouraged her to bring English-speaking friends home to study with her. Elizabeth recalled her

mother emphasizing the importance of education (her mom would often show her rough and calloused hands to Elizabeth after returning home from a day's work at a factory).

Elizabeth was determined to go to a prestigious college and began doing a lot of research and preparation work. She took Advanced Placement (AP) courses and studied for hours each day for the SAT exam. With help from teachers and friends, she also rewrote her college application

personal statement over 30 times. As a result of her determination and hard work, Elizabeth was accepted to Duke University and received a full (need-based) scholarship. In college, Elizabeth learned that her hard work was not over. At Duke, she continued to devote time and energy to her studies, took advantage of the university's writing center, and asked professors for additional help. She made it to the Dean's List and earned her master's at Duke. Elizabeth is now a New York City Coro Fellow.

Students, here are some suggestions regarding how to plot and plan your application process:

General Timeline for College Planning

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| 9TH (FRESHMAN) | Introduce yourself to your guidance counselor and express interest in going to college. |
| 10TH (SOPHMORE) | Take the practice SAT (the PSAT) in October (it is free to NYC students). Talk to a school guidance counselor about what steps to take to earn a Biliteracy Seal on your diploma. |
| 11TH (JUNIOR) | <p>September/October: Meet with your high school guidance counselor to discuss the college process.</p> <p>January, May, or June: Take the SAT or ACT.</p> <p>May: Ask two teachers (from different subject areas) with whom you have a good relationship to write you a college letter of recommendation. Ask your guidance counselor to write a guidance letter of recommendation on your behalf.</p> <p>May: Take Advanced Placement (AP) exams, if AP courses are offered.</p> <p>Spring: Take the SAT II if necessary.</p> <p>Ongoing: Visit colleges during the school year or summer—if possible, parents should attend.</p> |
| 12TH (SENIOR) | <p>Fall: Take the SAT or ACT a second time. Colleges will take your best score in each section across both test dates.</p> <p>September: Meet with your college counselor.</p> <p>September: Check application requirements for colleges of interest. Each application may cost \$20-\$100. Ask about fee waivers (total or partial elimination of cost).</p> <p>Ongoing: Research and apply for scholarships and ask about low-interest loans (never assume that a school is too expensive to attend).</p> <p>November: Submit early action/decision application(s).</p> <p>Ongoing: Check to see if colleges have received all of your documentation; this can be done by calling the school’s admissions office (remember to be professional).</p> <p>December: Receive response from early action/decision school(s).</p> <p>January: File FAFSA (a financial document that will be explained in the financial aid section) with guardian and student tax forms.</p> <p>March/April: Receive admissions decisions.</p> <p>May: Students must accept only one college and parents must make a tuition deposit (students can contribute with extra money if working after-school or summer jobs).</p> |

For additional information regarding specific steps students can take to prepare for college, refer to the DOE’s Expect Success literature:
<http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/237307EF-A806-4D2C-9E62-14E040DED23B/0/HSExpectSuccess.pdf>.

Throughout your high school years:

- establish good study habits
- get good grades
- take challenging classes
- participate in sports, clubs, and/or community service activities
- explore interests
- spend time thinking about your future career
- research colleges and universities
- save money for college applications, exams, and related expenditures

Colleges/Universities in the USA

There are thousands of colleges and universities in the United States; finding the right one takes time and effort and can be overwhelming, especially when the higher education system is different from what you have experienced in your home country. This section provides information regarding the different types of colleges and universities in the United States to help you can make a more informed decision about your college education.

Public and private colleges and universities: what's the difference?

The primary difference between public and private colleges is how they are funded.

- State tax dollars help support **public colleges**, so tuition is lower for students who live in the state in which the college is located. For this reason, it is less expensive for a New Yorker to attend public schools such as Brooklyn College or SUNY Binghamton, which are both located in New York. A New Yorker who attends a public school that is outside of New York State (whether in New Jersey, like Rutgers, or in North Carolina, like the University of North Carolina) will pay higher tuition than a student who is from that state.
- **Private colleges**, like Vassar College and New York University, are funded by student tuition and alumni dues, making their tuition generally more expensive than public colleges. However, some private colleges have generous grant and scholarship opportunities to help students alleviate the cost of tuition.

Two-year and four-year programs: what's the difference?

Students enrolled in an undergraduate program can earn two types of degrees: an associate degree and a bachelor's degree.

- **When graduating from a two-year college (often referred to as a community college), students earn associate degrees.** As the name suggests, graduating from a two-year college requires at least two years of full-time study; some students will need more time if they are required to take remedial courses or if they can only attend classes part-time. Upon graduation, many students decide to transfer to a four-year college. The tuition is usually much lower at a community college than a four-year college.
- **When graduating from a four-year college, students earn bachelor's degrees.** Completing the required number of courses at a four-year college or university usually takes at least four years. Like two-year colleges, these schools can be big or small. Cooper Union in Manhattan has only about 900 students while Queens College in Flushing, Queens, has over 18,000 students.

Important information for New York City high school graduates

There are a large number of public colleges and universities in New York. Students who are state residents are eligible for lower tuition rates at all of the colleges in the SUNY and CUNY systems:

- **The State University of New York (SUNY):** SUNY is the largest comprehensive state higher education system in the country. It has 64 colleges across New York State, including both two-year and four-year colleges.
- **The City University of New York (CUNY):** With 23 colleges across New York City, the CUNY system offers a lot of choices for students who wish to pursue their college degree close to home. By attending CUNY, not only could tuition be lower, students also have an opportunity to save on living expenses.

Resources that will help you research college choices

A guidance counselor is usually the person at the school who provides college information, writes letters of recommendation, and compiles school documents to be sent to colleges: it is always a good idea to set up a meeting with the guidance counselor to discuss college options.

You can also find reviews of colleges and universities in books such as *Fiske Guide to Colleges*, *Princeton Review*, and *Admission Matters*. You may find the most up-to-date information regarding a college's application procedures, deadlines, and unique requirements on the college's own website (*www.nyu.edu* or *www.stonybrook.edu*, for example). Additionally, the College Board, an organization dedicated to college readiness, has a large amount of college-related information (see *www.collegeboard.org*).

Attending college fairs and visiting college campuses will help both students and parents gather more information about the institutions. During campus visits, take advantage of the opportunity to meet with admissions counselors, faculty, and students.

With so many options, how do you decide where to send an application?

Selecting a college that fits your family's needs requires that you evaluate a lot of factors. Families should have an honest talk about all of the factors that may affect the decision to apply to college.

These factors include:

- a student's academic interests and strengths
- the social and cultural environment that will suit your child and help him or her to best learn
- how your family can financially manage college tuition and related costs

PARENTS

As soon as your child starts planning to apply to colleges, you should work closely with him or her. Reading this handbook is a step in the right direction!

Selection process: dream colleges, target colleges, and safety colleges

A student's list of colleges should contain dream colleges, a number of target colleges, and some safety colleges.

Dream

A **"dream"** or **"reach"** college is one that a student really wants to attend, but only has a small chance of being admitted into. The most competitive schools in the country will always be "dream" colleges, regardless of a student's academic achievements.

Target

A **"target"** college is one which a student has a better-than-average chance of being admitted, and where he/ or she "fits in" well academically, socially, and otherwise.

Safety

A **"safety"** college is one that a student should be admitted into as long as he or she applies. A "safety" college also refers to a school that a student's family can afford.

Meet Nevres Buljubasic

The First Person in His Family to Attend College

During the Bosnian War, Nevres Buljubasic's father was wounded, prompting the family to flee their native country when he was just 5 years old. "We came here with no money or friends, but we got through it because my parents really wanted us to succeed and receive a better education" Nevres said.

At first, Nevres struggled to learn English and adapt to his new country. As his English skills improved, he

taught his entire family. As a student at Port Richmond High School on Staten Island, Nevres was the Chief Executive Officer for his school's Virtual Enterprise Program and a member of the boys' lacrosse, football, and soccer teams. During his senior year, Nevres and his family became U.S. citizens.

"I feel that one of my greatest accomplishments was teaching my mother and father English," said

Nevres. "I am excited for the next challenge in my life, because I am the first person in my family to go college."

Despite Nevres's busy schedule, he has maintained a B+ average. Nevres attends Berkeley College in Manhattan, where he plans to major in international business in the hopes of becoming a C.E.O.

Early action versus Early decision: what's the difference?

Some colleges give students the opportunity to apply before the standard application deadline, allowing them to find out early if they are accepted. There are big differences between the two programs:

- **Early action:** Students who apply to a school by the early action deadline (November 1 or November 15) can hear back from the college before the winter break in December. Students who are accepted may decide not to apply to many other colleges; they will have until May to declare their decision. Remember: Be sure that you feel comfortable with the financial aid package that is being offered before accepting a college's offer.
- **Early decision:** Early decision is similar to early action with one major difference: If accepted, a student must agree to withdraw all other applications and attend that school. The potential benefit is that, because applicants find out much earlier if they are accepted, students applying to college through early decision may only have to apply to one school.

Please recognize that there are significant risks to early decision: You will not be sure of your financial aid package before you agree to attend the school, and you may later decide that you like another college better. While students can withdraw their early decision agreement for reasons other than inadequate financial aid, they risk having other colleges withdrawing future admissions offers.

Meet Kelwin Diaz

He Overcomes Language Barriers to Receive His Advanced Regents Diploma

Kelwin Diaz started his K-12 education in a school for special needs students, where he was placed in a self-contained setting and was enrolled as an English language learner (ELL). By middle school, he was a former ELL and enrolled in general education classes. Kelwin received his Advanced Regents Diploma from the Bronx High School for Writing and Communications and now attends the College of Brockport, which is part of the State University of New York.

"At first, it was pretty hard for me to adjust to the new settings because the students were pretty different," Kelwin said. "I kind of felt different from everyone else. But after a while, I started to adjust and get used to it." At the beginning of high school, Kelwin had to take extra classes and put in extra time with his teachers to get caught up in the core content areas. But he not only caught up with general education classes, he went above and beyond, taking all of the Advanced Placement classes offered by his school and earning a 90 or higher on four different Regents

exams, including a 98 on the U.S. History exam.

Chemistry was Kelwin's favorite class in high school and inspired his choice to study science in college.

Kelwin said there is one golden rule for academic success that any high school student can follow: Don't slack off. "Don't give up, and keep pressing on. The moment you start slacking off is the moment it will hit you even harder. You just have to keep working at progress every day."

Tuition and financial aid

When students begin their college search, no school should be ruled out because of cost. Many colleges offer individual students a tremendous amount of financial aid. However, any final list of college choices should include financial, as well as academic, “safety” schools: schools that a student should be admitted into as long as he or she applies.

Financial aid is monetary help for meeting the costs of a college education. Often, the financial aid offered by a college is based on a family’s “financial need.” Financial need is defined as the difference between what it costs to attend a particular college—tuition, room (housing), board (dining)—and what you and your family are expected to pay towards a college education.

To determine your yearly Expected Family Contribution (EFC), you must complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form, available at www.fafsa.ed.gov/. In determining your EFC, financial aid officers consider a number of factors including income, assets, the number of people in the family, and, if the family owns a home, the value of the family’s home.

SAVING FOR COLLEGE

New York State offers a savings option called the 529 Direct Plan, which can help families save for college. It is an investment account into which you set aside money to pay for qualified higher-education expenses, such as tuition, certain room and board costs, books, and fees. The state’s 529 plan offers tax benefits that are not available with other types of savings accounts. For more information, visit the New York 529 website at: <https://uii.nysaves.s.upromise.com/content/home.html>.

To qualify for financial aid, a student must first prepare and submit a FAFSA form online. You may also have to submit a College Scholarship Service Profile form, available at <http://student.collegeboard.org/css-financial-aid-profile>. Some colleges also ask students to prepare and submit a school-specific, financial aid form(s). Students should only send financial aid paperwork to schools where they have been accepted and are seriously interested in attending.

Different forms of financial aid

Some types of financial aid can be awarded to a student in the form of grants or scholarships (money that does not need to be repaid by the student/family). Other financial aid comes in the form of loans that need to be repaid. Still other aid is offered through work study opportunities that enable students to earn money by working a job on campus.

If you qualify for financial aid, an award letter will be sent to your home. The letter will indicate the types and amounts of financial aid you will be receiving. Different colleges might offer very different amounts of financial aid. If you feel that your award is insufficient, contact the college’s financial aid office. Likewise, if your family’s income has recently decreased, you should contact all of the offices where you sent your FAFSA paperwork to notify them of this change; sometimes, colleges are willing to work with a family and adjust their financial aid award.

Sample Award Letter⁷:

ABC College Financial Aid Award Letter

John Smith
123 Main Street
Any Town, State, 12345

Award Date: April 10, 2010
SSN: XXX-XX-0000
Estimated Cost: \$30,150.00

Please return this letter by: April 24, 2010

Dear John:

We are pleased to offer you the following financial aid package for the 2010-2011 Award Year. This package is subject to change depending on your enrollment status (full-time or part-time) and other variables such as additional aid and scholarships not shown here. If you receive a scholarship or other form of aid, let us know as soon as possible so we can add it to your award package. ABC College reserves the right to adjust your awards.

Unless there is a change in your award, this is the only letter you will receive. Included with your award letter are an instructions guide and the terms and conditions of your awards. Please read them carefully and contact the Financial Aid Office if you have any questions or would like to discuss your award package. Once you have read the terms and conditions, please check either "Accept" or "Reject" for each award.

| Award | Fall | Spring | Total | Accept | Reject |
|----------------------------|------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------|--------|
| ABC College Grant | \$375.00 | \$375.00 | \$750.00 | | |
| Federal Suppl Ed Opp Grant | \$1,000.00 | \$1,000.00 | \$2,000.00 | | |
| ABC College Scholarship | \$2,500.00 | \$2,500.00 | \$5,000.00 | | |
| Pell Grant | \$1,000.00 | \$1,000.00 | \$2,000.00 | | |
| Federal Perkins Loan | \$1,000.00 | \$1,000.00 | \$2,000.00 | | |
| State Academic Grant | \$575.00 | \$575.00 | \$1,150.00 | | |
| Subsidized Stafford Loan | \$1,750.00 | \$1,750.00 | \$3,500.00 | | |
| Unsubsidized Stafford Loan | \$1,000.00 | \$1,000.00 | \$2,000.00 | | |
| Federal Work-Study | \$1,000.00 | \$1,000.00 | \$2,000.00 | | |
| | | Total Aid: | \$20,400.00 | | |

You must return this award letter, and any other award signature pages as applicable, by the above date or the award will be rescinded. Please keep a copy of all documents for your records.

Student Signature

Date

A tip for parents:

It is important that you speak to your child about the college selection and admission process. Respect your child's wishes, but be honest about your family's financial status. Together, you will need to weigh all of the factors to come to a collective decision.

⁷ <http://www.citizensbank.com/student-loans/financial-aid-package-samples.aspx>

In-state tuition for documented and undocumented New York students

Regardless of their legal status, students living in New York State may be eligible for in-state tuition at SUNY and CUNY schools. In-state tuition can be much lower than out-of-state costs, as this example from SUNY Binghamton's 2012-2013 academic year⁸ shows:

| Annual budget (2012-2013) | NYS Resident | Out-of state Resident |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Tuition | \$5,570 | \$14,718 |
| Fees | \$2,043 | \$2,043 |
| Room and Board | \$12,336* | \$12,336 |
| Cost of Attendance | \$19,949 | \$29,097** |

* Figures reflect an on-campus housing plan with standard double-occupancy room, and average meal plan

** Total cost of attendance for international students is \$33,200 (as of August 2012, this figure is subject to change) (see www2.binghamton.edu/admissions/students/international-students.html for more information)

QUALIFYING FOR IN-STATE TUITION AT SUNY

To qualify for in-state tuition at a SUNY school, a student needs to present a valid Permanent Resident Card as proof of their immigrant status. Generally, based on the Federal Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, students who are unable to present valid documentation of their alien status are prohibited from qualifying for an in-state tuition rate. However, non-resident students—including undocumented students—who have attended a New York state high school for at least two years and graduated from that school, may be eligible for in-state tuition at SUNY schools.

QUALIFYING FOR IN-STATE TUITION AT CUNY

To qualify for in-state tuition at a CUNY school, a student must have: (1) graduated from a New York state high school within five years of applying to CUNY, (2) attended a New York State high school for two or more years, or (3) obtained an General Education Development (GED) credential from an approved New York State program.

⁸ www2.binghamton.edu/admissions/attendance-costs.html

A tip regarding CUNY scholarships

Students who graduated from a New York City high school with a B average or better may qualify for a New York City Council Vallone Academic Scholarship. To be eligible, you must enroll in a CUNY college within one year of graduating from high school and, to keep the scholarship, you must maintain a B average or better in college. Visit cuny.edu/index.html for more information.

The CUNY Honors College offers outstanding undocumented students full-tuition grants, a pre-set allowance (or stipend) and many other benefits. Visit macaulay.cuny.edu/ for more information.

Scholarships for undocumented students

Colleges accept undocumented students and some offer them scholarships. Several businesses and philanthropic organizations also provide scholarships to undocumented students. Scholarship directories are listed below. Contact scholarship providers for applications and details about their requirements and deadlines.

1. **Get Ready for College:**
www.getreadyforcollege.org/pdfGR/ScholarshipsUndocumented.pdf
2. **The Illinois Latino Council of Higher Education (ILACHE):**
www.ilache.com/
3. **An Immigrant Youth Financial Resource Guide:**
www.iyjl.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/IYJL-Immigrant-Youth-Financial-Resource-Guide-.pdf
4. **Latino College Dollars: Scholarships for Latino Students:**
www.latinocollegedollars.org/
5. **LINCTelacu:**
<http://telacu.com/site/en/home/education/applications.html>
6. **The Mexican American Legal and Educational Fund (MALDEF):**
www.maldef.org/assets/pdf/Scholarship_List_2010_2011.pdf
7. **Migrant Scholarships:**
www.migrant.net/migrant/scholarships.htm
8. **The Salvadoran American Leadership and Educational Fund (SALEF):**
www.salef.org/
9. **U.S. Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard Scholarship Guide:**
http://roybal-allard.house.gov/uploadedfiles/2009_paying_for_college-master.pdf
10. **The United States Hispanic Leadership Institute (USHLI):**
www.ushli.org/docs/2012%20Scholarship%20Application.pdf

INTERNET ACCESS:

If you do not have computer or Internet access at home, public libraries offer it free of charge. Many schools may also offer Internet access for school-related activities.

College/Career Readiness Activities and Programs

College Bound Program: The Office of English Language Learners' College Bound Program is a citywide college and career readiness program that is geared toward immigrant and English as a Second Language (ESL) students who attend a New York City public high school. The program holds classes on seven college campuses across all five boroughs to prepare students for college life and their future careers. Instruction is delivered by a staff of certified ESL, English language arts, and technology teachers, as well as guidance counselors. Students have an opportunity to visit several college campuses, where they can talk to staff and learn more about college life and academic programs.

College Fairs: Some high schools may host their own college fairs, where parents and students can speak with admissions representatives from many colleges. Go with a list of questions to ask about campus life, academic programs, financial aid, and admissions requirements.

Some sample questions include:

- (1) What is the graduation rate of students from minority groups and/or from public schools?
- (2) What support mechanisms exist for developing writing skills?
- (3) How much guidance do freshman receive when planning classes and internship opportunities?
- (4) Is there specific academic or social support for first generation college students?

Both parents and students should feel free to ask representatives questions. Questions could be about the representative's school, or about the college experience in general. If you're unsure of when and where there are fairs in your area, check with a school counselor or college advisor.

One fair to know about is the Big Apple College Fair, held in each borough at some point during October. To learn more and to register, visit bigapplecollegefairs.com. For a schedule of New York State college fairs, visit hesc.ny.gov/content.nsf. For the location and hours of the NYC National College Fair, visit vinacacnet.org.

College open house events: Parents and students should contact colleges of interest to ask about open house dates and hours. Both SUNY and CUNY encourage students, families, and school counselors to visit. In addition to open house programs, many campuses offer campus tours, admission interviews, overnight stays, and the opportunity to meet with faculty, staff, and coaches. For more information, visit: www.suny.edu/student/campuses_open_house.cfm.

Other Useful Websites

Career Resources

1. Career Mag, to search for available jobs:
www.careermag.com/
2. Career Forward, to help plan your future career
(this website is intended for students middle school and older):
<http://nroc.careerforward.org/careerforward/mvu/default.htm>
3. U.S. Department of Labor statistics, to learn current salaries of different occupations:
http://stats.bls.gov/emp/ep_table_104.htm
4. Mapping Your Future, to help you plan for your future career
(intended for students middle school and older):
<http://mappingyourfuture.org/>

Scholarship Resources

1. A DOE website for teachers, which includes resources that are provided to teachers regarding how to help their students plan their next steps after high school:
<http://schools.nyc.gov/Teachers/guidance/PostSecondary/default.htm>
2. A scholarship search engine:
www.scholarships.com/
3. The Posse Foundation, a scholarship program offered to “students with extraordinary academic and leadership potential who may be overlooked by traditional college selection processes”:
www.possefoundation.org/
4. HEOP/EOP, a “Higher Education Opportunity Program [that] helps economically and educationally disadvantaged students get the education they deserve”:
<http://heop.org/>
5. American Education Services, to learn more about financial information about loans and planning to pay for college:
www.aessuccess.org/
6. A Financial Aid Award Letter Comparison tool:
www.finaid.org/calculators/awardletter.phtml

College Resources

1. NYC College Line, a comprehensive website that provides information about free and low cost programs, events and resources to help New York City students prepare for and complete college: www.nyccollegeline.org/
2. The New York Urban League's Parents Guide to College, a very comprehensive guide written for parents: www.nyul.org/files/Parents_Guide_to_COLLEGEcpr.pdf
3. The NYC DOE's Office of Postsecondary Readiness College Planning Handbook: http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/78980541-5F7C-4E27-9FF9-84490FCF43ED/0/OPSR_CollegePlanningHandbook_2011.pdf
4. The United Way of New York City's College Readiness Guide, a guide written for NYC students and their families: www.lehman.edu/thebronxinstitute/Media_And_Publications/PDF_Resouces/Useful_Publications/17_United_Way_NYC_CollegeReadinessGuide.pdf
5. The College Board, a central site for college planning which includes registration for ACT/SAT, research on individual colleges, information on financial aid, and scholarship searches: www.collegeboard.org/
6. The Common Application, a site where you can download and submit a college application form that is accepted by hundreds of colleges across the country: www.commonapp.org
7. ACT, information about the ACT (an exam sometimes required for college entry): <http://act.org/>
8. FAFSA, the official website of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid: www.fafsa.ed.gov/
9. FinAid!, an explanatory website exploring different types of financial aid: www.finaid.org/
10. My College Guide, information about what to do once a student is enrolled in college: <http://mycollegeguide.org/>
11. Envisage International Corporation's International Student Guide, information about attending college abroad: www.internationalstudent.com/index.html
12. Peterson's Real Guide to Colleges and Universities, college and graduate school planning: www.petersons.com/
13. U.S. News and World Report's college rankings, including a comparison of colleges across the nation: www.usnews.com/rankings
14. The State University of New York (SUNY): www.suny.edu/
15. The City University of New York (CUNY): www.cuny.edu/

Glossary and Terms to Know



ACT: An exam offered nationally, used by colleges as a tool to evaluate students' applications. In New York, the ACT is offered less often than the SAT, but colleges generally accept both. Not all colleges require the ACT or SAT. For example, SUNY schools require either the ACT or SAT, but CUNY schools only require them for their highly-competitive four-year programs.

Application fee: The fee colleges charge to review students' applications for admission. Typical fees range from \$20 to \$100. Depending on household income and family size, students may be eligible for fee waivers, which means they don't have to pay the required fees (see Fee Waiver).

Cost of attendance (COA): The total cost of attending college for one year, including tuition, room and board, fees, books, travel, and personal expenses. Each college must calculate a COA for each student. Students are allowed to receive a total combination of financial aid sources up to the amount of their COAs.

The College Scholarship Service Profile (CSS Profile): A type of financial aid application required by some schools.

Deposit: The payment that you must submit to a college to hold your place as a student and/or for housing once you have been accepted. Deposits are usually non-refundable, but will be subtracted from your bill when you enroll.

Expected Family Contribution (EFC): The amount your family is expected to contribute to a student's college education.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA): Students must complete this form (available at www.fafsa.ed.gov) before each year of college to be considered for almost any kind of financial aid.

Fee waiver: An exemption from having to pay a fee, granted on the basis of household income and size. Separate fee waivers are available for several college application-related fees, such as the college application fee itself, SAT registration, ACT registration, and CSS Profile. You may need to show proof of income in order to qualify for a waiver.

Official transcript: The transcript, which includes all of a student’s grades and Regents exam scores, is sent directly from the high school to the colleges where a student is applying. To indicate the transcript has not been altered it is sometimes stamped or sealed with a faculty or staff person’s signature across the closed envelope flap. Colleges generally require students to submit an official transcript, as opposed to a student’s copy of the transcript, to ensure the document’s authenticity.

Proprietary College: A for-profit private college, run by an individual or company. Most proprietary colleges focus on specific job training in either associate or bachelor’s degree programs. Few, if any, proprietary colleges have student housing.

Room and board: “Room” refers to dormitory (dorm) housing on campus; “board” refers to a pre-paid meal plan to eat in a school’s cafeterias.

SAT reasoning test (SAT): A national exam, offered by the College Board, and used by colleges to evaluate students’ applications. Community colleges may not require the SAT.

SAT II subject tests: The college admissions tests that are part of the College Board SAT program (see above). Each test is an hour long with multiple-choice questions on one academic subject area; for example biology, Spanish, or American history. Only a small number of colleges require students to take SAT II Subject Tests as part of the college application. Visit *collegeboard.org* for more information.

Supplemental materials: The documents or other material that students include with their college applications that are either required or suggested by a specific college. Some examples are letters from coaches, employers, or mentors; essays; or a high school term paper.

The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL): This test measures a student’s ability to communicate in English. If English is not an applicant’s primary or first language, and the student immigrated to the United States within the last four years, he or she may need to take this test to demonstrate readiness for college instruction in English.



Department of Education

To access the online version of this handbook, and to learn more about The New York City Department of Education's Office of English Language Learners, please visit:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/ELL/default.htm>