

AGORA CYBER CHARTER SCHOOL
COLLEGE & CAREER PLANNING GUIDE
2024-2025



AGORA CYBER CHARTER SCHOOL
HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELING DEPARTMENT



Your time has come! You are about to embark on the most important and exciting years of your high school career. You will be faced with many challenges and decisions this year as you finalize your post-secondary plans. Remember to take advantage of the help we can provide you in the Counseling Department. This packet contains a great deal of very important information. Please read it and refer to it often throughout the year.

~Your Agora School Counselors

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ACADEMIC CONSIDERATIONS

- **GRADE LEVEL DETERMINATION**

Grade level will be determined based on the number of EARNED credits:

- 9th Grade – 0 to 4.99
- 10th Grade – 5 to 10.99
- 11th Grade – 11 to 15.99
- 12th Grade – 16 +

Agora requires official documentation and records of all credits previously completed at other school districts for students to be eligible to graduate.

A minimum of 22 credits must be earned prior to graduation to participate in graduation ceremonies. College bound students should earn 25-27 credits to demonstrate college readiness.

- **CREDITS FOR GRADUATION**

Students must earn a minimum of 22 credits in the following content areas that are aligned to the Pennsylvania Academic Standards. Full year courses are worth 1 credit; semester courses are worth 0.5 credits.

Our course description book is updated annually and available on the high school website and at this link:

<https://tinyurl.com/Agora24-25>

Content	Credits Required
English	4
Mathematics	3
History/Social Sciences	3
Science	3
Humanities/ World Languages	2
Electives	5
Physical Education	1.5
Health	0.5
TOTAL	22

AGORA CYBER CHARTER SCHOOL PATHWAYS TO GRADUATION

Based on Act 158 of 2018

Beginning with the class of 2023, students must meet statewide graduation requirements in one of five pathways:



Pathway 1:

KEYSTONE PROFICIENCY

- Proficient or Advanced Keystone score in Algebra 1, Biology, and Literature



Pathway 2:

KEYSTONE COMPOSITE

- At least 1 Keystone score is proficient or Advanced and no score is Below Basic
- Composite Keystone Score is at least **4452**



Pathway 3:

KEYSTONE 2 - SCORE COMPOSITE

- Earned **one non-numeric PROFICIENT** pursuant to Act 136 of 2020 **AND**
- Earned **two numeric scores** in Keystone Exams associated with academic content other than the content area that was awarded a non-numeric Proficient
- At least one of the two scores must be Proficient or Advanced
- Neither score may be Below Basic
- The composite of two scores must be **2939** or higher

NOTE: When utilizing a 2 score composite, the student must have also successfully completed locally established, grade based requirements for each Keystone content area in which the student earned a score of basic.



Pathway 6:

IEP

- A student with a disability who is unable to satisfy pathway requirements but who satisfactorily completes a special education program is granted a diploma under Title 22 §4.24



Pathway 4:

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1 Piece of Evidence

- Attainment of one alternative assessment score or better:
 - ACT (21), ASVAB AFQT (31), PSAT/NBSQT (970), SAT (1010)
- Attainment of 3 or better on AP Exam(s) related to each Keystone content area in which less than Proficient
- Successful completion of dual enrollment courses(s) related to each Keystone content area in which less than Proficient
- Successful completion of a pre-apprenticeship program
- Acceptance into four year Institution of Higher Education (IHE) for college-level coursework



Pathway 5:

EVIDENCE BASED

3 Pieces of Evidence Consistent with Student's Goals

ONE or more of these four bulleted items:

- Attainment of 3 or better on any AP Exam
- Successful completion of any dual enrollment or postsecondary course
- Industry-recognized credentialization
- Acceptance into an other-than-four year Institution of Higher Education (IHE) for college-level coursework

AND, no more than TWO of the following

- Attainment of Proficient or Advanced on any Keystone Exam
- Successful completion of a service-learning project
- Letter guaranteeing full-time employment or military enlistment
- Completion of an internship, externship, or cooperative education program
- Compliance with NCAA Division II academic requirements

For Pathways 3, 4, and 5, in addition to the bulleted requirements, students must obtain a grade of 60% or greater in the course corresponding to the Keystone Exam in which they were less than Proficient.

- **LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT**

- Although Agora does not require students to complete a world language prior to graduation, many colleges and universities recommend two years of a language prior to high school graduation (that's two years consecutively of the same language). Many students choose to take a third year of a language during their junior year. Keep in mind that many colleges require students to take a language in college as part of their elective requirements.

- **DUAL ENROLLMENT**

- Dual Enrollment allows students to take college classes while still enrolled in high school. These classes count for both high school and college credit. Students are eligible for this program in their junior and/or senior years and must have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher with no attendance issues. Agora currently partners with the following institutions: Indiana University of PA, Penn West University, Point Park University, Lackawanna College, Harrisburg County Community College, Montgomery County Community College and Gratz College.
 - For additional information, students should contact Mrs. Kristin Thatcher, College & Career Readiness Coordinator at kthatcher@agora.org or their School Counselor
- Agora does not currently partner with any career and technical schools. If you would like to pursue Vo-technical or supplemental programs you would need to return to your home school district. Students enrolled at Agora must be full-time Agora students.

- **NCAA ELIGIBILITY**

- Agora has been an NCAA-approved school since the 2016-2017 school year. Please visit the [NCAA Eligibility Center](#) (Agora's CEEB code is 393397).

- **EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND SPORTS TEAM ELIGIBILITY**

Pennsylvania Public School Code (24 P.S. § 17-1719-A- 14) requires that students be permitted to participate in extracurricular activities offered by their home school district, provided that they are not offered by Agora. Students must comply with policies and meet the specific eligibility criteria set forth by their home school district. Student athletes must also satisfy eligibility requirements established by the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association. Student members of a sports team with their home school district must continue to meet grade requirements to be part of the team. Coaches needing academic information from Agora must make a request in writing to the Head of School. Whenever possible, Agora will assist students and parents to secure the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities.

JUNIOR CHECKLIST

AUGUST/ START OF COHORT

- ☐ Attend and complete Orientation at the high school.
- ☐ Set academic goals.
- ☐ Review schedule and make sure you are taking the classes you need to graduate and that match with your future goals.
- ☐ Send a message to your teachers and introduce yourself.

YEARLONG TASKS

- ☐ Check and monitor grades for academic progress
- ☐ Attend Agora workshops and career/college events

SEPTEMBER

- ☐ Register with your local district's guidance department to take the PSAT.
- ☐ Study for the PSAT: complete practice tests at www.collegeboard.org.
- ☐ Join extracurricular activities/clubs to get involved in to boost your resume and/or college applications. Consider leadership roles in these activities.
- ☐ Use a planner to keep track of assignments, test dates, and extracurricular activities.

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER

- ☐ Remember that junior year grades are very important in college admissions. If you are having trouble with your schoolwork, ask for help!
- ☐ Attend information sessions with college/career representatives visiting Agora.
- ☐ Take the PSAT at your local school district (October).
- ☐ Register for your AP Exams (if applicable).
- ☐ Create a **College Board** account to explore careers and colleges www.collegeboard.org

DECEMBER

- ☐ Receive the results of your PSAT. Read your score report and consult your counselor to determine how you might improve on future standardized tests.
- ☐ 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 summer or senior year offers you opportunities to test again but be aware of deadlines for college applications. www.collegeboard.org or www.actstudent.org
- ☐ Begin identifying colleges that may be a good fit for you. Make a preliminary list of colleges that you would like to investigate further.
- ☐ Continue to strengthen standardized testing skills by utilizing Khan Academy. <https://www.khanacademy.org/>

JANUARY

- ☐ Prepare for semester 1 finals. Meet with teachers and attend help sessions if necessary.
- ☐ Check your schedule for semester 2 courses. Review that you are scheduled for the correct courses.
- ☐ Memorize your Social Security number (required on most college applications).
- ☐ Enroll in an SAT or ACT Prep course or utilize free online test prep materials.

JUNIOR CHECKLIST (CONTINUED)

FEBRUARY/MARCH/APRIL

- ☐ Prepare to participate in course selection process for 12th grade. Meet with your counselor to discuss your choices for next year as well as post-secondary plans.
- ☐ Consider scheduling college visits/open houses. Virtual tours are a great option too!
- ☐ Attend Agora's Community College Week and go to at least two presentations of schools in your area.
- ☐ Begin to prepare for May Advanced Placement (AP) Exams (if applicable).
- ☐ Research summer enrichment opportunities. Consider pursuing a summer program that gives you a taste of the college experience, applying for an internship, working, or volunteering.
- ☐ Sign up for the May or June SAT (www.collegeboard.org) or ACT (www.actstudent.org).

MAY/JUNE

- ☐ Take the SAT or ACT.
- ☐ Take AP Exams (if applicable).
- ☐ Take Keystone Exams (if applicable).
- ☐ Ask your 11th grade teachers with whom you have good relationships to write college recommendation letters on your behalf. Ask your school counselor for a recommendation if you have a good relationship with him or her. (See Appendix for form)
- ☐ Prepare for Semester 2 finals. Remember, your **final** grades go on your transcript, so make sure you pass all your classes and meet all deadlines.
- ☐ If you do not pass a class, contact your school counselor to review your options.

JULY/ AUGUST

- ☐ Continue to refine your list of college choices.
- ☐ Continue to research majors and possible career choices.
- ☐ Research college essay prompts on Common Application and/or college web pages. Begin preparing for the actual college application process. Start to draft your college application essays.
- ☐ Compile your resume, writing samples, or other evidence of talents for college admissions or scholarship applications.
- ☐ Study for the ACT or SAT if you plan to retake any tests senior year.
- ☐ Begin researching scholarship opportunities (www.collegeboard.org, www.fastweb.com, and www.scholarships.com are a few places to start).
- ☐ Complete the NCAA Initial-Eligibility Clearinghouse form if you hope to play Division I or II sports.
- ☐ Hit the road and visit colleges and universities with your parent or guardian. Make sure to ask questions and involve your family in the process!
- ☐ **Pro tip!** Create a separate email account to use for all college related information/applications/accounts and SAT & ACT accounts. Make sure that the email account name is **professional!** DO NOT use your Agora student email account as some information may be blocked and you will need access to these college accounts after you graduate from Agora.

SENIOR CHECKLIST

AUGUST/ START OF COHORT

- ☐ Attend and complete Orientation at the high school
- ☐ Send a message to your teachers and introduce yourself.
- ☐ Check your schedule for accuracy. Verify you are in the proper classes to fulfill graduation requirements.
- ☐ Review your career and educational goals.
- ☐ Join any extracurricular activities that are of interest to you.

YEARLONG TASKS

- ☐ Check and monitor grades for academic progress
- ☐ Attend Agora workshops and career/college events

SEPTEMBER

- ☐ Check due dates for college and scholarship applications.
- ☐ Write or update your resume, sample essay, and list of references.
- ☐ Ask for letters of recommendation from teachers, school counselors, etc. if you did not do this during junior year. (See Appendix for form)
- ☐ Continue visiting college fairs and speaking to college representatives.
- ☐ Register for the SAT (www.collegeboard.org) or ACT (www.actstudent.org) if you are planning on retaking the exam (or haven't taken the exam yet).
- ☐ Apply for PIN number for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) so that you are ready to fill it out when it becomes available on October 1st (www.fafsa.ed.gov)

OCTOBER

- ☐ Meet with your counselor to review college/career plans and graduation status.
- ☐ Register for your AP Exams.
- ☐ Take or retake the SAT or ACT (if needed).
- ☐ Arrange for your SAT or ACT scores to be sent to colleges. Scores must be sent directly from SAT or ACT.
- ☐ Work on completing college applications, collecting all items required for admission, letters of recommendation, personal statements, etc.
- ☐ 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.
- ☐ Request a transcript from Agora Records (see Page 16) if requested by a college.

NOVEMBER

- ☐ Begin looking into possible sources of scholarship money (www.collegeboard.org, www.fastweb.com, and www.scholarships.com are a few places to start).
- ☐ Check with colleges to see if they require other financial aid forms in addition to the FAFSA, such as the CSS Profile.
- ☐ Continue preparing your college applications and make sure they are received before the deadline.
- ☐ Some colleges do have November deadlines, so be sure to submit those applications first.
- ☐ Attend 12th Grade Financial Aid Workshop and begin the FAFSA.
- ☐ Gather income tax information. You will need it to apply for financial aid.

DECEMBER

- ☐ Continue working hard in your courses. Don't lose motivation. Reach out to your teachers if you are struggling or have questions.
- ☐ Continue to check your grades and monitor your progress.
- ☐ Continue investigating scholarships and apply for scholarship opportunities by the deadlines.
- ☐ Finish visiting colleges and schedule interviews where appropriate.

SENIOR CHECKLIST (CONTINUED)

JANUARY

- ☐ Prepare for semester 1 finals. Meet with teachers and attend help sessions if necessary.
- ☐ Check schedule for semester 2 courses. Review your schedule to make sure you are in the correct courses.
- ☐ Submit your completed FAFSA to be processed as soon as possible.
- ☐ Pay attention to any scholarship announcements and apply if you qualify.

FEBRUARY

- ☐ Send any completed college applications to colleges whose deadlines have not yet passed.
- ☐ Request midyear transcripts (see Page 16) to be sent to the colleges to which you have applied, if required.
- ☐ Begin to think about which college you will attend if accepted. Rank your choices.

MARCH/APRIL

- ☐ Begin to prepare for AP Exams (if applicable).
- ☐ Look for college acceptance and financial aid letters in the mail (or on-line).
- ☐ Meet with your counselor, if needed, to discuss options.
- ☐ Make your final decision.
- ☐ Notify your college of choice of your acceptance and send the required deposit by the deadline.
- ☐ Watch for important deadlines regarding housing, financial aid, registration, etc.

MAY/JUNE

- ☐ Take AP Exams (if applicable).
- ☐ Prepare for Semester 2 finals. Remember, your final grades go on your transcript, so make sure you pass all your classes and meet all deadlines. If you do not pass a course, it could keep you from graduating and affect your college decision.
- ☐ Be sure to check that you have not lost credits in any classes.
- ☐ Attend Agora's Graduation ceremony and celebrate! Congratulations!
- ☐ Apply for summer jobs to save money for college.
- ☐ Submit a final official transcript (see Page 16) to the college or university you have selected.

Check the Counseling website frequently for events and announcements!

<https://agora.org/high-school-guidance/>

~You will need to be logged into ClassLink to view the information~



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. Check each college's admissions profile and data (GPA, academic requirements, test scores, etc.) that is available on their websites. Gathering this information early will allow you to determine the schools that are a good match for you as well as to form meaningful questions that will impress college admissions counselors during visits, college fairs and interviews.

COLLEGE VISITS

- Attend college events hosted by Agora. Be on the lookout for virtual college visits in your email and on the Agora Website.
- We strongly recommend visiting the college(s) to which you are applying. You can contact the college admissions office directly or look online for prescheduled open house events and tours.
- To get 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.

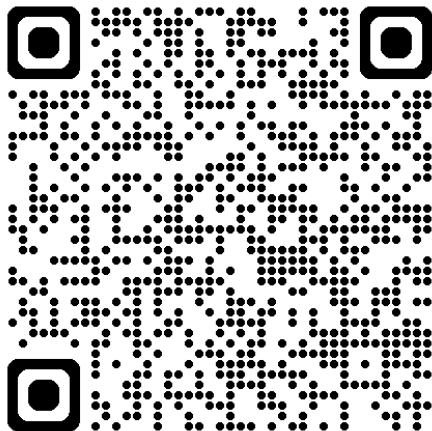
- **Make connections:** talk to current students. Ask the students nearby what they like best, or why they chose this college and what their classes are like. Some colleges even have programs where prospective students are allowed to spend the night in a dorm with a current student.
- **Take notes (and pictures!):** 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)
- A great resource to bring along on your college visits is the Campus Visit Score Card. Using the QR code below, be sure to print a copy to keep track of the schools you have visited:
 - [Campus Visit Scorecard](#)



COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMS



Please refer to the college application requirements regarding standardized test score requirements for the colleges you are considering. The student is responsible for contacting the appropriate testing agency and having the scores sent. There are two common standardized tests which colleges may require as part of the application. They are the **SAT and ACT**. 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 High School Counseling Department 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 email your counselor for specific information regarding the processes well in advance of the test date.

A few things to note:

- Most colleges have adopted a **test-optional policy**. Check the colleges' website to review their requirements. If you choose not to submit scores, know that your high school transcript and course rigor will be considered as the most important part of your application.
- It is often wise to take the SAT or ACT regardless, as these are at times required for scholarships. Strong scores can help strengthen your application.
- Community Colleges, trade schools, and technical schools usually do not require SAT's or ACT's but please check with the schools in which you are applying.
- Cost: SAT - \$60.00; ACT - \$68.00; ACT with Optional Writing: \$93.00
- When you register, select a date/location that is most convenient for you.
- **Agora's CEEB School Code is 393397 and should be entered during online SAT/ACT registration.**

Be on the lookout for Agora's recorded SAT/ACT Presentation that is emailed to all Juniors and Seniors in the Fall.



Not sure which test is best for you? Compare the two:

[Digital SAT vs ACT: Which Should You Take? \(prepscholar.com\)](https://prepscholar.com/digital-sat-vs-act-which-should-you-take/)

Features	SAT (Digital)	ACT (Paper/Pencil)
Testing Time	2 hours 14 minutes	2 hours 55 minutes +40-minute optional essay
Number of questions	98	215
Time per question	1 minute, 11 seconds	45 seconds
Score range	Composite 400-1600	Composite 1-36
Test Components	Reading and Writing Module 1 Reading and Writing Module 2 27 questions per Module Math Module 1 Math Module 2 44 questions per Module	English – 75 questions Math- 60 questions Reading- 40 questions Science- 40 questions Writing (optional essay)
Science section	No	Yes, general (introductory) knowledge of Biology, Chemistry, Earth/Space, and Physics
Score Range	400-1600	1-36
Essay	None	Optional
Calculator use	Allowed (built in calculator and tools)	Allowed
Guessing penalty	No	No
Biggest challenge	Deep content knowledge	Time crunch

If you are still not sure, you can take a practice test for each (on the College Board and ACT websites). This will give you a good idea of how you will perform on these exams.

Please take note of the registration deadlines below:

Note that late deadlines will result in additional fees

ACT www.actstudent.org

SAT www.collegeboard.org

2024-2025

ACT and SAT Test Dates

Agora School Code: **393397**



ACT www.actstudent.org		SAT www.sat.org	
TEST DATE	REGISTRATION DEADLINE	TEST DATE (all digital)	REGISTRATION DEADLINE
September 14, 2024	August 9, 2024	August 24, 2024	August 9, 2024
October 26, 2024	September 20, 2024	October 5, 2024	September 20, 2024
December 14, 2024	November 8, 2024	November 2, 2024	October 18, 2024
February 8, 2025	January 3, 2025	December 7, 2024	November 22, 2024
April 5, 2025	February 28, 2025	March 8, 2025	February 21, 2025
June 14, 2025	May 9, 2025	May 3, 2025	April 18, 2025
July 12, 2025	June 6, 2025	June 7, 2025	May 22, 2025

*Print your **registration ticket** when you register – this must be brought with you on exam day. You will also need a **photo ID** to enter the test (can be driver's license, state ID, passport, school ID, work ID, etc.). If you do not have a photo ID, please visit the DMV to obtain a state ID (cost is \$41.50) - [DMV Photo ID](#)*

ADMISSIONS

- Know the admissions requirements of your top schools. This information can be found on the individual college's website and at CollegeBoard.org
 - Does your GPA match up?
 - Do you have enough high school credits and are they in the right subject areas?
 - For example: have you taken 2 years of a language and four years of math?
 - What are the requirements of the specific degree programs you are applying to?
- Find out if the college requires official SAT or ACT scores.
 - If it does, that means you must request the report to come directly from ETS or ACT to the college.

APPLYING

- Colleges typically use one of three types of applications:
 - Their own internal application, via their website
 - Common App
 - Coalition Application

The Common App and Coalition Application both allow students to apply to multiple colleges through one platform. This will save students from having to enter in the same information multiple times (demographics, parent information, list of activities, courses, and grades, etc.). Most colleges require supplemental information within these applications, but it is all contained on the same dashboard. The Common App and Coalition Application are free to use, but most colleges have an application fee, which students will have to pay prior to submission.

Most colleges accept the Common App, as it is most widely used. But some accept both the Common App and/or the Coalition Application. It does not matter which application you use. The Admissions Offices will receive the application through all the methods they outline on their website.

- Make sure you answer all the questions on the application. Do not leave anything blank. Agora Cyber School info is below:

AGORA CYBER CHARTER SCHOOL
1018 W. 8th Avenue
King of Prussia, PA 19406
844-402-4672

- Check to see if teacher and/or school counselor recommendation letters are required. Some colleges do not require them, or they may be optional.

- **To request your transcript from Agora**, you must:
 - Make the request in writing by EMAILING transcripts@agora.org
 - **Please use your personal email to make a request** as the student “agoracyber.net” domain can be blocked.
 - Include your name, student ID#, date of birth, current grade level, and the name and address of the school to which you are requesting your transcript be sent, also include the fax number if applicable.
 - Allow 10 working days for the Transcript Department to process your request.
 - Last minute requests may not get out and a missed deadline is a missed opportunity.
 - Allow the colleges three weeks to process all parts of the application once each piece is received.
- College Admissions Essay:
 - All essays should be typed into a separate document first. You do not want to type your draft directly into the application and then accidentally hit submit. This happens!! Your essay is extremely important. Before submitting an essay, have it critiqued by your English teacher and/or a trusted adult.
 - Once you have finalized your essay, you can then copy/paste it into the application prior to submitting.
 - Finally, and most importantly, **know the deadline dates**. Or to be more accurate, you should know the *priority deadline date*.
 - Don't delay in submitting your applications. The best bet is to get all applications in by the end of *Winter break*.
- Self-Reported Academic Record (SRAR):
 - Some colleges require the SRAR, which students complete online in the SSAR system. Students enter each high school course, when taken, credit value/earned, and grades. It allows colleges to make quicker admission decisions without having to wait for the official high school transcript. If admitted, an official high school transcript will still be required before the college's deadline. See above for how to request an official transcript.
 - Helpful SRAR videos:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCeMbsuURI8cOT7mf2_An6CQ

STAY ORGANIZED WITH THIS COLLEGE APPLICATION CHECKLIST FROM COLLEGE BOARD:

- [College Application Checklist](#)

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 at [Federal Student Aid](#) and [PA State Grant Program](#)

- **Understand the different types of Financial Aid:** Although financial aid is sometimes referred to as an award, don't assume that all financial aid is free money. Financial aid refers to both the money you don't have to pay back (grants and scholarships) and the money you do (student loans)
- **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.
- **Meet the deadlines!** It is not exactly first come, first served in the aid office, but nearly every college has a limited aid budget, and when the dollars run out, they stop giving aid. Late applications stand a good chance of showing up when there is no money left. But here's the good news: There are billions and billions of dollars out there ready to go to millions and millions of college students. If you become an educated aid consumer and complete the forms accurately and on time, there is a good chance that you will receive enough aid to make it possible to attend that dream school.
- **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. Tax return information is used from two years prior ("*prior-prior*"). So, for students enrolling in college in 2025, you would use your family's 2023 tax information.
- **Attend the virtual financial aid presentation at Agora**, typically held each November. Learning about the financial aid process as early as possible is very helpful.

COMMON COLLEGE TERMINOLOGY

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 college 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 www.commonapp.org

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
<http://www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org/>

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 (also called Restrictive Early Action): 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 school. Students should only use this option if they are certain they will attend, if admitted (regardless of the financial aid package)

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

Superscore: Many schools will ask you to list the score and test date of your best individual test scores—such as your best ACT English, best Math, best Reading, and best Science scores—and then calculate a “super composite” or superscore based on these scores

Supplements: Schools may require, in addition to an electronic application, supplementary materials- Teacher Recommendation, 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 an acceptance later


OTHER EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER OPTIONS

Community College is a popular, cheaper alternative to going directly to a 4-year college. SAT/ACT test scores are not required; instead, there is a placement test given by each school to determine which classes are best for you. Most community colleges offer non-degree certificate programs, associate degree programs, and gen ed college courses that can be transferred to 4-year colleges where they have transfer agreements.

Think College provides students with intellectual and developmental disabilities with resources, assistance and training opportunities to attend college. Pennsylvania has 18 colleges with programs. <https://thinkcollege.net/college-search>

Trade/Technical Schools are a great option if you prefer hands-on training to obtain skills to enter a trade. Trade and technical schools offer certification programs and degree options in as little as 6 months depending on the program. The demand is growing for skilled tradespeople so companies will be looking for these graduates!

An **Apprenticeship** is learning a trade by working under the guidance of skilled workers of that trade. It is on-the-job training. You earn while you learn and are paid a wage from the first day you become a working apprentice. As an apprentice your wages will start at about 50% of the skilled worker's rate of pay and will increase periodically until you reach the full skilled wage. It usually takes four to five years to complete an apprenticeship program, but the training costs you nothing and you are earning a paycheck the entire time!

Link to Apprenticeship & Internship Opportunities:  [Making the career connection job.internship.apprenticeship doc.xlsx](#)

Military: Do you have a desire to serve and protect our country? Are you interested in training in a highly structured, physical environment? You may be interested in speaking with a U.S. military recruiter.

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!

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.

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

Agora US Military Resource: [Agora US Military Resource](#)



Workforce: If you have decided that you would like to go directly into the workforce without any additional training, you can use the links below to explore careers and/or look for job openings in your area.

- Check the Guidance website and email for career fairs and internship opportunities that are available for students
- Utilize Smart Futures for career exploration (Via ClassLink)
- Check with your school counselor for job application resources/assistance

GAP Year: If you have the desire and ability to take a year off school before entering postsecondary training or the workforce, you may want to consider an organized gap year program. Do not just sit at home when you could be building your skills or traveling!

Here are examples of meaningful Gap Year experiences to consider: [Gap Year Activities](#)

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Smart Futures: Log in through Class Link

Agora Counselor Website: ARC through Class Link – Departments – Guidance

Building a Strong High School 4-Year Plan- [Creating Your 4-Year High School Plan | Template Included \(foundationlearninggroup.com\)](#)

10 ideas to get ready for college in 9th/10th grade- <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-in/applying-101/how-to-start-getting-ready-for-college-in-9th-and-10th-grade>

My Next Move- <http://www.mynextmove.org/>

Whether you're looking to go directly into the workforce or looking at careers that require college, this is another great site that can help you explore what career you would like to do once you graduate high school. The site also discusses knowledge, skills, and personalities that are typically found in individuals that enjoy the different careers

Education Planner - www.educationplanner.org

A great site that provides career and college planning tools along with providing information that helps students (and parents 😊) with decisions for after high school. The site is a public service of the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) and its student loan servicing operations, FedLoan Servicing and American Education Services (AES)

Undecided on a college major?- [How to Decide on a College Major](#)

College Board – <https://www.collegeboard.org>

College Board's site has a lot of great tools and preparation information for college.

- <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search> helps to match students with schools.

College Vine - <https://www.collegevine.com/>

Explore colleges, understand your chances for admission, and get guidance on the college admission process. A link to College Vine is available on ClassLink.

Sara Harberson America's College Counselor – Sara is a nationally recognized authority on elite college admissions, providing lots of resources for students on social media

[Sara Harberson | America's College Admissions Counselor](#)

Petersons – <http://www.petersons.com>

At Peterson's site, there is a lot of information on everything from scholarships to financial aid

Mapping Your Future – <http://www.mappingyourfuture.org/>

This site assists with career exploration and scholarships

Pennsylvania CareerZone – <http://www.pacareerzone.org>

PA CareerZone features career assessments, an occupation search, career exploration, information about budgeting money, career cluster videos, and more career resources

O-Net Online – www.onetonline.org

This site allows for students to search careers based on job different job information like wages, education level, job expectations, and availability after graduation

US Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics – <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/>

This link is for the Occupational Outlook Handbook to research career overviews that provides information on hundreds of occupations

Research jobs: [PA Career Link](#)

Interview Tips from the US Department of Labor: [Interview Tips](#)

FinAid! – The SmartStudent Guide to Financial Aid – www.finaid.org or www.fafsa.org

This site provides a lot of information on different financial aid available and can help students develop a financial aid package for college

Fast Web – College, Scholarships, and Financial Aid Search Site - www.Fastweb.com

Student Scholarships Newsletter: Sign up to receive a weekly scholarship newsletter
[Scholarship Newsletter \(studentscholarships.org\)](http://studentscholarships.org)

PHEAA – 5 Steps to Financial Aid - <https://www.pheaa.org/college-planning/five-steps/index.shtml#step1>

Making the Career & College Playbook- Resources provided by Agora's College & Career Readiness Coordinator [Making the Career & College Playbook](#)

Agora Cyber Charter School
Student Profile for Letters of Recommendation

Student Name:

Phone Number:

Please complete the questions and statements below to help your counselor write a letter of recommendation so that it truly reflects your best qualities and accomplishments.

- 1) My best qualities are:
- 2) My family and friends would describe me as:
- 3) In twenty-five words or less, describe the strengths of your personality and character. Please provide specific examples if possible.
- 4) My most important accomplishment (in or out of school) and why I am proud of this:
- 5) My most meaningful extra-curricular activity is, and why?
- 6) What special commitment or leadership roles have you undertaken during high school? (Can be in or out of school)
- 7) Something interesting or important that most teachers or students may not know about me:
- 8) Any obstacles, events or hardships that affected me in high school:
- 9) Is your high school record an accurate measure of your ability and potential?
If not, then were there extenuating circumstances that interfered with school?
- 10) A class or academic experience (paper, project, etc.) that really challenged me and why:
- 11) How I have spent my summers during high school:
- 12) Do you work during the school year? If so, how many hours and what are your responsibilities?

13) My career goals or possible areas of interest/college major are, and why (what influenced this decision)?

14) Please describe your decision to attend an online school(cyber) as opposed to attending a brick and mortar.

15) Please list the colleges you are applying to in order of first – last choice:

16) What else would you want your counselor to share with an admission counselor?