CEHS
School Counseling

Grade 12
Parent Handbook

Class of 2026
September, 2025

HOW TO CONTACT US

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SOCIAL WORKERS:
Danielle Grimes, LCSW
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ADMINISTRATION:
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Academics

Senior year academics are important for both college preparation and college admission. It's vital for seniors to stay engaged and do their best work in their classes. Senior grades are equally important in the college admissions process. Colleges will request 1st Quarter grades along with semester and final transcripts. 1st Quarter grades will be recorded in early November and students will be notified in advance.

Government classes are highly focused on contemporary issues. Seniors should be following the news. They will be preparing to vote and will write a public policy analysis that will include a letter to Congress advocating a particular point of view.

Seniors are enrolled in one of five English courses, and the content varies depending on the course's focus. Common among all senior English classes are the consistent practice crafting sophisticated pieces of writing, the examination of appropriately challenging texts, and a focus on honing speaking and listening skills.

In science courses, seniors will be working independently toward long term projects as well as class assignments. They'll be developing responsibility in getting their work in on their own.

Senior Transition Project (STP) will run for two weeks in May. Seniors will submit their proposal in January.

CEHS Transcript

Your student can pick up a copy of their 6-semester CEHS transcript from the School Counseling office on or after September 11th. Please review it with them carefully. Colleges expect seniors to take all senior classes listed on their transcripts. Any changes made to senior schedules after a student submits a college application will need to be reported to the college. Please note that all college acceptances are conditional upon successful completion of the full school year.

DAILY SCHEDULE

	MAROON DAY	GOLD DAY
7:55- 9:10	1	5
9:10- 9:20	Morning Break	
9:20- 10:35	2	6
10:35- 11:10 11:15- 12:30	Lunch A 3	Lunch A 7
OR	OR	OR
10:40- 11:55 11:55- 12:30	3 Lunch B	7 Lunch B
12:35- 1:00	Achievement Period/ Advisory	
1:05- 2:20	4	8
	Lunch A — Floors 1 & 3	Lunch B — Floor 2 & Math

EARLY RELEASE SCHEDULE		
	MAROON DAY	GOLD DAY
7:55- 8:45	1	5
8:45-8:55	Morning Break	
8:55- 9:40	2	6
9:45- 10:30	3	7
10:35- 11:20	4	8

Upcoming College Fairs:

NEACAC College Fair
September 17th, 9am-11am
University of New England, Biddeford Campus
Harold Alfond Forum
100 Colleges attending

Greely High School Postsecondary Fair
September 18th, 6-8pm
Greely High School Gymnasium
303 Main Street, Cumberland

Consider Canada College Tour
September 17th, 6:30-8:00pm
Scarborough High School
11 Canadian Colleges and Universities attending so far:

- Mount Allison University
- Acadia University
- Cape Breton University
- Dalhousie University
- University of New Brunswick
- Mount Saint Vincent University
- University of Prince Edward Island
- Bishop's University
- Saint Mary's University
- St. Thomas University
- University of Guelph

Military Exploration Day:

In early November, representatives from each branch of the military will be visiting CEHS to talk to students who are interested in learning more. Representatives will be outside the Cafeteria during each lunch period that day. More information will be provided in the weeks prior to this event.

College Admissions Rep Visits:

Over 120 college admissions representatives visit CEHS in the fall to provide students with additional information about their school. Seniors can meet with college reps in the School Counseling Office if they are free at the time or if they have a pass with teacher permission. Some colleges who are unable to travel to our area may offer "virtual" visits as well.

Students can access the list/schedule of these visits and sign up through their SCOIR accounts. While these visits are for students only, parents can also view the list/schedule on the School Counseling website. Please encourage your senior to check this list regularly as colleges will be scheduling visits on an ongoing basis.

All seniors are *strongly* encouraged to attend as many of these visits as possible. These visits can be a great way for students to learn about colleges they are unfamiliar with or that they are unable to visit in person. While they are informational only, the representative coming to our school is often the person who will be reading their application so it's a great opportunity for students to introduce themselves. For some schools, attending a rep visit is also a way of "demonstrating interest" in the college/university.

College Athletic Eligibility:

If your student is interested in playing Division I or Division II college athletics, they must register with the NCAA Clearinghouse. Division III information can be found on individual college websites. To register with the NCAA, go to ncaa.org, then click the link to NCAA Eligibility website.

SCOIR:

SCOIR (pronounced "score") is a comprehensive web-based system that gives you and your student access to a wealth of college and career information. SCOIR integrated with Common Application this year allowing for the seamless submission of all documents to your student's colleges.

- Students will use SCOIR to conduct college searches, organize their college list, keep track of deadlines, and sign up for college rep visits to CEHS.
- Students will complete the required FERPA Release Authorization, submit fee waiver requests, and complete their portion of Early Decision Agreements in Common App for those colleges they're applying via Common App.
- Students applying to non-Common App schools will need to manually enter them into their SCOIR account.
- **All supporting documents (transcripts, recommendations, school profile, etc.) are submitted to ALL colleges through SCOIR by Ms. Thomas on the colleges' deadlines.**

In addition to student accounts, SCOIR also offers parent accounts which allow you to conduct your own college search, view your student's progress, view the list of colleges suggested for your student to research and add your own suggestions. To register for a parent account, please contact Elizabeth Thomas at ethomas@capeelizabethschools.org.

Understanding Application Deadlines

Every college offers different options to apply and deadlines can vary. Refer to the Common Application instructions, SCOIR, or check each college's website.

- *Regular Decision*: Applications are accepted on or before a specific deadline. Most "Regular Decision" deadlines are around the 1st or 15th of January or February. Decisions are usually announced by mid-April.
- *Early Action (EA)*: Non-binding, early review of credentials. Deadlines are typically in early November (some are now in October) and decisions usually announced by mid-December.
- *Early Decision (ED)*: Binding agreement to attend the college if admitted. Students are only permitted to apply ED to one college, but can apply EA to others at the same time. Deadlines are typically in early November and decisions usually announced by mid-December. An Early Decision application requires an agreement form signed by student, parent and School Counselor. Some colleges also offer a second round of Early Decision in January.

- *Rolling Admission*: Non-binding. Applications reviewed on a rolling basis as they are received. Decisions are often made a few weeks after an application is submitted or after first quarter grades have been received. Students are encouraged to apply early in the fall to Rolling Admissions schools for the best possible opportunity of admission and financial aid.

College Application Responsibilities

CEHS:

- Teachers will upload their letter of recommendation for the student to SCOIR.
- The School Counseling office submits the student's transcript, CEHS school profile, school report form, and all letters of recommendation through SCOIR. All supporting documents will be submitted on the college's deadline.

Please note that there is often a lag time between when CEHS materials are submitted and when they show as "received" on the college website or portal.

STUDENT:

It is the student's responsibility to:

- **Regularly check CEHS emai**l for information from Ms. Thomas and from colleges.
- **Develop a balanced application list** that includes at least 2-3 "Likely" schools.
- **All seniors must complete an orange "First Deadline Notification Form" at least 3 weeks before their first application deadline.** This allows us enough time to carefully prepare transcripts, school forms and the counselor letter of recommendation.
- **Provide at least 3 weeks advance notice of their first deadline to the two teachers writing their letters of recommendation** (in person or email is fine).
- Check college websites to **verify if standardized tests are required, confirm each school's policy for submitting test scores, and submit scores through the College Board or ACT website.**
- **Submit applications and application fees** on or before the college's deadline.

After your student submits an application, they should receive an email from the college with instructions about next steps. In most cases, students will be asked to create a college-specific portal or account where they can track the status of their application and receive their admissions decision.

Admissions Test Requirements and Dates

Standardized testing requirements have changed dramatically over the past few years. It is important to check each college's website carefully to determine its testing requirements.

Test-Optional: The college does not require SAT or ACT scores for admission however students may submit them if they feel it strengthens their application. For test-optional schools it is recommended that students should only submit scores if they are within or above the median range (in each section) for admitted students at that institution.

Test-Blind or Test-Free: Scores will not be considered by the college even if the student wishes to submit them.

Test-Flexible: Students can choose which test scores (or combination of) they want to submit to the college (SAT, ACT, AP).

Over 2,000 colleges and universities are now test-optional and 85 are now test-blind. www.fairtest.org provides a complete list of schools that are test-optional and test-blind.

Students must register themselves for all upcoming tests through the testing agency:

Seniors who wish to apply Early Action or Early Decision in November should test no later than October to ensure that their scores will arrive by the college's deadline.

SAT: collegeboard.org

October 4th (registration deadline 9/19)
November 8th (registration deadline 10/24)
December 6th (registration deadline 11/24)

ACT actstudent.org

October 18th (registration deadline 9/12)
December 13th (registration deadline 11/7)

AP Exams

All exams will be given May 4th-15th, 2026

Sending Test Scores

Colleges that require "official" test scores require that they be sent *by the student* directly from the testing agency. (www.collegeboard.org or www.act.org). The College Board charges a $14 fee for each report that is sent to a school. ACT charges $18.50 per report.

Many colleges will also allow students to "**self-report**" their scores on their Common Application and send official scores through the testing agency after they are admitted and choose to enroll. **Check individual college requirements carefully**.

An Overview of the College Application

When college admissions officers review an application, their goal is to determine if the student is academically prepared for college level study. They want to be sure they can be successful at their college. They also want to know how the student will conduct themself as a member of their campus community and if they will be the right "fit" for their institution. The application helps answer their central question: "Who is this kid, really?"

Each part of the application plays a distinct and important role. Each deserves careful attention.

- The **transcript** is the official record of the classes your student has taken and the final grades they earned in grades 9-11. Senior transcripts will also include 1st quarter and semester senior grades as well as both the unweighted and weighted GPAs. GPAs are truncated and recalculated at the end of each semester. CEHS does not rank its students.

  In lieu of an official high school transcript, about 38 universities now require the **"Self-reported Academic Transcript & Record System" (STARS)** report. A complete list can be found here.

- **Standardized test scores** provide another way for colleges to compare your student with other applicants across the country. Over 2,000 colleges and universities are now test optional. If your student chooses not to submit their scores to a test-optional college, they will not be disadvantaged in any way.

- The **application** provides demographic and educational data as well as an **activities** section where students can list their extracurricular interests and highlight the most important things they have done outside the classroom.

- The **essay (or "personal statement")** provides colleges the opportunity to hear directly from your student and learn something about them that can't be found anywhere else in their application. It also demonstrates their ability to write well. The student's own voice will come through clearly in a well written essay.

- **Supplemental essays/questions** – Colleges may also require students to complete additional supplemental essays or questions specific to their school. These essays are typically shorter and can ask students to reflect on anything from a meaningful activity to why they are interested in the specific school they are applying to. The more your student knows about themselves and the college they are applying to, the easier these will be to answer.

- **Teacher recommendations** provide observations and insight into how the student has performed in their class and classroom. Students will ask two teachers of core academic subjects to write their college recommendations. They will also identify 3 CEHS staff members (teachers, club advisers, coaches, etc.) to provide Ms. Thomas with information for her counselor recommendation. These individuals have been given a Google Form to return to her and do not need to be contacted by the student.

- The **counselor recommendation** letter is a carefully written synthesis of your student's potential for college success based on academic, extracurricular and personal perspectives. This letter may include comments from teachers, coaches, club advisers. It may also include an explanation of any extenuating circumstances that have impacted their high school experience.

Selective schools: *ANY* school that admits fewer than 25% of applicants

- Highest expectations of applicants
- Admission decisions are highly unpredictable
- Look for consistent record of Honors/AP courses
- Increasingly common for 50-60% of the incoming class to be admitted through Early Decision (if offered).
- Demonstrated interest may be considered
- Institutional needs are a much higher priority and are the "unknown" factor each year.
- An applicant's financial need may also be considered when making an admission decision.

Liberal Arts Colleges:

- Holistic admissions (rather than by major)
- Selectivity varies
- Less likely to offer Early Action as an option

Public Universities

- Admissions can be more straightforward due to higher volume of apps. In some cases this means no letters of recommendation or essays.
- A student's choice of major/college may influence how admissions reviews their application and have an impact on students' opportunity of admission.
- Some may favor in-state students over out-of-state applicants.

Search for the "Common Data Set" for individual colleges for more detailed information and insights into their admissions practices.

College	#Apps 2025	Admit Rate % 2025	Early Decision Admit Rate % 2025	Admit Rate % 2021	Admit Rate % 2018	Admit Rate % 2015	Admit Rate % 1998
Boston College	39,681	13	30	19	28	28	40
Boston University	76,772	12	31	17	20	29	79
Bowdoin College	14,045	7	15	8	9	15	31
Brown University	42,765	6	18	5	5	9	
Colby College	20,144	7	--	8	10	19	34
Colgate University	17,308	17	--	17	28	26	
Columbia University	59,616	4	--	4	5	7	
Dartmouth College	28,230	6	--	6	8	12	
Duke University	58,698	5	13	5	6	9	
Georgetown University	26,841	12	11 (EA)	12	14	17	
M.I.T.	29,282	5	6 (EA)	4	7	6	
New York University	120,000	8	--	13	16	8	
Northeastern University	105,000	5	43	18	18	35	78
Northwestern University	53,000	7	19	7	7	32	
Tufts University	33,400	11	--	11	15	11	33
Villanova University	26,305	27	--	25	27	17	
University of Virginia	64,463	15	26	17	23	43	33
Wesleyan	14,970	16	--	19	16	29	32
Williams College	15,520	8	27	8	12	18	26
Yale University	50,227	5	11	5	6	19	18

Excel spreadsheet listing the ED and RD acceptance rates for hundreds of schools (Data from the 2023-24 admissions cycle)

College Financial Aid

The Finance Authority of Maine website famemaine.com provides a wealth of information and clear explanations of these important topics:

- What is financial aid?
- Who should apply?
- How to apply?
- When to apply?
- What happens after applying?
- How is financial aid calculated?
- Tips for filing the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)
- Preferred lenders
- Special circumstances
- What is the CSS Profile? How do I know if it is required by a college?

Financial aid helps students and families pay for expenses such as tuition, room, board and fees. It can be grants, scholarships, student employment or loans. It can come from the federal government, state government, college/university or private sources.

A student's financial aid package can include:

- Grants: outright gifts that do not have to be repaid
- Scholarships: awarded to students who meet certain criteria the college sets
- Loans: must be repaid
- Work Study: funds paid to student for on-campus employment

Federal **need-based** aid is dependent on a family's financial circumstances and income. Many private colleges and universities may also offer additional *institutional* need-based aid in the form of grants, scholarships, and/or loans.

Colleges that "meet full need" are committed to covering all costs associated with your student's attendance, minus what they have determined your family's contribution to be.

Many (but not all) colleges offer **merit scholarships** in addition to need-based aid. Family finances are not considered for merit scholarship awards. Instead, they recognize strengths of students the college wishes to enroll.

College financial aid offices have varying ability to meet the increased financial needs of their students. Because colleges have different endowments and differ in their priorities of how to use their financial resources, **you can expect different financial aid packages from different colleges.**

Federal law requires that all colleges and universities provide "**net price calculators**" on their websites. Take advantage of these calculators to determine what your student's estimated cost of attendance would be at each specific institutions. Please note that these estimates may only reflect need-based aid and not merit aid so read the fine print carefully!

Financial Aid Webinar

A recording of our spring Financial Aid Webinar can be found here on the School Counseling website or via the link below:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zrW1aqDMkNo6oQJJ-NcFpctImvbCZQ-Z/view?usp=sharing

Financial Aid Tasks

- Check individual college websites to to confirm if the school requires the **CSS PROFILE**, a supplemental financial aid form used by many private colleges, in addition to the FAFSA.
- **Establish your FSA ID** for filing the federal financial aid application. You and your student will each need an FSA ID.
- The 2026-2027 FAFSA will collect 2024 income information. **File the FAFSA as soon as possible when the application opens October 1, 2025 at FAFSA.gov**

Financial Considerations

- Be sure your student has at least one or two affordable 'Likely' colleges on their list in case financial aid doesn't work out.
- Check out the Tuition Break Program for discounted tuition on select New England state school programs: nebhe.org/tuitionbreak

Help Completing the FAFSA

The Finance Authority of Maine is offering two vitrual FAFSA help sessions this fall on October 29th and November 20th. They also offer individual one-on-one help sessions which can be scheduled here.

Scholarship Search

Many colleges require that students apply by a specific date to be considered for scholarships. In most cases, this would be their "Early Action" application round/deadline. Check individual websites for more information as well as additional scholarship opportunities that may require an additional application. Students can apply for local/CEHS scholarships in the spring of their senior year.

Scholarship Search Websites: If you have to pay money to get money, it's probably a scam. In general, be wary of scholarships with an application fee, scholarship matching services who guarantee success, advance-fee loan scams and sales pitches disguised as financial aid "seminars".

We highly recommend that every student creates an account through Goingmerry.com where they will be matched with scholarships that align with the information they enter into their profile.

RECOMMENDED "TO DO" LIST FOR PARENTS

COLLEGE LIST:

- **Visit** college campuses if possible. Check college websites for times of tours and info sessions. If you can't visit in person, check college websites for virtual offerings.
- **Help your student develop and finalize a reasonable list** of colleges that includes at least two "Likely" as well as some "50/50" and/or "Reach" schools.

APPLICATIONS:

- Help your student manage and track each of their school's application deadlines and requirements.
- **Help your student complete the "FAMILY" section of their Common Application**. It's ok to preview their application for errors before they submit but please do not complete any sections of the application for them. If your student's college does not use the Common Application, they may complete their application through the colleges' website and then manually add it to their SCOIR account.
- **Confirm with your student that they have turned in an orange "1st College Deadline Notification Form" to Ms Thomas at least 3 weeks before their first deadline.**

ADMISSIONS TESTS:

- Double check college websites to be sure that your student has met the institution's standardized testing requirements and understands their policy for submitting scores.
- If your student is planning on submitting test scores, check individual college websites to confirm if they allow "self reported" scores or if they require "official" scores which must be sent by the student through their College Board or ACT account.

SCHOLARSHIPS and FINANCIAL AID:

- **Check individual college websites for additional scholarship opportunities as well as financial aid deadlines and requirements**
- Establish your FSA ID for FAFSA filing and updating.
- File the FAFSA after October 1, 2025
- If required, complete the CSS PROFILE as soon as your student's college list is complete.
- Encourage your student to sign up for an account through GoingMerry.com

ADVICE FOR SENIOR PARENTS

- Choose a mutually agreed upon day of the week that you will discuss college and ask questions.
- Students must take the lead in this process and be the primary point of contact for their colleges. Be a manager and consultant.
- Help your student stay organized (tracking application, financial aid and scholarship deadlines is especially helpful).
- Don't make the entire process about getting into "reach" schools. College lists should be set up so there is more good news than bad.
- Focus on fit and challenge your definition of what makes a college a "good" school.
- Talk about finances and what your family can afford to pay. Be upfront and transparent. Avoiding these conversations often leads to more stress for students.
- Long lists cause more stress. Help your student identify what is most important to them and then narrow down.
- Help your student learn to cope with rejection. This is an unprecedented time as far as selectivity in college admissions. Celebrate their successes and remind them how proud you are of them!
- Remind your student to check their email *regularly*!

<u>What to avoid:</u>

- **Do <u>not</u> complete any part of your child's college application.** Help them edit, check for spelling errors and assist them in filling out any parent/family information.
- **Do not contact college admissions representatives on behalf of your student. Your student must be the primary contact person for their colleges.** Financial Aid is the exception here as parents are generally in the best position to inquire about financial aid related questions or circumstances.
- Avoid "McRankings" and stick to the data that colleges provide.
- Don't try to change your child to fit a college, change the list of colleges to fit your child.

USEFUL WEBSITES

SCOIR is a web based system that gives your student access to a wealth of college information. You can do college research as well with parent access. You will receive an email from Ms. Thomas with a link and more information.

www.collegeboard.org SAT registration and information.

www.actstudent.org ACT test registration and information.

www.fairtest.org List of colleges that are test optional

www.studentaid.gov Information about federal student aid and link to the FAFSA application.

https://www.bls.gov/ooh/ Occupational Outlook Handbook. Current information on careers including job outlook, education, and salary.

www.famemaine.com Financial aid basics, scholarship search, college aid calculator

www.todaysmilitary.com, a site created by the US Department of Defense as a resource for parents, educators and young adults curious about military service.

www.careeronestop.org: a page for students sponsored by The US Department of Labor for a variety of resources.

For a comprehensive list of Gap Year programs, visit:
usagapyearfairs.org/programs

The College Essay Guy: Excellent (and accurate!) information about college admissions, the college essay, supplemental essay help and more

College Kickstart: Up to date information and data about admissions results at colleges across the country.

Common Data Sets: Each year colleges publish detailed information about their most recent applicant pool and admissions process. A simple Google Search for “X university Common Data Set” should take you there. Most colleges will include a chart that indicates what factors are most important to them in the admissions process which I find particularly useful!

CEHS Care Closet

As we have seen an uptick in Cape students and families struggling to meet their basic needs, the Student Support Team has begun a new initiative: the CEHS Care Closet.

Our hope is to provide students access to personal care items, non-perishable food, and gift cards for items that they and their families cannot afford.

HELP US TO REACH OUR GOAL

$2,500

We are hoping to raise $2500 each school year to purchase personal care items, food, clothing, or meet other needs as they arise.

How you Can Help

- Donate by check payable to: Cape Elizabeth High School
- Donate cash
- Donate $25 Hannaford and/or Cumberland Farms gift cards
- Donate Items from the list below:
  - Shampoo and conditioner
  - Deodorant
  - Toothbrushes, dental floss & toothpaste
  - Menstrual products
  - Body wash
  - Razors & shaving cream
  - Mens and womens socks (new in packages only)

Cash or individual items can be brought to the School Counseling Office

QUESTIONS?

Contact:
Elizabeth Thomas
(207) 799-7265
ethomas@capeelizabethschools.org