

Dear Class of 2026 Parents and Guardians,

Please read the attached information that was emailed to your child (Plan for the Future) and check out the two attachments that are sample college comparison templates.

It is very important that high school juniors are already planning for what comes after high school. Whether your child is planning on work, military, apprenticeship or college, there is a lot they should be doing to explore and organize information about their future. Please encourage them to get busy now! College admissions is less than a year away with application completion needing to be done ideally before December 1, 2025. Exploring the world of work, including apprenticeships, has a bit more flexibility but sooner than later is always better. Now is the ideal time for anybody interested in the military to begin discussions with recruiters.

If you have questions, please contact your child's guidance counselor.

Dan Riley: A-F 207-474-5511 extension 4112 driley@msad54.org
Dan Hylan: G-N 207-474-5511 extension 4111 dhylan@msad54.org
Laurie MacFarland O-Z 207-474-5511 extension 4113 lmacfarland@msad54.org

Class of 2026: Now is the time to plan for your future.

Use some of your free time over break to prepare for the future! Now is the time to formally investigate colleges if you have not already started. Finding a list of colleges that will meet your educational needs, and your personal interests takes time and organization. Do not wait any longer! Creating a list of potential colleges now will enable you to look carefully at all the possibilities and make informed decisions about where you will apply next fall. Determining a list now will also allow you time during February break, April break and summer to visit some of your top options.

-Where to research: collegeboard.org: Use the College Board's BIG FUTURE. BIG FUTURE has a wide range of interactive college search tools including two- and four-year college lists and college majors. No idea what you want to do? BIG FUTURE also has interest inventories that can help you identify your skills, abilities and how they connect to certain careers and college majors. Big Future also has great financial aid information including FAFSA filing tips and scholarship searches. **Just for using BIG FUTURE, you will be eligible for monthly \$500 and \$40,000 scholarship drawings!!** It is also easy to research colleges of interest by going directly to a college's website.

-College visits: Colleges love to have potential students visit campus. There is nothing more informative than seeing an institution in person. Think like you do when you shop for a car. You wouldn't buy the car without a test drive. Visiting a campus is like a test drive helping you to get a feel for the features that the campus will offer.

-Organization is key: Create a formal comparison format that you can use to assess the pros and cons of each campus. Create your own spreadsheet with columns for the important features and assets that you are looking for in a college. See the two samples attached to this email for ideas or use them as your comparison tool.

If your transition is not college, you can still begin looking at your options. If you are thinking of serving your country by enlisting in the **military**, investigate the different branches (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, Space Force, National Guard). Communicating with local recruiters is essential to understand the opportunities and steps required to enlist. Asking questions does not commit you to anything. If your plan is to go to **work**, investigate the local job market. Use the local Career Center to help you build a resume and develop an employment portfolio. Consider on the job training or an **apprenticeship**. Apprenticeships enable you to work for pay, earn benefits and learn a skilled trade from masters in their field. Check out apprenticeships at: <https://apprenticeship.maine.gov/career-seekers>.

For assistance with any of these options, see your guidance counselor.

COLLEGE COMPARISON WORKSHEET

Use the criteria below to help you compare your top schools.

Use the blank rows to add any other characteristics that are important to you.

SCHOOL				
Location				
Size				
Net Price estimate				
Average amount in loans				
Percent admitted				
Application deadline				
Standardized test requirements				
4-year graduation rate				

College Comparison Worksheet

Evaluate each school in the areas listed below and then compare your evaluations.



School Characteristics			
ACADEMICS	School 1	School 2	School 3
Class location (on or off campus, online)			
Class scheduling (when classes are held)			
Faculty experience and expertise			
Programs of study (majors and minors)			
Student-to-faculty ratio (class size)			
ADMISSIONS	School 1	School 2	School 3
Admissions or placement tests			
Applications forms (school, system, common, online)			
Credit for prior learning*			
Deadlines (early decision, early action, rolling, open)			
Selectivity (open, liberal, traditional, selective, very selective)			
Total first-year applicants			
> % accepted			
> % who actually enrolled			
> Average GPA of applicants			
CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT	School 1	School 2	School 3
Campus facilities, equipment and services			
> Computers and Internet access			
> Food service (cafeterias)			
> Health care			
> Housing			
> Library			
> Recreational			
> Transportation (parking, buses, etc.)			
Campus safety			
Campus setting (urban, suburban, small town, rural)			
Coeducational			
Geographic location (distance from home)			
Religious affiliation			

* Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Postsecondary Enrollment Options, College in the Schools, College-Level Exam Program

STUDENT BODY	School 1	School 2	School 3
Number of undergraduates enrolled			
> % of full-time students			
> % of men and women			
> % of students 25 or older			
> % of minority students			
> % of students from out-of-state			
> % of international students			
> % of student who live on campus			
% of students who return the following year			
% of students who graduate			
% of graduates employed within one year			
COST	School 1	School 2	School 3
Application fee			
> Fee waiver available?			
Amount of deposit (after acceptance)			
Total annual cost of attendance			
> Tuition and fees			
> Room and board			
> Other required expenses (books, supplies)			
FINANCIAL AID	School 1	School 2	School 3
Financial aid availability			
> Grants (participates in federal and/or state grant program?)			
> Scholarships			
> Work study			
> Loans			
Financial aid deadline			
Financial aid forms (FAFSA, PROFILE, school)			
% of undergraduates receiving financial aid			
> Average amount awarded to undergraduates			
STUDENT ACTIVITIES	School 1	School 2	School 3
Athletic offerings			
Campus clubs and activities			
Extracurricular organizations and events			
STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES	School 1	School 2	School 3
Career counseling			
Job placement services			
OTHER CONSIDERATIONS	School 1	School 2	School 3
Financial condition			
School accreditation			