

## The American Counseling Association's "*Counseling Corner*" Weekly Columns

### **Making The College Application Process Less Stressful**

from the American Counseling Association

If you're parenting a high school junior or senior, then the stress of applying for a college is probably starting to escalate. While that first college class is still a ways off, there are lots of reasons for feeling anxious now.

There are tests to take, applications to complete and essays to write. And on top of all that is making a college decision that truly can be life shaping. No wonder everyone is stressed.

One way to reduce this stress is simply to understand all the issues, decisions and steps necessary for college admission. An important starting point is sitting down for a family discussion about paying for college. Family contributions, scholarships and loans can all be discussed, but the bottom line for many families may be that certain schools will simply be too expensive. Now is the time to make that decision.

Next, understand the full college application process. A good starting place for understanding the process is the College Board site at <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-in>. Your high school counselor can also be a good source with information about deadlines, programs of study and college costs. The counselor can also help narrow down college possibilities based on your son or daughter's interests, grades and overall school performance.

Most colleges still require ACT or SAT testing. For high school seniors, now is the time to do that testing, but high school juniors can also benefit from taking one of those national tests for the practice it provides. Studies have shown that because these tests can produce fairly high anxiety levels, students who take the tests more than once almost always improve on the second go around if only because they are less anxious and now better understand the testing procedures.

This is also a good time to pick up one or more college guides, either at your local bookstore or library (or sometimes from your school's counselor). These guides will provide descriptions of the various colleges and universities, and also outline the requirements and costs for each of the schools. Virtually every school now has a fairly comprehensive website which will provide a great deal of information for prospective students and their parents.

Understanding the costs and process involved in applying for college can make it all much less stressful for both parent and child. The key is to act early and not delay until the last minute.

*"Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to [ACAcorner@counseling.org](mailto:ACAcorner@counseling.org) or visit the ACA website at [www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org).*

###

words: 397