

## College Application Basics

### The **BIG** Idea

- What do I need to complete a college application? (And why should I care about this if I'm not planning on going to college?)

### AGENDA

Approx. 45 minutes

- I. Warm Up (5 minutes)
- II. Application Review (10 minutes)
- III. Complete an Application (25 minutes)
- IV. Wrap Up: Next Steps (5 minutes)

### MATERIALS

#### PORTFOLIO PAGES:

- Portfolio pages 3-4, College Application Tracker (from Introduction unit)

#### STUDENT HANDBOOK PAGES:

- Student Handbook page 8, What's My College Application Status?
- Student Handbook page 9, Websites and Passwords

#### FACILITATOR PAGES:

- Facilitator Resource 1, College Application Chart

#### Overhead and LCD projector

#### Laptop with Internet connection

### OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, students will:

- Review what they need to know, and what they need to do, to complete a college application.
- Understand the similarities between a college and work application.
- Complete an online city or state college application in class.

## OVERVIEW .....

Students review the different components of a college application, and how they figure into admissions decisions. Then, they begin an online application for a local city or state university.

## PREPARATION .....

- List the day's **BIG IDEA** and activities on the board.
- The following handout needs to be made into an overhead transparency or copied onto chart paper:
  - **Facilitator Resource 1, College Application Chart**
- Consult with your school counselor on the execution of this lesson, including her recommendations regarding the use of state or local websites listed below, fee waivers, and procedures for requesting transcripts and letters of recommendation. You'll also want to discuss any system already in place for tracking college application activities, share **Portfolio pages 3-4, College Application Tracker** (from Grade 12 Introduction unit), and determine how you can best combine resources to avoid duplication of effort.
- Prior to class, create your own account on your local or state application website, and familiarize yourself with the entire application process. (See **BACKGROUND** for specific sites.) Be prepared to supply students with the web address and instructions for completing an application in your own state, as described for WV in **Activity III, Complete a College Application**.
- If you are unable to project the online application using an LCD and laptop, you may wish to make transparencies of the application pages.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION .....

RTS students are encouraged to apply to at least three colleges – a reach, match, and safety school. Many college access organizations advocate more – as many as 10 to 12 applications to maximize opportunities to find a good match.

Completing multiple applications and keeping track of all the components can be a daunting task. One way to economize on effort is to complete application forms accepted at more than

one school. Students should be made aware of this option for city and state schools, as well as those accepting the Common Application. Examples:

1. To apply to multiple public colleges in the same state:

NY: **SUNY Online Undergraduate Application**

<https://www.suny.edu/student/oas/welcome.do>

PA: **Pennsylvania Mentor (online applications)**

<http://www.pennsylvaniamentor.org/AdmissionApp/introduction.asp>

WV: **College Foundation of West Virginia (online applications)**

[www.cfwv.com/](http://www.cfwv.com/)

**NOTE:** Some schools require their own applications, so students should make sure the state school to which they are applying is listed on the state website.

2. To apply to multiple public colleges in New York City:

NYC: **CUNY Online Undergraduate Application**

<http://web.cuny.edu/admissions/undergraduate/onlineapp-1.html>

3. To apply to multiple selective private colleges:

**The Common Application:**

[www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org)

## IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS .....

In **Activity III**, you may choose to focus on a single popular college choice instead of state/local application websites, depending on your school counselor's recommendation.

The College Foundation of West Virginia ([www.cfwv.com](http://www.cfwv.com)) also provides an online Practice Application. You may prefer to demonstrate its use rather than selecting a specific WV college.

## ACTIVITY STEPS .....

### I. Warm Up (5 minutes)

1. [As students enter, ask them to complete the “Do Now” on **Student Handbook page 8, What’s My College Application Status?** Give them 2 minutes to complete the activity.]
2. [Invite volunteers to share what they wrote down.]

3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** If you’re feeling a little stressed out over college applications, take a deep breath. Over the next six lessons, we’re going to tell you everything you need to apply to college. As you just saw, there are several parts of the college application. Some of you are already pulling these together, and others are still figuring out the next step. Wherever you are in the process, that’s okay for now. In this unit, we’re going to walk through the application process together, answer all your questions, and help you get started.

And if you’re not planning on attending college, this unit should still be very helpful. Many people decide to return to college after entering the workforce, and understanding the application process gives you a head start. There are also many similarities between applying to college and applying for a job. I’ll point these out as we go along. It’s all about knowing how to highlight your experience, your skills, and qualities that make you stand out.

4. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Here’s a quick overview of what we’ll do over the next six weeks. Today, we’ll review the different components of the college application and how each one should be completed and sent to the college of your choice. Then we’re going to walk through an online application that can be used for most colleges in your city/state.

In weeks two through six, we’ll work on a piece of writing that tells the world who you are – your college essay. If you’re not applying to a college that requires an essay, this will be a good exercise in thinking about what you have to offer a school or employer.

5. [Have students turn to the **Portfolio pages 3-4, College Application Tracker**, from the introductory lessons.]

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Already feeling a little overwhelmed? To help you keep track of the requirements at each school, and remember where you are in the application process for each, you can use **Portfolio pages 3-4, College Application Tracker**, to help you keep track.

## II. Application Review (10 minutes)

1. [Project **Facilitator Resource 1, College Application Chart** on the overhead projector.]

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** If you're applying to colleges, you're probably wondering what the admissions people are looking for. Well, this chart takes a look at the eight main factors considered by admissions teams in colleges across the country. Let's take a closer look at each component, why it's important, and how you'll send it to the colleges of your choice.

2. [Review the chart with the class.]
3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Remember, not every school will require each of these components, but all schools will require some of these — at minimum, a high school transcript, and often standardized test scores as well. Large public colleges often have fewer requirements — they have too many applicants to carefully consider extra materials from each person. Colleges that have more resources for screening applicants will require more.
4. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Now you know the main components of the college application, but how do you get started? The first step is to find the application for each school you're interested in. This is usually pretty easy to find on the school's website under Admissions or in catalogs you received in the mail. The application asks for basic information about yourself, your school, and your activities. It also specifies which components are expected, such as the essay, recommendations, and interviews.
5. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Now if you're worried about filling out lots and lots of applications, I have good news: In many cases, you can fill out one application that can be used for several colleges. For example, many states have online applications that can be used for all the state schools. Similarly, the Common Application is a website providing one application that can be used for over 300 private colleges and universities.

**Please take note:** Even if a college uses one of these sites for its online application, you should always look carefully at that college's website to double-check admissions requirements. Some have additional forms that need to be completed. You may have to pay a separate application fee for each school. (Check the rules in your city or state.)

## III. Complete a College Application (25 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Let's take a look at an online application for our state.

Chances are, many of you will apply to a state school in our system, so we're going to spend the next 25 minutes or so completing this application. If you're unable to complete the application today, you can save it and return to it anytime.

2. [Using a computer and LCD projector, show students a website that allows your students to apply to several colleges in your state or city. (See **Preparation** above.) For example, in West Virginia, the website is: [www.cfww.com/](http://www.cfww.com/). Demonstrate how to navigate the website. Explain that each student will need to create his or her own account. Once this is done, students can use their username and password to complete the application, save their work, and return to the application any time:

**Step 1:** Click "College Planning" at the top of the page.

**Step 2:** Click "Applications," then "Apply to College and Track Your Applications."

**Step 3:** Click "Create an Account." [Give students a few minutes to complete their own account. They'll need to input personal information such as their name, birth date, address, school, etc.] Students should use **Student Handbook page 9, Websites and Passwords** to write down their Username and Password.

**Step 4:** When they've completed the account, click "Click here to continue."

3. [At this point, students will see the Apply to College page. Now walk through the process of completing an application:

**Step 1:** Select a college they're interested in from the menu and click "Apply."

**Step 2:** Have students carefully read details about application procedures for that school. They may wish to print out this page, and can return to it from within the application as well. Remind students that many schools waive application fees for low-income families. (They should check with the school counselor for details.) Also advise students to check the individual college website for the mailing address if additional materials are needed. **Remind students to use Portfolio pages 3-4, College Application Tracker to record each school's requirements.**

**Step 3:** Click "Begin application for [school name]." Before students begin completing their applications, click through the four main screens so they are familiar with the information that will be requested. To do this without filling in the form, you can select a screen from "Skip & Jump to" among the left-hand navigation buttons. Briefly review the information on each of these screens:

**Screen 1: Personal Information**

(student name, address, email, phone, citizenship information)

**Screen 2: Application information**

(enrollment information, residency, high school information)

**Screen 3: College Information**

(for students who have previously attended college)

**Screen 4: Emergency Contact**

(name and contact information for parent, guardian, or spouse)]

4. [Also point out these buttons on the left-hand side:
  - Introduction (to see the first page of this school’s application)
  - Save (to save work)
  
5. [Next, point out the button “Submit Your Completed Application.”] **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Keep in mind that you will not be able to submit an application until all the information is complete. If you have completed the application, this button will take you to a final screen called “Application Submittal.” You must “sign” this page by typing your name to verify that all the information is correct. (**Please make sure you’re seriously considering this college before you hit “submit.”**)]
  
6. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** After submitting your application, you will see an application agreement statement. Remember that you must print this agreement and mail it to the school’s address with your application fee.
  
7. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** If you’ve finished, take a moment to check off the box on your **College Application Tracker** that shows you’ve submitted your application. Don’t worry if you did not complete the application today, or if you want to send this application to another school as well. You can return to this website anytime, type in your username and password, and work on your application for this or other schools.

**IV. Wrap Up: Next Steps (5 minutes)**

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** You’ve done a great job today getting started on the college application process. The main thing I want you all to come away with is the “big picture” of a college application.
  
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Next week, we’ll take a look at another part of the college application — the college essay. Over the next few weeks, we’ll review lots of sample essays so you know what’s required, and you’ll also get a chance to write your own —with a little help from your classmates and me.

## College Application Chart

How are admissions decisions made? No single factor determines a student's admission to a given college. Here are some of the factors schools consider:

What They Look At	Why It's Important	Who Provides This
High school transcript	The high school transcript (the four year report card) is <u>always</u> the most important factor in evaluating an applicant. The transcript includes: Grades received, courses taken, teachers' comments, attendance and lateness record, as well as effort in studies.	School counselor, at your request
Admission Test Scores (SAT, ACT)	Most colleges will have a range of SAT or ACT scores that they would like to see from an applicant. Few colleges have a cut-off score. Most colleges require the SAT or ACT and like to see two attempts at the test. Some colleges require the SAT II (subject area tests) as part of the application.  See these website for instructions on sending your scores: ACT: <a href="http://www.actstudent.org/scores/send/index.html">http://www.actstudent.org/scores/send/index.html</a> SAT: <a href="http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/scores/sending.html">www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/scores/sending.html</a>	ACT or SAT, as directed by you
Essay	Included on many college applications. The essay is evaluated for content as well as style. Often a strong essay will make up for the weaker transcript or SAT score.	You
Activities	Colleges want students who will get involved on campus. They look for high school and community activities such as athletics, volunteer work, student government, summer experiences, and part-time jobs.	You
Letters of recommendation	Plan to ask at least one teacher for a recommendation. Some will ask a second person outside of school (coach, boss, religious leader) to write a letter.	Teacher or other, at your request
Interview	Required for some colleges, most make it optional. An interview is a great chance to learn more about the college and present your special situation to the admissions committee. Interviews may take place on campus or in your community with a graduate (alumnus) of the college.	You set up
Audition or Portfolio	Music and art colleges or programs may ask for samples of your work, such as a portfolio, video, audio CD, etc. to demonstrate your ability. Ask your high school teachers for advice on what to include.	You
Application Fee	<u>Not</u> a factor in an admissions decision. Pays for the processing of your application. Low-income families may qualify for fee waivers. Ask your school counselor.	You

Adapted from CollegeBound, Young Women's Leadership Foundation.



## What's My College Application Status?

The chart below lists the main components of the college application. For each one, check the box that describes your preparation.

Application Component	I'm all set – I know how to complete and send this component.	I'm a bit confused— I'm not quite sure what I need to do for this component.	I'm clueless —I definitely need more info about this component. Help!
Basic application (personal info, activities)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Essay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
High school transcript	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Admission Test Scores (SAT, ACT)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Letters of recommendation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interview	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Application fee	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Audition / Portfolio (music or art school)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How do you feel about the college application process?  
 Below, write what you're most concerned about.

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## Websites and Passwords

The following websites may be used to access multiple college applications. Use this sheet to record your username and password for sites you use.

Type of Applications	Website	Your Username & Password
<b>New York</b> (SUNY schools)	<a href="https://www.suny.edu/student/oas/welcome.do">https://www.suny.edu/student/oas/welcome.do</a>	Username: _____ Password: _____
<b>New York City</b> (CUNY schools)	<a href="http://web.cuny.edu/admissions/undergraduate/onlineapp-1.html">http://web.cuny.edu/admissions/undergraduate/onlineapp-1.html</a>	Username: _____ Password: _____
<b>Pennsylvania</b> (state schools)	<a href="http://www.pennsylvaniaintor.org/AdmissionApp/introduction.asp">http://www.pennsylvaniaintor.org/AdmissionApp/introduction.asp</a>	Username: _____ Password: _____
<b>West Virginia</b> (state schools)	<a href="http://www.cfww.com/">www.cfww.com/</a>	Username: _____ Password: _____
<b>Common Application</b> (300+ selective private schools)	<a href="http://www.commonapp.org">www.commonapp.org</a>	Username: _____ Password: _____
<b>Your State:</b>	Website: _____	Username: _____ Password: _____