

# College Application Week Site Coordinator Toolkit October 17-21, 2016

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Dear College Application Week Site Coordinators,

Welcome to College Application Week! We are excited to have you and your school participate in this [nationwide](#) college awareness event. The goal of College Application Week is to support seniors in completing college applications, while increasing visibility and college-going culture throughout the city's high school communities. This toolkit will provide you with a checklist, event ideas, and templates to help you plan and host successful events during [New York State College Application Week](#) this October 17th-21st! Please visit [NYC College Application website](#) for additional resources to support successful implementation of this college access event.

Thank You,

Office of Postsecondary Readiness

College and Career Planning Team

## Get Started: What to do Before College Application Week (CAW)

### Six Things to do Before College Application Week

1. Sign up students for the city-wide [Virtual College Fair](#) on October 6<sup>th</sup>
2. Attend [Director of Admission Panel](#) at Fordham University on October 13<sup>th</sup>
3. Attend a [Counselor Open House](#) to learn more about CUNY options
4. Order Viewbooks from [SUNY](#) and [CUNY](#)
5. Check out HESC's College Application Week [Planning Materials](#)
6. Connect with volunteers!

#### Helpful Hint:

Reach out to volunteers to ensure they are prepared to assist your students. Click here for the [Volunteer Toolkit](#), which details common volunteer tasks.

#### Helpful Hint:

The HESC CAW website includes a week-by-week [timeline](#) and a [coordinator checklist](#) to simplify planning for busy site coordinators!

Don't forget to spread the word!

[Send Letters Home](#), [Hang Posters](#),  
and [Get Teachers Involved](#)

## The Basics: Helping Students Submit College Applications

### 3 Steps to Choosing the Right Colleges – And Avoiding the Wrong Ones!

#### Step 1: Explore Options

We all know, each student has unique circumstances, values, and aspirations. When making a college list, students will have to reflect on how their unique needs and goals translate into college preferences. The first step is researching what is out there:

College Search platforms like [Collegeboard College Search](#) and [Quick Facts on SUNY Campus](#) help simplify comparisons. Counselors across NYC recommend these as places to start the college list-making process.

#### Helpful Hint:

This [College Wish List](#) and [What to Look for in a College Worksheet](#) can help students begin to learn about college variety!

[College Research Charts](#) like these can help organize and direct research!

#### What are NYC counselors saying about... Where to start researching with a student

*"I really like sitting with the student and doing a Collegeboard college search. It helps guide me through the preferences conversation and at the end we have a list of colleges to start researching."*

- Sandy Jimenez, Trainer and College Access Counselor,  
Options Center, Goddard Riverside Community Center,  
Manhattan, NY

*"For career exploration and information including job descriptions, job trends, and salaries, I recommend [CareerZone](#) and [O\\*net](#)."*

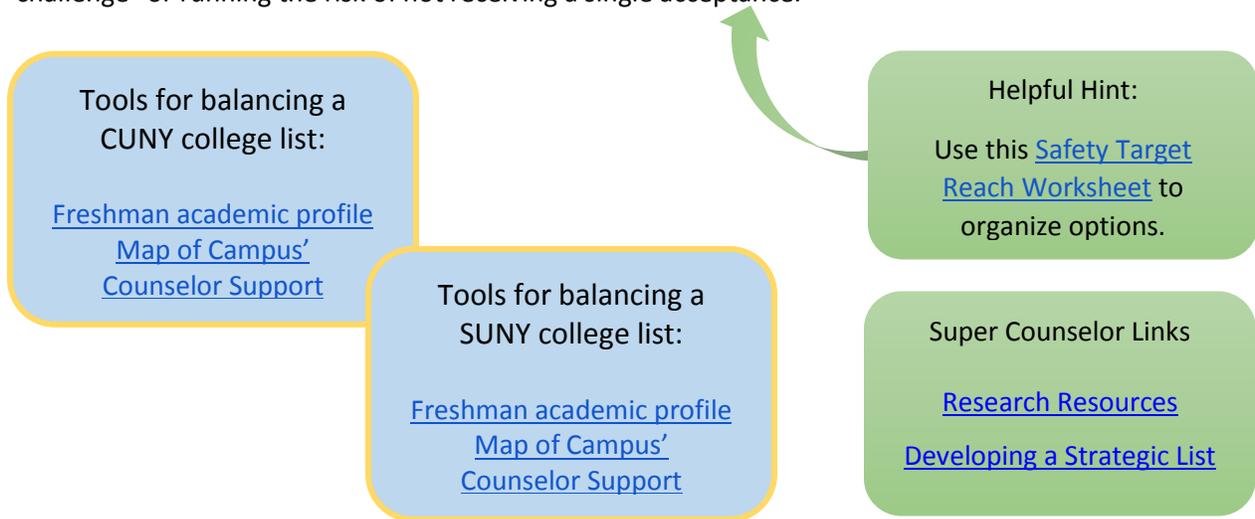
- Norma Feriz-Gordon, College and Career Planning Manager,  
Office of Postsecondary Readiness, New York City NY  
Former School and College Counselor at Hillcrest High School

## The Basics: Helping Students Submit College Applications

### 3 Steps to Choosing the Right Colleges – And Avoiding the Wrong Ones!

#### Step 2: Be Balanced

“Safety, Target, Reach” is the College counselor’s way of saying “hope for the best and plan for the worst”. Each student’s college list should include schools where his or her GPA and SAT scores are a little below the average for admitted students (Reach Schools); a bit above the average (Safety Schools); and schools where his or her scores are in line with average admitted student’s (Target Schools). This ensures that the student is not “under-matching”--ending up in a school that will not be an academic challenge--or running the risk of not receiving a single acceptance.



#### What are NYC counselors saying about... How many colleges should be on a student’s college list

*“Let’s face it, students change their minds with each day. As such, students should absolutely fill their CUNY application with 6 school options and fill at least a SUNY application with 2 to 4 schools (even if they prefer to stay in NYC). They’ll only go to one school in the end, but they’ll have a range of options come commitment day in May.”*

-Jonathan Chavez, *Director of College Persistence,*  
Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation,  
Brooklyn, NY

*“Ideally students should apply to 6 CUNYs, approximately 4 SUNYs, and depending on competitiveness between 3 and 6 private schools.”*

- Victoria Hulit, *College Success Director,*  
Let’s Get Ready, New York City, NY

## The Basics: Helping Students Submit College Applications

### 3 Steps to Choosing the Right Colleges – And Avoiding the Wrong Ones!

#### Step 3: Be Savvy: Encourage Families to Understand Their Investment

No matter the students' situation: college is an investment. Before students and their families commit to the investments of money, time and attention; help them understand the financial risks as well as lifelong benefits.

#### Super Counselor Tip:

The [US DOE College Scorecard](#) is a simple tool for comparing colleges' average debt incurred, graduate's starting salary, graduation rates, and other indicators of college value.

Use it!!

#### What NYC counselors are saying about... Comparing the bottom line

*"Prioritize financial affordability. Students and their families must become savvy consumers. You can help by familiarizing yourself with the financial aid practices of the particular institutions they are interested in; identifying opportunity programs and schools that meet full need; and researching alternative institutional aid such as merit scholarships. This information will help build students' financial aid awareness. In turn, their college lists will be more targeted, and can yield more college acceptances where they can afford to attend."*

- Zee Santiago, *College and Career Planning Manager,*  
Office of Postsecondary Readiness, New York City, NY  
*Former Director of College Counseling at CollegeBound Initiative*

*"When considering a college with a high ticket price, ask admission offices if they have 'First Destination Survey' reports. Some private colleges compile these reports to give prospective students an idea of what all graduates are accomplishing within the first few months after earning their diploma. Here is [an example](#) from Case Western Reserve University."*

- Maggie H. Brown, *Director of Postsecondary Programs,*  
Office of Postsecondary Readiness, New York City, NY

## The Basics: Helping Students Submit College Applications

### 3 Steps to Choosing the Right Colleges – And Avoiding the Wrong Ones!

#### Step 3: Be Savvy: What everyone needs to know about for-profit colleges

The college transition process is a delicate time where newly minted “adults”, in an unfamiliar world, are given the opportunity to make decisions about their future—with access to large sums of money in the form of government loans and grants. Any savvy New Yorker can see why they are prime targets for predatory practices!

For-profit colleges and universities have been in [the news regularly this year](#) for investigations into such predatory practices. As Undersecretary of Education, Ted Mitchell [explains](#), “too often, [for-profits] leave students with high debt or either no degrees or worthless degrees”. To address the chronic issues and problematic practices of for-profit colleges, the US Department of Education created a Student Aid Enforcement Unit (SAEU) earlier this year. The SAEU led the charge this year in closing down ITT Technical Institute due to their use of aggressive recruitment tactics—targeting low-income populations and veterans—while providing substandard educations that would not prepare graduates for gainful employment despite deceptive promises ([see this article for more details](#)).

As a college counselor, you have the ability to keep your students and their families informed of the risks posed by engaging with and enrolling in for-profit colleges.

#### Helpful Hint:

If you are not sure if a college is for-profit, check Wikipedia--do not rely on the college’s website.

Also use [this list](#) of for-profit colleges in New York

#### Super Counselor Tip:

This [PBS investigative report](#) on for-profit colleges is a great place to start learning about for-profit colleges across the nation.

Watch it with your students!

#### What are NYC counselors saying about... for-profit colleges

*“ASA is a particularly compelling option for young people who are interested in pursuing football at the college level but want to remain local, as no public colleges in the city currently host a football program. Be sure to communicate the risks of for-profit colleges with your high school’s football coaches, so they can help advocate for your students’ best interests.”*

- Liz Kahn, Director of College Success Programs,  
Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation, Brooklyn, NY

*“When my students are investigating for-profit options, I ask them to look up the cost of tuition. Many for-profit colleges will not list their tuition costs on their websites and even over the phone, they cannot get a straight answer. My students are smart enough to recognize that this is a red flag. If not, I have them do the same for a non-profit college.”*

- Maggie H. Brown, Director of Postsecondary Programs,  
Office of Postsecondary Readiness, New York City, NY

## The Basics: Helping Students Submit College Applications

### Hitting Submit

Make sure your students are prepared to fill out the applications:

While each student’s list will be unique, they all need some of the same information prepared before hitting submit. Have your students review the [SUNY](#) and [CUNY](#) applicant checklists.

### Have you heard the news?

The New York City Department of Education announced on Monday, September 26<sup>th</sup> that CUNY application fees will be eliminated for low-income students.

To find out more, [click here!](#)

#### What are NYC counselors saying about... Being a super counselor on “submit day”

*“If the manpower is available to check applications for even the most trivial details (i.e. email addresses and social security numbers are correct—do it! Fixing issues later can be more time consuming. Also don’t underestimate the impact of tech issues while completing long applications such as SUNY or Common App.”*

- Norma Feriz-Gordon, *College and Career Planning Manager,*  
Office of Postsecondary Readiness, New York City NY  
*Former School and College Counselor at Hillcrest High School*

## The Basics: Helping Students Submit College Applications

### Hitting Submit

#### But wait, there's more: Teacher Recommendations and College Essays

Filling out biographical information on an application is just the start for many college applications. Writing the “perfect” college essay and collecting multiple letters of recommendation can take much longer—but are crucial for students to whose they are more than just a GPA or SAT score. [College Application Week](#) can be a great time to gain headway on these lengthy processes.

#### What are NYC Counselors saying about... Teacher Recommendations and College Essays

*“When it comes to teacher recommendations, I have my students do three things:*

- 1. Choose the “right” teacher – one that can speak to your demonstrating progress in the class and/or excelling*
- 2. Give the teacher at least 2-3 weeks notice, a clear deadline, and clarity about the number of copies needed and how the recommendation should be submitted (emailed, in envelopes with a signed seal, etc.)*
- 3. Give the [teacher a brag sheet/outline](#) of some of the key points you would like highlighted in the recommendation”*

-Jennifer Grunin, College and Career Planning Manager,  
Office of Postsecondary Readiness, New York City NY  
Former Head of College and Career Planning at LIFE Academy

*“When preparing college essays, encourage students to use their resources and provide them with examples such as [www.teenink.com](#) or the [College Essay Guy](#) that provides free tips, scholarships, and services on a sliding scale. Also, encourage them to have peers and teachers review their drafts.”*

- Norma Feriz-Gordon, College and Career Planning Manager,  
Office of Postsecondary Readiness, New York City NY  
Former School and College Counselor at Hillcrest High School

## The Basics: Helping Students Submit College Applications

### What's Next?

#### Keep up energy:

*"After my students hit submit, it's time to celebrate: high five, shout outs, energetic public announcements and encouraging students to 'brag' to their friends, families, and teachers."*

- Norma Feriz-Gordon, College and Career Planning Manager, Office of Postsecondary Readiness, New York City NY  
Former School and College Counselor at Hillcrest High School

#### Make sure students know that hitting submit is just the beginning:

*"Have a 'to do' list of [next steps](#) to give students after "hitting submit"— what colleges to follow up with and when. Having everything written down and with deadlines can help students stay on track."*

- Victoria Hulit, College Success Director,  
Let's Get Ready, New York City, NY

#### Advocate for your students:

*"Calling/emailing [admission offices] for every student sounds nice, but it's a logistical nightmare and incredibly intimidating! You're more likely to be successful reaching out to 'a friend' at an admissions office--maybe someone you met at a conference or who you invited to visit your high school. Try giving them a call to check on a student's application status and then let the conversation flow naturally. In the meantime, make efforts to build that network!"*

- Jonathan Chavez, Director of College Persistence,  
Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation, Brooklyn, NY

#### Find a system to keep track of the paperwork you are required to submit:

*"Most counselors are learning on-the-go, so here are a few tidbits:*

- *There is a difference between a permanent record with full history of regents tests and permanent records with highest regents scores. Be mindful of the records you send colleges.*
- *SUNY (counselorconnect) and Common App (recommender portal) provide online portals to track documents and submitted apps to each respective school; these portals will ease your mind!"*

- Jonathan Chavez, Director of College Persistence,  
Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation, Brooklyn, NY

### Get started with the Financial Aid Process:

Don't forget, the new FAFSA opens October 1<sup>st</sup>. Please review the [new financial aid application messaging and planning calendar](#), [financial aid toolkit](#), financial aid completion [events](#), and other [resources](#) to help your students complete financial aid forms.

## Get Inspired: College Application Week Activity Ideas

As a College Application Week Coordinator, it's up to you to choose which activities your school will run to encourage college application submissions, but you're not alone! Here are some ideas counselors throughout the city have been talking about...

Advertise College Application Week at Townhalls • **Invite back graduates for an Alumni Panel** • Celebrate Applications with a Pizza Party • Be sure College Application Week is on the School Website • **Send out a Recommendation Letter Tip Sheet** • **Have School Staff to Wear College Shirts** • [Visit CUNY Campus'](#) • Ask Volunteers to Help [Apply for Fee Waivers](#) • **Have "I Submitted" Bulletin Board With Student Photos** • Include Teachers in a College Knowledge Scavenger Hunt • **Encourage Students to Take Application Packets Home to Share with Family** • **Set up Office or Call-in Hours for Parents to Connect with College Office** • [Ask Alumni to Volunteer to Support College Counselor](#) • Have Students Wear Colors of Dream School • **Hold a College Application Marathon to Build Community Spirit** • Plan a New Theme or Activity for Each Day • Put Up College [Application Week Banners](#) Around School • [Ask Teachers to Decorate Doors to Show Where They Attended College](#) • Invite Admission Counselors to Hold Information Sessions During Lunch Periods • [Have One-on-One Appointments with Seniors](#) • [Ask for Support from Full Staff in Reviewing Applications before Hitting Submit](#) • Make School-Wide Announcements Celebrating Students who Apply • Reserve the Computer Lab for Completing College Applications • **And Make Sure to Print Application Packet Summaries** • Also Reserve it for the Virtual College Fair on October 6th!! • [Have Seniors Speak with Freshmen about their College List](#) • Invite Partner and Community Organizations to Help • [Ask Student Government to Promote College Application Week](#) • **Ask Teacher Help to Review Applications before Hitting Submit** • Set up a College Fair--Ask School Staff to Represent their Alma Mater! • [Send Home Letters about College Application Week](#) with Request for Application Materials • **Request Pennants from Colleges** • Share FAQ worksheet ([like this](#), or your own!) with Students, Parents, and Teachers! • [Build Relationships with Staff and Faculty Allies in the Work -- Show Appreciation for Help!](#) • **Make a Barometer Bulletin Board showing Schoolwide Completion of Applications** • **Hold a Kickoff Pep Rally** • Make Application Marathon a Party with Food • Host a Parent Night During College Application Week • **Give out College Buttons for Students!** • Fill out an Application Worksheet Ahead of Time ([SUNY](#) and [CUNY](#)) • **Use Posters on Staircase to Show "Steps to College"** • Team up with Advisory Classes • [Have Students Research College and Make Presentations as Public Speaking Assignment](#)

## College Application Week for Everyone: Parents and Guardians

As all counselors can attest, parents and guardians are key allies in the college process, so it is a great idea to plan to include them in College Application Week. Be sure to send home information about college application week—this example of a [parent letter](#) (pg 27) from HESC is a great place to start.

If possible, work with your parent coordinator and/or PTA to host a parent night on or after College Application Week. If this is not possible for your school, College Application Week can be a good opportunity to build momentum that can encourage faculty and staff to help participate in a future college-focused parent night.

Even if you are not able to get parents and guardians to come to you, be sure to provide families with useful information to prepare for their child’s college process. These documents are great resources:

- [Planning for Success: Supporting Transitions through High School to College and Career](#)
- [College Bound: A Plan for Achieving in High School](#)
- Vocabulary lists for parents from *First in the Family*, available in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#)!
- [50 Strategies for Families to Start Early and Survive the College Admission Crush](#) (by Story2)

### Super Counselor Tip:

Some colleges offer their own materials for first-time college parents. Be sure to ask Admission Counselors to send these materials to your college office.

This one from Dickinson is [a great example](#).

### What are NYC counselors saying about... Hosting a successful parent night

*“My top tips for parent night:*

- *Provide food*
- *Schedule time for general Q&A, followed by time for more private Q&A at the end*
- *Encourage parents that speak another language to bring a translator*
- *Provide business cards and have a sign-up sheet for meetings to complete more time-intensive steps*
- *After parent night, send out notes reviewing the topics you covered to attendees”*

- Norma Feriz-Gordon, *College and Career Planning Manager,*  
Office of Postsecondary Readiness, New York City NY  
*Former School and College Counselor at Hillcrest High School*

## College Application Week for Everyone:

## Activities for Teachers and Non-Seniors

An outstanding College Application Week is relevant for everyone in the school including underclassmen and teachers. While seniors are busy finalizing and submitting applications there are a variety of ways to engage your freshmen, sophomores, and juniors.

- [Schedule a Campus Trip to a College in the City](#)
- Hold a school-wide pep-rally: younger students cheer on seniors as they announce their college lists!
- Ask teachers to run [classroom workshops](#) for juniors on
  - What College Means to YOU!
  - Building your College Counseling Resume
  - Understanding Standardized Tests
- Ask teachers to run early awareness [activities](#) for freshmen and sophomores on
  - College Affordability
  - Getting to Know [College Possibilities](#)
  - Curriculum Planning
- Have juniors research [CUNY support programs](#) and make in-class presentations
- Encourage classes to do Career and College Major Exploration on [Career One Stop](#), [O\\*Net](#), or [CareerZone](#)

Super Counselor Resource:  
[College Planning Handbook](#)  
and [9-12 College and Career Timeline](#)  
for students!

### What are NYC counselors saying about... Early Awareness during College Application Week

*“[College Application Week](#) is a great time to engage in early college awareness. I love bringing in alumni to 9th and 10th grade classrooms and organizing peer-to-peer conversations where younger students can ask questions about older students’ college stories. It’s a great way for younger students to expand their horizons and understanding of the college process and an equally valuable time for older students to be self-reflective and recommit to their college journey. For a school that does not yet have alumni, I’d recommend setting up college story interviews between students and teachers—just make sure the teachers being interviewed are not the ones running the class! As a bonus, the conversations will encourage teachers to be self-reflective as to how they are elevating college-going culture in their classrooms.*

– Joshua Steckel, Senior College and Career Planning Manager, Office of Postsecondary Readiness;  
Author of *Hold Fast to Dreams: A College Guidance Counselor, His Students, and the Vision of a Life Beyond Poverty*

## Social Media for College Application Week

## Stay involved in the nationwide dialogue by engaging with College Application Week on social media.

Have students post how they will #ReachHigher on [www.Bettermakeroom.org](http://www.Bettermakeroom.org)

Encourage students to sign up for [UpNext](#) by texting 'COLLEGE' to 44044 so they can receive free text messages that remind them of important tasks throughout the college process.

Promote College Application Week in NYCDOE's facebook and twitter pages.

- 1) Share a photo of your school's college-planning activities on NYCDOE's [Facebook/Twitter](#)
- 2) Encourage students to share a photo once they submit a college application or with someone helping them in the college-going process!
- 3) If your school is not on facebook or twitter, please send photos and caption to Kaity Modesto at [kmodesto@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:kmodesto@schools.nyc.gov) and we will share on official NYCDOE social media. Don't forget to collect [media consent form](#) if you haven't already.

Seniors! Oct 17-21 is College Application Week! What colleges are you applying to and why?  
#CollegeAccessforAll #ReachHigher

College Application Week is Oct. 17-21! College students/grads: inspire others. Share why you chose your college! #CollegeAccessforAll #ReachHigher

Our school is celebrating College Application Week, October 17-21! Learn about options for after high school! #CollegeAccessforAll

It's NY's annual College Application Week! Have you applied to postsecondary institution?  
#CollegeAccessforAll

Happy College Application Week! [<attach picture showing CAW activities>](#) #ReachHigher  
#CollegeAccessforAll

Tomorrow is College Application Week at [<insert school>](#). Don't forget to wear your favorite college gear or colors! #CollegeAccessforAll

[<Insert number>](#) of our seniors at [<insert school>](#) have applied to college, training programs or the military! Congrats, #classof2017! #CollegeAccessforAll

Colleges #bettermakeroom for our students here at [<school name>](#), who are geared up and ready to #reachhigher! #CollegeAccessforAll

**...and don't forget to tweet at the first lady [@FLOTUS](#)  
who will be following along from The White House**

## Thank You!

We hope this toolkit serves as a valuable resource as you coordinate your school's College Application Week. As a student's college counselor, you are *their* most valuable resource in the journey to and through college. We thank you deeply for extending your time and efforts to make College Application Week 2016 a success and for all that you do to ensure that NYC high school students provide pathways to College Access for All.

Again, thank you: this work couldn't be done without your dedication and passion!