Secondary School Placement
Each year, our ninth-grade students begin the final chapter of their academic journey at North Country School. It is an exciting time as our students and their families explore their next step into secondary schools. With hundreds of schools that offer excellent academic, athletic, artistic and community programs, families have much to consider. This process requires a strong and open partnership amongst all parties - NCS, students, families, and secondary schools - in order to navigate the application process.

Because secondary schools vary in academic rigor, size, structure, and program, the Secondary School Placement (SSP) Office works in collaboration with ninth-grade families to find schools that best meet the individual needs of each student. Knowing that no one school is the right school for all students, finding a proper “fit” is of paramount importance. Through individual conversations with families and students, our goal is to find a range of schools that are a good match for each student.

Families begin the secondary school process in the spring of a student’s eighth-grade year. While a time-consuming endeavor, the secondary school search process should conclude in the spring of their ninth-grade year with each student’s acceptance to a variety of schools.

Timeline 2023-24 Overview
Summer 2023
- June: Family meetings by Zoom with SSP Office
- Families research schools; students receive tutoring or do online work to prepare for the SSAT (and TOEFL, for international students).
- August: Families schedule school interviews and tours (please prioritize week of November 29 - December 4 as our Senior Interview Week)

Fall of 2023
- Class visits with secondary school representatives on campus; SSP Office does mock interviews with students
- The SSAT’s will be administered here at NCS on the following dates. Registration for these tests will open in August 2023.
  - Saturday, October 14
  - Saturday, December 9
  - Saturday, April 20
- October: TOEFL at a local test center (for nonnative English speaking students; Meredith Hanson will reach out via email to register when exact date is confirmed)

November 2023
- By Thanksgiving Break: Families register accounts with online application systems (Standard Application Online unless you have a current account through SSAT, Gateway to Prep Schools, and/or RavennaSolutions); students make progress on Student Questionnaires and Essays.
• **By November 15:** We ask students to speak with all adults at school they are asking for a recommendation (including English and math teachers, principal, and any teachers needed for supplemental recommendations)

**December 2023**
• **By December 15:** Families notify SSP Office of their finalized list of schools. It is critical for each student to have a balanced list of schools consisting of a couple “reach” schools, several “target” schools, and a few “likely” schools.
• Students who need to submit a graded essay should notify that teacher in early December so that a PDF file including the teacher’s feedback can be created in advance of application deadlines.
• **December or January:** TOEFL at a local test center (for nonnative English speaking students; Meredith Hanson will reach out via email to register when exact date is confirmed)
• **During Winter Break:** Students finish revising their short answers and essays in preparation or uploading

**January 2024**
• **By January 10:** Recommendations and transcripts uploaded by SSP Office (please note: families are responsible for submitting the student essays, graded writing sample, entrance exam scores – i.e. SSAT, ISEE, TOEFL – and any neuropsychological testing)
• **January 15:** First big wave of application deadlines for secondary schools

**Spring 2024**
• **March 10:** Letters of decisions from secondary schools
• **Late March and early April:** Revisit Days at secondary schools
• **April 10:** Enrollment deadline

**Summer before Ninth Grade - Research Schools**
NCS recommends that each eighth-grade family research schools over the summer. School websites, virtual tours, and outreach to NCS graduates who currently attend secondary schools are great ways to get more information about schools. At this stage in the process, we encourage all families to be open to a wide variety of schools, including both day and boarding.

**Summer before Ninth Grade - Entrance Test Preparation**
Families may look to enroll their students in SSAT test preparation during the summer for rising ninth-grade students. Families may arrange for their child to have individual/group tutoring sessions or students may use SSAT test preparation books (such as Kaplan or Princeton Review) for practice.

International students will also need to prepare to take the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) in the fall. Meredith Hanson will help families register and take the TOEFL at a nearby test center.
Summer before Ninth Grade - Arrange Interviews and Tours
In August, families should contact secondary schools to schedule appointments to visit and interview in the fall. Keep in mind, ninth graders are excused from classes the week after Thanksgiving weekend, so we ask you to schedule as many school visits as possible during that week so the students’ academic experience is minimally interrupted. Interview times fill up quickly, so please contact Admission Offices in August to schedule these visits. Please do not schedule more than two interviews per day.

Fall of Ninth Grade - Class Visits with Secondary School Reps
We traditionally have dozens of representatives visit NCS in the fall. With information from families about their student and the kind of school they are interested in (academic rigor, location, athletic interests, artistic interests, etc.), the SSP Office will invite a mix of schools to meet with all 9th graders during their secondary school preparation classes. School representatives will spend about forty-five minutes with students, making short presentations and allowing time for questions.

Week after Thanksgiving Day Weekend - Tours and Interviews
All ninth-grade students and their families are expected to participate in tours and interviews the week after Thanksgiving Day weekend. Interviews are an integral piece of the application as schools will not consider an applicant’s file complete without an official interview. Families should contact Admission Offices directly to arrange these appointments. Since tours and interviews can take up to two hours, families should visit only two schools per day.

Prior to Senior Secondary School revisit days, the SSP Office will conduct mock interviews with ninth graders to discuss proper conduct, a range of questions they can expect, and areas to highlight for their tours and interviews. Families should also discuss their own expected behavior of their child while on secondary school campuses.

In the weeks after Senior Secondary School revisit days, we will be able to accommodate a small number of zoom interviews during the school day. Please remember that in-person interviews provide an advantage in the application process and prevent missed class time.

Fall/Winter of Ninth Grade - SSAT (and TOEFL, for int’l students)
Secondary schools may require students to take the SSAT (and TOEFL, for international students) during the academic year in which they apply. Families are responsible for registering their students for the SSAT on the EMA website. If your child has a neuropsychological evaluation, please check the date of the evaluation. It should be updated every three years.

TOEFL registration is coordinated by Meredith Hanson; please do not register your student for TOEFL without contacting her first. Please look for communications from Meredith on these details.
NCS is an official SSAT test site and we plan to offer the SSAT on two Saturdays during the academic year (in October and December). When initially creating an account and registering for the SSAT, families should identify NCS as the sole recipient of their students’ scores using our SSAT school code, 5386. Later in the year (once families have decided definitively which schools they’re applying to), it is the family’s responsibility to release official score reports to each secondary school.

We recommend that each student take the SSAT in October. Students should then plan to take the SSAT for a second time in December in order to maximize their score results.

During school breaks, students may also take the SSAT at another test center or the SSAT At Home if it is geographically more convenient than NCS. Families should still identify NCS as a recipient of the scores using our SSAT school code, 5386.

**Fall/Winter of Ninth Grade - The Application**
Completing secondary school applications can be daunting, but online systems such as the Standard Application Online (SAO) can make the process more streamlined. Families may use the SAO to complete one application and one set of essays and send them to multiple secondary schools. Since more than 450 secondary schools accept the SAO, we recommend using this platform throughout the application process. There are a few schools that may not accept the SAO, but they typically will consider a different form of “common application.” These other application systems include Gateway to Prep Schools and Ravenna Solutions.

*The most competitive schools will require applications to be submitted by January 15. Other schools typically have application deadlines of February 1 and 15. Please check each school’s website for their application deadlines.*

Students are required to complete essays for their applications. While NCS offers broad guidance to our students in their essay writing, they must be the catalyst behind this part of the process. Students may use weekends, evenings, Thanksgiving Break, and Winter Break to work on their essays. We will also provide time during our Secondary School class for students to work on their essays. We are happy to proofread for obvious, grammatical errors, but it is the student voice that needs to come through in these essays. Keep in mind that schools will compare your child’s SSAT writing sample with what they submit in the application – they should not be reading like E. Hemingway or V. Wolf overnight. Families will assist students in uploading their students’ essays to the applications.

**Winter of Ninth Grade - Recommendations and Transcripts**
The SSP office will upload transcripts and teacher recommendations to the online application systems by the application deadline at each school. Most schools will require recommendations from the current English teacher, current math teacher, and a school administrator (for example: Principal/Head of School, secondary school counselor, or advisor). Some schools also ask for a fourth recommendation
from a science teacher, foreign language teacher, or coach. Our office has a list of schools that require these supplemental recommendations.

Please note: All recommendations are strictly confidential; families will not be able to view them. If a family needs a supplemental recommendation, the student should ask that person if they are able to complete it and then enter the recommender’s email address in the online application system. **The deadline for making this request is November 15.**

The SSP Office will submit the items below directly to the secondary schools on behalf of each student. Note: we will not submit transcripts until NCS has been added as a score recipient on a student’s SSAT scores. For students taking TOEFL, those scores must also be sent to the SSP Office.

- School Official Recommendation
- English Teacher Recommendation
- Math Teacher Recommendation
- Supplemental Recommendation (if required by a school)
- North Country School Transcript
- Previous School Transcript (if required by a school)

**March 10 – Notification Date**
Most secondary schools will release their decisions on March 10. Today, families are usually notified by email or they can login through an online portal to see the decision as soon as the clock strikes March 10! This is an exciting and anxious time for families and students, and we ask that you keep our office informed of all notifications.

**Late March and Early April - Revisit Days**
Schools will offer admitted students the opportunity to revisit before making their final enrollment decision. Revisit Days usually are held during the first week of April, when classes have resumed following Spring Break. Families should notify NCS’s Dean of Students if your child will miss classes for a Revisit Day. Schools will post their Revisit Day dates and times on their websites. Families are responsible for arranging transportation to these schools.

**April 10 - Commit to a Secondary School**
The school you select will require a signed enrollment contract and non-refundable deposit, typically by April 10. Once you have made your commitment, please notify the other schools. Your child’s acceptance has placed other students on the waiting list (possibly NCS classmates), and notification of your decision will have an impact on that waiting list.

We wish you the best with this school search process, and we invite you to contact us with questions along the way.

*Bill Newman, Director of Admissions & School Placement*