

# HANDBOOK TO SECONDARY SCHOOL COUNSELING

## A GUIDE TO THIS HANDBOOK

INTRODUCTION .....	2
YOUR RESOURCES AT FENN .....	2
WHAT TO DO IN THE FALL.....	3
• Obtaining material from independent schools	
• Setting up visits, tours, interviews	
• Registering for the SSAT or HSPT	
• Financial Aid	
• Considering public high school	
• Selecting graded English papers	
WHAT TO DO IN THE WINTER.....	8
• Where to apply	
• What you should submit to Fenn	
• What Fenn sends to schools	
• What families are responsible for	
• Other application materials	
○ Supplemental testing	
○ Material from non-Fenn sources	
• Writing final applications	
○ Missing application materials	
COUNTDOWN: MARCH TENTH - APRIL TENTH.....	10
• Hearing from independent schools	
○ School revisits	
○ School wait lists	
• Evaluating financial aid decisions	
• Communicating decisions to schools	
LOOKING AHEAD: APRIL TENTH – SEPTEMBER.....	12
• Finishing your Fenn career in good standing	
• Seeking help with course selection at your next school	
• Forwarding Fenn transcripts	
• Requesting Fenn records	
• Keeping in touch with Fenn	

## INTRODUCTION

The decision about which school your son will attend after leaving Fenn is a very important one. The Secondary School Counseling Office offers a variety of resources to assist you.

The counseling process normally begins in the spring of your son's seventh grade year. The Counseling Office hosts several programs: an informational event that introduces families to the admissions process, an opportunity for boys to meet with the current ninth graders, and a forum with admissions officers from local schools. The Upper School Division Head also hosts a Fenn Ninth Grade Night.

Throughout the late summer and early fall of your son's eighth or ninth grade year, the Counseling Office meets with all families who would like to learn about the secondary school process and who are considering applying to independent secondary schools. Family members meet with the Counseling Office to discuss: 1) your son's and your family's goals, 2) your son's current and past academic performance, 3) SSAT tests and scores, 4) school profiles and programs, and 5) the compilation of a balanced list of schools for your son. For ninth grade families, the counseling meeting occurs between the spring of the eighth grade year and early September. Please contact the Counseling Office to schedule an appointment.

Each year some eighth graders and their families explore options at schools other than Fenn for their ninth grade year. If you are considering this, Fenn advises you to take these steps before scheduling a meeting:

- Help your son settle into his eighth grade year - academically, socially, athletically – before entering into the secondary school admissions process, which is both demanding and time-consuming.
- Read the document titled “Questions and Answers about The Fenn Ninth Grade,” which is available at [www.fenn.org/secondarycounseling](http://www.fenn.org/secondarycounseling).
- Attend the Fenn Ninth Grade Night in October (In 2021-2022, there will be an additional Fenn Ninth Grade Night in the spring for seventh grade families).

If your family wants to pursue the idea of leaving after eighth grade, or at least to explore its possibility, please call Lauri Wishner at (978) 318-3616 to schedule an appointment with the Counseling Office.

In the late fall, the Counseling Office hosts an event that walks families through the application process. In the spring, Fenn holds a “revisit” day for eighth graders who may return as ninth graders.

## YOUR RESOURCES AT FENN

### To inquire about

- COUNSELING APPOINTMENTS
- SSAT schedule, registration information, and fee waivers; mock interview scheduling
- Counseling boys – Grade 9 and Middle School
- SSAT schedule and registration information; mock interviews
- Counseling boys – Grade 8
- SSAT schedule and registration information; mock interviews

### Contact

Lauri Wishner  
978-318-3616  
[lwishner@fenn.org](mailto:lwishner@fenn.org)

David Irwin  
978-318-3555  
[dirwin@fenn.org](mailto:dirwin@fenn.org)

Amy Stiga  
978-318-3650  
[astiga@fenn.org](mailto:astiga@fenn.org)

For more information, please visit our web page: [www.fenn.org/secondarycounseling](http://www.fenn.org/secondarycounseling).

## WHAT TO DO IN THE FALL

In early fall, you and your son should focus on thinking and talking about goals for secondary schools, attending open houses and admissions fairs, scheduling tours and interviews, and preparing and registering for the SSAT, an exam that many independent schools require as part of the application process.

### **1. OBTAINING MATERIAL FROM INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**

Before setting up live or virtual school visits, tours, and interviews, we encourage families to learn more about secondary schools by attending Open House events (live or virtual) or Admissions Fairs. You can also visit school websites or call school admissions offices to obtain resource materials.

- Visit [www.fenn.org/secondarycounseling](http://www.fenn.org/secondarycounseling), click on *downloads* and click on *secondary school directory* for a list of school website addresses.
- Please note that some Open House events fill up quickly, so you may want to register early.

### **2. SETTING UP VISITS, TOURS, INTERVIEWS**

When you find schools that interest you, we suggest you schedule a school visit and interview.

*Timing for Interviews* - Fenn recommends that you schedule your school visits and interviews to begin in mid-late October. This will allow your son to settle into the school year and give him more experiences to talk about and better questions to ask.

*How to Prepare for the Interview* –The purpose of the interview is to give the secondary school a better chance to know the applicant. Your son should be prepared to talk about himself, his interests, his life at Fenn, his academic and special talents, and his summer activities. He should relax and be himself.

In the fall, your son will have the opportunity to schedule a **MOCK INTERVIEW** and/or virtual mock interview through the Counseling Office. Please see the flyer titled “Secondary School Interview,” with suggestions on how to prepare for your visit and for meetings with admissions personnel. Make sure you are prepared with questions for interviewers and student tour guides by visiting school websites and reading their viewbooks.

We encourage you to have your son write short thank you notes to the interviewer and student tour guide. Feel free to email or hand-write your note.

*What Happens at an Interview* - Although school approaches vary, an on-campus visit typically lasts up to two hours. The interviewer will usually meet briefly with your whole family, and then spend about 30 minutes with you and your son separately. Then, either separately or together, you will tour the school with a student guide (who is often asked to submit his or her impressions afterward). We recommend that you wear a jacket and tie to interviews at schools that require them for students. If the school has a more relaxed dress code, you can dress according to the Fenn dress code, with a collared shirt tucked into tailored pants. The format and timing of a virtual visit and interview may vary.

*Absences Due to Interviews* - Your son should inform his teachers in advance about upcoming absences and make arrangements about the work he will miss. It is extremely important for your son to complete his course work during this process. Secondary schools consider first- and second-term grades in their admissions decisions.

*A Word of Caution* - Some families are falsely encouraged or discouraged by their interview experience. Remember that admissions decisions are not made until March, and are based on many factors, including the applicant's academic grades, teacher recommendations, test scores, record of extra-academic contributions at Fenn, special talents, and personal interview.

### **3. REGISTERING FOR THE SSAT AND HSPT**

#### **SSAT TEST REGISTRATION (for schools that require the SSAT)**

1. **REGISTER at [www.ssat.org](http://www.ssat.org). REGISTRATION FOR 2021-2022 OPENS ON AUGUST 1, 2021.** Register early for the most flexibility (preferably October to December). This year there are multiple testing options:

##### **A. TESTING AT FENN:**

- Standard testing and testing with accommodations
- paper-based test
- offered on 10/16, 11/13, 12/11, and 1/8/2022
- You may test at any/all of these test dates
- cost - \$155
- Seats at FENN fill quickly, so you may want to register early. You may select another test center if it is more geographically convenient for you.
- **TESTING AT FENN THIS YEAR WILL BE CLOSED, MEANING THAT TESTING WILL BE AVAILABLE ONLY TO FENN STUDENTS. YOU WILL NEED AN ACCESS CODE TO REGISTER. PLEASE EMAIL LAURI WISNER FOR THE CODE. THERE IS A DIFFERENT CODE FOR EACH TEST DATE.**

##### **B. PROMETRIC TEST CENTER testing:**

- Standard testing and testing with accommodations
- Computer-based test
- On-demand testing at your convenience – any day and any time
- Limit of 3x/school year for any computer-based testing (Prometric and SSAT at Home combined)
- Cost - \$215
- Locations in Boston (2), Burlington, Lowell, Worcester

##### **C. SSAT at HOME testing (through PSI):**

- Standard testing and testing with accommodations
- Offered on weekends every 3-4 weeks all year
- Computer-based test via a web application with remote and live proctoring
- Laptop and/or Internet access provided if you don't have both at home
- Limit of 3x/school year for any computer-based testing (Prometric and SSAT at Home combined)
- Cost - \$235

##### **D. FLEX testing:**

- Standard testing and testing with accommodations
- Scheduled testing through Dave or Amy
- Paper-based test

- Limit of 2x/school year so it should only be used as a test of last resort) (once between 8/1 - 11/14 and once between 11/29 - 7/31/2022). There is no flex testing from 11/15 – 11/28/2021.
- Cost - \$155 plus Fenn proctor fee if taken at Fenn
- OR cost - \$225 plus private consultant fee if taken with consultant

**ALL REGISTRATIONS BEGIN AT [www.ssat.org](http://www.ssat.org):** you may then be directed to the Prometric site or the PSI site, depending on which testing option you choose. You may register up to 90 days out and as late as 24 hours before a test date for the computer-based tests. All score reports will look the same (although FLEX test writing samples will be hand-written and the Prometric and SSAT at home writing samples will be typed). For equity and access concerns, schools will not be able to determine how you tested.

**HAVE SCORES SENT TO FENN** (*and only to Fenn; we are listed on the SSAT website as 'Fenn School,' not 'The Fenn School'*). **We would like to review scores with you before you release them to schools with your application packets.**

2. **WAIVER OF SSAT FEE:** Fenn can provide vouchers to families who qualify for financial aid at Fenn. If you would like a voucher, please email Lauri Wishner at [lwishner@fenn.org](mailto:lwishner@fenn.org) so she can process your request. Once the request is approved by SSAT, you will receive a fee waiver code via email to submit with your SSAT registration form. Fee waivers are not available for Fenn proctor fees for a flex test, consultant fees, or testing with a consultant.
3. **TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS:** Go to [ssat.org/testing/accommodations/overview](http://ssat.org/testing/accommodations/overview) for instructions on requesting accommodations. At the time of registration, the accommodations requested **MUST** be ones the student consistently uses throughout his years at Fenn, and they must be applied to the test registration by checking the appropriate box. Please allow sufficient time for processing.  
Contact information for testing accommodation verification:

Dr. Eden Dunckel  
Director of Learning Support Services  
Fenn School  
516 Monument Street  
Concord, MA 01742  
[edunckel@fenn.org](mailto:edunckel@fenn.org)

4. **PREPARE FOR THE SSAT:** There are a variety of different test-taking strategies for the SSAT. Some students may benefit from structured, active steps toward preparation. Your son may want to spend a few hours at home using online practice tests so he can familiarize himself with the SSAT format. In some cases, individual tutoring may help if a student's needs are well matched with a proven tutor. The Secondary School Counseling Office can provide you with SSAT tutoring resources. Online practice testing from SSAT is included with the test registration.
5. **RECEIVING SSAT SCORES:** Scores are released within a week after taking a computer-based test and two weeks after taking a paper-based test. Check the score release schedule online at [www.ssat.org](http://www.ssat.org).

### **HIGH SCHOOL PLACEMENT TEST (HSPT)**

Some parochial schools require the HSPT in lieu of the SSAT. The HSPT is generally offered on site at the parochial school. Test dates for the HSPT vary from the SSAT and are usually early in the fall. For more information, please visit the school's website, where you can register for the test.

#### **4. FINANCIAL AID**

Independent schools aim to attract and enroll students with diverse talents, passions, and life experiences. Schools try to meet the goal of creating diverse and vibrant school communities by providing financial aid to deserving families, which can offset some of the cost of attending an independent school.

In recent years, independent schools have reported a significant increase in requests for financial aid from their current students and applicants. Schools are working to meet this need by increasing the size of their financial aid budgets. While many students are awarded financial aid each year, most schools do not have sufficient funds to meet all of the financial aid needs of their prospective students. At many schools, highly qualified applicants are sometimes placed on a wait list or are admitted without financial aid because the school does not have the resources to meet all of the needs of the students it would like to admit.

As you begin to look at independent schools, it is important to evaluate whether you will need financial aid in order for your son to attend. As part of the application process, it would be beneficial for you to initiate a conversation with the admissions office to address the impact a financial aid request may or may not have on your application. If you decide to apply for financial aid, please follow the steps listed below.

##### **How should we apply for financial aid?**

If you decide to apply for financial aid, you should ask each school's financial aid office about its programs, procedures, and deadlines. If you are applying for financial aid, schools require the completion of the School and Student Services (SSS) application from NAIS ([www.sss.nais.org](http://www.sss.nais.org)). The SSS forms may take several weeks to process so you must allow ample time for paperwork to arrive at schools by their financial aid deadlines. You may want to complete the SSS paperwork in early December to allow for adequate processing time.

##### **How do schools make their financial aid decisions?**

Schools consider the SSS computation in order to assess a family's ability to pay educational expenses when determining the allocation of financial aid funds. Families may access the SSS computations. Each school reviews SSS and other data to determine a family's ability to pay. The school then considers the amount of financial aid available for the upcoming year. At nearly all independent schools, the need for financial aid exceeds the available funds and schools cannot support all requests. In this case, an applicant may be placed on a financial aid waitlist or be admitted without aid.

In general, schools do not base awards on academic, athletic, or similar "achievements" criteria. However, schools channel funds to address their goals and priorities.

Financial aid is strictly a matter between an independent school and a family. Fenn does not become involved in financial aid discussions with independent schools.

## **5. CONSIDERING YOUR OWN PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL**

Many families choose public school for their son's high school.

In the late fall, Fenn informs Concord and Carlisle families about events at Concord-Carlisle Regional High School. CCHS hosts a number of programs during the school year that are designed for Fenn parents and students who live in these two towns. Boys may also have the opportunity to spend a day visiting CCHS in the winter. These events may be dependent on the CCHS COVID-19 protocols in place for the 2021-2022 school year.

CCHS generally sends its registration materials to Fenn in February for distribution to prospective students. Fenn teachers will recommend courses for your son based on his performance and potential and we will forward that information to you. You may contact the teachers if you have questions about the course recommendations.

Other public high schools also make it easy to learn about what they offer. Please contact your high school's guidance office to obtain all registration materials and to learn about deadlines, procedures, release of records forms, and any informational meetings the school may offer. Fenn will assist, if the family is interested, in the course recommendation and registration process at other area public high schools. Please contact Lauri Wishner at 978-318-3616 for more information.

## **6. SAVING GRADED ENGLISH PAPERS**

Some schools require a teacher-graded paper from this year's English or social studies class. Students may discuss their options directly with their English or social studies teacher; we encourage students to reach out to their teachers by December 1<sup>st</sup>.

**STUDENTS SHOULD INCLUDE THE GRADED PAPER WITH THE APPLICATION MATERIALS THEY SEND TO SCHOOLS.**

# WHAT TO DO IN THE WINTER

## 1. WHERE TO APPLY

Families usually decide to apply to an independent secondary school after school visits and interviews. At this time, they also finalize the list of schools to which their sons will apply. We encourage your son to apply **ONLY** to schools that truly interest him and that he feels excited about. Your Secondary School Counselor at Fenn is available throughout the process to exchange impressions of schools and to discuss the list of schools you are considering.

## 2. WHAT YOU SHOULD SUBMIT TO FENN

- *Fenn Release of Records* form
- *“Blue Sheet” (a summary cover sheet listing each school and grade to which you are applying, and whether you are applying for a day or boarding position).*

We must receive forms **by December 1** in order to process your application packets.

## 3. WHAT FENN SENDS TO SCHOOLS

- **Confidential recommendations** written in mid-December by each applicant’s English, mathematics, and language teachers.  
[Please do not give math, language, and English teacher recommendation forms or links to individual Fenn teachers or to the Counseling Office; teachers access the secure **Common Application Recommendation forms for these subjects online**].
- Official Transcript
- Fall Term Report Card
- Advocacy Letter
- School Report
- Fenn Release of Record form
- Term 2 grades, as requested by schools
- SSAT reclassified test scores (for ninth grade repeat applications only)

## 4. WHAT FAMILIES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR

- Completing the student and parent sections of the application
- **Submitting the Supplemental Recommendation** (see below)
- **Releasing SSAT SCORE REPORTS** electronically to schools that require them
- **Submitting the graded paper** (see below)
- Providing any other required recommendations/materials

### **Supplemental (Personal or Special Interest) Recommendation:**

- Ask an adult who can speak to a student’s talent, passion, or interest
- Supply the writer of this recommendation with the electronic link or the appropriate forms/envelopes.
- **PLEASE ALLOW THE PERSON SUFFICIENT TIME BEFORE THE DEADLINE TO WRITE THE RECOMMENDATION**
- Feel free to reach out to the Counseling Office if you would like to discuss who might be a good person to write the recommendation.
- Seek a reference from someone who knows your son well (and who is not already writing a recommendation for English, math, or world language); applicants are better served by recommendations written by adults who know them well.

### **Graded Paper:**

- **STUDENTS NEED TO INCLUDE THE GRADED ENGLISH OR SOCIAL STUDIES PAPER WITH THE APPLICATION MATERIALS THEY SEND TO SCHOOLS IF THE SCHOOL REQUIRES ONE.**

## **5. OTHER APPLICATION MATERIALS**

- Fenn comments and advisor letters that are generated at the end of each term as progress reports to parents are not sent to secondary schools.
- Fenn does not automatically inform other schools of other test results (WISC or ERB, for example). Parents interested in sending additional information must either forward information beyond the standard “Fenn Package” described above or authorize Fenn to send it.
- *Records and material from non-Fenn sources:*  
Secondary schools are most interested in the applicant’s record at his present school and in his current school year. If you would like to send material from a previous school, a non-school program, or an outside consultant, you must authorize it to be sent directly to secondary schools. If you are considering sending supplemental material, we encourage you to discuss it with the Counseling Office before authorizing its release; please send us a copy of the supplemental material.

## **6. WRITING FINAL APPLICATIONS**

Completing school applications is your son’s responsibility. Parents can help by “brainstorming” ideas and by proofreading for mechanics and clarity of expression. We strongly recommend that you complete the applications over **the December vacation**. Carefully follow each school’s guidelines for completing their applications; some schools prefer them to be mailed while others request that you submit them online.

**Reminders about missing application materials from secondary schools:** Admissions offices at some schools send reminders about the absence of recommendations and other Fenn-supplied materials as soon as they receive your application. **Do not panic.** Please inform the Counseling Office and we will make sure that all is in order. Fenn’s application packets are sent in mid-January, and it may take schools several weeks to process all documentation.

## COUNTDOWN: MARCH TENTH - APRIL TENTH

### 1. HEARING FROM INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

Schools notify applicants of their decisions (Accept, Wait List, Deny) on March 10. Please contact the Counseling Office if you would like to discuss admissions decisions.

If your son has been **ACCEPTED** to a school, he will receive an invitation to a “revisit day.” The “revisit day” is a valuable opportunity to learn about each school and its culture.

- We recommend revisiting ALL SCHOOLS that you are considering attending.
- We suggest that you think about what you are looking for in a school program as you prepare for your “revisit days.”

**Please respond (yes OR no) in a timely manner to all “revisit day” invitations.**

- RSVP “Yes” immediately as “revisit days” do fill up.
- RSVP “No” if you will not attend.

If your son has been placed on a **WAIT LIST** at a school:

- Contact the school’s admission office immediately if you would like to stay on its wait list.
- If your son is interested in remaining on a wait list, he should communicate (via letter, email, or phone) with the Director of Admissions and with the admissions officer (and coach or head of a specific program – i.e., band) with whom he interviewed.
- Schools that go to their wait lists will typically do so around mid-April.

In recent years, very few students have moved from wait lists to acceptances. Please inform the Counseling Office if you choose to remain on a wait list so that we can continue to advocate on your behalf.

Schools do not extend revisit invitations to applicants on their wait lists.

If your son was **DENIED** admission to a school, and you have questions about the decision, please contact the Counseling Office.

### 2. EVALUATING FINANCIAL AID INFORMATION

On March 10, you will also receive information about your financial aid application. Financial aid decisions are made based on documented family need and a school’s available financial aid budget. If you receive a financial aid award that you feel does not meet your full need, it is appropriate to contact the school to discuss whether they can adjust the award package.

Some schools accept students only if they can fully fund a financial aid request; thus, financial aid **may** affect admissions decisions.

Financial aid is strictly a matter between an independent school and a family. Fenn does not become involved in financial aid discussions with schools.

### **3. COMMUNICATING DECISIONS TO SCHOOLS**

April 10 is the deadline for replying to **ALL** offers of admission. Your son should notify each school as soon as he decides whether to confirm an acceptance, decline an acceptance, or wish to remain on its waitlist.

If you are unsure about how to decline an acceptance, we suggest you politely respond via an email or a telephone message to the admissions office. Thank the admissions staff for their efforts and consideration to you and relay your decision.

Please observe this same courtesy and procedure in informing your public high school guidance office promptly, if you decide to withdraw your registration.

## **LOOKING AHEAD: APRIL TENTH - SEPTEMBER**

### **1. FINISHING YOUR FENN YEAR IN GOOD STANDING.**

If you are a ninth grader, your Fenn ninth grade record becomes part of your secondary school record and, as such, will be a component of your secondary school transcript when you apply to colleges. If you are leaving Fenn after 8th or 9th grade, how you have performed in your courses affects what courses you are allowed to take next year, especially in science, math, and world languages. Work hard to keep your grades up through the end of the year.

### **2. SEEKING HELP WITH COURSE SELECTION AT YOUR NEXT SCHOOL**

- Your new school may send you course placement forms to be completed by some of your current teachers. These forms are most often used to certify readiness for the next course in sequence. Please contact the Counseling Office if you would like help with these forms.
- A few schools require placement tests either this spring, this summer, or early next fall. It is appropriate to review the material on which you will be tested.
- You can consult with your Fenn teachers for information about course levels if you have any questions. You can also contact the people in charge of scheduling at your new school and can refer them to our Counseling Office if necessary.

### **3. FORWARDING FENN TRANSCRIPTS**

After Fenn's graduation, the Secondary School Counseling Office automatically mails a copy of your Fenn transcript (with all end-of-year academic grades from your years at Fenn) and your final report card to your new school.

### **4. REQUESTING FENN RECORDS**

Following current federal and state standards for handling educational records, Fenn permanently retains your transcript, report cards, standardized test reports, instructor and advisor comments, and consent for release of records.

### **5. STAYING IN TOUCH WITH FENN**

Fenn likes to hear about its students' transition to a new school. Fenn sends a survey to graduates, asking about their experiences and we appreciate all responses. There are also less formal ways for Fenn alumni to keep in touch: through alumni reunions, attendance at Fenn sports events, and visits to campus. The Fenn Alumni Office will communicate with you through its various mailings announcing upcoming events and reunions.