

HIGH SCHOOL OPTIONS

A Guide for Breakthrough Manchester Students & Families

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INTRODUCTION

As you look toward high school, you may not be aware of all of the choices that are available to you. In order to find a school or program that best fits your interests and needs, it is critical that you begin thinking about what you want now...and that you take the steps necessary to end up where you want to be! As you are thinking about high school, consider the following:

- ***You have choices!*** There are essentially four kinds of high schools: public, parochial, independent day, and boarding. Within these schools there are many choices to be made. You'll have to decide what level of classes you wish to take, whether you want to take advanced placement classes, how you will be extracurricularly involved, etc.
- ***Learn all of the details.*** It is crucial to be well informed about the academic program you will enter. Some programs are very structured to make sure that you have met all requirements for college admission, while others give you a tremendous amount of responsibility in terms of choosing your classes and course of study. Read materials from the school or browse their website, talk to students who attend or have attended the school and, if possible, visit the school to learn about its structure and philosophy so that you know where you are and what you need to do.
- ***Tuition should not prevent you from applying to any school.*** Most schools that have tuition costs have some form of financial aid. You should find out the level of aid available at different schools so that you know what to expect as you go through the process. You should also understand that most schools will expect you to pay some portion of the tuition.
- ***Always keep your college goals in mind.*** It is better to struggle in harder classes than to excel in easier ones. Generally, a college will view a B in an honors class more favorably than an A in a regular class. Make sure that you are enrolling in the most challenging academic program you can manage.
- ***Where will you be happy?*** Do you want a big school or a small school? Do you want to attend school locally or look elsewhere? What kinds of classmates do you want to have? How independent are you?



TYPES OF SCHOOLS

Public Schools: District

Manchester has three large (2000+) public high schools (Central, Memorial, and West) that offer a wide variety of programs. Each school has four levels of academic classes ranging from honors level (4) to a very basic level (1). **While Level 2 courses are regarded as “college track”, many colleges and universities do not consider them to be adequate preparation for college.** For example, UNH-Durham generally does not accept students who have taken all Level 2 classes. **With rare exceptions, Breakthrough students should be in Level 3 and 4 classes.**

Entry into the levels of classes is determined by the recommendation of 8th grade teachers. In March of the 8th grade, you will request the classes you wish to take and teachers will approve or deny your requests. **You and your parents/guardians need to know that a parent/guardian is entitled to request that their child be placed in a different track than is recommended by the teacher.** It is crucial for students and parents/guardians to play an active role in the decision-making process from the very beginning. Ultimately, the classes that you take are up to you and your parents/guardians.

It is also important that you know that rules for participation in different levels vary by school. Some schools allow you to take a mixture of classes (for example, Level 3 math and Level 4 English) while other schools require you to take all courses in the level of your lowest class (for example, if you are not approved for Level 4 math, you must take all Level 3 courses). Again, knowledge is the key to your success. **Ask lots of questions!**

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| • Central High School: | 603-624-6363 | www.central.mansd.org |
| • Memorial High School: | 603-624-6378 | www.memorial.mansd.org |
| • West High School: | 603-624-6384 | www.west.mansd.org |

Public Schools: Charter

Charter schools are non-sectarian, tuition-free, public schools of choice. They are publicly funded and open to all students, regardless of geographic or district location. Each school adheres to the guidelines of its charter, so they are independent of most state programs and initiatives to allow for innovation, but they are still accountable for both academic results and sound fiscal practices.

Charter schools tend to be smaller than the public district schools (100-500 students) and may combine elementary, middle and high school grade levels. These schools often focus their course of study in a particular area such as math and science or the arts. The curriculum at charter schools varies as a result of the guidelines they set for themselves in their charters, but most offer a college preparatory track for all enrolled students.

smaller than public schools, allowing for individual attention. It is likely that you will know your teachers and counselors well. Most parochial schools offer a college preparatory curriculum for all students.

Although parochial schools generally have lower tuition than independent schools, they often have less financial aid. Sometimes, students at parochial schools look for individuals who will sponsor a portion of their tuition. There is only one parochial high school in Manchester - Trinity High School. Others in the area include Bishop Brady High School in Concord and Bishop Guertin High School in Nashua.

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| • Trinity High School: | 603-668-2910 | www.trinity-hs.org |
| • Bishop Guertin High School: | 603-889-4107 | www.bghs.org |
| • Bishop Brady High School: | 603-224-7418 | www.bishopbrady.edu |

Boarding Schools

Boarding schools are similar to independent day schools except that students live at school in dormitories staffed by faculty members who serve as advisors and mentors to the students. Room and board (meals) are included in the price of tuition, which generally runs quite high. However, boarding schools typically can offer more financial aid than day schools. Class size is small and, like independent day schools, it is assumed that every student will go to college. Admission to boarding schools is extremely competitive.

There are a very large number of boarding schools in New England and many more around the country. While they are certainly not for every student or family, they can work out extremely well for some. Boarding schools come in all different sizes, locations, and structures. They range from very small (200 students) to fairly large (over 1,000 students). Most are co-ed, some are single sex. They range academically from extremely rigorous to fairly challenging. Students in these schools often come from around the country and, sometimes, from around the world.

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| • Philips Exeter Academy | 603-772-4311 | www.exeter.edu |
| • New Hampton School | 603-677-3400 | www.newhampton.org |
| • The Association of Boarding Schools (TABS) | | |
| <i>You can request a free Boarding Schools Directory and ask questions.</i> | | |
| | 1-800-541-5908 | www.boardingschools.com |

Boarding Schools in NH (this is a sample, there are more)

Brewster Academy, *Wolfboro*

Cardigan Mountain School, *Canaan*

Dublin School, *Dublin*

Hampshire Country School, *Rindge*

High Mowing School, *Wilton*

Holderness School, *Plymouth*

Kimball Union Academy, *Meriden*

New Hampton School, *New Hampton*

Phillips Exeter Academy, *Exeter*

Proctor Academy, *Andover*

St. Paul's School, *Concord*

The White Mountain School, *Bethlehem*

Tilton School, *Tilton*

FINDING THE RIGHT SCHOOL

There is a wide variety of schools in the area, across the state and around the country. Each has its own philosophy, curriculum and specialties. How can you find the right match for you and your family?

Things to Consider

- **Academic Rigor-** Academic standards and expectations vary from school to school. At college preparatory schools it is expected that all students will go to a four year college.
- **Specialization-** If you have a particular interest or talent, such as music, sports, marine science or journalism, there may be a school that offers an intensive program of study in that area, or that provides more focused instruction and opportunities in an activity.
- **Social Factors-** Smaller schools may encourage more students interactions in and out of the classroom, while larger ones may be more diverse, allowing for more extensive social networking. Some schools also require more student and family involvement.

All schools offer some advantages, including competitive academic and extracurricular programs. However, it is up to you to seek these opportunities in order to get the most from your education and to give you the best options for college and the future.

APPLYING TO A SCHOOL

Once you have decided on a school or several schools that you feel are a good fit for you and your interests, you need to apply. The application process can be long and it will require some effort from you and your family. It is best to start as soon as possible. Many schools begin their admissions season in the fall and applications are due by mid-winter, but all have their own deadlines, so be sure you know

these important dates. Application for all schools will be made up of several parts, including an essay, transcripts from your current school, a teacher recommendation and standardized test scores. Be sure that you know everything that you need to submit to make your application complete and on time.

Applying for Financial Aid is a separate process from the admissions application, however the two go hand in hand. **You must request a financial aid application when you inquire for admissions if you want to be considered for financial aid.**

Campus Visit

If possible, try to schedule a visit to the school during a school day. You will be able to see the students (your future peers) in action and you will get a sense of daily routine. Most schools will offer a campus tour for you and your family to show you the ins and outs of the school. Take advantage of this time to look carefully at the buildings, classrooms, cafeteria, gymnasium, fields, auditorium, etc. Ask lots of questions. (Please see *Questions to Ask* at the end of this packet.) The school may invite you to spend a day on campus with a student in your grade or in the grade you will be entering. A visit day is another opportunity to see what it might be like to actually go to the school.

Some schools may require a campus visit, a day with a student, or an on-campus interview as part of your application. Be sure to know if you need to schedule a visit.

Standardized Tests

An entrance exam or standardized test is a requirement for many schools. The Secondary School Admissions Test (SSAT) is commonly accepted, however, some schools may have their own specific exam. Ask the admissions office what tests they would like you to take and when the tests are offered.

SSAT

The SSAT is the admissions exam required by many independent schools across the United States. It is a timed, multiple choice aptitude test that includes a Writing Sample, a Quantitative (math) section, a Verbal section, and a Reading Comprehension section. Test scores should be reported directly to the schools to which you are applying. There is a place on your registration form for this information. Breakthrough is able to provide fee waivers – contact the Breakthrough office (641-9426 or mzackey@derryfield.org) for more information.

- **SSAT (Secondary School Admission Test)**

www.ssat.org

Financial Aid

Financial Aid is probably the biggest concern for most students and families who are thinking about a private school. Tuition can be a great expense. ***However, you should never let tuition keep you from applying to any school.*** Most schools offer some sort of financial aid program to families and there are different ways to pay for your education. The key is to ask many questions about financial aid when speaking to schools so that you are sure you understand what is available and how you can apply to be eligible to receive this aid. You will want to know the full tuition for one academic year, what kind of

payment options are available, how many students at the school receive financial aid, what kind of awards are given, and the average amount of a financial aid package.

Financial Aid Process

1. Call the admissions office of the school to request a financial aid application and when it is due.
2. Complete the Parent Financial Statement (PFS). You can get the paper forms or apply online at <https://sssbynais.org/parents>.
3. Send all necessary materials (PFS, copies of your Federal Income Tax Forms, and others) to the school **before** the deadline.
4. *Optional*- provide a statement to the school to explain any special circumstances that affect your family's ability to contribute.

Parent Financial Statement (PFS)

The PFS must be completed in order to be considered for financial aid by an independent school. This is a nationally generated form that takes your family's financial information and uses it to calculate your need and your expected contribution. You can apply on paper, but it is preferred that you apply online (<https://sssbynais.org/parents>). The PFS asks many questions and can be complicated. Be sure to call the school admissions office if you are uncertain while you are filling it out.

Good Things to Know

- **ASAP**- The sooner you can complete your financial aid forms and your application to the school, the better your chances for receiving aid. Awards are not given on a "first come first served" basis necessarily, but the Financial Aid Committee will start to give aid as soon as the applications are due. If you submit your forms late, there may not be as much money to award.
- **Need Blind Admission**- "Need Blind Admissions" means that the schools' decision to admit a student will not be affected by the student's need for financial aid. It is important to understand that you may be admitted to the school, but you still may not receive the amount of financial assistance your family needs to cover the cost to attend.
- **Family Contributions**- While financial aid is awarded to families in need, school often expect them to contribute something to the cost of tuition. Rarely do financial aid packages cover the full amount. Your contributions show the school that you are committed to and invested in your own education.
- **Extra Costs**- There are often extra costs associated with attending a school that are **not** covered in the tuition. Books and supplies, school activities, athletic equipment, are just some of the things that may add to expenses.

WHAT IF I'VE MISSED DEADLINES?

Ideally, you won't need to know the answer to this question. But if you realize that you've missed deadlines or registered for the wrong classes...**DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT!** Talk with your parents/guardians, the school, or Breakthrough because there may still be some options. Never assume that you've missed the boat. Still, it is important to be very conscious of deadlines. Often, although you might still be admitted late to an independent boarding, parochial, or day school, there will be no financial aid left. In essence, don't close doors on yourself. **BUT**, if you think you have, try to open them again!

WHAT NEXT?

If you are interested in public district schools...

You will register for courses in the winter of your 8th grade year. **We strongly recommend that you take all Level 3 and/or Level 4 classes.** If your teacher does not recommend these levels for you, talk with your parents/guardians and your school counselor. Remember, ultimately you and your family determine the courses you will take.

If you are interested in public charter schools...

The Academy of Science and Design is the only charter school in the area, located in Nashua. If you are interested in applying, call the admissions office for information (603-595-4705). **Applications are due December 5, 2014.** Upon receipt of your complete application packet, you will receive confirmation and instructions about the required testing and information session which take place in January.

If you are interested in independent day schools...

The Derryfield School is the only independent day school in Manchester. If you are interested in applying, call the school for materials (603-669-4524). **Applications are due January 30, 2015,** and require that you take the SSAT. In addition, you will need to do a school visit and interview. Make sure to ask important questions about financial aid. Financial Aid forms are also due January 30, 2015.

If you are interested in parochial schools...

Open houses, admissions tests, and the application process begin in November. Call the schools, preview their materials, and schedule a visit. Make sure to get all information on financial aid, admissions requirements, and deadlines.

If you are interested in boarding schools...

The application process for boarding schools is similar to that for independent schools. It requires an exam (SSAT or equivalent), a written application, and an interview. Applications are usually due around February, so it is important that you select the schools to which you wish to apply and gather application information specific to that school.

THINKING AHEAD – FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES IN HIGH SCHOOL

There are many opportunities and programs available to help you on the path to college once you select your high school. Breakthrough will do our best to notify you of these opportunities at the times when they become available, but here is a brief overview of some of the program to keep them on your radar. It is important to note that many of these programs are available to you regardless of your choice of high school.

During the School Year

Access Academy

This tuition-free after school opportunity run through St. Anselm's College is designed to join refugee, immigrant youth, and underrepresented high school students from the four Manchester high schools together with college students from St. Anselm's for skill building, teamwork, and unique learning opportunities. The program meets once a week to study topics such as Humanities, Computer Construction and Literacy, College Access, Public Achievement, and GPS - Biodiversity. Transportation to and from the program is provided to students. This exciting program allows you to receive high school credit, provides exposure to the beautiful college campus at St. Anselm's, and teaches you valuable skills on researching, presenting, and the ins and outs of college life. Students apply by contacting their school's ELO representative.

CAPSS (Caring Adults Promoting Student Success)

This mentoring program for students in 9th grade was recently launched by Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Manchester to match incoming freshmen with college-educated business professionals for four years. Once matched, mentors and mentees exchange weekly emails and meet once a month at the student's school. The CAPSS program helps mentors and mentees build strong personal relationships while students develop key college-success skills, such as a critical thinking, self-advocacy, grit, social capital, and financial literacy. It also guides mentees step-by-step through the college exploration, application, and transition process. For more information, visit <http://www.bbbsmanchester.org/our-programs/capss-mentoring.php>. To apply, contact Rachel Fender at (603) 669-5365 or by email at rachel@bbsmanchester.org.

ETS (Educational Talent Search)

The mission of Educational Talent Search is to prepare academically qualified limited income, first generation* New Hampshire youth to complete secondary school and enroll in and complete a program of postsecondary education. By providing academic advising, career, college, financial literacy and financial aid information, ETS increases educational opportunities for these youth. The ETS program is offered at Central, Memorial, and West High Schools, and students can speak to their school guidance counselor to obtain an application. For more information, visit <http://www.ets.unh.edu/index.html>.

*First generation = neither parent has graduated from a 4-year college.

Upward Bound (NOTE: Summer & School Year Component)

This free program is available to students in 9th, 10th and 11th grades at Central, Memorial, or West High School who are in good academic standing, are seriously considering attending college, and whose parents or guardians meet federal income and educational guidelines. To be educationally eligible, the parent(s) with whom the student lives cannot have a degree from a four-year college. The program contains a summer and school year component. During the six-week summer program, students live on the campus of the University of New Hampshire. Their days are packed with challenging courses, creative problem-solving initiatives, group work in communication skills, trips, sports and all kinds of fun. During the school year, Upward Bound hosts an extensive academic year program to advise, motivate and enrich students throughout the school year. For more information on the program, visit <http://www.upwardbound.unh.edu/prospective.html>.

STEAM (Science Technology Engineering Arts Math) Ahead NH

STEAM is currently available to students at West High School. STEAM Ahead NH is a partnership between West High School, the Manchester School District, Manchester Community College, the University System of New Hampshire, SNHU, and Manchester businesses DYN and SilverTech. The goal of the project is to provide a rigorous college-level learning experience for high school students who will earn up to one full-year of college credits at no cost, and to connect students to quality STEAM careers so that they may fill local STEAM jobs and live and work in New Hampshire. For more information about the STEAM Ahead initiative, please contact Bob Baines at 603-263-7883 or bob@steamaheadnh.com

During the Summer

ACCESS EXETER

ACCESS EXETER, a program of accelerated study in the arts and sciences, offers students entering grades eight and nine access to the wide range of resources available at Phillips Exeter Academy. Participants share in a partnership of cooperative learning and sharpen their skills of observation and expression. Students will participate in one of ACCESS EXETER'S six academic clusters: Project Exeter: A Greener Earth, The Land and the Sea, Problem-Solving: An Odyssey of the Mind, A Global Community, The Creative Arts: Let Your Spirit Soar, or Exeter C.S.I.: Crime Scene Investigation. ACCESS EXETER is a community of approximately 280 students and more than twenty interns and teachers. Students who reside on campus for the summer will live in one of several small dormitories or houses, each staffed with faculty members and proctors. Day students will be affiliated with one of the dorms or houses. All students will be part of a community that enjoys living and studying together. For more information on the program, visit http://www.exeter.edu/summer_programs/7324_7484.aspx.

Girls Summer Leadership Program at Dana Hall

The Girls Summer Leadership Program provides a special setting for girls to work with high school and adult mentors to gain valuable skills and resources that they can take with them as they enter high school. The Girls Summer Leadership Program is a 7-day/6-night residential program open to girls who have completed eighth grade and will enter a high school in the fall. In specially-designed workshops and activities, girls build leadership skills, focusing on communication, decision making, collaboration, conflict resolution, anti-bullying and ally training, problem solving, and understanding differences. The program takes place on Dana Hall's beautiful 52-acre campus in Wellesley, Massachusetts. Under the supervision of residential faculty members, girls live with roommates in Dana Hall dormitories. For more information, visit <http://www.danahall.org/programs/gslp/index.aspx>.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Ask school administrators, admissions representatives, current or past students.

- * What is the curriculum? Are there exciting courses in your area of interest?
- * What are graduation requirements? What classes should you take as a college-bound student?
- * What type of academic support does the school offer? Is there tutoring available? What about academic advising, study skills courses, etc.?
- * What type of personal support does the school offer? Is the counselor accessible? Where can you go for help?
- * How approachable are the teachers? Do they have time to work with you individually?
- * How much academic pressure is there at the school? Is it rigorous enough to prepare you for college yet balanced enough to meet your needs?
- * What must you consider financially? What is the tuition, if any? What level of contribution does the school expect from you and your family?
- * What types of students are at the school? Is the student body ethnically, economically, and culturally diverse? What middle schools did the students attend?
- * What types of students would be most happy at this school? Who would NOT be happy?
- * What classes are offered in the performing and visual arts? Can you take art, music, drama?
- * What kinds of athletic teams does the school have? How competitive is it to participate in athletics?
- * What co-curricular activities and student organizations exist at the school? Are there opportunities for leadership?
- * What kind of college counseling does the school offer? What kinds of colleges do students attend?