

# **Guide to Secondary School Admissions**



## **The Rumson Country Day School**



***Fall 2014***

## **Our Admissions Philosophy**

This guide aims to help Rumson Country Day School families with the transition to secondary school. RCDS prides itself on the extensive help and support it provides throughout this process, and the success of our secondary school guidance program is clearly evident from our graduates' happiness and achievement in high school. Regardless of the high schools our families pursue, RCDS provides expert guidance based on our in-depth knowledge of each individual child as well as the secondary school landscape.

RCDS encourages our families to send their child to the school where he or she is most likely to succeed. This is not the same as sending a child to the "best" school he or she can get into. Instead, it involves taking a careful and honest assessment of a child's strengths and weaknesses, considering what is best for the family, and evaluating schools based not only on what they have to offer the child, but also on the contributions the child is going to make to the school.

We believe in honesty and transparency throughout the entire process. Sometimes, this means the advice we give may not be exactly what our parents want or expect to hear. We ask that you trust our knowledge of your child and the schools he or she is considering, and our years of experience successfully placing our graduates.

To this end, we want to remind you that the process does not conclude the moment a child is admitted into a school. The goal must be bigger than just "getting in." As much as possible, we ask you to be honest about why you or your child is attracted to a school: is it because of "bumper-sticker recognition," or do you believe it's where your child's needs are going to be met so that he or she can flourish and grow?

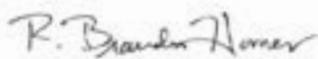
Rumson Country Day is not a feeder for any particular school. We send our graduates to a wide array of schools: public and private, large and small, religious and non-denominational, hours away and just around the corner. Our kids are fantastic jugglers; they do well almost everywhere they go. This breadth allows our families to choose what is right for them and them alone. Please don't allow gossip or third-party stories color your impression of a school. Judge schools only after you've visited them, and remember that what might be exactly right for your family may not be the best choice for another.

And, above all, remember that all children are works in progress; they are still becoming who they are going to be. No matter how long your child has attended RCDS, you've seen him or her grow in amazing, unpredictable ways. The same will happen at the next school.

It is our hope that this guide will make the coming months easier. As always, check specifically with the schools to confirm any dates listed in this guide. If you end up having to make a difficult choice between multiple schools, we advise you to make the decision; please do not put it in the hands of your child. Of course, you'll want his or her input, but in the end, where to send a child for high school is a choice that should be made by the adults in the room.

We wish you luck. Just as it is a privilege to welcome students into our school, we take great pride in the way we lead them out. At Homecoming and just before the Thanksgiving holiday, when our alumni return donning the sweatshirts of their high schools, looking happy and tired and healthy, and when they poke their heads into their old classrooms and remember the Little Dining Room and remark on how small the halls seem, we know we've done well.

R. Brandon Horner



Director of Secondary School Placement  
The Rumson Country Day School



## II.

### **Criteria for School Selection**

We believe the following factors (in order of importance) should be considered when choosing a school. *Note:* “Reputation” and “College Matriculation” are *not* on this list!

#### **1. Geography**

All secondary school decisions begin with this consideration, and it affects every family. Geography is a significant factor not only for potential boarding school students, but also for children who are interested in attending public, parochial, and private day schools. If a family loves its town and local high school, and wants to be a part of the culture of that school, that is a geographic factor. If a school is only twenty minutes away, but draws widely, so your child may end up with close friends who live an hour away, that is a geographic factor. If a boarding school is only an hour away and you will be able to watch your daughter’s field hockey games and make it home for dinner on a Wednesday night, but another is four hours away and you won’t see your child until Thanksgiving, that is a geographic consideration. Draw your mileage circles and decide how far is too far. If a school is forty-five minutes too far away, it’s really going to factor negatively into your child’s secondary school experience.

#### **2. Programs and facilities**

Ask your child: how would you be involved if you attended this school? Which classes would you take? Which clubs or teams would you try to join? Which spaces in the school would you be most likely to occupy? It’s okay to be turned on to a school because of a new building, or an academic or extracurricular program, or a specific teacher or coach (although remember, they might leave). Pay particular attention to the things a school has that can’t be found elsewhere. In the arms race of school advancement, every campus has a new arts building or student center or library. What does the school have that you’ve never seen before?

### 3. Size

When we ask families to consider school size, we're asking them to look at more than just the enrollment numbers. In all schools, size affects structure; it dictates when, where, and how students eat lunch, how many levels of athletic teams there are, who students live with in a dormitory, how active a student can be in extracurricular activities. Most importantly, it dictates class size. Depending on the schools you're considering, your child may be faced with class sizes in high school that double the class sizes at RCDS. At RCDS, small class sizes not only enhance student engagement and accountability, but teach our students to be self-advocates and to foster close relationships with their teachers. In our experience, this is where large high school class sizes can become a detriment to RCDS students. It's not just the other bodies in the room. Sometimes, our students who attend high schools with larger class sizes find that their teachers do not or cannot afford them the same level of "contact time" they've grown accustomed to at RCDS. In these circumstances, it is often only our most forward students, those who speak up, make themselves known, and set appointments to meet for extra help, who find success in larger classes. When considering a school with larger numbers, ask yourself if your child is more likely to disappear or make herself heard in a room of twenty or more students.

Other size questions include: Are there Post Graduate students? What is the percentage of day vs. boarding students? How and when do the class sizes increase? (Many boarding schools add a third of their students sophomore year.) Is there an advisory system? How many college counselors are there? And so on.



#### **4. Gender and Religious Affiliation**

Many of the schools our families consider are religiously affiliated or single sex. As every family feels differently about these factors, our only advice is this: if your child is willing to consider a school, get them on campus and let them see it for themselves. This is particularly important in single sex schools, where the most hesitant applicants may become quick fans when they see the benefits of these schools in person. That said, if single sex is an absolute non-starter with your child, we would discourage you from pursuing those options.

### **III.**

#### **Schools' Criteria for Student Selection**

1. Transcripts – RCDS sends year-end sixth and seventh grade grades and grades from the first marking period in eighth grade. After a student has graduated, we send that student's sixth, seventh, and eighth grade year-end grades to the high school the student is attending. A student in an honors-level course has an "H" designation next to his or her average. If we have the student's SSAT scores, we include them on our transcript, so it is very important that you let the Main Office know if you do not want your SSAT scores sent with your transcript. RCDS does not send ERB scores to high schools. Grades are the primary determining factor that schools use to select its students.

2. Recommendations – Most schools requiring recommendations will ask for three: one from the head of school or placement director, one from an English teacher, one from a Math teacher. Sometimes, schools will require a student's current (eighth grade) teachers; sometimes they do not. These recommendations ask faculty to discuss a student's academic potential and achievement as well as his or her attitude and character. You may have additional letters written by parties outside of the school (by an outside coach or music instructor, etc.), but we recommend you limit these letters to one. Multiple letters, particularly from people who only know an applicant peripherally, do more harm than good. In order to preserve integrity, many of these recommendations ask you or your child to sign a confidentiality release. We consider these recommendations confidential; please do not ask a school to see your child's recommendations.

3. Test Scores – Schools use various tests. Most boarding schools use SSAT, but day and parochial schools may have their own tests. The weight of test scores is dictated by a school's selectivity.

Often, a high test score will not “get you in,” but a low one will “keep you out.” Some schools ask for a student’s “first choice” on a standardized test, and they will automatically wait-list anyone who selects a different school.

4. Interviews – Schools interview candidates to assess the role they will play in the school community. Schools interview parents as well. Like test scores, a great interview can help (though it will never trump a poor transcript), but a bad interview will seriously harm a candidate’s chances of admission. Bad interviews are ones in which the student and his or her parents come across as uncommunicative, rude, arrogant, or unrealistic.

5. Application Materials – Schools carefully read student essays, not only to glimpse a student’s writing ability, but to gauge a student’s character. Essays must be written by the student (it’s painfully obvious when they’re not), but they also must be clean, clear, and free of glaring grammatical errors. Schools also use these essays to look for red flags. (Example: a family applies for financial aid, but the applicant’s essays are all about extravagant family vacations.)

6. Financial Aid – Most schools factor aid applications into their admission decisions. See below for more information about how to approach this aspect of the admissions process.

7. Legacy, Arts and Athletics, Diversity, Development – Schools do tend to favor candidates who have family connections to a school, or candidates who are going to make significant contributions to the school outside of the classroom. This includes candidates who are going to diversify student population, and families they believe will make significant financial contributions to the school.

8. Conversations with RCDS – Throughout the admissions cycle, we are in constant contact with admissions officers from various schools. We speak to them before a student visits a school, after he or she applies, as the school is making its decision, and after that decision is rendered – throughout the entire process. We have cultivated close, trusting relationships with these schools by maintaining an honest, open dialogue about our students and their families. When we feel a student is a strong match for a school, we let them know. Conversely, when we have concerns about a student’s future at a school, we let them know. In these conversations, the most effective thing we can tell a school is that the child will attend if offered admission. We will not say this unless we unequivocally believe it to be true.

## IV.

### **Annual Calendar and Suggested Timetable**

*Note: Some open house and admission dates appear below for local schools that have been historically popular with our students. The schools included do not represent an exhaustive list. Please confirm these dates and times with the schools' admissions offices.*



#### ***Spring of Seventh Grade***

- Begin having family conversations about secondary school options.
- It's not necessary, but feel free to schedule an appointment with Mr. Horner to discuss what you're thinking.
- Again, not necessary, but consider having your child take the Seventh grade SSAT.
- Obtain a practice book and make a plan to prepare for the test.
- Begin researching specific schools.

#### ***September of Eighth Grade***

- Review test dates and decide when your child is going to take the SSAT.
- Attend the RCDS Boarding School Fair (odd years) or Secondary School Admissions Guest Speaker (even years).
- Continue researching schools. Cultivate a list of schools your family would like to consider.
- Schedule appointments for interviews. While these are considered academically excused absences, do your best to avoid game days and key attendance days such as the Eighth Grade Carnival. Be sure to notify Sue Leslie in our Main Office of any scheduled visits.
- For local schools, mark the dates of open houses in October, November, and December.
- Review test dates for local parochial schools.
- Attend Open Houses for local schools.
- Monmouth County Career Academies (9/27)

## **October**

- Attend Open Houses for local schools.
  - Monmouth County Career Academies (Multiple dates throughout October.)
  - Trinity Hall (10/4)
  - Christian Brothers Academy (10/5)
  - Mater Dei (10/5)
  - Ranney (10/5)
  - Red Bank Catholic (10/19) and (10/20)
- SSAT at RCDS (10/18)
- Trinity Hall – Entrance Exam (10/25)
- Schedule an appointment with Mr. Horner for interview prep.
- Complete tours and interviews. Be sure to notify Sue Leslie in our Main Office of any scheduled visits.
- Potential SSAT test date
- Begin to reduce list of potential schools.

## **November**

- Consider SSAT at non-RCDS location.
- Attend Open Houses for local schools.
  - Trinity Hall (11/1)
  - Monmouth County Career Academies (11/1 and 11/4)
  - Ranney (11/20)
- Christian Brothers Academy Entrance Exam (11/1)
- Red Bank Catholic – Application Deadline (11/3)
- Red Bank Catholic – Placement Test (11/8)
- Trinity Hall – Early Application Deadline (11/21)
- Trinity Hall – Entrance Exam (11/22)
- Schedule an appointment with Mr. Horner for interview prep.
- Complete tours and interviews. Be sure to notify Sue Leslie in our Main Office of any scheduled visits.
- Decide on the final list of schools to which your child is going to apply. While we want you to look at a lot of schools, we recommend you do not apply to more than five.
- If recommendations are required for an application, students should ask their teachers if they are willing to write for them. It is not assumed that a teacher will write on a student's behalf, and the request should come from the student, in person.

## ***December***

- Monmouth County Career Academies – Admission Deadline (12/12)
- Christian Brothers Academy – Transcripts Due (Early Dec.)
- SSAT at RCDS (12/13)
- Monmouth County Career Academies – School Records Deadline (12/22)
- Turn in all application materials (including transcript requests and recommendation forms) to Sue Leslie no later than 12/12/14. If applications are online, fill out the sections required so that recommending teachers and the main office receive requests.
- Complete applications, including essays.
- Turn in all forms that need to be filled out by the school to Sue Leslie.
- Trinity Hall – Early Application Admission Notification (12/19)
- Notify Sue Leslie in our main office of any change of plans in terms of applications.

## ***January***

- Submit boarding school applications; check with schools for specific due dates.
- Christian Brothers Academy – Admission Notification (Early Jan.)
- Trinity Hall – Regular Application Deadline (1/9)
- SSAT at RCDS (1/10)
- Ranney School – Admission Deadline (1/15)
- Most boarding school applications are due 1/15 or 1/31.
- Monmouth County Career Academies – Admissions Exam (1/24/2015)

## ***February***

- Ranney School – Admission Notification (2/1)
- SSAT at RCDS (2/7). Confirm with admission offices that scores from this test date will be accepted.
- Rumson-Fair Haven High School – Foreign Language Placement Test (2/18)
- Rumson-Fair Haven High School – Math Placement Test (2/24)

## ***March***

- Trinity Hall – Regular Admission Notification (3/2)
- Boarding School Admission Notifications (3/10)
- Ranney School – Enrollment Contracts Due (3/15)

## ***April***

- Boarding School Enrollment Contracts Due (4/10)

## ***May***

- Monitor wait list movement

## V.

### **Local Schools**

*The following local schools have been historically popular with RCDS students. This list is by no means exhaustive. Commentary is based on our knowledge of the school and RCDS alumni feedback.*

Though the admissions processes for local schools is not overly complicated, there are multiple steps involved. Most local schools require a paper application, recommendations, and some form of standardized testing. Plan on attending an open house for any school that you're considering; it's there that you'll find the most accurate information about a school's admissions procedures.

### **Public Options**

When a family decides to send an RCDS graduate to a local public school, the process is very simple. Often, the only decisions that need to be made involve placement in specific courses. Even if a student has not been in honors-level classes at RCDS, we might recommend honors-level placement for high school. The most popular public options for RCDS students have been Rumson-Fair Haven High School and Red Bank Regional High School. Notes: Rumson-Fair Haven High School gives its placement tests in Foreign Language and Math in mid-February. These tests take place at 3:30, so there is a potential conflict with RCDS athletics. Red Bank Regional High School also has a specialized program in the visual and performing arts (Academy of Visual and Performing Arts). According to the RBR website:

*Admission to the Visual & Performing Arts Academy is based on audition, portfolio, interview, NJASK test scores, (or comparable test such as the Terra Nova Grade 8 Survey), academic performance, attendance, and other criteria related to the specific area of study. Each year well over one hundred-fifty students audition for approximately seventy-five to ninety openings. Presently there are two-hundred eighty-one Visual and Performing Arts Majors in grades 9-12. Currently, VPA majors account for approximately twenty-five per cent of the student body (1,111).*

If you are interested in this program, please call (732) 842-8000, extension 262.

In some cases, families choose to pay tuition to have their child attend a public school in an area other than where they live. Please contact the individual schools if you are interested in this option.

## **The Monmouth County Career Academies**

Monmouth County also offers five Career Academies – public schools with specialized programs in specific areas of study. The five academies and their areas of focus are:

- **Academy of Allied Health & Science** (Neptune, NJ) – Medical Sciences
  - **Biotechnology High School** (Freehold, NJ) – Life Sciences, Technology, Engineering
  - **Communications High School** (Wall, NJ) - Media, Journalism, Publishing, Art
  - **High Technology High School** (Lincroft, NJ) – Math, Science, Technology, Humanities
- **Marine Academy of Science & Technology** (Highlands, NJ) – Marine and Environmental Studies

Admission to these schools is highly selective and is based solely on transcripts and standardized test scores. Often, only the top two or three candidates from each town are offered admission. Specific criteria for admission can be found on the schools' websites.

*Notes:* A candidate may only apply to one Career Academy. Students who attend these schools are sent to their district public high schools for athletic and arts offerings.

## **Private Day Schools**

**Ranney School**, (Tinton Falls, NJ) 732-542-4777

Ranney School is a private, co-ed, Pre-K to 12th grade day school with approximately 820 total students. They typically enroll 70-80 students in the 9th grade. Ranney uses a rolling admission process, so candidates have the most success if they know they want to attend Ranney and apply early. When candidates visit Ranney for a tour and interview, they are given a brief standardized test and asked to produce a writing sample. Ranney excels at student-teacher relationships, small class sizes, facilities, college placement, and diversity. However, lack of athletic competitiveness (there is no football team), and the fact that the school draws from western Monmouth County (so friends may live an hour away) should be considered.



## **Religiously-Affiliated Schools**

### **Christian Brothers Academy** (Lincroft, NJ) 732-747-1959

Christian Brothers Academy is a Roman Catholic, all-boys, 9th to 12th grade day school with approximately 950 total students. They typically enroll 250 students in the 9th grade. CBA excels at athletics, community service, school spirit, and college placement. However, athletic considerations (there is no football team; it can be very difficult for students to make an athletic team), and a tendency toward large class sizes should be considered.

### **Trinity Hall** (Leonardo, NJ) 732-291-1297

Trinity Hall is a new all-girls day school with approximately 30 students per grade. The school is “in the Catholic Tradition,” which means that although it offers courses in Theology, Ethics, and Spirituality, it is an independent private school and religious standards are not imposed on any member of the Trinity Hall community. Trinity Hall offers a demanding academic experience with significant emphasis on character education, leadership, and community contribution. Families should also consider that the school is only in its second year (so there are only freshman and sophomore classes right now), and that its current facilities (and limited programs) are not permanent.

### **Red Bank Catholic High School** (Red Bank, NJ) 732-747-1774

Red Bank Catholic is a Roman Catholic, co-ed, 9th to 12th grade day school with approximately 1,000 students (250 per class). The school offers a competitive athletics and expansive arts programs. RCDS students who attend RBC do very well academically. However, interested families should be aware of issues of academic rigor, scheduling, and a disparity in the percentages of female to male students.

Other religiously-affiliated schools in our area include **Mater Dei Preparatory Academy** (Middletown, NJ) and **St. John Vianney High School** (Holmdel, NJ).

## VI. Boarding Schools

Though many of our families limit their boarding school search to “local boarding schools” – schools within a 1.5 hour radius – RCDS students have attended a wide range of boarding schools up and down the East Coast, far too many to list and discuss individually. We recommend that any family interested in boarding school consult the school selection criteria listed above, and begin the conversation with discussions about geographical distance and size. TABS (The Association of Boarding Schools) offers an excellent catalogue (including a useful map). You can request it at [www.boardingschools.com](http://www.boardingschools.com).

Many families also ask about applying to boarding schools for the sophomore year. This is very common – most schools increase their freshman class by close to 50% for the sophomore year. Though there are fewer spots, there are also fewer applicants, so the process as a whole does not differ very much. Of course, RCDS will do whatever we can to help our alumni if they decide to apply to a different school anytime during their high school career.



## Interviews and Tours

After you do your initial research and begin to craft a list of potential schools, the first step in the boarding school admissions process is a visit to the school's campus, where you and your child will be given a tour and interview. We always recommend that you visit the school for the interview; making the effort to visit shows the school how serious you are about it. If you have to miss school for one of these visits, RCDS considers it an excused academic absence, which means that the student is given time to make up any missed work. As soon as you have scheduled a tour, please let Sue Leslie ([sleslie@rcds.org](mailto:sleslie@rcds.org)) in the Main Office know about it.

The tours are given by current students (often juniors or seniors). Sometimes, if you give an admissions office a heads-up about your child's interests, they will try to match you with a student who can provide particular knowledge about that program or aspect of school life. (For instance, if your child is a soccer player, they may match her with a current player as a tour guide.) But more often than not, these assignments are random. Because of this, and because the guides are busy high school students, please do not read into it if something feels off in terms of your tour. If your guide forgets to show up, or if he or she is not a good fit, it is not a reflection of the school's opinion of you. It's random luck: some tour guides are great, and others are duds. Other than trying to match as best they can, the schools do not prioritize in terms of their tour guides.

The child and the parents are interviewed separately, and each interview lasts roughly 20-30 minutes. In the parent interview, the admissions officer is trying to assess how honestly, accurately, and realistically the parents view their child. They are also judging how supportive they believe you will be of the school. If they believe that the relationship between the parents and the school is going to be a difficult one, it certainly harms the child's chances of admission.

In the child interview, the admissions officer is trying to determine the kind of impact the student is going to make on the school. When we discuss the interview process with our students, we remind them that these places are schools, academic institutions, and their first priority is a child's academic interests and potential. If your child talks for twenty minutes about hockey and lacrosse but has no answer when asked what book he or she is currently reading, it's a bad sign for an admissions officer.

The worst thing a child can do in an interview is not talk. The second worst thing is to talk too much. It should be the child's goal to make the conversation 50/50 as much as possible. It's okay to get sidetracked and spend a large amount of time talking about a specific project or class or teacher; don't feel the need to mention every achievement or experience. If your child applies, all that information will be in his or her application.

Very seldom will questions be asked that have "wrong answers." They're looking for students who are positive, who are genuinely interested in academic areas, and who see themselves as dynamic learners. Even if they ask a question with a negative direction ("What's your least favorite subject?"), the child should try to spin it into a positive. If they ask an odd question ("What kind of vegetable would you be?"), it's okay for the child to say that he never thought of that before, and to take a second before answering.

They will ask if a student is looking at other schools, and if so, where. Your child should be honest, but remember it is important to project that *the school he is looking at today is his first choice. The school he is looking at tomorrow will be his first choice, too, when he's asked by that school's admissions officer.* It's okay to say that he is not sure yet, and that he is excited about what the school has to offer.

Every interview ends with the same question: "Do you have any questions for me?" Your child should have some. She can use the tour to help her craft them. She should try to ask questions that can't be answered in one sentence, and that can't be answered by looking at a school's website. "How can students participate in both athletics and community service?" is a much better question than "What's your student to teacher ratio?" It's not easy to relax when talking to a stranger in an unfamiliar place, knowing that you are being evaluated. But the child should try. He should be confident but not cocky. Remember: while he would be very fortunate to attend this school, the school would be fortunate to have him as one of its students. Also remember: they want him to apply. Application fees are a major source of revenue for a school, and more applications mean a lower acceptance rate, which many people equate with exclusivity. So, while it's nice to think *They loved us*, remember that it's their job to be welcoming.



## The SSAT

Most boarding schools use the SSAT as their standardized test. This test is administered at RCDS in October, December, January, and February. Most students can take the January test and be fine for application deadlines. If you need to take the February test, please obtain approval from the school's admission office that it will be accepted.

SSAT also offers a Flex Test. The Flex Test is administered one-on-one at the family's convenience. It does cost more than the traditional test, and can only be taken once (per test level). Please contact Jeff Garside if you are interested in signing your child up for the Flex Test.

We encourage students to take the Grade 7 SSAT Test in the spring of their seventh grade year. This is not the test that counts in the admissions process. It is simply to give the students the experience of sitting through the test and seeing the kinds of questions asked. They can obtain a practice book and do some review over the summer. It is not necessary to hire a tutor, though families occasionally do so. We then suggest the student take the Grade 8 SSAT Test in the fall of their eighth grade year at whatever time is best for them. Unless something goes wrong (a child is sick; the fire alarm goes off, etc.), there is usually no benefit to taking the test twice.

Management of SSAT scores is all done online. Their online system allows you to send your scores to the schools of your choice. We ask that you please send them to RCDS so that we can view them as well (the RCDS school code is 6196). If you take the test more than once, schools will only see the individual test score you choose to send.

In certain circumstances, the SSAT can be taken with academic accommodations, and schools are blind to this circumstance. Please speak with us if this is something you are considering.

The 2014-2015 SSAT Registration Calendar is as follows:

<b>2014-15 Test Registration Calendar</b>					
<i>Registration for all 2014-15 tests opens August 1, 2014.</i>					
Standard Test Date	Regular Registration	Late Registration Begins (\$40 additional Fee) Begins 12:00 am EST on	Rush Registration Begins (\$80 additional Fee) Begins 12:00 am EST on	Last Day for Test Registration Ends 11:59 pm EST on	Special Accommodations Deadlines* Ends 11:59 pm EST on
<b>Saturday, October 18, 2014</b>	Friday, August 1, 2014 - Saturday, September 27, 2014	Sunday, September 28, 2014	Sunday, October 5, 2014	Wednesday, October 15, 2014	Saturday, October 4, 2014
<b>Saturday, November 15, 2014</b>	Friday, August 1, 2014 - Saturday, October 25, 2014	Sunday, October 26, 2014	Sunday, November 2, 2014	Wednesday, November 12, 2014	Saturday, November 1, 2014
<b>Saturday, December 13, 2014</b>	Friday, August 1, 2014 - Saturday, November 22, 2014	Sunday, November 23, 2014	Sunday, November 30, 2014	Wednesday, December 10, 2014	Saturday, November 29, 2014
<b>Saturday, January 10, 2015</b>	Friday, August 1, 2014 - Saturday, December 20, 2014	Sunday, December 21, 2014	Sunday, December 28, 2014	Wednesday, January 07, 2015	Saturday, December 27, 2014
<b>Saturday, February 07, 2015</b>	Friday, August 1, 2014 - Saturday, January 17, 2015	Sunday, January 18, 2015	Sunday, January 25, 2015	Wednesday, February 4, 2015	Saturday, January 24, 2015
<b>Saturday, March 07, 2015</b>	Friday, August 1, 2014 - Saturday, February 14, 2015	Sunday, February 15, 2015	Sunday, February 22, 2015	Wednesday, March 4, 2015	Saturday, February 21, 2015
<b>Saturday, April 11, 2015</b>	Friday, August 1, 2014 - Saturday, April 4, 2015	Sunday, April 5, 2015	Sunday, April 12, 2015	Wednesday, April 22, 2015	Saturday, April 11, 2015
<b>Saturday, June 13, 2015</b>	Friday, August 1, 2014 - Saturday, May 23, 2015	Sunday, May 24, 2015	Sunday, May 31, 2015	Wednesday, June 10, 2015	Saturday, May 30, 2015

\*Special Accommodations must be approved prior to test registration. Date shown is deadline for completed registration, following special accommodations approval process. See [ssat.org/SA](http://ssat.org/SA) for instructions.

## **Applications**

Though some boarding schools still use a paper-based system, many have moved to an online system. For these schools, all aspects of the application – personal information, transcript requests, recommendations, and essays – are completed online. Unfortunately, there are multiple systems in use, and they all operate independently. *It is the family's responsibility to monitor and manage online applications*, as in many instances, RCDS cannot access student accounts. Students must check with faculty to see if they have received email requests for recommendations, and with Sue Leslie in the main office to coordinate transcript requests. Popular online application systems include one administered by SSAT, Gateway to Prep Schools, SchoolRecs.com, and Applyweb.com (CollegeNet). *As soon as you are certain your child is applying to a school, please notify Sue Leslie in our Main Office, and drop off any necessary paperwork.*

## **Financial Aid**

An application for financial aid is a family's personal decision, and it is a conversation that RCDS does not take part in. However, we can tell you what we know about the way aid applications can affect admission.

Very few schools are wealthy enough to be truly need-blind. Instead, many schools are "need-aware," meaning that they take aid applications into consideration when making admissions decisions. There is no doubt: an aid application makes admission much more difficult. Instead of only asking a school to accept your child, you're also asking them to afford you as well. Schools have limited aid budgets, and they want to spend their money on children who will diversify and expand their student body. Frankly, for many boarding schools in our general area, that does not mean RCDS students. Schools are also very wary of families who apply for aid when it seems unwarranted.

Every year, talented, over-qualified students are waitlisted at schools because of aid applications. The schools are waiting to see if they themselves will have the money to yield the student, and waiting to gauge the student's commitment to the school. Unfortunately, this means that seemingly less qualified students are offered admission over more qualified students who have requested aid. This is a sticky situation, and we recommend you discuss it privately with your child so that he or she understands the realities of the process.

## Decisions – Theirs and Yours

In the world of boarding school admissions, decisions come out on March 10th. These decisions are mailed home, but are sometimes delivered via email or are available to view online. For many of our children (and their families), this is a difficult time. For many, it is the first time hearing they have not been accepted somewhere. We love our students and think the world of them, but realistically, when they're placed into pools of hundreds (and in some cases, thousands) of similar students, they do not always come out on top. We ask that you remain calm and patient. Please do not jump on the schools and demand information. (In fact, many schools time their spring break so that the admissions offices are closed immediately following the notifications.)

Schools notify families of three possible outcomes:

1. Acceptance. This is wonderful news. There may be a notice regarding aid included, or it may arrive separately. Please be sensitive to families who may not be receiving this good news.

2. Wait list. Students who are waitlisted were deemed qualified for admission, but for some reason, the school was not able to offer them a spot. If students are wait listed at schools of their choice, we recommend that they contact the school immediately and let them know they want to be kept on the wait list. Students do occasionally get taken off the wait list; however, there is seldom any aid available for these students. More importantly, *if you are placed on a wait list at a school you know your child will not attend, please have them contact the school immediately and ask to be taken off the wait list. This will often open a spot for another RCDS student.*

Wait list decisions can drag out through the spring. Many schools will not even look at their wait lists until after they have received answers from their accepted students on April 10th. All you can do is let the school know of your intentions, and wait.

3. Rejection. This is upsetting news. Please do not ask the schools to reconsider. Once their decision is made, it's final.



## Re-visits

Many boarding schools will offer accepted students a chance to come back to campus and spend a day (or in some cases, an overnight) with a current student. These are wonderful opportunities to see the school as it truly lives, without the burden of the hope for admission. Though things can be hectic in the Eighth grade spring, we encourage our students to attend these re-visits. It is often during these visits that the family's decision is finally made. We encourage students to "go with their gut," and to listen to what feels right for them. Re-visits are not offered for students who have been placed on the wait list.

Schools ask for an answer from their accepted students by April 10th.

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide. We hope that it makes this confusing time just a bit easier. As always, please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or need any help.

Good Luck!

