



ST. MICHAEL'S
Guide to the
High School
Search Process
2019-2020



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The High School Search: A Teachable Moment

The process of searching for, applying to, and selecting the high school program that best suits a young person is among the hidden gems of a K-8 school. While this journey can (perhaps must) include some anxiety, the opportunity for a middle school student to participate in such a significant decision can be a richly rewarding learning experience, one that paves the way for a thoughtful college choice four years later. Similarly, families of these students have the chance to engage their teenagers in meaningful discussions about their aspirations, strengths, challenges, and what is important to them in ways that might not surface in any other endeavor.

Like almost any rich learning experience, this one should begin by pondering a few guiding questions. Students would do well to think through, and almost certainly write down, answers to these questions – as well as use them as launch points of discussions with family members, teachers, and others involved in the search process.

What do you intend to get out of your high school experience?

What do you intend to put into it?

What should high school feel and be like?

List things that are important to you about where you will go to high school.

This should include academic, athletic and social things and can range from big topics (e.g., public vs. independent school, size of student body) to specific quirks (e.g., a great cafeteria). They don't have to be in order of importance.

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |



Roles & Responsibilities

Instrumental to such a positive learning experience, as well as to finding a school that is the right fit, is clarity of the roles and responsibilities of those involved.

Student

The student is the person whose life will change most as a result of this decision. Thus, it is vital that the student engage fully in the process. *The student is responsible for* thinking deeply, communicating regularly and honestly with the people listed below, meeting deadlines, and generally approaching the process with an open mind and a positive attitude.

Student's family

While the student's life will change as a result of this decision, so too will that of the student's family/parents. Those changes may exist in a variety of areas from logistical (getting to/from a new school), to financial (change in tuition required), to emotional and beyond. Thus *the student's family/parents are responsible for* the same things as the student. In addition the family must manage the collection, completion and delivery of various forms required of the various application processes.

Student's advisor

The advisor generally serves as the "eyes and ears" on a student while she/he is at school. The same is true in this process. With the added element that *the advisor is responsible for* checking in with the student and her/his family to ensure that the process is moving ahead.

Registrar

Mrs. Godwin serves as the School's registrar. In this capacity *she is responsible for* processing [transcripts](#) and distributing application packets to independent schools. The role of the registrar is slightly different for independent versus public schools. Please refer to those pages of this packet for details, but know Mrs. Godwin is always a good first stop with a question.

Head of School

Mr. Gregg has a wealth of experience working with families in the high school search process. *He is responsible for* ensuring that the process is clear to students and their families, as well as addressing any concerns or issues along the way. In addition, both Mr. Gregg and Mrs. Stargell are available for individual consultations.



Schedule & Milestones

Milestone	Independent	Public
Introduction to the process	Back to School Night	
High school packet sent to students & families	Late September	
Search process Orientation and Open House	October 11	
Research schools	Select open house dates below and in the appendix	
Seek teacher recommendations	November 1	November 1
Submit applications	November to December 2	November to December 2
Testing	November to March	January to February
Individual campus visits	December to February	n/a
Decisions	March 6	March 6
Opportunity for campus (re-)visit	March	March
Enrollment (contract) due	March 25	March 20

Selected open houses

October 14	9:00 a.m.	Virginia Episcopal School (Day Students)
October 15		Open High School-RVA Applications will be available online after the 15th
Varies	7:00 p.m.	Douglas S. Freeman Leadership (see *Zone Meeting Schedule)
October 6	1:00 p.m.	Saint Gertrude
October 19	10:00 a.m.	Episcopal High School (Boarding Students)
October 24	10:00 a.m.	Millwood School
October 20	2:00 p.m.	Trinity
October 28	7:00 p.m.	James River Leadership**
October 24	8:30 a.m.	Collegiate
October 16	5:30 p.m.	Benedictine
November 3-4	on-line	Virginia Episcopal School (Boarding Students)
November 5	8:30 a.m.	St. Catherine's
November 5	9:00 a.m.	St. Christopher's
November 17	2:00 p.m.	Steward

*Please go to the following link for information on Henrico County Specialty Schools
<https://henricoschools.us/specialty-centers/#tab-uitj390-2>



** Please see Event Calendar for Chesterfield County Public Schools in the Appendix.

Applying to an Independent School

The VAIS-accredited schools in the Richmond region are Benedictine, Collegiate, Millwood, St. Catherine's, St. Christopher's, Saint Gertrude, Steward, and Trinity. In addition, the region offers non-VAIS high schools (e.g., Blessed Sacrament Huguenot, Veritas) as well as many VAIS-accredited boarding schools (e.g., Episcopal High School, Virginia Episcopal, St. Margaret's, Woodberry Forest). For a complete listing of boarding schools in Virginia visit vais.org. For boarding schools outside of Virginia visit boardingschools.com/find-a-school.

1. **Research** schools to determine potential fit with your criteria. School websites are helpful as are admissions open houses, which are generally held in October and November. Most admissions webpages will allow you to inquire and request additional information prior to completing an application. Many independent schools request that you register for their open house. Please check the website of the school you are interested in to get details about open house registration and any time changes.
2. **Submit an application to the school(s)** in which your child has an interest as soon as possible. Application materials are often a mix of online forms and paperwork. Be sure to check this for each school. Also, *inform Mrs. Godwin* each time you apply to a school. If you intend to apply for financial aid you should begin this process as well. Read more about financial aid later in the packet.
3. **Seek out teacher recommendations.** Remember to provide the teacher(s) a list of co-curricular activities, awards, and community service activities. *Do this by November 1* since teachers will likely have many students requesting recommendations.
 - Note that many schools require at least two recommendations from teachers. Many require the current math and English teacher to fill out the recommendation. Some require an additional recommendation from an administrator (Mrs. Stargell and Mr. Gregg). Be sure to check the requirements for each school.
 - Benedictine, Collegiate, Saint Gertrude, St. Catherine's, St. Christopher's, Steward, and Trinity use a common recommendation form. When applying to more than one of these schools please leave the name of the school blank on the form. Attach a post-it-note with the name of the schools to which you are applying. Mrs. Godwin will copy the recommendation for each school.
4. **Submit the "Release for Transcripts" request** form to Mrs. Godwin. This allows St. Michael's to send transcripts and ERB scores. Doing this as soon as possible ensures transcripts and recommendations are mailed to the school(s) together and on time.



5. **Schedule testing.** Most independent schools require applicants to take some form of standardized test. Benedictine, Collegiate, St. Catherine's, St. Christopher's, and Steward utilize the Secondary School Admissions Test ([SSAT.org](https://ssat.org)). Millwood, Saint Gertrude, Trinity and Maggie Walker use the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (tinyurl.com/OtisLennonTest). In addition, Trinity administers three sections of the Stanford Test to all candidates.

Paying for an Independent School

Even for families paying full tuition at St. Michael's, the prospect of paying for an independent school education (which at many Richmond-area schools is double St. Michael's tuition) can be daunting. In addition, applying for and even considering financial aid can be unsettling for families. Families that have applied for financial aid at St. Michael's should find the process in high school quite familiar.

Overall, there are many questions to consider. This section addresses many of them. However, please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Gregg with questions.

How much will an independent school cost?

Independent schools publish on their websites the tuition and fees for the current year, and generally after the holidays, those for the coming year. Annual tuition increases vary from school to school, but increases in the 4% to 6% are common.

What financial assistance is available at independent schools?

There are two types of financial aid: merit-based and need-based.

Merit-based aid is awarded based on criteria established by a school. Independent schools vary on their philosophies, policies, and (if applicable) criteria for merit-based aid.

Need-based aid is awarded based on the financial need of a student's family. Most independent schools offer need-based aid to newly enrolled candidates.

Will we qualify for need-based financial aid?

The short answer is, "You will not know unless you ask." That said, be sure to read below the answer to "*When should we apply?*"

Schools generally utilize an independent third party to assist in determining "financial need." Two of the most common services providing such assistance to schools are School & Students (ssbbynais.org) and FACTS (factsmgt.com). These services utilize complex formulas to determine the amount of a family's disposable income available for tuition payments. Please note the service's technically-derived definition of "disposable" income may not match your family everyday definition. While these formulas are fixed, schools are allowed some leeway in how they treat certain financial variables, e.g., whether home equity will be counted as an asset, or if tuitions paid to other institutions will reduce disposable income available.



Schools' ability to treat certain variables as they see fit notwithstanding, schools using the same service should arrive at *approximately* the same expected family contribution (EFC), regardless of the tuition charged by the school. For instance, if the SSS formula determines that a family's EFC toward tuition is \$5,000 that family would qualify for \$10,000 of financial aid at a school charging \$15,000 and \$20,000 of aid at a school charging \$25,000.

	School A	School B
Tuition	\$15,000	\$25,000
EFC	(\$5,000)	(\$5,000)
Aid for which family qualifies	\$10,000	\$20,000

There is a distinction, and thus families may see a difference, between the amount of aid for which a family qualifies and the amount of aid a school chooses to award. In other words, while it is best practice for schools not to exceed the amount of need-based aid for which a family qualifies, they are not required to provide 100% – or any – of that amount. Need-based aid is awarded entirely at a school's discretion.

How do we apply for financial aid?

For merit-based aid, you will need to inquire with the school regarding available programs and requirements.

For need-based aid:

1. After checking a school's admission webpage to determine the service it uses, create an account on the webpage of that service.
2. Using that account, complete a parents' financial statement. This is much like filing taxes online. You will need information regarding family income, expenses, assets, and liabilities.
3. In completing the financial statement you will have the option to have a copy of the report forwarded to the school(s) to which you are applying. There are matters to consider in deciding when to do this. See "*When should we apply*" below. Note that you will need to complete this statement only once for each service as you can have the report forwarded to multiple schools.
4. If necessary, forward any supplemental information required by schools, e.g., most recent federal tax returns, as part of their process.

When should we apply for financial aid?

The simplest answer is, check the box listed on most admissions applications indicating you are interested in receiving information about financial aid. Then follow the steps listed above.



The more complicated answer is related to the question, “*Will applying for need-based financial aid impact our child’s chance of being accepted?*”

Whichever answer feels more comfortable to you, please know you can get an order of magnitude sense of the EFC prior to actually applying to the school for aid by completing the steps listed above and *not* having the report forwarded to any schools. This will allow you to see what the formula has determined is your family’s EFC. If you are considering applying for financial aid, taking this step early in the process may well offer useful information.

Will applying for need-based financial aid impact our child’s chance of being accepted?

This is one of the most challenging questions for families to ask high school admissions officers, whose answers are often carefully crafted to reflect school policy. In short, the answer is, “It depends.”

In an era of strained school budgets and post-recession family budgets there is generally more demand for financial assistance than school capacity to meet demand. Combine this with a competitive admission pool where enrollment slots are also at a premium and admissions officers find themselves challenged to ignore a family’s ability to pay. While policies and procedures may vary from school to school, these pressures are realities for all schools.

Thus, while applying for financial aid may not impact whether a student is offered admission to a school with a need-blind admission policy, the extent to which aid is available will almost certainly impact whether a family can take advantage of that offer by enrolling. Again, awarding aid is the school’s prerogative and may be shaped by factors such as availability of funds, academic strength of application, ways in which a candidate might contribute to the life of the high school (e.g., in the arts, athletics, etc.).

Who will see our financial information?

While policies and procedures vary by school, it is good practice for schools to treat such sensitive information confidentially and severely limit the number of people with access to it. Generally, this will include a director of financial aid, a business manager, and perhaps the director of admission.

For more information about how independent schools are supposed to administer financial aid please refer to the National Association of Independent Schools’ Principles of Good Practice, nais.org/Series/Pages/Financial-Aid-Administration.aspx.



Contact information for selected VAIS-accredited high schools and public specialty centers

Benedictine High School

3041 N. Sheppard Street
Richmond, VA 23221
Greg Lilly, Director of Admissions
804-708-9504
glilly@benedictinecollegeprep.org

Collegiate School

103 N. Mooreland Rd., Richmond, VA 23229
Brent Miller, Director of Admissions
804-741-9712 Brent_miller@collegiate-va.org
Margaret Pace MS/US Admissions Coordinator
804-665-1724 mpace@collegiate-va.org

Douglas S. Freeman High School

8701 Three Chopt Road
Richmond, VA 23229
Rob Peck, Leadership Center Director,
rfpeck@henrico.k12.va.us

James River High School

3700 James River Road
Midlothian, VA 23113
Ashley Hewlett, Specialty Center Director
804-378-2420 Ashley_Hewlett@ccpsnet.net

Maggie L. Walker

1000 N. Lombardy Street
Richmond, VA 23220
Megan Perez, Administrative Assistant
804-364-5800 ext. 2111
mperez@gsgis.k12.va.us

Millwood School

15100 Millwood School Lane
Midlothian, VA 23112
804-639-3200
jjennings@millwoodschoool.org

Saint Gertrude High School

3215 Stuart Avenue
Richmond, VA 23221
Meredith McNamara, Director of Admissions
804-822-3955 mmcnamara@saintgertrude.org

St. Catherine's School

6001 Grove Avenue, Richmond, VA 23226
Jennifer Cullinan, Director of Admissions
804-288-2804 jcullinan@st.catherines.org

St. Christopher's School

711 St. Christopher's Road
Richmond, VA 23226
Mr. Hamill Jones, Director of Admissions
804-282-3185 ext. 2388 jonesh@steva.org

St. Margaret's School

P. O. Box 158
Tappahannock, VA 22560
Bowdre Fortson, Asst. Dir. of Admissions
804-443-1832 bfortson@sms.org

Steward School

11600 Gayton Road
Richmond, VA 23233
Robin Oliff, Director of Admissions
804-565-2315 robin.oliff@stewardschool.org

Trinity Episcopal School

3850 Pittaway Road
Richmond, VA 23235
Margie Snead, Director of Admissions
804-327-3151 margiesnead@trinityes.org

Virginia Episcopal School

400 VES Road
Lynchburg, VA 24503
Justine Burton, Director of Admissions
434-385-3815 jburton@ves.org



Enrolling in/Applying to a Public School

Applying to and enrolling in your local high school, a specialty center, or a Governor's school all have different processes. As with independent schools, please **let Mrs. Godwin know the schools to which your child is applying**. Similarly, let her know if your child decides she/he is no longer interested in a school for which the process has started.

Enrolling at your local high school

Please contact the high school that your child would attend and speak to them directly about their enrollment process.

Applying to specialty centers

The counties and the City of Richmond offer a host of public specialty centers to which students may apply for admission. A complete list of schools can be found at the following websites.

Chesterfield: mychesterfieldschools.com/schools/specialty-centers

Hanover: http://hhs.hcps.us/resources/the_specialty_center/the_specialty_center_home

Henrico: henricoschools.us/specialty-centers

Richmond: <https://www.rvaschools.net>

In addition, you will find an abundance of information on public specialty centers (as well governor's schools) in the appendix at the end of this packet. Application procedures differ for each program, but the process below offers an overview.

1. **Research** the schools listed on the websites above to determine potential fit with your criteria. School websites are helpful, as are admissions open houses. Contact individual schools for open house dates and applications.
2. **Submit an application (and essay, if required) to Mrs. Godwin** as soon as possible. Applications for all specialty centers in the surrounding counties are available at your home public middle school and/or on-line. Be sure to sign all application forms.
3. **Seek out teacher recommendations.** Remember to provide the teacher(s) a list of co-curricular activities, awards, and community service activities. *Do this by November 1* since teachers will likely have many students requesting recommendations. Each school has different requirements for who must complete recommendation forms. Be sure to check these requirements. Once the recommendations are complete, Mrs. Godwin will notify the student's family that the "application packet" is ready for pick-up. (See #5.)
4. **Attend testing.** Schools require their own test for admission. Check schools for details.
5. **Deliver the student's "application packet."** This packet, which is available in the middle school office after January conferences, includes a first semester transcript along with teacher recommendations. *Families are responsible for delivering the packet* to their home public middle school in late January or early February.



Applying to a Governor's School

The VA Department of Education offers a series of academic-year programs for high school.

[Appomattox](#), [Blue Ridge](#), and [Maggie L. Walker](#) are the three schools available to students in the greater Richmond area. A wealth of information is available about these programs at:

doe.virginia.gov/instruction/governors_school_programs. The process below outlines the basics of the application process.

1. **Research** the schools listed on the website above to determine potential fit with your criteria. School websites are helpful as are admissions open houses. Contact individual schools for open house dates and applications.
2. **Pick up an application from the appropriate location.** These are available beginning Tuesday, October 15, 2019 through your public middle school and/or local public school office of gifted education. In order to obtain an application, you will need to show proof of residence such as a utility bill, phone bill, etc. Details on proof of residency can be found here: mlwgs.com/admissions/application-forms

County of residence	Where to obtain an application
Chesterfield	home public middle school counseling department
Goochland	Office of Gifted Programs (804) 556-5610
Hanover	home public middle school counseling department
Henrico	Office of Gifted Programs (804) 652-3765
Powhatan	Gifted Coordinator at (804) 598-5720
Richmond	home public middle school counseling department

3. **Submit an application to Mrs. Godwin** as soon as possible. Be sure to sign the application.
4. **Seek out teacher recommendations.** Be sure to check requirements for who must complete recommendation forms. Remember to provide the teacher(s) a list of co-curricular activities, awards, and community service activities. *Do this by November 1* since teachers will likely have many students requesting recommendations.
 - On the recommendation forms there is a box entitled “applicant’s and parent/guardian’s waiver of right to access confidential information.” You must check the “waive right of access” or the recommendation cannot be completed.
 - Mrs. Godwin will notify the student’s family that the “application packet” is ready for pick-up.
5. **Attend testing.** Governor’s schools administer regional testing sessions for admittance. The test used is the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (tinyurl.com/OtisLennonTest).



6. **Deliver the student's application.** The application and teacher recommendations will be available in the middle school office. *Families are responsible for delivering the packet* to their home public middle school by December 2, at noon. NO LATE APPLICATIONS WILL BE PROCESSED. Do not take the application to Appomattox, Blue Ridge, or Maggie Walker.
7. **Deliver the student's first semester transcript to the home public middle school.** The transcript may be picked up in the office after conferences, in late January/early February.

Maggie L. Walker Governor's School Planning Committee

The MLWGS Planning Committee is comprised of a representative from each one of the localities participating in The MLWGS program. Its function is to assist the Director in implementing and directing the mission of the school. The Committee is also responsible for the development of admission and selection criteria. If you have any questions about MLWGS, contact the Committee member and/or gifted program administrator from the district in which you reside.

School District	Contact	Email	Phone
Charles City County Schools	Dr. Todd Perelli	tperelli@ccps.net	804-652-4617
Chesterfield County Schools	George Fohl	George_Fohl@ccpsnet.net	804-639-8620
Goochland County Schools	Raye Rector	rrector@glnk12.va.us	804-556-5610
Hanover County Schools	Connie Foreman	cforeman@hcps.us	804-365-4554
Henrico County Schools	Chandra Floyd	cfloyd@henrico.k12.va.us	804-652-3765
City of Hopewell Schools	Jan Butterworth	jbutterworth@hopewell.k12.va.us	804-541-6400
King & Queen Public Schools	Stephanie Lambrecht	slambrecht@kqps.net	804-785-5981
New Kent County Schools	Ross Miller	rmiller@nkcps.k12.va.us	804-966-9697
City of Petersburg Schools	Dr. Ann Ifekwunigwe	anifekwunigwe@petersburg.k12.va.us	804-862-7022
Powhatan County Schools	Patricia Haskins	patty.haskins@powhatan.jk12.va.us	804-598-5720
Prince George County Schools	Willie Elliott	welliott@pgs.k12.va.us	804-733-2700
City of Richmond Schools	Lynn Pleveich	lpleveic@richmond.k12.va.us	804-780-7805



Appendix: Supplemental Calendar Information

This information will be provided separately.