

# Getting Ready for College Guidebook

---

Child's Name

---

High School Graduating Class



by Cynthia F. Johnson  
*Library Director*  
*November 2010*

**The Rowayton Library**  
33 Highland Avenue  
Rowayton, CT 06853  
(203) 838-5038  
[Library@Rowayton.org](mailto:Library@Rowayton.org)  
[www.Rowayton.org](http://www.Rowayton.org)

## Table of Contents

|                                                                |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| The Purpose of Recording History .....                         | 3  |
| Your Guide Towards Your Child's College Education .....        | 4  |
| Your Child's Activities Throughout the School Years .....      | 5  |
| • School Related Activities Form .....                         | 6  |
| • Additional Activities Form .....                             | 10 |
| Your Child's Academic Interests Through the School Years ..... | 13 |
| • Academic Interests Form .....                                | 14 |
| Who is this child? Descriptive Adjectives .....                | 17 |
| • Descriptive Adjectives Form .....                            | 18 |
| Outstanding Accomplishments .....                              | 20 |
| • Outstanding Accomplishments Form .....                       | 21 |
| Unusual or Personal Circumstances .....                        | 23 |
| • Unusual or Personal Circumstances Form .....                 | 24 |
| Reading Log .....                                              | 25 |
| • Reading Log Form .....                                       | 26 |
| Building a Resume .....                                        | 29 |
| • Sample Resume .....                                          | 30 |
| Letters of Recommendation .....                                | 32 |
| Request for Letter of Recommendation .....                     | 33 |
| The College Application Process .....                          | 34 |
| • Student Profile .....                                        | 35 |
| • Parent's "Brag Sheet" for College Recommendation .....       | 38 |
| • Junior/Senior's "Brag Sheet" .....                           | 39 |
| Conclusion .....                                               | 42 |
| Acknowledgments .....                                          | 42 |

## The Purpose of Recording History

If we are to have lofty ideals, we could begin with the inscription above the entrance to the National Archive building in Washington, DC.: "The past is prologue to the future." As a record of human accomplishments and failures, history provides foundations of broad experience for future actions. A greater awareness of history produces a more enlightened electorate, thus improving the quality our democratic society. As long as civilization exists, people will study history to understand the present and to prepare for the future. And, as Gertrude Stein wrote, "History takes time.... History makes memory." We begin by taking the time to record history, and, in the recording, we make memories.

---

## Your Guide Towards Your Child's College Education

You, the parenting adult, has the greatest opportunity to watch your child's growth and development through the school years. You may keep scrapbooks of photographs, pictures on the refrigerator, and the school papers from year to year. You display ribbons or trophies won in class or in athletics or music or science or art. We celebrate achievements with mementoes and memories... and then, as the time approaches for our children to apply for college, all these icons must be summed up in a few phrases on a college application. Years of triumphs, developing interests, desires, goals, personality nuances must be documented and presented to an institution who has no idea who your child really is.

And, of course, your child is a teenager – that age when communication has taken on a new form – as few words as possible – where he or she understands everything, and assumes that everyone else understands it all as well or that no one understanding them at all.

Now is the time to start helping them prepare – by documenting those icons in words – to remind the children later when they need to put everything in writing. They will have to “sell themselves” and they won't know where to begin. This *Guidebook* will help you and your child to avoid those frustrations.

The goal of this *Guidebook* is to record your child's achievements, interests, desires, and goals that he or she has formulated throughout the years. Reading the completed *Guidebook* just prior to filling out college applications and writing college essays will bring you and your child together – to relive and rediscover those personality traits that make your child unique. You will have put into words your child's years of discovery, joy, successes, and failures. One doesn't wake up one morning to be the person they are, it is a slow and laborious process. Your observations, your ability to record the milestones in what seems ordinary day-to-day life, will enhance and enrich your child's vocabulary when it comes time for them to “sell themselves” to a college.

Also as parents you may be asked, by your child's high school Guidance Department, to write up information in the form of a “brag sheet” to help the Guidance counselors write letters of recommendation. This *Guidebook* will be your starting point for that, as well.

Take this opportunity now!

If you start off well, and fill some forms out now... and then forget it for a while... don't worry. Just pick up the *Guidebook* again and continue. Every thing you write will be of help later – if you write a little or write a lot – it will be a start, a great help, when your child begins the college application process.

## **Your Child's Activities Throughout the School Years**

Every day, your child plays. Fred Rogers said, "Play gives children a chance to practice what they are learning....They have to play with what they know to be true in order to find out more, and then they can use what they learn in new forms of play."<sup>1</sup> Let's help your child remember what he or she has been learning all these years.

---

<sup>1</sup>Fred Rogers (20th century), U.S. children's TV personality and author. *Mister Rogers Talks with Parents*, ch. 5 (1983).









---

| <b>Additional Activities</b> | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | <i>Please note information such as Team Captain, Club President, Grade Level, Awards, etc.</i> |
|------------------------------|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Community/Religious</i>   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |                                                                                                |
|                              |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |                                                                                                |
|                              |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |                                                                                                |
|                              |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |                                                                                                |
|                              |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |                                                                                                |
|                              |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |                                                                                                |
|                              |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |                                                                                                |
|                              |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |                                                                                                |
| <i>Scouts/Youth Groups</i>   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |                                                                                                |
|                              |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |                                                                                                |
|                              |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |                                                                                                |
|                              |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |                                                                                                |
|                              |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |                                                                                                |
|                              |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |                                                                                                |
|                              |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |                                                                                                |
|                              |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |                                                                                                |
|                              |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |                                                                                                |
|                              |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |                                                                                                |
|                              |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |                                                                                                |
|                              |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |                                                                                                |
|                              |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |                                                                                                |
|                              |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |                                                                                                |
|                              |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |                                                                                                |
|                              |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |                                                                                                |





## **Your Child's Academic Interests Throughout the School Years**

If you ever asked your child what his or her academic interests were, you would probably get back a look of great skepticism. But a Chinese proverb states: “Learning is a treasure which accompanies its owner everywhere.” And this is where your objective observations come in. Here is your opportunity to evaluate your child’s performance in school based on interest and learning – not necessarily grades. And, this is the opportunity for you to set the record straight. Your child may get a *B* or *C* in a beloved subject, and get an *A* in a subject that he or she has learned to perform well in but with low interest. In this section you can document your child’s thrills of discovery and later, together, recall these treasures.







## Who is this child? Descriptive Adjectives

If you were to sum up your child's personality, choosing five (5) descriptive adjectives, what would they be? In almost every college application, in almost every high school Guidance Department *College Form Packet*, your children will be asked to describe themselves using *descriptive adjectives*. (On Google, *description adjectives regarding the College Application process* recorded more than 630,000 hits!). Of course, the adjectives you or your child will provide will be the ones that currently reflect your child's personality at the time of the college admissions process, but when you read those adjectives describing your child recorded throughout the years, you will be immensely helped in formulating new words. Take a moment at the end of each school year and choose five descriptive adjectives for your child. **AND, use each of them in a sentence that explains why they apply to your child!** When you use this *Guidebook* for the college application, you will see how your child has developed... what traits were there all along, which ones have matured or are newly developed.

---

|                               |          |
|-------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Descriptive Adjectives</b> | <b>6</b> |
|                               |          |
|                               |          |
|                               |          |
|                               |          |
|                               |          |
| <b>Descriptive Adjectives</b> | <b>7</b> |
|                               |          |
|                               |          |
|                               |          |
|                               |          |
|                               |          |
|                               |          |
| <b>Descriptive Adjectives</b> | <b>8</b> |
|                               |          |
|                               |          |
|                               |          |
|                               |          |
|                               |          |
|                               |          |
| <b>Descriptive Adjectives</b> | <b>9</b> |
|                               |          |
|                               |          |
|                               |          |
|                               |          |
|                               |          |

---

|                               |           |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Descriptive Adjectives</b> | <b>10</b> |
|                               |           |
|                               |           |
|                               |           |
|                               |           |
|                               |           |
| <b>Descriptive Adjectives</b> | <b>11</b> |
|                               |           |
|                               |           |
|                               |           |
|                               |           |
|                               |           |
|                               |           |
| <b>Descriptive Adjectives</b> | <b>12</b> |
|                               |           |
|                               |           |
|                               |           |
|                               |           |
|                               |           |

## Outstanding Accomplishments

Colleges will be looking at high school transcripts. They will see grades; they will see test scores; they will see letters of recommendation from teachers and the high school guidance department. But they will need to see more to really get to know your child. You or your child may be asked to list accomplishments beyond the final marks for each grade. Record them. Remind your child of them. Sometimes these accomplishments are of great value in looking for college essay material. “Believe in yourself, and the rest will fall into place. Have faith in your own abilities, work hard, and there is nothing you cannot accomplish.” – Brad Henry

---

|                                    |          |
|------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Outstanding Accomplishments</b> | <b>6</b> |
|                                    |          |
|                                    |          |
|                                    |          |
| <b>Outstanding Accomplishments</b> | <b>7</b> |
|                                    |          |
|                                    |          |
|                                    |          |
| <b>Outstanding Accomplishments</b> | <b>8</b> |
|                                    |          |
|                                    |          |
|                                    |          |
| <b>Outstanding Accomplishments</b> | <b>9</b> |
|                                    |          |
|                                    |          |
|                                    |          |

---

|                                    |           |
|------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Outstanding Accomplishments</b> | <b>10</b> |
|                                    |           |
|                                    |           |
|                                    |           |
| <b>Outstanding Accomplishments</b> | <b>11</b> |
|                                    |           |
|                                    |           |
|                                    |           |
| <b>Outstanding Accomplishments</b> | <b>12</b> |
|                                    |           |
|                                    |           |
|                                    |           |

## Unusual or Personal Circumstances

The philosopher Epictetus said, “Skillful pilots gain their reputation from storms and tempests.” Sometimes, there are unusual or personal circumstances in our life that affect our education or personal experience. They should be noted – not as an excuse, but because they are part of our history.

---

| Unusual or Personal Circumstances | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|
|                                   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
|                                   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
|                                   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
|                                   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
|                                   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
|                                   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
|                                   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |

## Reading Log

Yes, I am the director of a library, and yes, you knew I would eventually get to the topic of books. Reading – outside the curriculum – is important to colleges, and during the interview process, a college counselor might ask your child about his or her favorite book or author, or about favorite recreational reading and magazines. The following pages can be used as a log of those books and magazines read *inside AS WELL AS outside the school assignments*. Such a log can show you patterns of interest and help you and your child choose more books, more topics, more authors that your child might enjoy. Hopefully, you will have to add pages to track them all.







## **Building a Resume**

It never hurts to start building a resume for your child. It is useful in applying to volunteer programs, internships, educational programs, and jobs. The following is just one “sample” format. You can look for other ideas on the Internet. The content, though, would remain the same. Of course, the “look” should be representative of your child. Let him or her choose the style, color, and feel of the resume.

**STUDENT NAME**

Social Security Number *(only for colleges and some job applications)*

Home Address

Home Telephone Number *(not their personal cell phone)*

Email Address *(create one just for jobs and college applications – not the personal or family email address – but remember to check it often)*

Website/Home Page

Name of School

Class of 2\_\_\_\_

*List only last four (4) years of information*

**6<sup>th</sup> Grade**

*List of School and Community Activities (List positions held)*

*Honor Roll*

*Class Activities*

*Athletics*

*Summer Programs*

*Etc.*

**7<sup>th</sup> Grade**

*List Repeated Activities First*

*Then Any Other Organized Endeavors*

*Summer Programs*

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade**

*List Repeated Activities First*

*Then Any Other Organized Endeavors*

*Summer Programs*

**Freshman Year**

*List of School and Community Activities (List positions held)*

*Honor Roll*

*Class Activities*

*Athletics*

*Summer Programs*

*Etc.*

**Sophomore Year**

*List Repeated Activities First*

*Then Any Other Organized Endeavors*

*Summer Programs*

**Junior Year**

*List Repeated Activities First  
Then Any Other Organized Endeavors  
Summer Programs  
Summer Employment*

**Senior Year**

*List Repeated Activities First  
Don't Forget to Include Positions & Offices Held  
Internships  
Any Other School or Community Activities  
Summer Programs  
Summer Employment*

**Special Interests/Hobbies/Leisure Activities/Family Travel**

It is okay to go to two (2) pages if necessary, but remember to put your child's name on each subsequent page. Graphics are fine to add to a student resume. Be creative.

When your child is in high school, you might also have him or her create a *letterhead* to match the resume. This can be used for correspondence between the student and colleges, employment, internships, and/or volunteer organizations.

And, if your child is technologically savvy, you can supplement the resume with a *website or home page*. **BE SURE NOT TO PUT PERSONAL INFORMATION ON THE WEBSITE** (*no address or telephone number*). You can match the design of the resume to that of the website.

## Letters of Recommendation

There is no time like the present to ask a school teacher; mentor; art, dance, or music teacher; or coach for a letter of recommendation. If your child has made an *impression* on an adult, other than a family member, worth remembering, ask for a letter of recommendation. It can be used in applying for a summer program, an internship, a volunteer position, and later, for college. Letters of recommendation also provide you with another objective point-of-view of your child. And this view can be very useful to you and your child when filling out that college application.

## Request for Letter of Recommendation

First make the request in person, either by you the parent – if your child is not in high school – or by the student in high school. Then follow up with a written request asking for the letter.

If appropriate, include in your request a copy of your child's student resume (to refresh their memory of your child's accomplishments) and always include an envelope (addressed to the child and stamped) with instructions that a copy of the letter be returned to the student. Also, provide a reasonable deadline for the letter in your request.

When requesting a letter of recommendation specifically for a college application, your high school guidance department may have a form to add and also may request that the letter be submitted to the guidance department. In any event, include a note and envelope asking that a copy of the letter be returned to the student. Letters can be misplaced and it is better to have a personal copy of the letter if needed.

---

## The College Application Process

When it comes times for your child to fill the college application, they will be "selling self" to the college. The information, which is sent to the college, and the manner in which the information may be crucial to college acceptance. For that reason, it is important that the greatest care be given to the preparation of the college application. And there is no time like the present to prepare.

Included in this *Guidebook* are several forms which might help you and your child compose your thoughts – and the necessary information – in order to proceed smoothly through the college application process.

Also, the high school Guidance Department might well make the following suggestions to your child in completing that process:

1. Photocopy the application form, and using the photocopy prepare a trial application.
2. Prepare drafts of all essays. Ask your English teacher or counselor to review the essay before it is placed with the application.
3. Re-check your spelling, punctuation, and grammar.
4. Type or print a clear, neat clean final application. Erase errors - do not cross out! Prepare your application in the privacy of your home - not in the school cafeteria or other in areas which offer mental distractions.
5. Do not eat while you are preparing the final application form. Food Stains usually cannot be removed, and they do not enhance the appearance of your application.
6. Ask your parents to review your application. This is important! Your counselor will ask if your parents have looked over your application.
7. Above all, insure that the application is completed and brought to your counselor for processing well in advance of your deadlines.

Important! It usually takes three or four weeks for an application to be mailed to you by the college. If you "mess up" the one you have received, you may not receive a new application form before the application deadline. Therefore, be very careful in completing the application. The completed application tells a lot about you.

---

## Student Profile

*to be filled out by the student*

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Graduation Year: \_\_\_\_\_

College Aspirations:

---

---

---

Career Objectives:

---

---

To the Student:

It is the responsibility of the high school guidance counselor to present some sense of your promise for further personal and intellectual growth. Conveying your “unique” qualities is not an easy task. Therefore, you are asked to give an honest estimation of yourself. Please take the time to think about who you are, and where you are headed. Do not limit your discussion only to what has happened to you in school. Include experiences drawn from any part of your life.

Please answer the following questions with explanations. These answers will further enable your guidance counselors to understand the qualities, which are unique to you.

1. What are your academic interests?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Which courses or types of courses have you enjoyed the most and why?

3. What do you choose to learn when you can learn on your own? What do your choices show about your interests and the way you like to learn?
  
4. Has any summer experience, work, or study been of significant importance to you? Please describe.
  
5. Is your high school academic record, SAT's included, an accurate measure of your ability and potential? If not, what do you consider the best measure of your potential for success in college level work?
  
6. What do you consider your greatest strengths? Explain in detail.
  
7. What do you consider your greatest weakness? Explain in detail.
  
8. Give five (5) descriptive adjectives that tell something about you as a person:

9. Is there any other information you would like to share with your counselor so that he or she can make an accurate appraisal of you to colleges and universities?

If you were to write your own recommendation, what would you say about yourself? Please write at least three sentences.

---

## Parent's "Brag Sheet" for a College Recommendation

*to be filled out by the parent*

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What do you consider to be your child's most important accomplishments during the high school years?
2. In what areas has your child shown the most development and personal growth during the past three or four years?
3. What do you consider to be your child's outstanding personality traits?
4. If you had to describe your child in five adjectives, what would they be?
5. Are there any unusual or personal circumstances, which have affected your child's educational or personal experiences?

Please feel free to use a second sheet of paper if your comments do not fit into the space provided.

## Junior/Senior's "Brag Sheet"

*to be filled out by the student*

In order to depict your positive qualities and attributes in letters of recommendation, your high school guidance counselors will want to know as much about you – the student – as they can. Besides being able to discuss your academic and extracurricular achievements, they will want to be able to discuss the qualities that make you unique. They will also want to know about the experiences that have been most meaningful to you. Please answer the following questions as accurately and completely as possible.

DO NOT BE AFRAID TO BRAG!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. List 6 adjectives that describe you best:

|       |       |       |
|-------|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |

2. The most important of these adjectives is \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. List six adjectives that you think your friends might use to describe you:

|       |       |       |
|-------|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |

4. What books have you read on your own this past year?

|       |       |       |
|-------|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |

5. What magazines do you read regularly?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. What are your special interests, hobbies, or leisure activities?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. What are your proudest personal accomplishments?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. How would you assess yourself as a person? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. What areas of yourself would you most like to personally improve, develop, or change?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10. How would describe yourself as a student?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

---

11. What circumstances, if any, have interfered with your academic performance?

---

---

12. Is your high school academic record, SAT's included, an accurate measure of your ability and potential? If not, what do you consider to be the best measures of your potential for success in college level work?

---

---

---

13. Is there anything that you would like me include/exclude in a letter of recommendation for you?

---

---

14. If you were to write your own letter of recommendation, what would you say about yourself? Please write at least three sentences.

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Conclusion

There is no way to know now what direction your child will take – towards college, towards a career choice, towards the pursuit of happiness. Parents can only help document the path the child takes. And, in time later, together, reflect upon it.

## Acknowledgments

The content for this *Guidebook* was inspired by my personal experience in helping prepare my son for college. I gratefully acknowledge the wisdom and guidance of the Ridgefield High School College Guidance department (2004) as they helped my son (and me) prepare for the college application process.