

Applying to Secondary School



Applying to Secondary School Handbook A Parent's Survival Guide

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Introduction

As parents of an upper school student at Hampstead Academy, you are probably beginning to think about where your son/daughter will attend High School. Many of you may be looking into the possibility of private high schools in New Hampshire, Massachusetts and elsewhere for your child. The process of learning about and applying to private schools can be complicated, intimidating and stressful for both you and your child. We have created this handbook with the hope that we can make the process more manageable and also less stress inducing for all. This booklet contains information on:

- The current competitive status of the top area private schools
- Finding a good fit: How to evaluate schools and choose those appropriate for your child
- The timeline: How to manage the application process
- Financial aid for private school tuition
- The details about the individual elements of the applications such as SSATs, interviews, essays and recommendations
- How the process may affect your child

In addition, we have provided several addendums at the back of the booklet that provide interesting, valuable, time saving information on the schools in the area, historical placement information of Hampstead graduates, SSAT score breakdown and more. We hope that you will find this to be a useful tool as you begin this important process. Please know that we are willing to help you in any way we can, so if you have questions that are not answered here, feel free to call.

How to Begin: Thoughts & Homework for Parents

Before you even begin to make a list of schools you, as parents, think your son or daughter should apply to, here are some things to consider that will help you frame and define your search process. Many of these suggestions may seem obvious, but they are still worth putting down on paper or discussing.

- What does he/she like to do?
- What are his/her passions?
- What are his/her strengths and weaknesses?
- What has she/he loved about Hampstead Academy? What has she/he not liked about Hampstead Academy?
- Is she/he outgoing and self confident or more shy and reserved?
- Is it your sense that she/he is mature or immature for her/his age relative to peers?
- Does your child do best in a small, somewhat sheltered setting, or is he or she ready for a larger environment?
- What are your child's learning styles? Is your child a self-starter or does he/she require a catalyst (parent or teacher) to get into gear? Is your child organized and use his/her time wisely or is he/she more likely to procrastinate?
- Do you anticipate that your child needs a high degree of support to succeed?
- Is boarding school an option?
- Is parochial school an option ?
- Is your public school an option?
- Is tuition a big factor in your decision? Many schools offer good financial aid.

Notes: *Parochial schools tend to be significantly less expensive.*

Pinkerton Academy, the public school for Derry, Hampstead and Chester does admit tuition paying students each year. Apply early in the year.

Answer these questions honestly. The more honest these answers are, the more useful they will be. Answer the questions with the understanding that they are for you, your child, your spouse and maybe some teachers' eyes only. Have each person create answers to these questions and then compare answers to see similarities and differences in how you each view your child and how your child sees himself.

Take some time with your child and ask him/her what feelings he/she has about private high schools. Try and do more listening than talking at this point. Here are some questions to ask your child that may help facilitate this conversation:

- What do you most enjoy about school? What subjects, sports, extracurricular activities such as art and theater, music are most important to you?
- What do you like the most about Hampstead Academy and what do you like the least?
- Can you describe what the perfect high school for you would be? What are the top 4-5, most important things this school would have or offer for you?
- What do you think about private high schools? Do you have impressions of any specific schools? Where did you get these impressions?
- How do you feel about beginning this process? Excited, nervous? If nervous, why? What part of the process, as you understand it, makes you nervous?

At this point, you may want to arrange a meeting with the Upper School Coordinator to discuss appropriate choices. This is a chance to review your child's academic transcripts and try to select schools that are a good match academically, and a match for your child's interests and emotional, social needs. You can borrow The "Private Independent Schools" book (Bunting and Lyon Blue Book) from the Upper School Coordinator that gives short overviews of all independent schools in the North America. In the Language Arts room, we also have files with catalogues and videos of many New England Schools. You are welcome to borrow these as well.

As you consider public, vs. private, day school vs. boarding, parochial vs. non-parochial, take time to talk with other parents about their child's experience. I have a list of parents of students who have gone to many of these schools and are willing to talk about their experiences. Please feel free to give me a call and I can put you in contact with them.

A recent 8th grade parent shared her thoughts:

(Peg Gaillard) "I would not necessarily jump to the decision that you are not willing to have your child consider a boarding school or a large school or a Parochial school. Again, it is important to remember that this is your child's high school experience. Don't dismiss any option until you feel you have educated your self on it. I speak from experience as a mother who swore up and down I would never "send our child away" for high school. Our daughter will be attending a school in Massachusetts next year with a 5-day boarding program. This is why I say it is worth making some *initial judgments* about what variety of school you are willing to consider. Let yourself remain as open-minded as you can as you educate yourself about the different types of schools. The more you know about all the options (even the ones you don't think you're interested in) the more confident you and your child will be about selecting the right ones.

Another important consideration for you as parents is to decide how much "say" your child will have in the ultimate decision of where to attend high school. If your child applies to three schools and gets in to all three, will you let your child make his/her own decision about which of the three she/he wants to attend or will you, as parents, have the ultimate decision making power. The way you approach the school selection process may differ based on how you plan to handle this.

The Application Process

A) During 6th Grade year :

1. Begin to gather information and work samples from your child's classes.
2. Keep an ongoing list of school or community activities that will be useful when your child is asked to create a resume in 8th grade to help with his or her applications and to assist teachers and others who will be writing references
Include in your list: awards, Honor roll, Athletic and other activities, hobbies and interests, work and volunteer experience, Community Service
3. Attend the Secondary School night at Hampstead Academy in June. We have many admissions officers as well as former students attend the event to help you see the wide variety of boarding and day schools in the area.

B) During 7th Grade year

1. Attend the Secondary School Fair at Pike School (or others) which is usually held in the second half of September.
2. Make a wish list "Both with your child and alone, detail all of the things you'd like to find in your dream school. Don't limit yourself. As you identify potential schools, call or email to request catalogs and applications "
3. Continue to update the resume information
4. Take the SSAT preparation course which is an Activity period choice for 7th graders in April. Take it again in the first Activity period of Grade 8.
We use the Kaplan book in school, so if your child needs extra practice, purchase one of the others (Barrons, Arco, McGraw Hill) for use at home.
5. Take the Lower Level SSAT in June. This is not the test that is the required component for admissions, but is good practice. It also gives us information about your student's strengths and weaknesses and helps give us a better framework for practicing for the SSAT in the 8th grade year.
(Although not required, we can include these test results in your child's transcript which is sent to Secondary Schools.)

**** Note that your child's percentage score on this test may seem lower than you usually see. The test compares your child to other seventh graders taking this test at this time. Look at the percentage given in the bottom right hand corner to see how your child compares nationally if all seventh graders took this test.**

6. Keep copies of any graded essays written this year. One may be required for some applications.
7. Meet with the Upper School Coordinator to review possible choices.
8. Visit some of the schools you are considering. Take a tour, but do not schedule an interview at this time. Spring of 7th grade is a good time to do this.

C) During your 8th grade year

1. Attend the Pike School/Hampstead Academy School Fair.
2. Visit and tour prospective schools.
- 3 . Register for the SSAT beginning August 1st (www.ssat.org)
 - Tests given in October, November, December and January
 - Students who are routinely given extra time in school for testing due to documented needs, can apply for an extra 30 minutes to complete the test. (See Susan Pitman for details on applying for this.)

A student with a **school-documented disability** may apply for special testing accommodations for a national or international SSAT administration. Only students who can provide school documentation that verifies that they routinely receive special accommodations in their current school setting will be approved.

Special accommodations are not available for temporary disabilities, such as a broken arm.

Students requesting only **extra testing time**, if it is routinely permitted in their current academic setting, may apply for a standard 30-minute extension to the end of the test.

Students with **other requirements** may also apply for special testing accommodations. With SSAT approval and evaluator verification, additional accommodations may include:

- Permission to mark answers directly in test booklet
- Large print test booklet and materials
- Use of laptop computer with spelling aid (for writing sample only)
- Additional testing time (50 minutes total) for completing each section. Standard testing time is 30 minutes per section."

4. Sign up for any parochial school exams. Note that most of the parochial school applications are due in December. You will receive acceptance from Parochial schools in January, and will have to put down a deposit before you hear from other private schools. Failure to send in a deposit will cause you to lose your place or put you on the wait list.
5. Arrange for interviews at schools. Make sure to send a hand written thank you note to your interviewer and your tour guide.
6. Give reference forms to teachers and outside references as early as possible, hopefully by November
7. Make sure that the Upper School Coordinator has a copy of your resume since questions are asked about outside interests and community service. Only you may know the answers to some of these questions.
8. If you want the Language Arts teachers to proofread your essays, make sure to give them plenty of time. Do not wait until the last minute!
9. In December and January ... Complete applications. Your Language Arts teachers will be glad to proofread your essays if you give them time.

Create an application calendar

Whether it's on your computer or with an old-fashioned paper list, account for every deadline and deliverable. Things like application essays take time! Application requirements may include: school records, letters of recommendation, a student statement, a writing sample and/or application essay, an application fee, etc.

Make financial aid part of your campus visit

Financial aid is a face-to-face process. During each campus visit, stop in to see the financial aid officer. There is a limited amount of need- and merit-based aid for private school, but you need to apply separately in most cases.

Keep track of paperwork

As you work on each application, keep copies of everything you send in. This will make for easy reference later, and can also be helpful if you're applying to multiple schools with similar requirements.

Beware of deadlines

Most schools have a December, January or February application deadline. Make sure you know when your application is due and get it in as soon as possible.

TESTS

SSAT is a required test for many private Secondary Schools. Many of the Parochial schools administer their own tests or require the HSPT Entrance exam or the Catholic High School Entrance exam. The Parochial tests are usually administered at the schools.

During the fourth Activity period in the 7th grade year and the first activity period in the 8th grade year, students are offered test preparation. Students will need to purchase the Kaplan SSAT book. Math and LA classes also integrate some practice into their curricula. Essay writing skills are included in LA class.

SSAT offers two tests:

Lower level is taken by students in grades 5 -7 (Students are encouraged to take their test in June of the 7th grade year, both for practice and for areas that might need to be studied.)

Upper level is given in Nov, Dec, and Jan and is for students in grades 8 – 11.

(Note: Your child's percentage grade on these tests may be lower than you are accustomed to seeing, since the grades compare your child to other students taking the test, not to the national population)

You can wait until you see the results before forwarding the grades to Secondary Schools. There is an extra charge for waiting. You can take the test several times. Most school consider the highest achieved score in the application process.

Some schools that Hampstead Academy students have attended

If you would like to talk with an alumni (or parent) from one of these schools, check with the Upper School Coordinator for phone numbers.

Public Schools

*Pinkerton Academy, Timberlane Regional High School
Salem High School, Sanborn Regional High School, Exeter High School
Pentucket Regional High School, Triton High School, Haverhill High School
Newburyport High School, Coe-Brown High School*

Private Schools

*Bishop Brady – Concord NH
Bishop Guertin High School – Nashua NH
Brewster Academy – Wolfeboro NH
Calvary Christian – Derry NH (closed '09)
Derryfield School – Manchester NH
Holderness School – Plymouth NH
Kimball Union Academy – Meriden NH
New Hampton School – New Hampton NH
Phillips Exeter Academy – Exeter NH
Portsmouth Christian – Dover NH
Presentation of Mary – Hudson NH
Proctor Academy – Andover NH
St. Thomas – Dover NH
Shaker Road - Concord, NH
Tilton - Tilton NH
Trinity – Manchester NH*

*Austin Prep – Reading MA
Berkshire School - Sheffield MA
Brooks School – Andover MA
Central Catholic – Lawrence MA
Concord Academy - Concord MA
Governor's School – Byfield MA
Lawrence Academy – Groton MA
Milton Academy – Milton MA
Nobles & Greenough – Dedham, MA.
Northfield Academy – Northfield MA
Phillips Andover – Andover MA
Pingree School – South Hamilton MA
Sparhawk School – Amesbury MA
St John's Prep – Danvers MA
St Mark's - Southborough MA
Tabor Academy - Marion MA
Waring School – Beverly MA*

*Berwick Academy – South Berwick ME
Gould Academy – Bethel ME
Choate Rosemary - Wallingford, CT
Westover High School, Middlebury, CT*

Some Statistics on near-by Schools 2015 Data

Brooks School

Total School Population = 376 Students
Acceptance Rate: 25%
Average SSAT for incoming students = 65%
Percentage on Financial Aid = 23%

Central Catholic

Total School Population = 1135 Students
Acceptance Rate: 68%
Average SSAT for incoming students = N/A Catholic Exam
Percentage on Financial Aid = 25%

Lawrence Academy – Groton MA

Total School Population = 400 Students
Acceptance Rate: 47%
Average SSAT for incoming students = 50%
Percentage on Financial Aid = 32%

Phillips Academy Andover

Total School Population = 1108 Students
Acceptance Rate: 13%
Average SSAT for incoming students = 94%
Percentage on Financial Aid = 47%

Phillips Exeter Academy

Total School Population = 1063 Students
Acceptance Rate: 17%
Average SSAT for incoming students = 93%
Percentage on Financial Aid = 45%

Pinkerton Academy

Accepts tuitioned students from out of district each year. This is a rolling admissions process, however, it is wise to get your application in early in the year.

* See the Upper School Coordinator if you are thinking of applying and she will give you a copy of your child's transcript to include with your application.
Students are generally accepted on first come first serve basis.

Useful Websites

www.ssat.org
www.nais.org
www.nipsa.org
www.petersons.com

NEW ENGLAND BOARDING SCHOOLS

1. Academy of the Holy Family	All-girls	9-12	Baltic, CT	45. Lawrence Academy	Co-ed	9-12	Groton, MA
2. Avon Old Farms School	All-boys	9-12	Avon, CT	46. Linden Hill School	All-boys	3-9	Northfield, MA
3. Bement School	Co-ed	3-9	Deerfield, MA	47. The Loomis Chaffee School	Co-ed	9-12	Windsor, CT
4. Berkshire School	Co-ed	9-12	Sheffield, MA	48. The MacDuffie School	Co-ed	9-12	Springfield, MA
5. Brewster Academy	Co-ed	9-12	Wolfeboro, NH	49. Maharishi Academy of Total Knowledge	All-boys	9-12	Antrim, NH
6. Bridgton Academy	All-boys	12-12	North Bridgton, ME	50. The Marvelwood School	Co-ed	9-12	Kent, CT
7. Brooks School	Co-ed	9-12	North Andover, MA	51. The Meeting School	Co-ed	9-12	Rindge, NH
8. Buxton School	Co-ed	9-12	Williamstown, MA	52. Middlesex School	Co-ed	9-12	Concord, MA
9. The Cambridge School of Weston	Co-ed	9-12	Weston, MA	53. Milton Academy	Co-ed	9-12	Milton, MA
10. Canterbury School	Co-ed	9-12	New Milford, CT	54. Miss Hall's School	All-girls	9-12	Pittsfield, MA
11. Cardigan Mountain School	All-boys	6-9	Canaan, NH	55. Miss Porter's School	All-girls	9-12	Farmington, CT
12. Chapel Hill-Chauncy Hall	Co-ed	9-12	Waltham, MA	56. New Hampton School	Co-ed	9-12	New Hampton, NH
13. Cheshire Academy	Co-ed	9-12	Cheshire, CT	57. Northfield Mount Hermon School	Co-ed	9-12	Mount Hermon, MA
14. Choate Rosemary Hall	Co-ed	9-12	Wallingford, CT	58. Oliverian School	Co-ed	9-12	Haverhill, NH
15. Concord Academy	Co-ed	9-12	Concord, MA	59. Phillips Academy	Co-ed	9-12	Andover, MA
16. Cushing Academy	Co-ed	9-12	Ashburnham, MA	60. Phillips Exeter Academy	Co-ed	9-12	Exeter, NH
17. Dana Hall School	All-girls	9-12	Wellesley, MA	61. Pomfret School	Co-ed	9-12	Pomfret, CT
18. Deerfield Academy	Co-ed	9-12	Deerfield, MA	62. Portsmouth Abbey School	Co-ed	9-12	Portsmouth, RI
19. Dublin School	Co-ed	9-12	Dublin, NH	63. Proctor Academy	Co-ed	9-12	Andover, NH
20. Eagle Hill School	Co-ed	8-12	Hardwick, MA	64. The Putney School	Co-ed	9-12	Putney, VT
21. The Ethel Walker School	All-girls	9-12	Simsbury, CT	65. The Rectory School	Co-ed	5-9	Pomfret, CT
22. Fay School	Co-ed	6-9	Southborough, MA	66. St. Andrew's School - RI	Co-ed	9-12	Barrington, RI
23. The Forman School	Co-ed	9-12	Litchfield, CT	67. St. George's School	Co-ed	9-12	Newport, RI
24. Foxcroft Academy	Co-ed	9-12	Dover Foxcroft, ME	68. St. Johnsbury Academy	Co-ed	9-12	St. Johnsbury, VT
25. Fryeburg Academy	Co-ed	9-12	Fryeburg, ME	69. St. Mark's School	Co-ed	9-12	Southborough, MA
26. George Stevens Academy	Co-ed	9-12	Blue Hill, ME	70. St. Paul's School	Co-ed	9-12	Concord, NH
27. The Glenholme School	Co-ed	5-12	Washintgon, CT	71. St. Thomas More School	All-boys	8-12,	Oakdale, CT
28. Gould Academy	Co-ed	9-12	Bethel, ME	72. Salisbury School	All-boys	9-12	Salisbury, CT
29. The Governor's Academy	Co-ed	9-12	Byfield, MA	73. South Kent School	All-boys	9-12	South Kent, CT
30. The Greenwood School	All-boys	4-9	Putney, VT	74. Stoneleigh-Burnham School	All-girls	7-12	Greenfield, MA
31. Groton School	Co-ed	8-12	Groton, MA	75. Suffield Academy	Co-ed	9-12	Suffield, CT
32. The Gunnery	Co-ed	9-12	Washington, CT	76. Tabor Academy	Co-ed	9-12	Marion, MA
33. Hampshire Country School	All-boys	3-12	Rindge, NH	77. The Taft School	Co-ed	9-12	Watertown, CT
34. Hebron Academy	Co-ed	9-12	Hebron, ME	78. Thornton Academy	Co-ed	9-12	Saco, ME
35. High Mowing School	Co-ed	9-12	Wilton, NH	79. Tilton School	Co-ed	9-12	Tilton, NH
36. Hillside School	All-boys	5-9	Marlborough, MA	80. Vermont Academy	Co-ed	9-12	Saxtons River, VT
37. Holderness School	Co-ed	9-12	Plymouth, NH	81. Washington Academy	Co-ed	9-12	East Machias, ME
38. The Hotchkiss School	Co-ed	9-12	Lakeville, CT	82. Westminster School	Co-ed	9-12	Simsbury, CT
39. Hyde-Bath	Co-ed	9-12	Bath, ME	83. Westover School	All-girls	9-12	Middlebury, CT
40. Hyde-Woodstock	Co-ed	9-12	Woodstock, CT	84. The White Mountain School	Co-ed	9-12,	Bethlehem, NH
41. Kent School	Co-ed	9-12	Kent, CT	85. Wilbraham & Monson Academy	Co-ed	9-12	Wilbraham, MA
42. Kents Hill School	Co-ed	9-12	Kents Hill, ME	86. The Williston Northampton School	Co-ed	9-12	Easthampton, MA
43. Kimball Union Academy	Co-ed	9-12	Meriden, NH	87. The Winchendon School	Co-ed	9-12	Winchendon, MA
44. Landmark School	Co-ed	9-12	Prides Crossing, MA	88. Wolfeboro: The Summer Boarding School	Co-ed	6-12	Wolfeboro, NH