

Maine Arts Academy

Student Guide to College

At Maine Arts Academy, we endeavor to transform the lives of our students through arts and academics. This transformation applies to your time at MeAA and continues into your transition to college, career training, or higher learning. The Maine Arts Academy ***Student Guide to College*** is intended to provide you with an overview of the college application process. In it, you will find information about early college classes at MeAA through the UMaine System, how to apply to colleges, financial aid and scholarship opportunities, and preparation tips for writing your college essay and getting ready for college performing arts auditions. There's also a timeline to follow to begin your college preparations as early as your freshman year and a quick Resource Guide at the end that lists many important links and resources.

We wish you the best in your college search and are here to support you through the journey!

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Early College Options at Maine Arts Academy

Through the University of Maine System's ***Aspiration Program***, Maine high school students in their junior and senior years are eligible to take up to six course credits tuition free each semester. This usually equates to two free classes per semester and can give MeAA students a jump start into college life with the possibility of up to 24 college credits earned before leaving high school. These credits are guaranteed transferable within the UMaine system and are often accepted at many other colleges outside the UMaine system. This means that you may be able to earn a college bachelor's degree in three years rather than the usual four and save a lot of money in college tuition costs!

Advantages to taking Early College Courses

- *Wide variety of course choices*
- *Challenging course material*
- *Greater independence when you do your coursework*
- *Preparation for college life*
- *Proof that you are college ready*
 - *(build your College Transcript as you complete classes)*
- *Save money on future college tuition by taking transferable college classes*

How to Enroll

Representatives from UMaine's Early College Program come to the MeAA campus at the end of each semester to meet with students and to help sign students up for available college classes. Often these classes can fill your MeAA graduation requirements. It is important to check with the MeAA Guidance Office to understand which college classes will meet which MeAA graduation requirements. Popular UMaine classes include: English 101, College Writing, General Biology, Anatomy and Physiology, Business Management, Chemistry for the Life Sciences, Public Speaking, Intro. to Literature, US History, and Intro. to Psychology.

Many UMaine classes are available as on-line courses. Others may require you to travel to the campus (Augusta or another campus site) and others may be a combination of in class and on-line work. It is important to understand the commitment before signing up for the class. College classes require a greater deal of personal responsibility, organization, and accountability. Be sure to read registration information thoroughly and don't be afraid to ask questions when speaking with a representative. Most college classes will require you to purchase a college textbook and some classes require a lab fee. Although tuition for these courses is free, often there are costs involved with taking a college course. Please note that college courses often begin at the end of August before the MeAA Fall Semester begins. It is the student's responsibility to access a laptop for these courses. There may be a time gap between the start of college classes and when the MeAA laptops are dispensed.

To get started with the Early College process, you may visit the following websites:

- University of Maine System: [Home - Early College](#)

- University of Maine at Augusta: [Early College at UMA](#) and [Info for Registered Early College Students](#)
- University of Maine at Machias: [Courses - Early College](#)
- University of Maine at Fort Kent: [Rural U | Early College at UMFK](#)

Considerations: Are You Ready for Early College Classes?

There are many advantages to taking Early College classes, but also remember that by taking college classes, you are building a College Transcript that will follow you in the future as you apply to college programs in and out of state. Good grades on your college transcript can signal to future colleges that you have a proven record with college level material. Poor grades will signal the opposite.

Use the following questions to assess whether you are ready for the responsibility that comes with enrolling in college coursework. Be completely honest with yourself!

- *Are you driven to succeed in your high school class work?*
- *Do you have a “B” average or above in all of your classes?*
- *Do you like to challenge yourself?*
- *Can you work independently?*
- *Are you organized?*
- *Can you meet a deadline?*
- *Does the wide variety of college course choices inspire you?*
- *Would you be willing to reach out to a college professor if you have questions or concerns about your course work?*

As you decide to make the commitment to early college classes, you can start the process by exploring the UMaine Aspirations Program at: [ExplorEC Portal](#)

Through this portal, you can find information on the following:

- *How to enroll for UMaine classes*
- *How to set up and access your UMaine account*
- *Links to the campus-wide information systems, **Brightspace** and **Blackboard**. This is where you will see assignments posted for your classes and it is where you will communicate with your professors.*
- *Semester schedules and deadlines*
- *How to withdraw from classes*
- *How to obtain your transcripts*

You can access the UMA Early College Handbook through the following link:

[UMA EC handbook accessible 15AUG2019.pdf](#)

To search for Early College classes, use the UMA Course Guide. It is advised to stay with 100-200 Level Courses. Some courses may require a placement test for High School students.

[Course Guide](#)

Going Outside the UMaine System

You may also consider taking Early College classes at other Maine Colleges.

Kennebec Valley Community College - KVCC in Fairfield is also part of the Aspirations Program and offers many options for students. For more information, contact Flora Stack at: fstack@kvcc.me.edu or visit: [Programs for High School Students - KVCC](#)

Colby College - If you have an “A” average at MEAA, Colby College in Waterville may be an excellent choice for early college classes. Colby takes a select number of high school students each semester with the first course being free and a second at a 50% tuition discount. For more information, contact kkbishop@colby.edu

Thomas College - Thomas College in Waterville offers a Dual Enrollment Program where Maine High School students can take college classes for free. For more information, visit: <https://www.thomas.edu/dual-enrollment/>

Getting Ready for College

Different Types of Colleges and College Programs

Community College

A Community College is a public, non selective, affordable college that focuses on technical skills needed in the workforce. Most Community College programs are two year programs that lead to an Associate’s Degree or Certificate. Community Colleges are affordable options, offering the lowest cost per credit. Credits earned at a Community College can often

be transferred to a four year degree program, if additional education is desired. The advantage of a Community College is that the programs are geared towards getting students the necessary skills to get out into the workforce quickly. Getting out into the workforce quickly means that you may be able to gain financial independence and continue additional schooling at your own pace.

Community College Programs often include Certificates or Associate Degrees programs in: *Nursing, Culinary Arts, Business, Computer Science, Criminal Justice, Electrical Engineering* and many others.

Maine has several Community Colleges located around the state to choose from. You can learn more about Maine's Community College System by visiting: www.mccs.me.edu/our-colleges/

The University of Maine System

The University of Maine System is Maine's public university system offering over 100 degree programs through its seven universities located around the state. Most of the undergraduate degree programs are four year programs that culminate with a Bachelor's Degree in a selected program. The University of Maine System also offers many graduate programs for students wishing to pursue a Master's or Doctoral degree after receiving their Bachelor's degree.

It is the University of Maine's mission to provide affordable four year college education to Maine students. You may wish to start your college search by looking at University of Maine programs on the various campuses. Applying to the University of Maine will give you a good perspective of what is available close to home. Financial Aid packages are significantly higher for Maine students than for out-of-state students.

Some specific program highlights include: *Education, Engineering, Law, and numerous medical fields, including Veterinary medicine*. Both the University of Maine at Orono and the University of Southern Maine offer music and theater programs that are worthy of consideration. The University of Maine at Orono is the largest of the campuses in the UMaine system and offers residential housing for students.

Private University (In-State and Out-of-State)

There is a wide variety of private Colleges and Universities located in Maine, around the country, and in countries outside of the US. Private universities tend to be more selective in nature, often requiring a certain GPA, level of SAT score, and auditions/portfolio review for admittance into specific programs. The tuition costs of private universities vary significantly but are generally higher than in-state public universities or community colleges. When looking at private universities, it is best to have specific choices in mind regarding programs you wish to pursue. Check to see if the college requires you to submit your SAT score and if you fit the SAT range for that school. As admittance for many private colleges can be extremely competitive, you may wish to consider Early Action or Early Decision when applying. Private colleges and universities can offer excellent educational advantages. Look for a good fit both personally and financially.

Here's a list of Private Colleges and Universities in located in Maine:

Colby College - www.colby.edu

Bates College - www.bates.edu
Bowdoin College - www.bowdoin.edu
Thomas College - www.thomas.edu
Husson University - www.husson.edu
University of New England - www.une.edu
College of the Atlantic - www.coa.edu
MECA (Maine College of Art) - www.meca.edu
Unity College - www.unity.edu

Here's a list of Out-of State Colleges to start your search:

Emerson College - www.emerson.edu
Bennington College - www.bennington.edu
Dean College - www.dean.edu
Berklee College of Music - www.beklee.edu
Hartt School - University of Hartford - www.hartford.edu
Marymount Manhattan College - www.mmm.edu
Pace University - www.pace.edu
University of the Arts - www.uarts.edu
Ithaca College - www.ithaca.edu

The College Application Process

You've narrowed down your interests, taken your SAT's, maybe signed up for some Early College classes through the University of Maine system, and now you're going into your senior year at MEAA and it's time to apply to colleges. There are several ways to go about the College Application process and they are listed below.

The Common App

The Common App or **Common Application** is a single online college application form used by nearly 900 colleges and universities. The Common App can be a great timesaver and that is why about a million students apply to more than 4 million colleges each year using the Common App. Instead of filling out individual application forms for each of your selected colleges and repeating the same general information again and again, the Common App allows you to fill out one online application form and shares the information with the schools of your choice. There is no fee to use the Common App, however individual colleges may have application fees. These application fees can be paid by credit card through the Common App.

An updated Common App becomes available on August 1st of each year. This is a good time to start your application process by logging in and creating a profile. The profile is everything you want colleges to know about you: your arts and academic classes, your hobbies and extracurricular activities, your community service, and any honors and awards.

After you create your profile, you can start adding the schools to which you would like to apply. You can apply to up to 20 colleges and universities on the Common App. The Common App provides a search engine where you can visit the profiles of participating colleges. There are nearly 900 colleges that use the Common App, so the choices are vast. When a certain school catches your attention, it is important to take a closer look. Does it match your interests? What is the acceptance rate? Do you need a specific SAT score to be accepted? Can you take a virtual tour?

The number of schools that you apply to is a personal matter. Generally, you may wish to narrow your search to 7-10 top college choices. That may include 2-3 safety schools or schools with a high acceptance rate and good financial aid options. This should include University of Maine system schools and any community college choices. Then, you may focus on 3-4 target schools or schools that seem to be a great fit for your career interests. You can finish your search by adding 2-3 reach schools or schools with a great reputation but a low acceptance rate (many well-known Ivy League schools fall in this category, such as: **Harvard University**, **Yale University**, **Brown University**, and **Dartmouth University**). Most reach schools are highly competitive. If you have the grades, resume, and SAT scores to get accepted into a highly competitive school, their financial aid packages can be quite generous.

When you have selected and listed your colleges on the Common App, start a checklist or spreadsheet to keep track of everything each college requires for application. This will vary from college to college and it is important to stay organized and on top of the deadlines for each college. Your checklist can include: application fees and deadlines, audition or portfolio requirements for arts programs, and number of required essays. It is very important to stay on top of application requirements!

The next step is to gather your letters of recommendations from teachers, administrators, and/or guidance counselors. Select people with whom you have a strong relationship and personally ask them if they would be willing to write a letter of recommendation. At MeAA, you might consider selecting one arts teacher and one academic teacher. Think about the type of college program in which you are applying and consider who would be best suited to communicate your skills and talents to college administrators. Your select recommenders can upload your recommendation by opening and accessing their Common App accounts. You can ask for a copy of the recommendation letter for your own records.

The Common App requires that you upload one original college essay as part of your application. They provide seven or so writing prompts to help in your preparation. The requirement for the essay is that it is between 250-650 words in length. Tips for writing your essay are included in this guide on page 18.

The Common App will ask that a high school transcript be sent to the colleges of your choice by MeAA. You may contact MeAA Administration or Guidance Department regarding your

transcript. If you have enrolled in early college classes, you may also request that UMaine send your college transcript. Please give lots of time before the application deadlines for this task.

To get started with **The Common App**, visit: www.commonapp.org

The Common App has a guide that will walk you through the application process. To access it, go to: www.commonapp.org/apply/first-time-students

An updated step by step video guide on The Common App can be found on YouTube. Search: **How to Guide to the Common Application - Tutorial.**

Khan Academy offers videos with step by step instructions to help in filling out the Common App. Visit: [Filling out the college application: Common application walkthrough \(article\)](#)

The Coalition App

The Coalition App is another college application platform that you may consider using when applying to colleges. It is quite new and not as well known or widely used as The Common App. The benefit of The Coalition App is that all of the member schools are committed to providing college accessibility to lower income students. At present, more than 150 colleges and universities make up this coalition. They define themselves as being committed to greater student access, affordability, and success.

The Coalition App empowers students to learn about, prepare for, and apply to college with a three step approach. As early as 9th grade, students may open a Coalition App account. You can begin building your profile and start your search for colleges.

A second feature of this application platform is your “Locker”. The Locker feature is private, unlimited digital space where you can begin recording your high school experience. You may include videos of work, essays, projects, artwork, auditions, sound recordings, and awards. This body of work may be edited and eventually shared with colleges. This portfolio can help a college get to know you and your accomplishments beyond your grades, test scores, and “prompted” college essays. It can offer a wider view of who you are as a student.

A third unique step in The Coalition App process is “Collaborative Space,” a virtual area that you may use to connect with teachers and guidance counselors to gain important feedback on your college preparations.

Like The Common App, The Coalition App is free to use. Applicants who demonstrate financial need may apply for fee waivers when applying to Coalition member schools.

For more information about The Coalition App, visit: www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org

You may visit the profiles of member schools using the following link:

Applying Directly to Colleges

Some excellent colleges and universities do not have memberships with college application platforms. Students should apply to those schools directly by visiting the college website and carefully following their application requirements. College admission counselors are often available to answer questions about the schools they represent, so do not hesitate to use them as a resource.

A few schools of interest that currently do not use application platforms include:

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), www.mit.edu

The University of California, www.universityofcalifornia.edu

Fashion Institute of Technology, www.fitnyc.edu

Goddard College, www.goddard.edu

Key Components to the College Application Process

Whether you are applying to colleges by using an application platform such as: The Common App or The Coalition App, or applying directly to your college of choice, there are many common components to the application process. In each instance, you will be asked to complete the following.

Create a Profile/Provide Personal Information - this first step of the process will ask you to provide basic information about yourself, your family, your classes and interests, extracurricular activities, community service, and honors and awards. Take lots of time with this section, be thoughtful and accurate, and go into detail. This is the section where a college gets to know you as a student. Tell the story of who you are, what you have accomplished, and where you want to go.

Official High School Transcript - The Official High School Transcript is the record of the classes you have taken in high school and the grades you have received for those classes. It

indicates current GPA's (Grade Point Average) and Class Rank. Your Official High School Transcript should be sent from Maine Arts Academy to the colleges to which you are applying. You may request that your transcript be sent by contacting MeAA administration or Guidance Department. Please make your request far ahead of college deadlines. It is advised that you look over your transcript with your Guidance Counselor at the end of your junior year or beginning of your senior year to make sure that all information is updated and accurate.

If you have been taking early college classes, you may also request that a transcript of your college grades be sent to your chosen schools. You may use this link to request transcripts from the UMaine System: [Requesting a Transcript](#)

Standardized Test Scores - Many schools require applicants to submit SAT scores. Each time you take the SAT test, you are allowed four free score reports. You may choose which schools you would like the score reports to be sent. The current fee for additional reports is \$12.

Letters of Recommendation - You will be asked to provide 2-3 letters of recommendation as part of the college application process. You may obtain letters of recommendation from teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators. It is best to select people who know you well and can comment on your academic and artistic growth, achievements, and personal qualities. It is helpful to communicate your intended major and interests to your recommenders so they may tailor your letter around those interests. Please request your letters well in advance of application deadlines.

College Essay - Writing a college essay is a required part of the college application process. The college essay is a place where you can showcase both your writing skills and your personality. Many colleges have specific requirements for the essay, so it is important to carefully check in with each chosen college. Most will require that the essay be between 250-650 words. The Common App provides prompts that can help you get started with your essay. For more tips on writing your college essay, see ***Tips for Writing Your College Essay*** in this guide.

Early Decision vs. Early Action - Many schools offer early decision or early action options. For example, the early decision deadline for Emerson College is November 1 and the early decision deadline for Colby College is November 15. By choosing Early Decision, you are bound to that school if accepted and must attend. In contrast, Early Action means you will get a non-binding early response to your application. You will not have to reply to that school until the normal response time (usually May 1).

Performing Arts Auditions/Visual Arts Portfolio Review - Competitive performing and visual arts college programs require an audition or portfolio review. In larger schools, this can often be a two step process. Students may be asked to submit artwork, vocal and instrumental selections, dance solos, and monologues digitally in the fall as a pre-screen audition or review. Colleges often receive thousands of pre-screen auditions and work to pare numbers down to a few hundred students who are invited to audition or show their portfolio in person. These audition or portfolio reviews often take place in January and February. Check with specific college programs for audition/interview dates. When applying to visual and performing arts programs where in-person auditions are required, remember to budget in your travel expenses,

as traveling to college auditions can become quite expensive. For more information about the audition process, see ***The Audition Process for Performing Arts Students*** in this guide.

Financial Aid and Scholarships

Applying for Financial Aid

There are several types of financial aid available to students applying for college. Most financial aid falls under three categories: grants and scholarships, student loans, and work study. Money from grants and scholarships is money that you do not have to pay back. Private and federal student loans need to be paid back with interest after you graduate. Work study is work on the college campus that pays you a salary. Work study is helpful in paying for school supplies and living expenses while you are in school.

Filling Out the FAFSA - The FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) form is the first and most important step in applying for financial aid. It becomes available on October 1st each year and it is advised that you fill out the FAFSA form as soon as possible in the fall. Federal financial aid is available on a first come basis. If you have neglected this step until the spring, it is absolutely still worth applying. The deadlines for the FAFSA vary. The federal deadline is June 30. The Maine deadline is May 1. Be sure to check the deadlines for each of your chosen schools. MeAA hosts a FAFSA workshop in October each year to help families with the FAFSA form. The workshop is led by FAME (the Finance Authority of Maine). FAME is a great resource for assistance through the college application process. As well as leading FAFSA workshops, they are a resource for finding state funding and scholarships.

To learn more about FAME, follow this link: [Education](#)

To get started with the FAFSA form, you will need to gather documents. Ask for your parent's help with this step if you are a dependent student. You will need to gather the following:

- Social Security numbers for both you and your parents.
- Driver's License number (if you have one).
- Federal Tax Information or tax returns including IRS W-2 information for you and your parents.
- Records of untaxed income: child support payments, interest income
- Information on cash: savings and checking account balances, investments, assets for both you and your parents.

Before starting the application, you must apply for a FSA ID. Go to: www.fsaaid.ed.gov You will be asked to create an account for yourself. It may take up to three days while the system confirms your identity. Parents must create their own FSA ID using their own personal

email account and phone numbers. These accounts must be different from the accounts listed by the student.

Once you have gathered your documents and received your FSA ID, you are ready to start your FAFSA Application. You can access the FAFSA form at: www.fafsa.gov

Select “Start Here.” You will need your FSA ID number to begin. Near the beginning of the application, you can create a “SAVE” key. This is a temporary password that will allow you to start the application and finish it at another time. The “SAVE” key can also allow your parents to complete their information at another time or in another location.

As you start the application process, you will need to list at least one school to receive your information. You may list up to ten schools on the online application.

Once you have filled out the financial information on the application, you will be prompted to sign and submit the form. You will receive your Student Aid Report between three days and a few weeks. It is advised to look it over carefully to make sure it is accurate.

You can access numerous FAFSA help videos at: [Federal Student Aid](#)

As you are accepted into schools listed on your FAFSA form, the schools will calculate your financial aid and send you an award letter or financial aid offer. Look this over carefully. Remember, grants and scholarships are money that you do not need to pay back. Student loans need to be repaid after graduation. Compare and contrast aid offers from different schools carefully, considering the breakdown of grants, scholarships, and loans offered.

The amount of financial aid is an important factor in determining where you should go to college. Give thought to the projected amount of student debt and how you will pay it back. You will need to fill out the FAFSA application for each year of college. Make sure that you are projecting the amount of financial aid needed for the total number of years that it will take for you to receive your degree.

Once you make a decision of which college you will attend, you can accept your financial aid package. Accept the scholarships, grants, and work study first. Then, accept federal loans which will have a lower interest rate than private loans. You may need to continue looking for additional funding such as: private loans and/or additional scholarships.

Accessing Additional Scholarships

To supplement your Financial Aid Offer, you may wish to continue your search for additional funds for school. The FAFSA Student Aid Report has connected you to grants and

scholarships, student loans, and work study from federal sources. Other sources exist on the state and local levels. The following is a list of suggestions to continue your search:

- Use a college scholarship search engine, such as: www.fastweb.com or www.collegegreenlight.com
- Contact your college financial aid office and ask about additional scholarships. Often, they are the best resource.
- FAME - The Finance Authority of Maine. Visit their website for access to state scholarships. [Maine Scholarship Search](#)
- MEAA Guidance Office for information on the **Mitchell Scholarship** [Scholarship - The Mitchell Institute](#) and the **Robin Taylor Neal Memorial Scholarship** for MeAA students.
- Your employer or your parent's employer. Often businesses give scholarships to local students.
- Local community or religious organizations, such as: Augusta Calumet Club or the Maine Elks Association.
- Organizations related to your field of interest (search Performing/Visual Arts scholarships.) For example: Monmouth Community Players Scholarship, the Portland Player Theater Scholarship.

Applying for additional scholarships takes organization and persistence. Sort your scholarship applications by due date and create a checklist or spreadsheet to keep track of the details.

Many scholarships will require:

- Your FAFSA information
- A letter of recommendation
- Your latest transcript and GPA (request from MEAA administration)
- A written essay

When you write your essay, make sure it meets the scholarship criteria and speaks to the question or prompt on the application. Whenever possible, type your application. If you have to handwrite the form, make sure your handwriting is neat and legible. Proofread your application and essay. Spelling and grammar absolutely count. Try to be authentic in your application. Apply because you are interested and not because someone told you to apply. Sincerity and passion come across to those reading scholarship applications! Try to submit scholarship applications ahead of the deadline and make sure that you have included all required materials.

A Timeline for Students

What You Can Do to Prepare for College in Your Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, and Senior Years

Freshman Year - Consider your Arts/Academic Pathways at MeAA. By the end of your freshman year, declare your "major" or concentration at MeAA. Consider the classes that you are taking or intending to take in your Sophomore year and beyond. Does this pathway

challenge you? Does it make you want to learn more about a certain subject? If so, you may want to brainstorm and explore careers associated with your arts pathway.

If your arts concentration is considered more of an interest or hobby for you, explore what does excite you and could lead to a career choice. Perhaps, it is an academic subject or outside hobby? Research, brainstorm, and explore career options. What choices can you make to get you where you want to go?

What if you like everything or what if nothing excites you? Keep exploring your options! Try some different classes or activities outside of school. There are benefits to keeping your options open!

You don't have to have answers at this time, but it is your job to continually ask questions and explore future career options!

Sophomore Year - Start to consider college options. Visit college fairs and try to tour a couple of local colleges. What programs do these colleges offer that are of interest to you? What kinds of financial aid does the college offer? What kind of a degree will you receive upon graduation from this program? Will the degree prepare you for a career in your field of interest or will more training be involved after graduation?

Prepare and take your PSAT 10 test in the spring of your sophomore year. Based on your PSAT scores, colleges will start to reach out to you. Read your college information carefully and consider following up on programs/schools that interest you by visiting college websites and arranging a visit. Most colleges have Open House Days for prospective students throughout the year.

Junior Year - Continue to consider career and college options. In your junior and senior year, you are eligible to take early college classes through the UMaine System. You may explore and sign-up for early college classes right at MeAA at the end of each semester. Early college classes are excellent ways to prepare for college while meeting some of your MeAA graduation requirements. Please note that college classes require independent work! Before signing up for classes, honestly ask yourself if you are ready and self-motivated enough to meet the requirements and deadlines of a college class! Motivated students can often find that they are able to graduate from MeAA with a year of core college classes under their belts. On the other hand, failing or performing poorly in a college class will stay on your transcript going forward. High scores on college classes will make you more attractive to prospective colleges.

Prepare and take your SAT/NMSQT in the fall of your Junior year. This test is the same as the PSAT 10 test that is taken in the spring of your sophomore year. Taking both tests will help to prepare you for the SAT test that is administered in the spring of your Junior year. Both tests provide test scores so that you can clearly see your strengths and weaknesses and can build an individual plan to practice and improve skills.

The official SAT test is administered in the spring of your junior year and again in the fall of your senior year. **The SAT is the test that colleges will look at.** The SAT's can be taken more than once and are administered at MeAA. You may opt to take the SAT again at a different site.

The SAT is available in different languages, if needed. There are free SAT prep classes that you can take in preparation:

- Colby College in Waterville offers a FREE SAT prep course through the national program, “Let’s Get Ready.” For more information about the course, visit: [Let’s Get Ready: Students Helping Students to and Through College](#)
- Khan Academy offers free online SAT prep at: [Official SAT® Practice](#)
- The Princeton Review offers free online practice tests and other free online events at: [Free SAT Practice Test | Free SAT Events](#)
- Kaplan University offer a free online “SAT bootcamp” at: [Free Online SAT Practice Tests & Events](#)

Many students opt to take their SATs in the spring of their junior year and again in the fall of their senior year. The highest score can be reported to colleges.

Continue to visit College Fairs and make arrangements to tour a few more colleges. Perhaps, augment family trips and vacations with out-of-state college visits. Be sure to ask about financial aid/scholarships availability for out-of-state students. A good question to ask is: “what percentage of out-of-state students make up your student body?” Or, “what is the average amount of student debt that students are graduating with at your college?” Make careful note of the responses!

Senior Year - First Semester - Narrow your college options and begin the application process. The Common App is a good place to start and an updated version is available in August. Most colleges ask for a college essay, letters of recommendation from teachers, and arts students may also be required to prepare an audition or show a portfolio. You may upload your college essay and teachers can upload letters of recommendation right on The Common App. Some colleges have their own application process, so please carefully read through the application process for each college that you are interested in. If you are applying to multiple colleges, creating a spreadsheet for yourself is a great organizational tool. You can list application requirements for each college and check off when you have completed each step.

- Sign-up for Early College Courses offered through the UMaine System.
- Consider taking the SAT’s for a second time in the fall.
- Complete The Common App or other application for the colleges of your choice. For top college choices, you may decide to apply Early Decision or Early Action. (*For more information about Early Decision or Early Action, see section below.*)
- Complete a FAFSA (financial aid form). The FAFSA form becomes available in October. To receive the highest amount of financial aid, it is best to fill out the FAFSA form early, rather than waiting until spring or summer. You will need your parents to help with this step, as their financial information is required on the FAFSA form. MEAA holds fall FAFSA workshops for parents to help with this process.
- Write your college essay
- Arts Students: Sign-up for Performing Arts auditions or Visual Arts portfolio review at the colleges where you are applying.
- Ask for Letters of Recommendation from your teachers. You may list a teacher as a recommender on The Common App. Most teachers already have an account and will receive a notice once you have completed your application. Teachers can fill out the

student evaluation and upload a Letter of Recommendation. Please make sure to ask a teacher before listing them as a Recommender on The Common App! Communicate with them regarding your choice of college major and interests so they can tailor the recommendation accordingly.

- **If required**, prepare a video “pre screen audition.” Many competitive college performing arts programs receive thousands of applications each year and require students to submit a video audition ahead of time. If accepted, students will be invited to visit the college to audition in person. *(More about this process in the Audition Process for Performing Arts Students section).*
- Apply for private scholarships. Visit the FAME (Finance Authority of Maine) website for information about private scholarships available for Maine students. The MeAA Guidance office also regularly emails scholarship information to seniors.

Senior Year - Second Semester

- Wait for your acceptance letters! Most come with information about financial awards.
- Often arts students are accepted into a University before auditioning or showing their portfolio. They are accepted as general education students with undeclared majors. ***Complete the audition/portfolio process to gain acceptance into the college program of choice.***
- Wait for complete information regarding your financial aid packages.
- Continue to apply for private scholarships.
- Carefully weigh your choices, seriously taking financial aid packages into consideration. Ask questions and carefully consider student debt. Will the finances of attending a prestigious college program enhance or negatively alter your ability to pursue your dreams after graduating with your degree? This is a very tough question.
- When deciding between top schools, it is sometimes helpful to make another visit to the college. Ask to sit in on a class or two. Are you excited by the class? Are you interested in the people that you meet? *Remember, you have had a unique arts experience at MeAA and it is not uncommon for college arts classes to be covering very familiar material. Make sure that you find a program where you feel engaged and challenged!*
- Make your final decision. This may include sending a tuition and housing deposit.

Tips for Writing Your College Essay

The college essay portion of your college application is an opportunity for a college to get to know you beyond test scores and grade point averages. It's where you can showcase your writing skills, your personality, and your interests. The Common App supplies students with several writing prompts for consideration. If using a writing prompt, take the time to understand what the prompt is asking. It is best not to recycle an academic essay for use on your college application. College admission counselors are looking for you to breathe life into your application. They want to see your personality and aspirations shine.

Here are some steps to consider when writing your essay:

Brainstorm

- Reflect on your chosen prompt - what is being asked? Make sure you are reflecting on a subject that you care about and is important to you.
- Freely write down any and all ideas you may have on the subject.
- Narrow down the options - Choose your top few ideas from your list. Which has the most potential for development? Which will best showcase you as a person?
- Choose your path/story to tell

Create an Outline

- Every story has a beginning, middle, and end (or, introduction, body, conclusion). Plot the structure of your essay.
- Strategize - how can you best capture the attention of a College Admissions counselor? Perhaps, you could open with a question or a humorous anecdote? What would best capture the tone of the essay?

Write a First Draft

- Start to flesh out the ideas and structure of your outline.
- Write in Times New Roman font, letter size 12, double spaced.
- Write naturally and put ideas into your own voice.
- Pay attention to the requirements of length both on the Common App and for individual colleges. Most are between 250-650 words. 650 words is between 2-3 pages.
- As you read over your essay, make sure it flows naturally and leads up to a strong conclusion.
- Spelling, grammar, and punctuation count. Make sure your spell check is on!

Revise Your Work and Create a Final Draft

- After reading your first draft, start to make revisions. You are looking for ways to make the essay stronger. Sometimes it helps to put yourself in the shoes of the College Admissions Counselor reading your essay. Pretend you don't know the person who wrote the essay. What kind of impression do you get? Does the essay tell a clear story? Would this person be a positive addition to college life? Are they a good fit for this school? Make revisions and continue to proofread your work.
- It is helpful to get an outside opinion on the essay, as well as proofreading, such as from a teacher or guidance counselor.
- Make your final revisions. Double and triple check that there are no spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors.
- Submit your essay.

The Audition Process for Performing Arts Students

Many competitive performing arts college programs require an audition as part of the admission application requirements. Performing arts programs can be extremely competitive. Often, strong college programs get thousands of applicants. Many want to see a prescreen audition and will ask for you to send a video performance of your songs, monologues, dance solo, or music selections. From the prescreen auditions, they will invite a few hundred students to audition in person. Read as much as you can about the audition process at the colleges of your choice and prepare to meet the audition guidelines. ***The teachers at MeAA are experienced arts professionals who have navigated countless audition processes. They are your best resource in putting together a successful audition!*** Each performing arts discipline has its own specific audition criteria. The following are general audition guidelines to help you prepare.

Plan Ahead - as you are working in your performing arts classes at MeAA, take the time to polish and master your songs, choreography, monologues, or music selections. They can later be used as audition material. As a performing arts student, it is your job to continuously work on a repertoire of pieces that show your technical ability and range as a performer.

Study the Requirements/Criteria - Do your homework on your selected college programs. Study each school's audition requirements. Choose your songs, monologues, dance pieces, and music selections carefully to meet the program's criteria. How does each selection showcase you as a performer? You may want to choose contrasting selections to showcase your abilities. Pay attention to time limits for your selections.

Practice - put in the time practicing your audition selections. Perform them for your teachers for feedback and for students in your classes. If possible, perform your sections at MeAA

Recital to gain experience. Make a habit of going completely through your selection without stopping. Practice your selections in the order you would like to perform them.

Prescreen Audition - If your school requires, you may be asked to put your selections on video to be viewed in the pre screening process. Put some thought into where you would like to record your selections. Use a neutral background and pay attention to the framing of the shot. Try to work in a place with good acoustics and no background noise or distractions. Your phone may be a sufficient recording device or you may wish to bring in higher quality equipment. Begin the recording by saying your name and the names of your selections. Edit your video so that there is no lag time between selections. Prescreen audition deadlines are often in November and December.

Get Prepared for the Physical Audition - You will be notified by the college program regarding your on campus audition date. These usually take place in late January and February. When you receive your audition date and invitation, put in the effort to learn as much about the audition process at that school as possible. Try to get a sense of what the audition day will look like and what will be required. Will you be auditioning alone in front of college faculty? Will other prospective students be in the room? Will there be a “technique class” where you will be asked to demonstrate skills? Will you be asked to improvise? Will a faculty member be stopping you and asking you to respond to direction? Will there be an accompanist for your song? Will there be an interview or time when you can ask questions?

Headshot and Resume - To prepare for your audition, you may want to get your headshot and resume up to date. You should bring along numerous copies of an 8”x10” professional headshot. It is important to look natural in the headshot. The interviewers will want to be able to recognize you from your headshot. Staple your one page resume to the back of the headshot. The resume should list your performing arts experience, shows you have been in, workshops, MEAA classes, and special skills. Keep your resume arts related - it is not the place to list summer employment or community service.

Interview - Often there is an interview portion of the audition. It may take place after you have performed your monologues, songs, musical selections, or dance solo. Or, it may take place after you have demonstrated skill in a “class” format. In the interview, you may have an opportunity to talk about your art: history, forms, and techniques. You may be asked about your inspirations and aspirations. Interviewers often like to hear how you connect your art form to the world, to current events, or how current events have personally shaped your relationship to your art form. Interviewers also often will ask why you are specifically interested in their program, so it is important to be able to articulate why you are interested in a particular program. Think of some pertinent question ahead of time that you might like to ask the interviewers. Be sure to express enthusiasm and interest in the program!

The Audition - In general, you will be led into the audition space. Clearly state your name what you will be performing for them. Take a breath and begin. Don’t be surprised if they stop you in the middle and ask you to “try something.” They may wish to give you direction and then ask you to start again. The purpose of this is to see how you respond to their feedback. Do your best to incorporate the feedback and show them something a bit different in your

performance. Stay positive, playful, and have fun working with them. Stay open and enjoy this process. Don't worry if you are not absolutely perfect in your performance. Do your best. Often, the faculty committee is looking for potential for growth, talent, and determination. They want to know if you are trainable.

General Tips for Audition Day

- Arrive well ahead of time. You will need to find your location, check in and warm-up. There will be distractions, so do your best to warm up your body and focus your mind.
- Make sure you have eaten a little something before the audition. You will need to keep your energy up.
- Bring water and stay hydrated.
- Dress neatly and make sure you can move comfortably. Dress appropriately and air on the side of neutrality. You do not want your clothes to be a distraction. This is not the place for ripped jeans, graphic t-shirts, large jewelry, or shoes that you can't walk in.
- Make sure your hair is out of your face.
- Dancers should wear shoes and clothing appropriate for different technique classes. This may mean a change of clothes and shoes if you are demonstrating several different styles of dance.
- The audition process starts when you arrive. Be on time, be polite, be focused on your work, stay friendly, positive, and enthusiastic. Be someone you would like to work with!
- Make eye contact with everyone you can, especially the audition panel.
- Put your phone away until after the audition process is complete. Do not allow your phone or other devices to distract you or send a message that you are uninterested in the process.
- Watch your body language. Eye rolling, crossing arms in front of your chest, leaning up against furniture or the wall can express that you are bored and uninterested or that you have a negative attitude.
- Be aware of how you interact with others. This is an audition and not a competition.
- If you are auditioning with friends, avoid idle talk and gossip or looking like you are a team. You want to stand out, not blend in with a group.
- If you make a mistake in your audition, keep going. No need to stop, make a face, comment, or break character.
- Be curious about the program, the people, and the audition process.
- Express your joy and passion for your art form!
- Be authentic!

GOOD LUCK!!!

Resources

Maine Arts Academy Administration

Heather King, *Head of School*, hking@maineartsacademy.org

Rachel Roberge, *Asst. Head of School*, rroberge@maineartsacademy.org

Diane Manter, *Office Manager/Admissions Counselor*

dmanter@maineartsacademy.org

Maine Arts Academy Guidance

Priscilla Girard, pgirard@maineartsacademy.org

University of Maine Early College Classes, [Early College at UMA](#)

University of Maine Course Guide, [Course Guide](#)

University of Maine Transcripts, [Requesting a Transcript](#)

Maine Community College System, www.mccs.me.edu/our-colleges/

The Common Application, www.commonapp.org

The Coalition Application, www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org

FAME - The Finance Authority of Maine, [Maine Scholarship Search](#)

FAFSA - Free Application for Federal Student Aid, www.fafsa.gov

SAT Information, [College Board - SAT, AP, College Search and Admission Tools](#)

Free SAT Prep at Colby College - "Let's Get Ready," [Let's Get Ready: Students Helping Students to and Through College](#)

US News and World Report, "Six Ways College Applicants Can Stand Out" article:
[What Colleges Look for: 6 Ways to Stand Out](#)

The Princeton Review: SAT prep, college advice, and related articles,
[College Advice & Tips](#)