



medina resident

Laila Hilfinger Takes the Mystery Out of the College Process

COLLEGE IS COMING!

Do you keep hearing about the increasing competitiveness of college admissions? Wondering if you'd be accepted today into your alma mater? College planning is an exciting and stressful time, no matter where you are in your high school career. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to the college search and application process. Each student is different, and every family situation is unique.

Admissions have become more selective as applications soar at colleges and universities worldwide, with more applicants applying to more schools. Families wonder which classes, activities, and clubs, should be highlighted for college applications so your teenagers can "position" themselves to accentuate their chance of being accepted.

WHAT'S WITH ALL THE AP'S?

We hear that students are taking more AP classes. How many should I take? Better to take the new SAT or the ACT? Which clubs and activities are important? Do I need an internship or a leadership role? So what can a family do to stay on top of four years of high school and make applying to college less stressful and more rewarding?

Summer is a great time to enhance your high school resume. Good grades are great, but colleges are looking for more. Do things this summer to explore new interests and develop your passions. Here are some things you can do to make summer enriching and valuable, and help you prepare for the school year. Rising juniors and seniors, pay attention!

WHAT'S IMPORTANT FRESHMAN YEAR?

Most classes are assigned, but freshman year is the perfect time to explore new interests. Join a club, try out for a new sport, volunteer. **Tip:** Volunteer hours during the summer after eighth grade can be used for graduation credit. But don't take on too much. Do well in what you choose. Remember: Grades count!

I'M A SOPHOMORE NOW

Make sure you will fulfill required classes like PE, Art, and CTE. Did you like last year's extracurricular activities? Great. Keep going. Not so much? Try something new. Think carefully about AP classes. There's no rush. **Summertime:** Volunteer, take a

neighborly knowledge



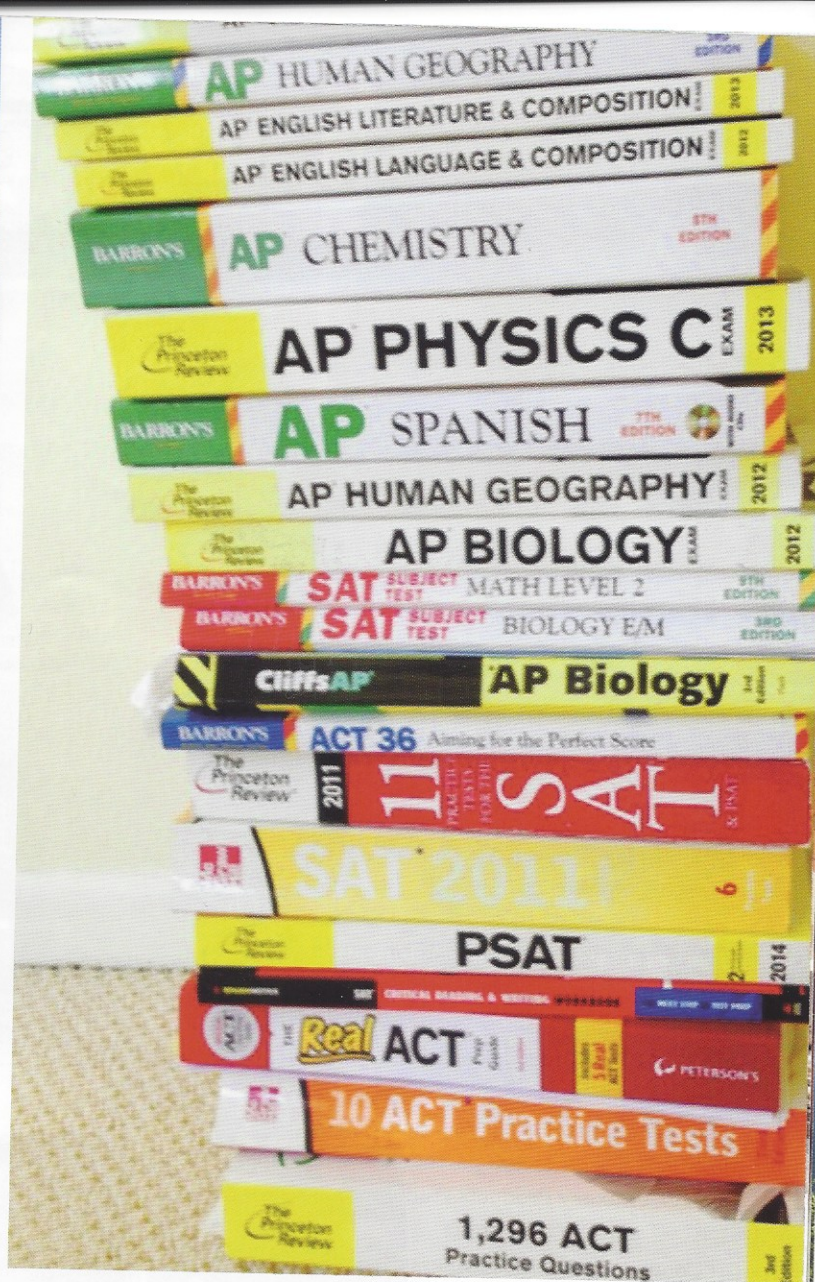
class, take a trip. Summer activities can help you better uncover your college or career goals. Prepare for the SAT or ACT. **Tip:** You'll be too busy junior year to study, so put in the hours to get your best scores now. And what about those SAT Subject Tests?

JUNIOR YEAR IS HERE!

Yup, you've heard about the stress. But you're ready. Strike a balance between AP and regular classes, and step it up with varsity sports, leadership, or your community involvement. Take the SAT or ACT. Visit colleges in the spring. Pay special attention to activities you are in, like sports or religious groups, that you are cultivating over your four years. **Tip:** Be careful about accruing too many random volunteer hours and spreading yourself too thin. Get a summer job. Narrow your college list. Maximize the summer after junior year by getting a head start on those applications.

STAY STRONG SENIOR YEAR

Remember when we could kick back senior year? No more! Challenge yourself in your classes, focus on electives in your areas of interest, strive for a leadership role, team captain, or job, or continue working on a community project. Retake the SAT or ACT if needed. Finalize your list of "likely," "target" and "reach schools." **Tip:** Think about applying EA or ED. Write essays and supplements. Finish your applications. Submit. Senior spring is in sight!



A Medina resident of over 20 years, Laila Hilfinger graduated from Brown and holds a master's degree from Columbia University. Her sons graduated from Bellevue High and Lakeside, and are college students at Northwestern and Brown. When she's not working with college-bound students, Laila can be found rehearsing with the Seattle Philharmonic Orchestra, teaching violin and viola lessons, or developing new talent as orchestra coach at Medina, Clyde Hill, and Interlake. She squeezes in classes at Flywheel whenever she can.

With decades of experience in college admissions and a passion for the process, Laila started Medina College Counseling to provide insight and perspective to families navigating the college admissions maze. Whether you are just starting to think about college or if you need that last push to finish applications, Medina College Counseling services are tailored to help you reach your goals. Laila provides guidance to students who are applying to a wide range of colleges and universities. Her mission is to help students embrace what makes them unique and feel empowered about their choices. For more information about the college application process, please contact: lailahilfinger@comcast.net or 206-601-4384.