

The slide features decorative watercolor illustrations in the corners. The top-left corner has yellow and orange flowers with green leaves. The top-right corner has a large, layered red and orange circular flower. The bottom-left corner has a cluster of red berries. The bottom-right corner has yellow and orange flowers with green leaves. The main title is centered in a large, bold, orange-brown font.

College Application Process Overview

Guiding parents and students through key application steps and options

Presented by Lana Meskunas
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The slide features decorative floral illustrations in the corners. The top-left corner has a branch with light brown leaves and a pale yellow flower. The top-right corner shows a red flower with yellow leaves. The bottom-left corner contains a large, layered red flower. The bottom-right corner features a red flower with yellow leaves and a brown, textured brushstroke-like element.

01

College Application Overview



Key components of a college application

Applications typically include transcripts, ACT or SAT scores, personal statements, essays, and/or recommendation letters.

Each piece provides insight into the applicant's academic record, personality, and potential contributions.

Completing all parts thoughtfully strengthens the overall application.



Application timelines and types

College applications follow specific timelines for submission varying by type: early decision, early action, and regular/rolling decision.

Check the college's website for application and scholarship deadlines. Keep a calendar!



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02

Early Application
Options For Selective
Schools



Early Decision (ED): binding commitment:

Early Decision requires applicants to commit to attending if admitted, typically with an early deadline. October 25, November 1, or November 15. Notified in December or January.

Students can only apply to one ED institution. Students must first sign an ED Agreement agreeing that if they are accepted, they will enroll and withdraw all other applications.

Restrictive Early Action/Single Choice Early Action (REA and SCEA): non binding, but comes with restrictions:

Hybrid between EA and ED. It's non-binding but similar to ED. It comes with restrictions on applying to other ED/REA/EA colleges in the early rounds. Students have until May 1 to consider other offers.

Early Action: non-binding:

Students can apply to multiple colleges under Early Action, with applications typically due in November. Students receive admissions decisions earlier, usually by Dec/Jan, without being committed to attending the college if accepted.

Regular Decision (RD) non-binding:

Students submit applications by a specified deadline, typically in December or January. Colleges then review these applications and notify students of their admissions decisions usually by mid-March or early April.

Rolling Admissions: non-binding:

Applications are reviewed and decisions are made as they are received, rather than imposing a deadline. Typically, decisions are turned around in 3-4 weeks. This means the application will remain open and students are admitted until the institution fills its class.



03

Transcripts and Testing



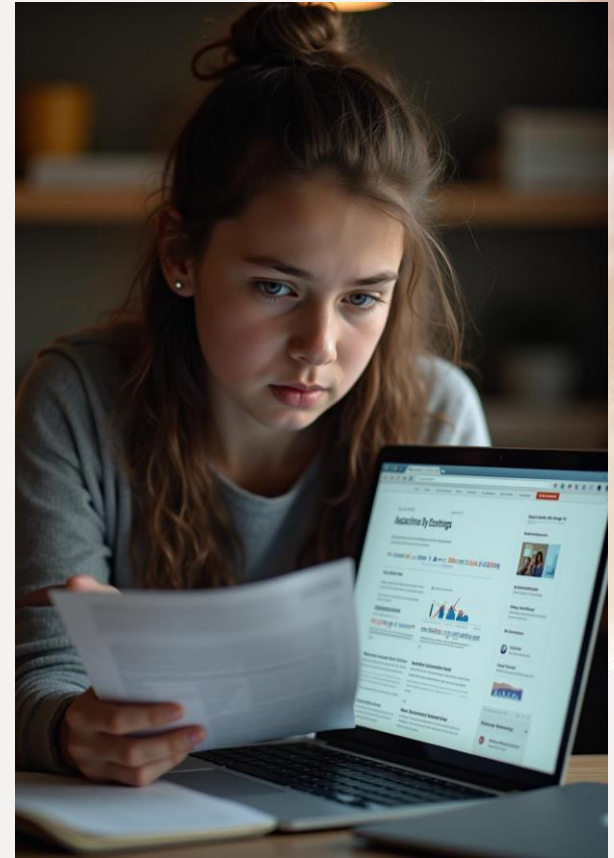
Importance of transcripts

Transcripts provide a detailed record of a student's academic performance throughout high school.

They show course rigor, grades, and class rank, giving colleges a clear picture of academic ability.

Accurate and timely submission of transcripts is critical to meet application deadlines and evaluation criteria.

Transcripts can be ordered here:
<https://madisoncityal.scriborder.com/>






ACT/SAT test scores and submission policies

Standardized test scores like ACT and SAT are often required but submission policies vary by college.

Some institutions have test-optional policies where scores are not mandatory. This approach considers other aspects such as GPA, essays, and recommendations more heavily. Applicants should evaluate if submitting scores benefits their chances or opt for test-optional to avoid potential weaknesses.

Understanding each college's requirements helps strategize whether to submit scores to strengthen the application. **Google: (College's name) Common Data Set 2025 to get up-to-date profile information.**

Official scores are sent to colleges from the student's ACT or SAT account. JCHS does not send scores. <https://www.act.org/>
<https://satsuite.collegeboard.org/sat>



04

Personal Statements, Essays, and Recommendations






Writing compelling personal statements

Personal statements should reveal the applicant's character, experiences, and motivations.

They must be authentic, focused, and well-structured to engage admission officers.

Highlighting unique perspectives and growth makes the statement memorable.



Crafting effective supplemental essays

Supplemental essays respond to college-specific prompts.

They demonstrate genuine interest in the institution and alignment with its values.

Clear, concise, and tailored writing strengthens connection with the college's mission.





Securing strong recommendation letters

Recommendation letters provide external validation of the applicant's qualities and achievements.

Choosing recommenders who know the student well and can offer detailed insights is key.

Providing recommenders with relevant background and deadlines improves letter quality and timeliness. Ask at least two weeks in advance.

Counselor letter comes from Mrs. Meskunas

Teacher recommenders should come from two core teachers. If a third is needed - can come from a community member, coach, or boss.



05



Financial Aid and Scholarships




Types of financial aid available

Financial aid includes grants, scholarships, loans, and work-study opportunities.

Grants and scholarships do not require repayment and are awarded based on need or merit. Check college's website for merit-based (based on student's GPA and ACT/SAT score) scholarships. Example: <https://www.uah.edu/admissions/undergraduate/financial-aid/scholarships/freshmen/freshman-in-state-academic-scholarships>

Loans must be repaid; understanding the options helps in financial planning. <https://studentaid.gov/articles/subsidized-vs-unsubsidized-loans/#:~:text=Direct%20Subsidized%20Loans%3A%20You%20won,the%20ofunds%20from%20your%20school>).



How to apply for aid and deadlines

Applying for aid involves completing the FAFSA and sometimes CSS Profile.

Filling out the FAFSA or signing a waiver is required for graduation.

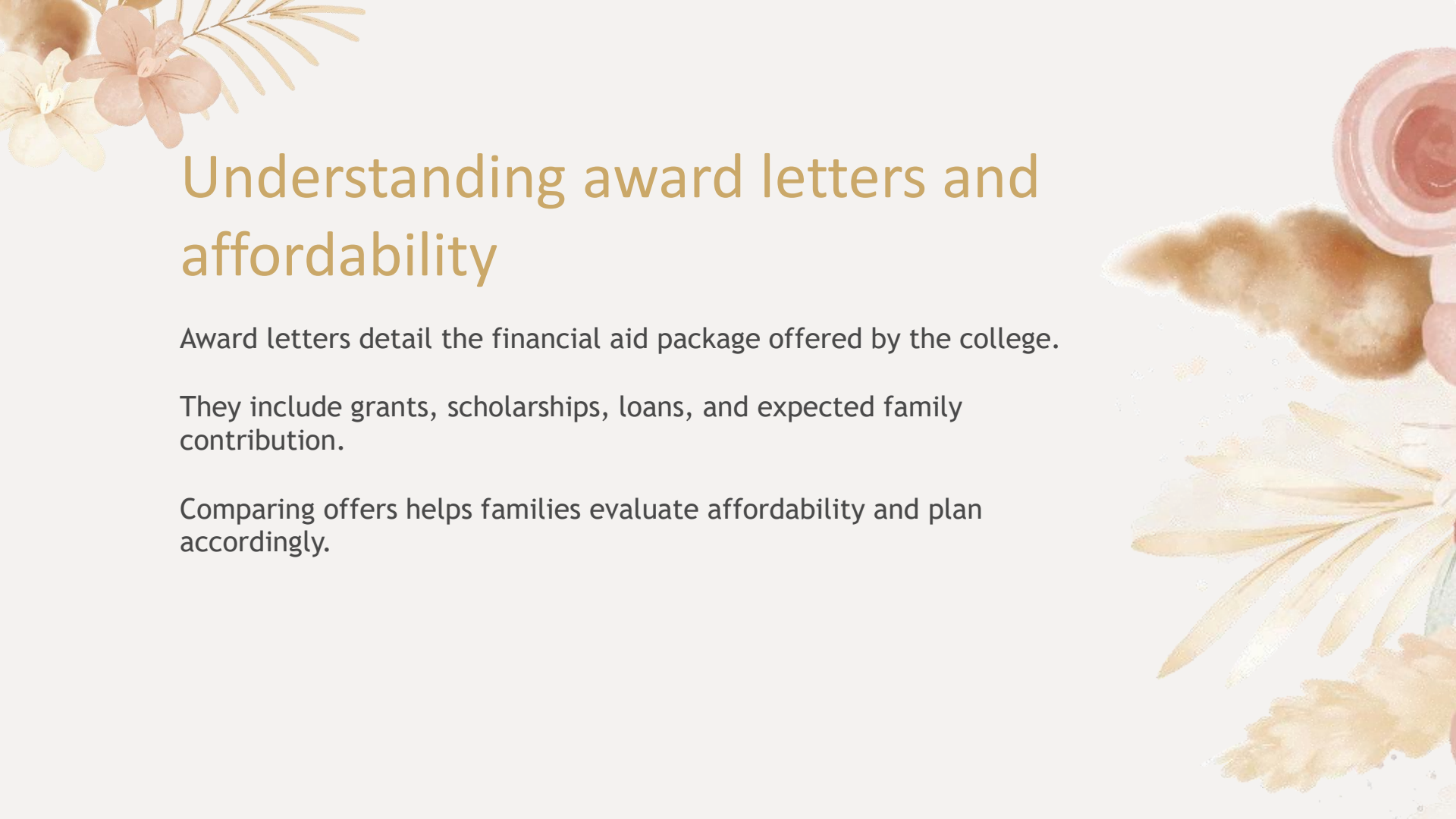
Student creates a FAFSA ID their senior year and then invites parent: <https://studentaid.gov/fsa-id/create-account/launch>

October 1 of senior year: FAFSA opens.
<https://studentaid.gov/apply-for-aid/fafsa/filling-out>

Meeting early deadlines is crucial to maximize aid opportunities.

Parents and students should gather financial documents in advance for accurate submissions:
<https://studentaid.gov/help/info-needed>





Understanding award letters and affordability

Award letters detail the financial aid package offered by the college.

They include grants, scholarships, loans, and expected family contribution.

Comparing offers helps families evaluate affordability and plan accordingly.

Application Instructions

How to apply directly to the college:

1. Fill out the college's online application.
2. Request your transcript to be sent to the college: <https://madisoncityal.scribborder.com/>
3. Send your ACT/SAT score to the college from your ACT or SAT account.
4. Check due dates for scholarship applications if applicable. Some schools automatically run your admissions application through their database, while others require you to be admitted before filling out the scholarship application.

If you are using the Common Application:

1. You will need to provide Mrs. Meskunas's email address when they ask you for your main recommender. llmeskunas@madisoncity.k12.al.us
2. Once you have supplied Mrs. Meskunas's email - she will upload your transcript and counselor recommendation (if needed) to the Common App. You will not have to separately request your transcript for those schools. You will still need to send your ACT or SAT score to the colleges (depending if they are test optional or not).
3. If you need a recommendation, you must give Mrs. Meskunas at least three weeks' notice. Fill out the recommendation packet located on the Guidance page of the JCHS website and send her a copy of your resume.

Questions regarding transcripts should be sent to Susan Blades at sablades@madisoncity.k12.al.us

Helpful Websites

James Clemens High School Guidance Page:
<https://www.madisoncity.k12.al.us/domain/611>

Career Exploration:
<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/> <https://www.onetcenter.org/>

College Planning and Majors Directory:
<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/>

Scholarship Websites:
<https://www.fastweb.com/> <https://goingmerry.com/>
<https://jlvcollegecounseling.com/>

Essay help:
<https://www.collegeessayguy.com/>

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Thank you!

Do you have any questions?

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