

College and Career Guide

Naperville North High School

Naperville, Illinois

For students on their way to college, getting there is not necessarily half the fun. Navigating the SATs and ACTs, the Common Application, college-specific applications, essay questions, and dozens of deadlines can be a daunting challenge. The journey has become a little less perilous at Naperville North High School, thanks to *The College and Career Planning Guide*, a joint project of the school's guidance department and the College and Career Planning Committee of the School/Family/Community Partnership (SFCP) team.

The SFCP team undertook the guide in response to parents who were concerned about planning for college and asked for more information on how to start a college search and prepare themselves and their teenagers for college. Parents met during the breakout sessions at SFCP meetings to brainstorm ideas for topics, chapters, and information they wanted to include. The parents continued their work outside of regular meetings, developing an outline, researching information, and writing the chapters.

The parents submitted their work to the guidance department for review and editing. The principal also approved the guide, which was printed by the district's printing service. The SFCP team spent about \$400 to print the guide — the only cost involved.

Because about 98 percent of North's graduates go on to college, the college search is a topic of great importance at the school. The guide is intended to be a tool and resource for all, even to assist the guidance counselors in their work. Among the guide's features are:

- A month-by-month checklist for college and career planning
- An outline of a student resume
- A college application organizer
- Tips for writing an effective essay
- Financial aid information

The guide also includes chapters on students with special needs, addressing accommodations for entrance exams, various levels of support colleges offer, resources for parents, and suggested questions to ask college admissions staff.

Distributed to all North students in September, the guide won rave reviews. "What a great resource — good for you, the SFCP team continues to do wonderful things for parents and students at North," wrote a school board member. "What a really GREAT informative college brochure you put together. Pat yourselves on the back for a job really well done," commented a parent.

With responses like that, there is no doubt that the SFCP team is proud of its guide. The team is already working on the next edition, surveying parents about what information they would like to see in the future. The next one will include chapters on scholarships and other topics parents have suggested — all in the interest of smoothing out some of the bumps on the road to college.

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From *Promising Partnership Practices 2006*, p 47