**13th Grade Investigation Process**

Contextualize this senior school learners: while reading literature is important and improving writing skills is important, more importantly is learning life skills that will help you be successful later in life and especially in 13th grade.

Exploration path:

1. Summative for all writing learning targets is the college essay at the end of their 13th grade path. However, the ticket for me to read their summative work is completing the entire 13th grade journey.
2. Review “Senior year checklist”. We will check this periodically together as a class and individually with Mr. Foster.
3. Internet exploration (We will use the library for a few days in class to do this. The amount of “homework” you will have will be entirely contingent upon how diligently you work during class).
	1. <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/> =
		1. Go to “Get started” then “Know yourself”. Explore at least 6 of the 13 texts and videos. Write a reflection for an organization and mechanics formative.
		2. Go to the “Get started” drop down menu. Explore at least 3 of the other subtopics. Write a reflection for an organization and mechanics formative.
		3. Go to “Find colleges” then “College 101.” Explore 7 of the 11 texts and videos. Write a reflection for an organization and mechanics formative.
		4. Go to the “Find colleges” drop down menu. Explore at least 2 of the next 4 subtopics. Write a reflection for an organization and mechanics formative.
		5. Go to “Find colleges” then “College Search.” Use this search engine to find your top 4 13th grade choices. Then, go to “Find Colleges” then “Compare Colleges” to narrow your search to your top 2-3 choices. Email (afoster@armadaschools.org) or meet with Mr. Foster to report your top 13th grade choices and justify your choices.
		6. Explore the other topics: Explore Careers, Pay For College, Get In, and Make a Plan. Email (afoster@armadaschools.org) or meet with Mr. Foster to report information you learned and steps you will take to make 13th grade a reality.
	2. Go to [www.parchment.com](http://www.parchment.com) Create an account. Use it to ensure that your transcripts will go to the right schools. Show Mr. Foster evidence that you did this.
	3. Go to <http://www.act.org/content/act/en/education-and-career-planning.html> Explore the four sub topics: Your Future Starts Now, Planning For Success, Explore Your Career Options, Financial Aid. Email (afoster@armadaschools.org) or meet with Mr. Foster to report information you learned and steps you will take to make 13th grade a reality.
4. Fill out application(s) from your top 13th grade choices. Submit them to Mr. Foster, internalize feedback, make amendments, share your application with parental figures, (after writing the essay, as explained below) submit your applications, and tell the counseling office where you applied.
5. Find the 13th grade choice that you will most likely make. Find the required college essay. Review the college essay writing tips below. This is summative for all writing targets for progress report time.

If you finish this process early, make a resume. This resume is the revision for summative.

**Mr. Foster’s College Essay Writing Tips**

1. **Answer the question.** While this may seem obvious, be sure the words on the page actually and accurately answer the question. If they asked you how a diverse experience that you had will help you contribute to the university, don’t get spend a page explaining how meaningful the experience was and then stop. Instead, spend half a page elaborating on how significant the experience was and then a whole other page saying HOW the experience will help you make University X a better place. In other words, **answer the question.**
2. Be sure to say **HOW** you answered the question. Don’t just list examples of the question’s answer, explain HOW these examples answer the question thoroughly. Here are some ways to do “HOW” writing:
	1. Ask how/why 3 times, like a toddler would. (then answer each one)
	2. Use strong syntax to make “syna-sentences” of already strong “HOW” sentences
	3. Not only say the “positive,” but say how you are not the “negative.”
3. **Be concise but thorough**. Be potent in your writing. Definitely answer the question thoroughly, but don’t ramble. This can be achieved through strong diction and multiple editing/revising sessions with friends, parents and teachers.
4. **Consider your audience**. Keep in mind that the reader of your essay will have had read hundreds of essays like yours. Make your unique, without being cheesy or cliché. Pull at the reader’s heart strings without sounding like a Hallmark card. Also, if the question is asked in second person, you should answer in first person. If it is in third, answer in third.

**Tips Mr. Foster gathered from respectable websites**

* Reveal your preference = Are you an arts person or someone who wants hard-facts science type?
* Values = Indicate what matters to you. How do you perceive yourself?
* Thought process = Are you whimsical, impulse, methodical, gather background information before choosing? They are looking for a pattern (your thinking style, level of intelligence, insight).
* Topics = Reveal who you are (sloppy, general, insincere, tasteless responses can hurt). Focus and be specific on one single event.
* Feature your strengths and weakness
* Focus on quality of your mind or character, like “I am a very \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ person” or tell story about an experience or time when you showed you were a very \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ person. List responsible not Eagle Scout; say committed not played basketball.
* Language should be simple, direct and clear. Make every word count
* Careless spelling, grammatical errors, awkward language, or fuzzy logic will make your essay memorable in a bad way
* Entire application should create a consistent portrait of who you are and what you will bring to their college. The more the pieces of the puzzle support one impression the more confident the and committee will be in admitting you.
* Develop your main idea with vivid specific facts, events QUOTES, examples and reasons
* Avoid clichéd, generic, and predictable writing by using vivid and specific details
* DON’T: Tell them about the charm of their university; tell them what you think they want to hear; include info found elsewhere in the application; sound like autobiography, travelogue or laundry list…YAWN!!!!

**2014 Actual College Essay Topics:**

[**Barnard College**](https://barnard.edu/)
“Pick one woman in history or fiction to converse with for an hour and explain your choice. What would you talk about?”

[**Common Application**](https://www.commonapp.org/Login)
The Common Application is a application used by 549 colleges and universities in the United States and abroad.
“Describe a place or environment where you are perfectly content. What do you do or experience there, and why is it meaningful to you?”

[**Harvard University**](http://www.harvard.edu/)
“What [would you] want your future college roommate to know about you?”

[**Pomona College**](http://www.pomona.edu/)
“What does freedom mean to you?”

[**Rhode Island School of Design**](http://www.risd.edu/)
“Is there something you love, have to do, can’t stop thinking about? Write about a personal passion or obsession other than visual art or design.”

[**Texas A&M University**](http://www.tamu.edu/)
“Describe a circumstance, obstacle or conflict in your life, and the skills and resources you used to resolve it. Did it change you? If so, how?”

[**United States Naval Academy**](http://www.usna.edu/homepage.php)
“Describe a personal experience you have had which you feel has contributed to your own character development and integrity.”

[**West Point (United States Military Academy)**](http://www.usma.edu/SitePages/Home.aspx)
“Why will you be successful in working with leaders, peers, and subordinates of a gender, color, ethnicity, and/or religion different from your own?”