**Getting into a Private High School:**

Applying to a private high school can be a daunting experience. Where do you start? What are the schools looking for in a candidate? Is it ever too early to start preparing yourself for applying to a private high school? Students should start thinking about what direction they want to go in for high school when they enter junior high. Admission advisors at private high schools are looking for candidates that are well rounded academically, personally and socially. Below you will find some pointers on becoming a good applicant.

**Standardized Test Preparation:**

Taking a standardized test can be overwhelming. There are many services that help students develop the test taking skills that are needed to be successful and confident when taking the SSAT, the PSAT and the SAT and /or the ACT tests. Some information can be found on-line and will provide direction to resources to help students obtain these skills. There are also learning centers in the area that focus on helping students to achieve confidence when taking these tests. A few examples are listed below:

* Sylvan Learning Center

200 Griffin Road

Portsmouth, NH

603-433-5898

<http://tutoring.sylvanlearning.com/centers/03801/index.cfm>

* SSAT website

[www.SSAT.org](http://www.SSAT.org)

**What Private High Schools are looking for in a potential candidate:**

Private high schools are extremely competitive. Admissions officers are looking for students who stand out from other applicants. Schools often look for students who are capable of academic excellence and are organized enough to participate in extra-curricular activities. These activities should be something you are passionate about. In addition, many schools are encouraged when they see a student who is able to give their time to helping others through community service. Below are some examples of what private high schools look for in a potential candidate:

* Academic Excellence-
  + Learning is not considered a chore but something you love to do
  + Homework is always on time
  + Test and quizzes are always prepared for
  + Projects are of outstanding quality
  + Willingness to seek extra help
  + Willingness to seek additional work to improve in any subject area
  + Participation in class
  + Prepared for every class
* Participation in Extracurricular activities
  + Sports
  + Band/Chorus
  + Drama
  + Dance
  + Clubs/organizations
  + Arts
* Strong character
  + Positive Leadership skills
* Community Service (examples listed below)
  + Visiting local nursing homes and/or hospitals
  + Assisting in local schools
  + Volunteering at local day cares or after school programs
  + Special Olympics
  + Volunteer at a local shelter or soup kitchen
  + Adopt a highway/road clean-up
  + Develop a community service project

**Interviews for Private Secondary Schools**

Many private high schools require an admissions interview. This is an important part of the application process. Dress according to the dress code of the school you are visiting. It is best to arrive early and be aware that first impressions are important. Be sure to make eye contact with adults, be conscious of your body language, speak clearly, and be polite. The interviewer may ask questions about the size of your school and grade, and the challenge level of the curriculum. In general, the interviewer will be attempting to understand your academic ability, your commitment to extracurricular activities, as well as get a sense if your confidence and attitude toward work and peers. Make sure that you have reviewed the information about the specific school to which you are applying and be prepared to ask one or two specific questions about school programs that interest you. It would be helpful to review the possible interview questions listed below so that you are prepared and confident in your response:

What qualities do teachers admire in you?

What kinds of activities would you like to pursue in high school

Who do you admire and why?

What is the hardest thing you have ever done?

How would your friends describe you?

What is the most important thing you have learned in the past year?

What book(s) have you read lately? Do you like to read for pleasure?

What qualities do you like in a teacher?

What characteristics do you look for in a friend?

Of what are you most proud?

Describe disappointment you have endured and how you did so?

How do you handle pressure?

What is your favorite and least favorite academic course and why?

If you had a free day to spend, what would you do?

What makes you happy?

Do you enjoy athletics? What sports?

Why do you want to attend this school?

Students and parents are encouraged to visit the high school before applying to be confident the school is the right choice for the student and their family. Many of the schools provide visitation information on their websites. The above suggestions are examples of ways to make yourself stand out from other potential candidates. Good luck!