

## Demystifying the Big Brown Envelope or BB

The BB is a system that helps me, Cindy, Lily, and teachers writing recommendations to maintain some order and organization to the chaos that commences in the fall and continues until early February. It is a system that we developed based on past experiences to reduce errors, omissions while instilling responsibility with the students. The teachers and staff at ICS pride themselves in writing recommendations that are specific to each student so their strengths can be highlighted and shine through to the admission officers. The anecdotal information (resume and ah ha moments) that the students provide in the BB help teachers make this happen. The resume and ah ha moments are not sent to the colleges.

It is a system that tracks college admission forms that the school and staff need to send i.e. transcripts, mid-year reports, recommendation letters, and detailed description of the rigorous academic program at ICS. Since every college has different materials required for the admission process, the BB process has the student identify what is required and when for each institution in which they are applying. A BB is made for me and each teacher that will be writing a letter of recommendation for the student (a max of 3 BB).

It does not provide a system to ensure or remind students to submit application pieces in which they are responsible i.e. the application (either Common or college-specific), submittal of SAT or ACT scores to colleges, essays required for the application, supplemental information, and graded writing examples if requested by the college. It is the student's responsibility to make sure these pieces are received by the college(s) by the due dates.

This year ICS will provide all envelopes and postage required for submitting transcripts, letters of recommendation, and detailed description of ICS. Students are responsible for submitting the applications and any college specific materials to the colleges. The Table below identifies the pieces.

<b>Material Submitted to Colleges</b>	<b>Responsible party for mailing</b>
Transcripts	ICS, part of BB as designated
Letters of Recommendations	ICS, part of BB as designated
School Report	ICS, part of BB as designated
Midyear Report	ICS, part of BB as designated
Final Report	ICS, part of BB as designated
Application (includes essay)	Student
Supplemental material, if requested	Student
Example of graded paper, if requested	Student
Portfolios if requested	Student
Have ACT/SAT scores sent to colleges	Student
Optional cover letter to colleges	Student can place it in the BB to be sent with transcripts and letters of recommendations, otherwise it is the student's responsibility.

Students request transcripts by signing their name on a yellow pad at the front desk. When they are placed in the BB it is marked on the front checklist.

Helping students through this process is a part of my job that I truly enjoy. Making sure that all 49 students get through this process requires organization and patience on the part of students, parents, and staff.

An example of a BB is posted outside my office for students and parents to review. If you have any questions or comments please email me at [kcomeau@lwsd.org](mailto:kcomeau@lwsd.org).