

# A Friendly Note To Any Student Interested in a College Recommendation From Mr. Janosco (Or From Any Other Teacher, For That Matter)

I support all DHS students in their quest for acceptance to their dream school. Since I have written my fair share of college recommendations over the years, I think it is only fair of me to share with you this list of helpful tips, advice, and requirements for those of you on the verge of entering “the college applications game.” I hope you will see that by doing a few relatively simple things on your end, you aid me on mine, which, in turn, ultimately helps you.

1. First off, ask yourself this question: “Is Mr. Janosco really my best bet for a stellar college recommendation?” Think about it. Did you earn a grade lower than a B in my class? Did you infrequently contribute to our class discussions? If you answered “yes” to either of these two questions, ask yourself one more: “If you were Mr. Janosco, and put in the position of writing a letter in support of a student with your class performance, would you have plenty to write?”

You see, if I agree to write a recommendation for you, I will only report the truth as I have experienced it. I will not embellish your performance in any way. If you have done great things, I will report great things. If you have done nothing to warrant high praise, I will not include high praise in my letter.

I write this not to discourage you. I just want you to make a smart choice. When seeking teachers to write recommendations, be certain to locate the ones who have plenty of fine things to say about you. This is common sense, right?

2. Next, all teachers have their limits. I cannot write a recommendation for each of my students. The process is extremely time-consuming; there is a point at which my letter-writing performance suffers. For this reason, I am limiting the maximum number of students for whom I will write letters to 15 per year.
3. Regardless of *when* you plan to apply to college (early-decision, early-action, etc.), I am requiring that those interested in a recommendation letter from me let me know well in advance. **My deadline for a recommendation letter will be the last class day in May.**

I will only consider those students who provide for me a typed, double-spaced “letter” in which the following questions are addressed:

- What are the highlights of your academic performance in my class? (Hint: An “A” on an assignment does not necessarily make for a highlight.) In which assignments and discussions did you invest yourself?
- Which of your extracurricular activities involves reading, writing, or other communication skills? (Hint: I will not be writing about your sports exploits or any other of your non-English-related pursuits in my letter.)
- I realize this will sound premature, but what academic subjects do you expect to focus on at college? And, without becoming “hokey,” how will your college studies and pursuits eventually benefit our society? (Hint: Notice the question reads “our society,” *not* “our economy.”)
- Finally, why should you be one of the 20 students I choose? Why you?

4. If you are one of the 20 students I choose, what follows are your next steps.

- a. If one or more of your target schools requires the “common application,” please furnish me with a separate application for every one of those schools. Type out the “TO THE APPLICANT” section completely. Also type out the “TO THE TEACHER” section with the following information:

Francis Janosco

English Teacher

Darien High School

High School Lane

203-655-3981 (x1155)

[Fjanosco@darienps.org](mailto:Fjanosco@darienps.org)

(Obviously, I will sign and date this section myself.)

- b. If one of your target schools requires a different application, type out the same information as outlined above before submitting it to me.

- c. If applicable, please check off any box that “waives” your right to access my recommendation. Do not fret about doing so; if I choose to write a letter for you I will certainly include great things. Admissions officers have more confidence in those letters that serve as a record of a teacher’s private views.

- d. The envelopes that you provide *must* be of the peel-off-sticker-seal variety.

- e. For each of your envelopes, provide this as your return address:

Darien High School

c/o Francis Janosco

High School Lane

Darien, CT 06820

If for some reason a letter is returned to me, I will track you down. Together, we will work to re-send it.

5. Place all of your materials in a sealable folder. **Write your name and the words “recommendation letter materials” in big letters on the front.** Leave this folder on my desk chair in the English department office.

6. **Please submit to me all materials at least two weeks before the mailing deadline for your application.** If you do not follow the steps outlined above, I reserve the right to return your materials to you for a “revision.”

7. Finally, when you are accepted to your school(s), I need to be among the first to learn about this good news. I would prefer to hear it straight from you rather than from another teacher or student. Should I not be given the chance to congratulate you personally?

8. Good luck. Your hard work and patience will be rewarded.