

# Reach High Scholars Program

## The Program

Reach High Scholars Program (“RHSP”) supplements resources that the Raymond schools are in a position to provide by encouraging students to “reach higher” in their educational pursuits than they otherwise would have imagined possible.

RHSP’s philosophy is that money should not be a roadblock to a great education. At no cost to the school district, it provides a continuum of initiatives that start in the Middle School. It helps students get through the starting gates to be admitted by top colleges that provide first-class educational opportunities and considerable need-based financial aid.

## RHSP’s New Structure

Since its inception in 2008, RHSP has operated on an informal basis, during which time it has become well-established in the fabric of the school district and the community, and it has had exceptionally good college admissions results. It is now implementing a more defined structure, with clear criteria for selection and standards for continuing membership.

Members of RHSP will accumulate eligibility points for their academic achievements and their involvement in initiatives of RHSP, with a minimum number of points required at the beginning of each year for continued membership. At the end of the junior year, based on their accumulation of points, participants will be honored as Members, Honors Members and Highest Honors Members, with further requirements to maintain those levels until graduation – at which time, members will receive appropriate recognition for their achievements.

In their senior year, students will be able to include their membership status on their college applications. The admission offices at about 100 top colleges will be furnished with information on the activities of RHSP to provide them with an appreciation of the value of this credential.

## RHSP’s Major Initiatives

- Raymond Roundtables, a summer academic enrichment program for middle school and ninth grade students
- Summer academic enrichment programs at Brown University, Dartmouth College, Phillips Exeter Academy and St. Paul’s School
- Boot Camps to prepare students for the PSAT and SAT tests
- Maintenance of a website with information on colleges and in-person support during the admission process: [www.reachhighscholars.org](http://www.reachhighscholars.org)

- Visits for students to colleges that are within a one or two-day drive from Raymond
- Paying a portion of fees for RHS students applying to summer programs, standard college admission tests and colleges, based on financial need
- The Reach High Scholars Club, a RHS student-run extracurricular activity. A similar club will be started for IHGMS 8<sup>th</sup> graders in the fall of 2017.

## Raymond Roundtables (“RR”)

Raymond Roundtables classes are designed for motivated students who are interested in challenging themselves academically. In recent years, there have been about 35-40 students enrolled in the classes, with an average class-size of 11 students.

RHSP has taken over the direction of RR, which was operated during the first six years by Phillips Exeter Academy. RR is an important early component in the continuum of RHSP initiatives that lead in later years to boarding summer enrichment programs, the PSAT/SAT Boot Camps and college visits.

The RR classes use PEA’s world-renowned “Harkness Method” of teaching, a student-centered seminar style in which classes are conducted around a table, while the teacher guides and fosters discussion among the students. The students learn to take responsibility for their education, to listen to each other and to explore the potential of their academic and intellectual abilities.

Over 230 Raymond middle schoolers and freshmen have participated in Raymond Roundtables.

## Summer Boarding Academic Enrichment Programs

RHSP has close working relationships with summer academic enrichment programs at Brown, Dartmouth, Phillips Exeter and St. Paul’s, all of which have made significant commitments to support our efforts. Since 2010, the Reach High Scholars Program has sent at least a dozen RHS students each year to two to five-week boarding programs at these institutions. Almost all of them have had substantial financial aid that has totaled over \$700,000 to date. RHSP and its individual and institutional supporters have contributed over \$200,000 to support this aid.

These programs cultivate an enjoyment of learning for the sake of learning; encourage students to take control of their academic destiny and provide unforgettable life-changing experiences with like-minded peers—all while making the students more appealing as college applicants. The experience of several RHS students suggests that doing two of these programs makes a dramatically greater positive impact on the admission process than doing just one.

Attending a summer enrichment program also gives students an experience similar to attending college – from living in dorms to selecting one's own courses and budgeting study and social time. This helps develop the strengths that come with being a strong student and makes the transition from high school to college much easier.

## **PSAT & SAT Boot Camps**

The RHSP Boot Camps offer more standardized testing preparation than is available at any other high school in Northern New England. In the fall, there is a three-week PSAT course for sophomores and juniors and a five-week SAT course for seniors. In the winter and spring, there is a 14-week SAT course for juniors. All the courses grant students significant price reductions on the basis of financial need. The Boot Camps are an effective way to show that students from Raymond are as well prepared as those from wealthier school districts, many of whom have prepared with courses costing 4-5 times what ours cost.

## **Mentors (To Be Implemented)**

RHSP intends to have a volunteer mentoring program that brings together college graduates to serve on mentoring teams. The mentors will operate in teams of two, with each team assigned to work with a group of 4-6 students from the beginning of the student's second semester in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade until they graduate from high school. Working in teams provides more flexibility, while also building bonds, trust, and ease of communication between the adult mentors and the students.

The mentors will help prepare their students for the college admission process and to become successful college students.

## **Reach High Workers (To Be Implemented)**

Reach High Workers is an initiative to be started by RHSP to meet the mutual needs of New Hampshire students in their early college years and local businesses wanting to attract new talent. Reach High Workers will facilitate RHSP alumni in finding stimulating summer jobs after their high school graduation and during their college years within a 35-mile radius of Raymond.

The students will be able to explore different types of work, business sectors, and possible career paths. They will gain insights into working in a medium to large-sized organization and a sense for professional life in Southern New Hampshire.

Employers will have access to New Hampshire students who have gone through rigorous selection processes to attend highly competitive colleges. They can assess the students over several weeks and, if appropriate, invite them to return for another summer and to consider permanent employment.

## Outcomes

The outcomes for students active in RHSP are convincing evidence that hard work and a commitment to availing themselves of academically enriching opportunities will allow students from Raymond to achieve their highest potential, regardless of income. The longer-term impact on the students is life-changing.

Since 2009, over 40 students, active in the Reach High Scholars Program, have gone to one of a list of 90 highly competitive colleges (top 3% of the over 3,000 four-year colleges in the U.S.), which is more than attended those colleges in the prior 100-year history of RHS. Most of them have financial aid with small amounts of debt and need-based grants of up to \$62,000 per annum that, over four years, will have a total value of over \$5 million.

Colleges attended by RHSP students include: Bard (2), Brown, Carleton, Connecticut College, Dartmouth (3), Hamilton (3), Hobart & William Smith (4), Holy Cross (3), Lafayette, Mount Holyoke, Union (2), Northeastern (2), University of Rochester, Rensselaer Polytechnic (3), St. Lawrence (2), Skidmore (3), Trinity (2), Wheaton (3) and Worcester Polytechnic (4). Several other students who were active in RHSP are attending other top colleges.

## Examples of RHSP Alumni Outcomes

- *Charlie Martin* (RHS '09, RPI '13) - received Ph.D in astrophysics at RPI in 2016; currently teaching astronomy at RPI.
- *KarryAnne Belanger* (RHS '10, Wheaton '14) - studying for a Ph.D. in biochemistry and molecular biology at University of Texas Medical School.
- *Steve Diamond* (RHS '10, WPI '14) - working as a software engineer at BAE Systems, a multinational defense, security and aerospace company.
- *Jesse Hardman* (RHS '11, Skidmore '15) - awarded Raymond's first ever Fulbright Scholarship, to teach in Germany for two years; now teaching in the AmeriCorps Vista Program in Baltimore, MD.
- *Samantha Harmon* (RHS '11, Dartmouth '15) -working as a product innovation associate at Athenahealth, a healthcare technology company.
- *Jake Leavitt* (RHS '11, Brown '15) - working as a research assistant in the Department of Psychiatry at Yale Medical School.
- *Jon Lemay* (RHS '11, Skidmore '15) - working as an English teacher at The Pennington School, a private secondary school in Pennington, NJ.

- *Amy Neeper* (RHS '11, Holy Cross '15) – studying for a Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) Degree at Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences.
- *Charlie DeBenedetto* (RHS '12, Hobart '16) – awarded Raymond's second-ever Fulbright Scholarship, to teach in Taiwan for a year; now teaching at Washington Bilingual Elementary School in Taichung City, Taiwan.
- *Ashley Lord* (RHS '12, Dartmouth '16) – working in Littleton, MA, as a user interface developer at IBM Watson, the cognitive business arm of IBM.
- *Joe Morin* (RHS '12, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute '16) – working in East Rutherford, NJ, as a design engineer for the U.S. subsidiary of Peri Formwork Systems, a German manufacturer of formwork and scaffolding systems.
- *Abbey Schlangen* (RHS '12, Trinity '16) -- working in Los Angeles, CA, as an account manager at Unified Social, a company that provides software to help clients' productivity in their use of marketing data.
- *Collin Spinney* (RHS '12, Hamilton '16) - working in Beaverton, OR, as a copy writer at Seamus Golf, which produces golf headcovers and other accessories.
- *Hope Palattella* (RHS '13, Connecticut College '16) - working as a photographer at Seamus Golf.

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