

Guidance Notes

A Monthly Newsletter of the Highland Park Senior High School Counseling Office



11th Grade
December
Edition

Post High School Planning in the Year Ahead

The next year is a big one for you and your student. In the next 12 months you and/or your student will be: taking college entrance examinations like the ACT/SAT, examining post-secondary options, registering for senior classes, discussing the financing of college, exploring various career opportunities, visiting college campuses, and completing applications. It's not surprising that many parents and students will constantly feel like they are falling behind, but don't worry. With a little planning, you can ensure that all avenues are explored in the coming months.

Planning Ahead – Things to Consider for the Rest of the Junior Year

The path for post-high school planning is different for every student, so please don't look at this as a firm to-do list, but here are some things to consider doing before the end of your student's junior year:

- Prepare for **college entrance examinations** like the ACT or the SAT. Almost all colleges require applicants to take one or the other (most have no preference), and they utilize your student's score when evaluating his/her application. Some students take the ACT more than one time to get a better score, however, students can avoid this by simply preparing thoroughly for their first test session. There are myriad books available at the store, or you can check out a free online practice kit at: <http://mncis.intocareers.org> (user name = highlandpark, password = scots)
- Register and **take the ACT/SAT**. HPSH hosts two sessions of the ACT (April & June) – register online at www.actstudent.org or pick up registration materials in the College & Career Resource Center (east side of the HPSH library).
- Explore **careers and colleges**. Things to encourage exploration:
 - Use the web! The site listed above (mncis.intocareers.org) is a powerful tool for exploring a wide variety of careers. Students can take interest inventories, find out about the nitty-gritty details of specific careers, and research the colleges that will prepare students for those fields.
 - Use the College & Career Resource Center at HPSH! Mr. Grays can help your student to access our resources on careers and colleges. Also, we often have representatives from colleges visit HPSH – have your student sign up for a session to sit down and find out about a specific college.
 - Use yourself! Share your own career story with your student. Talk about what careers you were interested in when you were 17, how you decided on your post-high school plans, what regrets (if any) you have, and where you see your future in your own career.

College Information Night

The HPSH school counseling department will present our annual College Information Night after parent/teacher conferences on **December 16**. Representatives from Saint Paul College, the University of Minnesota Twin Cities, the College of Saint Catherine, and University of Wisconsin River Falls will present a variety of information on the college selection and admission process. There will also be time for questions. The presentation will begin promptly at **7:00 in the library** – see you there!

Upcoming Dates for December:

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| • 12/1 (Mon) – PTA, 6:30 (library) | • 12/16 (Tues) – Parent/Teacher Conferences, 4:00-7:00 (cafeteria) |
| • 12/9 (Tues) – Site Council, 5:00 (library) | • 12/16 (Tues) – College Information Night, 7:00 (library) |
| • 12/10 (Wed) – Early Release at noon | • 12/18 (Thurs) – Choir Concert, 7:00 (auditorium) |
| • 12/11 (Thurs) – Progress Marks Quarter 2 due | • 12/20 – 1/4/09 – Winter Break |
| • 12/11 (Thurs) – Band Concert, 7:00 (auditorium) | |

Guidance Notes Continued...

A Note About Grades

Every year counselors hear the same thing: "Your junior year is the most important year for college applications." Myth? Yes...sort of.

When it comes right down to it, colleges will look at your student's entire academic record (grades 9 through 12), so every year is important. Admissions counselors look for trends in a transcript - having lower grades during the freshman year won't eliminate your student from consideration as long as there is consistent improvement over time. Colleges will also consider extraordinary circumstances that negatively affect a student's grades (a death in the family, for example).

Yet the junior year is the one that gets the most scrutiny. Why? Students generally complete applications for colleges during October - December of their senior year. Since we are on quarters at HPSH, final grades for senior classes will not begin to appear on the transcript until mid-November. Many colleges request a mid-year report to get a look at grades after 2nd quarter, but for the preliminary review of applications, colleges are often looking at a transcript that stops at the end of the junior year.

This is important to remember, because every year counselors also hear this from juniors: "I didn't do as well as I could have this year, but I'll get really good grades during senior year." Colleges do like to see improvement. Unfortunately, waiting until fall quarter of senior year to begin that improvement will put students at a serious disadvantage when completing college applications.

Making Up Credits

When a student does not pass a class required for graduation, that credit must be made up. Some classes (like science and math) can be made up the following school year if there is room in the needed class. Generally, students will need to make arrangements to make up credits outside of the school day. Options for Freshmen:

- **Extended Day**

These classes are offered at HPSH right after school, meeting two days a week from 2:15 - 4:45. Bussing is provided. The next Extended Day session will begin at the start of third quarter. Students will receive an invitation to join Extended Day in their advisory.

- **Summer School**

HPSH hosts summer school each year for 5 weeks beginning one week after the school year is out. Students can make up 4 credits in summer school. Students will be registered for summer school by their counselor in May of each school year.

- **Evening High School**

The Extended Day classes are often limited by staffing, but Saint Paul's Evening High School offers a fully array of classes for credit remediation. Evening High School is located at Gordon Parks High School (1212 University Avenue). Classes meet two days a week (Monday/Tuesday or Wednesday/Thursday) and run two hours each session. Evening High School's hours are 3 - 9 pm. Students wishing to attend Evening High School will need a referral from their school counselor. The next session will begin at the start of third quarter.

Helpful People to Contact...

- Counselors: Jesse Kramer, Barbara Kurtz, Meredith Rambow
- College & Career Resource Center: Grant Grays
- Parent Liaison: Nancy Kolb
- IB/Curriculum Coordinator: Charlotte Landreau
- Attendance: Joan Theisen, Sybil Shakir

You can contact any of these people by phone at 293-8940, or through email: firstname.lastname@spps.org