

# Guidance Notes

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



10<sup>th</sup> Grade  
September  
Edition

## Starting the School Year Of on the Right Foot

Welcome to your student's sophomore year! While your student may not be feeling the nervous excitement that accompanied his/her start last year, the sophomore year is an important part of his/her high school career. It is a great time for students to get involved in school activities, try more difficult IB-Prep classes, and step out of their comfort zone!

### Learning From Freshman Year

Now is a good time to talk with your student about his/her experiences last year. Freshman year can be a difficult transition for students, and some students struggle with higher classroom expectations and increased demands on their time. Take some time to talk with your student about his/her experiences – lessons learned, expectations that were or were not met, good/bad study habits used last year and attitudes towards school.

### Habits for a Successful Sophomore Year –

#### Refining What Works

Success isn't automatic – it is something that is developed through hard work, planning and effective habits. Your student has already developed some study habits – now is the time to refine them.

1. **Review Last Year:** Take some time to have a conversation about freshman year. Some questions to discuss with your student:
  - o Describe some experiences from freshman year where everything clicked – where you got the grade you wanted and really felt prepared. What specific steps did you take to make that happen?
  - o What did you learn about working with teachers from last year? What did you learn about late assignments? extra credit? asking questions in class? getting help before/after school?
  - o What did not work last year? Were there some study habits that weren't worth the time? (For example, maybe you tried to memorize your vocabulary words by writing them out over and over again, and you still got low scores on your tests...)
2. **Create Goals for This Year:** It is important to have an end-point in sight. Help your student to make SMART goals for classes this year.

SMART goals are: Specific & Measurable: they clearly state what you want to achieve in terms of the desired outcome, and that outcome can be objectively measured. Action-oriented: goals clearly state specific actions your student can take to achieve them. Realistic: reaching beyond your comfort zone is good, but when a goal isn't realistic your student will only end up frustrated. Time-sensitive: every goal must have an end point. Once you reach the end, re-evaluate and begin again!

Example of a SMART goal: In semester 1, I will raise my math grade to a B by attending tutoring once a week and studying for tests with my study-group on Wednesday evenings.

#### Upcoming Dates:

- Monday, September 8: PTA Meeting, 6:30 pm in the library
- Tuesday, September 9: Site Council Meeting, 5:00 pm, in the library
- Friday, September 12: Picture Day!
- Thursday, September 18: AVID Family Night
- September 22 - 27: Homecoming Week
- Wednesday, September 24: Early Release
- Thursday, September 25: IB Parent Meeting, 6:00 pm in the library
- Saturday, September 27: Homecoming Game vs. Harding, 1:00 pm

# Guidance Notes Continued...

## (Refining What Works...continued)

3. **Getting Specific About the Plan:** SMART goals are specific, but they don't take into account the day-to-day actions your student must take to make them a reality. Long-term planning is a difficult skill for teens. Help your student by taking large projects and breaking them down into smaller steps. Bring out the planner to get things in writing. Help your student to create his/her own deadlines.
4. **Focusing on Control:** It is always helpful to talk to your student in terms of control - it is easy to get caught up in worrying over things that are beyond our control, but focusing on these things is wasting time and energy that can be directed toward those things we do control. Your student cannot control, for example, which questions a teacher will ask on an exam. Your student can, however, use the last test to predict the type of questions that might appear on the next test. When talking to your student, redirect your conversation to those elements that can be controlled and help your student to understand the control that he/she does possess.
5. **Encouraging Self-Advocacy:** High school is full of hidden skills that are key to navigating successfully through classes, tests and homework - self-advocacy is one of them. Recognize and reward with positive feedback any time your demonstrates self-advocacy skills: whether staying after class to get extra help, joining in the discussion, or participating in a study group, there are many ways your student can take action to ensure they get the help that is needed.

## Are You On Parent Portal? Here's How!

Parent Portal is a way for you to check on the progress of your student. It allows you access to lunch accounts, attendance and grades. Many teachers also put up their entire grade book (listing assignments and scores) on Parent Portal. Here is how to get connected to Parent Portal:

- Go to [www.spps.org](http://www.spps.org)
- Click on "Parents"
- Click on the "Parent Portal" link (on the right)
- Follow the directions under "First time using Campus Portal?"

## Connecting With Teachers

Please understand that teachers do not update Portal on a daily basis - generally they will update once a week or once every other week. If you need more up-to-the-minute information, please contact the teacher directly through voice mail or email.

- Call 293-8940 at any time to access our voice mail system
- Email addresses are available at the HPSH website: [www.highlandsr.spps.org](http://www.highlandsr.spps.org) (the general format for emails is: [firstname.lastname@spps.org](mailto:firstname.lastname@spps.org))

If you are having difficulty connecting with a teacher, please contact your student's counselor. Starting in the 2008-09 school year counseling assignments are by students' last names. Ms. Kurtz will work with students last names A-He, Ms. Rambow has Hi-Q, and Mr. Kramer will be with students with last names beginning in R-Z.

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### Helpful People to Contact...

- Counselors: Jesse Kramer, Barbara Kurtz, Meredith Rambow
- College & Career Resource Center: To Be Determined
- 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](mailto:firstname.lastname@spps.org)