

Finishing the Junior Year: Life Lessons
From New Trier's Post-High School Counseling Office

Before we get into the end-of-the-year mode for this newsletter, here are some housekeeping items:

Post-high school counselors are available by appointment this summer

To make a summer appointment, please call 847/784-2234; *counselors cannot change their schedules or calendars from remote locations, so please do NOT email your counselor for an appointment.*

Please consider attending an essay seminar to get the writing process started, and unless you have already begun the Common Application with your counselor, a Common App workshop as well. A list of dates and times was distributed at our initial meeting, and is on the main page of the PHSC website.

Summer evening seminars are set for June 14 and June 27 – all are invited! Specific information is on our webpage at <http://www.newtrier.k12.il.us/phsc/> under the “Upcoming Events.”

Updated, sixth-semester transcript copies will be mailed to each student’s home in July as soon as we can get to them!

Be patient with Naviance – the testing agencies scramble to release scores to students and colleges, and New Trier, like all high schools, typically receives the scores for uploading six to eight weeks after the test date. Then we upload it within two days.

Exact essays for the Class of 2019 will be provided in a newsletter closer to the end of the month when colleges can confirm their questions for us.

The end of the junior year offers another terrific opportunity for parents to help students stop and consider what they have done well and what they would like to change or improve as they look toward the last year of their high school tenure. For those of you who received the sophomore parent newsletter, this is the same end-of-year exercise we asked you to consider last summer; it’s good to get into a pattern of review and assessment at the end of each year.

If at all possible, we encourage you to let your student have some summer; rest and relaxation are key to returning in the fall rejuvenated and ready for the demands of the senior year and the college application process. It’s perfectly acceptable not to have every spare minute of your student’s free time programmed with resume-building activities; in fact, we strongly encourage students to enjoy the luxury of being a kid is possible. Figuring out how to structure free time with friends and in activities is a life skill, and one that should be promoted!

Just like we recommend that students and parents meet for 45 minutes a week throughout the college selection and application process, we recommend another, more general meeting to assess the way the junior year went. Find a time where you and your student can go to lunch, have a cup of coffee at a new café, or go out for dessert. Plan to spend 45 minutes to an hour together. Plan to listen; ask questions, but be silent as your student formulates and communicates his or her responses. We’ve found that the less you talk, the more they talk to you, and that active listening allows students to reach their own conclusions without parental

input. If your student asks for input, feel free to offer only positive comments or suggestions. During the teenage years, even any perceived criticism can shut down communication.

The goal is to help students routinely assess what they do, how they do it, and how they can engage in a way that is more personally rewarding. Ask questions like:

Junior year is over; what did you learn about yourself this year?

Did you gain insight into activities that you found rewarding? Activities you liked?

How did participating in _____ affect the way you see yourself?

How did participating in _____ affect the way you see or interact with other students or with teachers?

Commend your student: I noticed you sat down to get your homework done right after you had a snack after school this year – did that study strategy work for you?

You seemed much happier this year; what was different this year?

I was so proud of the way you handled that situation with your friends and know it was very difficult for you; are you happy with the way things turned out?

What changes did you see in yourself this year?

What happened sophomore year that you worked hard to change or control differently during your junior year? How did that work out?

What do you want to continue to work on for your senior year?

Thank you for your help with your younger brother all year; I appreciated your perspective and your willingness to help. You demonstrated great _____ (maturity, restraint, responsibility, initiative). Do you see these qualities in yourself?

What did you participate in outside of your classes that you really enjoyed? What did you get out of that experience? Can you continue to participate next year, or do you want to try something else?

What extracurricular activities do you wish you hadn't participated in? What would you have changed about that experience to improve it?

If there were aspects of your junior year you did not like, were there any ways you might have approached things differently for a different outcome?

What risks did you take this year? (Asking for a date, meeting with teachers for the first time, moving levels in classes, taking a new elective or an unfamiliar academic course, for instance.)

What was personally fulfilling this year?

Did anything surprise you academically this year? How did you handle this? Looking back, are you happy with the way the situation unfolded, or are there things you might have changed?

You need not ask *all* of these questions. You just need to help your student take some time to reflect upon how the year unfolded, what the positive aspects were, how to increase the chances of having additional positive curricular or extracurricular interactions, and to decrease the prospect of negative situations. It's basically about these concepts:

How was the year?

What would you change to make it better?

How do these situations affect the way you anticipate the next year?

What can change – either how can I change or how can my choices change – to make next year even more rewarding and important in my personal, intellectual, and recreational growth?

This includes the recognition that life isn't always fair, and that while there are many aspects of daily life that can't be controlled, each of us can only control our individual responses to what happens.

What is vital in this process is putting your own parental ideas and goals for your student aside. This is not about you, but about helping your child figure out how to evaluate and improve his or her life choices. There are no right or wrong answers here, and we encourage you to resist the urge to tell your student what you want him or her to do; your job is to help your student learn to figure things out on his or her own – it will mean so much more that way!

We also find that being present or making yourself available to your teenagers is an important step in having them communicate with you. Even if you dread the idea of watching “Dancing with the Stars,” join your teenager for an episode or two. You may be surprised at what you learn by just being there, and how much your kids, no matter how mature they want to be, still need you as a sounding board.

There will be an additional newsletter from New Trier's post-high school counseling office in late June with an update of essay questions for the Class of 2019!

Have a terrific summer!!