

New Trier Township High School
Post-High School Counseling Office
Considerations for Freshmen

My student is the oldest in the family and the first to go through New Trier. When and how does post-high school counseling kick in for him?

Post-high school considerations for freshmen revolve around acclimating students to the academic environment and demands of the high school setting. It's vital that each student is appropriately placed in levels of classes that challenge but don't overwhelm. Additional thought should be given to each student's overall commitments, both inside and outside of the classroom, as they affect the amount of time available for studying. We also want students to have time for adequate rest and rejuvenation.

Freshmen should also search for extra-curricular activities that reflect their genuine interests and talents. Rather than engaging in many different activities that spread the student too thinly and interfere with his academic achievement, it's important to consider the quality of the time spent in each activity; generally speaking, if a student spends more time in fewer activities, there are opportunities to develop qualities like responsibility, dependability, task management, and leadership.

In terms of the formal college counseling meetings, freshmen may contact the departmental liaison to the freshman guidance team or any of the counselors with any special issues relating to the student's curricular choices. In fact, the post-high school freshman guidance team member spends evenings at the Northfield Campus during course registration to field individual questions from students and parents. Post-high school counselors visit advisories during the students' sophomore year and host an evening meeting for sophomore parents each January. The individual post-high school counseling appointments begin in the winter of the junior year. Students at the Winnetka Campus are always welcome to drop-in to the post-high school counseling office on drop-in Mondays throughout the academic year as well.

Will my student be at a disadvantage because New Trier doesn't begin individualized, post-high school counseling freshman year?

Absolutely not! In fact, New Trier's postsecondary counseling model is unique in its depth and breadth of services; Palo Alto High School in California decided very recently to follow the New Trier model, but no other high school, public and private, offers New Trier's range of services. The New Trier developmental model utilizes the school's advising system, guidance teams, and group and individual opportunities designed to focus on the needs specific to students during each year.

My daughter has a busy schedule and wants to know if colleges would rather see her earn higher grades in lower levels or lower grades in more challenging classes. What is your advice?

College admission officers *always* respond to this question by requesting higher grades in those more challenging levels – they want it all! In reality, we go back to what is educationally appropriate for each student in each discipline. College admission counselors want students to take advantage of courses that challenge them, but do not want students to be overwhelmed with academic and co-curricular obligations. There is a delicate balance to be achieved here, and it varies from student to student.

My student is enrolled in four-level science and is excelling in the class. His teacher recommended he take the SAT Subject Test. What is that?

Highly selective colleges sometimes require or recommend as a part of the admission process examinations in subject areas beyond the ACT or SAT. If a student is excelling in a four-level, freshman science course, it might be a good idea to take this hour-long exam in May or June of the freshman year when the material is still fresh in the student's mind. Typically, students test in areas where they have a good chance of doing well, or, if students are interested in some engineering or science majors, they might be expected to submit scores specifically in math and/or science to some highly selective engineering programs. Remember, though, that of the 3400 four-year colleges and universities in the nation, only thirteen schools require candidates to submit SAT Subject Tests in addition to an ACT or SAT. Of those thirteen, five are liberal arts colleges.

Because students will continue to learn math, history, language and English, taking other exams freshman year may not demonstrate individual student's highest achievement. SAT Subject Tests are usually offered six times a year, every year.

I'm nervous about college and worried that some decisions we made freshman year might close some doors to future opportunities. What advice do you have for me?

Working with your student's teachers to make sure the student is appropriately placed, and enrolling your student in at least four academic courses from among the disciplines of English, mathematics, social studies, traditional lab sciences, and foreign languages freshman year will keep your student in the running. Designing a yearly program of studies with your student's strengths and challenges in mind makes sure that he or she will be a viable college candidate.

As the parent in the process, stay focused on what's best for your individual student; instead of trying to fit your student into a particular mold, see where your student's interests lead. Some students who love social studies, for instance, find room in their senior year to take two social studies classes. Students deeply involved in New Trier music may find that taking science in summer school opens up their day to pursue one or more courses in music during the academic year. These opportunities will develop naturally; right now, you can help your student set disciplined study habits as the basis for a strong academic future.

My student hopes to play NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) Division One athletics. What should we be doing to keep her eligible?

Beginning with the class of 2016, the NCAA posted new rules for potential Division I athletes. This includes the accumulation of sixteen core courses by high school graduation. Pragmatically, this means that each potential DI athlete should be successfully completing at least four academic courses – from English, math, science, social studies and foreign language – during each year in high school. Students can take any combination of those courses, but in order to adhere to the NCAA rules, sixteen academic courses – the NCAA and colleges do not care about New Trier's majors/minors system – must be completed. Feel free to contact the post-high school counseling department for more specific information; all the counselors have a terrific working knowledge of the rules.