

Navigating the Transition to High School

Dear students and families,

The transition to high school can be difficult, perhaps more so if you've only ever gone to one school, like many of our graduating eighth graders. Before the cancellation of in-school classes, the eighth grade team wanted to have dedicated advisory sessions covering these topics in order to help our students make a smooth transition to high school. We have compiled as much useful information as possible in this document to help you prepare for the next phase of your education. Please read through this document, click the links, and, of course, reach out to us if you have questions, or need additional guidance.

Summer Reading/Homework

It is common for high schools to require their students do some reading over the summer. You can check your summer work requirements on your school's MNPS page. While you're there, check out the supply list to see what you should bring to school on day 1 (assuming we get to go back in August)!

There is also a summer reading challenge through MNPS and Nashville Public Library that you can read about [here](#).

High School Academies

Students at MNPS schools will have the opportunity to participate in Academic Academies in High School. In 9th grade, all students will participate in **Freshman Academic** and Freshman Seminar. This is an opportunity to learn more about academic fields and career paths before choosing an academy at the end of 9th grade.

[Academies of Nashville](#) explains in more detail the Academy model in MNPS. The goal of academies is college and career preparation. Academies include information taught in general education classes and opportunities beyond the classroom including career fairs, field trips, job shadowing, and internships.

The academies offered vary for different schools. The list of [MNPS Academies](#) explains the opportunities at each school.

Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate

Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) are **advanced academic programs** available to scholars at many schools in Nashville. Both programs allow students the opportunity to take classes more rigorous than the "regular" classes in high school. They may also offer unique elective classes including Art History, Psychology, and foreign languages.

Students interested in taking AP and IB classes should **inform their high school adviser early**, and begin taking Pre-AP and Pre-IB classes in 9th and 10th grade (AP/IB usually formally begins in 11th grade).

One of the many reasons students choose to take AP/IB classes is that they culminate in an exam that can be used to **satisfy college credit requirements**. For example, if a student earns the required score on the AP English exam in 12th grade, then they will earn credit for Freshman English. Students can earn between 3-6 credits per qualifying exam grade, which translates to one to two semesters that students do not have to pay for a class and get credit anyway. This can free up time to take more interesting/advanced classes, or just graduate from college in less time than normal.

- Check out the Hillsboro High School website for information on their IB program [here](#).

- CollegeBoard.org has a website with AP information and resources. Make an account [here](#).

High School Graduation Requirements

You will have a counselor in high school to help make sure you graduate on time; however, you should take time to plan a high school schedule that will work best for you. Senior year comes extremely fast, and you do not want to be caught having to take a bunch of difficult classes all at once. We've provided a short overview of the credit requirements below, but please click [this link](#) to view the exact requirements, including specific classes everyone must take.

- 4 credits in English (one class is worth 1 credit, so this means 4 years of English)
- 4 credits in Math
- 3 credits in Science
- 3 credits in Social Studies
- 3 credits in Electives
- 2 credits in a Foreign Language
- 1.5 credits (or a year and a half) in Physical Education and Wellness
- 1 credit in Fine Arts
- 0.5 credits in Personal Finance

GPA

Your GPA, or Grade Point Average, is a critical component of your high school career. Your GPA is the average of all your year-end course grades.

The GPA is used to determine what colleges and universities will accept you. The higher your GPA, the more prestigious universities you can be accepted to (and the more scholarship money you will receive). Your GPA starts day one of your Freshman Year. It is extremely difficult to raise your GPA later in high school, so take care of your grades from the beginning.

- [Here](#) is a helpful chart showing the conversion of number or letter grades to grade point averages.
- You can also use a [GPA calculator](#) to determine your GPA before report cards come out.

Goal Setting

We have reviewed and made SMART goals before, but [here](#) is the link to the video explaining how to create SMART goals. This summer may be a good time to assess your previous goals and make new ones for high school.

How to Take Notes

[Here](#) is a link to an article about four common note taking strategies. Regardless of which strategy you use, get in the habit of using shorthand and symbols, put the date and a title on each of your notes sections, and prioritize function the usefulness of your note) over form (how pretty your notes look).

How to Study

Two of the most common practices students use to study--typing notes and rereading notes/textbooks--are not actually effective. So, even if you have access to a computer in class, you should take notes by hand and use the following strategies to study instead of just rereading notes/textbooks.

- **Self-quizzing:** When you get to the end of your class notes, homework, etc, pause and ask yourself: "What are the key ideas? What terms or ideas are new to me? How would I define them? How do the ideas relate to what I already know?" This is better than rereading because rereading gives you a false sense of gaining knowledge; it's

not really an indication that you will have a long-lasting understanding of what you've read. When you have to articulate the ideas yourself, that is when learning really happens.

- **Strategy 1: Elaboration:** Explain the concept to somebody else, or make a connection to your own life. Create a metaphor or visual image for the material you're learning.
- **Strategy 2: Generation:** Come up with the answer before being shown answer choices. Engage with the material, no matter how poorly, and your mind will do some of the work for you. This one is tough because frequently you won't know the answer to something you just read
- **Strategy 3: Reflection:** Reflect on the learning done: "What went well? What could have gone better? What other knowledge or experiences does it remind you of?" Reflecting on what you've learned and connecting it to things in your past will help the new information stay in your brain.
- **Space out your studying:** Self-quizzing works even better if you space it out over the course of a few days/weeks. If you want to be able to remember information longterm (for Final Exams, etc.) you have to study more than once, over time. This means that, no, cramming the night before does not work.

Personal Organization/Schedule Making

You all are entering highschool and will likely participate in extracurricular activities based on your interests. In order to excel as a student and still have a social life, it is important to make a schedule. Below are a few helpful tips for staying organized:

- **Buy a planner/agenda:** This is a life saver for staying on top of everything while you're in high school. You will have many classes and not every teacher will remind you when things are due. Before your first day of school, you should buy an agenda because you'll be assigned homework as soon as school starts. If you cannot afford an agenda/planner you can use google calendar or excel.
- **Bring your agenda to every class:** You don't want to depend on your memory to remember everything, especially if you participate in extracurricular activities. If you bring your agenda to every class, you'll be able to record due dates as soon as they're given to you.
- **Record your schedule for extracurricular activities when you get it:** When you join a club or team, go ahead and add the schedule to your planner. By filling out your planner ahead of time you're able to see future conflicts between your school work and extracurricular activities.
- **Make sure you have folders or binders to keep your papers organized:** You will receive a lot of handouts during highschool, many of which you'll need again in the future. Whether it's to study for a test, or to double check a grade your teacher recorded incorrectly, it is important to know where important papers are.

Electives and Extracurricular Activities

Elective classes are a great way to learn more about what you're passionate about. You can learn more about what electives are offered by looking on the school website or talking to a guidance counselor. Ask older students at your school what their favorite elective classes have been.

Extracurricular activities, including sports, fine arts, and academic/social/philanthropic clubs, are also opportunities to learn more about what you're passionate about. Oftentimes there are activities connected to different academies. Extracurricular activities are a great way to meet new people and build community at your school. Participation in extracurricular activities is another thing colleges look at when you apply, so try a few clubs out in 9th grade, find a couple that you like, and stay involved through 12th grade.

Summer Activities

It is important to make the most of your summers because it allows you to explore your passions, get a feel for college life, develop new skills, and gain awareness about different careers. Plus, college admissions boards love to see that you were engaged in something meaningful during the summer.. Many programs are closed due to COVID-19, but these links will come in handy for next summer. Below are a few resources about different summer programs in Tennessee for high school students:

- MNPS will hold a virtual information session on Wednesday, May 27, 2020 detailing summer programs for high school students. The zoom link for this session will be available on Wednesday, May 20, 2020.
- [Accounting and Information Management Academy](#) (free)
- [Business Education for Talented Students \(BETS\) Programs](#) (free)
- [SOARing in Mathematics](#) (free)
- [Summer Winds Band Camp](#)
- [Summer Vocal Arts Intensive](#)
- [Mayor's Office Internship Program](#)

Feel free to Google additional camps/internships based on your interests. Again, many camps are cancelled this year due to COVID-19, but will probably start back up in 2021. You should also consider looking up summer programs in surrounding states.