



Parent Guidebook

**Westlake High School
School Counseling Department**

825 Westlake Drive
Thornwood, New York

(914) 769-8440

Westlake High School Parent Guidebook

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

During their high school years, your children need you to be interested and involved in their activities and in their academic progress. Here in the WHS School Counseling Department, we are fully committed to ensuring that your son/daughter is fully exposed to all that we offer. As counselors, we invest our time advocating for the student as an involved, well-rounded member of our school community. We strive to partner with teachers, parents, and administrators in helping your child to be a strong, self-advocate in their voyage to becoming an independent and successful young man or woman.

This booklet will give you the information you need to help your children not only succeed academically, but to also thrive and grow. With your guidance and support, your child is sure to have a great high school experience!

Nicholas P. DiPaolo
Guidance Curriculum Leader

Westlake High School

Mission Statement



To ensure that our students are fully prepared for their future endeavors after high school, we have created the following mission statement: ***We aim to support our students to become curious, knowledgeable and independent thinkers grounded in strong values and integrity. We promote our students to lead balanced lifestyles and be prepared for the real world, taking on new challenges and embracing responsible risks.***

CORE GOALS

It is our goal to ensure each student:

- 1) is aware of all of the offerings available at Westlake High School.
- 2) understands how to access all of the programs at Westlake High School.
- 3) focuses on academics as a priority with an end-result in mind.
- 4) understands the roles of the teacher as instructor and counselor as advocate; and that a parent or guardian's role is to be involved but to allow their child to become independent through self-advocacy.
- 5) is aware of the opportunities after high school through college, employment and/or military and vocational programs.
- 6) understands that it is important to treat everyone and be treated with respect and dignity at all times.
- 7) understands the relationship with their counselor and that anything said to him or her is held in confidence unless it poses danger to anyone.
- 8) understands that our role as counselors is versatile; we are here for course scheduling, issues with peers, teachers, family, etc., academic counseling, social/emotional counseling, career interests, college interests, post-high school planning, promotion of extra-curricular involvement including but not limited to sports, clubs, part-time employment, community service, etc., and also to hear about all of the good that goes on in a student's life. We truly do focus on the whole child and are eager to learn about each student's academic and personal lives.
- 9) is fully aware that we have an open-door policy for students and invite them to stop in whenever is convenient for them understanding they should try not to miss valuable class time. That being said, it should also be understood that due to the counselor's versatile role, they are sometimes involved in teacher meetings, supervisory duties, telephone conferences or other responsibilities and therefore may be unavailable at times. If this is the case, the student should see our Guidance secretary and arrange to set up an appointment with their counselor. Parents are also welcome to set up an appointment with the counselor.

The Transition to High School



Students need the support and guidance of their parents during this important transition period.

High school presents students with a variety of new opportunities and challenges. High schools are usually larger in size and the coursework is more difficult. High School students also find that they're expected to be more independent, more focused, and more responsible.

For the first time, students are taking courses that earn credits towards graduation. The grades they earn in their courses are also more important. High school grades help determine the kinds of jobs students can get and the college they will be able to get into.

Most students feel excited and a little apprehensive as they start high school. Students wonder if they will fit in, if they will like their teachers, and if they will be able to succeed in the courses they are taking. During this transition period, it is important to keep the lines of communication open. Let your child know that you are there to help make the transition to high school as smooth as possible.

Of course, this is not only a transition period for students. It's also a time of transition for parents. With each passing year, you see your child becoming more self-sufficient and independent. You also see your role as a parent changing.

During these high school years, it is very important that you continue to be involved in your child's life. You need to make sure that your child is doing well in school and that he/she is making good choices and decisions. You also need to make sure that your child understands that with increased independence comes increased responsibility. Remember, although parenting changes throughout the stages of your child's life, one constant is that you must oversee and approve of their decisions. Do not feel bad saying "no," do not feel bad being "nosey" and always, always know where they are. (Do not assume they will always be honest about their whereabouts).



High School Basics

The topics in this section are covered in our Student Handbook and on our school website. Read through the Student Handbook carefully and keep it for reference. For news and updates, regularly visit our school's website.



School Calendar



Our school has a calendar that shows when each grading period begins and ends, when report cards come out, and when their school will be closed for holidays and vacations. This calendar will also show test dates, open houses, and conferences. Be sure to write all of these dates on your calendar at home.

Attendance Policies

Our school has an attendance policy that encourages regular attendance, while allowing students to be absent if they are ill. If your child is going to be absent for more than a couple of days, please reach out to the counselor to see what the best course of action is. Try to get some work that can be done at home so that your child doesn't get too far behind. If your child has an extended illness or chronic health problem, get documentation from your child's physician and give it to the counselor.

School Counselors

High school counselors monitor academic progress, help students choose their courses, and talk to students about their career goals and educational options. School counselors are also available to answer questions and help students figure out how to deal with difficult situations. Make sure that your child knows how to go about making an appointment with his/her counselor. Counselors are excellent resources for both students and parents. If you have a question, need information or if your child needs help, contact your child's counselor by phone or email.



Programs and Courses

High school students have a number of courses they are required to take in order to graduate (math, history, English, etc.) While freshman schedules are mostly filled with required courses, each year students have more room in their schedules for electives (courses they choose or "elect" to take). Electives give students the opportunity to develop skills and gain knowledge in their areas of interest.

Students who plan to go to a four-year college need to choose college prep courses (foreign language, advanced math, etc.) for many of their electives.



In order to meet the needs of our students, our high school has a variety of programs. These include AP courses, Honors courses, Ninth Grade mini courses, career and technology programs, special education programs, and programs that make it possible for students to take college courses while they are still in high school (dual-enrollment courses). Students who are in the right courses and programs are happier, and they are more successful. If your child does not enjoy school or is struggling academically, ask your child's counselor if there might be a more appropriate program or set of courses for your child.

Scheduling

Students generally choose their courses for the following year in the spring during a 1:1 conference with their counselor. Before choosing their courses, students need to investigate and carefully consider all of their course options. To help your child choose his/her courses for the following year, look over the list of available courses and read the course descriptions. Make sure that your child signs up for all the required courses, and help your child choose the best and most appropriate electives. If you have any questions, call your child's counselor. Do not just assume that you can change a class later. Once a student's schedule is set, it may be difficult to change a class.



School Rules / Code of Conduct



In order to provide students with a safe environment that encourages learning, schools need to have rules regarding student conduct and behavior. Most students understand that rules are necessary and they follow them. For the students who do not follow the rules, there are consequences. Consequences can range anywhere from detention to expulsion. The severity of the consequence generally depends on the seriousness of the offense and the past history of the student(s) involved. While rules vary from school to school, no school will allow weapons, drugs, smoking, alcohol, intimidation, or harassment. Please consult our Code of Conduct or our administrators for further information.

Bullying can sometimes be a problem in high school. If your child ever complains that a student is bullying or harassing him/her at school or online, find out exactly what's happened. Then talk to your child's counselor or principal.

Extracurricular Activities

Studies show that students who are involved in extracurricular activities enjoy school more, and they do better academically. Fortunately our high school has a wide variety of clubs, teams and organizations that students can join. Encourage your child to get involved in at least two or three school-related activities. For a listing of all of our clubs, sports and activities, visit our website.



Eligibility Requirements



In addition to state eligibility requirements, our high school has their own requirements that students must meet before they can play a sport. Our policy is clearly stated in the Student Handbook. Academic eligibility for clubs and sports is evaluated every 5 weeks.

Enrichment Programs and Summer School

Going to summer school can be a great way for students to earn credits toward graduation. It is also a good way for students to lighten their class load during the regular school year. Students who are short on credits, or who have failed a required course, should go to summer school whenever possible. This will help keep them on track for graduation. If you think summer school may be appropriate for your child, get information on the dates, costs, and the courses offered. For information and advice, talk to your child's counselor. Administrative approval is required prior to a student taking summer school and/or enrichment courses for high school credit.



SUMMARY

Information Parents Need to Have

- ✓ School Calendar
- ✓ Attendance Policies
- ✓ Graduation Requirements
- ✓ State Testing information
- ✓ Academic requirements for each grade level
- ✓ Required and elective courses by grade level
- ✓ Information on the scheduling process
- ✓ School rules / Code of conduct
- ✓ Information on extracurricular activities
- ✓ Eligibility requirements
- ✓ Summer school options
- ✓ How to contact your child's counselor

If you need information or have questions on any of the above, check our school's website, call the high school office, or contact your child's counselor.

School Website:
www.whs.mtplcsd.org

Guidance Department
(914) 769-8440
Mr. Nicholas P. DiPaolo – Ext. 1610
Mrs. Lauren Cody – Ext. 1603
Mrs. Tina Matusiak – Ext. 1604
Mr. Tim O'Dwyer – Ext. 1602

Main Office
(914) 769-8311

Attendance Office
(914) 773-7886

The Academic Record



Parents need to know and understand the information that is included in their child's academic record. Parents also need to understand the following terms: GPA, class rank, four-year plan, and transcript.

Grade Point Average (GPA)

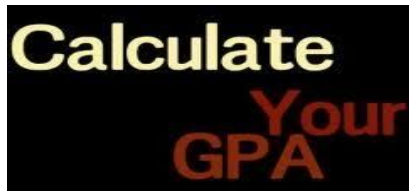
A student's grade point average, or GPA, is an indicator of how well that student is performing in school. A GPA is simply the average of a student's semester (or end of term) grades, starting with the freshman year (and any middle school courses for high school credit). Because colleges use GPAs to help them decide who to accept, having a high GPA can be very important for college bound students.



Although there are variations, our high school uses a numerical system out of 100 points. For information on how our system compares with other schools contact your counselor.

Many schools have "weighted grades" for honors, AP (Advanced Placement), and/or IB (International Baccalaureate) courses. If a school has weighted grades, then a grade in a weighted course is worth more than it is in a non-weighted course.

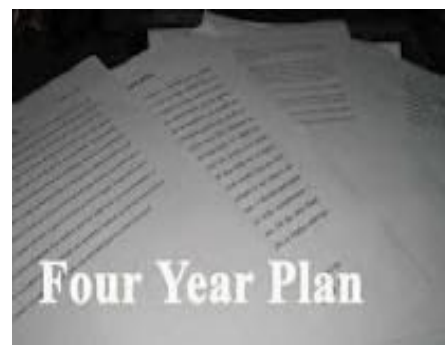
Class Rank



Westlake High school does not disclose the exact rank. In senior year, students are told of their decile rank. After 7 semesters, a Valedictorian and Salutatorian are chosen.

Four-Year High School Plan

A four-year high school plan is a listing of the specific courses a student plans to take during his/her freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior years. When making a four-year plan, it is important to consider graduation requirements, college recommended courses, and career goals. Students who want to play a sport in college also need to take college athletic eligibility requirements into consideration. Review and revise your child's four-year plan each year, making adjustments for academic performance, personal interests, revised career plans, and changes in curriculum offerings.



The best time to review and revise your child's four-year plan is when you are choosing courses for the following year. If you ever have a question or if you want to make sure that your child is taking the right courses, schedule an appointment with your child's counselor. Four-year plans are created in our ninth grade Guidance class. It is reviewed each year at our annual conference.



High School Transcript

A high school transcript is a document detailing a student's academic achievement in high school. A transcript is, quite simply, a copy of a student's high school record. Westlake High School transcripts contain the following information:

- Grades and credits for each course completed, beginning with grade 9 (in some cases grade 7/8)
- Community Service accomplishments
- Current cumulative GPA
- Anticipated graduation date
- New York State Regents exams

An official transcript has a signature, stamp or seal verifying its authenticity. An unofficial transcript is exactly the same as an official transcript, except that it has no signature, stamp or seal. Students can get an unofficial transcript (to check credits or to take on a college visit) by going to their guidance office.

Transcripts are used whenever a school, organization, or college needs an official copy of a student's academic record. For example, if a high school student transfers to a different school, the student's new high school will ask his/her previous school to send them an official transcript.

Colleges need to see an applicant's high school record in order to determine whether or not the student meets their admissions requirements. All colleges, therefore, require that a transcript be submitted with the student's application for admission. A transcript is also usually required when a student applies for a scholarship. The sample transcript on the following page will give you an idea of what a high school transcript might look like. (Due to space limitations, this transcript has been reduced).

STUDENT TRANSCRIPT

Student Name	
Grade	Gender
Date Of Birth	
Home Address	

Parent/Guardian: _____
 Counselor: _____
 Graduation Date: _____
 Diploma Type: Regents Diploma with Adv Designation

District Name: MtPleasant
 School Name/Address
 Westlake High School
 825 West Lake Drive
 Thornwood, NY 10594

Tel: (914) 769-8311

Fax: (914) 769-0596

CEEB: 335-563

Accreditation: NYS Board of Regents

Crs #	Course Name	Final Grade	Crdt	Ernd	Crs #	Course Name	Final Grade	Crdt	Ernd	Crs #	Course Name	Final Grade	Crdt	Ernd
WESTLAKE MIDDLE SCHOOL Grade 8					WESTLAKE HIGH SCHOOL Grade 10					Westlake High School Grade 12				
80010	SPANISH 1	84	1.00		601000	CHORUS	94	1.00		CS999992	COMMUNITY SERVICE	P	1.00	
341000	EARTH SCIENCE R	86	1.00		120000	ENGLISH 10H- PRE AP	89	1.00		EN149000	COLLEGE BND ENG.	85	1.00	
Weighted Average		85.00	2.00		80030	SPANISH 3	88	1.00		MA450000	STATISTICS	86	1.00	
WESTLAKE HIGH SCHOOL Grade 9					410010	GEOMETRY	75	1.00		HY243000	PSYCHOLOGY	90	0.50	
160010	THEATRE 1	99	0.50		321000	CHEMISTRY R	67	1.00		HY247000	ECONOMICS	90	0.50	
601000	CHORUS	94	1.00		221000	GLOBAL HIST. 2R	88	1.00		HY248090	AP GOVERNMENT	85	1.00	
111000	ENGLISH 9R	89	1.00		901500	HEALTH	89	0.50		MS601000	CHORUS	95	1.00	
80020	SPANISH 2	79	1.00		900101	PHYS. ED. FALL	89	0.25		MS602000	DEFENDERS	97	0.50	
400010	ALGEBRA	79	1.00		900102	PHYS. ED. SPRING	87	0.25		VA730020	PHOTO DESIGN 2	94	0.50	
311000	BIOLOGY R	80	1.00		Weighted Average		84.21	7.00		PE900201	PHYSICAL EDUC. FALL	94	0.25	
211000	GLOBAL HIST 1R	89	1.00		Westlake High School Grade 11					PE900202	PHYSICAL EDUC. SPRING	85	0.25	
900201	PHYS. ED. FALL	93	0.25		EN130001	AP LANGUAGE	95	1.00		Weighted Average		89.43	7.50	
900202	PHYS. ED. SPRING	96	0.25		FR080040	SPANISH 4	85	1.00		Summary				
Weighted Average		86.68	7.00		MA455010	ALGEBRA 2 & TRIG R	71	1.00		Total Credits Earned: 30.50				
					SC376000	ENV. SCIENCE	88	1.00		Cumulative Weighted Average: 87.02				
					HY231000	US HIST/GOV. R	96	1.00						
					MS601000	CHORUS	93	1.00						
					VA730010	PHOTO DESIGN 1	91	0.50						
					PE900101	PHYSICAL EDUC. FALL	90	0.25						
					PE900102	PHYSICAL EDUC. SPRING	96	0.25						
					Weighted Average		88.50	7.00						

Date	Assessment Test	Score
06/13/2007	Regents Phy Sci/Earth Sci	89
06/17/2008	Regents Integrated Algebra	82
06/17/2008	Regents Living Environment	82
06/16/2009	Regents Geometry	84
06/16/2009	Regents Global History	99
06/16/2009	Regents Phy Sci/Chemistry	75
06/16/2009	Regents Spanish	92
06/01/2010	Regents ELA	97
06/01/2010	Regents US History&Govt	97
06/15/2010	Regents Algebra2/Trigonometry	66
06/13/2007	SLP Spanish	86

Comments:

School Community Service 75 Hours

Honors and AP Semester and Final Course Averages are weighted .5% on Transcripts.
 Physical Education grades are included in the Cumulative Average.

Signature/School Counselor: _____

Date: _____

Help Your Child Succeed

High School students need their parents to be interested and involved in their academic progress. This section will go over several things that you can do to help your child succeed in school.



Provide a Good Place to Study

Students need a regular place to study that is quiet, well-lit, and comfortable. It should have a surface for writing and be equipped with paper, pencils, pens, calculator, dictionary, computer etc.

Help Your Child Set Academic Goals

At the beginning of each grading period, help your child determine what grade he/she should be able to earn in each course. Setting realistic goals will let your child know what your expectations are. Goals also give your child something positive to work towards.

Use Rewards and Consequences

Being offered a reward for a specific achievement can be very motivating for some students. Try using a reward when you want to encourage a change in attendance, effort, or behavior. Eventually, doing well will be its own reward. As for consequences, students need to understand that in school, and in life, there are consequences for poor performance and/or bad behavior. Consequences are most effective when they are reasonable and logical. For example, a reasonable and logical consequence for routinely being late to school might be a revised nighttime schedule (e.g., no TV, computer or phone calls after 9:30). For most students, a parent's approval is still very important. Make it a point to recognize extra effort and to acknowledge each academic success, even if it's just a good grade on a quiz.

Attend All Parent Programs

Our high school has an orientation and open house sometime during the start of the school year. These programs give parents the opportunity to see our school, meet their children's teachers, and learn something about the courses their children are taking. When you attend an orientation, open house, or parent meeting, you learn valuable information about our school. You also show your child that education is important and that you are interested in his/her academic progress. Our school also has numerous, grade-specific parent programs throughout the year. Please consult the school calendar or the Guidance Services Calendar for details.



Insist on Daily Attendance

When students miss school, they miss lectures, notes, class discussions, assignments, quizzes, and tests. It doesn't matter how conscientious students are about making up their work, they can never make up all of what they miss, even if they are absent for only a day or two. Parents, who allow their children to miss school on days when they are not ill, send a message that school is not really that important. If your child does not want to go to school, or if you are seeing a pattern of excuses to miss school, talk to your child or to your child's counselor.



See All Midterm Reports and Report Cards

In addition to report cards, our high school also provides students with progress reports. Expect to see a midterm report halfway through the year, and expect to see a report card within 7-10 days after the grading period ends. Our progress reports and report cards are uploaded to our parent portal, an online account specific to each parent/guardian. Make sure you are registered. *Do not just assume that someone will call you if there's a problem.* Many schools today put student grades online. This makes it easy for parents to monitor their child's academic progress. If your child's grades are available online, check them regularly.

Help with Time Management

Our high school students have a significant amount of homework. Many also have extracurricular activities, part-time jobs, and responsibilities at home. In order for high school students to keep up with their schoolwork, activities and other responsibilities, they need to develop good time-management skills. Talk to your child about the importance of having good time management skills, and encourage your child to use any "free time" during the school day to start on homework. Also encourage your child to get in the habit of creating a daily study plan. This study plan will, of course, vary from day to day depending on the time available and the amount of homework that needs to be done.



Deal Effectively with Homework



High school students must be responsible for keeping track of their assignments, completing their assignments accurately, and turning them in on time. Of course, not all students take this responsibility as seriously as they should. When students routinely don't do their homework parents often become frustrated and upset. While parents do not want to argue about homework, most parents do not feel that they can just stand by and do nothing. In these situations, it is possible for parents to unintentionally turn the completion of homework into their problem. If your child is not doing his/her homework, you first need to talk to your child to make sure that the homework is not too difficult, or that there isn't some other problem with the class. You then need to come up with a

plan in which the completion of homework becomes your child's responsibility, and if it is not completed, your child's problem. On the following page is an example of how one parent made the completion of homework the student's responsibility.

Jenna is a high school freshman who received a low midterm grade in her English class. Her father contacted her teacher and found out that Jenna had not turned in several of her homework assignments. Instead of getting angry, Jenna's father calmly explained to his daughter that she would be expected to turn in all future homework assignments. He then told her what the consequences would be if she missed another assignment.

Jenna's father explained that he would check back with her English teacher in two weeks. If he got a good report, he would check with her teacher again in another four weeks. If he found out that Jenna had missed one or more assignments, then she would have to face the consequences they discussed, and begin another two week period.

In this scenario, the responsibility for doing homework has been given to the student, where it belongs. Of course, for this approach to work, the father must follow through with contacting the teacher and, if necessary, impose the consequences (restrictions on watching TV, phone calls, social activities, etc.).

Students and situations are different, and parents must find their own way to deal with the issue of homework. Parents must, however, make homework their child's responsibility.

Listen



Talk to your child about what's happening in school and be a good listener. Pay attention not only to the words your child uses, but also to your child's body language, attitude, and mood. Parents who have a difficult time talking with their teenager often find that it is easier to talk when they are doing something they both enjoy. Make time for one-on-one activities like cooking, shopping, taking a walk, working on a car, or watching a game. These are great ways to spend quality time with your child, and they provide excellent opportunities for conversation.

Encourage Independent Problem Solving

Parents need to know what is going on at school, and they need to monitor their children's academic progress. It is, however, important for students to learn how to take care of their own affairs. Being able to get their own questions answered and their own problems resolved helps students gain confidence and become more independent. It also gives them a sense of empowerment. In high school, most problems can be resolved and most questions answered just by going to the right office or by talking to the right person. It is, of course, important for children to know that their parents are available if they ever need help.





Monitor Activities and Jobs

Make sure that your child isn't spending too much time watching TV, playing video games, instant messaging, and text messaging, or talking on the phone. If your child has a job, make sure that he/she is not working too many hours or working too late. While New York State has their own regulations, there are no federal regulations that limit the number of hours per day, or times of the day, that employees 16 years old and older can be required to work.

Encourage a Healthy Lifestyle

It is important for high school students to eat right, exercise, and get enough sleep. Have nutritious food at home and make sure that your child is physically active. Also, insist on a reasonable bedtime hour.



Encourage Positive Activities

High school students should take time to try new things, explore new interests, and find out what's important to them. Expose your child to different experiences, other cultures, and new activities. Most importantly, help your child find something to be excited and passionate about.

Be Aware and Be Informed

Many adolescents experiment with drinking and/or smoking. Unfortunately, drugs are also too easy for young people to obtain. Look for opportunities to discuss the dangers of drinking, smoking and using drugs. One conversation is not enough. While many parents do not completely understand the technology their children are using, all parents need to be aware of how, and for what purposes, their children are using their computers and cell phones. Monitor your child's Internet use and keep any computer with Internet access in a common space. Get to know your child's friends and know what your child is doing. If you have a feeling that your child is involved in an activity that's wrong or harmful, listen to your instincts and take action.



Set Limits and Boundaries

Adolescents need their parents to make rules and set limits. High school students also need to know that they will be held accountable for their actions and their behaviors. Even though young people often complain about parental rules and restrictions, knowing that they have a parent who cares enough to make sure they "stay on track" gives adolescents a much needed sense of security.

Be a Good Role Model

In today's world, children are barraged with messages from a variety of sources. The messages that children listen to the most, however, are the messages they get from their parents. Know that your words and actions have a tremendous influence on the way your child views the world and interacts with people.

SUMMARY

Help Your Child Succeed

- ✓ Provide a good place to study
- ✓ Help your child set academic goals
- ✓ Use rewards and consequences
- ✓ Attend all parent programs
- ✓ Insist on daily attendance
- ✓ See all midterm reports and report cards
- ✓ Help with time management
- ✓ Deal effectively with homework
- ✓ Listen
- ✓ Encourage independent problem solving
- ✓ Monitor activities and jobs
- ✓ Encourage a healthy lifestyle
- ✓ Encourage positive activities
- ✓ Be aware and be informed
- ✓ Set limits and boundaries
- ✓ Be a good role model

Work with Your School

Support and work with the administrators, teachers, and counselors at Westlake High School. Like you, we want your child to have a great high school experience.



Support Your Child's School

Children's attitudes about education and school are, to a great extent, determined by what their parents say and do. Your child needs to know that you support the teachers and the administrators at your school. Your child also needs to know that you consider education to be a top priority. You can best convey your interest in education and your support of your child's school by doing the following:

- Insist that your child be in school, on time, every day.
- Expect your child to work up to his/her potential.
- Show an interest in what your child is studying.
- Talk about the importance of getting a good education.
- Expect your child to follow the school rules.
- Attend all parent programs and parent-teacher conferences.
- Show consistent interest in your child's academic progress.



Communicate with Your School



It is much easier today for parents to stay informed and to communicate with school personnel. Schools have their own websites, and parents can often communicate with teachers and counselors via email. Don't hesitate to ask for information or help when you need it. If there is ever a situation (e.g., health problem, death in the family, divorce) that might affect your child's attitude or performance, tell your child's counselor or principal what's going on.

Work with the School to Resolve Problems

If your child complains about a class or teacher, ask your child to be specific about what the problem is. Listen closely, and try to objectively determine what is going on. While doing so, remember that part of your child's education is to learn how to succeed in subjects that he/she may not particularly enjoy. Also remember that it is important for high school students to learn how to adapt to different teachers, expectations, and teaching styles. If there is a problem with a specific class or teacher, first try to help your child figure out how to deal with the situation independently. If you feel that you need to intervene, contact the teacher and discuss your concerns with that teacher. If your child is having problems with several classes or problems adjusting to school, talk to your child's counselor.



Make the Most of Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences provide an excellent opportunity for parents to both give and receive information. Teachers are able to provide information on how a student is performing in a specific class, and parents can share information that will help teachers better understand their child. Before you go to a parent-teacher conference, make a list of the information you want to share, along with any questions or concerns you may have. Also, ask your child if there is anything you should talk to the teacher about. Sometimes it is helpful for students to also attend parent-teacher conference. This gives students an opportunity to be a part of the discussion.

On the following page are ten parent-teacher discussion topics, along with questions to ask. Focusing on these discussion topics and questions will help ensure that your parent-teacher conferences are meaningful and productive.



Parent-Teacher Conference

Discussion Topics and Questions

- Homework – Is my child's homework completed thoroughly, accurately, and on time?
- Class Participation – Does my child ask questions, volunteer answers, and participate in discussions?
- Organization – Does my child seem organized? Does he/she come to class prepared?
- Academic Success – How is my child doing in this class? Is my child working up to his/her potential? Is this class appropriate for my child's ability level?
- Classroom Time Management – Does my child use class time wisely?
- Attendance and Punctuality – Is my child in class every day? Does he/she come to class on time?
- Focus – Does my child pay attention in class?
- Social Adjustment – Is my child respectful and courteous to teachers and classmates? Does my child appear to get along with the other students?
- Strengths and Weaknesses – What are my child's strengths? What does he/she need to work on?
- Additional Comments – do you have any advice or suggestions for me or my child? What is the best way for me to contact you if I have any questions or concerns in the future?



Career and Educational Options



Choosing a career and figuring out how to prepare for that career can be difficult. Students need their parents to help them explore and evaluate their career and educational options.

Identify Abilities and Interests

As a parent, you know your child better than anyone. You can, therefore, be an invaluable resource in helping your child identify his/her strengths, and values. Try to help your child see how his/her personality traits and abilities can be valuable assets in the right career. Remember, there are many talents that are not measured in school (e.g., the ability to work with people, leadership abilities, and creativity).

Explore Career Options



Students can learn about various career fields by reading books and doing research, talking to people, and getting some firsthand experience. To help your child explore and learn about various careers, go to www.bls.gov/oco. This government website provides accurate, up-to-date information on hundreds of careers. Encourage your child to talk to people who work in various career fields. If possible, see if you can arrange for your child to job shadow someone for a day

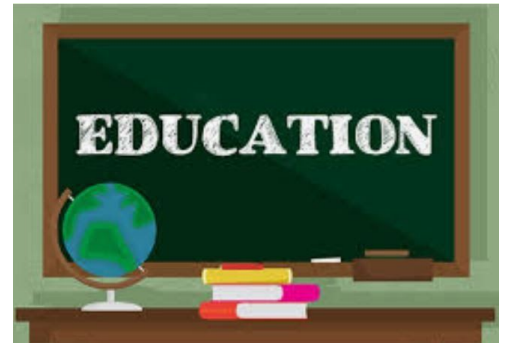
The best way for anyone to learn about a career is to get some firsthand experience by getting involved in a related activity, taking a related course, or getting a part-time job in a related career field. Volunteering for a community service organization is another excellent way for a student to learn about a career area. For information on planning and preparing for a career, go to our school's personalized Family Connection through Naviance account.

<http://connection.naviance.com/westlakehs>

Your child has been given a unique username and password. This program is web-based. It will be instrumental in your son or daughter's high school career; with features ranging from career research to college research, scholarship databases and student portfolios.

Discuss Educational Options

Most careers today require education and/or training beyond high school. While some careers require four years of college, others require just one year of additional education. A student's career choice will often determine which educational option is most appropriate. While there are many factors that determine the kinds of opportunities a student will have in life, the most significant determining factor is education. Make sure that your child understands the importance of doing well in school, and encourage your child to continue his/her education after high school. Help your student plan and prepare for the future by exploring the following six educational options.



Educational Options

- High School Career and Technology Program
- Four-Year College
- Community or Technical College
- Career or Trade School
- Military
- Apprenticeship



High School Career and Technology Program

Most high schools offer career and technology programs in a variety of career fields, (medical, computer technology, skilled trades, business, etc.). Students in career and technology programs spend much of their time “learning by doing.”

Students studying data processing work on computers, those studying early childhood education work with children, and those studying auto body repair work on cars. While students in these programs generally have the skills to obtain a job after graduation, almost two-thirds continue their education beyond high school. Career and technology programs are primarily available to high school juniors and seniors. If you think your child might do better in a more practical “hands on” program, or if your child has specific career goals, ask your child’s counselor for information on the career and technology programs available at your school. Southern Westchester BOCES is our provider for career and technical education. Students can enroll in these programs beginning in 11th grade.



Four-Year College

A four-year college education, or bachelor’s degree, can open doors and provide a wide range of career options and opportunities. Four-year colleges vary greatly in size, costs, admissions requirements, and in the majors they offer. All colleges and universities, however, want students who are ready for college-level work. It is therefore important that college bound students follow a college preparatory program in high school.



Community or Technical College



Community Colleges provide affordable, career-oriented programs that enable students to begin their careers after two years of college or less. Business, law enforcement, real estate, and engineering technology are just a few of the careers that students can prepare for by going to a community college. Students can also go to a community college for a year or two, and then transfer to a four-year college to earn a bachelor’s degree. Many states have state-supported technical

colleges. Like community colleges, they offer affordable, career-oriented programs, and many of their credits will transfer for a four-year college.

Career or Trade School

Career and trade schools offer short-term training programs in a wide variety of career fields (e.g., cosmetology, dental assisting, photography, welding). While some programs last only a few weeks, others take up to two years to complete. Career and trade schools can be expensive, and not all of them are reputable. It is, therefore, very important to check out the accreditation for any school you are considering. To find the career and trade schools in your area, go to <http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator> or search for “career schools” in your local yellow pages at www.yellowpages.com.



Military



The military trains young men and women so that they can serve and protect the interests of our country. The military offers qualified applicants a good salary and free job training. It also provides discipline and structure, as well as opportunities for career advancement and travel. In addition to the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines, there are opportunities in the Reserves and the National Guard. For information on military opportunities, obligations, and benefits, go to www.todaysmilitary.com.

Apprenticeship

Students who prefer a hands-on approach to learning may want to consider applying for an apprenticeship program. Apprentices learn a skilled trade (e.g., carpentry, welding, roofing, firefighting) through a combination of classroom instruction and on-the-job training. Most apprenticeship programs last four years. Because apprenticeship programs have a limited number of openings, they can be difficult to get into. For information on the apprenticeship programs in your area, go to www.doleta.gov or search for “apprenticeship training programs” in your local yellow pages at www.yellowpages.com.



College Information

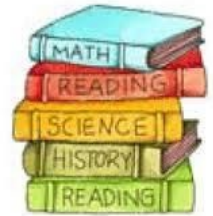


The following information will help you guide and advise your college bound student. To ensure that your child will be prepared for college, make sure that he/she takes the recommended courses, signs up for the right tests, and completes the necessary forms. Most importantly, encourage your child to do as well as possible in high school.

College Recommended Courses

Four-year colleges generally recommend that students take these college preparatory courses in high school.

- 4 years of English
- 3 years of math (including Algebra 1, Geometry, and Algebra 2) **[4 years is strongly encouraged]**
- 3 years of science (with laboratory experience)
- 2-3 years of the same foreign language
- 3 years of social studies **(4 is required by WHS)**
- 1 year of fine performing arts



College bound students should complete all of the above recommended courses, if possible. Students who have not taken all of these courses may be required to take remedial and/or additional courses once they are in college. Students who have not taken several of the above courses may want to consider starting at a community college or at a college's branch campus. These students can then transfer to a four-year college (or to the main campus) after a year or two.

Competitive schools and programs consider the above to be the minimum requirements. They recommend that students challenge themselves by taking advanced, honors, AP (Advanced Placement), and IB (international Baccalaureate) courses whenever possible. As a general rule, students should take as many college prep English, science, math, social studies, and foreign language courses as they can handle.

Admissions Criteria

Colleges use some, if not all, of the information listed below when determining whether or not to accept an applicant. Individual colleges however differ in how they evaluate this information. For example, one college may place a great deal of importance on test scores. Another college may focus more on other factors.

- Grade point average (GPA)
- Strength of subjects
- Standardized college entrance exam scores
- Class rank
- Recommendation Letters
- Special talents / awards
- Depth of extra-curricular activities
- Personal qualities
- Essays
- Interviews

Paying for College

For the 2019-2020 school year, most college costs fell with the ranges listed below. These figures include tuition, fees, room and board, and books for one year.

- Public Four-Year College (in-state) - \$18,000 - \$22,000
- Private Four-Year College - \$37,000 - \$52,500 (some exceeding \$70,000)
- Community College - \$5,000 - \$10,000

Parents who are saving money for their child's college education may want to consider investing in a 529 plan. While these plans vary from state to state, all provide tax benefits. For information, go to www.savingforcollege.com. Although college can be expensive, many students qualify for financial aid (grants, scholarships, work-study, loans). There are also a number of ways that students can make college more affordable. Students can go to a public college in their home state, live at home and commute, start at a community college, or take advantage of military educational programs. For information on how to pay for college, talk to your child's counselor or go to one of the websites listed on the following page, "College Information Websites."



College Timetable for Students

To ensure that your student will be prepared for college, encourage your child to follow the timetable below:



9th Grade – Get your high school education off to a good start by taking college prep courses, earning the best grades possible, and getting involved in a variety of activities. Make a four-year high school plan that includes all of the recommended college prep courses. Utilize the Guidance class to help set the stage for the next four years.

10th Grade – Continue taking college prep courses and getting the best grades possible. Also, consider taking the PSAT in October. This practice test for the SAT is primarily for juniors, but many sophomores take it also. See your counselor for information on these tests. Sophomores will meet with the counseling staff for a career conference where they will take a career interest survey.



11th Grade – Take the PSAT in October. Start gathering information on colleges, make college visits, and take the ACT and/or SAT in the spring. Most four-year colleges require that students submit scores from one of these tests. Juniors will meet with their counselor in the middle of the year for their Junior conference, a meeting that explores every option for developing a plan for after high school. Juniors will also take part in college tours and college preparation workshops.

12th Grade – In the fall, take the ACT and/or SAT, if necessary. Discuss your college plans with your counselor and complete college applications. If you are interested in financial aid, complete the FAFSA after October 1st. Seniors meet with their counselor constantly to refine and follow through on their post high school plan. Workshops and college related events take place throughout the first semester. In the spring, consider your college options and make a decision.



College Information Websites

Below are some of the best and most popular college websites. They all have excellent information.

<http://connection.naviance.com/westlakehs>

www.act.org

www.collegeboard.com

<http://studentaid.ed.gov>

www.educationplanner.com

www.finaid.org

www.petersons.com

Information for the Parents of Athletes



Playing a sport in high school requires time, energy and commitment. The following tips will help ensure that your high school athlete has a great season.

Through athletics, students strengthen their bodies and perfect their skills. They learn how to win, how to lose, and how to be part of a team. Athletes learn discipline, and they develop new and lasting friendships. They also have a lot of fun.



Be Aware of Athletic Eligibility

Most high schools have eligibility requirements for athletes. Athletes may for example, be required to maintain a minimum GPA in a certain number of classes. If you have questions about eligibility, talk to a counselor, principal, coach or athletic director.

Be Involved

Many coaches have preseason meetings for the parents of their athletes. These meetings are usually very informative. They also give parents an opportunity to meet the coaching staff and a chance to get to know each other. If your child's coach has a parent meeting, be sure to attend. Many schools also have parent groups or booster organizations that support the athletic teams. If possible, become involved in your school's parent organization.



Show Good Sportsmanship

High school sporting events can be very exciting, and it is easy for players and fans to get caught up in the action. As the parent of an athlete, you must always set a good example. Support the coaches and players at all times, win or lose.

Playing a Sport in College

Colleges belong to associations, and these associations have specific academic requirements that all athletes must meet before they can play a sport in college. For information on NCAA Eligibility requirements, go to www.eligibilitycenter.org. Students who are thinking of playing a sport in college should talk to their counselor to make sure that they are taking the right courses. They should also register with the NCAA Eligibility Center at the beginning of their junior year.



Discuss the Dangers of Steroids

In recent years, a number of athletes have chosen to use steroids to build muscle and gain strength. Steroids are illegal, and they can cause liver damage, heart damage, and sterility. If your child wants to put on weight and/or muscle, talk to the trainer about diet and exercise options.



Monitor Academic Progress

A coach's job is to develop athletes and to win as many games, events, or matches as possible. As a parent, it is your job to monitor your child's academic progress and to encourage your child to be successful in the classroom.

Support Your Athlete

The best way to help your athlete is to provide encouragement and to be positive, both at home and in the stands. If your child has a problem at any time during the season, encourage your child to talk to the coach. If the problem is not resolved, or if it is of a serious nature, make an appointment to talk to the coach yourself.



Parenting Tips

Help your Child Thrive and Grow

Helping your child thrive and grow does not involve doing extraordinary things. It is the little things you do every day that provide the guidance and support your child needs. Use these tips to help your child thrive and grow.



Parenting Tips

- Spend one-on-one time with your child doing something you both enjoy.
- Encourage a healthy lifestyle. Have nutritious food at home, insist on a reasonable bedtime hour, and make sure that your child does something physical on a regular basis.
- Get to know your child's friends.
- Help your child regularly set short-term and long-term goals.
- If your child is involved in athletics, theatre, band, or orchestra, go to every game or performance. Cheer loudly.
- Help your child explore various career and educational options. Encourage your child to continue his/her education after high school.
- Make sure that your child knows basic social behaviors (e.g., writing thank you notes, phone etiquette, having a firm handshake).
- Help your child choose clothes that adhere to your school's dress code, and that are in style and flattering. Talk about personal hygiene and grooming.
- If your child has a job, make sure that he/she isn't working too many hours or working too late.
- Pay attention to your child's moods, sleeping patterns, and eating habits. These can be good indicators of how things are going at school and with friends.
- Teach financial responsibility. Help your child learn how to manage money.
- Help your child develop interests and hobbies. Find something that your child excels at and has a passion for.

Communication Tips

- Discuss serious topics and encourage your child to express his/her opinions. Show respect for your child's ideas.
- Ask open-ended questions that require more than one-word answers. Instead of, *"How was school?"* say, *"Tell me about your day."*
- Talk to your child about the dangers of alcohol, drugs, and smoking. Make sure that your child knows where you stand on these issues.
- Be very specific in your communication. Instead of saying, *"Be home early"* say, *"Be home by 9:00."*
- If your child talks to you about a problem, do not feel that you have to fix it. Often, young people just want someone to listen. Be available to listen when your child wants to talk.
- Tell your child that you can always be used as an excuse if he/she is in an uncomfortable situation. (*"I can't do that."* *"I really need to get home."*)
- Eat dinner as a family as often as possible. Turn off the TV and talk about your day.
- Tell family stories. Hearing family stories gives children a sense of belonging.

Guidance and Discipline Tips

- Understand the technology your child uses and know where your child goes online.
- Use rewards and consequences to encourage a change in behavior.
- Try to use consequences that are logical and reasonable. For example, the consequence for abusing a privilege might be to have that privilege taken away for a period of time.
- Know what kinds of music your child listens to and what videos and TV shows your child watches. Provide guidelines and set limits.
- If your child has done something wrong, focus on the behavior not the person. Good kids sometimes make bad choices.
- Be aware of how, and for what purposes, your child is using his/her computer and cell phone.
- If you have a feeling that your child is involved in an activity that is wrong or harmful, listen to your instincts.

- Give your child a little more freedom each year.
- Never use physical punishment, and never take away a positive activity (e.g. sports, choir, or scouting) as a punishment.
- When your child leaves the house, know who your child is going to be with, where they are going, and what they will be doing. Have your child check in periodically. Don't assume what they say is the truth.

Additional Parenting Tips

- Give your child space, and respect your child's privacy.
- Expect your child to contribute to the running of the household. All children should have household responsibilities.
- Be a parent. Your child has friends. Your child needs you to be a parent.
- Keep your sense of humor.
- Do not be afraid to apologize or to admit you were wrong. Children need to know that it is okay to make mistakes.
- Celebrate the things that make your child unique.
- Provide a stable home environment.
- Encourage independent problem solving. When children learn how to solve their own problems, they become more confident.
- Be a good role model. Children learn their behaviors and attitudes from their parents more than from anyone else.

Information in this packet obtained through the efforts of the WHS School Counseling & Guidance Department in conjunction with Woodburn Press, High School Parent Guidebook.