



# ZHS COUNSELING OFFICE 11<sup>TH</sup> GRADE NEWSLETTER



September/October

## **ZHS Graduation Requirements and the Michigan Merit Curriculum** **- An Overview**



To prepare Michigan's students with the knowledge and skills needed for jobs in the 21st century, the State of Michigan has enacted a set of statewide graduation requirements. In order to graduate from Zeeland East High School, a student must accumulate 22 credits. One semester class is equivalent to a half credit. Simply put, this "allows" for a total of four semester class failures in a student's high school career (please keep in mind that colleges review a student's record and class failures will not be looked up favorably). Classes required for graduation include:

- 4 years of English
- 4 years of Math (Geometry, Algebra 1, Algebra 2, and a math-related class in the senior year)
- 3 years of Social Studies (Civics/Economics, American History, and World History)
- 3 years of Science (Biology, either Chemistry or Physics, and a science elective)
- 1 year of Physical Education/Health
- 1 year of Applied, Performing, or Visual Art
- 2 years of World Language

Students who do not pass the above graduation requirements will be off track to graduate and may be required to take credit recovery courses outside of the normal school day. Please keep in mind that there are financial costs involved with taking these courses.

There are very limited modifications that can be made to the above required curriculum. Through a personal curriculum (PC), students may choose to forego their P.E. elective (this does not include P.E. 9/Health) or their Performing, Visual, or Applied Arts requirement if they take a 3<sup>rd</sup> year of a world language or an additional English, math, or science credit (full year).

Also, students may opt to waive their 2<sup>nd</sup> year World Language requirement by taking an additional credit of Applied, Performing, or Visual Art. Please see your counselor for more information.

### **College Representative Visits to ZHS**

Each fall, representatives from universities, colleges, and the military visit both Zeeland East and West High Schools. Click [here](#) to see a complete list of visits (please check back regularly, as the list is continuously added to). Students can sign up to attend any of these visits by clicking [here](#). Visits will take place during the lunch hours (students are welcome to bring their lunch to meet with the reps). Students of all grades are encouraged to attend, especially juniors and seniors. This is a great way to learn more about a multitude of post-secondary options without having to leave the high school campus!

# **College Fairs and Campus Visits**

For students planning to attend college, the junior year is where “the rubber hits the road.” College fairs and campus visits are two very important methods of obtaining information about a particular college. Below are some recommendations to help students prepare for each as well as a listing of upcoming local fairs that are worthwhile attending.

## **College Fair Tips**

College fairs are an all-inclusive way to find out about colleges of interest because a variety of college representatives are gathered together in one place. Thus, students and parents can interact face-to-face with multiple admissions officers all in one location. Use these tips to make the most of the college fair experience.

### **Before the Fair...**

Answer the following questions to help determine what kind of school would be best for you:

- Do you want to attend a two- or four-year institution? Co-ed or single sex?
  - What size school do you want to attend?
  - What programs of study are you considering?
  - How far from home do you want to go?
  - Do you wish to participate in any specific extra-curricular activities or athletics?
  - Do you want to attend a school in an urban, suburban or rural environment?
  - Do you require any special services (i.e. tutoring, note takers, readers)?
1. Discuss your college plans with your guidance counselor, family, teachers and friends.
  2. Research your colleges of interest on the Internet.
  3. Check dates and registration deadlines for college entrance examinations.
  4. Register online before heading to the fair! (helpful but not required)

### **At the Fair...**

1. Pick up a bag and a fair directory.
2. Visit with colleges and universities which you feel meet your criteria.
3. Talk with a college counselor at the Counseling Center if you have any questions or need help with your college search.
4. Attend a workshop.

### **After the Fair...**

1. Determine which schools are the best “fit” for you and research their admissions criteria
2. Arrange a college visit when possible.
3. Make contact with your preferred college admissions offices to request additional information or address any questions you may have.

*\*Information taken from nacacnet.org and afterschoolmatters.org*

## **BE SURE TO PUT ONE OF THE FOLLOWING LOCAL COLLEGE FAIRS ON YOUR CALENDAR!**

- Hope College will be hosting an area-wide college fair on **Thursday, September 29 from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.** at the DeVos Fieldhouse. Over 80 colleges were represented last year. More info available at <http://hollandareacollegenight.com/>.
- Aquinas College will be hosting a fair on **Thursday, October 20 from 6:00 to 7:30.** More info available at [http://www.aquinas.edu/undergraduate/college\\_night\\_aq.html](http://www.aquinas.edu/undergraduate/college_night_aq.html).
- The annual **West Michigan National College Fair** will be held in the spring - **Tuesday, March 28.** Typically, over 125 colleges are represented. More information about the event can be found at <http://www.nacacnet.org/college-fairs> as the date gets closer.

## **The Campus Visit**

The campus visit is a crucial part of the college decision process. It is a time to ask questions, take a tour, sit in on classes, and obtain an overall perspective of the college's atmosphere. Visiting different colleges will give you and your student a better understanding of which college is the right fit. Setting up a campus visit is a fairly painless process. Most all colleges allow you to sign up for a visit on their website or by calling the admissions office. **It is highly recommended that students and parents visit colleges sometime during the junior year, so enough time is given to make informed decisions regarding the best choice school for the student.**

Since a student and his/her parents may have various questions about the campus visit, the following should help when a trip is made to a particular school.

### **How should you prepare for the visit?**

Before visiting a college campus, your student should do a little research on the college. He/she should look through brochures and view the college's website to find out basic information. This will give more time on the tour to find out information that is not found in the printed material. A campus visit should be scheduled at least two weeks before you plan to make the trip.

### **What should you bring along?**

There are several items that should be brought along in order to make the campus visit a success. Be sure to bring comfortable walking shoes since you will actually be taking a tour of the campus. Students will also want to bring a journal so they can write down any notes that will help remember the college. Since you may be seeing a lot of campuses, this journal will come in handy if any details about certain colleges are forgotten. Pictures will also help remember particular details about colleges so be sure to pack a camera or cell phone with camera. This will allow you to look back at pictures that can't be found on the college's website or in the brochures.

### **Who should you talk to?**

Try to meet with various members of the campus community. You will definitely want to meet with an admissions officer to discuss the school's requirements, deadlines, and financial aid programs. If possible, try talking to some professors to get a feel of what they expect out of a student. All professors are different so try to talk to as many as you can; you may even want to sit in on some of their classes to obtain a good perspective. Don't be afraid to go up to current students and start a conversation. Find out what they think about the college as a whole. Ask if they are happy with the college choice that they made. Since students are not employed by the college, they will not give you biased answers.

### **What questions should you ask?**

Now that you know who to talk to, you may be wondering what questions you should ask these people. You

will want to ask a variety of questions so you will go home with enough information to help make a decision on where to attend. Use the following questions as a guideline, and if you think of any more, be sure to ask.

### **Academic Aspects**

- What academic factors are considered during the admissions process?
- What is the average class size?
- Are professors accessible outside of class?
- What is the typical way to get in touch with a professor? Email? Phone call?
- Do you usually get in all the classes that you need to register for?
- On average, do professors or graduate students teach freshmen level classes?
- Are there academic scholarships available through the school?
- Are there tutoring services available on campus?
- What are the college's most popular academic programs?
- What is the grading system like at this college?
- What is the attendance policy?

### **Financial Aspects**

- What is the cost of attendance?
- If you have financial need, will you be able to get a financial aid package that meets all of your demonstrated need?
- What percentage of students receive financial aid?
- Are there work-study jobs available on campus? Off campus?
- If you don't qualify for work-study, what other jobs are available near campus that you could apply for?

### **Housing/Food Aspects**

- Are you required to live on campus your first year?
- What percentage of students live on campus all four years? Are the dorms single sex or coed?
- Are there community baths in the dorms?
- What are the rules for students living in dorms?
- Do the dorms have laundry facilities?
- Do the dorms have computer labs?
- What types of meal plans are available?
- What hours may students access food services?
- How many restaurants/cafes are on campus?

### **Social Aspects**

- How do students spend their free time?
- What are the most popular extra-curricular activities?
- What do most students do on the weekends? Stay on campus? Go home?
- Are there sororities and fraternities on campus? How many students participate in Greek life?

### **Community/Transportation Aspects**

- Do you like the surrounding city or town?
- Is the city or town big enough for your taste? Does it have a variety of restaurants, museums, parks, and movie theaters?
- Is the city or town small enough for your taste? Is it rural and peaceful?
- Will you have to have a car to live on campus? Can you walk to most restaurants, theaters, etc.?
- What is the city's public transportation system like?

## **Athletic Aspects**

- Are there athletic scholarships available?
- What sports are played at the school?
- Do athletes have to miss a lot of classes in order to participate in games?
- Do athletes have their own dorms?

## **Safety Aspects**

- How safe is the campus? How often are crimes reported?
- How are safety issues addressed?
- Is the campus well lit?
- Are there emergency phones on campus?
- Is there a pick-up service for students walking at night?

## **What if you can't visit?**

There are always circumstances in which a student cannot visit a college campus in person. If someone is unable to make a campus visit but is still interested in finding out about the college, there are several options. A student can call the school's admissions office to ask any questions he/she may have. Many college representatives travel to interview students in the geographical area assigned to them. Ask the college's admission officer if he/she can arrange someone to contact you. Also, students may be able to talk with recent graduates or current students from the area. Ask the college's admission office if the school is able to arrange such a meeting. Finally, a student can always take a virtual tour of the school. This option is available on many college web sites.

*\*Information taken from ecampustours.com*

## **The PSAT**

On October 19, some of our juniors will participate in the PSAT. The Preliminary SAT<sup>®</sup>/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) is a co-sponsored program by the College Board and National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC). It's a standardized test that provides firsthand practice for the SAT Reasoning Test that all students will take in the spring of the junior year as part of the Michigan Merit Exam and for college admission. It also gives students a chance to enter NMSC scholarship programs.

The most common reason students at Zeeland take the PSAT/NMSQT is to enter the competition for scholarships from the National Merit Scholarship Corporation. Only the top 1-2% of all test takers qualify for recognition. More information about the PSAT, as well as practice tests, can be found at <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/psat-nmsqt-psat-10>. Students registered for this test last May.

## **College/Career Planning Timeline – the Junior Year**

### **FALL**

- ❖ Ensure you have registered for classes that best prepare for your post-high school plans. Colleges factor in strength of schedule in addition to GPA, standardized test scores, etc.
- ❖ Take the optional PSAT/NMSQT. This is a “pre-SAT” test offered to high school juniors that provides practice for the PSAT that all juniors will take in the spring. Additionally, it is a qualifying test for students to enter into the National Merit Scholarship competition. Students taking the test had to sign up last spring.
- ❖ Students will meet one-on-one with counselors for their “junior interview”. This is an opportunity for students to review graduation requirements, post-secondary planning, and the junior year in general.

- ❖ Meet with college representatives that visit Zeeland High School. Each fall numerous colleges and universities send admissions officers to high schools to meet with students, provide information about their college, and answer questions students have. This is a fantastic opportunity for students to begin the college search process, if they have not already done so. Information is posted in the announcements. All students need to do is sign up in the counseling office to attend.
- ❖ Try to attend at least one college fair this year. Information about opportunities is available earlier in the newsletter.

## WINTER

- ❖ Attend the College Planning Night hosted by our Counseling Office staff to learn more about the college planning process and answer questions.
- ❖ Students meet with counselors to schedule classes for senior year. It is highly recommended that college-bound students take the following courses, at minimum:
  - Math – 4 years
  - English – 4 years
  - Science – 3-4 years
  - Social Studies – 3-4 years
  - Foreign Language – 2-3 years of the same language
- ❖ Juniors should start preparing for the M-Step. This is a State-mandated test given in April of the junior year. More specific information about the test will be provided in an upcoming newsletter. One way students can prepare is by using Khan Academy, a free online test preparation program. Instructions for registration and usage will be available in an upcoming newsletter.
- ❖ Register for AP exams if taking AP classes.
- ❖ If students have not done so already, they should begin the process of visiting colleges of interest. A campus visit is one of the best ways a family can gain insight as to whether or not a school is a good fit for their student. Most campus visits can be arranged by visiting a college's website, finding the admissions page, and completing an online visit request form. More information about the visitation process will be provided in a future newsletter.

## SPRING/SUMMER

- ❖ Attend the West Michigan College Fair at DeVos Place in Grand Rapids. MANY colleges will be represented and there will also be a variety of information presentations concerning the college planning process (ex. financial aid, college applications, etc.). Admission is FREE!
- ❖ Students can retake the SAT if desired and/or take the ACT.
- ❖ Begin calculating college costs. Here are a few websites that can assist in this process:
  - <http://collegecost.ed.gov/netpricecenter.aspx>
  - <http://www.finaid.org/calculators>
- ❖ Begin conducting scholarship searches, if not being done already. FastWeb (<http://www.fastweb.com>) and BigFuture (<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/>) are good sources. It is wise to establish a new e-mail account set aside strictly for college planning, as it can avoid a lot of junk e-mail to your regular account and can be closed once the college and scholarship search process is complete.
- ❖ Student-athletes who will be participating in NCAA Division 1 or 2 athletics will be required to register with the NCAA Eligibility Center after the junior year is complete. Likewise, students who plan to participate in athletics at colleges that are part of the NAIA will need to register with their association. More information is available at <http://www.eligibilitycenter.org> and <http://www.playnaia.org>.

## **Counseling Office Website and Facebook Page**

Please visit <http://counseling.zps.org> to explore the counseling office website. There is a wealth of information concerning high school and post-high planning. We also post pertinent information on our Facebook page. Search for “Zeeland High School Counseling Office” and like us!