



December

The Academic Record

Throughout high school, you will come across many different terms that you may or may not be familiar with. Listed below are some common terms that all students and parents should understand:

Credit

“Credit” is given to students for successful completion of a course. Each semester course at Zeeland High School is worth a half credit. In addition to taking and passing the courses required by the Michigan Merit Curriculum and Zeeland High School, students must obtain a certain number of credits. This number is 22 (it may be altered for students who have not spent all four years of high school at Zeeland). If students fail too many classes, they may become off-track to graduate and may have to take part in credit recovery programs such as summer school or online courses. These come at a cost, generally about \$150 per half credit.

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 student’s GPA is simply the average of the student’s semester grades, starting with his/her freshman year. Because GPA is one factor in college admission, it is important that students who are planning to attend college work hard in their classes.

Zeeland uses a 4.0 scale, in which an A=4.0, B=3.0, C=2.0, and D=1.0. Students with all A’s, for example, have a 4.0 GPA. Students who have Bs in half of their courses and Cs in the other half have a 2.5 GPA.

Zeeland does “weight” grades in Advanced Placement classes only. Because of this, a grade in an AP course is worth more than in a non-weighted course, as Advanced Placement classes are weighted on a 5.0 scale (A=5.0, B=4.0, C=3.0, D=2.0).

- **Term GPA** – the grade point average for a particular semester or marking period
- **Cumulative GPA** – a student’s overall grade point average, from grades 9-12

Class Rank

Many high schools use class rank to show where a student stands in relation to the other members of his/her graduating class. Zeeland ranks students in “deciles,” meaning, students are ranked based on the percent they fall from the top of the class. For example, a student who is in the top 20th percentile has a GPA that is in the top 20% of his/her class. Like GPA, class rank is another factor that colleges use in the college admissions process.

High School Transcript

A high school transcript is a document that details a student’s academic achievement in high school. A transcript is simply a copy of a student’s high school record. Although the appearance of the transcript varies from school to school, high school transcripts generally contain the following information:

1. grades and credits for each high school course completed (based on semester grades only)
2. attendance records
3. current cumulative GPA

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. You can request an unofficial copy of a transcript (to check credits, take on a college visit, etc.) by contacting your counselor.

Transcripts are used whenever a school, organization, or college needs an official copy of a student's academic record. For example, if a student were to transfer to another high school, the new high school would ask the student's previous school to send them an official transcript.

In order to determine whether or not a student meets their admissions criteria, college admissions officers need to have a record of an applicant's courses, grades, test scores, and GPA. Most colleges, therefore, require that an official transcript be submitted along with a student's application for admission. A transcript is also usually required when a student applies for a scholarship.

Report Cards

Report cards are grade reports issued four times a year at the end of each marking period. The marking period grades, combined with the semester exam, factor into the overall semester grade. Only the semester grades are recorded on the student's permanent transcript record.

Report cards are not mailed home, but are available online through Parent Portal.

Progress Reports

Progress reports are reports generated at the mid-point of each marking period, providing parents and students a look at "in progress" grades in each class. Just like report cards, progress reports are available online.

Parent Portal

Parent Portal is an online tracking tool for parents to monitor their son/daughter's academic progress at Zeeland High School via the Internet. With a password, parents are able to access their child's class schedule, grades, discipline history, report cards, and other information. Please contact the main office if you do not have access to Parent Portal but would like it.

Electives

Electives are courses not specifically required by Zeeland but offered to fulfill the 22 credits needed for graduation. Examples may include: Beginning Woods, Aerobics, Choir, Psychology, just to name a few.

PSAT 9

The Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) is a test that provides first-hand practice for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) that all high school students take in the spring of the junior year as part of the state-mandated Michigan Merit Exam (MME). The SAT is an important college admission test, and because of this, students at Zeeland High School participate in practice tests to prepare for it. In the spring of the freshman year, students take the PSAT 9. Additional practice opportunities will be given to students in both 10th and 11th grade.

**Some information adapted from "How to Get the Most out of High School."*