



September

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



Back in 2007, the State of Michigan enacted a set of statewide graduation requirements, known as the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC). In order to graduate from Zeeland East or West 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, United States 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 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 and to sign up (please check back regularly, as the list is continuously added to). The form is also available from our counseling office website under the “College and Careers” tab. Students of all grades are welcome and encouraged to attend, especially juniors! 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**

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](http://nacacnet.org) and [afterschoolmatters.org](http://afterschoolmatters.org)*

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

- Cornerstone University will be hosting the annual Grand Rapids Christian College Fair on **Monday, September 18 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.** More information is available at <http://www.naccap.org/events/EventDetails.aspx?id=955514&group=>.
- Hope College will be hosting an area-wide college fair on **Thursday, October 5 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 **Tuesday, October 24 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 27.** 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 PSAT**

On **October 11**, 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 and will be individually contacted regarding specific details for test day.

## **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.
- ❖ The counseling staff will host a junior meeting on **October 13** to discuss the important things that juniors need to do this school year.
- ❖ 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 Michigan Merit Exam (MME). 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!