



GENOA AREA HIGH SCHOOL GUIDANCE DEPARTMENT

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Guidance Newsletter: September

Dear Freshman Students and Parents,

As we begin to settle into this important year of your child's academic career, we encourage you to read this newsletter with an eye on the present and a view toward the future. As a subset of the Guidance role, I begin working directly with students and parents regarding postsecondary issues during junior year. However, I am writing this newsletter to encourage students to consider a four-year plan for their high school careers. Starting in freshman year we work with the students either individually or in small groups to talk about the transition to high school, course selection, and any issues regarding their personal and academic progress. We may also serve as helpful resources for students to look more closely at their interests, strengths, and needs. In assessing a student's application, colleges look at three distinct areas: the academic profile, the personal side of the student (including how a student spends his/her out of class time), and standardized testing. The four years at Genoa High School are ones in which young people grow in numerous ways and during which needs and interests change. The high school curriculum is designed to help address these changes and to incorporate the value of academic work with social and community service. Active involvement in all aspects is important since each has its own merit. Therefore, I hope that students look at their high school program in light of all areas and plan accordingly.

This newsletter contains helpful information about the following topics:

1. Academic opportunities at Genoa High School.
2. The role and timing of standardized testing
3. Extracurricular Opportunities and Community Service
4. How the various factors play a role in college admissions.

In conclusion, I look forward to working with you throughout high school. I trust that you will find this information helpful as you venture into the postsecondary process.

Sincerely yours,

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HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL

Looking ahead to see where we are going is important at all times. We do not want to trip over an unforeseen obstacle or miss a crucial turn in the road because we were not paying attention. Most of the time we do this automatically and without much thinking. High school is a journey from one place to another place. We need to look at the road ahead, see what different routes we could take, and where they might lead. Fortunately, high school contains many more opportunities than obstacles. Among the opportunities that the high school years offer are academic opportunities and extracurricular opportunities.

1. ACADEMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Academic planning insures that students and parents will be aware of the choices open to them and where those choices would take a student in subsequent years. A four-year academic plan for high school which is re-evaluated and updated annually is the best guarantee that each student will obtain the best classroom education possible. You should take the time to put together your four-year plan. A longrange view means looking at current classes as stepping-stones to what a student might take or be eligible for next year or the year after that.

Although Genoa High School requires all students to fulfill a core curriculum, this requirement still leaves open many choices. A review of the Student Handbook will show that students must have certain minimum numbers of classes in English, math, science, social studies, the arts, health, physical education, as well as electives. These core requirements leave open questions such as the level (standard or honors) at which each subject should be taken, the number of years beyond the minimum that would be advisable, and which electives make the most sense.

If a student has a career goal in mind, it is crucial to make sure that the program of studies that he or she is taking actually leads to that career goal. For example, a student interested in architecture who only took drafting classes as electives would not be in a strong position for acceptance into many architectural programs which want to see a portfolio of drawings from an art class. In a similar vein many business programs require that students be prepared to take Calculus the day they start their college program. If an applicant is not prepared to start Calculus, then it is highly likely he or she will not be accepted into that program at that college. Health careers constitute an area of tremendous job growth. Within the health field, interest in physical therapy as a career is especially strong. Thus, competition for acceptance into this major is keen. Students must have a strong science program in high school that includes Physics as a prerequisite for serious consideration for acceptance into the physical therapy program of a number of colleges.

Most students, however, do not know with any degree of certainty what they want to do after high school or change their mind several times about career goals and aspirations. Only a distinct minority of students will go on to do after high school exactly what they thought they would do. Even for these students it is impossible to know in advance who they will be. With this as a background, what guidelines can parents and students follow in examining academic options?



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- A. Plan a high school program that preserves choice after graduation. Your plan will vary depending on the competitive level of the schools you want to attend after finishing high school.
- B. Take the most challenging academic program of which you are capable and in which you will be successful. It will help you to stretch and grow.
- C. Consult with your Guidance Counselor to adjust your four-year academic plan as necessary based on new information, goals, and interests.

2. STANDARDIZED TESTING

During the course of high school, students will take some or all of the following tests: the PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test), the ACT – which is the test most often taken by Genoa students who are college bound (more information may be found on the website (<http://www.actstudent.org/index.html>) or the SAT – this test is often not taken by our students – but it is an option.

The PSAT/NMSQT is taken in October of Sophomore Year. Its purpose is twofold. First of all, it familiarizes students with the kinds of questions (verbal, mathematical, and writing) that students will find on the SAT. Secondly, students can qualify for scholarships that use the results of the PSAT/NMSQT such as the National Merit Scholarship, the National Achievement Scholarships for Outstanding Negro Students, and the National Hispanic Scholars Awards. Only the top half of the top one percent of PSAT takers goes on to be named National Merit Semifinalists. In other words, for the vast majority of students, the PSAT is exclusively a preview of and a practice for standardized college entrance testing. The best way for students to prepare for the PSAT is to take a good selection of solid academic courses, read widely, work hard in their studies, and take a practice test. In addition, when students register for the PSAT, they receive a booklet with test taking tips, sample questions, and a practice test.

The ACT is a standardized exam that measures your knowledge and skills in English, Mathematics, Reading and Science. It also measures your educational development (abilities) and identifies academic strengths and weaknesses. **ALL COLLEGE-BOUND STUDENTS SHOULD HAVE TAKEN THE ACT AT LEAST ONCE BY THE FALL OF THEIR SENIOR YEAR.** For specific information on the ACT, including testing dates, registration, and practice testing, visit www.actstudent.org. To register you will need GHS Code: 362285

Standardized Testing and the Learning Disabled Student

Students who are on an Individual Education Plan, a 504 Plan, or have documentation from a recognized professional outside the school system detailing their need for accommodations may qualify for accommodations on standardized tests such as ACT. These students should see the counselor as soon as possible to apply for any accommodations. An eligibility form must be submitted to the testing agency for approval.

3. EXTRACURRICULAR OPPORTUNITIES

Academics, even with all their importance, are only a part and not the whole of the high school years. The opportunities for growth outside the classroom are tremendously varied. Extra-curricular activities can tap parts of the personality that the regular classroom never touches or they can enable a student to pursue in depth an interest originally sparked by a classroom topic. Through extracurricular activities, students can follow up on an already existing interest, open up new interest areas, and find new friends.



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For many students, the growth in self-confidence that they experience while in high school can clearly be attributed to involvement in an extracurricular activity. Extracurricular activities require students to be doers rather than receivers. The personal qualities and characteristics developed in such activities can be long lasting and have a direct connection to the kind of personal and interpersonal attributes essential to success later in life.

Extracurricular activities can be school sponsored or entirely separate from school. Furthermore, to take full advantage of the opportunities available requires looking not only at the school year but also the summertime. Some examples are in order:

The Arts

First and foremost the arts are not extracurricular but central to becoming a truly educated person. However, for the student who wants to go beyond what is required, there are lots of options. School sponsored theater productions offer not only acting roles, but also openings for set design and construction, stage crew, lighting, publicity, ticket sales, etc. Additionally, we are lucky enough to have fantastic art, choir, and band programs. There are also numerous opportunities to engage in the arts outside of the school sponsored activities – students just need do a little digging – but good options are – The Genoa Civic Theatre, The Toledo Museum of Art, local vocal and instrument teachers.

Athletics

Sports can be individually oriented, such as golf and track, or team oriented, such as soccer, football, basketball, etc. Sports provide important physical outlets for students. Competition, cooperation, stamina, perseverance, leadership are all fostered by sports. During the season students are challenged to manage their time well so that they can balance their academic and athletic commitments. While athletics may not be for everyone, there is a wide enough array to be appealing to many students.

Community Service

Students looking for community service opportunities should check with their local churches, youth groups, and community organizations. Helping others takes many forms. For some students it is tutoring a younger student having a difficult time with a subject. For other students it is making sandwiches for the homeless. Many students find helping others is not only satisfying, but in the process they also learn a lot about themselves.

Employment

For some students a job is an unavoidable necessity. Family circumstances demand it. In such cases employment often precludes participation in many or all other school activities. Under these conditions a job can be a sign of increased responsibility and maturity. On the other hand, jobs that provide discretionary income only may be problematic and a sign of misplaced priorities. Jobs can provide wonderful growth opportunities when not negatively impacting school performance.

Student Leadership Opportunities

For the student who wants to represent his or her peers, student government offers significant opportunities. One does not have to be class president, vice-president, treasurer, or secretary to become involved. Planning



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and carrying out student activities requires the input and participation of many. For some students membership on the Student Council provides a channel to voice to those in charge the impact that decisions are having. It also provides students with a chance to appreciate the complexity of a large organization.

Summer Opportunities

The summer is an especially rich time for extracurricular activities. The opportunities for service, learning, academic enrichment, career exploration, and work experience are greatly expanded.

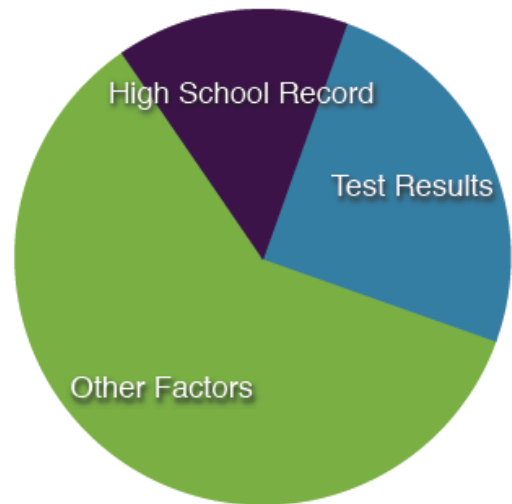
3. HOW ALL THE PIECES COME TOGETHER

Now that we have had the opportunity to talk about academics, standardized testing, and extracurricular opportunities the following graphics can depict how those three areas come together. Depending on their selectivity level, i.e., how difficult it is to be admitted, colleges weigh these three factors differently.

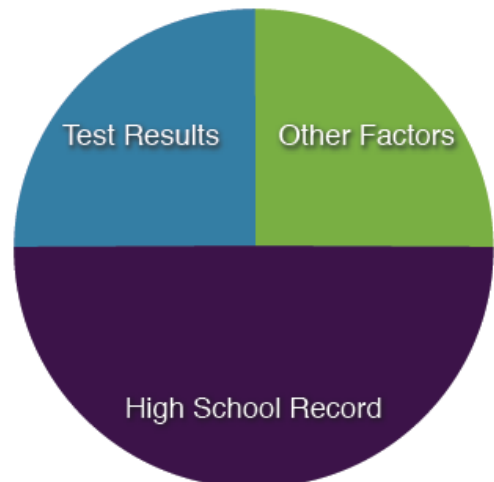
What many people find surprising is that as the selectivity level goes up, the size of the "other factors" section increases sharply. There is a very simple and understandable reason for this. For example, at the **Most Selective Level**, the high school records and the testing results of the applicants are assumed to be superb. Otherwise, an applicant would not be seriously considered. At schools where there are more academically qualified applicants than can be admitted, candidates are admitted largely on this "other factors" category. Included under this heading are significant extracurricular involvements, special talents, legacy (a parent attended), etc.

At the **Selective Level** colleges are looking for solid achievement in each category. However, students do not have to be leaders in their extracurricular or outside school activities. Colleges are looking for participation. Leadership is welcome but not necessary. The high school record shows strength and challenge, but does not have to be the most demanding program of studies that the high school offers. Test results are good, but do not have to be the top scores possible in whatever area is being tested.

MOST SELECTIVE



SELECTIVE



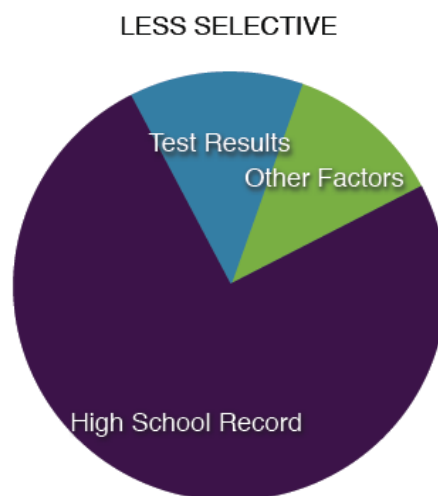


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At the **Less Selective Level** the high school record is the biggest factor. However, if it is decent and test scores are average, the likelihood that the candidate will be admitted is quite strong even if involvement outside the classroom is quite limited.



It is my hope that this general information will help to set students up on a road to success throughout the four years they spend with us at the high school. If you have questions, please be sure to email or call. These next years will FLY by and before you know it, graduation day will be here. It is important to begin preparing for what happens after that, now!