

Counseling Services at Taylorville High School

The main role of the Guidance Department is to help each student to achieve understanding of self and environment and to assist each student in the development of decision-making abilities. In order for this help to be utilized by the student, he/she can be introduced to the Guidance Program in several ways.

OPEN DOOR POLICY: Students may walk in at any time. If your counselor is busy at that time, please make an appointment to return at a later date.

TEACHER REFERRAL: Teachers may suggest that students seek help, advice or information.

PARENT SUGGESTION: At times parents feel the need to have students speak with their counselor.

ADMINISTRATIVE INTERVENTION: Sometimes the assistant principal, dean, or principal may feel students could use the help or direction of a counselor and refer them to the Student Services Office.

The counselors will also assist students in course selections, career planning, scholarship information and post-high school transitions. Students need to get to know their counselor early in their high school career. They should work with their counselor regularly to develop and maintain an educational and career pathway that best suits their abilities and goals.

Five-Year Planning Guide

INTRODUCTION

High school students face many career choices in our society. Many of these choices require further education beyond high school. This education can come in the form of college, technical schools or even the military. This guide was developed to help those students wishing to further their education. This guide is an attempt to help parents and students through this difficult process. While we tried to anticipate most situations, this guide in no way can answer all the individualized questions that many families encounter. Parents and students should use this guide as a supplement to information received from the counselors in the Taylorville High School Student Services Office, college admission counselors representing their respective schools or even military recruiters.

A FEW ISSUES TO CONSIDER

Is college for you? Hopefully, you have already made that decision. Assuming it is, another question that should be asked is "Will you be ready to go to college?" Issues like academics, finances, and maturity need to be considered. These issues can be a big influence on what college you may choose to attend. Take them all into consideration. The choice of going to college and what college to attend is a decision in which the whole family should participate.

WHAT YOU SHOULD BE DOING AND WHEN

In this section we will outline what parents and students should be thinking about and doing during their 4 years of high school and their first year of post-high school education.

GRADE 9

Fall and Winter

- Meet school requirements. You should be passing not just your required classes, but also all your classes. Keep your grades as high as possible, as this will pay off later.
- Make an appointment to see your counselor to discuss your post high school plans and outline a plan for what courses would be best to take at THS.
- Access the [Career Information System Program](#) or [Career Cruising](#) program from the internet, in the Student Services Office, or the computer lab. This program will help you make decisions and provide you with information you need to plan ahead. User name and password are available by talking to the counselors.

Spring

- Strongly consider taking the Career Orientation class offered to all THS students. This is a full credit, 1 semester class taught by the Business Department. This is not just a business class. It is a class designed to help students investigate different careers and to match up careers with their individual interests and abilities.
- Investigate employment trends. Take these into consideration when thinking about a career. Remember, you do not have to decide on a career, but you should start thinking about what you want

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to do.

- Start thinking about these 5 possibilities:
 - 4 year college or university
 - 2 year Associate Degree program
 - Work apprenticeship programs
 - Vocational or Technical schools
 - Military

GRADE 10

Fall and Winter

- Complete any steps you failed to complete in grade 9.
- All sophomores are required to take the PLAN test. This is a pre-ACT test that prepares students for the ACT test to be taken in their junior year.
- In late fall the PLAN test is given. Any student considering college should sign up and take this test. This test is put out by ACT. There is a nominal charge to the student. This test is given during the school day, at THS, by the counselors. It will give the students scores in the same 4 areas that are on the ACT. It will predict a probable ACT score range and gives the student invaluable practice at taking an ACT type test. Valuable career information including an interest inventory is also on the test.
- Start spending time researching various colleges. Information is available in the form of printed material in the Counseling Center, online information at college websites, college videos available in the Counseling Center, and through the Discover program.
- Consider signing up to take the ASVAB, the Armed Service Vocational Aptitude Battery, which is offered free to students early in the school year. This test is given by the Department of Defense but there is no military obligation for students who take the test. This test gives the test taker a good idea of what areas the student has for strengths and weaknesses. ASVAB is a complete battery of tests that includes math, verbal and even mechanical skills. Although this test is not mandatory, students should give serious consideration to taking this test.

Spring

- Re-examine the courses you have planned to take your final 2 years at THS. Discuss this plan with your counselor and make any changes that are necessary.
- Take advantage of any program that allows you to visit job sites of careers in which you are interested.
- Review basic requirements for college admission with your counselor. Discuss these requirements with your parents.

GRADE 11

Fall and Winter

- Sign up to take the ASVAB, the Armed Service Vocational Aptitude Battery, which is offered free to students early in the school year. This test is given by the Department of Defense but there is no military obligation for students who take the test. This test gives the test taker a good idea of what areas the student has for strengths and weaknesses. ASVAB is a complete battery of tests that includes math, verbal and even mechanical skills. Although this test is not mandatory, students should give serious consideration to taking this test.
 - Even though most scholarships are intended for seniors, check out the few that are available to juniors. Check out our new scholarship hook that list all scholarships.
 - Talk with your school counselor and parents about your college plans.
 - Register to take the PSAT in October. There is a fee for this test, which is administered at THS by the counseling staff.
 - Start thinking about what you are looking for in a college. Take the following into consideration enrollment, location, programs offered, security, admission requirements, and cost.
 - Make sure you have a social security number. It would be a good idea to memorize it.
 - If you have not already become active in extracurricular activities, think about becoming involved in these types activities. Many scholarships take this involvement very seriously. This is true especially during the junior year.
 - Visit with college reps when they visit THS. Prepare a list of questions about that particular school.
- Make final decisions about what classes to take as a senior. Consider AP classes. Even though they

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are more difficult, colleges take difficulty of curriculum into consideration. We also have classes with dual credit from Lincoln Land Community College and Tech Prep credit. Check this out with your counselor.

Spring

- All juniors are required to take the PSAE (Prairie State Achievement Exams) which includes two days of testing (ACT and WorkKeys). The state requires all students take the PSAE (most take it in the spring of their junior year) in order to receive a high school diploma from the state of Illinois.
- Begin keeping any information you have acquired from different schools. Create a folder for each school. Keep all information.
- Continue to visit with college reps and acquire information on colleges.
- Begin narrowing your list of possible colleges.
- Plan for any college visit you might want to take during the summer. When visiting, make sure you talk to a person in the admissions office, housing office and financial aid office.

GRADE 12

Fall and Winter

- Consider taking the ACT again if you have only taken it one time. It is offered in September and October. It is recommended to take the ACT at least twice. Colleges take only your best score.
- Visit the Student Services several times a week to check on the availability of scholarships. Scholarships are listed in the daily bulletin and on the counseling website. Visit our website for the latest information and dates at http://www.taylorvilleschools.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=192&Itemid=250 .
- Make an appointment and talk to your counselor about your college and scholarship plans.
- Decide whom you are going to ask for recommendations for admissions and scholarship applications. Talk to these people ahead of time to check out how much time they would like to have to write the recommendations. Planning ahead helps prevent problems.
- Send off scholarship applications. Keep copies and make sure all required information accompanies all applications. Follow directions exactly, and always type the applications unless instructed otherwise.
- Get applications for the colleges on your list. Applications can be obtained in the Student Services Office or many can be downloaded from the Internet web page of that particular school or the counseling website. Make sure you get housing information as well as financial aid information from each school.
- Send off any early applications after carefully checking them and keeping copies. Keep copies of everything. Make sure transcripts, recommendations, or any other relevant information is sent as well.
- Encourage parents to mail off tax returns as early as possible for financial aid reasons.
- Obtain a pin number for one of your parents and yourself prior to December 1.
- Prepare FAFSA to be sent off as soon after January 1, as possible. Make sure all information on FAFSA is correct. Keep copies.
- Narrow choice of schools down to fewer than 4. If you have not made a visit to any of these schools, do so.

Spring

- Review college acceptances and financial offers you have received.
- Talk over your choices with your parents.
- Make a decision based on what is best for you and the family.
- Notify the school that you have chosen. Make sure you send in any deposits that may be needed. Many times housing requires a deposit.
- Continue to send off scholarship applications. Some are awarded late in the school year or after graduation.
- Maintain good grades. Colleges can and do cancel admission rights to students who do not continue with good grades after admittance.
- Arrange to have a final transcript sent off to the college(s) of your choice.
- Notify the schools that you have decided not to attend of your decision.

POST HIGH SCHOOL

Many items will be different when planning your first year of education after you get out of high school. Listed below are some issues to take care of after high school graduation but before actual start of your new school.

- Check out any orientation sessions that might be held during the summer for incoming students.
- Make sure your living arrangements are set. Many schools allow first year students to live with a specific roommate. If you have someone with whom you want to room, check it out with the school to see if that is possible. Another consideration is the type of living arrangements. Some schools offer living arrangements that emphasize studying, athletics, or even specific areas of study.
- Make sure you meet all the fee deadlines. You can lose any prior arrangements with the school if payment is not made on time.
- Make sure you have whatever clothing is required for the upcoming school year. Many students find that they have to do much more walking when they are away at school. Consider the climate, where you will be living in relation to your classrooms, and basic layout of the campus.
- Plan ahead for your personal items you may want to take. Items like fans, pictures, electronic equipment or even musical instruments need to be considered.
- If you are going to be eating on campus, meal plans may need to be considered. Some schools offer a variety of meal plans based on the number of meals per week. Find the one that is right for you.
- Several other considerations should be laundry, long distance phone calls and a budget for spending money (checking accounts and credit cards).

During the first year of post high school education, keep in mind the following points:

- Most schools have minimum academic standards. These standards must be met to continue attending the school. Generally speaking, most schools are not very flexible when it comes to maintaining their academic standards.
- Keep in contact with your academic advisor. If you are having trouble, seek help immediately. Post high school education can be very fast paced. It is easy, to get behind in your academics and can be very difficult to catch up. It is much easier to keep up.
- Keep in contact with your instructors. Let them know who you are. Let them know that you care about your grades and you care about their class. This can be a big advantage in larger schools.
- Keep in contact with the Financial Aid Office at your school. If you are receiving any kind of financial aid, you probably will have to go through the same process of getting aid for your second year as you did for your first year. This means filling out the forms, finding out if any scholarships you might have had are renewable and in general, repeating the whole Process. Your school's financial aid office will be happy to assist you in this process.
- At some point you should discuss with your academic advisor what you should take your second year. Find out what is going to be offered and for what you should register.

THE SELECTION PROCESS

Students and parents have many options in selecting a college. A simple question should be asked.

What are we looking for in a college? Some of your options may include the following:

Size - College enrollment ranges from several hundred students to over 50,000

Format - Colleges come in 2 year or 4 year basic formats. Programs within may vary in length.

Private or Public - Some schools are supported by the state, and some are privately supported. Many of the private schools are smaller and may be church affiliated. There are many more private schools than public.

Location - Many schools of various sizes are located near Taylorville. This is totally a matter of personal preference.

Security - This is a factor that everyone should note. Talk to the college admission people about any trouble that may have happened on campus.

Special Programs - Some students are looking for special or specific programs. Make sure the school you are considering offers these programs.

Taking these factors into consideration will give a family a start in the selection process. This process is different for each student and family. Make up your own list.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Many helpful resources are available to parents and students. Your most important resource is the counselors in the THS Counseling Center. Use them! Additional resources can be divided into two general groups. These groups can be classified as print and electronic sources. Listed below are some excellent printed resources that can be found in the Counseling Center or in many cases may be purchased:

The College Handbook printed by The College Board. This is a directory of almost 3,000 4 year and 2 year colleges.

Index of Majors and Graduate Degrees printed by The College Board. This lists which schools offer what majors.

Barron's Profiles of American Colleges is another comprehensive list of colleges.

Occupational Outlook Handbook, printed by the Department of Labor. This offers detailed information on most of the most popular career fields.

College Costs and Financial Aid Handbook is printed by The College Board.

The THS Student Services has many additional print resources available for students and parents. Consult your counselor for assistance. Listed below are some electronic resources available to parents and students:

CIS (Career Information System) This is a software program developed by ACT and available online. Updated yearly, it has information and/or direct Internet connections to over 2000 occupations and virtually every 2 and 4-year university, technical school and even graduate schools. Information on all these schools can be directly accessed through the CIS program. CIS can help the student make decisions about careers, college selection and financial aid information. It has much practical information, such as how to prepare for the ACT, how to write a resume, and even how to interview for a job. Obtain a user ID from your counselor to begin using CIS. This internet program can be accessed from any place you can obtain internet access. Also available within this program are practice tests for tests such as ACT, PSAT, ASVAB, etc.

The Counseling Center is online so that a student or parent can access websites including any or all of the following:

www.act.org The website of the ACT organization includes test registration and preparation.

<http://www.collegeboard.com/?student> The website of the College Board offers a wide variety of information, including test preparation for the SAT and much information about careers and financial aid.

www.collegezone.com This is the website of the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC). ISAC is responsible for the distribution of all federal and state financial aid in the state of Illinois. This is a terrific site that has other information, such as a financial aid estimator, long term financial planning information, a loan repayment calculator, college cost and savings information, information on the college selection process, and even information on academic preparation for college. At this website you will find Higher-EdNet. At this location you will find a free scholarship search service, sponsored by the state, that will select scholarships for you, based on information you provide. This can be a very valuable tool.

www.fafsa.ed.gov This site is for seniors who want to apply for federal and state financial aid online. It also has a lot of great information.

www.c3apply.org This is the ACT college planning guide.

www.ed.gov/thinkcollege/ is the federal government's college guide.

www.ftc.gov/bcp/menu-jobs.htm is the federal government information source on scholarship scams.