

Parent Principal Corner



Notes

Pre-enrollment

Parents can find a few tips on pre-enrollment on page 2 of this newsletter. If you have ANY questions before your student enrolls, please contact the counseling department. (page 2)

Attendance

The new attendance policy is now being enforced. One question that surfaced was, "What if my child goes on a college visit, is that a parent request?" No, this is a document excuse. Simply have someone at the college sign a note (or pick up a note in the counseling office) stating your student was there and return it to the office.

AWL (Academic Warning List)

Another new policy that has gone into effect is the AWL. Every Wednesday we now run a report and identify all students with 2 or more failing grades. These students are notified by having a letter delivered to them in class. For procedures of how to remove oneself from this list or to read the consequences, visit the high school website.

State Assessments

Yes, it's that time of year when schools around the state gear up for state assessments. In February, our sophomores and a few juniors will begin their journey taking reading assessments.

While state assessments are not the only way to measure student learning, it is one that has become very public. Now we see our results in the Topeka Capital-Journal. It seems like schools get more attention when they do poorly than when they do well. For example, did you know that Shawnee Heights High School made "Standard of Excellence" in both reading and math this year? This is the first time in school history that this has been done. Late in January we had a celebration with our senior class recognizing their hard work.

As parents, we ask that you help us prepare your student for these tests. You can do this by simply talking with them about the importance of the tests and making sure they get enough rest the night before taking the tests. If you have a student who says, "the results have no bearing on me", let me share how this test will impact them. We, as a school, look at these results. If we find a student scoring below Proficient, we need to take action in helping close any gaps. We will do this by requiring students who are flagged (a state term for

students scoring below Proficient) to take an additional course in the area of their needs. This means they have to give up an elective to do this.

While students may see this as a punishment, it's not. If a student has gaps in their learning, we need to do what we can to close those gaps. I have learned over the years that once in a while a student just blows off the test (doesn't take it seriously). The problem is that the school can't determine that they blew it off, so the only solution is to assume they have some challenges and we need to do what we can to assist them. So, that student finds themselves in this extra class.

For the most part, students who are assigned to these classes need some additional assistance. It is our hope we can keep class sizes down and target the areas where the student needs help.

Our goal here at SHHS is to first make AYP, but also Standard of Excellence in both math and reading. To get this done, we need to do everything we can to help our students prepare for these state assessments.

PRE-ENROLLMENT TIPS

Besides State Assessments, it is also time to begin the enrollment process for next fall. This pre-enrollment is extremely important since the schedule for next year is based on it. Plus, with the tightening of the budget pre-enrollment numbers could save or close course offerings. So please encourage your child to get this done.

There are a few things you might want to consider, as parents, when it comes to your student enrolling for next year.

- We strongly encourage you to sit down and visit with your student about their choices. Find out what their reasoning is for taking a course. Help them take courses that will better prepare them for their plans after high school (if you are not sure, contact a counselor).
- Over the years I have seen far too many students choose courses based on what their friends are taking or their boyfriend/girlfriend. Then, somewhere down the road they missed an opportunity to better prepare themselves for their future. So please, don't let them use that reasoning in choosing a course.
- I have heard students in the past choose a teacher because they are easy, or not choose a teacher because they are hard. I guess this would be ok if the courses they are taking line up with their future plans. But often they take courses they don't need because they wanted the "easy teacher", or they have avoided key courses because they didn't want to work that hard. This is where we need help from parents to make sure they make the right choices.
- We have made a few changes for next year. College English I & II is now offered during the school day and we strongly encourage any student considering college to take these courses. We have dropped AP American History and replaced it with College History I & II. (Students interested in AP can audit the course and still take the exam.) We have added College Biology to our course offerings. Other current college courses have been taken over by Washburn instead of Allen County; these include College Public Speaking and College Algebra. We do have some issues with College Psychology and are currently working through them.
- Seniors tend to look for the easiest route. Some have the idea, "I need an easy year to relax before college." Research has strongly shown that is the wrong approach. Students who tend to take time off or slow down have a difficult time gearing up their freshmen year in college. These students risk poor grades or even dropping out of college. A better approach is taking a more challenging senior year. This keeps them geared up and focused as they move into college. Plus, the courses they take tend to better prepare them for their college courses.
- One more item regarding seniors. This year SHHS saw 40 students graduate early and 125+ take the early release opportunities. That is well over half of the seniors! Both concepts (early graduation & early release) were developed to help those students who had a plan in mind. If they are taking college courses second semester or even working a job during their off school time, then the time can be beneficial. But if they go home and take a nap or play the XBOX, the habits being developed can impact the change college can bring in just a few months. Before a student takes early graduation Parents before you approve your student to take the early graduation or early release, sit down with them and make sure there is a clear plan. Also, take a hard look at what we offer here. Would not taking courses at the high school better them for their next step? I will say we are developing some new plans to provide more for our seniors, but with budget cuts ahead it doesn't appear we will be able to do much next school year.
- Incoming freshmen need to look at a rough 4 year plan. One of the early choices is taking either Teen Topics or NJROTC. Both have some positive points. I will say that many feel NJROTC is only for military bound students, but that is far from the truth. It provides some great leadership opportunities and teaches some discipline that can be applied in life.
- Here are some things to consider while planning next year's enrollment and the years beyond. Is your student taking courses that line up with their career interest? For example, if they want to go into some type of business are they taking all the business courses possible? I have had students say they want to own their own business someday, but they haven't taken any business courses. If they are not sure what they want to do, are they taking courses to explore their interests? For example, they may like to work with their hands but are not sure what it is they want to do in life. Are they taking industrial tech or metals? If they are interested in leadership or the military are they taking NJROTC? If they want to go into medicine are they taking all the math and science possible? Have they explored the many opportunities at Washburn Tech?