

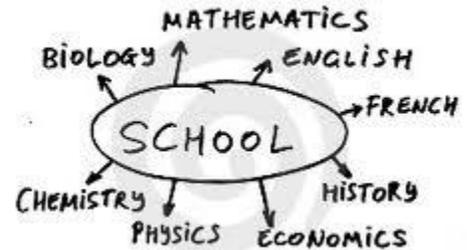


January 2015

# Suffield High School Monthly Guidance Newsletter

## 2015-2016 Course Selection Time

Believe it or not, the time has nearly come to begin planning for the next academic year. Again this year, students will be completing their course requests online, using our Power School Program. Specific course selection instructions will be distributed to 9-11<sup>th</sup> graders on Tuesday, January 13<sup>th</sup>. Students and parents are encouraged to review course offerings using the SHS Program of Studies Booklet (found online at [suffield.org](http://suffield.org)) and to discuss plans for next year's courses so that the wisest possible choices will be made. Students should also discuss their plans with teachers and secure their tentative recommendations for proper course levels, etc. **Course request pages, signed by the parent/guardian, are due (bring to your Advisory teacher) by Tuesday, January 27<sup>th</sup>! Students who do not return a signed course request page will have courses chosen for them and will not be able to select different elective courses later!** Counselors will be available during lunch every day to help with questions and as always, we will be happy to meet with students and their folks to assist with course selection questions or concerns. Please call us at, 860-668-3813 if you would like to schedule an appointment.



## What Colleges Look For



While colleges look at many factors in evaluating students who apply for admission, nothing is more important to them than the quality of the courses a student takes throughout high school and their performance in those courses. Students who elect to take the most challenging courses available to them, particularly in the core subjects (English, Math, Science, History, and World Language) and perform well in those courses, definitely have more options at college application time. Taking additional core courses, above and beyond the minimal high school graduation requirements, is always a good idea and will not only make a student a stronger candidate for college admission, but prepare them to succeed at the next level as well. We encourage all students to consider their course selection options carefully and to seek out their counselor for assistance in making final decisions about the courses they will enroll in for next year because those choices can have a major impact on later college admission chances.

## Choosing High School Classes

Many high school seniors feel as if they can just write off their last semester, skip class and let their grades slip. But colleges everywhere are stressing the fact that performance during senior year of high school is a significant factor in their admission decisions. Competitive schools want to admit students who take challenging classes, especially in the core subjects, throughout their high school careers – and senior year is no exception. Here's some expert advice to help you select your high school courses.

1. Take the most rigorous courses you can handle. Colleges like to see students who challenge themselves and succeed. If you started out taking advanced classes as a freshman, stay on the advanced track. As much as you may dislike math or English, taking that high-level literature or calculus course will be worth it. Author and journalist David Marcus writes in his book "Acceptance" that the rigor of high school courses selected is generally more important than the grade earned, and that many competitive schools ignore the As made in easy elective courses.
2. Take four years of core classes in English, math, science and social studies. Most elite colleges in the state, including Trinity, Wesleyan, Yale and UConn, require at least four years of English but recommend students take as many years of each core subject as possible. Also, a strong record of core courses in high school will prepare you for the required courses you may have to take in college.
3. Take four years of world language classes. Colleges like persistence, and being bilingual, or at least competent in a second language, certainly impresses colleges preparing students for participating in a global economy. Plus, many colleges – such as UConn – have foreign language requirements that apply to students in certain schools who have taken fewer than three years' worth of foreign language classes in high school.
4. Elective classes should reflect interest. Do you like music? Did you take band in high school? Are you a history buff? Did you take every single history class available? Colleges like kids who can demonstrate a deep interest in something, and a great way to do that is through your elective choices.
5. Don't slack off senior year. Take a rigorous course load, and do as well as you can. Don't take your first college acceptance letter as a license to goof off for the next four months. Stay active, stay engaged and stay involved.

*Taken from: Courant.com Author: Joseph Adinolfi*

## Junior College Planning Appointments

Parents of SHS Juniors are reminded to call the Guidance Office (860-668-3813) to arrange a time to come in and meet with your son's/daughter's counselor. During the meeting, counselors will be happy to answer any questions you may have about the college planning process. We'd also like to review a college planning calendar with you; encourage your junior to plan ahead on visiting colleges during upcoming school vacations and to seek letters of recommendation later this spring; begin thinking of ideas for a college application essay; and put together a resume of awards and activities for use with college applications next fall. Counselors would also like to show you the Naviance/Family Connections online college planning program that we recently demonstrated to all juniors during English classes. This customized program is an excellent tool that juniors will be encouraged to use frequently throughout the college search process to identify schools that fit them best in terms of personal preferences and academic qualifications.



As is true with any big endeavor, the whole college/career search process is less overwhelming when you start early, break it into smaller tasks, and tackle it one piece at a time. We look forward to helping you do just that and working with you during this exciting time!

## FAFSA Time

After January 1<sup>st</sup> is the time for seniors and parents to submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). All colleges require students seeking financial aid to submit this form which establishes the degree of financial need a family will have. FAFSA worksheets are available in the guidance office and online at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov). Some colleges also require that students and parents file additional forms, such as the CSS PROFILE, so it's critical that you find out exactly what forms are required and when they are due!



## College Goal Sunday

Manchester Community College will be hosting College Goal Sunday again this year! The date is Sunday, January 25th, from 1:30-4:30. College Goal Sunday is a day devoted to helping students and their parents complete the FAFSA, which is the first step in applying for financial aid.

MCC is one of several sites, where students may complete their FAFSA application, with help from knowledgeable financial aid professionals. All of the sites are listed on the College Goal Sunday website. Included on the website is information on what to bring to complete the FAFSA, and answers to any other FAQs you may have.

Seniors and parents are encouraged to attend, and register in advance for the event at the website, which is:

[www.collegegoalsundayct.org](http://www.collegegoalsundayct.org)

## 7 Common FAFSA Mistakes



### 1. Not Completing the FAFSA

I hear all kinds of reasons: "The FAFSA is too hard," "It takes too long to complete," "I never qualify anyway, so why does it matter." It *does* matter. By not completing the FAFSA you are missing out on the opportunity to qualify for what could be thousands of dollars to help you pay for college. The FAFSA takes most people 23 minutes to complete, and there is help provided throughout the application. Oh, and contrary to popular belief, there is no income cut-off when it comes to federal student aid

### 2. Not Being Prepared

The online FAFSA has gotten a lot easier over the last few years. We've added skip logic, so you only see questions that are applicable to you. There is also an option to import your tax information from the IRS directly into the

FAFSA application. But, the key to making the FAFSA simple is being prepared. You'll save yourself a lot of time by gathering [everything you need to complete the FAFSA](#) before you start the application.

### **3. Not Reading Carefully**

You're on winter break and probably enjoying a vacation from reading for a couple weeks. I get it. But when it comes to completing the FAFSA, you want to read each question carefully. Too many students see delays in their financial aid for simple mistakes that could have been easily avoided.

Don't rush through these questions:

**Your Number of Family Members (Household size):** The FAFSA has a specific definition of how [you](#) or [your parents' household size](#) should be determined. Read the instructions carefully. Many students incorrectly report this number.

**Amount of Your Income Tax:** Income tax is not the same as income. It is the amount of tax that you (and if married, your spouse) paid on your income earned from work. Your income tax amount should not be the same as your adjusted gross income (AGI). Where you find the [amount of your income tax](#) depends on which IRS form you filed.

**Legal Guardianship:** One question on the FAFSA asks: "As determined by a court in your state of legal residence, are you or were you in legal guardianship?" Many students incorrectly answer "yes" here. For [this question](#), the definition of legal guardianship does not include your parents, even if they were appointed by a court to be your guardian. You are also not considered a legal guardian of yourself.

### **4. Inputting Incorrect Information**

The FAFSA is an official government form. You must enter your information as it appears on official government documents like your birth certificate and social security card. Examples:

**Entering the Wrong Name (Yes, I'm serious):** You wouldn't believe how many people have issues with their FAFSA because they entered an incorrect name on the application. It doesn't matter if you're Madonna, or Drake, or whatever Snoop Lion is calling himself these days. You must enter your full name as it appears on official government documents. No nicknames.

**Entering the Wrong Social Security Number (SSN):** When we process FAFSAs, we cross check your social security number with the Social Security Administration. To avoid delays in processing your application, triple check that you have entered the correct SSN. If you meet our [basic eligibility criteria](#), but you or your parents don't have a SSN, [follow these instructions](#).

### **5. Not Reporting Parent Information**

Even if you fully support yourself, pay your own bills, file your own taxes, you may still be considered a [dependent student](#) for federal student aid purposes, and therefore, you'll need to [provide your parent\(s\) information](#) on your FAFSA. Dependency guidelines for the FAFSA are determined by Congress and are different from those of the IRS. Find out whether or not you need to provide parent information by answering [these questions](#).

### **6. Not Using the IRS Data Retrieval Tool**

For many, the most difficult part about filling out the FAFSA is entering in the financial information. But now, thanks to a partnership with the IRS, students and parents who are eligible can automatically transfer the necessary tax info into the FAFSA using the [IRS Data Retrieval Tool](#). This year, the tool will launch on February 2, 2014. In most cases, your information will be available from the IRS [two weeks after you file](#). It's also one of the best ways to prevent errors on your FAFSA and avoid any processing delays.

Note: If you used income estimates to file your FAFSA early, you can use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool to update your FAFSA two weeks after you file your 2013 taxes.

### **7. Not Signing the FAFSA**

So many students answer every single question that is asked, but fail to actually sign the FAFSA with their PIN and submit it. This happens for many reasons, maybe they [forgot their PIN](#), or their parent isn't with them to sign with the parent PIN, so the FAFSA is left unsubmitted. Don't let this happen to you. If you don't have or don't know your PIN, [apply for one](#). If you would like confirmation that your FAFSA has been submitted, you can [check your status](#) immediately after you submit your FAFSA online.

Author Nicole Callahan is a new media analyst at the Department of Education's office of Federal Student Aid

## Top Ten Scholarship Tips

Applying for college scholarships can be overwhelming. The sheer number of scholarships out there makes the process even more confusing. Be prepared to invest time researching or you may waste time applying for awards that your teen has little chance of getting. "Scholarships are like a part-time job. It takes a lot of work," said Saroj Jagernauth, counseling department chair at Deer Valley Unified's Sandra Day O'Connor High School. Here are 10 tips to help navigate the scholarship field:



**1. Where to start.** Begin at the colleges or universities where your teen plans to apply. Find out what they offer. Many list scholarships on their Web sites, but don't be afraid to call the admissions office and ask, Jagernauth said. Admissions officers often will have suggestions. "A lot of families are scared to exercise their options, but the best thing they can do is (call) the university," she said.

**2. Read the fine print.** Find out what the scholarship's qualifications are. If the minimum grade point average is 3.0 and your teen falls below, you likely will waste your time. If the scholarship requires a track record of volunteering, and your teen is only just starting to ladle soup in the soup kitchen, it's unlikely he will get the award, said Richard Montauk, a Boston-based college consultant and author of *How to Get Into the Top Colleges*.

**3. More is better.** Don't pin hopes on one or two applications or you may be disappointed, Montauk said. It's sometimes difficult to tell what your chances are when applying for a scholarship. Some groups will publish the number of applicants, and the number of scholarships awarded the previous year, but not all do. Montauk said it's OK to call the scholarship organization and ask how many people applied last year and how many scholarships were given.

**4. Local vs. national.** If you're pressed for time, it may be best to concentrate on local scholarships and those offered by colleges. Any groups you are affiliated with such as Rotary, Lions Club, religious, union or professional organizations may offer college scholarships. Check with your employer's human resources department to see if your company offers scholarships.

**5. Remember your teen's strengths.** If your teen is an ace student, focus on merit scholarships. If your daughter is an outstanding volleyball player, think athletic scholarships. If your son works at a fast-food restaurant, check to see if the company gives scholarships. If you served in the military, check into military scholarships.

**6. Be careful of paid scholarship services.** If a Web site wants money to search for scholarships, think twice, Montauk said. There are plenty of free Web sites such as [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com) that will search for free.

**7. Don't forget federal aid.** Fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, even if you think you make too much money to qualify. You have nothing to lose by filling out the form.

**8. Consider the time involved vs. the possible payoff.** Some scholarship applications are simple and require only a few minutes. Others require essays and recommendation letters and interviews. If it's a big-money scholarship, it may be worth your time. If not, you may want to reconsider.

**9. Don't forget deadlines.** Scholarship deadlines vary, so put the individual deadlines on your calendar so you won't miss out. Some scholarships require recommendation letters from teachers or counselors, and it's best to give these people two weeks' notice, Jagernauth said. When you ask for a recommendation, give the teacher a short written biography of the teen so the teacher can personalize the letter.

**10. Ready to fill out forms.** You will save time and frustration if you gather tax forms, your teen's resume, any recommendation letters and essays ahead of time.

Taken from: *azcentral.com* Author: Anne Ryman

**Second Semester Coming**



It is hard to believe, but the first half of the school year will be completed after mid-year exams conclude on January 23<sup>rd</sup>. Students will receive copies of their semester two schedules on Monday, January 26th. As always, students or parents with questions about courses, credits, or other issues are encouraged to call the appropriate counselor at (860) 668-3813.

**Drop/Add Procedures**

The procedure for dropping and adding courses is the same as in the past and is outlined below.

1. Student wishing change discusses it with parent/guardian and gets written permission.
2. Student has "Drop" teacher sign the parent/guardian permission note.
3. Student makes appointment with counselor to discuss change and determine if it's appropriate. If it is appropriate, DROP/ADD paperwork is issued to student.
4. Student signs form and secures signatures from all teachers involved. "Add" teachers sign first.
5. Student returns completed form to counselor who makes change in PowerSchool and issues student a new schedule to follow.

Schedule 1			
Bid:	Alt1	Alt2	Omit?
2762			
30000-01	30000-02		<input type="checkbox"/>
33001-03	33001-07	33040-01	<input type="checkbox"/>
<del>11000-01</del>	<del>11000-02</del>		<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>

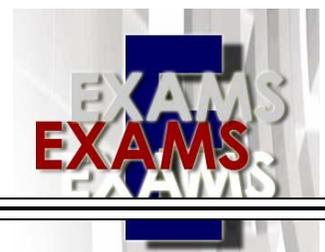
Cannot meet row three conditions

Students are allowed 10 school days at the start of the semester to add new courses. The last day to add a new course for semester two is Friday, February 6<sup>th</sup>.

Students may drop a second semester course without penalty until Friday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, but must always carry a minimum of 6.0 credits and be enrolled in at least five courses at all times.

**Tentative Mid-Year Exam Schedule**

<b>Tuesday, Jan. 20</b>	- Per. 1	Exam 7:45 - 9:50
	- Break	9:50 - 10:05



- Per. 2 Exam 10:10 -12:15

### Wednesday, Jan. 21

- Per. 3 Exam 7:45 - 9:50

- Break 9:50 - 10:05

- Per. 4 Exam 10:10 -12:15

- Make-up Ex. 12:20 - 2:10

### Thursday, Jan. 22

- Per. 5 Exam 7:45 - 9:50

- Break 9:50 - 10:05

- Per. 6 Exam 10:10 - 12:15

- Make-up Ex. 12:20 - 2:10

### Friday, Jan. 23

- Per. 7 Exam 7:45 - 9:50

- Break 9:50 - 10:05

- Make-up Ex. 10:10- 12:15

## Exam Tips for Students

The following are some helpful hints on taking exams, reprinted from “Mental Strength”, a US Marine Corps Publication.

**Establish a regular study pace.** If you’ve pulled an all-nighter, you probably know exactly how much good cramming does – zilch! You’re likely to forget most of what you’ve learned before you even walk into the classroom, and you’ll be so tired that you’ll have a hard time remembering the rest. Instead, try to keep up with your work as the semester progresses.

**Make a plan.** After the test is announced, make a three-day plan to prepare for it. On the first night, skim the course material, making notes in the margins and saying the main points aloud. On the second night, read the notes carefully and without looking at the page, say the main points aloud. On the third night, write up a sample test and review it with a classmate. You’ll discover your weak spots and reinforce the material you’ve already mastered.

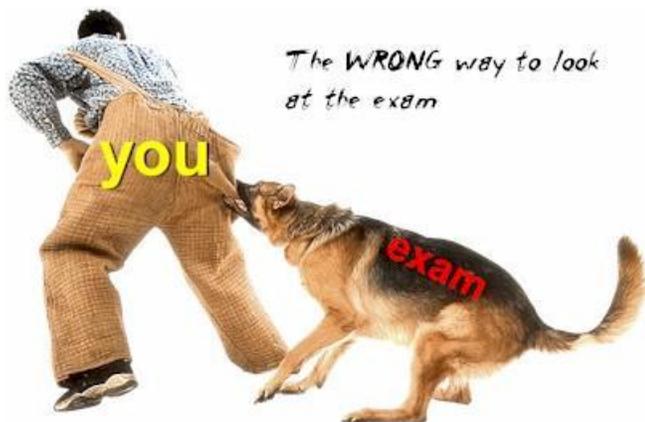


**Study with friends.** Ask some classmates who are serious about school to get together and study before a test. Take turns asking each other questions you think the teacher might include. For an English literature course, you might discuss the readings you did. For a math exam, work on practice math problems. Studying with friends will help build your confidence; and listening to one another’s comments may help you remember key points.

**Find out what the test will cover.** If it's a midterm or chapter review, ask your teacher exactly what the test will include. If it's a standardized test, like the SAT or a civil service exam, the student should get a review book and some sample tests. Just knowing what to expect will take away a lot of stress and help you focus on what you have to do to prepare.

**Find out the kind of questions that will be included.** For tests on recent course work, ask your teacher how the test will be structured – for example: true/false, multiple choice, essay, or a combination of the preceding. Every test calls for different test taking strategies. Here are some guidelines:

**True/False:** Beware of words such as “always,” “never,” and “all” – just one exception will make the statement false. And keep this in mind – if you're not sure on an answer, guess. You've got a 50/50 chance on being right.



**Multiple Choice:** Read all the choices carefully, and eliminate the one that is obviously wrong. Be especially careful with “all of the above” or “none of the above” choices. Often the longest choice is the correct one – it's been constructed to be the most complete.

**Essay time** is of the essence, so use it carefully. Put your study skills to work and draw up an outline. This will help you organize your information and present it clearly and logically within a limited time frame.

**Psyche yourself up** – make sure you get plenty of sleep and eat a healthy breakfast. Arrive early and ready with pens, pencils and calculator. Remind yourself that you are well prepared, and you should come through with flying colors.

## Yes, They Can Take It Back



As many seniors have begun to hear from colleges about admissions decisions it's worth noting as the final applications go in the mail that the process doesn't end with those final forms or even with the acceptance letter. Colleges can and do rescind offers of admission in certain circumstances. Sure, it's rare. Most of the time it's because the grades that students earn in the last semester aren't quite up to par with the transcripts they submit with their applications.

In other cases, it's for things more sinister. As Elizabeth Wissner-Gross reports in her new book *What Colleges Don't Tell You*, sometimes colleges receive letters asking for a student to be disqualified.

"Occasionally university admissions officers receive a letter providing the name of a supposed offender who has been offered admission. For example: 'Lucy Smith, whom you admitted to your college, recently was suspended from high school for cheating--and has cheated her way through high school--and does not deserve to go to your college.' These letters are rarely signed, but they identify a specific student they accuse. Beware! College admissions officers say they follow up on negative, unsolicited letters, if the letters identify a particular student--even if the letter is unsigned."

Admittedly, this, too, is rare, but it doesn't cost a college much to pick up the phone and verify such claims with a high school. Be honest in your dealings with colleges and you've got nothing to worry about.

Oh, and keep those grades up, too. Senioritis is a horrible disease to recover from when you start school again in the fall.

Taken from: [WWW.USNEWS.COM](http://WWW.USNEWS.COM)

Author: Alex Kingsberg

### Upcoming Events for January

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|---------------|--|
| January 1     | Time to file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). CSS PROFILE should also be filed if your colleges require it. |
| January 13    | Course Selection Directions for 2012-2013 school year distributed to students in Grades 9-11.                                    |
| January 20-23 | Mid-year and final exams for full year and semester one courses.   |
| January 24    | SAT Administration (generally considered to be "last chance" for seniors seeking Fall admission to four year colleges).          |
| January 26    | First day of semester two! Students pick up S2 schedules in Advisory Class before school that morning.                           |
| January 27    | Deadline for all students in Grades 9-11 to return their Course Request Page, signed by parent/guardian, to Advisory teacher!    |



**HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

**THE SHS GUIDANCE DEPARTMENT WOULD LIKE TO WISH ALL OF OUR STUDENTS**

**AND THEIR FAMILIES A HAPPY AND HEALTHY NEW YEAR!**