

# Portage Northern Counseling Office Newsletter: Sophomores!

## The Counseling Staff

Welcome back!

Remember, students are assigned to a counselor based on the student's last name:

**Mrs. Shari Smith: A-D**

ssmith@portageps.org

323-5527

**Mrs. Krista Hovestadt: E-K**

khovestadt@portageps.org

323-5420

**Ms. Amy DiMaggio: L-Q**

**Director of Counseling**

adimaggio@portageps.org

323-5472

**Mrs. Cindy Figueroa: R-Z**

cfigueroa@portageps.org

323-5424

Administrative Assistants:

**Ms. Ruthie Connaughty**

Registrar / Enrollment / Ap-  
pointments

rconnaughty@portageps.org

323-5475

**Mrs. Deb Beverly**

Transcripts / Scholarships /  
College Visits

dbeverly@portageps.org

323-5464

**Office Hours:**

7:00 am—3:30 pm

**Located on east end of  
second floor.**

Inside this issue:

Counseling Services 2

Graduation Requirements 2

Your Freshmen Year 3

Helpful Hints 3

Suggestions for Students 4

Suggestions for Parents 4

Avoid the Sophomore Slump 4



---

## On Track?

- To be on track for graduation, a student entering his/her sophomore year, must have a minimum of five (5) credits. Many of you may have more than that already! When viewing your transcript, exclude any middle school (MS) credits. Those classes counted as pre-requisites, but not toward the 26 credits required for graduation.
- If you have less than five credits, be sure to contact your counselor immediately to enroll in an online credit recovery class through Michigan Virtual High School.
- Portage Public Schools policy states that students must complete all graduation requirements within four years of enrolling in high school. Specific graduation requirements are listed on page 2.

## Counseling Services

A staff of four full time counselors are here to provide:

**Academic Planning:** Counselors will work with students to create a 4 year Educational Development Plan (EDP); they will monitor and audit students to remain on track for graduation and will help students with academic issues.

**Individual / Personal Counseling:** Counselors are always here to help with any questions or concerns that students might have. We are here to listen and provide support. We also help students seek additional counseling or community resources, if needed. We're here to talk

about anything: friends, family, school, stress, goals...anything.

**College Preparation:** Students will be advised as to which classes best prepare them for their future college choices. Counselors will guide students to prepare themselves to be well-rounded, academically strong candidates for college admissions. Students should become active quickly in extra-curricular activities and in volunteering outside of school.

**Post-Secondary Plan:** Counselors are also here to discuss many other options for life after high school: the armed forces, a trade or tech school, the Peace Corps or travel.



## Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) PNHS Graduation Requirements

**English: 4 credits**

**Math: 4 credits**

Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra 2 and a Senior Year Math Related Course

**Social Studies: 3 credits**

American History, Government / Economics, World History

**Science: 3 credits**

Chemistry / Physics, Biology (all year), Earth Science and Chem 2 or Physics 2

**Health / Freshmen Focus: 1 credit**

Health is required and FF is strongly recommended.

**Physical Education: 1.5 credits**

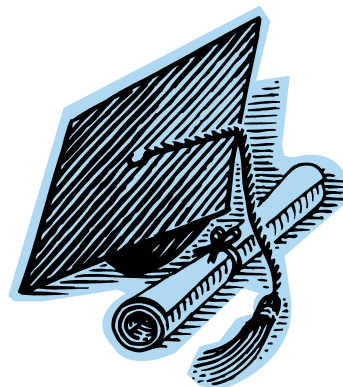
3 one semester courses. All 1.5 credits can be "waived" by participating in PN sports or marching band. For individual plans, contact your counselor.

**Fine Arts: 1 credit**

Recommended to be completed in grades 9 or 10. Some examples: music, art, Forensics, Drama, Woodworking, many business classes and more....

**World Language:** At this point, World Language is not a PPS graduation requirement; however it is strongly advised that students take at least two years of the same language to be considered "competitive" for college admissions.

Students must earn 26 credits to graduate from Portage Public Schools. They must also meet the minimum core requirements as outlined by the MMC.



The only schedule changes that will be allowed in the fall are those that are missing a class or have a doubled-up hour. Unfortunately, we can not honor teacher requests or lunch change requests. Thank you.

## What to Expect From Your Counselor During Your Sophomore Year

Counselors will give classroom presentations to all sophomores the first month of school to introduce ourselves and discuss the services available. At this time, we will also discuss the standardized tests that occur during the 10th grade year.

In February, we will meet with each student, one on one, to create the academic schedule for the following academic year. At this time, we will review students' four year Educational Development Plan (EDP). Counselors will complete semester audits to ensure that students are on track for graduation. If a student fails a required course, the counselor will automatically place the student in that course the following year. Coun-

selors are here to be a liaison between home and school. We are here to facilitate discussions, to help when a concern or problem is not resolved and to be an advocate for students. Our main goal is to provide students and parents with information regarding the academic and social-emotional components of high school life.

The sophomore year is a great time to begin researching colleges online. Counselors will give in depth college planning presentations during the junior year.

**Standardized Tests:** All sophomores are strongly suggested to take the **ACT PLAN**, which is a practiced test for the ACT. The ACT is one of two common college entrance exams, along with the SAT. Counselors will provide detailed interpretation of all test results for all students.

There are no other required or suggested standardized tests during the sophomore year. We typically recommend for students to begin taking the ACT/SAT during their junior year.

**Future Standardized Tests: 11th grade:** PSAT (optional), ACT/SAT (optional) MME (required).

Contact your counselor now if you will need accommodations for the PSAT or IB exams during your junior year. Typically an IEP or 504 Plan is in place to receive any accommodation.

## Helpful Hints for your Sophomore Year

**Tips for Students:** The sophomore year can be a challenge for students. Many refer to it as the "sophomore slump" because students are not new to high school, nor are they experienced upperclassmen. Due to this 'middle ground', many students find it is harder to stay focused on academics and to maintain a high GPA. The sophomore year is a very important year to establish and keep a solid GPA. Grade Point Average is one factor for colleges admissions. Additional factors for college admissions are class rank, ACT/SAT test scores, strength of core curriculum, personal essays, letters of recommendation, extra-curricular activities and volunteer work.

The 10th grade year is also the time to begin thinking about for possibly pursuing the IB Diploma during your junior and senior years. If you are interested in pursuing the diploma, be sure to attend IB meetings hosted by Mr. Searing (IB Coordinator) and/or Mrs. Nott (IB Cass Coordinator). At the end of your sophomore year, you will map out a two year plan for your IB Diploma courses and exams with your counselor and Mr. Searing.

- Seek academic help/support, if needed. Contact a teacher immediately if there is a concern about content, grading or policies.

Monitor your grades weekly via the PIV (Parent Internet Viewer). If you do not have your access code, see Ruthie. Attend the ASSIST room after school for extra time/help and/or work with a teacher before/after school. Get involved! Begin participating in extra-curricular activities. We have over 60 clubs and activities here at PN. Search our PN website for more details.

**Tips for Parents:** Stay in touch. Monitor daily announcements and keep up to date on our website. Monitor students' grades on the PIV. Contact teachers immediately if there is concern. Encourage your student to seek academic support from the classroom teacher or the ASSIST room. The ASSIST room is open Mondays-Thursdays from 3 to 5 pm. It is located on the 3rd floor, east end. There will be a teacher and tutors available.

Be sure to stay connected by reading the Huskie Tracks, reading our daily announcements online and monitoring our PN website at [www.portageps.org](http://www.portageps.org).



## Suggestions for Students

- ◇ Be active in your education. Take responsibility for your learning, homework, grades and communication with teachers.
- ◇ Ask questions and participate in class.
- ◇ Be respectful to all teachers, staff and students.
- ◇ Follow all instructions in your classes and know the rules in your student handbook.
- ◇ Monitor your grades on the PIV and ask the teacher if you have a concern.
- ◇ If you are behind in credits, see your counselor immediately to enroll in a credit recovery class online through Michigan Virtual High School.

## Avoid the Sophomore Slump

- Be active! Research areas of interest to you— including possible majors, minors and extra curricular activities. Find something you'll love—and go with it!
- Set Goals! Set goals for yourself for your high school graduation. Make sure they are attainable and specific to your own needs.
- Stay Healthy! It seems simple— stay healthy and active— **you'll feel more energized and motivated to do other things... like homework, perhaps??!**
- **Don't Go Overboard!** Manage your schedule and make sure that it's balanced between classes you enjoy and classes that are required and/or recommended for college. If you are overloaded, you are more likely to become disconnected and / or stressed out.
- Stay motivated! Your sophomore year is a great time to begin searching for colleges online. Research college admissions and testing requirements. Take college tours and bring a list of questions.
- Ask Questions! Talk to your teachers, parents, friends, counselors **about your academic questions. Don't be shy... no question is a silly question!**

## Suggestions for Parents

- ◇ **Be active in your child's education.** Be sure that your phone numbers and email addresses are updated in the grade/counseling offices.
- ◇ Contact the teachers first regarding concerns about content, grades or policies.
- ◇ Communicate with counselors regarding changes in home environment or other personal concerns regarding your student.
- ◇ **Know your teachers' classroom policies** and be familiar with the student handbook.

Be sure to stay connected by reading the Husky Tracks, reading our daily announcements online and monitoring our PN website at [www.portageps.org](http://www.portageps.org).



Have a great year!

Go Huskies!