

Important Things to Know Regarding College Planning
Kathy Oxford, M.S.S.W., Ed Specialist in School Counseling

1. The best way to contact me is through email, kathy.oxford@hallco.org. Use your course catalog, student handbook, the Hall County School website, GAcollge411, College Board's and Peterson's website for searching college information. I see many junior and senior students, parents, and teachers each day, so to manage my large volume of paperwork I work at my desk completing college and scholarship recommendations, and returning phone calls after 4 p.m.
2. I see students by appointment and emergency drop in. College and career information is available in the Student Services Counseling Office. All students have advisors who supply information from me and other sources. Advisors are very helpful in keeping up with your students' graduation requirements and planning sound schedules for academic success. College representatives visit NHHS frequently. **Daily announcements are important and are placed on IC and Announcement Board – Front Lobby.**
3. **I expect all students to continue their education after graduation through apprenticeships, the military, technical college, two year college, or four year college. Employers want trained workers; a high school diploma is never enough to compete for the best jobs and benefits.**
4. I am supportive of mid-year graduation but only if the student pursues a course of study or enters a volunteer service / mission program. Mid-year graduation will be very difficult on a 7 period day.
5. I encourage rigor in all subjects. Students should choose courses that will challenge them to the best of their ability. No employer or college wants a student who has done nothing their senior year. It is well documented that students who are unchallenged their senior year do not perform well in college. IB courses are the most demanding, followed by AP classes, and honors courses. The HOPE Scholarship/Grant Program does not recognize non-academic electives.
6. I have learned that taking a year off in math is detrimental to college success.
7. **I expect students to visit post secondary schools with their parents and by themselves multiple times. Sit in classes, spend the night in the dorms, and talk to students and professors. Monday holidays, spring break, and summer vacation are great times to visit. The district does not formally recognize college visitation days. Should you use a school day for visitation, pick up a college visitation form from the Student Services Office. Using school days for college visits is not encouraged but sometimes cannot be avoided. Our administration is very supportive of college visitation.**
8. I expect that all juniors have taken the PSAT in their 10th and 11th grades because important predictive information for the ACT and SAT is available from those scores. Material for ACT and SAT registration is available in the Student Services/Counseling Office and online. I suggest that my four year college bound students take the **ACT** - followed by the SAT **only under my advisement**, as they are very different tests but equally acceptable to all colleges and universities. All Colleges/Universities/Scholarships accept the ACT. The ACT gives better information regarding academic strengths and weaknesses and tests students on high school material. The SAT is more projective in nature and less information is gathered from the results from the high school side of things. Do choose the writing option for the ACT, because colleges want writing scores. Students generally perform best on the ACT. The SAT has become a high-stakes test. **I suggest all students complete their chosen college entrance test by the end of their Junior (3rd) school year if**

possible. Always use our school code, 111395. Otherwise the official sticker scores will not be sent to our office. The ACT and SAT may be taken free of charge by students with demonstrated financial need. Students with special needs are allowed accommodations for testing but only through SSD application. See me to begin that lengthy process. Other important tests offered at NHHS include the ASSET (entrance exam for GA technical colleges) and the ASVAB (a career aptitude exam sponsored by the U.S. military.) Both are free of charge and are given during the school day twice per year. Announcements will be made for these testing opportunities.

9. Mrs. Anita Cox is North Hall High School's Advanced Placement Coordinator. She will provide information to your student each spring regarding testing. Currently, there is no cost because the state and Hall County Schools pay for all AP testing to encourage participation by all. Tests are taken here in the late spring and I arrange the testing sessions. All AP students must take their AP exams. Students may also take AP exams without taking the course for full price. Accommodations for special needs students are consistent with those requested for the ACT & SAT. AP courses are also available through GA Virtual High School which can make scheduling more flexible however the rigor is very high. Transfer AP grades from (GA Virtual HS) do not receive extra points.

10. I enjoy a good relationship with area colleges. My students are successful taking ACCEL courses (joint enrollment). I look to ACCEL courses as a perfect source of elective credit and college experience, offered at a very low cost. See me to begin the ACCEL application process and read about it on GAcollge411.

11. I offer a January financial aid workshop for senior parents to explain the FAFSA (a free federal form used to determine financial need and for HOPE), the alternate HOPE Scholarship form and HOPE Grant applications, etc. **There is no need to do anything regarding financial aid until students and parents have completed their annual tax forms.** (Mid year grads will complete their college financial paperwork ASAP.) There is no strategy to "getting the HOPE". Simply get the highest grades possible in your academic subjects (English, Math, Science, Social Studies and Foreign Language). Extra HOPE credit is given for Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses. These courses will have an additional 5 points added to the final grade (i.e. 3.0 to a 3.5). HOPE GPA's are not available on transcripts and can only be provided by the GA Student Finance Commission. The HOPE information you seek is on GAcollge411. You can also see your student's HOPE GPA on that website. HOPE information is never available on a permanent record. Do not make this common mistake!

12. In regards to scholarships, I will announce recognition and scholarship opportunities - you should use online search engines. **Daily announcements are important.** Remember, scholarships are usually for students with extreme financial need, extremely high grades, extremely high college entrance exams, extensive community contributions, exceptional athletic talent, etc. National scholarships are difficult for Georgians to obtain because all good students here can go to school in-state 90% tuition free. The majority of solid scholarship money is sitting at the college for exceptional academic talent, artistic talent, and tuition discounts at private school making a private education almost as affordable as a public one. It is the student's responsibility to take advantage of the information offered through my office.

13. I will treat your students as if they are my own. Having used that philosophy for over 30 years of practice, I am sticking to it.

P.S. Please return to NHHS in August knowing what you plan to do after graduation. I expect all applications to be complete by the 15th of October, especially with assuring the availability of housing. Trust me, experience has taught me so well. You will feel a huge sense of relief once you have completed this entire task. Please follow my time line and enjoy the rest of the school year.