FRESHMAN

NEWSLETTER

GRAFTON HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2029

MEET YOUR SCHOOL COUNSELORS

As you continue settling into your freshman year, remember that your school counselors are here to support you every step of the way. The next four years are full of opportunities to learn, grow, and discover what interests you—both in and out of the classroom. Whether you're adjusting to new routines, exploring clubs and activities, or starting to think about future goals, we're here to help you navigate it all.

At Grafton High School, students are assigned a school counselor based on their last name and work with that counselor for all four years of high school. This allows students to build a strong partnership with their counselor and receive consistent support for academics, college and career planning, and social-emotional growth.

Don't hesitate to reach out with questions or stop by to say hello—we're excited to help you make a strong start and set the foundation for your high school success!

SAVE THE DATE!
GRAFTON HIGH SCHOOL COURSE PLANNING NIGHT

Tuesday, December 9, 2025
6:00-8:00 PM

More details to follow soon!

Mrs. Andrea Ross, Counseling Director, (A-Ca)
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IN THIS NEWSLETTER:

- Meet Your School Counselors
- Why & How Do I Meet with My School Counselor?
- Freshman Meetings
- Check Your School Email
- SchooLinks Exploration
- Graduation Requirements
- Community Service & Diploma Seals
- Mental Health & Wellness Supports
- Transition Tips for Freshman: Adjusting to High School
- GHS Counseling Webpage

WHY DO I MEET WITH MY SCHOOL COUNSELOR?

School counselors are trained to support students' academics, social-emotional well-being, and future planning. Students meet with counselors for help with classes, friendships, personal challenges, or planning for college and careers. Counselors also guide students in developing academic and career plans to ensure students are on track for graduation.

HOW DO I MEET WITH MY SCHOOL COUNSELOR?

The GHS Counseling Office is located on the first floor by the back doors, next to the Attendance Office. Students can meet with their counselor by appointment—made via email or a counselor request slip—or often by walk-in before or after school or during lunch. If an urgent situation arises, students can ask any staff member to see a counselor immediately. Parents are also welcome to email or call their student's counselor.

FRESHMAN MEETINGS

Counselors will be in classrooms October 28th–30th to share important information about graduation requirements, special programs, and course planning. During November, school counselors will begin meeting individually with freshmen to check in and help them make a strong start to high school. During these meetings, counselors will review each student's classes and grades, discuss academic and career goals, and share helpful freshman resources. It's a great time for students to ask questions, explore their interests, and learn how to make the most of their high school experience. If parents or guardians would like to attend their student's individual meeting, please notify the student's assigned school counselor by October 31st so that scheduling arrangements can be made.

CHECK YOUR SCHOOL EMAIL REGULARLY

Your GHS Outlook email is the main way school counselors share important information and connect with students. Since counselors don't have Canvas classrooms to communicate, it's important to check your email often so you don't miss announcements, meeting invites, or helpful resources. Staying on top of your email helps you stay informed and connected!

SCHOOLINKS COLLEGE & CAREER EXPLORATION

Freshmen are encouraged to start using SchooLinks, our college and career readiness platform, to explore interests, discover strengths, and begin thinking about future goals. SchooLinks helps students learn about different careers, explore high school course options, and start building a personalized plan for success.

Even though it's early in high school, logging in regularly is a great way to get familiar with the platform and complete any assigned tasks. SchooLinks will continue to grow with you over the next four years, eventually becoming the central hub for college, career, and post-secondary planning. Starting now gives freshmen a head start on planning for their future!

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GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

To earn a high school diploma in Virginia, students must complete a set number of course credits and verified credits (earned by passing required SOL tests).

Most students work toward either the Advanced Studies Diploma or the Standard Diploma:

- The Advanced Studies Diploma requires 26 credits and 5 verified credits.
- The Standard Diploma requires 22 credits and 5 verified credits.

Students earn one (1) credit for a full-year course and a half (0.5) credit for a semester course by earning a passing grade of 64% or higher.

Advanced Studies Diploma		**Standard Diploma**	
Twenty-six credits are required for the Advanced Studies Diploma, including the following:		Twenty-two credits are required for graduation, including the following:	
English (9, 10, 11, 12)	4 Credits	English (9, 10, 11, 12)	4 Credits
Mathematics	4 Credits	Mathematics	3 Credits
Science	4 Credits	Science	3 Credits
History & Social Science	4 Credits	History & Social Science	3 Credits
World Languages (3 of one or 2 of two languages)	3 Credits	Health/PE	2 Credits
Health & PE	2 Credits	World Languages, Fine Arts or Career/ Technical Education	2 Credits
Fine Arts or Career/ Technical Education	1 Credit	Economics & Personal Finance	1 Credit
Economics & Personal Finance	1 Credit	Electives	4 Credits
Electives	4 Credits	Virtual Course: *noncredit-bearing or required elective credit-bearing course*	
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Verified credits are awarded when a student passes both the course and the corresponding SOL exam. All students must earn at least one verified credit in math, one in science, one in history, and two in English (reading and writing).

Students who do not pass a course may need to attend Summer Academy to stay on track for graduation. Freshmen can prepare now by earning good grades, completing required courses, and developing strong study habits for future SOL exams.

COMMUNITY SERVICE & DIPLOMA SEALS

While community service is not required for graduation, it can count toward certain diploma seals that recognize students' achievement and involvement. The YCSD Community Service Seal requires 150 or more volunteer hours, which must be documented on the Community Service Log and submitted by April 15th of senior year. Participating in service is a great way to give back, build skills, and strengthen your college or career applications.

View the YCSD Program of Studies for more information.

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLNESS SUPPORT

High school can bring new challenges, and school counselors are here to help students manage stress, build coping skills, and stay balanced. Counselors provide a safe space to talk about emotions, friendships, and personal concerns while teaching strategies for healthy habits, time management, and self-care. Reaching out early is a great way to take care of mental health and stay focused on success.

In addition to school counseling support, students also have access to the following resources:

- Calm Room – A quiet, supervised space where students can take a short break to reset, regulate, and return to class ready to learn.
- Care Solace – A division-supported resource that helps students and families connect quickly with community-based mental health providers. Families may partner with their school counselor to complete a referral or they may use the the linked resource to search for a provider on their own.

PLAN AHEAD FOR FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

YCSD offers several special programs for 11th and 12th grade students. You can start preparing now by reviewing the application requirements for these programs and maintaining strong academic standing throughout high school. See below for more information on the Governor's School for Science and Technology and the New Horizons Career & Technical Education Center.

GOVERNOR'S SCHOOL FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (GSST)

The Governor's School for Science and Technology is a competitive, two-year, half-day program for 11th and 12th grade students. Students apply during 10th grade and the PSAT is highly recommended.

GSST offers three strands of study:

- Engineering: Focus on engineering principles and calculus-based physics. (Prerequisites: Biology, Chemistry, Pre-Calculus)
- Biological Science: Covers chemistry, cell and molecular biology, genetics, and organism physiology. (Prerequisites: Biology, Chemistry, Algebra II/Trig; Physics recommended)
- Computational Science: Emphasizes software development, modeling, simulation, and non-calculus physics. (Prerequisites: Biology, Chemistry, Algebra II/Trig)

Visit the Governor's School for Science and Technology website for more information: GSST Website
Join the Prospective Student Pipeline at: Prospective Student Information

NEW HORIZONS CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION CENTER (CTEC)

For over 40 years, CTEC has provided hands-on career and technical education for Virginia Peninsula high school 11th and 12th grade students. Students apply during 10th grade, must meet prerequisites, and are encouraged to notify their counselor to ensure required documents (transcript, conduct, attendance) are submitted. Programs include:

Healthcare • Veterinary Science • Cosmetology • Culinary Arts • Criminal Justice • Firefighting • Cybersecurity • Computer Programming • Mechatronics • Automotive Technology • Building Construction • HVAC • Welding • Plumbing • Electricity • Marine Service Technology • Early Childhood Education • and more.

Visit the New Horizons Career and Technical Education Center website for more information: NHCTEC

YCSD HONORS PROGRAM

The York County School Division Honors Program offers students in grades 8–12 a rigorous academic experience. Students must maintain a strong GPA (3.25 in 9th grade; 3.50 in grades 10–12), earn no final grade lower than a "C," and take a minimum of six AP or dual enrollment courses across four content areas.

Honors students also complete four consecutive years of the same world language, maintain a full course load each year, and may not repeat, drop, or withdraw from courses after the drop/add period. Students must also complete 20 hours of community service beginning in the first semester of 9th grade.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Community service hours are not required for graduation, but they are recognized or required through certain honor societies and special YCSD programs. Be sure to check the YCSD Program of Studies for full details and submit your hours through the Community Service Log by Spring Break of Senior year.

TRANSITION TIPS FOR FRESHMEN: ADJUSTING TO HIGH SCHOOL

Starting high school is an exciting time, but it can also feel overwhelming as you adjust to new routines, classes, and expectations. Developing good habits early can help you stay organized, manage your time, and feel confident navigating your freshman year. Below are some practical tips to help you make a smooth transition and set yourself up for success both inside and outside the classroom.

1. Get Organized Early
- Use a planner or digital calendar to track homework, tests, and events.
- Create a routine for checking grades and assignments in Aspen and Canvas weekly.
- Keep a dedicated folder or binder for each class to avoid misplaced work.

2. Learn to Communicate with Teachers
- Don't be afraid to ask questions in class or email your teacher for help.
- Use teacher remediation or tutoring sessions if you're struggling.
- Be polite and professional in emails—start with a greeting and include your class period.

3. Manage Your Time Wisely
- Break big assignments into smaller steps and set mini-deadlines.
- Limit distractions (phones, social media) during study time.
- Set a consistent bedtime—sleep impacts focus and mood.

4. Get Involved
- Join at least one club, sport, or activity to meet new people.
- Attend school events—pep rallies, spirit week, games—to feel connected.
- Volunteer or help out in school activities—it builds friendships and confidence.

5. Build Good Habits Early
- Review notes daily instead of cramming before tests.
- Sit near the front or in a spot where you can focus.
- Keep your backpack and digital files organized.

6. Take Care of Yourself
- Eat breakfast and stay hydrated throughout the day.
- Make time for things you enjoy outside of school.
- Talk to your counselor or a trusted adult if you're feeling overwhelmed.

7. Set Short-Term Goals
- Aim for small wins—like turning in all assignments on time this week.
- Reflect on your progress every grading period and adjust your habits.
- Celebrate your accomplishments, no matter how small.

8. Know Your Resources
- Visit the counseling office to learn about tutoring, mental health support, and career planning tools.
- Check the school website for academic help, clubs, and announcements.
- Ask upperclassmen for advice—they've been through it!

DON'T FORGET TO VISIT THE GHS COUNSELING WEBPAGE!

Your GHS Counseling webpage is a one-stop shop for important updates, resources, and tools to support you throughout high school. Be sure to check back regularly for new announcements and opportunities!