

JUNIOR NEWSLETTER



~~~~~ SETTING SAIL FOR SENIOR YEAR AND BEYOND ~~~~~



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## Grafton High School Course Planning Night

**Tuesday, December 9th**  
**6:00–7:30 PM**



**Course Fair:**  
**6:00–7:00PM**

**Presentation:**  
**7:00–7:30 PM**

## GHS Counseling Department

As you prepare for your senior year, remember that your school counselor is here to support you every step of the way. Whether your plans include college, career, trade school or military service, we're ready to help you explore your options, stay on track for graduation, and navigate the next steps with confidence. Don't hesitate to reach out with questions—we're excited to help you make the most of your final year and prepare for what comes next!

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Visit the **GHS Counseling** page for additional resources, announcements, and opportunities!

## Junior Meetings

Counselors will visit Junior classrooms during the first two weeks of December to share important information about graduation requirements, special programs, and course planning for Senior year. Beginning in December and continuing through January, school counselors will meet individually with Juniors to review classes and grades, discuss academic and career goals, and share helpful resources for planning next steps—whether that includes college, trade school, employment, or military service.

Students will receive a pass with their pre-scheduled Junior Meeting date and time. Parents and guardians are encouraged to attend; however, if they would like to be included, for planning purposes, they should notify their student's assigned school counselor by December 5th so that scheduling arrangements can be made.

## Advanced Studies or Standard Diploma

On Track for Graduation? Know Your Diploma Path!



### ADVANCED STUDIES DIPLOMA

(26 CREDITS)

| Subject                                                                                                    | Credits |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| English                                                                                                    | 4       |
| History                                                                                                    | 4       |
| Math                                                                                                       | 4       |
| Lab Science *from 3 different disciplines                                                                  | 4       |
| Health & PE *to include First Aid/CPR/AED Cert.                                                            | 2       |
| World Language *3 consecutive years or 2 years from 2 different languages                                  | 3       |
| Fine Arts or CTE                                                                                           | 1       |
| Econ. & Personal Finance *counts as required virtual course                                                | 1       |
| Electives *to include 2 sequential electives                                                               | 3       |
| Completion of an AP, Dual Enrollment, Work-Based Learning or CTE (Career & Technical Education) Credential |         |

### STANDARD DIPLOMA

(22 CREDITS)

| Subject                                                                                                    | Credits |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| English                                                                                                    | 4       |
| History                                                                                                    | 3       |
| Math                                                                                                       | 3       |
| Lab Science *from 2 different disciplines                                                                  | 3       |
| Health & PE *to include First Aid/CPR/AED Cert.                                                            | 2       |
| World Language, Fine Arts, or CTE                                                                          | 2       |
| Econ. & Personal Finance *counts as required virtual course                                                | 1       |
| Electives *to include 2 sequential electives                                                               | 4       |
| Completion of an AP, Dual Enrollment, Work-Based Learning or CTE (Career & Technical Education) Credential |         |



If you're unsure about a requirement or want to learn more about a course, explore your options in the [YCSD Program of Studies](#).



## Get Ready for Your Future with **schoolinks**

SchoolLinks is our school's official college and career readiness platform, designed to help you prepare for life after graduation—whether that means college, career, military, or other pathways. It's your one-stop hub for planning your next steps and building a personalized graduation plan that reflects your goals.

### What Can You Do in SchoolLinks?

- Discover your learning style, strengths, and career interests through surveys
- Build your Academic and Career Plan (ACP) through the Course Planner
- Explore 2-year and 4-year colleges, trade schools, and technical programs
- Create course plans based on career pathways
- Take virtual reality college campus tours
- Search for scholarships and learn about financial aid
- Find internship, apprenticeship, and volunteer opportunities
- Explore traditional, emerging, and military careers
- Create digital portfolios and resumes for college or employment
- Track college applications, transcripts, and letters of recommendation (Senior Year)

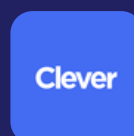
### How to Log In:

Students:

- Log in through Clever, then select the SchoolLinks logo.

Parents/Guardians:

- Access SchoolLinks through an invitation from your student or by using a Claim Code found in Aspen under Details > Demographics.



## ✓ Enrollment: Your Next Chapter Starts Here

Thinking about college? Start now to stay ahead! Here's a helpful Junior Year Checklist:

- Visit college campuses – Call ahead to schedule a guided tour and check the college's website for open house dates.
- Finalize your list of colleges – Make sure it's realistic and includes at least one "safety" school.
- Keep a college calendar – Track all admission and scholarship deadlines.
- Update your resume – Include accomplishments, work experience, and activities. This will help with applications, essays, and recommendations.
- Register for SAT or ACT – Secure your test dates early!

Tip: Staying organized now will make senior year much less stressful.

### NCAA Eligibility: Important for Student-Athletes

- Playing Grafton Sports? You must be enrolled in 5 credit-bearing classes and have passed 5 classes the previous semester to stay eligible.
- Want to play college sports? If you plan to compete in Division I or II, you must register with the NCAA Eligibility Center to be eligible for recruitment.



The Common App is a single electronic application accepted by over 1,000 colleges and universities. If you're applying to two or more schools that use Common App, it's a great way to save time and reduce stress!

To ensure your school counselor can upload your official transcript, School Report, and any required letters of recommendation, you must link your Common App and SchoolLinks accounts.

Before your counselor writes your recommendation, they'll need your [Senior Information Sheet](#) so they can highlight your achievements.

Common App opens August 1! Click the logos to access the Common App and SchoolLinks websites.

## Opportunities College Planning Workbook



The [ECMC Opportunities](#) book is a free, step-by-step guide to planning for education after high school. Inside, you'll find:

- Types of colleges and a worksheet to help you choose the right fit
- Information on the college application process and entrance exams
- A worksheet to organize your applications and deadlines
- Guidance on financial aid, FAFSA, and Virginia-specific resources
- VA College Profiler to compare costs and average SAT/GPA scores
- A glossary of college terminology to make the process easier

Whether you're considering a university, community college, or career school, this workbook helps you stay organized and informed.

## What Colleges Are Looking For – And How to Shine

When you apply to college, admissions teams look at more than just grades. Here's what matters most:

- **Grades and Test Scores:** Your academic record is key. Check each school's testing policy—some are test-optional, others require SAT or ACT scores.
- **Extracurricular Activities:** Leadership roles stand out. Colleges want to see commitment and impact, not just participation.
- **Rigorous Course Schedule:** Challenge yourself! Advanced, honors, AP, and DE courses show you're ready for college-level work.
- **Follow Directions:** Read carefully. If an application asks for one essay, don't answer them all—you won't earn extra points. Complete every section as instructed.
- **Be Thorough and Prompt:** Include all requested materials, sign every form, and meet deadlines. Give teachers and counselors at least two weeks for recommendations—don't wait until the last minute.

### Your Application Essay: Make It Count

- Show, don't tell – Use specific examples to bring your story to life.
- Be creative and memorable – Let your personality shine.
- Proofread carefully – Spell check isn't enough. Ask an adult to review for grammar and clarity.
- Stand out – This is your chance to share what makes you unique.



## SAT, ACT, or Both? Your Spring Testing Game Plan

Plan ahead! Juniors should aim to take the digital SAT at least twice in the spring of junior year. Some students also choose to take the ACT—this can be a great option if you're strong in science or prefer a faster-paced test format. Talk to your school counselor to see which test is best for you.

Free Test Prep Resources:

- [College Board Bluebook](#) and [Khan Academy](#) offer personalized SAT practice.
- [ACT Academy](#) provides free practice for all students.



**Know the Requirements:** Some colleges remain test optional, but policies vary. Always check the college's website for specific testing requirements. Note: Some schools only allow test-optional applications for students with a GPA above a certain threshold.

|                  |                        |
|------------------|------------------------|
| SAT Test Dates:  | Registration Deadline: |
| March 14, 2026 → | February 27, 2026      |
| May 2, 2026 →    | April 17, 2026         |
| June 6, 2026 →   | May 22, 2026           |

|                     |                        |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| ACT Test Dates:     | Registration Deadline: |
| February 14, 2026 → | January 9, 2026        |
| April 11, 2026 →    | March 6, 2026          |
| June 13, 2026 →     | May 8, 2026            |
| July 11, 2026 →     | June 5, 2026           |

Grafton School Code: 472504

## College Admission Plans Explained

Understanding application options can help you plan ahead. Here are the most common types:

**Regular Admission:** Apply by a mid-winter deadline, hear from colleges in early April, and make your decision by May 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Rolling Admission:** Apply anytime and usually receive a decision within 2–6 weeks. Be mindful of scholarship deadlines—they may have fixed dates.

**Early Action:** A non-binding option. Submit your application in early fall and hear back by early January (or sooner). You still have until May 1<sup>st</sup> to decide.

**Early Decision:** This is binding. Apply in early fall and receive a decision between December and January. If accepted, you must attend. You may only apply to ONE school under Early Decision.

### Already Earning College Credit? Check Your Options!

Have you taken Advanced Placement (AP) or Dual Enrollment (DE) courses in high school? You might already qualify for college credit or advanced placement—but not all colleges and universities treat credits the same. It's important to compare schools to see where you can get the most transfer credit.

#### AP Credit Policy Search



Your AP scores could earn you college credit or allow you to skip certain courses. Use the AP Credit Policy tool to find colleges that offer credit or placement for AP scores.

#### Transfer Virginia



Dual Enrollment courses let you earn college credits while in high school. You need a 3.0 GPA to enroll in a DE course. Learn how these credits transfer to Virginia partner institutions through Transfer Virginia.

Taking advantage of AP and DE opportunities now can save you time and money later—especially if you choose a school that maximizes your transfer credits.

### Considering Community College?

Community college is an affordable, flexible option—especially with Virginia's Transfer (2+2) Program! You can complete two years at a community college, then transfer to a four-year university to finish your degree, saving time and money along the way.

**College Transfer Programs:** Through statewide agreements, students who graduate from one of Virginia's 23 community colleges with an associate degree and a minimum GPA may receive guaranteed admission to more than 30 colleges and universities across the Commonwealth.

**Certificate Programs:** There are career-ready options, too! Many community colleges offer certificate programs in high-demand fields that can be completed in a year or less—helping you quickly gain skills and enter the workforce.

Talk to your school counselor to learn more about programs, transfer pathways, and how to get started!

## Interested in Trade School or Workforce Training?

College isn't the only path after graduation—trade schools, apprenticeships, and workforce training programs offer hands-on learning and direct pathways into high-demand careers. Whether you're interested in skilled trades, healthcare, technology, or public service, there are great options across Virginia.

Programs like apprenticeships combine paid on-the-job training with classroom instruction, while technical and career colleges offer certificates and credentials in fields like welding, HVAC, nursing, dental assisting, IT, and more—often in two years or less.

Explore [Apprenticeship & Workforce Training](#) and [Health & Technical Career Colleges](#) on the GHS Counseling page. Talk to your school counselor and check out Virginia's opportunities for career-ready graduates!

### **Employment: Launch Your Career**

Heading Straight Into the Workforce? Virginia offers great opportunities to help you get started! The [Virginia Employment Commission \(VEC\)](#) is a valuable resource for job listings, training programs, and employment support.

Before you begin applying, make sure your resume is polished—use the [SchoolLinks](#) student profile and resume builder to create or update your resume. SchoolLinks also lets you explore careers, connect with local employers through the Employer Showcase, and discover jobs that match your strengths and interests.

Don't forget to meet with the GHS [Career Coach](#) for personalized guidance, and check out resources like [MyFuture](#), [Virginia Career View](#), and [BigFuture](#) for more career exploration tools.

### **Enlistment: Serve with Purpose**

If you're considering joining the military after graduation, there are countless opportunities to explore. The branches of the U.S. Armed Forces and National Guard offer access to hundreds of training schools and thousands of career paths—from engineering and healthcare to aviation and cybersecurity. This training, along with the leadership and discipline gained through service, can provide a strong advantage in the civilian job market.

Each branch has its own enlistment qualifications, so it's important to connect with local recruiters or explore more online. A great place to start is [MyFuture.com/military](#), along with resources like [Careers in the Military](#) and [Today's Military](#), which offer insight into life in the service and help you decide if it's the right path for you.



The **ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery)** is a career exploration tool that helps identify your strengths and connect them to civilian and military careers. GHS will offer the ASVAB in February. For details, see your school counselor and sign up through SchoolLinks.

## 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.

