

CLASS OF 2030

O'FALLON TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL

PARENT CONNECTS

Freshman Year:
Helping Your Panther Make the
Transition

Milburn School Counseling & Social Work Teams

Panther Connects Open House • August 2026

2030

**YOUR OTHS JOURNEY
STARTS HERE**





You have a high schooler now.

More freedom. More responsibility. More opportunity.

QUICK POLL

Raise your hand if your freshman has already answered “fine” when you asked how school is going.



Your Freshman

How was school?

Fine.

8 HOURS. ONE WORD.

Freshman year is a transition for students — and for families.



Three things you will leave with

A practical roadmap — not an information dump.

What is normal

What freshmen often experience as they adjust to high school — and what deserves a closer look.

How to support

How to coach independence without stepping away — or taking over.

Where to turn

The people, programs, and supports available at Milburn and across OTHS.

 **Our goal: help your student feel capable, connected, and known.**



Your Milburn support team

Students do not have to wait for a crisis to connect with us.



Travis Hattan

School Counselor

Last names A-Q • ext. 5287
hattant@oths.us



Tracey Ritzel

School Counselor

Last names R-Z • ext. 5238
ritzelt@oths.us



Kate Randle

School Social Worker

Milburn Campus • ext. 5259
randlek@oths.us



Tarah Rottmann

School Social Worker

Milburn team • ext. 5632
Tarah.Rottmann@oths.us

 **Start with us. If we are not the right person, we will help connect you to the right person.**



Social Work at Milburn

Support for students and families - before concerns become crises.

Students can connect with a social worker for:

- Any social-emotional need
- Peer or family concerns
- Mental-health concerns, including anxiety or depression

Students do not need to be in crisis to ask for support - and parents are welcome to reach out, too.

How to connect

SCAN OR TAKE A PHOTO



SocialWorkersMilburn@oths.us

Digital form: Counseling Office
Offices: next to the Attendance Office

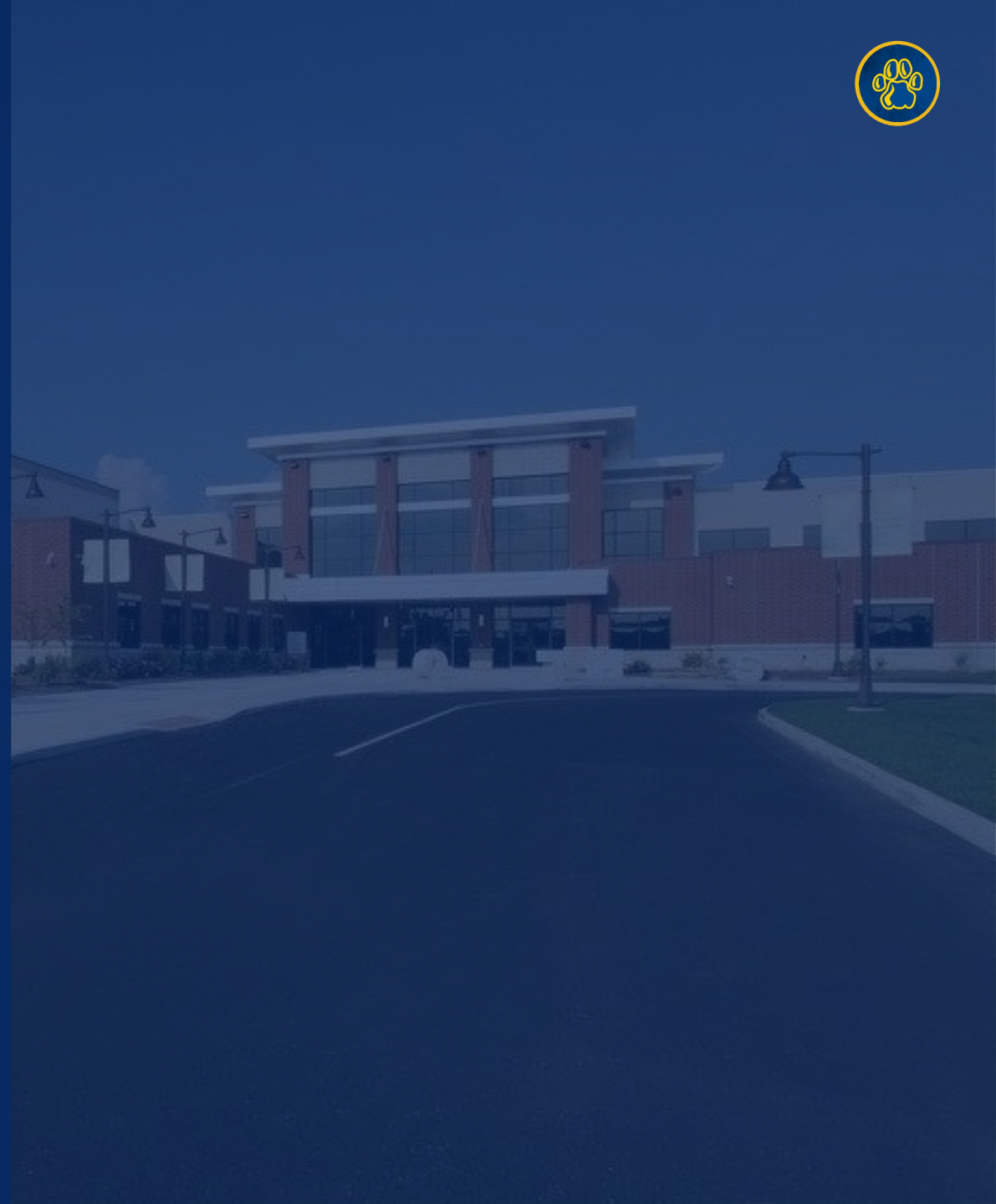


01

THE TRANSITION

Freshman year is not a straight line.

The goal is not a perfect start. The goal is steady growth, stronger habits, and knowing when to ask for help.





What the year may feel like

Different students move through this transition at different speeds.

AUG-SEPT

Excitement + nerves



Learning routines,
names, expectations,
and where they fit.

OCT-NOV

Reality sets in



Grades and missing
work feel more real.
Organization matters.

DEC-JAN

Reset + regroup



First-semester
reflection and a
chance to adjust
habits.

SPRING

Confidence grows



More independence
and growing
attention to Smiley
and sophomore year.

 **One hard week is not a trend. Patterns are what we watch.**



Your role is changing

Not less involved — involved in a different way.

AUDIENCE CHECK

When something goes wrong, which response do you reach for first?



MANAGER MODE

"I'll take over before my student tries."
"I'll handle the entire conversation."
"I'll fix the problem for them."



COACH MODE

"What have you tried so far?"
"Who is the right first person to contact?"
"What support do you need from me?"



Support the process without taking over the process.

The four moves that matter most

A simple formula for a strong freshman year.

01



SHOW UP

Attendance creates opportunity.

02



DO THE WORK

Small assignments add up.

03



ASK FOR HELP

Early is easier than late.

04



GET CONNECTED

Belonging changes the experience.



These habits matter more than having high school “all figured out.”



Three systems every freshman family should use

A short weekly routine can prevent small problems from becoming big ones.

01

SKYWARD FAMILY ACCESS

Review grades, attendance, and fee information at a consistent time each week.

Aim for a routine — not constant monitoring.

02

OTHS STUDENT EMAIL

Students are expected to check their OTHS email every school day.

Official reminders and school messages arrive there.

03

ATTENDANCE REQUESTS

Report absences in Skyward Family Access or contact Milburn Attendance.

Robin Mason • ext. 5204

● A consistent weekly check-in works better than waiting for a crisis.

02

CONNECTION

**Every freshman
needs a person
and a place.**

One trusted adult and
one meaningful activity
can make a big school
feel much smaller.





Who is your person at OTHS?

If something went wrong tomorrow, does your freshman know where to go?



 **The person matters less than the connection.**

One activity is enough to start

OTHS has something for nearly every interest — the goal is fit, not a packed résumé.



CREATE

Band & Colorguard
Choir • Theatre • Art



COMPETE

Athletics • Academic teams
E-Sports • Robotics



LEAD + SERVE

ROTC • Student Council
FBLA



EXPLORE

Explore clubs by interest.
Try one. See what fits.

One sincere try is enough to begin.

Freshmen can ride the activity bus from Milburn to Smiley; families arrange transportation home.

Students do not need to join everything. They need somewhere to belong.



The Freshman Panther Bucket List

Experiences that help Milburn students feel part of the entire OTHS community.

1

Attend a Panther athletic event

2

Join one club, team, or activity

3

Watch a band or AFJROTC performance

4

Participate in Spirit Week or Homecoming

5

Go to a play, musical, concert, or art show

6

Ask a teacher for help before it feels urgent



VISIT SMILEY FOR AN EVENT

● Connection grows through small experiences repeated over time.



03

SUPPORT

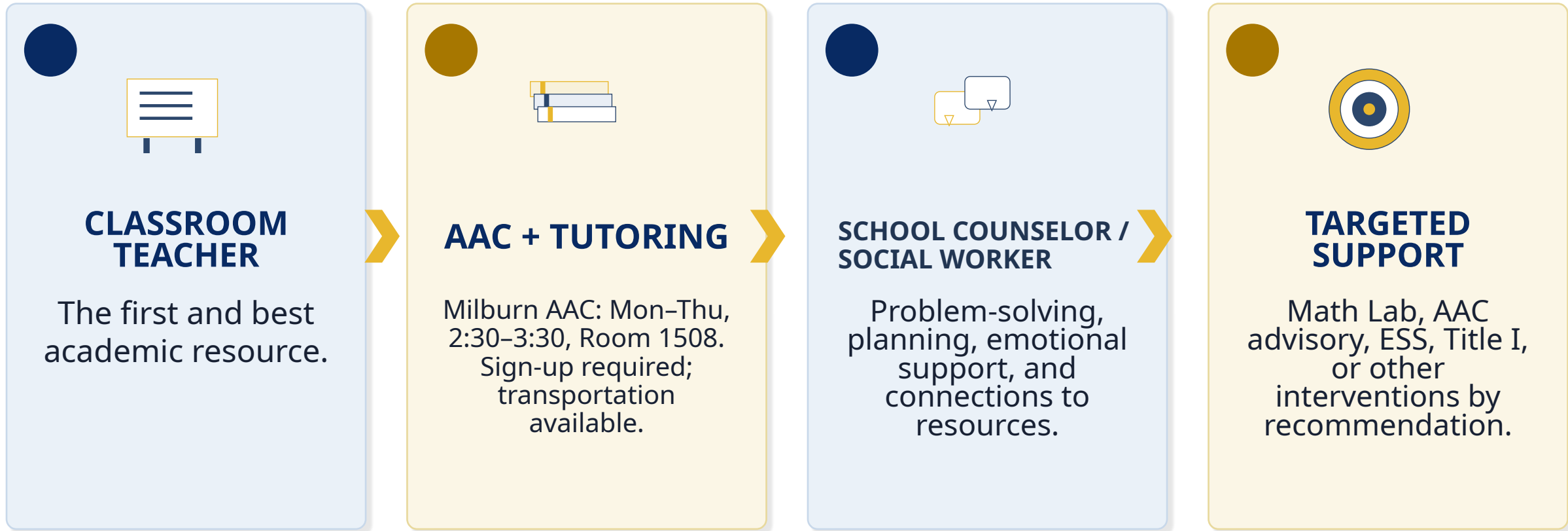
**Help is part of the plan
— not a last resort.**

The strongest students are not the ones who never struggle. They are the ones who learn how to use support.



The OTHS support ladder

Start close to the classroom, then add support as needed.



Asking early gives us more options.



Let them struggle — don't let them drown

The difference is usually a single setback versus a growing pattern.



PRODUCTIVE STRUGGLE

- One forgotten assignment
- A disappointing quiz or test
- Needing to ask a teacher a question
- Learning to manage time
- A friendship disagreement
- Trying something new and feeling uncomfortable

Coach the next step.



A PATTERN NEEDS ATTENTION

- Repeated missing work across classes
- Significant attendance changes
- Major or sudden grade decline
- Persistent withdrawal or isolation
- Ongoing overwhelm or shutdown
- Major emotional or behavioral changes

Contact the school so we can problem-solve together.



One bad day is human. A repeated pattern is information.



Conversation starters for home

If it is helpful, here are a few simple questions families sometimes use.

? **Who did you sit with at lunch today?**

? **What class feels easiest right now? Hardest?**

? **Which teacher do you feel comfortable asking for help?**

? **What is coming up this week that you need to plan for?**

? **What is one thing at OTHS you might want to try?**

? **Who is your person at school?**

IF HELPFUL

💡 **The goal is simply to make conversation feel easier.**



School counseling stays with the transition

Our advisory program revisits the skills students need across the year.

PHASE 1

101

SETTLING IN

High School 101
Level Up Your
Success

PHASE 2

PLAN

SETTLED

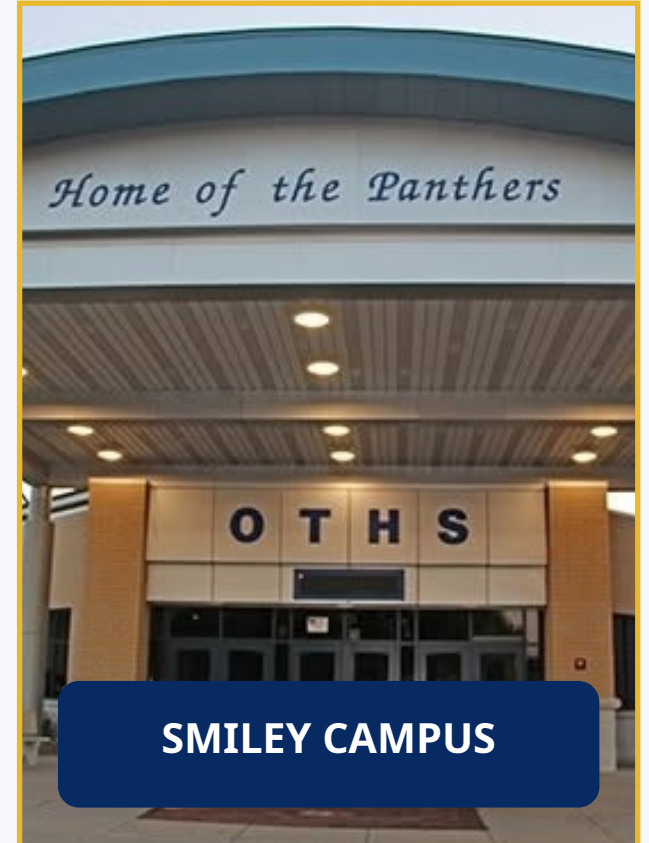
Course selection +
individual
School Counselor
meeting

PHASE 3

NEXT

SPRINGBOARD

Smiley transition •
GPA
transcripts • PreACT 9



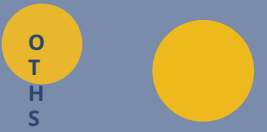
 We keep revisiting the transition — not just during the first week of school.

04

THE PATH FORWARD

Milburn is the beginning — not a separate high school.

Freshmen are already Panthers. Their connection to Smiley and graduation begins now.



Milburn → Smiley → Graduation

One school. Two campuses. A four-year plan.



GRADE 9

MILBURN

BUILD THE FOUNDATION

Build habits: attendance, organization, and self-advocacy

Find a trusted adult and one meaningful activity

Take PreACT 9 and plan sophomore courses



GRADES 10-12

SMILEY

EXPLORE & GROW

Expand electives and explore career pathways

Add challenge when it fits: honors, AP, or dual credit

Grow through leadership, service, and involvement



THE NEXT STEP

GRADUATION

LAUNCH WITH A PLAN

Complete 21 credits and required subject areas

Complete seven semesters and the State assessment

Launch toward college, career, military, or training

The bridge to Smiley starts now: attend events, use the activity bus, and see OTHS as one community.



Course selection: choose fit, not pressure

School Counselors balance interests, readiness, commitments, and wellness.



INTERESTS

What subjects and pathways fit the student?



READINESS

What do prerequisites and current performance show?



COMMITMENTS

What activities or responsibilities will matter next year?



BALANCE

What level of challenge is healthy and manageable?

OCTOBER

Course selection advisory presentation



**OCTOBER-
FEBRUARY**

Individual meeting with the School Counselor

Choose carefully: after the semester begins, schedule changes are limited.



The best schedule is appropriately challenging and personally manageable.



Freshman year counts — without needing to be perfect

The transcript starts now, but growth is expected.



SEMESTER GRADES

85 / 15

Semester work = 85%
Semester exam = 15%
Credits are earned at semester end.



GPA

4.0 / 5.0

Regular courses use a 4.0 scale.
Honors/AP courses use a weighted 5.0 scale.



ELIGIBILITY

5 CLASSES

Weekly: enrolled in and passing at least five full-credit classes.

Semester: pass five full-credit classes (2.5 credits).

 Freshman year is about building a record — and learning how to respond when something does not go well.



Graduation at a glance

21 total credits — monitored across all four years.

ENGLISH

8 semesters

MATH

6 semesters

SOCIAL STUDIES

5 semesters

SCIENCE

4 semesters

PE

4 semesters

HEALTH

1 semester

CONSUMER EDUCATION

1 semester
(Personal Finance)

ELECTIVES

2 semesters



These are minimum subject-area requirements. Additional courses and electives bring students to 21 total credits.



School Counselors review progress each year — families do not have to memorize this tonight.



When should a parent contact us?

You do not have to know the “right” department before reaching out.

1**CLASS QUESTION**

Start with the classroom teacher.

2**SPORT / ACTIVITY**

Start with the coach or sponsor.

3**COURSE SELECTION AND PLANNING**

Contact the School Counselor for patterns across classes, schedule questions, academic planning, or help coordinating support.

4**SOCIAL / FAMILY**

Contact the social worker or School Counselor for social, emotional, or family concerns.



NOT SURE WHERE TO BEGIN?

START WITH US

**Milburn Campus
618-622-9647**

We will help connect you with the right person.

● Earlier communication usually creates more options.

TAKE A PHOTO

CLASS OF 2030



Three things to remember



SHOW UP

Attendance matters.



SPEAK UP

Ask questions. Advocate. Use support.



CONNECT

Find a person, activity, team, club, or place.

Ask your freshman two questions this week:

1. Who is your person at OTHS?
2. What is one thing you might try?

Freshman year is about growth — not perfection.

Open House Meet & Greet

Use the rest of the evening to make brief, positive connections.



Review your student's schedule in Skyward.



Meet teachers in their classrooms

Exchange contact information and hear a brief overview of each class.



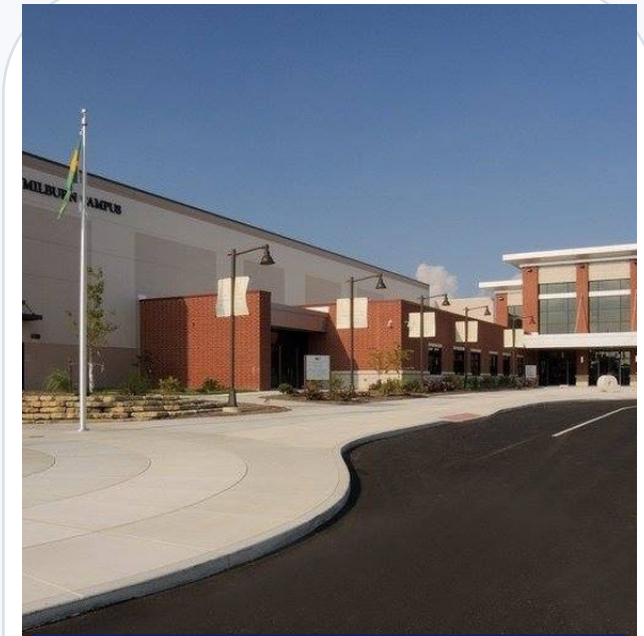
Move at your own pace

The evening is designed to be free-flowing.



Save extended conversations for follow-up

Teachers and School Counselors are not available for lengthy one-on-one conferences tonight.



MILBURN CAMPUS

Thank you for partnering with us. We are excited to work with the Class of 2030.



Detailed graduation requirements

Reference slide — 2026–27 OTHS Curriculum Guide.

SUBJECT AREA	REQUIRED	KEY DETAIL
English / Language Arts	8 semesters / 4 years	Two years must be writing intensive.
Mathematics	6 semesters / 3 years	Algebra I content + Geometry content.
Social Studies	5 semesters / 2.5 years	U.S. History + Civics or American Government; Constitution tests.
Science	4 semesters / 2 years	One year Life Science + one year Physical Science.
PE / Health	5 semesters total	4 semesters PE + 1 semester Health; exemptions may apply.
Consumer Education	1 semester	Satisfied at OTHS by Personal Finance.
Electives	2 semesters	Art, CTE, Performing Arts, or World Language.



21 credits • 7 semesters • State final accountability assessment



Schedule changes and course withdrawals

Reference slide — 2026–27 Curriculum Guide and Student Handbook.

BEFORE THE SEMESTER

Course substitutions, additions, and student-initiated level changes must occur before the first day. Space and graduation requirements still apply.

AFTER THE SEMESTER BEGINS

Changes are limited to specific circumstances. Requests for a different teacher, lunch hour, or rearranged class hours are not approved.

WITHDRAWAL NOTATIONS

FIRST 10 DAYS

No transcript notation

AFTER DAY 10

W • no GPA impact

AFTER 9 WEEKS

WP if passing

AFTER 9 WEEKS

WF if failing • counts like F

 Parent/guardian approval is required for class drops and student-initiated level changes.



Grading scale and weighting

Reference slide — current OTHS handbook/curriculum guide.

GRADE	PERCENT	REGULAR GPA	HONORS / AP GPA
A	93–100	4.00	5.00
A–	90–92	3.67	4.67
B+	87–89	3.33	4.33
B	83–86	3.00	4.00
B–	80–82	2.67	3.67
C+	77–79	2.33	3.33
C	73–76	2.00	3.00
C–	70–72	1.67	2.67
D+	67–69	1.33	2.33
D	63–66	1.00	2.00
D–	60–62	1.00	2.00
F	59 & below	0.00	0.00



SEMESTER GRADE

Semester work = 85%
Semester exam = 15%



GPA + CLASS RANK

Weighted cumulative GPA is calculated on GPA-eligible academic classes. Class rank updates at semester end.

 Skyward provides ongoing access to student academic progress.



Athletic and extracurricular eligibility

Reference slide — current OTHS handbook/curriculum guide.



OTHS / IHSA ELIGIBILITY

WEEKLY

Students must be enrolled in and passing at least five full-credit classes.

SEMESTER

Students must pass at least five full-credit classes (2.5 credits) to remain eligible for the following semester.

School Counselors receive reports and help students connect with academic support.



NCAA PLANNING

Division I and II athletes must complete 16 approved core courses.

Ten core courses must be completed before the seventh semester; seven of those ten must be in English, math, or natural/physical science.

Not every OTHS course is NCAA-approved. Eligibility verification is the responsibility of the student and family, with School Counselor support.



Students interested in college athletics should tell their School Counselor early.



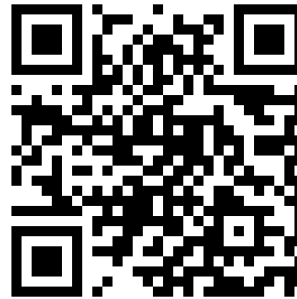
Parent resources and current contacts

Scan or click to explore official OTHS resources.



Freshman Resources

Click or scan



Clubs & Activities

Click or scan



Academic Assistance Center

Click or scan

Milburn Campus: 650 Milburn School Road • O'Fallon, IL 62269 • 618-622-9647

💡 Information and contacts were updated from official OTHS sources in August 2026.