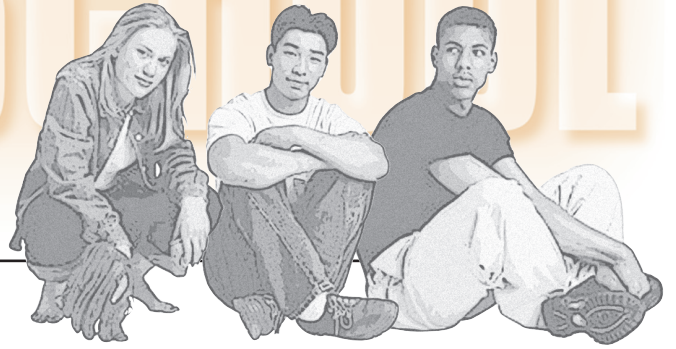


HIGH SCHOOL PARENT



The 21st century high school:

A laboratory for the new world

Who knew a generation ago what today's commonplace technology would be able to do?

Cell phones were mere science fiction not that long ago. Yet today these phones—some as small as matchbooks—are in the hands of most every teenager, linking them to friends and family no matter where they are.

Newer still is the science of the tiny—nanotechnology—that has brought new breakthroughs in consumer products: the micro-thin surface of ceramic flat irons that smooth hair, the UV coating on sunglasses and the microchips that hold research papers inside home computers, for example.

But, as the saying goes, the more things change, the more they stay the same. When it comes to high school studies, this phrase rings comfortingly true...with some exceptions.

Our rapidly changing world and increasingly technological workplaces have led high school educators to think long and hard about what teens need to learn to best prepare them for their future paths. After all, high school is the laboratory where teens can hone their “real-world” academic and social skills and learn about what they like and might want to do or study after they graduate.

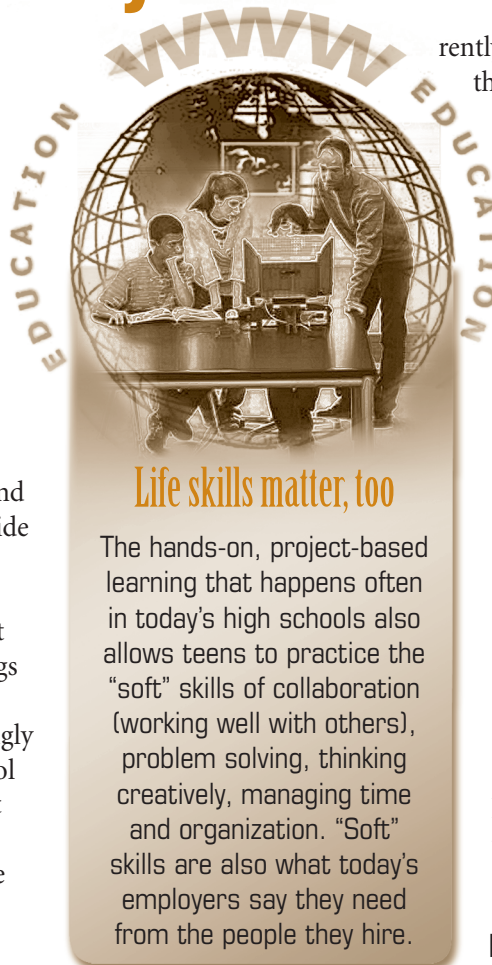
What they have found is that teens need a solid foundation in the “basics” such as English language arts (reading, writing, editing), social studies, physical education and the arts (visual, performing and musical) as much as ever. College educators and today's employers echo the same conclusion.

The National Science Foundation estimates that by 2010, as many as one-fourth of all jobs will be based on science, technology engineering and math (often referred to as STEM subjects). These jobs will run the gamut from construction to robotics. So teens, *all teens*, need ample practice with these important subjects, too.

Spurred by this information, and by the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act enacted in 2002, New York State requires all high school students (with some exceptions for students with special needs) to take coursework in five of the basic subjects and

then pass corresponding state Regents exams in order to graduate. For a Regents diploma, these include English, Math A, U.S. History and Government, Global History, and one science subject area. A grade of 65 percent or better on these exams is required. Although a local diploma option cur-

rently exists it will be phased out as of 2008 and the Regents diploma will take its place as the reflection of basic high school competency.



Life skills matter, too

The hands-on, project-based learning that happens often in today's high schools also allows teens to practice the “soft” skills of collaboration (working well with others), problem solving, thinking creatively, managing time and organization. “Soft” skills are also what today's employers say they need from the people they hire.

Making math...and other ‘why do I need this’ subjects...matter

Where today's high school learning differs from learning of decades past is in its delivery. Gone are the days when lessons were taught through lecture, “skill and drill” and in isolation (first-period biology *never* touched on the geometry taught later in the day). Today, students are frequently asked to take what they learn in one class and weave it into their learning in another areas. As much as possible, learning is also linked to what interests teens most.

Most adult work projects, regardless of the profession, require employees to tap into a variety of skills to successfully complete the task. Thus, high school teachers help prepare their students for these challenges through hands-on lessons designed to demonstrate that what they learn in school can be applied in real and meaningful ways.

Hands-on lessons: A link to the real world

As technology opens our personal lives and workplaces to people and co-workers in companies worldwide, it will be essential to have an understanding of other cultures and political structures, plus the ability to communicate in languages other than English. Consider how this knowledge might be used to fashion a high school global studies project.

In creating a faculty/student basketball challenge as a fundraiser to benefit a charitable organization in a third-world country, students would need to draw on much more than their understanding of continents and borders. Science in the form of economics would come into play as students set prices to maximize the profit and determine the supplies needed. Math and technology would blend when using computer spreadsheet applications to track the project's progress and provide eye-catching graphics. Language arts would be used when writing, revising and editing the project proposal, soliciting donations, and creating persuasive publicity. Web-research skills would help students learn about the good work their recipient organization does, and encourage them to think critically about how much of what they learn on-line is true and what is deceptive. Ultimately, all the photos, the charts and graphs, the ticket design could be pieced together to create a PowerPoint presentation for teachers and classmates to learn from and critique.





Tips for getting into college It's never too early to get started

As the parent of a Colonie Central High School student you know it's never too early to start thinking about college. But many parents wonder, "What can I do to help my teen get ready for that next important step?" Here are 10 good tips on what it takes to prepare for life after high school:

1. Take a challenging high school curriculum

Students should stretch themselves to take the toughest courses they can handle. For example, a "B" in an Advanced Placement course beats an "A" in a regular Regents-level course in the eyes of the college admissions office. Or four years of Regents math and science are better than three. You get the picture?

2. Keep up the hard work in the senior year

Students shouldn't take an easier course load just because they're on their way out the door. Students who slack off in their senior year are not as well prepared for the rigors of college, and college officials don't want to take the

chance of accepting someone who is not likely to make the grade.

3. Go for an upward trend with grades

It's better to start with grades that are a little low and raise them, rather than to start high and lose ground.

4. Leadership posts are always good

This is yet more evidence that a student will do well in a college environment.

5. Don't get superficially involved in seven or eight activities

Go for two or three and display a passion and a depth of involvement. Strong participation in extracurricular activities can be particularly helpful for the student who is academically borderline.

6. Anything students have created or founded is impressive

For example, a student who takes the initiative to establish a new school club or start his/her own business is a very attractive college candidate.

7. An out-of-school job is a plus

This is especially true if a student has earned money to contribute to the family or to his/her own college education, as opposed to using it for luxuries. A job such as this is as good as an extracurricular activity since it demonstrates maturity.

8. Consistent volunteer work is good

Anything a student does to demonstrate a global view or a concern for other people is looked upon favorably by colleges.

9. College board (SAT, ACT) scores matter

But day-to-day performance matters more. In other words, high grades are more important than test scores.

10. Display intellectual curiosity

Entering a creative project into a science fair or posing and researching an interesting question in social studies class is the sign of a student who is truly a learner. That's what colleges want most.



The threats of school violence continue to confront our country and our schools, and like all institutions, we must adapt to these new circumstances.

Parents should be assured that the South Colonie Central School District is well prepared to keep students safe in

case an emergency arises. The district continues to discuss and refine its methods for improving the safety and security of children and adults in our schools and has a comprehensive emergency preparedness plan with which staff and faculty are very familiar.

Keeping our schools safe

Here are a few things you as parents can do to help us keep our schools secure:

- Always check in at the front office/desk when you are visiting our schools.
- Always wear your visitor's badge and make sure it is visible.
- Report any suspicious activities or people around our schools to your school administrator or local law enforcement official.
- During a lockdown drill, please understand that no one would be allowed to

enter or exit the building.

- During a lockout drill, individuals would only be permitted to enter or exit through enhanced security precautions.
- During the practice of these drills you may be required to pick up your teen at other predetermined locations.
- Make sure your teen's information card is updated with the correct home, work and cell phone numbers for you and your primary emergency contact person(s).

"While these measures may seem extraordinary, the safety of the students and adults in our schools is a top priority," said Superintendent Michael Marcelle. "Our primary responsibility is to focus on the education of our students and maintain a safe, secure environment. Therefore, we shall continue to provide an environment conducive to teaching and learning while taking steps to respond to the security needs of our schools."

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact CCHS or the district office.