



OLD SAYBROOK HIGH SCHOOL

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Dear Students, Parents, and Guardians,

Planning for the 2020-21 Academic Year has begun! Careful course selection is essential to ensuring that each student is getting a personalized, appropriately challenging academic experience. School counselors and teachers work closely with students to ensure they are choosing core classes and electives that are aligned with their quest for knowledge of self, exploration of possibilities and building life skills.

This week school counselors are at the middle school delivering instructions on choosing courses for the 2020-21 academic year to students in grade 8. Students in grades 9, 10 and 11 met during X Block by class last week to hear this information and course selection in Powerschool is now active!

The [2020-21 Program of Studies](#) booklet is designed to assist students in making important, academic decisions and includes a multitude of helpful information from graduation requirements to flexible pathways for earning credit and course offerings by content area. Conversations with parents, teachers and counselors are also an essential part of determining which courses will best meet the needs and goals of each student as they plan their academic journeys. You can access the Program of Studies and course selection process on the Guidance section of the [high school webpage](#).

All current high school student course requests are to be submitted through the PowerSchool Portal. Students in 8th grade will complete course request sheets received following the course selection presentations on March 3rd. **The deadline for submitting all course requests is Wednesday, March 11th.** (If I could have this sentence jump out of everyone's phone/computer screen, I would!!! Please get all requests in on time! I'll tell you what...I will provide a **free ice cream** to every, single student in grades 8 – 11 if *every, single student* meets the deadline. All or nothin', Rams! Make it HAPPEN!)

Here are some things to keep in mind as courses are being requested:

- Only those courses (including levels) for which students have been recommended by their teachers will be available for selection in Powerschool.
- If a student wishes to take a course at a level higher than the current teacher's recommendation, he/she must have a direct conversation with his/her current teacher before moving forward with an override. If a student wishes to override a teacher level recommendation, the appropriate form must be completed and signed by the student, parent and recommending teacher and submitted to the high school/middle school guidance office. Override Forms are located in each school's guidance office and **the deadline for submitting override requests is Friday, March 20th by 12:00pm. Overrides submitted after sections have been created cannot be honored.**

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"The mission of the Old Saybrook Public Schools is to educate and prepare students to achieve their highest aspirations, care for others and the environment, and contribute to a global society by working in partnership with families and the community, and by engaging each learner in a rigorous, personalized, and meaningful educational program."

- All students must schedule at least 6.5 credits of coursework each year. The only exception is for seniors who have a *pre-approved*, future-focused plan that requires attention during school hours. Seniors wishing to take advantage of this opportunity should meet with their school counselor as soon as possible to get more information.
- Students are expected to have no more than one class period of study hall in their schedules. We have many elective offerings for a small school and students should take advantage of these opportunities for growth and learning! Keep in mind that students are also expected to utilize at least half of X Block for school work and extra help, as needed.
- Courses and the number of sections needed is dependent upon the number of requests for each course.
- Ultimately, students should select courses based on their individual needs, and in consideration of the other activities going on in their lives during the academic year.

We also want to remind everyone of our flexible pathways to earning credits. Students may request pre-approval for course credit towards meeting graduation requirements when planning to engage in robust learning opportunities outside of the school day and school year through accredited institutions. This may be in the form of online learning, as well as courses taken on-site. Students may also earn up to .5 credit for community service hours of 80 or more with some specific parameters. Please see the “Credit Q & A” section of the Program of Studies for more information!

Construction of the master schedule for the 2020-21 academic year will begin the week of March 23rd so it is imperative that students have all of their course requests submitted **on time!** Students, parents and guardians will be notified of the courses that fit into students’ schedules based on the development of the master schedule before the end of this school year. Additionally, we will communicate when final schedules are complete and ready to view in PowerSchool as soon as feasible over the summer.

Thank you for your close read of this information! Please feel free to contact the high school guidance office for assistance with course selection or to further discuss course and program planning options.

Sincerely Yours,



Sheila A. Riffle