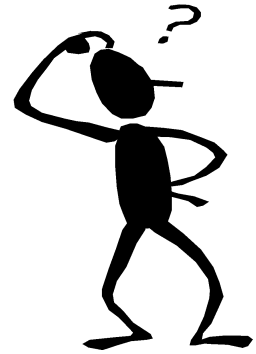


# Breakthrough Manchester High School Planning Guide 2017-2018



Hello Eighth Graders and Families!

Welcome to the world of high school planning! Hopefully you are discovering many exciting choices available to you. One way Breakthrough serves families is by supporting you in choosing the best possible schedule for your high school classes. This takes some effort on your part as you reflect on your academic interests and your goal of going to college. The following guide will tell you what you need to know to be on the college path. We understand that you are hearing many different things from your teachers, counselors, friends and family. It can be difficult to figure out what is best for you. Breakthrough is here to help you make good decisions that will allow you become a successful college bound student. We feel strongly that you should **not compromise** your goals when it comes to high school; select the most challenging classes you can. Your choices will pay off in the future – in college, careers, and beyond.

The Breakthrough staff will support you and your family throughout the high school registration process, while you are a high school student, and through a very similar process during your senior year as you apply to college. With this in mind, here are some things to consider as you begin looking at high school courses.

Good Luck!

Becky Berk and Lucy Weathers



# Breakthrough Manchester

## High School Planning Guide for the Class of 2022

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## PREPARING FOR THE TRANSITION TO HIGH SCHOOL AND BEYOND

High school is an exciting time for students. With a wide range of opportunities for academic exploration, extracurricular involvement and personal development, high school can be lots of fun, but it can also seem overwhelming at times. There are many choices to be made and many pressures to succeed. Not only is high school a time to develop skills and discover individual talents, but it is also a time to prepare for college and the workplace. As we all know, the competition for college admissions is increasing and colleges are encouraging students to complete more than the minimum admission standards to ensure college readiness and success. A better understanding of the high school system and the college admissions process, along with the desire to achieve your goals of higher education, will arm you with the tools you need to succeed.

As you look ahead to the next phase in your academic career, you are encouraged to take positive risks along your path. These risks will help you gain valuable experiences and build skills that you will carry with you for the rest of your life. Now is the perfect time to audition for the school musical, learn a new instrument, try out for a sport, and to choose the more challenging class over the “easy A.” Now is also an ideal time to take on new responsibilities. Volunteering at school, church or in the community, and offering to do a few more chores at home is a good place to start. It is important to understand that you will probably make mistakes and face some struggles as you take these risks and responsibilities. Everyone does and that is okay because we often learn more from our failures than we do from our successes. You have lots of support from the Breakthrough Office, your family and your friends, so go for it!

### Six Tips to Help Prepare Students & Families for High School

**1 Attend the High School Orientation Day.** Students and families should go to the Freshman Orientation. You will meet current students and teachers and learn your way around the school before your first day. These events are invaluable.

**2 Discuss the differences between the middle and high school experience.**

**3 Learn about school routines and schedules.** The best way to do this is to talk to students currently going to your high school.

**4 Develop good study habits now.** Establish a good study area at home, free from

distractions and make a study schedule so you have quiet time to do your work.

**5 Practice organizational skills and time management.** Use an academic planner and a calendar to schedule your own assignments and activities as well as family activities that might affect you.

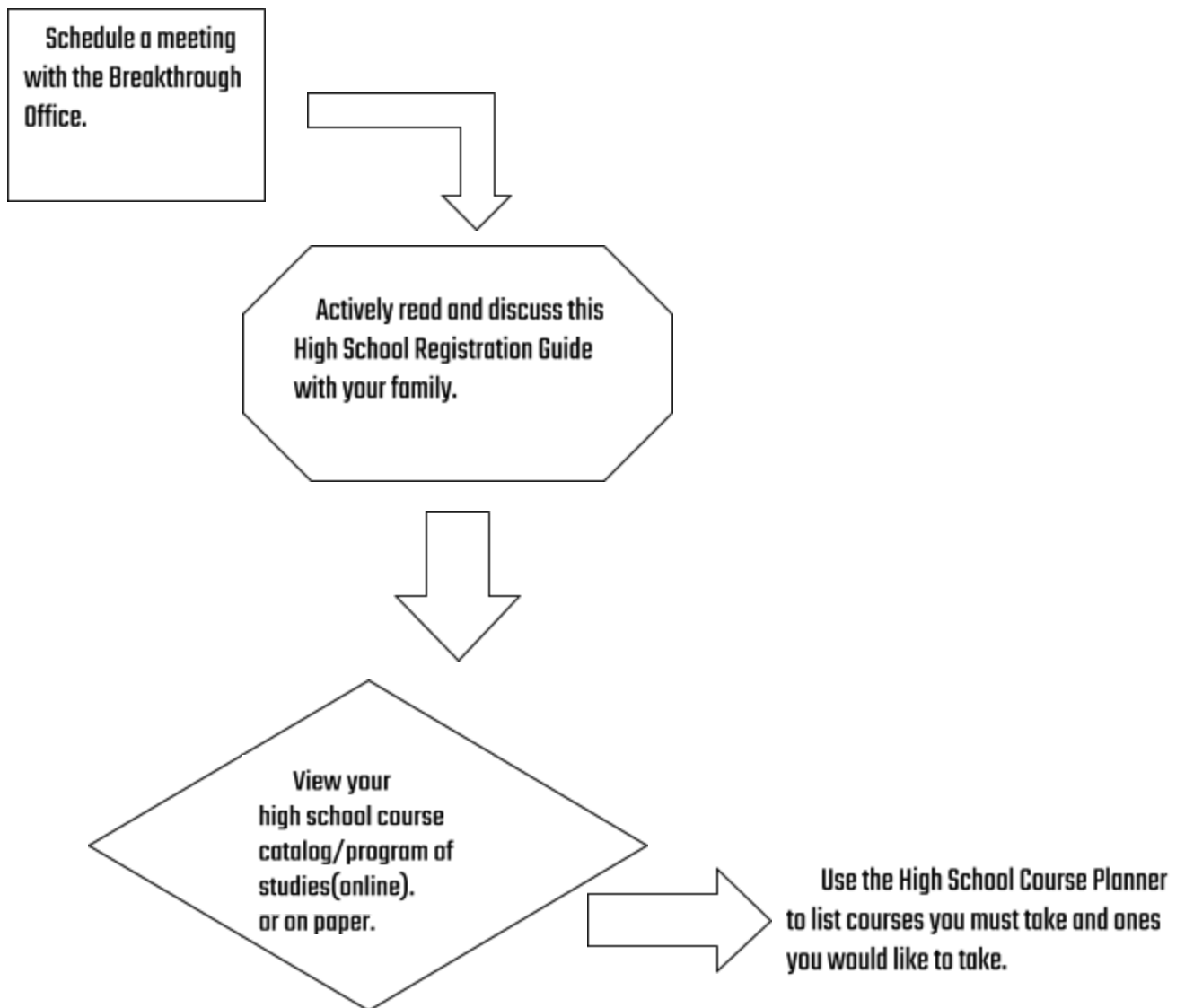
**6 Set priorities.** The expectations and responsibilities of high school will be quite different than they were in middle school. You will often need to make choices between academic requirements and social activities. Take time to evaluate the levels of importance for each of your commitments.

*Adapted from The Public Schools Parent Network of the New South Wales Department of Education.*

## HIGH SCHOOL REGISTRATION

You have heard us say many times that the courses you take in high school will have a strong impact on your options for college and your life beyond. They really do. To be prepared you must meet the minimum college admissions requirements, which, surprisingly, are more than the requirements needed to graduate from high school. It is our mission to make sure that you are eligible and ready for college and that you have as many options as possible when you are a senior.

Here are a few steps to take *before* registering for your classes.



## THE REGISTRATION PROCESS

While the process for registering for high school and for 9<sup>th</sup> grade classes may vary slightly from school to school, the basics are the same for all of the schools in the Manchester School District. Please be sure that you read all material that is sent home and that you ask questions if you are unclear about something. You can call your school's Guidance Counselor or call the Breakthrough Office.

SCHOOL	8 <sup>th</sup> GRADE GUIDANCE COUNSELEOR	PHONE NUMBER	EMAIL
Hillside Middle School	Ms. Lavigne (A-F) Ms. Provost (G-N) Mr. Dupere (O-Z)	624-6352	dlavigne@mansd.org vprovost@mansd.org wdupere@mansd.org
McLaughlin Middle School	Mrs. Mosley	628-6247	mmosley@mansd.org
The Middle School at Parkside	Ms. Lavigne	624-6356	dlavigne@mansd.org
Southside Middle School	Mrs. Libby	624-6359	rlibby@mansd.org

In February and March, the high school guidance counselors and principals will visit each middle school to meet with the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. They will speak to students about how high school differs from middle school, the opportunities and extracurricular activities available and how to select courses and register for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

After these presentations, a course registration packet will be sent home for you and your family to complete together. The packets will contain a course catalog (program of studies) that lists all of the courses offered in the high school. While choices are somewhat limited for freshman, you should look at classes that are open to older students as well so that you can plan ahead for 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades. **Parents and students play a critical part in the course selection process, so it is important to communicate openly about your choices.**

- Read the course catalog. Write your 9<sup>th</sup> grade classes on the registration form.
- Submit the form to your 8th grade teacher (often your homeroom teacher.)
- Teachers review your choices and make recommendations for the course level that is appropriate for each class you selected.
- Teachers return forms with recommendations to you for a parent signature.
- Return a final copy of your registration form with teacher recommendations and parent signature to your guidance office to be sent to your high school.

It is a long process, but each step is in place to ensure that students are assigned to appropriate courses.

Here are some important things to know:

### **AIM HIGH!- LEVELING:**

***We strongly recommend that all Breakthrough students enroll in Level 3 and Level 4 classes as these classes will give you the widest variety of options after graduation.***

Manchester high schools level classes according to difficulty. Level 4 classes are honors and Advanced Placement (AP) classes, and Level 3 classes are considered college-preparatory. You may hear that Level 2 courses are also college-preparatory, and this is true for some colleges. However, many colleges and universities, including the University of New Hampshire, do not look favorably upon credits from Level 2 courses in the admissions process.

### **CHALLENGE YOURSELF:**

***It is better to get a B or even a B- in a Level 3 class than it is to get an A in a Level 2 class.***

Students, we encourage you to challenge yourself to work in the highest level possible, remembering that you can obtain academic support from Breakthrough if you need help. You can always move down a level later, if necessary. College admissions officers have told us that they want to see that students are taking the most challenging courses possible while maintaining strong grades (A's and B's.)



### **FULFILL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS:**

The state of New Hampshire's high school graduation requirements will be listed in the course catalog, along with the high school's requirements, credit assignment system and grading policy. This is called the school's profile. (When you apply to college, this profile is sent with your transcript to describe your school to admissions officers.) As you select courses, you must be sure that you meet the credit and course requirements for 9<sup>th</sup> grade so that you will be on track to graduate on time.

### **MEET COLLEGE ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS:**

***The requirements to graduate from high school DO NOT meet the minimum requirements needed to apply to many colleges and universities.***

You need to know this now, as an 8<sup>th</sup> grader, so that you are not caught short in your senior year. We advise you to look at a few colleges and their application requirements to get a sense of the types of classes that they want to see on your transcript. To be eligible to apply to college, you will need to take at least 2 years of the same World Language, and at least 3 years of Mathematics, including Algebra I and Algebra II.

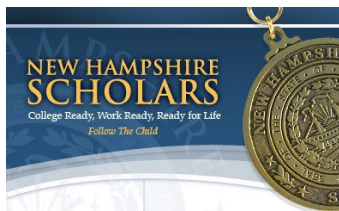
### **PLAN FOR 4 YEARS:**

While it is difficult to think about all four years of high school before you have even stepped into a classroom, it is good to plan ahead based on your interests. As you look through the course catalog, you will see a variety of courses in all subject areas. You will also find that some of these courses are only open to older students or have a pre-requisite. It is helpful to have this information as a freshman so you can plan these courses into your schedule in later years. We have included a **High School Course Planner** in this packet to help you look ahead. Of course you will likely make changes as you move through high school, but at least you have an idea of where you are going.

## **KNOW YOUR RIGHTS. WAIVING THE TEACHER RECOMMENDATION:**

***Ultimately, YOU AND YOUR PARENTS/GUARDIANS have the final say in what classes you will be enrolled in 9<sup>th</sup> grade.***

Although your 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher will approve your requests and make leveling recommendations, you have the right to waive this recommendation. If you are denied the opportunity to take more rigorous classes, your involvement can make the difference. We encourage all Breakthrough students to aim high in terms of course selection. It is much easier to move down a level if you find a class to be too challenging than it is to move up a level if you find it not challenging enough. Do not hesitate to call the Breakthrough Office if you have questions about waiving the teacher recommendation.



## **NEW HAMPSHIRE SCHOLARS PROGRAM**

The Manchester School District participates in the New Hampshire Scholars Program. Taking the New Hampshire Scholar core courses prepares you for life after high school. A rigorous education opens more doors and offers more choices. As a New Hampshire Scholar, you will increase your potential for admission and scholarships for college. Furthermore, throughout high school you will connect with local business leaders to learn important 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills.

The process to become a New Hampshire Scholar is pretty simple- take challenging courses that go above and beyond the high school graduation requirements. The classes included in the core requirements are: 4 years of English, 3 years of a lab based science, 3 years of math, 3.5 years of social studies, and 2 years of the same foreign language.

There are numerous advantages to becoming a New Hampshire Scholar.

- You will be better prepared for admission to college and to be successful when you get there.
- You may receive training and mentoring from potential employers.
- Your designation as a New Hampshire Scholar will be added to your transcript.
- You will become a better candidate for certain scholarships and financial aid.

When you select your courses for next year, please choose courses listed in the State Scholars Course of Study ([www.NHscholars.org](http://www.NHscholars.org)). We encourage every student and their parent to sign the contract to become a New Hampshire Scholar. You can get a contract and sign up with your guidance counselor.

## SELECTING COURSES

### SO WHAT CLASSES DO I CHOOSE?

The course catalog from each high school may seem overwhelming. There are so many choices...from Shakespeare and American Literature, to Chemistry and Human Anatomy, to the Holocaust and Russian History, to Sports Marketing, Fashion Design and Photography. Where do you begin?

As a **college bound student**, you must:

- **Select classes that will meet the admissions requirements of the colleges to which you apply.**

It is a great idea to look at college websites or call schools to see what they require from their applicants. If you do not know which colleges you may want to apply to, then you can use the general guidelines found on the “Manchester School District Freshman Year Course Requirements” in this packet.

- **Become a NH Scholar.**

Register for courses listed in the State Scholars Course of Study (go to the website, [www.NHscholars.org](http://www.NHscholars.org) for more details) to prepare you for college!

- **Realize that colleges want to see that you have a strong foundation in the core subject areas.**

Full year courses often have more academic weight than semester classes. Colleges consider the five core subjects to be **English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and World Language**. They will look at these classes and your grades from these classes before anything else in your application.

- **Choose challenging, interesting classes that you will be successful in taking.**

Here is a subject by subject breakdown to help you know what you need:

### ENGLISH- 4 years (each year of high school)

In 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade, most high schools offer only one English course, so your only choice will be the level of the class you wish to take (Level 3 or 4 if possible!) In 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades there will be more options. *Colleges are looking for courses that develop writing skills, critical thinking skills, reading comprehension and vocabulary.* Many semester English electives, although interesting, may not build these skills and therefore will not have as much weight on your college application. Try to stick to the basic writing composition and literature courses.

### MATHEMATICS- 3-4 years (4 years is strongly recommended)

*Math credits should include Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II.* Math is used in college courses and many career fields, so take as much math as you can.





**SCIENCE- 3-4 years (4 years is strongly recommended, 3 years should be laboratory sciences)**

Science includes physical science, biology, chemistry and physics. Science classes develop critical thinking and problem solving skills necessary for college and beyond. *Many colleges require that at least 2 science credits be laboratory based and the NH Scholars Program requires that 3 credits are lab based*, so be sure you take this into consideration when making your schedule. Laboratory sciences often meet for a double period and are usually 1.5 credit courses.

**SOCIAL STUDIES- 3-4 years**

Social studies refers to history, government, sociology, economics, etc... *Be sure to include U.S. History as at least one of your credits.* (In Manchester schools, U.S. History is taken in the junior year.) If your schedule allows, take at fourth credit in a social studies course that interests you.

**WORLD LANGUAGE- 2-4 years (3-4 years is preferred by colleges)**

*World language courses are not required for high school graduation in NH, but they are required for many college applications.* Colleges will want to see that you have taken at least 2 years in the same world language, but they prefer that you take 3-4 years of the same language so that you become proficient in reading, writing and speaking a second language. We recommend that you begin a world language in your freshman year of high school and continue through your junior or senior year. If you take a language in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, you should think carefully about continuing your study of that language in high school as you already have a good foundation.

**FINE ARTS- .5 year (1 year is suggested)**

Examples of fine art courses may be art classes such as drawing or painting, or classes such as band, orchestra, chorus, theatre, etc... Often these courses are offered as half credit classes, or one semester classes. *Please note that in the Manchester schools, many of the higher level art classes require that you take the full year "Foundations of Art" course before you can enroll.* If you are interested in art and think you may want to further explore courses within the subject, it is recommended that you take "Foundations of Art" in your freshman year.

**COMPUTER SCIENCE- .5 year**

*Unfortunately, any computer science courses taken in middle school do not count for high school credit.* There is a wide range of courses from which to choose based on your comfort with technology and your interests.

**HEALTH/PHYSICAL EDUCATION- 1 year of P.E. & .5 year of Health Education**

Try to take these required courses early in your high school career so that you do not have to work them into your schedule later when you have more specific courses and electives you need and want to take.



## **ELECTIVES**

*BEWARE!!!* Electives are fun, interesting and provide a great opportunity to explore new topics. However, they also take away class periods from your core courses (and remember, colleges look heavily at your core courses.) You are encouraged to take a few electives throughout high school to get experience in these different fields, but make sure you are not replacing a core subject (English, Math, Science, Social Studies, and World Language) with an elective.

## COLLEGE PREPARATION

### SO WHAT DO COLLEGES LOOK FOR?

#### TRANSCRIPTS, TRANSCRIPTS, TRANSCRIPTS

Probably the most commonly asked question by high school juniors and seniors and their families at our College Planning workshops is,

**“What do colleges look for when reading my college application?”** It is a difficult question to answer because different schools place emphasis on different aspects of a student’s application file. However, we have learned from speaking to college admissions representatives from various colleges and universities that **a lot of weight is placed on the high school transcript-courses taken and grades received for ALL FOUR YEARS!** Yes, despite the rumors that freshman year is a transition year and it does not count for college, admissions offices will consider the 9<sup>th</sup> grade year as they look to admit a student. Therefore, it is important to start strong by taking challenging classes and doing well in these classes. Many of the juniors and seniors we see are a bit discouraged when they hear that colleges will see their freshman and sophomore year grades. By then it’s too late to do anything about them. **But, as a rising 9<sup>th</sup> grader, you are in a great position because you know from you first day of high school that colleges will assess all of your high school work when they view your application.**

Do not let this information stress you about your first year of high school. Rather, use it as a motivational tool. College admissions offices understand that the road is not always smooth and that there will be obstacles as you go. A slip or a bump will not have a huge impact if you bounce back quickly with improvements in your grades and an increasing degree of difficulty in the levels of classes you chose to take. Let us emphasize again, that ***it is better to get a B or even a B- in a Level 4 class than it is to get an A in a Level 3 class.*** Colleges will also want to see that the majority of your classes were in the **five core subject areas, English, Math, Science, Social Studies and World Language.** We have been told by several admissions offices that electives do not carry a lot of weight on the high school transcript, and therefore will not significantly increase your qualifications as an applicant.

#### ACTIVITIES & EXTRA CURRICULARS

Aside from the high school transcript, colleges also look carefully at the extracurricular activities you have participated in and your involvement in your school and community. While many students feel the need to sign up for as many activities and join as many clubs as they can, quantity is not the best strategy. **College admissions representatives want to see commitment and passion for a particular interest.** Anyone can be a member of a club, but not every student can take ownership of an activity and become a leader of a group. Selecting several activities to try in your freshman year will allow you to find what your real interests are. Then you can chose to become an active member of the groups you enjoy and feel most strongly about. **Focus your time and energy on these few activities and work your way into a leadership role-** such as class treasurer, team captain, stage manager, or yearbook editor. It is the quality of your involvement that will make the most impact on your college application.

“But my parents want me to focus on my school work and not spend time doing extracurricular activities.” This is another statement we hear from older students. While your school work (transcript!) is important, other activities will help build social skills, communication skills and provide unique experiences that you cannot gain in a classroom alone. In addition, your participation in extracurricular activities will teach you time management, a skill that will be crucial to your success in college.

And what about jobs? **Jobs are certainly considered to be valuable experiences on a college application, whether they are formal, paid positions or something you do regularly to help family or neighbors.** Many students worry that because they have a job after school or on the weekends, they are not able to participate in school-sponsored activities such as sports teams, drama clubs or the newspaper. However, just like those activities, a job requires that you learn how to manage your time, to improve your communication skills and to develop work specific skills that make you a well rounded individual. If you have a job, you should be proud of it and do not be afraid to add work-related experiences to your list of activities on your college application.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Another piece of the college application includes a **recommendation from teachers and your guidance counselor.** By your senior year, these teachers and counselors should know you well as a student and will be able to tell a college about your work habits, your motivation to learn and your academic abilities in various subjects. While many colleges will want recommendations from teachers that you choose to ask to write on your behalf, some require a recommendation from an English teacher, and **most will require a statement from your guidance counselor.** So now that you know who you will need to ask to write your recommendations, there is no excuse for not getting to know these people early in your high school career- *especially your guidance counselor.* Guidance counselors are wonderful resources throughout high school, not just people you should meet in your senior year. Stop in at least once a quarter during your first three years of high school, maybe more in the spring of your junior year when you start to think about your options for college. And of course, you will want to seek them more frequently in the fall of your senior year as you apply to college.

## THE PATH TO COLLEGE

Once you have registered for high school and selected your 9<sup>th</sup> grade courses, there are still a few more things you can do to set yourself on the college path from the first day of high school.



Find out who your Guidance Counselor is and schedule a meeting in the fall. Ultimately, this person will write your college recommendation, so you want to form a strong relationship now. Use the meeting to discuss your college goals and to plan your academic course work.

Get Involved! Go to the Activities Fair at the start of school. Sign up for clubs, dance, drama, newspaper, sports, or student government. Meet people and build leadership skills. Colleges look for these on your application.

Talk to your family about paying for college. College is expensive, but there are ways to start saving early and there is financial aid and scholarship money available. Call the Breakthrough Office for planning assistance if needed.

Keep track of your activities, awards, community service, and other educational experiences throughout high school. This will be the beginning of your resume which you can use for summer programs, jobs, honor societies and college applications.

Visit college campuses whenever you get the chance. Even just a drive through a campus will give you a feel for the different types of schools out there.

