

West Hartford Public Schools

Agenda Item: College Admissions Process

Meeting Date: November 5, 2014

From: Nancy DePalma, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

Through: Tom Moore, Superintendent

Background

The West Hartford Public School District is widely recognized as one of the outstanding districts in Connecticut. Our students are the beneficiaries of a rigorous curriculum, stimulating extra – curricular activities, and a supportive community. Guided by a talented professional staff, WHPS graduates develop a 21st century skill set intended to make them college and career ready. School counselors play a significant role in this process by encouraging knowledge of self, fostering student career and interest exploration, scaffolding purposeful academic planning, and linking outcomes to relevant post-high school opportunities for all students.

School Counseling Program

The school counseling curriculum forms the core of individual student success plans, which support long-term academic, personal/social, and career development. Students begin this process as they enter our middle schools. Through targeted developmental lessons and early career exploration, students develop an introductory foundation of career awareness which supports positive transition to the high schools by forging connections between career interests and high school elective course options. At the high school level students continue interest and career exploration in the first two years. As juniors, students apply the self-knowledge generated by these experiences to the high school planning process and engage in reflective individual planning supported by their school counselors.

College Counseling

While the vast majority of WHPS graduates pursue higher education immediately upon graduation, more varied options exist for students to choose from than ever before. Students increasingly consider non-traditional paths such as work or GAP year experiences prior to college enrollment to name a few. With college costs escalating and financial aid burdening consumers with post-college debt, students are becoming savvier in their decision-making. It is not uncommon for students to pursue an associate's degree at a community college, before completing additional requirements at a college or university for a bachelor's degree. Another increasingly common strategy is to attend state universities and enroll in honors programs, rather than pricier, more prestigious, private schools. Either of these pathways help minimize costs, particularly when students anticipate that their future pursuits will require graduate study.

**Agenda
Item: VII.B.2**

The college counseling portion of the WHPS program begins in earnest during a student’s junior year. The spring semester ‘Junior Workshop’ series, consisting of individual, group, and parent/guardian meetings, provides students and families with valuable information and a timeline by which to organize their conversations and explorations. Fall application workshops assist students with the mechanical aspect of actual college application, while an annual joint Conard/Hall College Fair in October provides an important opportunity for students to interact with college admissions personnel. Additionally, recently expanded financial aid programming provides families with strategies to save for and fund college education, while also providing assistance with the sometimes complex financial aid application process.

Class of 2014 Outcome Summary

Conard High School

| | |
|--------------------|--------|
| Four Year Colleges | 67.6 % |
| Two Year Colleges | 23.1 % |
| Technical Schools | 1.7 % |
| Post Graduate | 0.9 % |

Total Further Education 93.3%

| | |
|------------|-------|
| Military | 0.9 % |
| Employment | 3.2 % |
| Other*** | 2.6 % |

Total Post-High School 100 %

Hall High School

| | |
|--------------------|--------|
| Four Year Colleges | 76.5 % |
| Two Year Colleges | 13.1 % |
| Technical Schools | 0.3 % |
| Post-Graduate Year | 0.3 % |

Total Further Education 90.2 %

| | |
|------------|-------|
| Military | 1.9 % |
| Employment | 4.0 % |
| Other*** | 3.9 % |

Total Post-High School 100 %

*** Examples of “Other” include GAP year programs, career training or apprenticeship, and 5th year programs for special needs students

Current Trends and a Look Ahead

Current trends in college admissions include:

- Increase in electronic application and number of total applications submitted by students
- Continued increase in Early Action applications
- Social media
- “Demonstrated interest”: a school-specific measure reflecting a student’s level of perceived interest in the institution
- Recommendations: the number and source type vary more widely by institution than ever before, as does the importance of the recommendation in admissions decisions
- Cost concerns

As the department looks ahead, areas of program improvement will focus the following:

- Development of *college completion* skills to complement the current local, state, and national emphasis on college readiness and access.
- Introduce high school – college transition element for seniors
- Continue identification and program development to support 1st generation students, ESOL, other under-represented populations
- Develop identification and supports for undocumented students
- Continue expansion of programming to support students seeking non-traditional post-high school paths

Dr. Nancy DePalma, Tor Fiske and Ed D’Addio, School Counseling Department Supervisors will be present to answer questions.