Choosing Courses for Senior Year

The BIG Idea

- Which senior year high school courses will I need to graduate and which will best help me reach my educational and career goals?

AGENDA

Approx. 45 minutes

I. Warm Up: Looking Back, Looking Ahead (10 minutes)

II. Graduation Requirements (5 minutes)

III. Courses for Your Career and Interests (5 minutes)

IV. Courses for College-Bound Seniors (5 minutes)

V. Preliminary Course Selection (15 minutes)

VI. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

MATERIALS

- ❑ **PORTFOLIO PAGES:**
  - Portfolio page 11, Four-Year Plan
  - Portfolio page 1, Interest Profiler and Basic Skills Survey Results
  - Portfolio page 2, Evaluating Top Career Choices (from Careers 2)
- ❑ **STUDENT HANDBOOK PAGES:**
  - Student Handbook page 122, Recommended Courses for College
  - Student Handbook page 123, Questions for My School Counselor
- ❑ **FACILITATOR PAGES:**
  - Facilitator Resource 1, DO NOW
- ❑ Overhead projector
- ❑ Sample packet of local school district's 12th grade course selection forms and information (e.g., background information on course selection process, student data form, listing of 12th grade courses w/ syllabus, course selection form, etc.)

OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, the student(s) will:

- Understand which courses are required for high school graduation in their state or district.
- Understand which courses are required or recommended by four-year colleges.
- Identify the courses that will help them explore their interests and prepare for future careers.
- Use the criteria above to select courses for their senior year.

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OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students begin to select courses for their senior year. They first record the classes they will have completed by the end of junior year. Then they review three important criteria for selecting classes: state or district requirements for graduation; courses that help them prepare for specific careers and explore their interests; and requirements or recommendations for college-bound students. Next, they use a listing of course offerings to select options for next year. Finally, they complete a list of questions for their school counselor regarding their final selections. Some schools may elect to use this class for official course selection by inviting the school counselor to co-facilitate.

PREPARATION

- ❑ This lesson is designed to help students prepare for their meetings with the school counselor to select courses for the 12th grade. Be sure to coordinate with the counselor to become better acquainted with the processes involved. If possible, invite your school counselor to serve as a co-facilitator of this lesson. Having him/her present will be incredibly valuable in answering students' specific questions.
- ❑ You will need to contact local school officials well in advance of this lesson to identify and assemble necessary information and forms for your district's course selection process (juniors choosing courses for their senior year). This packet of information should include: district or state requirements for graduation, a listing of senior year courses, the course selection card or form, and any other information needed to help students and their parents understand the senior year course selection process.
- ❑ Ask your school counselor if it's possible to access a copy of each student's transcript so students don't have to guess regarding the number of credits they've accumulated.
- ❑ List the day's **BIG IDEA** and activities on the board.
- ❑ Write the day's vocabulary word and definition on the board.
- ❑ The following handouts need to be made into overhead transparencies or copied onto chart paper:
    - **Student Handbook page 122, Recommended Courses for College**
    - **Portfolio page 11, Four-Year Plan**
    - **Portfolio pages 4-5, Education Requirements**

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VOCABULARY

Advanced Placement (AP) Classes: challenging courses that give students the opportunity to earn college credit while still in high school. Students must successfully complete an exam at the end of each AP course.

IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

DO NOW:

(You may choose to present the Warm Up activity as a written Do Now. Present the questions on the board or on an overhead projector, and have students write only their answers on index cards. You can also choose to give the students a handout by copying **Facilitator Resource 1, DO NOW.)**

Questions:

1. How many credits do you need to graduate from your high school?
2. What are some examples of advanced courses your school offers?
3. What career do you think you would most like to pursue? What classes do you think you could take during your senior year that would help you reach that career goal?

After they have completed their answers, call on students to read their answers. Then begin with the **Warm Up** as written.

Activity IV, Courses for College-Bound Seniors: If you already know some colleges to which students will likely apply, you may want to check their course requirements and recommendations online. An easy resource for this information is the College Board. Enter the college name under "College QuickFinder" (**http://collegesearch.collegeboard.com/search/index.jsp)** Once you've selected your college, click through several screens to find the "Am I On Track?" feature. This Academic Tracker allows students to compare courses they've completed with college recommendations. (This website is revisited in **Education After HS 6, College Research I.**)

Activity V, Preliminary Course Selection: If your school has an official course request form for students to complete, you may choose to have students complete this form instead of completing the 12th grade column in **Portfolio page 11, Four-Year Plan.**

With students' permission, you may wish to collect **Student Handbook page 123, Questions for My School Counselor,** to share students' scheduling concerns.

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ACTIVITY STEPS

I. Warm Up: Looking Back, Looking Ahead (10 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE**: Welcome, everybody. This week, we're going to begin a new unit on Education After High School. Right now, you all may have very different plans, from going to a four-year college, to completing a technical degree, to launching right into a career. But whatever your plan, it's important to know what kind of education or training can help you in your future and how you can prepare for that now. In today's lesson, we're going to look at an important decision you'll be making about your immediate future — planning your classes for next year.

2. Have students turn to **Portfolio page 11, Four-Year Plan**.
   SAY SOMETHING LIKE: To start, please fill in the courses for the first three years — in other words, the high school classes that you took in 9th and 10th grade along with the classes you are currently taking. This is an essential step in determining which classes you'll take next year. Now, we'll review some of the criteria for choosing next year's classes, including:
   - Which classes you need to graduate
   - Which classes fit your interest and career goals
   - Which classes are required or recommended by colleges

3. Give students about five minutes to complete the first three years of this chart (9th–11th), reminding them to leave the fourth column (12th) blank.

II. Graduation Requirements (5 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE**: First things, first: How many of you want to graduate from high school? (Show of hands.) Of course you all do! So that's the first thing we want to consider when choosing courses for next year. Let's take a look at what's required in our district/state.

2. Hand out the list of district/state requirements for graduation, and display a copy on the overhead projector. Review the credits for each subject required by your district/state.

3. Give students a few minutes to review the requirements and compare them to their own Four-Year Plans.

4. Take a few minutes to let students ask questions about these requirements.

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III. Courses for Your Career and Interests (5 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE**: Of course, graduation requirements shouldn't be the only thing you consider. You want to choose courses that match your personal interests and career goals, too. This is important whether you're planning on a career, a two-year college, or a four-year college.

   Earlier this year, you completed the IHaveAPlanIowa.gov's Interest Profiler to identify careers that matched your interests and goals. For your top career choice, you recorded recommended classes from IHaveAPlanIowa.gov. Let's turn back to **Portfolio pages 4-5, Education Requirements**, to review those lists.

2. Display a copy of this page on the overhead projector to remind them what this form looked like.

3. Give each student their list of recommended courses and instruct them to review their list for the next few minutes, noting the recommended courses for their selected careers. Encourage them to write down new or different interests that may not be on their list. In addition, prompt students to think about why the subjects on their list have been recommended.

   NOTE: If your students find that many of the subjects recommended by IHaveAPlanIowa.gov are not offered at their school, facilitate a quick discussion about how else they could gain experience in those areas (extracurricular clubs or activities, internships/jobs, summer programs, etc.). In addition, stress to students that it's ok if they can't take every subject recommended by IHaveAPlanIowa.gov.

IV. Courses for College-Bound Seniors (5 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE**: The final thing you'll want to consider when choosing classes are the requirements and recommendations for college. Now, this is important to everyone, even if you're not planning to apply for college next year. These courses are also an important foundation for success in most careers.

   If you have capable students who aren't planning on taking college courses, you may point out that people can decide to enter college at any age, and can take courses to get ready at a local community college if they haven't had them before. But the opportunity cost for postponing these pre-college courses is that 1) these courses will cost money later on, and 2) adult students often have to fit school into a schedule that includes other responsibilities—like a job or family. Now is a great time to take college prep courses – while it costs them nothing and school is their main responsibility.

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2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE**: Let's take a look at the courses that are recommended by most colleges. Please turn to **Student Handbook page 122, Recommended Courses for College**. [Display this page on the overhead projector and review the recommendations as a class.]

   Keep in mind that these are general recommendations. You'll want to check with the colleges you're applying to for their specific requirements. [See **IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS** for a recommended website to find this information.]

   Note if there are any differences between the graduation requirements from your high school and the college recommendations. For example, if your school requires students to complete two years of foreign language, students who are planning on applying to a four-year college should be encouraged to take a third year.

3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE**: You'll also note that **Advanced Placement** courses are at the bottom of this list. Raise your hand if you've ever heard of an AP class. (Show of hands) Who can tell me something they already know about these classes? [Allow students to respond.] These are challenging courses that give you an opportunity to earn college credit. These courses are usually taken during senior year. To earn credit, you must successfully complete an AP exam at the end of the course. Keep in mind that AP classes are not required for college admission, but are highly recommended. What are some reasons to take AP courses? [Allow students to respond and list their ideas on chart paper or the board.] You are exactly right. Not only do they give you a head start in college, they also improve your chances of admission. After all, if you can successfully complete an AP course, you've already proven to a college that you are willing and able to succeed in more challenging courses. And you save money because AP courses count for college credit.

4. Give students a few minutes to review the recommendations and compare them to their **Four-Year Plan**. They may also want to compare these courses with those in their **Portfolio pages 4-5, Education Requirements,** which recommend courses that prepare students for specific career paths.

5. Take a few minutes to let students ask questions about these requirements.

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V. Preliminary Course Selection (15 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE**: Now that we've reviewed some of the most important criteria for choosing courses, it's time to take a first pass at making your own choices. You will be choosing courses from this list of course offerings for next year. [Hand out copies of this list (obtained from your school counselor) and display a copy on the overhead projector.] You'll share these preliminary choices with the school counselor when you make your final schedule.

2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE**: Please turn back to **Portfolio page 11, Four-Year Plan** that you started at the beginning of the class. Now, I'd like you to take some time to complete the column for 12th grade, considering the criteria that we discussed today. Remember that the first thing to consider is whether you have the necessary graduation requirements.

3. Give students about 15 minutes for this step. Walk around the classroom to answer questions they may have as they make their selections.

VI. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

1. Have students turn to their **Student Handbook page 123, Questions for My School Counselor**. Give students a few minutes to write down any questions they had as they were making their course selections.

2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE**: Remember, the courses you selected today aren't set in stone. Over the next day or two, think about the ones you chose today. Which ones are you most excited about? Are you still wondering about any courses that aren't on your list? Add these thoughts and questions to the list you just started and share these with your school counselor.

3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE**: Great job today, everyone. Next week, we're going to talk more about education after high school and start exploring college majors—what they are and how to choose one that helps you meet your goals for the future.

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DO NOW:
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Directions: Read the questions below and record your responses.

1. How many credits do you need to graduate from your high school?

_____

2. What are some examples of advanced courses your school offers?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
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_____

3. What career do you think you would most like to pursue? What classes do you think you could take during your senior year that would help you reach that career goal?

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Recommended High School Courses for College

Subject	Number of Courses	Recommended Courses
English	Four or more years	Grammar, composition, literature
Math	Three or more years	Algebra I and II, geometry, trigonometry and/or calculus
Science	Three or more years	Biology, chemistry, physics, earth/space science; include lab classes
Social Studies	Three or more years	U.S. history, U.S. government, economics, world history or geography, civics
Foreign Language	Three or more years	At least two years of the same language.
Other/Electives	Varies with colleges	Check with each college; some require courses in computer science or the arts (including visual arts, music, theater, drama, dance)
Advanced Placement (AP) Courses	Recommended	Courses available in different areas within science, social studies, English, foreign languages, and more. Check with your school to see which AP courses are offered.

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Name _____

Questions for My School Counselor

As you're figuring out your course schedule for next year, you'll probably have a lot of questions for your school counselor. Write your questions below.

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

3. _____

_____

4. _____

_____

5. _____

_____

6. _____

_____

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Four-year Plan

Warm Up: Please fill in the first three columns of the chart below to record your classes in 9th, 10th, and 11th grades. Your teacher will provide instructions for filling in the column for 12th grade.

	Courses Taken/Planned			
SUBJECT	**9th**	**10th**	**11th**	**12th**
1. Language Arts				
2. Math				
3. Science				
4. Social Studies				
5. Foreign Language				
6. Other/ Electives (Arts, Computer Science, etc.)				

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