

POST-HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELING SOPHOMORE NEWSLETTER

END-OF-YEAR 2025

SOPHOMORE YEAR

Congratulations class of 2027 on completing your first year at the Winnetka campus! Your commitment, resolve, and perseverance are qualities that will serve you well throughout your time at New Trier and beyond. Post-high school counseling would like to provide further information about what to expect in the coming semesters and what you can do in preparation for junior year as it pertains to planning for life after New Trier.

ACADEMICS

We strongly encourage all students to find their individual balance between academic rigor and strong academic performance. If your intention is to pursue a college education, know that regardless of whether or not an ACT or SAT score will be required for admission, the academic merits of a student's profile as demonstrated in the transcript continue to be the core foundation of admission evaluations.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

We also know that when colleges review applicants, most do not simply aim to fill a class with numbers and grade point averages, but in fact, try to build a class of students with a variety of backgrounds, values, interests, perspectives and activities. Thus, post-high school counseling continues to emphasize to students the importance of finding an ideal blend of activities and commitments that excite you, inform you, and allow you to embrace your interests outside the classroom. If there was a prescribed set of activities that was most effective to attain college admissions, everyone would have it. Rather, students should feel confident and reassured that the interests you discover and pursue throughout high school serve as a reflection of the values and the contributions you will add regardless of the post-high school path you pursue.

MAIALEARNING

The class of 2027 is the first group of students who will make use of MaiaLearning for their four-year experience at New Trier. MaiaLearning is a college and career research platform offering comprehensive support for college applications, resume building, financial aid guidance, and academic planning tools. The class of 2027 students and parents received access to MaiaLearning as freshmen, and post-high school counseling conducted tutorials on the system this past spring during their sophomore advisory visits.

MaiaLearning includes a full suite of resources, tools and databases which provide customized support to students and parents as they navigate the college, career, scholarship and financial aid research and application process. Click on the titles below to watch brief videos detailing a few key features:

- [College search features](#)
- [Career planning tools](#)

TAKING A LOOK AHEAD

Now is the ideal time to reflect upon your first two years of high school as you transition into the final half of your time at New Trier. What has gone well? Which areas do you want to improve upon? What goals do you have for next year? Most likely, your adviser has introduced you to a self-reflection journal activity in MaiaLearning. Taking the time to work through that journal assignment will help you in the long run as you give thought to your experiences and goals for your remaining time at New Trier and beyond.

POST-HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELING SOPHOMORE NEWSLETTER

END-OF-YEAR 2025

STANDARDIZED TESTING

Frequently, we are asked, "When should students begin taking college admission tests?" The ACT and SAT are designed for students who are in the latter portion of the junior year curriculum, so most students are advised to take those tests in the second semester of junior year (February – June). Some students in an advanced curriculum might find an early winter testing date to be convenient. However, testing too early may yield results that undermine a student's confidence. There will be multiple opportunities for students to take the SAT and/or ACT during the spring of junior year and early senior year.

On April 9, 2025, all sophomores took a PreACT exam which is designed to provide familiarity with the ACT format and identify areas of strength and areas for improvement. In the coming weeks, New Trier will send the score report PDF via email. This fall, juniors will be able to take the PSAT/NMSQT in October. Finally, the State of Illinois will provide a free ACT to all public high school juniors in spring of 2026 as part of their mandatory suite of assessments for graduation.

For a comprehensive overview of testing considerations, we encourage you to watch the "Navigating College Admissions Testing" presentation we hosted last December. To view a recording of the program, click [HERE](#).

HEAAB

This May, the post-high school counseling department hosted our Higher Education Admissions Advisory Board (HEAAB) which included 14 college admissions leaders. They spent two days on the New Trier campus for meetings, presentations, and round-table discussions. Various New Trier faculty and administrators shared about the current and upcoming curricular initiatives as well as many details that makes us an innovative, lighthouse school. Post-high school counselors led discussions around the current state of admissions, and a panel of graduating seniors presented on how they navigated their search and admissions process.

Attendees included admissions leaders from: Univ of Chicago, DePaul Univ, Univ of Denver, Dickinson Coll, Univ of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Indiana Univ, Univ of Iowa, Univ of Michigan, Michigan Tech Univ, Northwestern Univ, Oakton Coll, Purdue Univ, Coll of William & Mary, and the Univ of Wisconsin - Madison.

POST-HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELOR LIST

PHSC staff and their advisory pairings:

Cassandra Barca: barcac@nth.net	Burnside, Hafron, Howe, Malamuth
Jill Cervantes: cervantj@nth.net	Doll, Immel, Pilewski
Heather Ecklund: ecklundh@nth.net	Hands, Rotman, Schubert, Torrisi
Kristen Graf: grafk@nth.net	Boumstein, Burns, Garneau, Lowery, Rowe
Nick Kostalek: kostalen@nth.net	Haak, J.J. Hill, Horne, Niemi, Stabinsky
Michael O'Connor: oconnorm@nth.net	Bushell, Fergus, Hillhouse, Rafferty-Flatter, Wright
Thomas Shorrock: shorroct@nth.net	Gries, Laue, Nasshan, Wininsky
Gretchen Stauder: stauderg@nth.net	Clemenz, S. Hill, Holderread, Klein
Robert Zigmund: zigmundr@nth.net	Dane, Goode, Kolososki, Kuzmanic

JUNIOR YEAR AT A GLANCE

DROP-IN DAYS

Throughout the year, PHSC hosts drop-in days on all Anchor Days. This means any Winnetka campus student can stop by room 201 for a brief chat and/or quick questions with their post-high school counselor. During first quarter, seniors drop-ins are prioritized, given their timeframe for college application completion.

CHOICES FAIR | OCT. 7

A partnership between local high schools, the **CHOICES Fair** is a post-secondary planning night for college-bound students with learning differences. This year, it takes place at Lake Forest High School. Click [here](#) for more details.

ADVISORY VISITS | QUARTERS 2-4

Starting second quarter and continuing through the remainder of the school year, post-high school counselors will make regular visits to student advisories. We will cover a range of topics from career and college planning, standardized testing, course registration, and more. Students who consistently attend advisory will be at an advantage, as they will be receiving timely insights and information.

GAP YEAR FAIR | JAN. 24

Join us for the annual New Trier Gap Year Fair. The largest of its kind in the country, this event will include speakers, vendors, and resources for students and families considering a gap year experience.

STANDARDIZED TESTING | SECOND SEMESTER

By design, the most common time to take the ACT and/or SAT for the first time is in the spring of junior year. Many students choose to retest in the summer before and/or fall of your senior year, if needed. Some students might take the ACT and/or SAT for the first time in the winter of their junior year, should they be in a more advanced curriculum.

The state of Illinois requires all public high schools to administer one ACT for juniors (it's a state-mandated graduation requirement). This required ACT for the class of 2026 will occur on April 22, 2026. For this test, registration is not needed. For all other ACT/SAT testing dates, those require student registration via my.act.org or collegeboard.org, respectively.

Key PHSC events for the 2025-26 school year:

COLLEGE REP VISITS | FIRST QUARTER

During the first quarter, our office will host more than 200 college admissions representatives. These info sessions will occur almost daily. Juniors are welcome to attend, should the meeting time align with their free or lunch period. Details to be posted in [Maia Learning](#) and on the [NT school calendar](#).

JOB FAIRS & JOB BOARD

Each semester, our office hosts a job fair for all Winnetka students on the first floor, outside of the cafeteria. This is a great opportunity to learn more about local employment opportunities. The fairs will occur on Sept 17, 2025 and Feb 25, 2026. Moreover, there is a link to the New Trier Job Board on the [PHSC page](#) of the New Trier website.

PSAT/NMSQT | OCT. 9

On October 9, the [New Trier Test Center](#) will coordinate the PSAT/NMSQT. This practice SAT exam is not required for college admissions. However, for this PSAT date only, the top half of the top 1% of test takers are considered for the [National Merit](#) scholarship program. The New Trier Test Center will send out more info over summer and at the beginning of the 2025-26 school year.

PHSC PARENT PROGRAM | NOV. 12 & 13

Join us in November for the [Junior PHSC Parent Program](#) for parents/guardians of the class of 2027. During this Winnetka campus evening event, you will meet with your student's post-high school counselor, hear an overview of the college search/application timeline, and learn more about our comprehensive services.

PHSC MEETINGS | SECOND SEMESTER

Individualized PHSC appointments will begin shortly after the start of second semester and continue through the end of the year. Instructions on how students can schedule their meeting will be sent out in early winter. At your PHSC initial appointment, we will discuss your future plans and questions, and we'll navigate how we can support you in reaching your goals. Parent(s)/guardian(s) are welcome to attend the first meeting; all follow-up meetings will be student-counselor only.

COURSE REGISTRATION | JAN & FEB

In partnership with advisers and teachers, post-high school counselors will work closely with the class of 2027 to provide guidance on selecting senior year courses. Counselors will be visiting advisories regularly to present essential information and help answer questions.