**Module 1 Part 5:  
Between Now and Then: Exploring the High School and College Option**

*This section corresponds with middle school classroom materials Module 1 Lesson 5.*

[Introduction](#Introduction)

[Learn About It](#Learn)

My Goals

* Recognize I’ll make important choices in high school
* Think about what I might want to do after high school graduation and what choices I’ll make to get there

[Objective Check](#Objective)

[Digging Deeper](#Digging)

Introduction

Objective: You will identify the 3 choices that you will make from your freshman year through your senior year of high school and why and how those choices will affect your post-graduation plans.

Estimated time needed: 30-45 minutes

Materials needed:

Internet access

Introductory Video (Double Click to play)

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Creating Your Schedule

One of the biggest decisions that you will make is the creation of your schedule. This process actually begins midway through your 8th grade year. The high school that you will attend might have an open house. Attend this event with your parent, guardian, or trusted adult. At the open house, you will learn about registration, core classes, electives, lunches, clubs, and more.

When you actually begin the registration process in the spring of your 8th grade year, you will need to be ready to choose classes for your entire 9th grade year. These classes include both core classes and electives. We’ll talk about what you will need to take, but first let’s understand some details.

Parents Chime In

Your child has spent a lot of time in these modules learning about high school, setting goals, and learning about himself or herself as a learner. Now it’s time to put it all together. When your child starts high school, he or she needs to have an idea of what he or she wants to do. This should be an informed decision, not one determined by friends or by what others are doing. Talk with your child about the importance of making good decisions from the very beginning.

Learn About It

There are 2 ways you can start high school. You can be prepared and ready or you can go in thinking that you will figure it out as you go along.

Up to this point in your school career, you have gotten report cards, but your grades have been between you, your parents, and your school. Your report cards have served a purpose, but they won’t really ever be looked at by anyone else. Once you start 9th grade, that all changes. From day one, each grade that you make will play a part in the grades that you receive for the semester on your report card.

You have also always taken art, music, physical education, and other electives. But you haven’t received letter grades for them before. In high school, you will get a grade in every class that you take, including electives, and those grades will be on your report card. The grades on your report card will create an overall grade point average (GPA), and that GPA will be used to apply to colleges, scholarships, and jobs.

So, if you go into your freshman year of high school unprepared and signed up for the wrong classes, then you will make decisions that will start your transcript and GPA out in the wrong direction. You will have to work very hard to turn around to the right direction. It’s best to go in prepared so that you start day one moving toward your goals!



Help is Available

There are many support options available for you in high school. In addition to providing the supports specified in your IEP, teachers often offer after-school tutoring and may provide guided time for you to gain extra instruction.

In addition to these supports, if you have an IEP, you are eligible to register for a curriculum assistance class as an elective. This class might have different names at different schools, but the general idea is that you use one of your elective selections to take this class.

A teacher with a special education background might teach the class. Typically, the class is split between flex time and direct instruction. The flex time can be used to get assistance with what you learned that day, or to work on your homework, study for tests, or receive clarification on confusing content. Your curriculum assistance teacher will work closely with your core class teachers to find out your weak areas in each class. He or she will also work to provide any testing accommodations listed in your IEP.



Standard, Honors, and Advanced Placement Classes

You have probably heard people talking about honors and Advanced Placement (AP) classes, but most people don’t actually understand what is expected in the different class levels. Not only that, but certain stereotypes are associated with each class level. It is important to choose classes based on what is best for you, not what you think will make you look or seem successful. Consider the definitions of each class level.

Standard: This class level offers instruction and guidance through activities and assignments to help students achieve adequate understanding of the course content.

Honors: Honors classes are distinguished by the rigor of work and depth of study rather than by the quantity of work. These classes are designed to give students a more challenging and in-depth experience in which students are expected to work independently and accept greater responsibility for their learning.

Advanced Placement (AP): These classes demand that students are self-motivated, avid, critical readers who desire to improve already strong writing skills. Teachers often try to build these class environments to mirror what students will experience in college.

Remember, though, that each class and teacher style is different, so these descriptions will not apply in every single situation.



Which Should You Choose?

As you enter high school, it is natural to want to be in classes with your friends. As you look toward your future goals and ambitions, though, keep in mind that what is best for you might not be best for your friend.

You have learned about your learning styles and completed goal setting activities. By this point, you have a good handle on what is best for you. Your friends might plan to take an honors English class. If you know that a rigorous English class is going to be difficult, you will need to register for the standard English class. The pace will be slower and you will receive more instructional supports. This will not only help your GPA, but it will also build your confidence moving forward. Yes, honors and AP classes are weighted, but the extra weight in your GPA will not help if you make a D or fail the course, and it certainly will not help your confidence.

Conversely, your friend might plan to take a standard math class, but you know you are very good at math. You should talk to the counselor and register for an honors math class.

The important thing to remember about class selection is that you need to know *your* learning styles, *your* interests, and *your* plan for the future while remembering that even the grades from your first semester are critical to the overall GPA that you will receive upon graduation.

All that said, do not be afraid to take an honors course. If the subject is not something affected by a learning disability or especially challenging content area for you, you may surprise yourself. The challenge of an honors class might be motivating, and the students in the class with you may be stronger students (from whom you can learn by example).

Parents Chime In

You are going to need to take an active role in helping your child select classes for his or her freshman year of high school. You know your child’s strengths and weaknesses. Make sure that your child is taking what is best for him or her. There can be a lot of talk among parents about certain teachers and classes. This can even involve some amount of adult peer pressure to have your child conform to what everyone else’s child is doing. Don’t fall for it.

Schedule an appointment with your child’s guidance counselor, and make decisions that are in the best interest of your child. It is better to have your child in an environment that will breed confidence and success than to have him or her in a situation in which he or she will struggle.



Choosing Your Concentration

In order to graduate from high school, you also may need to have a concentration. Most students begin taking classes toward their concentration as 10th graders. But you should begin to think about this process as an incoming freshman. You want to take classes for your concentration that interest you, but that will also be advantageous toward your future after graduation.

These are some examples of concentrations that you could choose in high school. Make sure you check your state and local requirements and course offerings for the options available to you!

AVID (Advancement Through Individual Determination)

ESL (English as a Second Language)

Career and Technical Education

JROTC (Junior Reserve Officer's Training Corps)

Sports Medicine

Arts Discipline

World Languages

Advanced Placement

College courses

English, Math, Science, or Social Studies

High School Graduation Requirements

Your state and local school systems have graduation requirements. Many states provide 2 primary tracks to graduation. One track directs you to take courses that will prepare you for continued education after high school. The other track prepares you to begin work after high school. Both require the same number of course requirements and yield the same diploma. However, the classes that you take will be very different in the 2 pathways.

If you have even a glimmer of a thought that you would like to go to a 4-year college or a community college after high school, begin taking classes on the track that will prepare you for this. It is much easier to switch to the career track than it is to switch to the college track once you have already started high school!

Most of the classes that you take on the college track will switch over to the career track, but many of the career-track classes will not meet the requirements for the college track.

If you are certain that you want to follow the career track, think of what career you want to have one day. Be sure to take the classes that will give you the skills needed to succeed at that job.

If you plan to attend a trade school after graduation before you begin your career (welding, plumbing, etc.), you can take the career-track classes and still be eligible for acceptance to a trade school.

Parents Chime In

States have different requirements. Find out what your state requires. If you can’t find it yourself, ask the guidance counselor at your child’s current school or future high school.

Click [here](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/curriculum/home/graduationrequirements.pdf) for North Carolina’s graduation requirements.

Your Support System

Begin having transition meetings at the end of 8th grade. It is here that your middle school support system will meet with your future high school support system. Take this opportunity to ensure that your plans are solid and that you’ve considered all possibilities. Your support team should include:

Middle school counselor

Middle school special education teacher

Parent(s), guardian(s), other adults

High school counselor

High school special education teacher



Additional Considerations

Before you know it, you will be at the end of high school, looking forward to your adult life. For now, though, you have some decisions to make that will set you up for success 4 years down the road.

You need to know that college is an option.

You may have learning disabilities or other health impairments, but you do not have to be defined by those pieces of you. They are just parts of a puzzle that is yet to be put together.

If you want to go to college, you absolutely can go.

You need to pay attention to the diploma track that you are taking.

If you qualify for a course waiver in a foreign language or math, you need to make sure that you don’t need that class to get into college. Even if you qualify for a waiver, you can still take the class. Just make sure that you have the appropriate supports in place first. Having limited languages or math classes will decrease your chance of getting into college.

Plan out your course pacing and selection early in your high school career. This will give you the opportunity to take your time and learn the necessary skills before you enter each class.

One of the challenges of college is learning to manage course selection and long range study skills. Try to develop these skills in high school where you have a strong, close-knit support team.

Try It Out

Through your work with this module, you have started thinking about your dreams and goals as well as your learning strengths and challenges. To help you think about different options, click [here](C:\\Users\\jamesmo\\Downloads\\MSM1_Lesson_5_Post_Graduation_Plan_Examples_handout_6.1.16.docx) for some scenarios for what you might be thinking about doing after college. Choose the one that most closely represents you and your interests. Then, think through the following questions:

Who should be on your support team?

What diploma track would you take?

What electives should you take?

What concentration would be helpful?

How will you get extra help if you need it?

Write an imaginary ending to your senior year in high school that includes what you will be doing after graduation. Use the handout [here](C:\\Users\\jamesmo\\Downloads\\MSM1_Lesson_5_Between_Now_and_Then_Handout_6.1.16.docx) to organize your thoughts if it helps you.

Parents Chime In

Get creative with this exercise. Review your state’s graduation requirements and possible concentrations. Thinking through this scenario with your child will set him or her up for success.



Wrapping Up

You are starting to put together all you have learned and see the big picture! High school is a big change, but it doesn’t have to be scary or mysterious. Take the time to plan and be prepared, and those good decisions will go a long way toward your success.

If you have time, use the document [here](C:\\Users\\jamesmo\\Downloads\\MSM1_Lesson_5_My_Choices_handout_6.1.16.docx) to organize your thoughts and reflect on what you will need to do when you start registering for classes in high school.

Digging Deeper (all of the links were found on 5/20/16):

Information on course selection:

<http://www.fastweb.com/student-life/articles/high-school-course-selection-tips>

<http://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/the-college-admissions-insider/2011/03/07/3-steps-for-choosing-the-right-high-school-classes>

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-in/your-high-school-record/how-to-choose-high-school-electives>

Making general decisions in high school:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/1122D484-9CCE-461E-9F63-038D288BE698/0/HSPlanningflyerTH20YourDecisionsMatter.pdf>

For help figuring out your interests, check out these interest inventories:

[Student Interest Survey](C:\\Users\\jamesmo\\Downloads\\Simple.pdf)

[Student Interest Inventory](C:\\Users\\jamesmo\\Downloads\\VALUE_StudentInterestInventory (1).pdf)

[When I Learn…](C:\\Users\\jamesmo\\Downloads\\inventory.png)

Have you accomplished today’s objective?

Objective: You will identify the 3 choices that you will make from your freshman year through your senior year of high school and why and how those choices will affect your post-graduation plans.

*If so, congratulations!*

*If not, review the information on high school choices again. Have your parent or guardian review this information with you.*