

**Hollidaysburg Area High School, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648**  
**2004 PSCA Career Education and Development Committee Award Winner**

Hollidaysburg Area Senior High School is a comprehensive public high school in Blair County in west-central Pennsylvania with approximately 1000 students in grades 10-12. We believe that although our planned guidance program encompasses all of the ASCA national standards for school counseling, career guidance holds a prominent part in our program. We have devised a plan with developmental activities for each grade level. Our philosophy is as follows:

It is the belief of the Guidance Department that counseling is a vital and continuous part of the total development of every student. The guidance program is developmental in that there are sequential activities by grade level which are conducted through class visits as well as individually with every student. These services are also adaptable to the varied and changing needs of students with different goals. We make every effort to provide the services needed for the individual student in an appropriate and meaningful way. Our goal is to provide counseling services which facilitate the unique growth and development of every child.

There are three counselors in our building; each one assigned to a particular graduating class. Beginning with the scheduling process at the end of the ninth grade year, the grade level counselor remains assigned to a particular class through the senior year. We find this most advantageous in getting to know students more thoroughly over the course of the three years.

Our community is best described as suburban with parents ranging from blue collar to professional. Most parents are very much interested in the career planning of their children with the majority hopeful that their students will eventually attend a four year or at least a two year college. Others are satisfied with sending their children to the local career and technology center with some going on to post-secondary technical or trade schools. We also have a viable cooperative education program through which numerous students enter the world of work in the areas of retail, food service, or business. A small number of graduates enter the military.

Our curriculum pathways include: college preparatory, associate degree preparatory, and occupational preparatory. The college prep program includes both honors and advanced placement courses. The associate degree prep program provides three options: computer technology/business, engineering technology, and health care technology. The occupational prep program also provides three options: marketing, business, and the Greater Altoona Career and Technology Center. These curriculum pathways are an intricate part of our career counseling; essentially driving the scheduling process and helping us to provide our students with courses appropriate for their future career plans. Students may matriculate freely from one pathway to the other as interests or plans change. Furthermore, levels of courses are not restricted in any pathway but rather determined by the ability of a particular student. (e.g. A student who meets pre-requisite requirements of physics may enroll in that course even though it may be a higher level than listed for the associate degree prep curriculum.)

## *The Sophomore Year*

Each grade level counselor begins the school year with a classroom visit to describe the year's guidance and counseling activities and services. At this time, a student bulletin and other relevant hand-outs are distributed. In the tenth grade year, students are provided with an overview of the three main components of the counseling program; specifically, personal-social adjustment, educational planning, and career planning. Students are informed that they will be completing various career assessments through the Choices software program. These assessments are: the Interest Checklist, the Basic Skills Survey, and the Work Importance Locator. They will also be able to complete an occupational search using Choices. Finally, students are told that they will be completing a shortened version of the Myers-Briggs Personality Test.

During this initial class visit, the career portfolio and the career conference are further described to students. It is explained that they will be compiling various print-outs and other written exercises which will be maintained in their portfolios and shared with their parents through an individual conference to which parents will be invited in the spring.

Finally, students are asked to review a study skills packet and then complete a worksheet entitled: *My Study Habits*.. This begins to facilitate thought processes with regard to doing well, setting goals, and making future plans.

A second class visit is held the following month during which students meet with the counselor in the computer lab to begin their inventories. All print-outs are collected and filed in the career portfolio. Moreover, students are provided with the internet connection of Choices called CX-online or Bridges and encouraged to continue their career exploration at home. At the same time, parents are informed of this process through *Counselor Link*, our parent newsletter and through our school web page, [www.tigerwires.com](http://www.tigerwires.com).

A third class visit is conducted in December during which students complete their inventories on Choices and their personality assessment. A follow-up student guide to CX-online is distributed at this time.

In February, students will begin the scheduling process. We meet with sophomores in three extended class period large group sessions by curriculum. We have students complete the *All About Me* worksheet and *My Career Plan*. This is followed by distribution and explanation of scheduling materials.

During the month of March, each student meets individually with the counselor to finalize course selections. In the interim, students are advised to obtain faculty and parent input in choosing their courses for the following year. During the individual conference, students receive counseling pertaining to career goals and meeting those goals through careful selection of coursework.

In mid-March, a letter is sent home to the parents of all sophomores inviting them to attend a career conference. The conference consists of a review of the academic progress of the child and the contents of the career portfolio. Conferences are shared by all three counselors and conducted during April, May, and June.

## *The Junior Year*

After spending a considerable amount of time during the sophomore year assisting students with career and self awareness, we shift focus somewhat during the junior year.

### The Career Room Orientation:

In the fall, juniors are provided with an orientation to the guidance career room which is stock full of college catalogs, college handbooks, scholarship reference books, SAT, PSAT, ACT, and ASVAB prep materials, military information, college videos and CD-roms, and occupational information. Instruction is given on how to use the various career and post-secondary school guides and catalogs. In addition, students are reminded that various guidance related software programs are available at the high school for their use, including Choices, CX Online, and Chronicle Guidance Publications. An activity is administered which allows students to reflect upon what they are looking for in a post-secondary school. A worksheet outlining various factors to consider when selecting a school is distributed and explained.

### Planning Next Steps:

During a subsequent class visit, juniors are taken to the computer lab to complete a college search activity on the Choices software program. Having completed the worksheet during the career room visit, students should now be better able to complete the college search activity on the computer. From this activity, students are given a printout of potential college matches that they can now investigate on their own or by using the career room resources. For non-college bound students, a discussion focusing on searching for a vocational/technical school is covered as well as discussing proper job etiquette for those not planning on pursuing training after high school.

### The Post High School Opportunity Fair:

Juniors and seniors are encouraged to attend a college fair that is held every fall at a neighboring high school. Transportation is provided for interested students in order to give them an opportunity to meet with post-secondary school representatives and collect information on colleges, business schools, trade and technical schools, and the military.

### Graduation Project:

Every junior student is required to complete a graduation project which consists of a 10 page research paper and a five to ten minute oral presentation. Many students choose to do their graduation project on a career area of interest. As part of the requirements for career paper, students are expected to job shadow and interview a professional who is currently doing the work they are interested in. Students must also research information on the job, including job duties, educational requirements, personal qualifications, job outlook and salary.

### Job Shadowing:

Throughout high school, students are encouraged to learn as much as they can about careers that interest them. We designed a Job Shadowing Directory of businesses and industries in our county who have offered to be a job shadowing site for students. The guidance counselors assist in setting up the job shadowing for interested students.

### College Rep Visits:

Juniors and seniors are encouraged to sign up for college rep visits. Sign up sheets are posted in the guidance office, and students are provided with a list of schools and the dates when representatives will be in the high school. College representatives give small group presentations year around.

Test Preparation:

Juniors are provided with information about standardized tests (ASVAB, PSAT, SAT I, SAT II, and ACT) during a class visit, including information about the purpose of the various tests, the types of questions on each test, the difference between random and educated guessing, and how to register for the tests. Information is provided about a SAT prep course that is offered at the high school on Saturdays during the months of January, February, and March. Interested students are encouraged to sign up for this course.

Small group interpretation of PSAT and ASVAB scores are conducted through the guidance office for every test taker. Individual student interpretation of SAT and ACT scores are conducted upon request.

The Rotary Career Fair and Rotary Shadowing Program:

In the spring, juniors are provided with two opportunities to expand their knowledge of careers. A representative from the local Rotary club speaks to students and provides them with the opportunity to become involved in the Rotary job shadowing program. Interested students are matched with local Rotarians and other professionals in the community for a day.

Students are also encouraged to participate in a Rotary Career Day. Juniors from every school in Blair County participate in this fair. Speakers representing approximately 100 occupation fields are present to talk to students about their jobs. At the end of the event, an essay contest is held, giving students the opportunity to write about their experience and what they learned about the careers. The winners receive savings bonds.

Open Houses and Summer Programs:

Announcements are made via the PA system as well as through fliers, the school web site, newsletters, and posters regarding summer programs and college open houses. Students are encouraged to apply for summer enrichment programs such as the Pennsylvania Governor's Schools of Excellence as well as other career oriented programs that are held at various college campuses. Students are nominated to attend leadership programs and career exploration programs such as the National Youth Leadership Forum on Law, Medicine, and Business. Many students are provided with information about summer programs that are related to their areas of interest.

Individual Conferences:

Individual student appointments are held to help students with educational planning to meet their career goals.

Work and Volunteer Programs:

Counselors meet with students who express an interest in participating in the school's work transition programs or the Learning Through Service (volunteer) program.

## *The Senior Year*

During the senior year, we continue many of the programs that were started with our students as juniors. We also help seniors with the transition from high school to adult life.

### Job Shadowing:

This is an ongoing program. Students may feel they could use more exposure in a career area of interest and would like another opportunity to shadow. Some seniors may be shadowing for the first time as they may be able to fit it into their schedule more readily or something has sparked an interest in which they would like to explore further.

### Post Secondary School Application Process:

In the fall of the senior year, the counselor makes a visit to the senior English classes to go over the procedures for applying to post secondary schools. The counselor tries to advise the seniors on a variety of issues surrounding the application process. The procedure for submitting applications and requesting transcripts is covered as well. Students are given a copy of a monthly scholarship bulletin and are informed that they will receive one each month of the school year.

### College Representative Visits:

This is a continuation of something that was made available to the students during their junior year. Senior students are encouraged to take advantage of this in order to research their potential college choice(s) and finalize their decisions.

### Post High School Opportunity Fair

A college fair is held every fall at a neighboring high school. Seniors have the opportunity to attend the fair.

### College Visits:

Individual students are encouraged to make visits to schools of interest. The counselor may help in arranging for this to happen.

### Making College Count:

This is a presentation for our college bound seniors. A professional speaker meets with seniors to discuss the transition to college. The speaker discusses the various issues that face college freshmen.

### Financial Aid Classroom Presentation:

The counselor goes into the senior English classes to go over the financial aid process. Students learn the basics of financial aid and of the application deadlines.

### Financial Aid Night:

An evening program is held each December for parents in the high school auditorium. A financial aid officer from Penn State Altoona is the presenter. He explains how to complete the FAFSA and he also explains the various types of financial aid. The presenter is available to answer individual questions.

### Individual Meetings:

The counselor meets with individual students and/or their parents throughout the year to help investigate and answer questions about their future plans.

Field Trips:

Non-academic students are provided with an opportunity to visit the Job Center in town. Interested students will learn about various ways to apply for jobs. Information regarding resume preparation is also discussed.

Another field trip is arranged for non-academic students to visit a community college.