

Students and Parents,

Greetings from the School Counseling Department! We hope that the start of the school year has been good and that 1st quarter is finishing on a high note for students. We would like to provide to you some information specific for freshman students about planning for high school and making the freshman year a successful time. Visit our school counseling website as we provide a lot of information for parents and students, and answers to common questions. The website is located at <https://bentonschoolcounseling.wordpress.com/>. The Iowa College Access Network (ICAN) has great resources that are free. We would encourage you to download High School Success guide and share with your 9th grader at [ICANHighSchoolSuccessWeb_D6DC041C51B7A.pdf \(icansucceed.org\)](https://www.icansucceed.org/).

Students begin establishing their high school GPA (grade point average) right away their freshman year. It is important to remind your student to maintain good study habits, homework habits, and time management skills to receive the best grades possible. Often, colleges look specifically at GPA and grades from the freshman year to make predictions on how a student makes major transitions. GPAs are determined by assigning the appropriate grade point to each grade earned and dividing by the number of credits earned that quarter. Grade points are listed in the high school handbook.

Students should also be mindful of their attendance at school. It is extremely important for students to be in school each day. Absences lead to make-up work and can greatly affect grades.

Students receive grades for each class at the end of each semester. Freshmen receive progress reports for all classes prior to conferences. Conferences are a great time to connect with teachers to discuss academic progress. Grades are also updated on Powerschool regularly. All parents who supplied an email address to the school will automatically receive periodic updates of grades via email. We encourage you to maintain communication about grades with your student and their teachers.

Students have a greater variety of classes to choose from in high school. Each year, students will review and revise their 4 –year plan in December, and then register for high school classes online in January. Students should consider their 4-year plans as a roadmap through their high school career. The 4-year plan is a fluid document that can change, but we want all students to have an idea of where they are headed in terms of coursework. Schedule changes can be made throughout the year. Students must see Mrs. Nesbitt or Mr. Cretin to change a schedule and must adhere to deadlines. Counselors monitor graduation progress closely and course changes will not be made if they jeopardize graduation progress.

Students are encouraged to find meaningful extracurricular activities. Research shows that students who are involved in school or non-school related organized activities are more organized, manage time better and have a better self-image. We have a variety of athletics, fine arts and school clubs from which to choose. Please encourage your student to try something throughout the year.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Mrs. Nesbitt or Mr. Cretin at 228-8701 or nnesbitt@benton.k12.ia.us or acretin@benton.k12.ia.us. We look forward to a great class of 2026.

Mr. Cretin, Mrs. Nesbitt, and Mrs. Bear