



Talking to Students About Academic Improvement

Advisors are receiving a list of students who are at risk of failure in one or more classes. The following tips are for facilitating a conversation with advisees on academic improvement. This guide and accompanying discussion are intended to put the students in the driver's seat, as they have the most control over grades.

Step One: Identify current academic habits with students

- How would you describe the steps you have taken so far to prepare for your classes?
- What is your current system for staying organized?
- If you had an English project due today, what did you do in the last few days to prepare?
- Tell me about a great school project you've done?
 - What are three things that made it successful?
 - What are three things you would do differently next time?
- Describe how you handle homework. Things to consider:
 - Organization: How do you know what needs to be done?
 - Environment: Where do you study?
 - Time of day: When do you study? For how long?
 - Resources: Where do you go when you have questions or need help?
- When you know a test is coming up, how do you prepare?
- Do you feel that attendance is a barrier to your success in the classroom?

Step Two: Establishing desired goals with students

- Do you want to graduate from Highland Park Senior High with your classmates?
- What classes are you currently getting your best grades in?
- What classes are you getting lower grades in?
- When you are working your hardest, what is the best grade you can get in each class?
- After this discussion, what is one academic goal you will have for each class (English, social studies, math, and science)? Your elective? [Note: goals do not just have to be about grades—they can include: homework, attendance, turning in work on time, etc.]

Step Three: Planning for success

Given the discussion in steps one and two, let's determine specific changes you will make to achieve your goals?

- Homework:
 - What time of the day will you set aside to complete homework? How long will you study?
 - Where will you study?
 - How will you keep track of the homework you need to do?
- Studying: identify three studying techniques that work best for you that you will start using to study for tests. For example, work with friends, make your own tests, review notes, etc.
- In class: What three changes will you make in class to meet the goals we discussed? When will you start these changes?
- Resources: Name one person who will help you meet your goals.
 - Name _____
 - How can this person help you?

Step Four: Monitoring progress

Remember, the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step!

- What are two changes you will make in the next week to move closer to your goal?
- What is one thing your advisor can do to help you in this process? When is the next time you will meet your advisor to review your progress? How often will these meetings be scheduled? What do you want your advisor to ask?

Turn over for a discussion guide to talk to your advisory about academics!

Discussion Guide: Leading a Check-in Discussion With Your Advisory

These discussion questions are only suggestions and should be used as a guide for a discussion. If your class goes in another direction during the discussion, go with it. Feel free to supplement these questions with your own questions and thoughts.

The purpose of this discussion is to have a group check-in regarding the transition to life in high school. Through this discussion we hope that students will:

- Share their difficulties in adjusting to high school
- Identify barriers to their success
- Create a list of behaviors that have helped them adjust to the expectations of high school
- Learn new ways of succeeding in high school from their peers

The questions are grouped by topic—do with them what you will.

Understanding Expectations

- Think back to when you were just starting at the high school. What were your expectations for high school? What things did you look forward to in high school? What did you think would be different from life in the junior high? What things did you fear?
- How did it turn out? How is life in high school different/similar to life in junior high?
- Do you believe you have a good idea of what you need to do to graduate high school? How did you come to understand these expectations? If you don't have a good idea of the requirements for graduation, how might you find out that information?

In the Classroom

- How are the classes different than they were in junior high? What differences did you expect when you imagined a high school classroom?
- Do you feel that you are able to keep up with the pace of work in the classroom? What kind of things do you use to stay organized? Do you use your planner? What things are most helpful?
- What are some things that teachers do that help you stay organized?
- What do you do when you don't understand something in your classroom or you are having difficulty with an assignment/project/concept? What things have you found helpful? What things could you try in the future?
- What things do you like about high school?

At Home

- How much time did you spend a night during junior high on your homework? How about now?
- How do you study? What works best for you? Do you have a specific place that you study? A specific time of day to study? Can you work with distractions?
- What do you do when you have trouble understanding homework? Who can you/do you talk to? What resources do you use?
- Do you know how to use the Student Portal to check your grades on the internet?

After the discussion...

It would be very helpful if you would write up a brief summary of your class's discussion and send it to your SLC Team (lead teacher, counselor, and administrator). We are most interested in those areas where the students are having difficulty, but don't seem to have any clear answers.

