

# IMPORTANT INFORMATION FROM THE GUIDANCE OFFICE

## A FOUR YEAR PLAN

**Coordinator of Guidance & College Placement: Mrs. Linda Dowdy**

Everything you ever wanted (and needed) to know about being a **Freshman** – college bound – student at Father Lopez Catholic High School.

This is your first year of high school and it is the first year that all semester grades will be recorded FOREVER on a permanent record called a TRANSCRIPT. No grades that you received prior to this year will be included on this form. Semester grades are an average of your first nine weeks grades times two, your second nine weeks grades times two and your semester exam. For example, if you received a "C" for your first nine weeks in English, an "A" for the second nine weeks, and a "B" on your semester exam, your instructor would calculate your grade as follows:

$$C = 2.0 \times 2 = 4.0$$

$$A = 4.0 \times 2 = 8.0$$

$$B = 3.0 \times 1 = \underline{3.0}$$

$$15.0 \text{ divided by } 5 = 3.0 \text{ (B)}$$

Your semester grade is a B. This is the grade that will appear on your transcripts. In the second semester, your third and fourth nine week grades, as well as your final exam, will be averaged together the same way to determine your second semester grade. We do not average the first and second together for a final grade for the course. Each semester counts by itself. For each semester you complete with a passing grade (D and above), you will receive ½ credit. For a full year of English, for example, if you pass both semesters, you will receive two ½ credits which equal 1 full credit. Some courses are complete after one semester such as Team Sports or Webmasters. Upon successful completion of one of these courses, you will receive ½ credit.

In order to receive a diploma from Father Lopez Catholic High School, a student must complete a total of 28 credits. The course work that is required to graduate is as follows:

4	Credits	English
4	Credits	Theology
4	Credits	Mathematics
3	Credits	Science
3	Credits	Social Studies
2	Credits	Foreign Language
1	Credit	HOPE
1 1/2	Credit	Computer/Performing Art
5 1/2	Credits	Electives

Even though all transcripts do not look alike in format, certain items are always included. Along with semester grades and the title of all courses completed, it has identification information about you including your address, social security number, date of birth, sex, your current overall GPA (Grade Point Average), attendance, and

community service hours. Your GPA is the average of all your semester grades each year you are in high school. Even if you change schools before you graduate, your GPA will include the averages of all high school semester grades. Your GPA will only change with semester grades NOT nine week grades. If you take an AP (Advanced Placement) class or a dual enrollment course you will receive an extra quality point in calculating your GPA. For instance, if you earn a "B" for the semester in your English class, the "B" earns 3.0 points and the AP classification earns one point, so you receive 4.0 points for a grade of a "B" Honor courses earn an extra ½ quality point.

Aside from academics, it is extremely important to be a part of your school. Father Lopez offers a wide variety of opportunities for students to be a part of sports, clubs, and student government offices. Do not wait to be asked! Show up for the first meeting and be a part of the action. It is a great way to get to know the students in your class and in your school. Once you are a part of a team or club you will feel more like a GREEN WAVE.

Through your Theology class you will be required to volunteer 15 hours in our community. Each year your Theology class will have this requirement with an increase in the number of hours needed in order to pass the class. It is a good idea to find an organization that sparks your interest in your freshman year. Therefore, you can make it a part of your four-year plan at Father Lopez. By the time you graduate you will have served at least 100 hours. Many scholarships now require that you document community service.

Now is the time to start keeping a list of the following:

- Clubs/Organizations
- Leadership positions
- Sports
- Community Service
- Awards/Honors
- Employment

List everything! Note the grade for each. Example: soccer (9, 10). Start your resume now and update it every year. College and scholarship applications will ask what you have done with your time aside from attending classes. If you don't write down this information as you go, you may forget many significant activities.

As a freshman, you will take the PSAT in October. You are automatically signed up for this test. It is not optional. The exam takes about three hours. The results are returned to you in November. At this time, your guidance counselor will go over each section of the paperwork and explain its significance. This test compares you to other students in our school and all students nationwide who took this exam. Your weaknesses and strengths are highlighted and the results not only help you to be more informed about your progress, but it also "red flags" to your teachers any academic weakness. These results help us to better help you.

For all of you athletes, here is the latest information regarding participation in any interscholastic sports as it has been told to us by the Florida High School Activities Association:

- In order to be eligible to play or practice, you must maintain a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 or above on an unweighted 4.0 scale by the end of the first semester of your ninth year. If your overall grade point average falls below 2.0 at the end of any semester that you are in high school, you will not be eligible to participate until you bring up your overall GPA to at least a 2.0. Remember the cumulative grade point averages only change at the semester, not the nine weeks.

## **Your SOPHOMORE year at Father Lopez Catholic High School**

As a sophomore you have successfully completed your first year of high school. Your transcript indicates that you have completed all requirements of a freshman and you are ready to begin your second year of high school. You have a cumulative grade point average. The courses you will be taking as a sophomore are indicated. No grade will be placed on your transcript for your sophomore year until the end of the first semester and the end of the second semester. Colleges are particularly interested in your sophomore and junior course load and your grades for these two years. All four years are important but there is an emphasis on these two years. Protect the grades that go on this PERMANENT record.

Students are encouraged to take part in at least one sport. You don't have to be a super star to be involved on the playing field. All students are invited to participate.

Aside from athletics, stay involved in your class activities. Run for class office or be a part of the function of your class (homecoming float decorating, etc.). Join one or more of the clubs on campus. Let others know that you want to be a part of the organizations.

Don't forget to continue your service hours through your Theology class. This is a requirement of graduation and also several scholarships are now requiring documentation of all high school volunteer work. Make sure that you keep a record of your hours and get a signature of the on-site supervisor.

Remember to continue your resume throughout your sophomore year. As is indicated in the freshman year, it includes: clubs/organizations, sports, and leadership positions.

Each fall there is a county-wide college fair. This year is a good time to attend. College/University representatives from all over the United States will be on hand this one evening to give you handouts and answer your questions. Parents and students are encouraged to attend. We will give you more information as it becomes available.

In February, you will be given a course selection sheet as well as a course description book. Your counselor will be talking to you about the courses you will need to sign up for as a Junior.

You will be taking the PSAT again this year. It is good practice for the SAT. You can compare your score with last year's results. You will also take PLAN, the pre-test for the ACT, another college entrance exam. You will take the SAT and ACT in your junior year.

# What Every JUNIOR at Father Lopez Catholic High School Should Know

Well, you're halfway through high school! You now have a transcript that includes semester grades from your freshman year and your sophomore year. Your cumulative GPA is recorded. At the beginning of this year your course load will be recorded on your transcript and as semester grades become available, they will be included. These are really the last grades that colleges will see before you apply in the fall of your senior year. It is important that you make the best grades in your junior year. Colleges want to see that you are serious about your studies and that you are successfully completing a college preparatory curriculum. Take an Honors or Advanced Placement class if you have a choice. Most colleges give extra weight to these classes when they recalculate your GPA. DON'T slack off now!

This is the year that you should seriously examine your options for what you will do after high school. It's time to start taking college admission tests, make college visits, and start looking for scholarships.

This year you and your counselor will double check all of the academic requirements for high school graduation. You will meet with the counselor individually to go over your transcript and to discuss your tentative plans for the future. A "guided tour" of the guidance office and the guidance area will help you know where to find resources regarding colleges/universities, scholarships, and standardized testing.

Keep up your extra-curricular activities, sports, and your community service work. Update your resume monthly. It is easy to forget all of the activities and volunteer work you have done. Include everything!

In the spring, all juniors are automatically registered to take the PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test) in October. The test is given at Father Lopez Catholic High School. It is good practice for the SAT and it gives you a good idea of how you will score on the SAT. You will see how you compare with college bound students nationwide. Remember, they will be applying to the same schools as you. If you score exceptionally high, you will be recognized by the National Merit Foundation. This recognition can lead to scholarships! Your counselor will give you a Student Bulletin containing valuable test-taking tips and a practice test. You should take the time to read this newspaper and take the practice test. It can make a difference in your results. Speaking of results, they will be mailed back to Father Lopez usually before Thanksgiving. Your counselor will go over your scores and explain their significance. Briefly, you will receive a verbal, a math, and a writing score. Each ranges from 20 to 80. For National Merit purposes, the three scores are added together to determine the Selection Index. Students whose Selection Index scores are in the top five percent will become National Merit Semi-Finalists. TIP: The PSAT/NMSQT penalizes students for guessing by subtracting a fraction of a point from the score for every incorrect response. If you have no idea what the correct response is, you should leave the answer blank. If you can eliminate one or more answer, make an "educated" guess.

Once you have take the PSAT/NMSQT and the results have been returned to you, it's time to get ready for the SAT and/or ACT. When you receive your PSAT results you will also be given the test booklet you used during the examination. Your result sheet will tell you which questions you marked correctly and incorrectly. It will tell you what skill area was being tested and if it was considered a hard, medium, or easy question. With all of this information, you can look up the questions in your test booklet to see what the question was and if it was a careless error or if you need to learn the material before you register for the SAT. These questions are the same type that will appear on the SAT. What a great way to prepare! Register online at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) for the SAT and [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org) for the ACT. Father Lopez does not administer these tests on our campus. You will

be taking these tests at a school close to your home. You may want to take it more than once. Look carefully at the results of your testing. If your verbal or math skills are low, you should find a book or computer program to help you prepare before the next time you sit for one of these tests. If you do nothing, your scores will probably remain the same.

Almost all four-year colleges require scores for either the ACT or SAT I. Many will accept scores from either test. Some require scores for only one. Read through the college catalog under admission requirements to find out which test results they will accept. You may retake these tests as many times as you like. Colleges will generally use the highest score from each area of a test.

The SAT II Subject Tests are one-hour tests that cover material of specific subjects. Some colleges require that applicants take one or more of these tests for admission and/or placement. Check your college catalog. You can register for these tests online at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com). NOTE: All SAT, ACT, SAT Subject testing should be completed by the end of your junior year so that you are ready to apply to the college of your choice in the fall of your senior year.

Deciding which college/university is the best one for you is a BIG decision. There are over 3,000 colleges/universities in the United States. There is a lot to think about during the process of choosing, such as location, size, cost, facilities, available majors, reputation, competitiveness, community, safety, etc. The guidance office has computer programs and reference books available to assist you in your search for the school. Also, public libraries and book stores keep a wide assortment to meet your needs.

If you think you might be interested in participating in college sports, you are required to complete an application from the NCAA Initial-Eligibility Clearinghouse in Iowa at [www.ncaaclearinghouse.net](http://www.ncaaclearinghouse.net) or NAIA at [www.playnaia.org](http://www.playnaia.org). You must meet GPA and SAT/ACT requirements. Complete this information before you leave school in May. Tell your counselor so that your transcripts can be sent at that time. At the end of your senior year, a copy will be mailed to the clearinghouse with your final transcripts. There is no need to request this to be done; it will automatically be done then.

Stop by the Guidance Office for information about the Florida Bright Future Scholarship Program. The requirements for qualifying are clear. Do not wait until your senior year to make sure you have fulfilled the requirements. You may have to take another course or another SAT or ACT to better your score in order to qualify. These are valuable scholarships if you choose to attend school in Florida, either public or private. It is your responsibility to make the grades and get the standardized test scores needed. Good Luck!

# YES! You're Finally a SENIOR!

That's right. You are finally starting your senior year. Some of you thought it would never get here. Some of you wish it would hurry up and end and some are actually a little nervous about "Life at Lopez" So let's take it one step at a time.

First of all, it's not over until it's over! This is a very important year for a lot of reasons. Some students may think that as soon as they are accepted to a college, they can relax about their grades and just sit back and wait until the gifts arrive for graduation. NOT SO! The college/university that you apply to will only accept you TENTATIVELY until your final transcript arrives in June. They want to know that you have consistently maintained the same standard of grades throughout high school and that includes the final semester of your senior year. Colleges have the right to question an acceptance if the student slips in his/her academic dramatically after the initial acceptance. Protect your academic record THROUGHOUT high school.

Within the first few weeks of your senior year, your counselor will be talking to you in a group forum to give general information about the college application process, scholarship opportunities, etc. Also during that time, the counselor will schedule a meeting with you to meet to go over your own transcript and make a final check of all high school requirements for graduation. At this time, you should have an updated resume available for your counselor. This one page paper that you should have been updating each year since you were a freshman will be helpful to your counselor when it is time to write a recommendation for you. You should keep copies available to give to anyone you are asking to write a recommendation.

The college application process is as follows:

1. Most college applications are found online. It is a good time to request financial aid information. As you prepare to apply to colleges, you are encouraged to apply to at least one "safe" college. This is a college to which you will definitely be accepted and one that you and your parents have determined that you can afford to attend. Then you can apply for schools that are "pretty sure" and "wouldn't it be the absolute best if..." schools.
2. Complete the application and double check for accuracy. Ask your teacher for recommendations (of course you will be asking only those teachers who will write the best comments about you!) Give them plenty of time to get this back to you. A copy of the resume you have been updating for three years is helpful for those asked to write about you. After two weeks you can ask them if they have it. Some teachers will give it to you in a sealed envelope with their name across the seal. This assures confidentiality. **DO NOT** break the seal to "take a peak." Some schools may request that the recommendations come directly to their school from the teacher. Make it very clear to your teacher what you want him/her to do with it after completion.

If the application asks you to write an essay, give yourself plenty of time to write one that you are proud to submit. Some schools will request an essay which you submitted for a grade in one of your classes. This is a "no brainer." Send the college one that have favorable comments on it and a grade that you would be proud to post on your refrigerator.

Your updated resume should be included in your application packet. It should only be one page but should include all extra-curricular activities as described in the freshman year section of this packet.

O.K. So now you have your application complete, your teacher recommendations in hand or on their way to the college, your resume sheet, and the perfect essay all ready to mail. Colleges charge an application fee. It usually varies from \$10.00 - \$60.00. Check the application for the correct amount. A college may, if you're lucky send you an application with "FEE WAIVED" stamped or written on it. This means that they are not charging you an application fee.

3. Complete an application cover sheet available in the guidance office and bring your complete application or indicate that it was submitted online, recommendations, essay, and application fee check to the guidance office when you are sure that you are finished with it and never to see it again. There may be a page of your application that needs to be completed by the guidance counselor. This sheet will be turned in with all of your completed paperwork.

Once the counselor receives your application, it will be thoroughly reviewed for areas that were inadvertently left blank. You will be contacted by your counselor if you need to correct a section. The counselor will complete the counselor section and recommendation and prepare the application for mailing. An official transcript **excluding** SAT/ACT test scores will be sent to the school. **All test scores come directly from the testing agency.** If you know the schools you are going to apply to before the test, you can request on your ACT/SAT application that the results be sent directly to the colleges. When you apply to that school your test results will already be there. If not requested at the time of testing, you will have to fill out appropriate paperwork, available in the guidance office, and it will cost you about \$6.50 per request and /or school.

Always **ASSUME** that it will take two weeks for the counselor to package your application and get it mailed. Ninety-nine percent of the time your application will be off of the counselor's desk and in the mail within two days. **HOWEVER**, you are not to drop a "**DEADLINE TODAY**" application on her desk and run. It may not make the deadline.

Even though you are allowed to apply to colleges throughout the year, it is **STRONGLY** advised that all applications be submitted before Thanksgiving. Even community colleges will need to see SAT/ACT scores that meet minimum requirements. Otherwise they will require you to take their placement test before registering for classes. This can be done before the end of your senior year and you can start taking classes in the summer or wait until fall, but your paperwork and testing will be out of the way.

As you receive acceptance letters, the counselor will need a copy of them in order to include your schools in the graduation program.

After you have been accepted to colleges you will have to make a final decision. Hopefully, you have had an opportunity to visit all of the colleges you are seriously considering. It is important to actually step foot on the campus and know that you could feel at home there. When you make your decision, notify the college as soon as possible. If you will be living on campus, there will be forms to complete and it is usually a first come, first serve reservation with a deposit.

At the end of your senior year, you will be asked to complete a form indicating your final choice of schools. When all transcripts are complete and all fees have been paid, your final transcript, your NCAA Clearinghouse forms, and your Florida Bright Futures paperwork will be mailed out within two weeks.

## INFORMATION ABOUT PAYING FOR COLLEGE

There are four basic categories of financial aid. You should be familiar with these terms as you explore options to pay for your college education. Financial aid can make it possible for you to attend colleges that you may have considered too expensive. Do not pass up an opportunity to attend a college until you and your parents have looked into the following:

- **Grants:** This is money given to you to attend college. It does not have to be paid back.
- **Loans:** Borrowed funds that usually carry a low interest rate and do not have to be repaid until after one graduates, and then over an extended period of time.
- **Work Study:** 10 to 15 hours a week of on or off campus employment through which one can earn money to help pay his/her way.
- **Scholarships:** Money that is awarded because of academic achievement, outstanding talent or skill, and/or financial need.

You should always apply for grants and scholarships before taking out student or parent loans. Most families receive an aid "package" which is a combination of the above mentioned monies. They are awarded through college financial aid offices and they vary from college to college.

In order to get the financial aid ball rolling, your parents must first complete a FAFSA form online. This is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. By having your parents complete this application you may find that you are entitled to a federal grant (free money), federal loans (low interest rates), and/or federal work-study (money you earn at a school for your tuition). You can apply for loans through private agencies and/or banks but federal loans should be applied for first.

To answer all your parent's questions about financial aid, in January, there will be a financial aid workshop. It is held in our library and a financial aid counselor from one of the local universities will be here to walk them through the financial aid maze. This is a very informative night and well worth their time.

I feel as though I could write forever giving you little tidbits of information. These are the highlights of what you need to know in your senior year. If you have ANY questions, please do not hesitate to stop by and ask. There are no silly questions. If I do not know the answer, together we will find out. You are not going through the process of getting ready for college alone. Your parents, your teachers, and the staff are all standing by to make sure you are prepared academically, socially, and emotionally to take the next step – "Life after Lopez."