

Freshman Year Tip Sheet

For Freshmen Students:

- **THE HIGH SCHOOL SCHEDULE.** The schedule at Whitman is different from middle school in a variety of ways. You have 45 minutes for lunch. Classes meet every day, and homework is usually due the next day. You will have both a different schedule for your classes and different teachers for second semester. During exam week, you will come to school only during the periods when your exams are scheduled; there are no exams scheduled after noon. Most likely, there will be changes in both course schedule and course teachers between the first and second semesters.
- **SCHOOL COMMUNITY.** You'll enjoy school much more if you get involved in at least one extracurricular activity, and the sooner the better. It will help you make new friends in all four grades and become part of the Whitman community. There are lots of clubs and activities to choose from, and there is a night in October, "Welcome to Whitman Night," where the clubs are showcased and you can discuss them with students who are currently involved.
- **WHITNET.** Be sure that your family joins Whitnet, the electronic communication tool used by the school to communicate with parents. It's the single most important thing your family can do to stay informed and connected.
- **EDLINE.** Use Edline to keep track of your grades and assignments -- but use it wisely. Compulsively checking Edline for grade updates can lead to an unhealthy attitude towards academic performance, and may hurt the student/teacher/parent relationship. A tip sheet about using Edline wisely is available in the School Counseling Office.
- **MANAGE STRESS.** Some of the most important things you can do include getting enough sleep and exercising every day. Also, be sure to share any concerns you may have with a trusted friend or adult, such as a teacher or counselor. There is a tip sheet in the School Counseling Office with numerous suggestions for managing stress. You might find it helpful to post it on your refrigerator or on the wall above your desk at home.
- **GET ENOUGH SLEEP.** It can be extremely difficult to get enough sleep in high school, because of all the homework, activities, and early start time -- but it is extremely important to try! Establish a good schedule for yourself right from the start. There is a Tip Sheet about "Sleep and Teens" in the School Counseling Office that has many helpful suggestions.
- **TUNE OUT COLLEGE TALK.** You'll hear a lot more talk about college and college preparedness in the halls at high school. But during freshman year you should try to tune it out as much as possible. Give yourself time to get oriented. You really don't need to start thinking about college until junior year.
- **BACKPACKS/LOCKERS.** Many students carry their backpacks around school and don't use their lockers, because otherwise it's hard to get to class on time. To reduce the weight of your backpack, consider using lightweight folders instead of binders to hold class materials. Some families order used copies of textbooks (which can be found online) to avoid carrying them back and forth to school.

Please see reverse side for Tips for Freshmen Parents

For Freshmen Parents:

- **ADJUSTING.** The jump from middle school to high school can be tough for some kids, but most adjust quickly. Your teen will have much greater independence, at the same time that school pressures will require him/her to become more organized and efficient. Encourage your teen to take full responsibility for attendance, homework, and course selection. Your praise and support can make all the difference.
- **COMMUNICATION.** Communication is key! Discuss concerns about making the jump from middle school to high school directly with your teen and encourage him or her to seek advice from counselors, teachers, or other professionals.
- **STUDENT INVOLVEMENT.** Getting involved in extracurricular activities usually helps students adjust better because they will feel linked socially. It has a positive impact on academics as well. Encourage your teens to participate in these activities and help them find things that will interest them.
- **PARENT INVOLVEMENT.** Show your interest by attending school plays, concerts, team games, or special events. Volunteer to help out at school activities, too – you will form ties with other parents (which can be especially valuable during the teen years) and you'll be helping the school run better at the same time.
- **TEEN SAFETY.** Numerous research studies have shown that parents can positively impact their teens' decisions about alcohol and drug use by talking with them about it regularly. It is particularly important to have conversations about drugs and alcohol prior to social activities, whether private parties or school-sponsored activities such as Homecoming and Prom. A tip sheet with suggestions for starting these conversations with your teen can be found in the School Counseling Office.
- **TEEN MENTAL HEALTH.** Depression and other mental health problems are common in teens and often show up for the first time during adolescence. This is an important area for parental vigilance. If you see any signs of mental distress, it is important to take it seriously and seek help. There is a list of mental health resources in the School Counseling Office, and the school counselors are always available to provide assistance if needed.
- **WHITNET.** Join Whitnet, the electronic communication tool used by the school to communicate with parents. It's the single most important thing you can do to stay informed and connected.
- **EDLINE.** Parents may use Edline to view and monitor their child's assignments and grades. However, parental over-involvement in monitoring students' progress can be counter-productive in high school. This is a time when most students should be responsible for their own work. If you have a concern, encourage your student to work it out with the teacher directly or to talk to his/her counselor. A tip sheet about using Edline wisely is available in the School Counseling Office.
- **FOCUS ON HIGH SCHOOL.** Sometimes high school is presented to adolescents in our society as merely a necessary stepping stone to college or adulthood, rather than an important time in its own right. Talk to your teen about the future and his/her goals after high school, but not too much. Encourage them to enjoy high school while it lasts.