Scheduling for Fall 2016-2017: Food for Thought

**Remembering Balance**

So, what does “remembering balance” really mean? I guess when I say this I am asking you to please think about making thoughtful choices that support your academic success and your emotional and mental health. How do you do this? Well, a good place to start may be with choosing a class schedule that will challenge your strengths as well as we of course support students in choosing a schedule that challenges your academic strengths is challenging for you academically but not at the sacrifice of your self-care.

**A Few Things to Consider:**

1. **Academic Goals**-

   It is important to set academic goals and we are here to support you in achieving these goals as well as in challenging yourself academically. Please consider that what is also important in meeting these academic goals is to remember that you will need the support of your physical, emotional and mental health to make this happen. So, when I say, “Remember to Balance” I am saying, “Yes, please set academic goals but not at the sacrifice of your health and wellness.”

   “A little stress and in moderation can be helpful to high schoolers in so many ways. It motivates them to study, to do better. It helps push them,” says Mary Alvord, a psychologist specializing in teens based in Maryland. Adolescence is an important time to learn to deal with stress because teens can then deal with it better in college and in their adult lives. But too much stress has many effects on the body and mind, Alvord says. In the short term it can cause anxiety; over long periods of time, elevated levels of stress hormones can degrade the immune system, cause heart problems, exacerbate respiratory and gastrointestinal issues, and bring on chronic anxiety and depression. That’s bad for anyone, but it can be especially bad for high schoolers: “Colleges are complaining that kids are disengaged, they’re dropping out, taking a long time to graduate. It’s not developmentally appropriate for them to work so hard,” says Gwadz, one of the authors
of the recent study. And since everyone has a different psychological capacity for stress, it’s hard to know when a student is pushed to the point of degrading his or her health. – Alexandra Ossola, October 9, 2015 The Atlantic, “High-Stress High School”.

2. Personal Goals-

So how do I do this? How do I balance? A good place to start is to know your limits. We are all different, have different stressors, different thresholds of stress, different ways of expressing stress and coping with stress; So, the choices we make for what we can handle in a healthy way on a daily basis is going to differ from one person to the next based on our personal needs to be successful and achieve the goals we have set for ourselves.

a. Be honest
   i. Be honest with yourself about what your limits are; How much sleep you may need at night to function on a daily basis; be honest with yourself if you are pushing yourself beyond your means, or are you challenging yourself to meet your potential. You are smart young ladies and I trust you to be honest with yourselves to explore and Identify your warning signs. Please be honest with yourself if you are making choices to do something for yourself or for others.

b. Make choices that are sustainable
   i. In challenging yourself please think about the bigger picture and how you are going to feel a month along with your schedule, at the semester with this schedule. You want to set goals that you can achieve and one of the important parts of achieving a goal is being able to sustain the effort that it takes to be successful. You don’t want to burn out!

c. Set Personal Goals-
   i. A good way to balance is to make taking care of yourself just as important as taking care of your grades; or just as much a priority as taking care of your friendships and relationships. Imagine if we
gave just as much attention to our nutrition, our sleep, our mood, or our interests as we gave to our grades...that would be a GREAT BALANCE! An example of a personal goal is “I will not work past 11:30 at night,” or “I will do 1 hour of my hobby at least once a week.” Also, put something fun to do on your “to do” list. For some reason “to do” lists have reserved for all of the things we have to do that we don’t want to do. Well, the truth is that we can, and should, include the fun and healthy things that we would LIKE “to do” on that list as well. I promise you will feel just as accomplished achieving these goals as you do when you achieve the others.

d. Give yourself permission-

i. Give yourself permission to not be perfect but to be the best human being that you can be...which means making mistakes and not being “on” 24/7. Give yourself permission to be different from your friends and peers and for that to be OK and to make decisions that you know work for you even if they wouldn’t work for them. Give yourself permission to have some “down time”, permission to sleep, permission to know that how late you stay up does not determine how good your grade is...permission to be the best YOU that you can be.

“In some ways the most elegant solution is the one that is the most difficult to execute: letting students themselves learn to strike an equilibrium between stress and relaxation, especially when stress seems to be the more powerful force. “It comes down to ,” Alvord Says. “You can’t be ‘on’ 24/7. How can you allocate some time to an activity that can help relieve stress?” Sometimes those activities can look good on a college applicant, too—a student who plays recreational (not hyper-competitive) soccer for many years is moving to relieve stress and also shows college that she can persevere; clearing hiking trails can be relaxing and constitute community service hours that many kids
need to graduate. – Alexandra Ossola, October 9, 2015
The Atlantic, “High-Stress High School”.

a. Stay motivated-
   At the end of the day pick a schedule that even in the stressful times you will still be motivated. No matter what schedule you choose there will be times when it will be more difficult than others. So, you want to make sure that your schedule is manageable even in those tough times.

   **Resources posted on the Counseling Resource Board**
   - Determining limits
   - Realizing stressors
   - Improving coping skills