

High School Courses and Choices



Entering high school is an important time in your child's education. The courses that students choose in grade 9 will have an impact on what they can study in later grades and after high school. This Tip Sheet is only a first step to understanding those choices.

How can parents help?

Between October and January your grade 8 student will receive information about high school programs and courses. Some schools hold high school information nights or open houses. It is important to read the information and attend the information meetings so that you can help your child make choices that suit their interests, abilities and future goals. In some communities, grade 8 students will choose between secondary schools that offer different kinds of courses and programs.

Your child will bring home a form for you to sign. The form lists the choice of courses. It is important to go over the options with your child and make sure that they are taking courses that suit their interests and abilities. It is your responsibility to approve the choices your child makes.

If you need help, talk to your school guidance counsellor. Schools and school boards also publish information about school choices and lists of courses. School settlement workers can provide support to newcomers to Canada.

It is very important to remember that the courses students choose in grade 9 will affect their options in the future. There are many different types of courses. Some lead to community college, some to university and some to apprenticeship or directly to work. Not all high schools offer each type of course.

Students who succeed in grade 9 courses are more likely to graduate from high school. Parents should help their children choose appropriate courses each year.

What can parents do to help their children make good choices?

- Talk to your child about what he or she would like to do after high school.
- Pick up or download the course lists from schools in your area or read the school profile on the school website. Not all schools offer the same courses and courses types.
- Go to high school information nights and Open Houses. Some schools provide interpreters.
- Make an appointment with the school guidance counsellor, vice-principal or principal for help making choices that best suit your child's interests and strengths.

What are the requirements for graduating from high school in Ontario?

- Students must pass 30 credit courses between grades 9 and 12. Of the 30 credit courses, 18 are compulsory credits and 12 can be chosen from optional credit courses.
- Students must complete 40 hours of community service.
- Students must pass the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test or Literacy Course.
- Most students complete high school in four or five years but they may stay until they are 21 years old.

What choices do students have in grades 9 and 10?

In grades 9 and 10, there are four types of courses:

- **Applied** – focus on practical applications and concrete examples;
- **Academic** – focus on theory and abstract problems;
- **Locally Developed** compulsory credit courses (also called Essentials) for students who need more flexibility and support; and
- **Open** – to prepare students for further study and enrich their education.





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Students must take English, mathematics, science, geography, history, physical education, and French. Students may choose to mix different types courses. For example, a student can take Applied English and Academic math. They can also choose from optional or open courses in subjects that interest them.

How do course choices in Grades 9 and 10 affect students?

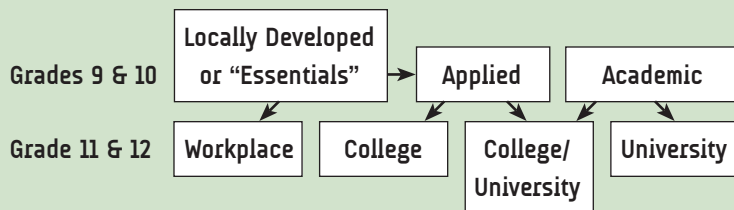
The courses students choose in grades 9 and 10 prepare them for specific courses in grades 11 and 12 and will affect their choices after they graduate.

What choices do students have in grades 11 and 12?

Students choose from four types of courses that prepare them for their goals after high school: Workplace, College, University/ College and University.

- Is there a chance any courses will be cancelled because of low enrolment? Which ones?

Where do the courses lead?



Can students transfer from one type of course to another?

In some circumstances, students may change from one type of course to another. To do so, they may have to repeat a subject (e.g. a student who completed grade 9 Applied math may have to take grade 9 Academic math). Or it may be possible for the student to take an on-line or summer school transfer course. The guidance counsellor can help you.

What should parents ask when choosing a high school?

- What subjects do you offer in grade 9 and 10 Academic, Applied and Locally Developed Courses?
- What subjects do you offer in grades 11 and 12 Workplace, College, College/University, University courses?
- What optional courses or programs do you offer? (e.g. computer networking, languages)

What should parents ask about Special Education Support?

- What kinds of special needs can your school support?
- What resources does your school have? (e.g. staff, programs, computer lab, special courses)
- What kinds of courses do you have for special needs students? Are they separate courses or combined within an existing course?

What should parents ask about ESL programs?

- Do you have ESL credit courses (e.g. ESL Science)? In which subjects?

For more information:

Visit your school board's website or phone your child's school

Ministry of Education <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/curricul/secondary/oss/oss.pdf>

Newcomers' Guide to Education: <http://www.settlement.org/site/ED/secondary.asp>

For copies of this tip sheet in other languages, go to the People for Education website at www.peopleforeducation.com