

LISTEN to the voices of our graduates!

Two weeks ago, nine graduates returned to the Hilltop Middle School to speak to current and potential Hilltop Middle School parents and students about how their experience at Hilltop prepared them for the high schools they are now attending. Public and private schools were represented by sophomores, juniors and seniors. Alumni Night, as we call it, has become a wonderful tradition at Hilltop. Hearing our graduates speak on topics related to how Hilltop prepared them for high school is a testament to the exceptional education they received here. It's also wonderful to see the camaraderie between old classmates!

picture of alumni

Parents may wonder how the small Hilltop community experience will translate for their child in larger institutions and various high school programs. It's impressive how well Hilltop students know themselves as learners and are able to adapt to any of the programs, public and private.

See for yourself **HERE {ADD LINK}** by reading some of the questions and responses from the evening.

The evening began by asking students to speak about the most valuable experience they had at Hilltop that prepared them for high school.

- Time management.
- I think the focus on humanities and ability to create guiding questions.
- Hilltop taught me how big the world is.
- Hilltop gave me an appreciation for seeing other perspectives.
- The experience of open discussions in class between teachers and students made me comfortable with public speaking.
- I felt very prepared in my ability to write essays and specific outlines.

How prepared were you to handle more testing?

- I realized a measurement in letters and numbers is not a big deal.
- It was shocking at first, then I enjoyed it, my school has now adopted the option to retake tests.
- I like testing, but tests are usually only 35% of the grade.
- The math and vocabulary tests in Hilltop's Middle School helped me feel prepared, as well as my time management skills.
- Most tests are low stress like Hilltop, but foreign language felt a bit more stressful at first.

How did it feel to come from the small community of HMS to the larger world of high school?

- I am very excited to have a larger community of friends.

- We have 850 students in our school and it's important to find your group through your interests and class choices.
- The first week was terrifying and my goal was to be acquainted with a wide range of students and Hilltop taught me to be adaptable.

Did you have many class choices as a freshman?

- I was able to test out of required classes and choose accelerated classes.
- I was able to choose Chinese language and some art options, as well as many accelerated classes.

Can you speak about your advisors, useful, helpful, available?

- I am able to talk with my advisor about anything.
- I see my advisor often and in more than one role, so I get to know them well.
- I haven't really gone to my advisor at all.
- My advisor helped me enter the STEM Academy, biomedical classes and my counselor has played an important role as well.

How would you compare yourself to your peers from other schools?

- Freshman year I fit right in. I was very prepared in writing and humanities and less so in science.
- I was ahead of others except in foreign language. First year was more challenging in physics.
- I had a better attitude towards learning.
- Because I was ahead in areas, I was able to test out of classes.

You all sound like strong students who milked the Hilltop programs for all they have to offer, do you feel everyone takes full advantage of all there is at Hilltop?

- Even if you struggle, it is very hard not to experience all that is offered because the teachers are on you to do your best.
- I was new to learning a foreign language but HMS taught me to know when and how to ask for help.
- Hilltop taught me solid skills. It is important to not have grades and to learn for the sake of learning.
- The written comments and assessments are very helpful for really developing the skills, not just work for the grades.
- I think I was very well prepared for any school.

Have you found your high school challenging enough?

- My high school is pretty rigorous.

- I struggled with feeling challenged at first, but I now feel challenged and it's motivating.
- I am able to switch out of a class if not challenged.
- Required classes are not motivating and I focused more on the social component during my first year.
- I just pick challenging classes.
- Freshman year was easy, sophomore year I took Honors classes and as a junior I am now taking Advanced Placement classes.
- Use your counselor to look for challenge.

Did you feel behind not having a foreign language?

- I found it very fun and challenging, did not feel behind.
- I took Chinese and others were not far ahead.
- I really liked language, it was new and exciting.

Last question asked the students to share a "pearl of wisdom" with current students as to how to spend their last year at Hilltop?

- It important to learn to manage your time.
- Hilltop has amazing opportunities, make the most of it.
- Specific outline, learn it, it will help you and they will not teach you this.
- As you choose a high school, know it's not who you will become, you can do well anywhere.
- Enjoy Hilltop, don't let the worry about where you are going to high school cloud your wonderful time at Hilltop.