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# Counseling Communiqué

Acton-Boxborough Regional High School Counseling Department  
<http://ab.mec.edu/abrhs/counseling/index.shtml>

## April Dates of Interest

- 3 Early Release Day for students
- 7 End of Term 3
- 12 ACT administered
- 16 Report Card Distribution in homeroom
- 18 Last day for 2008-2009 overrides
- 21-25 Spring Recess
- 28 School reopens



## Coming in May

- 1 Health Awareness & Fitness Day
- 2 Last day to make 2008-2009 course changes
- 2 Senior Community Service Day
- 3 SAT administered
- 21-22 Math MCAS

## Dinner, Anyone?

With our busy, on-the-go lifestyle, sitting together for a family meal may seem more difficult than ever. According to Wade Horn, Assistant Secretary for Children and Families at the U.S. Department for Health and Human Services, "The frequency of family dinners decreases significantly as children enter and go through high school - and that's just when the benefits of family dinners may be needed most." But why are family dinners so important?

According to a survey of 12-15 year olds by the National Center of Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, teens from families who eat dinner together are less likely to use illegal drugs, alcohol and cigarettes, while teenagers who rarely eat dinner with their parents are more likely to engage in these unhealthy activities. The study reports that teens who have dinner with their families five or more times a week are 32% likelier never to have tried cigarettes, 45% likelier never to have tried alcohol, 24% likelier never to have smoked marijuana, and twice as likely to receive As in school than teens who have family dinners twice a week or less.

Teens who eat with their families less than twice a week also report higher stress levels than those who eat with their families 5-7 nights per week. Eating together also ensures you are aware of what your teen is eating. Some studies report that 25% of U.S. teens are obese, a concerning statistic that can be attributed in part to fast food meals on the go. It is clear our fast-paced lifestyle is affecting both the physical and psychological health of our teens. When you can't eat together as a family because of busy lifestyles, make sure the foods your teens are eating are part of a healthy diet.

So, what can a busy family do? Set aside time for family dinners four to five times a week, and talk to your teens during this meal. Hands-on parenting during dinner will influence the choices your teens make when you are not with them. Family dinners are a unique opportunity for conversation and sharing, supporting your adolescents and allowing them to express their stresses and worries. Try leaving anxiety provoking questions about college, grades, etc. for another time and allow your teens to share what is on their minds. Make the dinner table a welcoming environment and an important part of your daily routine.

Lindsay Rosenman  
School Counselor

## Health Awareness and Fitness Day

The ABRHS Physical Education Department will host the fourth annual Health Awareness and Fitness Day on May 1st during all lunches. There will be interactive presentations, information booths and exhibits on the importance of staying active and leading a healthy life-style. For more information, please contact Suzanne Hoag at [shoag@mail.b.mec.edu](mailto:shoag@mail.b.mec.edu).





### The College Search

Finding colleges that are a good match for you, estimating your chances of being admitted and ultimately having to choose where to enroll is difficult but fun. There are no shortcuts to finding the answers to these questions, but it is worth as much time and effort as you can devote to this task.

Start out by setting aside some quiet time to reflect frankly on your strengths and weaknesses. Take a few minutes to daydream. Think about and visualize your ideal college. What does your vision of the “perfect” college look like? Remember, though there are thousands of schools out there, you may find that your “perfect” school does not exist. Identifying what characteristics make a place work for you will aid you tremendously. On a piece of paper write out a description of your college Utopia. Finally, focus on the results of your description. What are the things that stick out about your Utopia? What distinguishes your Utopia U from Run of the Mill U and Ain’t Gonna Happen U?

Although you may identify a first choice college, it’s a rare person for whom it can be said that there exists but a single, best college. Your final list of colleges should include a number of colleges, any one of which you’d be happy to attend if admitted. Keep in mind that most students end up very much liking the college they attend, regardless of whether it had been their first choice when they applied. There is no such thing as the perfect college.

It is also a good idea to focus at least as much attention on the overall quality of a college as on the quality of the particular department or academic area in which you may now be especially interested. Experience indicates that a fair number of students ultimately major in an academic area other than the one they had in mind when entering.

If at all possible, you should visit (see article below) the campuses of the colleges in which you are most interested, attend classes, and talk with some currently enrolled students. Keep in mind the fable about the seven blind philosophers, each of whom, upon touching a different part of the elephant, described a different animal. So, too, is the same university likely to be perceived, at least in part, quite differently by its various members.



### Campus Visits

There are lots of ways to find out about a college, from web sites to college fairs, but nothing beats the test of going to a college and seeing it for yourself. Here are some ideas to help you make the most of a campus visit.

**Call the admissions office or schedule your visit on-line in advance.** When you call the admissions office, tell them the time of day and the date you’d like to visit. Also, find out about lining up an interview or attending an information session.

**Read up on the college and think about questions.** Check out the resources in the Counseling Center and visit the A-B web site ([ab.mec.edu/abrhs/counseling/index.shtml](http://ab.mec.edu/abrhs/counseling/index.shtml)). Naviance/Family Connection is a good source for information on individual colleges, as well. ([www.connection.naviance.com/ab](http://www.connection.naviance.com/ab))

**Talk to as many students as you can** and don’t be bashful about asking questions. Have a meal in the cafeteria and pick up a copy of the student newspaper.

**Prepare for the interview.** If you have scheduled an interview, take along your list of questions. You’ll probably be asked about your academic background, interests, hobbies, goals and why you’re interested in the college, so be ready to talk about that. As with any interview, be on time, or call ahead if you know you’ll be delayed.

**Take time to look around on your own.** Take some time to explore the campus on your own and absorb the atmosphere.

**Write down your impressions** while they’re still fresh in your mind. Were the people you met friendly? Did they answer your questions fully and candidly? Did you like the social atmosphere?





## Information for College Bound Juniors continued

### The College Interview

Most colleges do not require interviews, but many encourage them. Sometimes alumni conduct them. Sometimes the interviewers are college admissions office staff, including undergraduate interns. But the routine is similar in most cases, and any college applicant who has a chance to be interviewed by a college high on her list should do so. An interview is not designed to help the college decide how smart the applicant is. It is a search for personal qualities that will assure that no matter how brilliant the student's academic record, he can deal with other people and create a congenial and productive atmosphere on campus.

Here are some tips and warnings. If you are going to be late for an interview, just call ahead and let the interviewer know. Dress neatly, but formal business dress is not necessary. What kind of questions do interviewers ask? There are all kinds, but they generally come down to inquiries about three personal characteristics—inquisitiveness, originality and demeanor. Many interviewers will ask what you have been reading outside of class and what you think about those works. They will also ask your views on current events, or teenage culture or even educational practices. They are usually not testing what you know of the details of such topics, but seeing if you have thought about such matters.

The ultimate point of the interview is to show that you are a good person—polite and honest and with a sense of humor about the unnerving admissions process. That means you have to be, as you have heard several hundred times, yourself! Lastly, **have some of your own questions**, a requirement for any good interview.

## Information for Seniors

### The Financial Aid Award Letter

Each college to which a student applies and is accepted for admission will send notification of its financial aid offer to students who have applied for financial aid. Most schools will show their full costs, the family's expected contribution and the difference between these two figures which represents financial aid eligibility or demonstrated financial need. The notification then lists a breakdown of the types of aid the school is offering: grants, scholarships, loans and college work study. If a college's notification letter does not include the total cost for the upcoming school year, they can be contacted to provide this information.

When a student has financial aid information from all of the colleges to which he or she has been accepted, the family can compare the kind of assistance and the bottom line costs. If the student's first choice college has offered an acceptable aid package, the student should sign the award letter and return it to accept the offer. Usually there is not a lot of room for negotiation in financial aid. If the college clearly is interested in having the student attend, it will probably give its best offer to be sure of getting that student. An award of more grant money from another college is not likely to make much difference unless the student is one they definitely don't want to lose. In most other cases they will have made their commitments of money to students and do not have the flexibility of making significantly more aid available to other students.

Money may be available for some special or extraordinary change of circumstances that may occur, such as the sudden death of a parent. If a family feels that something has been missed or ignored in the consideration process, an appeal can be made. A letter should be written to the financial aid director explaining the circumstances and indicate what you think the need is. Then follow up with a call several days after sending the letter to discuss the situation based upon the information provided in the letter.

### Yawkey Scholars Program

The Yawkey Foundation is offering a scholarship for students in eastern Massachusetts to help meet the rising costs of an undergraduate college education. This program is a need-based scholarship that will give preference to students with unique life circumstances that have made study and achievement challenging. Students need to have participated in a meaningful, sustained mentoring program. The deadline is April 15, 2008. ([www.sms.scholarshipamerica.org/yawkey](http://www.sms.scholarshipamerica.org/yawkey))

## Summer Opportunities

The Counseling Department has files of summer programs which can be used by interested students and parents. New information is continually added to these files. Programs vary from community service to travel, athletics, academics, and arts related programs. Some web sites to check out:

***Peterson's Summer Opportunities:*** Lots of information about camps, travel programs, college campus programs.

**[www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com)** - click on **Summer Camps and Programs under K-12 Schools and Programs**

***Landmark Volunteers:*** Volunteers serve on teams of 12 students under the full-time supervision of an adult team leader. Volunteer opportunities throughout the U.S. **[www.volunteers.com](http://www.volunteers.com)**

***Global Works:*** Environmental and community service, cultural and language immersion, and outdoor adventure programs located in various places throughout the world. **[www.globalworkstravel.com](http://www.globalworkstravel.com)**

***Summer Internships:*** Check out **[www.internshipprograms.com](http://www.internshipprograms.com)** or **[www.internweb.com](http://www.internweb.com)** for information about nationally posted summer internships.

## Course Selections for 2008-2009

Students have now completed course selections for the 2008-2009 school year. Course verification was given to students in school on March 12th. Overrides will be accepted until April 18th. Changes can be made using the proper forms in the Counseling Center until May 2nd.

## Boston Area National College Fair

Over 350 colleges and universities have registered for the Boston Area National College Fair, sponsored by the National Association of College Admissions Counselors, to be held at the Bayside Expo Center in Boston on Tuesday, April 8th (from 9:00 A.M.–12:00 P.M. and 6:00 P.M.–9:00 P.M.) and Wednesday, April 9th (from 9:00 A.M.–12:00 P.M.). Students who think this may be helpful are encouraged to attend in the evening. Students will not be given field trip status for the day if they choose to go during the school day.

## Gap Year Opportunities Fair

On Sunday, April 6, 2008, from 1 P.M. to 4 P.M. more than twenty agencies offering Gap Year Programs will be exhibiting at Noble & Greenough School in Dedham. For more information, call or e-mail Greg Cappello at Dynamy Internship Year - 508-755-2571 x18 or **[gcappello@dynamy.org](mailto:gcappello@dynamy.org)**.