

Counseling Communiqué

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

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Communication Skills

One of the most important skills that a student can learn while in high school is the ability to initiate communication with teachers, staff, and administration. This skill can prepare students for success in college and on the job. Parents can be helpful in this process by encouraging students to engage in conversations with adults in a positive way.

Communication between a student and a teacher can help clarify material for the student, give the teacher feedback about what is helpful or confusing to the student, and help the student and teacher view each other as partners in their education. Despite these benefits, many students seem to shy away from one-on-one communication with teachers and have opted out by sending a letter or an email regarding their concerns.

Recently, on a college campus, I witnessed a situation that arose with a student occupying a space for music rehearsals. The student decided to speak to some classmates about the policy of reserving a room. However, the student was misinformed of the policy. The college student decided to write an “angry” letter to the administrators in the Student Development Office (SDO) to voice his concerns about not being able to reserve a room for music rehearsals. Quite frankly, the student accused SDO administration for creating this policy, and he wanted it to be changed to fit his schedule. After receiving this negative response, a school official decided to approach the student about his letter. Through one-on-one communication the student was informed that this policy was created by the music department and not by the Student Development Office.

In this scenario, the student learned a valuable lesson about being misinformed, and using the proper and improper channels to communicate with adults with questions and concerns.

Some students appear to be more willing to seek help from a classmate or close friend, rather than speaking to an administrator, teacher, or staff member. However, if a student is able to talk with an adult as soon as he or she encounters difficulty, it may help alleviate his/her concerns. The student would be able to ask questions specific to his/her area of concern. Let’s help our students be more effective by allowing them to take responsibility for initiating communication when they need help. Parents have a role to play in encouraging their son or daughter seek out individual help. Parents may be able to help students view one-on-one communication as a life skill which can enhance their chances of success in school and beyond.

I’Esha Thomas
School Counselor

Dates of Interest April

- 6 Term 3 ends
- 9 ACTs administered
- 14 Report Card distribution in homeroom
- 15 Health and Fitness day
- 18 Spring Recess begins
- 29 Senior Community Service Day



Coming in May

- 7 SATs administered
- 31 Memorial Day—no school



Information for College-Bound Juniors

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. 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 in advance or schedule your visit on-line. 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. Go back through the information you’ve collected about the college. Check out the resources in the Counseling Center and visit the A-B web site (ab.mec.edu/abrhs/counseling/index.shtml).

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 and read the student newspaper.

Prepare for the interview. If you have scheduled an interview, take along your list of questions and a résumé list of activities (if available). 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. (See article on the next page.)

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

The College Interview



Most colleges do not require interviews, but many encourage them, and some even make them mandatory. 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 contribute to 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.

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 Boston Convention and Exhibition Center in Boston on Tuesday, April 12th (from 9:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.—9:00 p.m.) and on Wednesday, April 13th (from 9:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m.). Please visit the website <http://www.nacacnet.org> for information. Students who think this may be helpful are encouraged to attend during the evening session. Students will not be given field trip status or an excused absence for the day if they choose to go during the school day.

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 or loss of employment. 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 ensure it has been received and answer any questions.

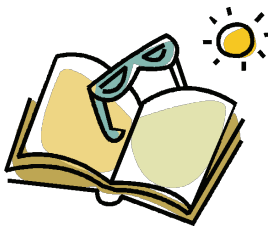
Bulletin Board

Physical Education and Health Awareness Day

The 7th annual Physical Education and Health Awareness Day will take place on Friday, April 15th. All students, faculty and staff are being encouraged to participate in the event held on the Leary Field Track. The day long event is organized to raise the level of awareness of our students and staff regarding the benefits of physical fitness and to understand how to develop and maintain an active and healthy lifestyle. Teachers can bring their scheduled classes to the Leary Field track to walk, jog or run during the class period. All ABRHS Departments and Staff will be grouped into teams, and the Team with the most participation will be awarded the Fitness Challenge Cup. The Physical Education Department is encouraging everyone to get up and move for a healthy lifestyle!



Acton-Boxborough Regional Summer School Program



Information about Academic and Physical Education Courses offered during the summer is now available online. Go to :

<http://ab.mec.edu/summerschool> for information about the schedule, fees and registration form.

Registration is now open. Programs begin June 27.

How to Spend Your Summer Vacation

The Red Sox are primed to beat the Yankees on opening day and the forsythias are about to bloom, Spring is here and yet it is not too early to think about summer plans. Naviance/Family Connections has a wonderful “Enrichment” feature that allows students and parents to review hundreds of summer opportunities at a glance.

To access the “Enrichment” feature go to your Naviance Home Page and click on the College Tab at the top of the page and then look under the last item listed under “College Research.” Enrichment Programs will be listed on the lower right side. Enter your search criteria and you are off and running.

Information on additional programs is displayed in the Counseling Center. Stop by and browse the brochures. Counselors are available to answer questions.

