

Counseling Communiqué

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

Alone Together

January 2012

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Technology is often created with the purpose of making us more productive and helping us to better connect with each other. In Sherry Turkle's book, **Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology and Less From Each Other**, she discusses how technology affects our interpersonal relationships and the resulting issues that arise. I was particularly struck by her assertion that as a result of our constant technological connection, adolescents today are not experiencing the same path to independence that used to be unavoidable throughout the natural separation from their parents.

By always being simply a phone call or text away from a parent or other adult, teenagers today are less likely to face a new situation truly on their own, with only themselves to rely on. Whether they are riding the T for the first time on their own, running late for school without a prearranged note from a parent or getting lost in a new neighborhood, they can easily seek assistance by calling or texting someone who can step in and address the issue for them. While this is reassuring as a parent since we want to help our children avoid difficulties, there is a lost opportunity to learn how to problem solve on their own, to self advocate and to navigate their way through a novel situation independently. There is a lot to be said for a child learning how to manage on his/her own and to make responsible decisions in the moment. Through technology we are always available but may be hindering our adolescents' ability to develop these skills which are necessary to become an independent adult.

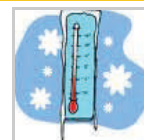
The process of learning to rely on oneself can be difficult, but it results in the development of self-efficacy. This differs from self-esteem because it is the confidence derived from experiencing success. If we have a strong sense of self-efficacy, we can recall past successes and feel more confident in our ability to solve future problems. In other words, we know we have gotten through difficulties in the past and can be sure of our ability to do so again.

If someone is always stepping in to solve a problem for our students, they will not learn that they are capable of doing so themselves. This is difficult because no one wants to see a student struggle or fail, but it is from our mistakes and experiences that we come to learn our strengths and believe that we can handle obstacles that come our way. When our students are presented with a challenge, we can help by brainstorming different solutions and helping them walk through the potential outcomes of each. In this way, we are offering support without stepping in to solve the problem on their behalf. With that encouragement, they will learn how to effectively problem solve and self advocate independently and those are skills they will use for years to come.

Shannon Dandridge
School Counselor

Dates of Interest January

- 3 School opens
- 5 Early Dismissal-10:50
- 6 Volunteer Opportunities Fair during all lunches
- 16 Martin Luther King Day—no school
- 16 Community Service Awards Night-7 P.M.
- 19 Jr/Sr Post-Secondary Planning Day
- 20 Term 2 ends
- 28 SATs administered



Coming in February

- 8 Report Card distribution
- 8 Class of 2013 College Night
- 9 Late Start @ 10:23
- 11 ACT administered
- 20-24 Winter Recess



College Admissions Testing

SAT Registration Update



Registration online at www.collegeboard.com gives you immediate test center assignment and confirmation. The College Board offers score choice which gives students the option to choose the SAT score and date sent to colleges. Under score choice a student can choose which subject test scores are sent. This gives students more flexibility in score reporting. In regards to the SAT, scores from an entire SAT test date are sent. Scores of individual sections from different test dates cannot be selected independently for sending. Students cannot see their SAT scores before utilizing the four free score reports offered by College Board at the time of registration.



ACT and SAT: What is the Difference?

No part of the college application process seems to be more intimidating than taking the ACT (American College Testing) or the SAT (Scholastic Assessment Tests). The first thing to know is that the ACT and the SAT are different tests. They are developed and administered by different companies, they test different areas of knowledge, and they are scored differently.

The ACT is administered by the American College Testing Program. It tests four areas of knowledge: English, (including writing), math, reading, and science reasoning. Each area is scored separately on a scale of 1 to 36, and a composite score is also given. Guessing at an answer on the ACT and being incorrect will **not** lower the overall score.

The SAT is administered by the College Entrance Examination Board. It tests math, verbal and writing skills, and each section is scored on a scale of 200 to 800. Some sections of the SAT math test require a calculator. Guessing at an answer on the SAT and being incorrect will deduct points from the overall score.

Students should first find out which tests are required by individual schools. The ACT is more commonly used in the Midwest, while the SAT is common on the coasts. **Most institutions will accept both**, however, and when both are taken, most schools will use the highest score when evaluating the application. Many schools will accept the ACT in lieu of the SAT and SAT Subject Tests. Some colleges do not require either the SAT or ACT.

It is recommended that students take standardized tests twice, once in the junior year and again in the senior year. The first attempt frequently disappoints students, and to some extent, a low score can be blamed on the unfamiliarity of taking a three-hour standardized test. Students are generally less anxious the second time they take the tests. Do not rely on taking standardized tests over and over to improve the score, however. Statistics show that most scores do not change drastically over three or more test attempts. Instead, take and score practice tests several times before taking the actual test.



When to take the SAT Subject Tests

The SAT Subject Tests are one-hour tests in specific subject areas used by many colleges for admissions and/or placement. Like the SAT, the SAT Subject Tests are part of the College Board testing program. Colleges which use these tests in the admissions process require various combinations (i.e., three tests of your choice or three including one math and one science). Students can check online to see what tests a college requires.

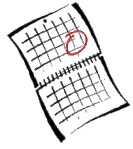
The SAT Subject Tests are administered on most of the SAT testing dates, but a student may not take both the SAT and SAT Subject Tests on the same day; however, students may register to take three of the one hour subject tests on the same date. Students taking the SAT Subject Tests who are considering applying to a college under an early decision plan, or who are candidates for one of the military academies or for ROTC scholarships should plan to take three subject tests in May and/or June of their junior year. Students who are finishing a course of study, such as U.S. history or a foreign language, might want to consider taking the Subject Tests at the end of this academic year. Some students take their Subject Tests in the fall of their senior year after they have arrived at a list of colleges to which they plan to apply, but in some cases taking the Subject Tests earlier than senior year may be advisable.



College Admissions Testing (continued)

When to take the SAT Subject Tests (continued)

A few sophomores and freshmen have, in the past, taken the biology or chemistry tests at the completion of these courses and have done quite well on them. Any students who are doing well in these classes may want to talk with their teachers and counselors about the advisability of taking a test this year. Students should check out the College Board web site for more information on this part of the testing process.



Preparing for the SAT/ACT

Standardized tests can be intimidating. And all the hype about test scores doesn't help. By the time you finish talking to your friends and reading about the tests, it may feel like those little ovals will determine your future.



True, test scores are important. But they're not nearly as important as many students think. Different colleges use test scores differently, but no colleges make admission decisions based solely on test scores. In fact, your academic record—the courses you've taken and the grades you've received—is looked at much more closely than your test scores.

There's no way to get around it—the best ways to prepare for the SAT or ACT are to study hard and read as much as you can.

The testing companies themselves agree. “The best preparation is to take challenging courses in high school,” says Kristin Crouse from ACT. “That prepares students best for college, and that's what the ACT measures.” High school social studies and English courses help students learn to read critically, to write well-written essays, and to develop a broad vocabulary. Math and science courses help students develop problem solving and quantitative reasoning skills. All of these skills are important to success in a college program and are measured in some way by the standardized tests.

Visit the SAT Preparation Center on the College Board web site where you will find practice tests and other useful hints.

Reading is another great way to prepare. No, you don't have to plow through *Moby Dick* (although that wouldn't hurt!). Choose books, magazines, and newspapers that you enjoy—everything from *Twilight* to the *New York Times* can strengthen your reading comprehension and vocabulary.



Unfortunately, there is no quick way to make up for taking easy classes and avoiding the library. But you can make the commitment now to read for at least 15 minutes a day. By the time the next testing date comes up, you'll feel more prepared.

Junior/Senior Post-Secondary Planning Day

On Thursday, January 19th during all lunch period students are invited to explore ideas for after graduation including: college, jobs, community service, travel, and many other opportunities. Refreshments will be served. For more information, please contact I'Esha Thomas at ithomas@mail.ab.mec.edu or Sara Clinton at scClinton@mail.ab.mec.edu.



Deadlines for Transcript Requests

Requests for transcripts for those applications with a deadline of February 1st need to be in the Counseling Center by the close of school on January 3rd, and for those applications with a deadline of February 15th, requests for transcripts need to be submitted by the close of school on January 19th.

Bulletin Board

Community Service during January

A variety of activities will focus school attention on community service during January. On January 6th there will be a Volunteer Opportunities Fair during all lunches. Students can find out about community service activities, some of which are school year activities and some are summer opportunities.

On January 16th, the school will hold its twelfth annual Community Service Awards Night in the auditorium at 7:00 p.m. At this event students will receive community service awards, and several students will speak about their experiences. The Youth In Philanthropy group will present to agencies which applied for and received grants through this program. There will also be a multimedia presentation recalling the service done by students during 2011. Anyone interested about more information about these activities can contact Kay Steeves (ksteeves@mail.ab.mec.edu or 978-264-4700, ext. 3444).

Mid-Year Exams



Mid-Year exams for math are scheduled for January 23rd and 24th and science mid-years on the 26th and 27th. These exams are administered in regularly scheduled math and science classes. The three days prior (January 18, 19 and 20) will be devoted to mid-year review in these classes. All other classes will not assign assessments on January 23-27th so that students may focus their attention on these exams. No homework exceeding 20 minutes per class will be given the days of or the day before an exam, and 20 minutes of homework may only be assigned if it directly applies to the

aiding in studying for a midyear exam. Students enrolled in multiple math or science classes are encouraged to speak with their teachers directly if they have concerns about the exam schedule.

Attention: Sophomores

Counselors will be meeting in small groups with their sophomore students on February 2nd & 3rd to discuss career exploration and future planning. At this time they will receive their Family Connection account. More information on this will follow in the February edition of the Counseling Communiqué.

Class of 2013 College Night

The Counseling Department will be hosting their Junior College Night on Wednesday, February 8th at 7PM. The snow date will be on Thursday, February, 9th also at 7 PM. The target audience for the evening is designed for juniors and their parents. Parents and students will be meeting with their individual counselors. More details will follow regarding where your child's counselor will be meeting. If you have questions please contact Jen Gabel at jgabel@abschools.org or Wioletta Pawlowska at wpawlowska@abschools.org. Thank you and happy holidays!

FAFSA Day in Massachusetts

Complete your FAFSA! College Goal Sunday is a non-profit program that provides free information and assistance to Massachusetts families applying for financial assistance for higher education. This statewide program is administered by the Massachusetts Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators. College Goal Sunday will take place on January 29th at 2:00 P.M. Anyone interested in learning more may call 877-4CGSMAS or visit online at www.fafsaday.org

From the Health Office: Adolescents and Headaches



Headaches are a common and frustrating problem in children and adolescents. Almost twenty percent of teenagers have frequent, recurrent headaches and about ten percent of teens complain of them weekly.

It is not known what causes headaches in most children, but some things that can trigger headaches include too little sleep, too much stress, missed meals, and dehydration, artificial sweeteners, chocolate, caffeine, flashing lights. It is a good idea to make sure that your child is getting **adequate sleep**, **adequate hydration**, **proper nutrition**, (eating three meals a day and two nutritious snacks, limiting high sugar and high fat foods), and **regular exercise**. Also, make sure that your child is not overwhelmed by school and extracurricular activities. For more information please check out www.keepkidshealthy.com