

Counseling Communiqué

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

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“Little Things”

I recently had the pleasure of presenting at Project Wellness with four absolutely amazing seniors. The seniors were asked to talk about how they developed their leadership styles, how they reached their own successes, and how they found their passions in life, in hopes that the 7th graders would learn something to help them on their journey. Many students and parents commented on how beneficial this presentation was, so I want to share some of their insights.

I intentionally chose four students with varying leadership styles who had achieved success in a wide range of activities, but I was fascinated to hear some of the similarities in their journeys. All of the students mentioned the importance of the support they received from their families, even when they made a mistake or were not successful. One student even mentioned, “Knowing that I could make a mistake and not feel embarrassed allowed me to feel confident to try different things...”

Each student also gave an example of how the “little things” that their parents did helped them know that their parents cared, but also allowed them to feel comfortable approaching their parents. One student mentioned how much it meant to her that her father left a note on her nightstand telling her how proud he was of her. Another student mentioned how her father brought her favorite drink to every sporting event, while another said that their favorite time of day was having snack with their parent and “just talking about our day.” Their advice was simply that those little things that you do for them really work.

The last piece of advice from them that I want to share is in regard to how each student found their passions. They were all in agreement that they felt comfortable and supported pursuing their own passion and that they were not “pressured to do what my parents me to do.” As one girl so eloquently put it, “My parents never pushed me to community service because they thought it was important. Instead, they exposed me to it, we did it as a family, and I eventually just enjoyed it and wanted to do it. They showed me the benefits, but then allowed me to choose for myself. I know that if I had done something else, they would have supported me but now we have something in common.”

As a parent, you always worry about what you need to do and how to do it, but it always amazes me how the little things that you do often yield the greatest results. How you respond to a mistake, telling them that you are proud of whom they are, or even simply asking they are doing is all vital in helping them on their way. They may not tell you, but it is all registering.



Todd Chicko
School Counselor

Dates of Interest May

- 2-12 AP Exams administered
- 7 SATs administered
- 16 Interim Reports issued
- 17 & 18 MCAS testing for sophomores
- 30 Memorial Day no school



Coming in June



- 3 Graduation
- 4 SATs administered
- 11 ACTs administered

Information for College-Bound Juniors

A Strong Finish Can Make the Difference

As a counseling department, our primary message is always that students should choose courses and activities based on their abilities and areas of interest, not simply as a way to enhance their college applications. High school should be a time of academic exploration and personal growth that ideally gives students the opportunity to identify their passions while developing their skills. However, we recognize that post-secondary planning is an important part of students' development and would like to provide some information about academic and extracurricular choices as they relate specifically to the college admissions process.

Academic Activities

When a college admissions committee looks at the transcript of a prospective student, they examine the entire academic record, including freshman, sophomore and junior years as well as quarter grades senior year. The prevailing question is: what kind of a student is the applicant at the present time? In reviewing your academic record, the admissions committee considers the quality of the courses you have taken, your classroom performance, and the academic competitiveness of your school. They expect you to challenge yourself within the curriculum and resources available at A-B. Regardless of the major or career you intend to pursue, a balanced high school curriculum is the best preparation for college. Your course selection and performance are very important factors in your application. Research consistently shows that the best predictor of academic success in college is a student's academic performance in high school. The senior year is a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate your commitment and passion for learning as well as how much you have grown since you were a freshman. It is your chance to show them all that you are capable of!

Extracurricular Activities

Colleges place value on extracurricular involvement in school and in the community. When admissions officers review your extracurricular record, they are more impressed by quality than by quantity because it demonstrates your commitment to an endeavor while showing that you have explored your interests and found something you are passionate about. Developing a talent (music, sports, writing), rising to a leadership role (e.g. class officer, captain of a sport, editor of a school publication), or achieving a special goal (Eagle Scout, community service) is more notable than having minimal involvement in numerous clubs.

Summer Activities

As you think about what to do this summer, consider opportunities that will allow you to explore an area of interest. Such opportunities include volunteering, taking enrichment courses, starting your own business or working in a challenging environment. What can you do to over the summer that will allow you to grow, engage in your community or learn more about the world around you? Check out the enrichment programs listed under Colleges on your Naviance page.

College Recommendations

Juniors should be thinking now about what kind of teacher recommendations and how many they are going to need to support their college applications in the fall. The months of April, May or June are a good time for the students to check in with individual teachers and start this process.

Juniors should be aware that there are two types of recommendations: formal and in-house (internal). A formal recommendation is written by a teacher and will be sent electronically through Naviance once the student requests it online (under "Colleges I am Applying to"). An in-house recommendation can be written on a form available in the Counseling Center or sent directly to the students' counselor through email. The student's counselor will use the in-house recommendations along with the parent response form and senior questionnaire (located in your Naviance account) to complete the school report form and counselor letter of recommendation. In-house recommendations never leave the building, while the formal recommendation will ultimately be sent to the colleges to which a student applies.

Specific instructions on how to request teacher recommendations can be found on page 5 of the AB Future Planning Booklet, located on the Counseling Center website (<http://ab.mec.edu/abrhs/counseling/Future%20Planning%20Booklet%202011.pdf>).

We often have parents ask us about whether a student should submit letters from someone who might be able to boost his or her chances for admission (former alums, someone in political office, etc.). Sometimes parents think their role in the application process is to pull strings but the truth is that very few people other than the applicant have much clout in the admissions process. Occasionally, special circumstances warrant input from additional sources and you should consult with your counselor to discuss whether or not this is the case. Admissions committees simply want more information about you, not an impersonal note from some politician. Concentrate on letters from people who know you well and share the qualities that make you unique throughout your application.

Information for College-Bound Seniors

Transition to College

Money Matters: Being Aware of Personal Debt

The spring is finally here, despite a very tough winter, which means that students in the class of 2011 are winding down their high school careers. This is a time for them to enjoy, reflect on the past four years and anticipate life after high school. With all of the excitement, and maybe a little anxiety, students will have many choices to make as they start their journey into young adulthood. Yet, there is one area in particular that is an important issue to cover and one in which parents can be a big help, and that is helping your child understand how to effectively manage money during the college years. As we all know, these can be “lean” years for most students as they hopefully learn how to budget, save and avoid the dreaded credit card debt. Parents can be especially helpful by educating their children about how finances work, good and bad debt, and learning to budget money.



Students, of course, will need spending money for many things: going out with friends, buying books and other expenses. Yet the temptation to overspend can, and does, happen more frequently since credit card companies began offering introductory credit cards with the allure of free gifts and other “tempting” promotions to get students to sign up and enroll. Parents can help their children by clearly explaining how debt can increase quickly and how interest rates work. Credit cards by themselves are not necessarily bad. Establishing a credit history is important and having one in emergency situations can be useful and needed. Yet, many students go beyond their spending and budgetary limits, and before they know it they can be over their heads financially. By having an open, honest and frank conversation about money, spending and debt, your son or daughter will be more fully equipped to make better choices when it comes to money which will help them during their college years and into adult life as well.

Counseling Center Bulletin Board

Field Trip to Middlesex Community College

On May 12th, Acton-Boxborough Regional High School students will attend a field trip to Middlesex Community College in Bedford. The students will learn a great deal about the academics and extracurricular activities at Middlesex. Here are some highlights:

- Middlesex is a public college with an open admission policy. SAT scores are not required (although there are some prerequisite requirements to enter some programs).
- The average year tuition and fees for a full-time (15 credit) student was slightly more than \$4,000. In comparison, tuition at UMass Amherst costs approximately \$10,232.
- Students who attend Middlesex are eligible for the Middlesex College Transfer Advantage which provides an affordable path to a baccalaureate degree. By enrolling in their Liberal Studies Certificate MassTransfer option, students are able to complete a 34 credit block of general education requirements, and if accepted at a Massachusetts state college or UMass campus, the entire block is guaranteed to transfer and apply toward the transfer institution’s general education requirements. Middlesex also has a number of agreements with public and private institutions that can facilitate the transfer process and maximize students’ transfer credits.
- Middlesex offers a summer study abroad program.
- Middlesex has numerous academic and sports clubs for the students.

More information can be found at: <https://www.middlesex.mass.edu>.



Bulletin Board

ABRHS Summer School 2011

Once again this year, the ABRHS Summer School will welcome students to three and six week classes for remedial credit, level advancement, and enrichment with offerings in Math, Science, History, English, World Languages and SAT preparation. In addition, high school credit may be earned for Physical Education, Creative Writing, and Writing Skills. An exciting new course is: College Search and Application. All summer courses count toward 990-mandate hours for students entering 10th, 11th, and 12th grades. Specific course information and registration forms can be found on the web site <http://ab.mec.edu/summerschool> or in the "Interaction" Acton-Boxborough Community Education spring catalog.



Volunteering



Volunteering can be a good way for students to feel useful, to meet needs in the community, to do some career exploration, to meet new people and to expand their range of experiences. Students who will not have full-time summer jobs or who have plans for only part of the summer are encouraged to consider volunteer work as one of their summer activities. Volunteer opportunities are posted on the high school web site (click on Student Volunteers under Quick Links).

There will be a Volunteer Opportunities Fair during all lunches on Tuesday, June 7th.

Summer Tutoring

Students interested in receiving tutoring during the summer should check the Tutors Database on the school district's web site (ab.mec.edu/district/jlinks.html), under Popular Pages.

Thanks to Our Volunteers

The Counseling Department is grateful to the faithful volunteers who make a major contribution to the functioning of the department. Volunteers answer the phone, do data entry, organize and file materials, prepare newsletters for mailing and perform other assorted tasks. Regular parent volunteers this year have included: Elizabeth Muff, Sunanda Sahay, Shelley Sherman, Kim Clymer, Susan Russell, Patti Babcock, Dana Hartman, and Anne Noeth.



Health and Wellness

Childhood sunburns can increase your child's risk of developing skin cancer as an adult. Even a suntan can be harmful to children. Tanning is an outward sign of internal skin damage. Research shows that much of the damage to skin is done in the first 18 years of life. Protecting skin and eyes during these early years can reduce the risk of some types of skin cancer by up to 78%. Melanoma is a cancer of younger people and can start as early as adolescence.

Youth and Skin Cancer

- 50% of lifetime exposure to UV light occurs during childhood and adolescence.
- It can take less than 10 minutes for a child's skin to burn.
- Children with severe sunburns are at an increased risk for skin cancer.
- A person born today is twice as likely to develop malignant melanoma compared to someone born only a decade ago and 12 times more likely as someone born 50 years ago.
- Being sun safe is the first step to reduce the chances of getting skin cancer later in life.
- Tanning beds increase your risk for skin cancer.

Further information can be found on the following web sites:

www.shadefoundation.org

www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin/chooseyourcover/guide.htm

