

Counseling Communiqué

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

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Think Before You Send

Text messaging has become the primary communication method of today's teens. Walk down the halls of ABRHS during passing time or lunch periods and you see lots of teens with their cell phones open typing away. What happens when teens choose to send messages or photos to each other that are inappropriate?

Recently, several cases involving "sexting" (sending sexually explicit text messages or photos via text), have been highlighted in the local news. In one recent national poll, 20% of teens report to having sent sexually explicit photos by text and over 30% report to receiving such a photo on their phones. This issue should not be taken lightly. In Massachusetts, sexting is being treated as a sexual crime. Students involved in taking or forwarding nude photos could face jail time and/or be registered as sex offenders.

Parents need to speak to their teens about sexting. Teens need to understand the serious ramifications, both in the legal system and in the emotional realm of taking and forwarding these messages. For students who send photos of themselves, we need to examine what is leading them to do so. Are they looking for attention from friends or potential dating partners? Are they feeling badly about themselves and looking for reassurance from others? When students forward pictures of others, what does that do to the person in the photo? How do they feel when a picture intended to be private is seen by many in the school?

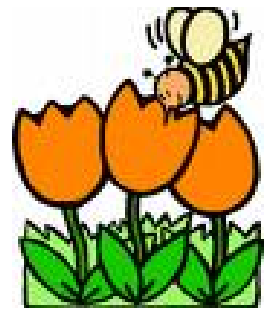
When you speak to your children, encourage them to think about the consequences of sexting. A photo is permanent. This photo can be forwarded to hundreds of others, posted on Facebook or other internet sites, and can follow the student for years to come. Remind students to think before they hit send. If a student sends an explicit photo to someone she thinks she can trust, no one knows where this photo will end up. If a student sends or forwards an explicit photo, there can be criminal consequences. Encourage students to report any sexually explicit photos sent to them on their phones. Some phones even have blocking options where all incoming photos can be blocked, leaving the possibility of receiving a sexually explicit photo off the table.

Keep the channels of communication open with your teen regarding text messaging and make sure they are aware of the potential ramifications of sending or receiving explicit messages on their phones.

Lindsay Rosenman
School Counselor

Dates of Interest May

- 2 SATs administered
- 4-15 Advanced Placement Tests
- 15 Interim Reports issued
- 19 & 20 MCAS testing for sophomores
- 25 Memorial Day—no school



Coming in June

- 5 Graduation
- 6 SATs administered
- 13 ACTs administered



Information for College-Bound Juniors



A Strong Finish Can Make the Difference

Academic Activities

When a college admissions committee looks at the transcript of a prospective student, more emphasis tends to be placed on the junior and senior years than on the freshman and sophomore years. 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. The grades you receive are a very important factor 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 often the single most important factor in determining admission. Your performance during this period speaks to your commitment to and passion for learning as well as your ability to perform under pressure.

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. Consistent effort and commitment are key indicators for colleges. The person who has developed a talent (music, sports, writing), risen to a leadership role (e.g. class officer, captain of a sport, editor of a school publication), or achieved a special goal (Eagle Scout, community service) will be treated more favorably than someone who has been an undistinguished member of numerous clubs.

Summer Activities

As you think about what to do this summer, consider unusual opportunities which could give your college application added depth. Students may want to participate in activities such as volunteering, taking enrichment courses, starting your own business or working in a challenging environment. It can be helpful to look at your activities from the point of view of an admissions officer. What kind of summer experience would put you in the best light?

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 May and June are a good time for the students to start this process.

Juniors should be aware that there are two types of recommendations: specific and in-house (internal). A specific recommendation is written on school stationery and is usually retained by the teacher until the student requests that it be sent to specific schools. An in-house recommendation is written on a form available in the Counseling Center and, once written, is given to the student's counselor. The student's counselor will use the in-house recommendations to complete the school report form. In-house recommendations never leave the building, while the specific recommendation will ultimately be mailed by the teacher to the colleges to which a student applies.

My Parents Know Someone...

In addition to teacher recommendations, a letter or two from someone who really knows you (like your boss or coach) can be helpful. If you have got some special skills, let admissions offices know about them. Ask your coach to talk to college coaches. Send along a videotape of your concert performance, or a copy of the literary magazine you edit. How about a letter from that former senator who's a friend of the family? Or the rich alumnus who told you to give him a call when you applied to his alma mater? Sometimes parents think their role in the application process is to pull strings. Admissions committees resent such outside interference. They want more information about you, not an impersonal note from some politician. Other than alums who give large sums of money to the school, athletic coaches, and members of the administration, very few people have much clout. Concentrate on letters from people who know you well.



Information for College-Bound Seniors

Transition to College

Money Matters: Being Aware of Personal Debt



The spring is finally here, despite last month's cold weather, which means that students in the class of 2009 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 which means that they will be college-bound in late summer. 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 March 31st, twenty-five Acton-Boxborough Regional High School students attended a field trip to Middlesex Community College in Bedford. The tour was extremely informative. The students learned 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 2009

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. Check for exciting new course listings including: College Search and Application and English Language Learning—beginner to intermediate. 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 ab.mec.edu/summerschool or in the “Interaction” Acton-Boxborough Community Education spring catalog.

Volunteering

Volunteering can be a good way for students some career exploration, to meet new people 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).



to feel useful, to meet needs in the community, to do and to expand their range of experiences. Students who

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: Maryann Mullin, Elizabeth Muff, Sunanda Sahay, Shelley Sherman, Karyn Finamore, Bobbie Chiauzzi, Kim Clymer, Susan Bartow, Jan DiBona, Laurie Gatley, Patty Higgins and Pat Herdeg.

