

Counseling Communiqué

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

Developing Healthy Relationships

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As adults, many of us may try to dismiss adolescent relationships as superficial or trivial. But as Sara Sorenson points out in her article, "Adolescent Romantic Relationships", as many as half of all teens report having been in a dating relationship and nearly one-third of all teens said they have been in a serious relationship (Teenage Research Unlimited, 2006). In addition, there is some evidence to say that these early relationships give adolescents opportunities to learn some of the necessary skills that can lead to the capacity for long-term committed relationships in the future. These relationships give teens an opportunity to refine ones' sense of identity, develop interpersonal skills, and receive emotional support. But relationships are confusing and challenging, and teens need support from all of the adults in their lives – parents, counselors, teachers, coaches, and community members – to help them navigate the gray areas and develop a strong sense of what constitutes a healthy relationship. In fact, with the explosion of media attention on high profile relationships and TV teen dramas with a heavy emphasis on early sexual activity, it has never been more important for adults to help model and define healthy romantic relationships for their teens. In other words, our teens need clear definitions and examples of what a healthy relationship looks like so they can compare what they see in the media with what is considered "healthy." We need to be talking with them about how a healthy relationship is built on mutual respect. In these relationships partners can talk freely and honestly to each other and can share in decision making. Partners in healthy relationships trust and support each other and respect the other person's freedom and independence.

Unfortunately, as we find out all too often, teenagers are uniquely vulnerable to getting involved in relationships that are unhealthy. In studies done by the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, teenagers report dating abuse more than any other age group. In our own Youth Risk Behavior Survey completed in 2008, 5% of girls and 3% of boys in grades 9-12 said they had experienced dating violence. Therefore, we need to be having conversations and educating teens about what constitutes an unhealthy relationship. In those cases, we need to help teens to see that when one person tries to control the other or manipulate the other to get his/her own way or uses verbal insults or putdowns, the relationship is unhealthy and concerning.

If you have concerns about your child's relationship, we encourage you to seek out additional support from pediatricians, mental health care providers, school counselors and psychologists who have referral sources and information to share. The Acton-Boxborough Coalition for Healthy Youth (ABCHY) has a new online resource site (www.abchy.org) with local information for support in these and many other issues facing our adolescent population. We want to partner with you as we help our adolescents navigate these issues and foster positive relationships. Through coursework like Fitness for Living and additional programs like Mentors In Violence Prevention, as well as individual conversations with students, we are hoping to educate our students on the importance of developing healthy relationships and the steps to take when relationships become unhealthy. Our primary goal is to make sure that the romantic relationships our teens are in are healthy and safe.

Susan Root
School Counselor

Dates of Interest November

- 3 Professional Day– no school for students
- 6 Term I ends
- 7 SATs and Subject Tests administered
- 11 Veterans Day- no school
- 18 Report Card distribution
- 26-28 Thanksgiving Recess



Coming in December

- 2 Financial Aid Night - 7 P.M.
- 5 SATs and Subject Tests administered
- 12 ACTs administered
- 14 Interim Reports issued

Information for College-Bound Seniors



Six Things to Know Before Applying

Here are some tips to follow for your college application:

1. Always proofread your application for spelling, grammar and content. Many schools do not allow an application to be modified once it is submitted. And always print a copy for your records before you click "send."
2. Look for an e-mail confirmation that your application has been received. If you are not contacted within 48 hours, call the school to verify receipt.
3. Do not wait until the last minute to submit your application. You'll avoid the stress caused by any unforeseen computer-related difficulties.
4. Know the school's policy for supplying supporting documentation, such as letters of recommendation. Often, everything must be submitted by the deadline; simply receiving the application may not meet a school's application requirements.
5. Be aware of deadlines. Many schools require on-line applications and supporting materials to be submitted by a specific date and time.
6. If you send your application electronically it will arrive more quickly than your transcript and recommendation letters that are mailed. Generally speaking it takes a college a couple of weeks to process the mail that has been sent via the post office. So, please do not panic if a college tells you they are missing your transcript or recommendation letters and your counselor or teacher says it has been mailed.

Financial Aid Information

There are two forms that are generally used to collect financial information for need-based awards. They are the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the Profile form of the College Scholarship Service which charges a fee. Both the FAFSA and the CSS Profile can be accessed on-line. The CSS Profile can be located at www.profileonline.collegeboard.com. The FAFSA is located at www.fafsa.ed.gov.



Financial Aid Night

Wednesday, December 2nd

7:00 P.M.



The Counseling Department will host a **Financial Aid Evening** on Wednesday, December 2nd at 7:00 P.M. The evening will focus on how to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as well as other aspects of the financial aid process. The guest speaker will be from the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority (MEFA). All families of college-bound seniors are encouraged to attend. Although this program will focus primarily on the specifics of completing the forms, parents of juniors may find it to be of some help in planning ahead for next year.

CSS/Financial Aid Profile

Many private colleges, universities and scholarship programs use the Profile to collect information and help them award private, non-federal student aid funds. As soon as students are sure about where they are applying for aid, they should check www.collegeboard.com/profile to see if the schools they are applying to are listed as requiring the Profile. The student should register at least three to four weeks before the school's or scholarship program's earliest deadline.

Information for College-Bound Seniors



Scholarship Information

Scholarship money generally comes from three major sources: specific colleges, organizations and foundations, and local scholarships.

The primary source of scholarship money, as distinguished from need-based financial aid, is college-based aid. Information about available scholarships from a given college can be found on the college's web site, in the Counseling Department scholarship files, in Naviance, or in college viewbooks. Many colleges have merit opportunities that are available to students simply by submitting an application.

A second source of scholarship money is organizations and foundations. Reference books on such scholarships are available in the Counseling Center and local libraries. As the Counseling Department receives information from scholarship granting organizations during the year, lists of these scholarships are available through your Naviance account. Many of these scholarships have very specific criteria. There are links to useful search engines on the ABRHS web site under counseling. **Finaid.org** is probably the most comprehensive search engine.

A third source of scholarship money is the scholarships awarded at graduation time by local organizations. A single application for all of these scholarships will be available to each senior through the Naviance account in March. Students need to complete only one application to be considered eligible for all of the local scholarships.

Counseling Center Bulletin Board

Report Cards

Report cards for term one will be distributed during home room on Wednesday, November 18th. Students are expected to take report cards home and share them with their parents/guardians. Parent electronic access to student report cards will be available at this time as well through the parent portal to Powerschool. Parents must have completed the on-line emergency card information in order to access this report. If you have questions regarding the emergency card information and your access please contact Jeanne Potter in the ABRHS front office.

PSAT Results

PSAT results are expected back in mid-December. Watch for more details in next month's newsletter.



Access to Records and Mailings for Non-custodial Parents

A parent, guardian, or eligible student may request copies of any part of the school record. A fee may be charged for the cost of copying. As required by M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 34H, a non-custodial parent wishing to have access to student records or school mailings should submit a letter of request to the school principal, Dr. Alixe Callen. Letters to both parents will then be mailed by the Counseling Department giving the Custodial Parent 21 days to respond. If there is no response, secondary mailings will commence. Questions regarding this process should be directed to your child's counselor (978-264-4700, extension 3430) or the Director of Pupil Services, Liza Huber (978-264-4700, extension 3265).

Body Mass Index (BMI) Screening Notification to families at ABRHS

The Acton-Boxborough High School nurses have been conducting annual hearing, vision, height and weight screenings for students in grade 10 for many years. According to the state's new BMI screening regulation which passed in April 2009, schools must now calculate student's Body Mass Index as well. We will use the heights and weights from the annual screenings to do this calculation. Notification of BMI results and resources will be sent in a confidential manner to all parents/guardians who participate in the height weight screening. BMI can be a useful tool in the early identification of possible health risk factors among developing youth.

Please visit the APS/ABRHS website for more detailed information.



Counseling Center Bulletin Board

Checking Out Contests, Activities and Programs for Students

Students often receive information in the mail inviting them to participate in national or international programs or activities or to have their names included in publications. Here are some tips for putting these invitations in perspective:

College admissions personnel are not impressed by Who's Who listings.

Families whose students receive information about summer or school year enrichment programs should realize that these "invitations" are marketing tools. If parents want their child to participate in a program like this, they should research the alternatives just as they would with any major purchase or expenditure. One possible place to start is the Petersons web site (go to www.petersons.com then click on K-12 Schools and Programs, then on Summer Programs and Camps). Another resource for juniors and seniors and their families is the Enrichment Programs section of the Naviance/Family Connection program accessible through the Counseling Department web site.

There are also web sites which families can use to check out activities they are considering. The National Association of Secondary School Principals has an Advisory List on Contests and Activities (www.nhs.us/scaa) designed to help students and their parents evaluate programs. The Advisory List of International Educational Travel and Exchange Programs (www.csiet.org) is designed to help families evaluate exchange programs. The Counseling Department advises parents to seek references from past participants in programs they are investigating as well as researching the sponsoring organization.

It is not necessary for families to spend large sums of money for programs for their students. Students can build their skills and experiences in a number of ways, including volunteering, paid employment and/or or participation in a wide variety of activities.

