

JUNIOR/SENIOR PARENT COFFEE ~ SEPTEMBER 28, 2011

Co-Chairs Report. The meeting was called to order at 9am. There were approximately 100 parents in attendance. Homecoming is on October 15th, the Student Life Committee is looking for 14 chaperones in two shifts (6-8p and 8-10p) and food donations. Contact Carolyn Eddie or Felicia Rubinstein (carolyneddie@hotmail.com or felmag@optonline.net). If you did not receive the fundraising letter, contact Melissa Graves at melgraves@aol.com.

Principal's Report. Dan Haron announced that there are some changes to Homecoming. Instead of holding the parade, there will be a banner competition. The king and queen will be crowned at the dance, and only seniors will be nominated. The whole school will vote. The Administration asks that parents be alert as to cars leaving their homes on Friday morning of homecoming week particularly with regard to the number of kids in each car. The China Exchange students arrived on 9/29/2011; it is the 10th anniversary of the China Exchange program.

Guidance Report. Paul Ribeiro (PR) wanted to remind parents that the seniors must submit a transcript request form 30 days prior to their specific school's application deadline. Generally the info from Guidance is released prior to the 30 days, but that lead time remains a requirement. The Transcript Request Form will trigger release of the transcript, the NACAC form, the school profile and the Guidance Counselor recommendation.

He announced specific dates:

- October 15th PSATs offered to Sophomores and Juniors at DHS
- October 18th Financial Aid Night (Financial Aid Director from Sacred Heart)
- October 20th The DHSPA evening panel of college admissions counselors
- October 24th Dartmouth College Info Session
- October 25th DHSPA meeting, "Woulda, Coulda, Shoulda" parent panel discussion

Junior Planning Night will be on November 2nd. The College Planning Guide can be downloaded from the DHS website.

Sophomore students will have a NAVIANCE Training Session. Students can get their code from their Guidance Counselor.

Q: Are college fairs different – do you need to go to all?

PR: They vary, many colleges repeat visits at several fairs. The best thing you can do is contact the school or the event organizers to find out who is going to be there.

Q: What would be the difference between a national fair and a local fair?

PR: The size is the major difference, a national fair might attract up to 300 schools whereas a more local fair would attract closer to 100. A national fair might have workshops as well.

Q: If a college offers interviews but doesn't require them, should a student go to it?

PR: Yes, if for no other reason than the college might use it to gauge interest level. Any contact with admissions representatives is good.

Q: Are Open Houses at places like the Marriott worth going to?

PR: While these Open Houses often attract up to 200 people, they can still be beneficial. One-on-one contact is the best but these large group sessions give you exposure to the school.

Q: Where can you get information about colleges?

PR: Naviance has links to many schools, College Board is a good place to start.

Q: How do students take advantage of the colleges visiting the College and Career Center?

PR: Seniors can go to as many college visits as they want with teachers' agreement/notification. They can not miss a test or quiz unless the teacher agrees they can make it up. Juniors may attend any sessions that fall during their free periods and with teacher's permission, may attend during class time. Each visit is different. The rep may not consider it an interview but the student should consider it an interview. These reps are usually the rep that services Fairfield County and they are in a position to fight for the student's application. Students can prepare questions but be wary of asking questions which can be answered easily online.

Q: Should parents contact the Admissions offices?

PR: The Admissions reps want to hear from the students. If it is about a scheduling issue, then it is okay for the parents to make the contact.

Q: Does DHS offer an opportunity for students to practice interviews?

PR: All guidance counselors have told their students that they would be happy to practice interviewing with them prior to a college visit. A homeroom for juniors on interviewing skills is being considered.

Q: What is on the transcript?

PR: The initial transcript shows the first three years of a student's high school grades. The second transcript which is sent after midterms includes 3-1/2 years. First quarter grades are not automatically sent. Students can send them if they are good. Guidance will send them at a student's request. IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE STUDENT TO ARRANGE FOR SAT AND ACT SCORES TO BE SENT TO COLLEGES.

Q: Does the guidance department advise students to take down their facebook page when they are in the application process?

PR: Guidance feels this is really a family decision but they do advise students to be cautious about what they post on facebook .

Q: Should letters of recommendation be done via paper or electronically?

PR: Most schools will accept either method, our guidance counselors use paper. Students should ask their teachers which method they prefer?

Q: Can you speak to GPA recalculation?

PR: Most colleges have their own method of recalculating GPAs as they are not all equal. They will recalculate to the scale they want (4.0 or 5.0) and will adjust for honors/APs as well as the curriculum of the specific of the high school.

Q: Is there a practice ACT (like the PSAT)?

PR: Yes, it is called The Plan. There are no immediate plans to offer it at DHS although they are discussing it.

Q: Should a student take the ACT or the SAT?

PR: It is entirely up to each family. Most colleges will now accept either. The one caveat is that the ACT has an optional writing component and students are encouraged to complete that. The SAT has a writing component "built in" to the test. It should be noted that the test taking strategies for the SAT and the ACT are very different. DHS is now administering the ACT. Dates for DHS administered standardized tests are available on the guidance webpage. Guidance is trying to find the balance between ACT and SAT test dates.

Q: Are certain test times better for students (is the January SAT, for example, skewed differently than say the March SAT)?

PR: I don't think so.

Q: When are students included in the Naviance database?

PR: Students are included as freshmen.

Q: How is Naviance updated?

PR: Guidance relies on students to find out how their college process worked. There is a homeroom dedicated to this in May of senior year. Guidance follows up with all students but accuracy is dependent on the student. Parents can encourage their children to update guidance as their process unfolds.

Q: Is the DHS school profile on the website final?

PR: The profile is available on the DHS website – from the dropdown menus on the homepage, select General, About DHS and then DHS School Profile. It is updated whenever there is new information (for example National Merit Scholarship Semi-finalists and Finalists).

Submitted by Lynn Biggart

October 8, 2011