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September 2009
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NOTE TO SENIORS & SR. PARENTS

TIMELINE

September 2009

9th – Registration

Deadline for October 10 SAT

13th – “Sticker Shock”

A program on financing college, presented by Bryan Hagen
3 PM Community Hall

13th – College Meeting – Seniors and Parents

4:30 PM Community Hall

15th – Senior Activities List and Parent Recommendations Due

18th – Registration

Deadline for Oct. 24 ACT

19th – PSAT Prep Class

begins (see pg. 4)

26th – PSAT Prep Class

October 2008

1st – Registration

Deadline for Nov. 7 SAT

10th – SAT and Subject Tests

11th – College Admissions Panel 3:00 Community Hall

11th – College Meeting Juniors and Parents 4:30 Community Hall

17th – PSAT exam for sophomores and juniors 7:45

24th – ACT and ACT plus Writing

As I write this, happy students are milling about the quad, licking brightly colored popsicles that are fast melting in the sun. It's the end of our first full week of classes, and we've carved out some time in our schedule to simply enjoy each other's company on a warm and sunny afternoon.

I found myself standing among them and marveling: I work in a school that makes time for popsicles! In this way, as in so many others, life at Tandem is wonderfully different than life at many American high schools.

There are some experiences, however, that our seniors have in common with virtually every other high school senior in the country: impending graduation. For most, this is time of both great excitement and great anxiety. I am honored that I have the opportunity to serve as a guide for this group as they prepare to embark on their next great adventure.

Over the course of the next two weeks, I will be meeting individually with each senior to discuss their college plans. Most students are in the process of narrowing their college lists or focusing on early decision or action deadlines.

Any senior who has not met with me by the Senior College Meeting on Sept. 13th needs to do so promptly so he/she can work with me on lists, applications, and essays. I am also available



Talking with college representatives is a rewarding and productive way to explore options.

to meet with students and their families after the College Meeting to address any further questions or concerns about the process (simply e-mail me to arrange an appointment).

All seniors should begin completing the Application List on page 36 of the *Choices* handbook. This list keeps track of colleges to which they are applying, deadlines, and necessary supplement information. The earlier that I have a copy of this list, the better I can assist in the process! (Deadline: 11/14). Students are also encouraged to start working on their college essays and applications (and can receive help from me as well as their English teachers).

As extracurricular activities are such an important part of a student's application, I am requiring all seniors to complete the activities list on page 32 of the *Choices* handbook, and to submit it to me by September 15th. Parents also need to submit the completed Parent Recommendation on page 34. This information is extremely helpful in writing in-depth college recommendation letters.

There is much to be done – but it IS manageable! Stay on top of the process by keeping your eye on the Friday e-mail, reading the College Newsletter, referring to the calendar in the *Choices* handbook, and calling or e-mailing if you have questions!

~ Catherine



Advice abounds when recent Tandem graduates return to share their insights on the college experience.

College Representative Visits (Scheduled as of 9/4/09)



All visits held in the College Counseling Office.

Interested seniors strongly encouraged to attend; juniors welcome!

Important Note: Teachers must be notified in advance if you will be missing any part of their class for a college visit. Attendance is kept at the visits!

9/ 16	Wed.	8:30 AM	Elon University
9/ 16	Wed.	1:15 PM	Hampshire College
9/ 17	Thurs.	8:30 AM	Virginia Commonwealth U.
9/ 18	Fri.	9 AM	Emory & Henry University
9/ 18	Fri.	12:30 PM	Davis & Elkins College
9/ 21	Mon.	8:30 AM	Barnard College
9/ 29	Tues.	8:30 AM	Vanderbilt University
10/ 2	Fri.	8:30 AM	Dickinson College
10/ 2	Fri.	11:30 AM	Eugene Lang College
10/ 7	Wed.	9:55 AM	James Madison University
10/ 8	Thurs.	11:30 AM	Salem College
10/ 9	Fri.	10 AM	Boston College
10/ 20	Tues.	11:30 AM	Ferrum College
10/ 20	Tues.	2:20 PM	Kenyon College
10/ 21	Wed.	8:30 AM	Gettysburg College
10/ 26	Mon.	8:30 AM	Randolph-Macon University
10/ 29	Thurs.	8:30 AM	Lehigh University
10/ 30	Fri.	2 PM	Washington & Lee Univ.
11/ 3	Tues.	8:30 AM	Bennington College
11/ 3	Tues.	1 PM	Washington College
11/ 5	Thurs.	8:30 AM	MD Institute College of Art
11/ 11	Wed.	11 AM	Bridgewater College
11/ 16	Mon.	3 PM	St. John's College

SAT & ACT TEST DATES & REGISTRATION DEADLINES

Register online at collegeboard.com and actstudent.org

Test Date	SAT & Subject Tests	Registration Deadline
10/10/09		9/9/09
11/7/09		10/1/09
12/5/09		10/30/09
1/23/10		12/15/09
3/13/10	(SAT only)	2/4/10
5/1/10		3/25/10
6/5/10		4/29/10

Tandem recommends that students take either the SAT or the ACT at the end of their junior year and, if interested in colleges that require them, they should also plan to take the Subject Tests in either May or June of their junior year.

Note: Students cannot take the SAT and the Subject Tests on the same test date!

Test Date	ACT & ACT w/Writing	Registration Deadline
10/24/09		9/18/09
12/12/09		11/6/09
2/6/10		1/05/10
4/10/10		3/5/10
6/12/10		5/7/10

If students need to retake the SAT or ACT, they should plan to do so early in their senior year (December is the last "good date" to retake for that year's application cycle).

If you are unsure if it would be helpful to retake the exam, consult with Catherine who is happy to discuss your particular situation and make a recommendation.

PSAT/NMSQT EXAM

Juniors and sophomores will be taking the PSAT on Saturday, 10/17, in the Gym. Plan to arrive by 7:45AM with calculators and #2 pencils. Students will be finished by 11:45AM. The fee is \$25 and payments should be made out to Tandem Friends and given to Louise or Michele at the front desk by 10/12. Students with extended time should include an additional \$50. Students who have not paid will not be able to sit for the exam.

For the sophomores, this test is purely for practice – scores will not be seen by colleges, nor will they affect any scholarship opportunities. For the juniors, the PSAT serves as the qualifying exam for the National Merit Scholarship Program, and therefore carries a bit more weight. If a student does well, it can potentially open the door to additional funding for college. Student scores should arrive at Tandem by mid-December, and will be sent home with your child.

TANDEM PSAT STRATEGIES COURSE

Allen K. Robinson has seven years experience in this field, and has received specialized training from Kaplan, Princeton Review and Sylvan Learning Centers. He is offering a 4-session class that focuses on maximizing your child's potential on the PSAT.

When: Saturdays
10:30AM – Noon
September 19 - October 10

Where: Middle School Meeting Room at Tandem

Cost: **\$220 + text**

Text: Cracking the SAT by the Princeton Review
Students should bring a check, made out to Allen Robinson, and the book to the first session.

For more information, please contact Allen at
Email: djallenk@gmail.com Phone: (804) 387-8546

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PSAT/NMSQT

1. Why take the PSAT/NMSQT?

Simply put, the PSAT/NMSQT is an easy, inexpensive and *effective* way to prepare for the SAT. Research has shown that gaining experience with proctored standardized tests can reduce anxiety and improve performance on these types of exams. In addition, students who take the test in 11th grade and meet other program entry requirements may enter National Merit Scholarship Corporation programs.

All students who take the PSAT/NMSQT will receive an official score report with scores in critical reading, mathematics and writing skills and can see how their scores compare to those of other students across the country. Students can see which answers they got right or wrong and they will also receive a personalized statement of specific academic skills that need attention, along with suggested steps to improve those skills.

Students who take the test will receive free access to My College QuickStart, an online college and career planning tool that contains an online PSAT/NMSQT Score Report; a customized My SAT Study Plan; personalized lists of colleges, majors and careers; and access to MyRoad.

2. Who should take the PSAT/NMSQT?

Typically, students take the PSAT/NMSQT in the 11th grade of high school. We also recommend 10th grade students to take the test to get a head start on improving academic skills needed for success in college and beyond. Last year, more than half of all test-takers nationwide were in 10th grade or younger.

3. How do students prepare for this test?

Classroom learning is the basis for test questions, so the best way students can prepare is by taking rigorous courses and becoming familiar with the test and its format. Students should review the *PSAT/NMSQT Official Student Guide*, which is full of useful information,

including a full-length practice test. The guide and the practice test will help students understand all the directions and be familiar with the types of questions that will be asked.

4. If students don't do well on this test, will it hurt their chances of getting into college?

Absolutely not. If anything, the PSAT/NMSQT will improve their chances, since it provides personalized information on the types of skills that the student needs to improve to prepare for the SAT and college. PSAT/NMSQT scores are not sent to colleges.

5. How many times may a student take this test?

Only once a year, but there is no limit to how many years a student may participate. It is important that 11th-grade students take the test to enter National Merit Scholarship Corporation competitions, as well as to prepare for the SAT.

6. What is Student Search Service®, and should students check “Yes”?

When students take the PSAT/NMSQT, they are asked if they would like to participate in the College Board's Student Search Service, a free service that provides names of students to certified educational organizations. If students choose to participate, they allow colleges, universities, scholarship programs and educational opportunity organizations to send information about the educational and financial aid opportunities they offer. Student information is strictly monitored and secure, and individual PSAT/NMSQT test scores are never shared with any outside entity.

7. When may we expect to see the results from the PSAT/NMSQT?

Tandem will receive score reports in December and will notify students regarding when, where and how to get their individual reports. We also receive an extra copy for the student's file in the College Counseling office for advising purposes.

Counselor's "2 Cents" Tip:

Now's the time to be talking to teachers about letters of recommendation! But don't just ask for one and walk away – invest some energy into putting together some important information that will help the teacher write a better letter. A short note describing the student's experience with the teacher and the class can be very helpful – especially if there is reference to a particular assignment or project (you may even provide a copy of some of the graded work from the class). **It's CRITICAL that students inform teachers of their earliest deadline date and follow up with them to be sure that their letters have been e-mailed to Catherine a week prior to that date.**