

# Canton High School

## Counselor's Corner Newsletter

February 2009

About a week ago I had the good fortune to attend The College Board's New England Regional Forum. One of the workshop sessions I attended was about counselors and administrators working together to promote academic achievement in high schools. It was an incredibly thought-provoking session, as it tied together two themes that have been bouncing around my head recently – communication and school improvement.

In my view, one of the primary functions of a school is to assess and respond to student needs. On an individual level, teachers, counselors, and administrators respond to student needs on a daily basis. On a broader level, assessing and responding to the collective needs of a student body is far more complex and requires far more intentionality. Successful school communities have multiple structures in place to assess student needs and are prepared to adapt to meet those needs when necessary. At Canton High School, we are continually striving to improve our methods for identifying student needs; finding new ways to collaborate and share information about successful practices.

Pivotal to this process, is the presence of open channels of communication within the school and with the families and outside service providers working with our students. To that end, I wish to share a summary of just some of the many roles your child's guidance counselor plays:

### **Academic Counseling**

Counselors work with students to identify their abilities, interests, and achievements. Counselors work with students to understand their learning and to develop effective study habits and time-management skills. Through attention to course selections, grades, and other activities, counselors help students to prepare for their academic futures.

### **Personal/Social Counseling**

Counselors help the students of Canton High School through acute or crisis situations. Counselors work with students to assess the issues, consult with parents, staff and other providers, and make referrals or bring in other resources when appropriate.

### **Post-Secondary Counseling**

Counselors assist students in developing their educational and/or career plans. Counselors provide information and expertise to aid students in decision-making based on interests, skills, and values.

### **Consultant**

Counselors work closely with parents, teachers, administrators, adjustment counselors, psychologists, school nurses, and school resource officers to provide information and to gain insight into student development.

### **Facilitator**

Counselors serve to facilitate difficult conversations between students and parents, students and teachers, and parents and teachers. Counselors can serve as a sounding board and liaison to work toward having cooperative and productive interactions.

Your child's counselor can best respond to your daughter's or son's needs when working in cooperation with the family. Please do not hesitate to contact your child's counselor should you have any questions or concerns about your child.

Best wishes now and always,

Dan Rubin  
Director of Guidance

## Upcoming Events

As juniors start the college search process, please plan to attend our evening program for parents of juniors.

Thursday, March 19th – 7:00 pm CHS Room 303 – the counselors will discuss the college search and application process.

Term 3 Progress Reports will be distributed Friday, March 6th

## Course Selection Process

As students contemplate course selections for next year, it is a good time for them to evaluate their progress and think about the future. Colleges often publish what academic courses they prefer to see on a student's high school transcript. The suggested or required subjects for an individual college will vary depending on the level of selectivity and various specialized programs to which a student may apply. Minimum requirements for four year colleges include the completion of sixteen academic units (one unit=a full year course) and most college admissions officers also like to see that students have taken advantage of the breadth and depth of courses offered at their high school. The great majority of CHS students take a course load of all five academic majors for all four years of high school. A student with particular interest in an elective area, whether performing arts, fine arts, or technology/engineering will understandably take more courses in those areas and progress to the advanced courses in their field of interest.

### Consider course levels

Students should think carefully about their course levels for next year. If they are performing reasonably well in their current levels, managing the workload appropriately and feel sufficiently challenged, it is logical that they stay in the same level for next year. When students seek greater challenge and are earning excellent grades, they may talk with their teachers about the possibility of moving to a higher level. If, on the other hand, they are struggling with the pace of a particular course, or keeping up only with the help of a tutor, it may make sense to consider a more deliberately paced class. In this situation, it is important to consult with the appropriate teachers. In addition to the discussion your child may have with his/her teachers, you should feel free to call your child's

teachers with any questions you have about courses for next year.

On course selection day in mid-to-late-March each student will receive a course selection form in their first period class. Class time will be dedicated to students meeting with their teachers to discuss course and level recommendations for next year. At the end of the day, each student will turn in their course selection sheet. Once selections are entered into the computer, a verification sheet will be mailed home along with instructions for modifying any course or level requests. If you disagree with a teacher's recommendation, you will have the opportunity to fill out an override form, which is available in guidance.

### Ideas for further exploration

This is a good time for students to consider doing an internship or course through TEC or other programs. This allows them to explore possible career paths and/or college majors. Students may take the opportunity to shadow a person in an area of career interest.

Looking for something to do this summer? It is time to be thinking about summer plans - for students to consider whether they plan to work, complete an internship, take a course, get involved in community service or some other form of volunteer work. All of these activities can be helpful for students as they begin to be more conscious of their future aspirations. For juniors, this summer may include the additional component of visiting colleges. The Internet is a terrific place to search for summer programs and there are files in the Guidance office for students to peruse.

## SENIORS

As you know, colleges to which students have applied request mid-year grades. Students should be reminded to maintain high personal and academic standards second semester as college acceptances are contingent upon the successful completion of course work for the entire year. Admissions officers have the right to and sometimes do rescind offers of admission because of poor academic performance second semester grades.

As your child hears from his or her colleges, you should be aware that students have until May 1, the Candidate's Reply Date, to inform the colleges of their decisions. Using the May 1 reply date allows students time to consider the decisions and financial aid offers from all colleges to which they have been accepted and

then make an informed decision about which to attend. Colleges will sometimes urge students to send in their deposit within 30 days of receiving the acceptance letter, often to guarantee space in a dormitory. If this occurs, the deposit should be fully refundable until May 1. Students should call the admissions office to clarify the policy and follow up with a written request.

### **It's not too late....**

Students who are still interested in applying to schools or colleges, but who have not filed any applications, or those who would like to apply to more colleges, should see their counselor as soon as possible. There are still many colleges with application deadlines of March 1 and later.

### **Some may change their minds...**

For some students, attending college immediately after high school may not be the best option, but they feel pressure to do so because most of their peers are going on to college next year. We all need to be open to other possibilities and give our children permission to do what is best for them. Such options require thought, research, discussion and planning. There are many options they will find intriguing and valuable to their growth before going on to college.

### **Be sure to let your counselor know....**

Students should inform their counselors of the action taken at each college as they hear. Although some colleges do inform the Guidance Department, many do not.

### **Be sure to let your teachers know....**

Students should also be sure to let the teachers who wrote letters of recommendation for them know how appreciative they are and keep them informed of the college decisions as well.

### **Please recycle....**

If you have college guide books this year that you will no longer need, please RECYCLE them in the Guidance Department. We are particularly eager to have extra copies of the subjective guides such as The Fiske Guide to Colleges and The Best Colleges by the Princeton Review, or any others you have found helpful. Counselors and students greatly appreciate your contributions!

### **Financial aid reminder:**

Town of Canton Scholarship information will be available online in March. If your financial aid forms (FAFSA, Profile and/or institutional forms) have not already been filed, they should be filed as soon as possible. Parents needing assistance in completing these forms may contact the Teri Loan Center,

[www.tericollegeplanning.org](http://www.tericollegeplanning.org), at the Boston Public Library. The financial aid officers at the colleges your child is interested in can be extremely helpful.

Remember to review carefully the requirements in each college's financial aid information materials, especially the deadlines; there is no way for students to get financial aid unless their parents apply! You may also consult Dan Rubin, the Director of Guidance, with questions on financial aid.

The Internet is an invaluable resource in the financial aid process. Some helpful web sites for processing financial aid forms:

**MEFA:** [www.mefacounselor.org](http://www.mefacounselor.org)

**FAFSA:** [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)

**PROFILE ONLINE:** [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

**FASTWEB:** [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)

**Smart Money Interactive:**

[www.smartmoney.com/college/finaid](http://www.smartmoney.com/college/finaid)

**Sallie Mae:** [www.salliemae.com](http://www.salliemae.com)

**Fed programs:**

[www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/index.html)

**FinAid:** [www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org)

### **Beware...**

You may have been approached by organizations who will guarantee you scholarship money for a fee. Check carefully into such plans and make sure they do not include the standard essentials (Stafford Loan, Pell Grant, etc.) as part of their package. If you research a particular service, we would appreciate your feedback so we can refer or warn other parents in the future.

Finally, students should be sure to check the Guidance Department web page and our Naviance website. There are a number of links to resources as well as further information on scholarships. Our suggestion is for students to apply for any aid for which they are eligible.

## **JUNIORS and SOPHOMORES**

### **Seminar Updates**

The Sophomore and Junior seminars are well underway. Our juniors are just beginning an introduction to the post-secondary search and planning process. Currently students are developing a common vocabulary of the many terms they will find as they navigate the search process. Students are registering for Naviance accounts, and are learning when and how to register for the SAT.

Sophomores are beginning to do some identity exploration through the Do What You Are interest inventory. For the third term, the primary focus will be on identity development

and community building, with an emphasis on how students can help to shape their high school experience.

## **JUNIORS and SENIORS**

### **Advanced Placement Exams**

AP exams are held from May 5th through May 16th. After February vacation. Students will be hearing about registration for AP exams. The registration period is will be announced soon and will be during the month of March. The fee is \$86 per test. A check, made out to “Town of Canton” for the entire amount (total for all tests to be taken) is required at registration. There will be no registration allowed after March 27<sup>th</sup>, as exams need to be ordered from The College Board.

## **JUNIORS**

### **SATs**

Please note: Deadlines for the May and June SAT are approaching on March 31<sup>st</sup> and May 5<sup>th</sup> respectively. Students should register online as soon as possible. Canton High School is a test site for the May test date only and is filling up very quickly.