

## Preparing for College Tips for 10<sup>th</sup> Graders and their Families

### Keep Working Hard in School:

We are reminding you of this because parents get tired of doing it. They are right. Your grades matter more and more each year, so your goal is to work to **your** potential.

In 10<sup>th</sup> grade, students begin to take specific steps toward the college application process.

- **October:** students take the PSAT test as practice for the one they will take in October of their Junior Year.
- **February:** the director of college counseling and the principal discuss keeping focus on schoolwork and summer activities during an Advisory/Common Day. Students have an opportunity to ask questions.
- **April:** Students and Parents are invited to attend the annual Four School College Fair (Burroughs, MICDS, Clayton and Ladue). This gives families an opportunity to browse and ask questions of admission officers from more than 135 colleges.
- **May:** Students and their parents attend the Burroughs College Counseling Seminar where college admissions representatives present information on a range of topics (essay writing, athletics in college, financial aid and scholarships, etc.). *If not offered, there is a similar program in August.*
- **June:** students who take Chemistry Accelerated take the SAT Chemistry Subject Test.
- **Throughout the sophomore year:** students are encouraged to visit colleges when they travel with their families or visit friends and family members at other colleges.
- **Throughout the sophomore year:** parents should feel free to call any college counselor with any questions that arise.
- **Summer:** You don't need to do an expensive college program to make the most of your summer time. Community service, a job, shadowing a professional – all things that show you are taking responsibility are fair game. You're likely to have more options if you get started on your summer plans in the winter/early spring. Attend the Summer Opportunities Fair.
- **Summer:** Princeton Review typically offers free practice tests for the PSAT – which you will take in October of your Junior Year. This PSAT is not seen by colleges, but is the qualifying test for National Merit status. The College Counseling Office will send more information in the spring.

## **Other Frequent Questions:**

### **Where does all that college mail/email come from?**

When a student takes a first PSAT (10<sup>th</sup> grade) and checks the box “Student Search”, it means colleges have the opportunity to purchase names from the College Board. Colleges know nothing about you, except your PSAT score. Based on your scores, they will begin to “market” their college to you – via printed mailings and increasingly, emails. You can opt out of this by not participating in Student Search. There is no “right or wrong” about whether you do or don’t, just know where the mail/emails are coming from and understand that the colleges know nothing about you but this PSAT score. By the way, PSAT scores are not used in the admissions process.

### **What about interest in a Military Academy?**

Now could be a good time to explore those web sites to understand the process and what each of the academies will be looking for. The process still doesn’t begin until the junior year, but there is more preparation and work to do for those who are applying to a Service Academy.

### **What about Test Prep?**

It’s not a bad idea to take advantage of the free PSAT practice test that Princeton Review gives in the summer before the Junior Year, but you can also choose to see the 10<sup>th</sup> grade actual PSAT as “practice,” since that is why we give it. For the most part, it is way too early to begin a formal test prep program for SAT and ACT testing in the junior year.

The fall of the junior year is a fine time to do test prep for testing in the winter/spring of the junior year.

Burroughs also has a free on-line test prep service that we give juniors access to in the fall of their junior year.

Khan Academy is the exclusive, FREE test prep for the SAT. ACT Academy for the ACT. Both are free.

### **What about my Extracurricular Activities?**

Colleges like to see students who have explored a little early on (9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades) and by 11<sup>th</sup> begin to be involved with passion, depth and commitment in a small number of activities. Do what you love! When you do, it stands out as you write about it in your college applications when you’re a senior.

Keep up with your activities as you go – Burroughs puts your school-related activities on the transcript, so make sure you keep those up to date (they are

updated in Advisory each May). Don't forget about the things you do outside of Burroughs. Keep a running tab of those, too. Doing this will make starting your application so much easier in the summer before the senior year. Trust us.

## **The Top Five Myths of College Admission**

(with excerpts from the "Fiske Countdown to College")

- 5. Students with straight A's and high SAT scores can get in anywhere.** If only this were true. The sobering truth is that you are entering applicant pools of students from all over the world. Colleges look for students who are well prepared, to be sure, but they are also balancing a whole host of "institutional priorities" that none of us is aware of from year to year – neither are they, by the way.
- 4. Getting in is all about strategy.** Doing your best work and doing what you love outside of the classroom setting is your best preparation. Most college credentials can't be manufactured, and admissions officers can see through the attempts of students (and parents) to jazz up things that aren't there.
- 3. Getting in is all about pulling strings.** Relationships are great and they certainly never hurt a student's chances for admission, but neither are they a guarantee of admission. Your accomplishments, talents and merit are going to be the backbone of how a college judges your application. The better your grades, the better your chances. And, do what you love; it makes you pop off the page!
- 2. College admission is a crapshoot.** It often seems that way because we (students, parents, teachers, college counselors) are not privy to the "big picture" of what a college sees. The goal of every college is to assemble a diverse and interesting class, and everyone who is admitted fills a role. The odds of admission at a particular college can change from year to year because both the pool of applicants and the college's needs change from year to year.
- 1. The college process is fair.** Life isn't fair, either. Just because you are good enough does not mean that you'll get in. The good news? If you apply to a sensible list of colleges, your college search will be a success, even if you can't control what happens at any particular college. You ARE going to college! All of the Burroughs community – and your family – is working with you to make sure you have great choices and end up in a place where you will grow and thrive.