

December 12, 2019

Dear 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Families:

I hope everyone had a festive Thanksgiving!

### **Final Exams & Transcripts**

Believe it or not, finals are just around the corner – your senior’s last set of finals at Burroughs! This year, end-of-term English papers will be due on Friday, December 13. Students will have a regular class schedule that day, but no new material will be introduced. Exams for other core courses will take place Monday, December 16 through Thursday, December 19. Like last year, most students will have only one final per day, and exams will not begin until 10 am. Our hope is that this format will make finals a little less stressful and will enhance student performance. Please note that *high school* students will not attend assembly during the week of exams. In case of inclement weather or illness, we have set aside Friday, December 20 for any necessary make-up exams. Students should begin preparing for finals now if they haven’t already started. Seniors should also be reminded that transcripts for *all* students – whether or not they have been accepted to a college – are sent in early January to *all* schools to which they’ve applied.

### **Protecting Students’ Integrity**

At this time of year, we sometimes see an uptick in the number of academic integrity violations. As part of the school’s ongoing efforts to prevent such transgressions, I encourage all parents and guardians to speak with their students about the importance of protecting their integrity. Studies have shown that when students are reminded that cheating is not merely wrong but also unfair to their peers, they are less likely to break the rules.

In addition, helping children understand *why* they are being asked to complete assignments and take exams can lessen the likelihood that they will transgress. For example, finals and end-of-term papers are not designed merely to gauge what a student has learned; the process of completing a summative evaluation is a learning experience in and of itself, as it provides an opportunity for students to determine for themselves what is essential (and what is not) and to synthesize all that they have learned over the course of the term. Quite honestly, this skill – of sifting through a mountain of information to determine the key takeaways – is becoming only ever more valuable in our world in which a seemingly infinite amount of information is accessible at our fingertips. Moreover, recent studies have shown that the simple act of taking a test helps us better to retain knowledge over the long term.

In advisory, we reminded students of the importance of academic integrity. I advised them to plan ahead so they could avoid ending up in a situation in which they were tempted to consider cheating. It’s also important for them to look out for one another – to help each other make wise choices. Finally, I urged them to seek out an adult with whom they feel comfortable if they find themselves in a bind. That adult can help them find a solution that doesn’t jeopardize their integrity, and – as I reminded them – they should never forget that late penalties are always preferable to making poor decisions that result in disciplinary action.

### **Senior Parent Meeting**

There will be an important meeting for parents and guardians of seniors at 7 pm on Monday, January 27, in Haertter Hall. I will share information about graduation, second-semester expectations, and the Senior May Project, and Nanette Tarbouni, director of College Counseling, will speak about some college-related matters. You can order graduation invitations and announcements from Jostens by visiting [thegraduationcenter.com](http://thegraduationcenter.com) and entering our state, city (St. Louis), and school name. Orders are due by Thursday, January 16; they can be

purchased after that date (through January 31) but prices increase and orders will arrive later. Purchasing these items is of course optional.

### **May Projects**

All seniors must complete a May Project, which is a *student*-planned community service project that in some instances may also include an internship component. I will provide details at the January meeting. Although students' actual projects do not begin until early May, seniors will begin planning when they return from winter break. Seniors will be assigned a faculty member as their May Project advisor, who will guide them through the design of their project and keep tabs on their progress.

The first deadline, to turn in their project proposal sheet, is Wednesday, February 5. Guidelines for the May Project will be mailed home with fall grades and will be posted on the Principal web page for the Class of 2020 over winter break. Remember, the May Project is a graduation requirement, and all students will be busy throughout the month of May; with this in mind, please do not schedule any travel or commit your child to other non-Burroughs activities on weekdays in May. Students will not be excused from May Project responsibilities for non-Burroughs obligations.

### **Decisions, Decisions...**

College decisions have already started to trickle in, and the pace will accelerate as we approach mid-December. Seniors are obviously anxious, so remind your child to be sensitive to the feelings of others. And it should go without saying but, of course, be considerate of what you say to other families as well. One student's "likely" school is bound to be another's "dream" school, and while we might speculate as to the reasons for particular outcomes, we honestly will never know, and such speculation, no matter our intentions, often ends up being hurtful. Finally, consider establishing college-discussion-free times at home (e.g., dinner), as we've found that doing so goes a long way toward relieving some of your children's anxiety. Remember, seniors are either talking about or being reminded about college all day long. Any break from the hubbub would no doubt be greatly appreciated.

Happy Holidays!

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