

December 12, 2019

Dear 11<sup>th</sup> Grade Families,

I hope everyone had a festive Thanksgiving!

### **Final Exams**

Believe it or not, finals are just around the corner. 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.

### **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 retain knowledge over the long term.

I spoke to the juniors at their last class meeting about 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.

### **College Program for Juniors in January**

This is a reminder that on Thursday, January 9, 2020 – the first Thursday after winter break – there will be a special college program *just* for students (juniors and seniors) at 7 pm in Haertter Hall. On that night, we will also have a JBS Alumni College Fair from 6 to 7 pm in the Haertter Hall lobby. I hope your students will mark their calendars!

As the juniors prepare to begin the college process, I'd like to recommend a TED talk on "The Power of Vulnerability" at [https://www.ted.com/talks/brene\\_brown\\_the\\_power\\_of\\_vulnerability](https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_the_power_of_vulnerability). While the process of figuring out where to apply can be exciting for students and parents/guardians alike, it can also be stressful and anxiety-inducing. I hope you find this talk both inspiring and helpful.

**Planning Ahead**

I understand that many juniors begin planning their summer around this time of year, so I want to share some important dates with you now. Senior Drey Land for the class of 2021 is tentatively scheduled to take place from Saturday, August 15 through Monday, August 17. While every year some seniors are unable to join us for this weekend, I hope that this advance notice will enable as many students as possible to attend.

Happy Holidays!

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