

January 16, 2020

Dear 9th Grade Families,

Happy New Year! I hope you and your families had a great winter holiday season and a restful break. We have almost completed two weeks back at school and it took no time to get back into the swing of the new semester!

Thank you for your flexibility with the weather challenges during finals week. Students did a great job taking the new exam schedule in stride, and I hope that your children felt good about their first semester results.

Grades

Since this is the first time that your children have experienced high school grades, there may be questions and various reactions. Some students may be elated with their grades, while others may feel that they weren't quite what they had hoped for. Some may also wonder what impact their grades have as they build their academic records before applying to college.

Contrary to a popular myth among Burroughs students, grades do count in 9th grade. They are part of the student's official academic record. However, as a former director of admissions at Washington University, I can tell you that of all the high school years, 9th grade is the year that is given the most leeway. Admissions folks understand that this is the transitional year (especially the first semester) as students adjust to the new academic challenges and expectations of high school. It is not discounted, but is seen as a benchmark and starting point. If students have excellent grades — great! These students may have relied on academic aptitude, combined with excellent study habits and an ability to connect with teachers, that enabled them to excel. If students have a mix of As and Bs, or even a C, it's still just a starting point and an opportunity to learn and grow. In my former profession, I saw a lot of students who had straight As in their freshman year. While impressive, it wasn't necessarily noteworthy. If students had mixed grades in their first semester but later showed improvement year by year, it often indicated how they met new challenges, persevered, practiced new study habits, and developed an intellectual curiosity and genuine love of learning.

In today's environment of unpredictable competitive admissions, people tend to think that it is only the students with perfect records who have a shot at the most competitive schools. This is simply not true. There are many different factors that are considered in admissions and there are many different schools. We help our students unpack these factors and find colleges and universities that are strong fits for their future goals. Our goal at Burroughs is to help students become lifelong learners, contributors, creative innovators and problem-solvers who have a growth mindset and will thrive well after their college years.

Common Day with College Counseling

This week the 9th graders met with me and Nanette Tarbouni, our director of College Counseling. Nanette has a wealth of experience both as a former admissions director at WashU

and as a college counselor. She and I gave the 9th graders a general overview of the admissions process and then answered their questions. We want the 9th graders to begin to think not only about their academics but also about activities that are interesting and important to them so that we can help them explore them more deeply. We'll continue working with students on various aspects of college admissions at each grade level with more intensive focus beginning in their junior year.

Summer Opportunities Fair

Every year, Burroughs, MICDS and Whitfield host the Summer Opportunities Fair, at rotating locations. This year's fair will be held at MICDS on Saturday, January 25 from 10 am to 3 pm. Everyone is welcome. There will be representatives from 160 local, national and international camps and organizations. It's a great way to explore academic enrichment and volunteer opportunities for all grade levels. I encourage you and your children to attend and explore these opportunities — and spark areas of interest.

Important Dates

Here are some other important dates to keep in mind:

- **Monday, January 20 — MLK Day / Day of Service** School will be closed, but we hope that students will participate in service projects with peers, faculty and staff. Please see this flyer for more information and encourage your children to participate. It's a great way for them to explore community service.
- **Friday, January 24 and Saturday, January 25 — Dance Show** Performances begin at 7:30 pm in Haertter Hall.
- **Friday, February 7 — Faculty Professional Day** School is closed.
- **Monday, February 18 — Presidents' Day** School is closed.
- **Wednesday, March 4 — Faculty Report Writing/Grade level programs** You will get a brief update on how your child is doing halfway through the second semester. Faculty have been given a day to write these comments. Students are not excused from school and will be participating in a half day grade level program. The 9th grade will visit the Holocaust Museum. We will begin loading buses at 8:10 am from the Clayton Road lot and will conclude with a picnic lunch on campus around 12:30 pm. Please have your child at the Clayton Road lot at 8 am.

Faculty and staff have told me that the 2nd semester flies by quickly. I'm looking forward to all the activities and programs and will keep you up-to-date.

All the best,

[Julie Shimabukuro](#)

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