

October 24, 2019

Dear 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Families,

I hope you all are enjoying the fall weather! It was great to see many of you at our Parent/Guardian Visiting Day and I hope you enjoyed seeing your child in action in the classroom!

Along with the change of seasons comes many changes at school. Fall sports are beginning to wrap up and winter sports will soon begin their practices. We have reached our halfway mark for the first semester and Preliminary Comments for classes will be sent home. Parent/guardian conferences with advisors have begun.

### **Preliminary Comments**

Our teachers have carefully prepared their comments for each of our students. I am impressed by our teachers' comments to help students understand their progress in each class. I encourage you to review the preliminary comments with your children and to use the comments as an opportunity to discuss their school experiences — celebrating positive accomplishments and behaviors, and talking about any challenging ones. Your child's advisor is also looking forward to discussing the comments with you and also with your child. They will contact you to set up a convenient time to meet. Please anticipate a phone call or e-mail to arrange a time to visit campus to meet with the advisor.

While high school is important for teaching content, it is also about teaching students how to learn. Ninth grade is a transitional time for many students — they still need coaching about how to budget their time, how to take notes and how to prioritize their many activities. Here are some suggestions for discussions with your child:

- **Communication and opportunities to meet with teachers**

In many of the preliminary comments (as well as in e-slips), teachers suggest that students come to see them to go over homework, tests or challenging material. It is important for students to follow through with these invitations. As students become more independent, they will hopefully begin to take more initiative to see teachers on their own, especially when they don't understand material. It would be great for you to encourage this behavior!

- **Organization**

Staying organized is key to our students' success, especially as their schedules become busy with sports, activities and family events. Here are some ideas for them to think about:

- **Budgeting and prioritizing their time**

Over a weekend, have your child sit down to look at the coming days ahead and help them plan appropriately for their many commitments. This type of planning can help them throughout the year.

- **Using their school planners**

Every Burroughs student receives a school planner that is broken down by week and then day. The bell schedule (X Day, late day, Common Day, etc.) is marked for each day, and there is room for students to list their classes and homework notes and assignments for each class. This will help them remember their homework assignments, quizzes, deadlines and exams.

- **Free Periods**

Students have multiple free periods throughout the week. While we want students to have some down time during the day to socialize and relax with their friends, they can also use some of these free periods to study, meet with teachers, review class notes,

and get a start on homework. There are designated study halls that are open every period offering quiet rooms to study. Oftentimes, peer study groups can be found in the library, and there are special peer help sessions for math that are available every period.

- **Taking notes**

Many of my advisees mentioned in our preliminary meetings that they weren't sure of the best way to take notes. I have included some methods in the resource section of the 2023 Principal Page. I especially like [Cornell notes](#) and [Sketchnoting](#) techniques. Our Academic Support Department also has some great resources for students on effective note-taking and would be happy to provide them.

- **Homework**

If homework is one of the issues mentioned in your child's preliminary reports, talk with them about how they can organize their study time. Students should try to set up a regular routine each night. In my joint advisory with Dr. Deken, who teaches neuroscience, he suggested that students start with the most challenging assignment and spend 30 minutes on it; take a five- to ten-minute break; and then start with another assignment. Dr. Deken's recommendation is that the hardest work should be done when the brain is the most energized to do work and students can re-energize their brain with periodic breaks between intense study times. It is also a good practice for them to put away phones and electronic devices to minimize distractions during homework time.

- **Sleep**

Discuss bedtime and sleep. Recent studies have shown that adolescents need at least eight hours of sleep at night. Burning the candle into the early hours of the morning does not reap any rewards. Students should work more efficiently, not longer. There is a good [NPR story](#) entitled "The Perils of Sacrificing Sleep For Late-Night Studying." [Another story](#) suggests that a good night's sleep will also keep us healthier and gives some tips on how we can all sleep better. I hope you will share this information with your child and help them understand its importance.

### **9<sup>th</sup> Grade Class Event**

Davey Desloge and Jud Dieffenbach, the 9<sup>th</sup> grade class sponsors, have been working closely with the 9<sup>th</sup> grade class as they plan a very fun evening of trivia and games on **Friday, November 8, from 7 to 10 pm** in the field house. As I will discuss with the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students, I want to share some of our policies for this event.

- The event is only for 9<sup>th</sup> grade students at Burroughs. Guests from other schools may not be invited.
- All students must check in at the main entrance of the field house. Students must enter and exit from the Clayton Road parking lot. Plan on dropping off and picking up your child from the Clayton Road lot.
- If students leave the event, they may not re-enter.
- Students are not permitted to wander outside the general area of the field house. Students are prohibited from rooms, stairways or hallways in the facility other than those designated for the event.
- The Major School Rules and the Drug Policy (see the *Student/Parent Handbook*) are in effect at all school-sponsored events. Students are responsible for understanding these rules before attending the event. If a student is found to have been in violation of one of these rules, a parent will be called to pick up the student. Further disciplinary action will be taken at the appropriate time.

We appreciate all the parent/guardian volunteers who are helping with this event. We hope that you will encourage your children to arrive in a timely manner in order to enjoy what has been planned, and to show appreciation to those who have worked so hard on planning this fun evening for them.

### **Thanksgiving Break**

There will be no school the Wednesday before Thanksgiving to give students a longer break and to make it easier for families to leave town for the holiday. Please do not take your student out of school early on Tuesday, November 26. Doing so puts unnecessary pressure on students to catch up and on teachers who need to help them do so. As you can imagine, it's also very disruptive to classes when several students are absent. As I mentioned in my summer mailing, students who miss school that Tuesday will not be excused from assignments.

### **9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Parent/Guardian Meeting**

You will soon receive a letter describing the 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> grade parent/guardian meeting on **Wednesday, November 13 in Haertter Hall**. During this meeting, we will learn strategies from a panel of experts that will help enhance the communication between parent/guardian and child around alcohol and other drugs of abuse. If you have questions about the evening, please feel free to contact me or Jennifer Jones, director of Counseling & Wellness ([jjones@jburroughs.org](mailto:jjones@jburroughs.org) or 314-993-4045, ext. 323).

As I continue to get to know the 9<sup>th</sup> graders better, I will invite them to meet with me one-on-one during one of their free periods. Please ask them to keep an eye out for this e-mail from me and assure them that they are not in trouble! I hope these informal meetings will help them feel comfortable talking with me, and that they will feel free to let me know if I can help or support them in any way.

Enjoy the beautiful autumn season!

Sincerely,

[Julie Shimabukuro](#)

Principal, Grades 9 & 10  
314-993-4045 ext. 340