

Moon Area High School Junior Newsletter – January 2026

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[Schedule a meeting](#)

Welcome!

My name is **Julie Sitko**, and I'm the College & Career Counselor at Moon Area High School. My role is to support students and families with the college search, career exploration, and post-secondary planning. Each month, this newsletter will share important updates and resources to help juniors stay on track. Please don't hesitate to reach out with questions—I'm here to help!

Winter Timeline for Juniors

- Begin exploring colleges & careers in Naviance.
 - Try free ACT test prep at academy.act.org.
 - Register for the SAT/ACT this winter (February/March).
 - If testing, begin test prep early.
 - Join virtual or in-person programs hosted by colleges (see individual school websites).
 - Review your child's transcript in Skyward (Portfolio section). Contact your school counselor with any concerns.
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Post-Secondary Planning Meetings

This is a critical time to begin planning for life after high school. By the second semester of junior year, students should be working toward clarity around their post-secondary path—college, military, or workforce.

Individual Junior Meetings

- From December through April, I will meet individually with each junior to discuss post-secondary plans.
 - Families are encouraged to **schedule a one-on-one meeting** using the scheduling link.
 - If you do not schedule a meeting, your child will be pulled during the school day.
 - Parent/guardian participation is welcome via Teams or phone.
 - Please schedule early if you wish to attend, as students may be scheduled before a family meeting is booked.
 -  [Schedule a meeting](#) (schedule early to ensure availability)
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NACAC National College Fair – Pittsburgh

 David L. Lawrence Convention Center

 January 27-28, 2026

- **School-Day Visit for Juniors:** Wednesday, January 28
 - Students must obtain a permission slip from the Counseling Center
 - Students will leave after homeroom and return for a later lunch
 - Free for all juniors
 - Students with truancy issues or who are not in good academic standing may not attend
- **Evening Session for Families:**
 - ⌚ Tuesday, January 27 | 6:00–8:30 PM
 - Parents/guardians and students are encouraged to attend together.

 **Pre-registration required:** <https://www.nacacattend.org/26Pittsburgh>

Upcoming Virtual Program: College Counseling Series – Spring 2026

All programs are virtual evening events and will be recorded and posted to the Moon Area Counseling Center website.

Everything You Need to Know About the Digital SAT & ACT

 Wednesday, January 21 |  6:30 PM |  Virtual

 Register by 6 PM on Feb. 10

[Register here](#)

Presented by Mike Goldstein, founder of Goldstein Test Prep. Topics include:

- Updated data, scoring information, and strategies for the digital SAT and its adaptive testing format
- Adaptive testing and scoring
- Bluebook app and digital testing tools
- Updates to the ACT, including digital options, and the optional Science section
- Understanding today's test-optional landscape
- New format of the combined reading/writing sections with one paragraph per question
- Continued evolution of test optional admissions policies and how to determine where to send test scores
- Decisions by schools such as Yale, Dartmouth, the University of Texas, Purdue, and others to require test scores of all applicants and what it means for admissions rates, average scores, and diversity goals

Questions can be emailed in advance to mike.goldstein@goldsteintestprep.com

Post-Secondary Education Planning Night

 Wednesday, February 4, 2026 |  6:30 PM |  Virtual

Recommended for Grades 10–11

Join counselors from Moon and Pine-Richland, plus guest speaker **Jennifer Winge**, VP of Enrollment at Allegheny College, to learn the basics of the college search process. [Register here](#).

LECOM Visit in January

A representative from LECOM (Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine) will be visiting MAHS to share information about their programs in medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, and health sciences. Students interested in healthcare careers are encouraged to stop by, ask questions, and learn more about early acceptance opportunities. Students will also participate in a soap carving – to teach students about tooth anatomy, and basic carving skills used by dentists.

- Date: January 13
 - Time: 2nd period
 - Location: Room 112
 - All grade levels are welcome -sign up in Naviance under “What’s New”
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So You Want to Be a Music Major?

 January 15 |  7:00 PM |  MAHS Band Room

An Informational Seminar for Students in Grades 7–12

The Moon Area Music Department invites students in grades 7–12 who are interested in pursuing music in college to attend our annual “So You Want to Be a Music Major?” seminar. Join guest speakers from the School of Music at Duquesne University for an engaging and informative session covering:

Topics Include:

-  Degree & Career Options in Music
-  Preparing for College Auditions
-  Selecting a College or University

- 🎵 What to Focus on as a High School Musician

Whether you're just beginning to explore music as a career or already preparing for college auditions, this seminar is designed to guide you on your next steps.

Questions? Contact Mr. Barthen at nbarthen@moonarea.net

SAT/ACT Information

- Check test dates and registration at:
 - www.collegeboard.org (SAT)
 - www.act.org (ACT)
- Dates are posted in Class Teams page under Post-Secondary Planning > Files and the HS Counseling webpage.

Helpful Notes:

- Fee waivers available for students on free/reduced lunch—see Ms. Sitko or your counselor.
 - No preference between SAT or ACT.
 - Research test-optional policies: FairTest.org
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ACT/SAT Test Prep Options

- [Khan Academy](#) (FREE SAT prep)
 - [ACT Academy](#) (FREE ACT prep)
 - [Penn State Beaver](#) – In-person SAT classes
 - [3RPrep](#) – Virtual & in-person options
 - [Goldstein Test Prep](#) – SAT/ACT tutoring (in-person & virtual)
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Scholarships

Log in to Naviance → Colleges → Scholarships & Money → Scholarship Search for current listings. New scholarships are posted regularly!

Favorite Scholarship Sites:

- [Fastweb](#)
- [Going Merry](#)
- [Pittsburgh Foundation](#)

Notable Scholarships for Juniors:

- [Hamilton Scholars Award](#) – Leadership, mentoring, and a \$500 scholarship (app opens in December)
- [Horatio Alger Scholarship](#) – For students who have overcome adversity
- [QuestBridge College Prep](#) – For high-achieving, low-income students

College Affordability Resources:

- [My Smart Borrowing](#)
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College Visits – What to Ask

- Four-year graduation & retention rates
 - Support for undecided students
 - Middle 50% GPA & test scores of admitted students
 - Academic rigor, internships, and career center opportunities
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NCAA Student-Athletes

If considering Division I or II sports:

- Register at eligibilitycenter.org
- Submit official transcripts via Naviance

- Test scores must be sent directly from SAT/ACT.
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Managing College Emails

- Create a **separate email account** for college communication
 - Use folders to organize by school
 - Check weekly and delete what you don't need
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Favorite College Search Resources

[Georgia Tech Admission Blog](#)

Great advice for students and families, with insights into the college admission process. Bonus: It's funny and easy to read.

[College Essay Guy](#)

Tons of free advice on college essays and applications. There are paid options, but many helpful tools are available at no cost.

Summer Programs – Apply Early!

Looking for enrichment opportunities next summer? These **prestigious programs** are ideal for current sophomores and juniors. Click on each program below to learn more and apply directly through their websites.

♦ **Pennsylvania-Based Enrichment Programs**

- [PA School for Excellence in Agricultural Studies](#) at Penn State
- [Iacocca Global Entrepreneurship Intensive](#) at Lehigh University
- [Governor's School for the Sciences](#) at Carnegie Mellon University
- [Governor's School for Global & International Studies](#) at University of Pittsburgh
- [Pennsylvania Free Enterprise Week \(PFEW\)](#) – Learn business by running a simulated company.
- [Carnegie Mellon Pre-College](#) – Art, design, drama, gaming, music, STEM.
- [Hillman Academy](#) – Cancer research internships
- [Magee-Womens Research Institute Internship](#) – Biomedical research (apps due Feb. 9).
- [Wildlife Leadership Academy](#) – Conservation field school.
- [Duke Summer Academy](#), [Eisenman Materials Camp](#), and more.

Check each program's website for details and deadlines.

Final Note

Junior year is a pivotal time for post-secondary planning. Please encourage your student to take advantage of these resources and opportunities. I look forward to working with your family this spring!