

Good Afternoon Students & Parents,

Welcome back to another great school year! We are very excited to see kids in the halls again. Each month, the Guidance & Counseling Dept. will send out a newsletter highlighting all of the events and programs being offered through our department. While some editions may be long, the information shared is typically reserved for very useful and resourceful information. We break out the newsletter by grade levels so you can skip ahead to what pertains to you most but always review the intro and end sections as they pertain to all.

We invite you to visit the Guidance & Counseling portion of the school's website [HERE](#). You will find just about everything from contact info to an abundance of college related materials and much more.

For an overview of all of our programs and services by grade level, have a look at our Guidance & Counseling Services Brochure [HERE](#).

Another helpful resource, especially for first time high school parents, is our [WHS Parent Guide](#). It covers everything from what to expect over the next 4 years to college planning and adolescent socialization. While a longer read, it is very much worthwhile. We highlighted the bits of advice we feel strongest about.

Lastly, [HERE](#) is a list of FAQs commonly asked by high school students and the respective responses.

We understand that school can be a source of occasional stress, especially when combined with other external and personal stressors. If students encounter stress or need to speak to someone about the impact their stress has on school, we encourage students to meet with their school counselor. As an additional layer of support and layer of coping strategies, we created our [Virtual Zen Space](#), a creative and engaging platform that helps promote mental health and well-being. Lots of great mindfulness and relaxation techniques!

IMPORTANT FOR STUDENTS TAKING ADVANCED PLACEMENT COURSES - AP EXAM FEES WILL BE COLLECTED IN OCTOBER. MORE INFO TO FOLLOW.

SENIORS:

Please see our 'summer to do list' newsletter (sent separately from this newsletter during early July). Counselors will be visiting English classes this week to outline the college application process. We will also be setting up individual, in-person Senior Conferences. Parents are welcome to join those individual conferences but it is not necessary if you cannot make it. As most of you know, many colleges have subscribed to a Test Optional policy with regard to SATs/ACTs. So, while there is less of a need (in most cases) to take these tests, we do encourage taking them if you believe it to be a strength of yours or if your colleges require them. Counselors will be hosting **Common Application Workshops** for students soon, dates TBA. This is a great service that all seniors should take advantage of. We have a very specific process for submitting college applications that will be outlined in our visits to ELA classes next

week, as well as during our Senior Conferences. Please adhere to our process; it is one that works well and avoids some of the common errors. Speaking of college applications, we are also hosting a **College Application Evening Workshop for Parents and Students on Tuesday, September 15th at 7:00pm in the WHS Library**. Lastly, [HERE](#) is our updated WHS School Profile.

Very important for parents of seniors...The financial aid process, specifically, applying for FAFSA, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid is available beginning October 1. We are hosting **Financial Aid Night** with Mr. Dan Robinson, Director of Financial Aid at Pace University on **September 29th at 7pm at WHS. More info to follow**. This is an extremely important info session for parents of seniors. FAFSA should be applied for regardless of your financial forecast - oftentimes, grants and scholarships are awarded through the FAFSA process. The closer you apply to the opening date, the greater chance of being eligible for aid. Please consider attending our evening presentation. [HERE](#) is the link to the FAFSA website.

Lastly, each fall we have a large variety of colleges visiting our Guidance & Counseling office to meet with students. The visits are posted on Naviance either through a daily reminder or as a summary listing under the "Colleges" tab (from the home page, select "colleges", then "college visits") . This list is added to almost daily so check often. This year, our college visits will be held in person, during the school day. In addition to being able to view our visit calendar on Naviance in real time, we will follow up each week with an email reminder of who is visiting (for that week). All visits will also be announced during daily announcements. Seniors are permitted to attend any of these visits if they have a free period. ***If they have class, they may ask a teacher for permission to attend. ONLY those Juniors who have free that period may attend; no Junior may ask a teacher for permission to miss class.*** Students are expected to attend the visits eager to listen to the college representatives and ask questions. While no special attire is needed, it is advised to remove any hats, hoods and refrain from cell phone use. The representatives that visit Westlake are often the area admissions reps that review student files so a strong impression can go a long way. In addition, all colleges are hosting a variety of other virtual events. A great place to learn about these general opportunities is on Naviance - Go to "Colleges" and then "College Events." We will also send some of the virtual event info as reminders.

JUNIORS:

The PSAT will be offered here at Westlake on Saturday, October 17th. The PSAT is a fully digital exam. [HERE](#) is some helpful information about the digital format. To prepare, consider downloading the Bluebook software [HERE](#) and visiting [Khan Academy](#) to practice. All juniors should take this practice version of the SAT. There is a cost for juniors. More info to follow. We will begin our discussion of the college search process and post-high school planning with Juniors in December.

SOPHOMORES:

Sophomores will focus on career exploration during the year, using Naviance and engaging in career research. More on this as the year unfolds. The PSAT will be offered here at Westlake on Saturday, October 17th. Sophomores ***in advanced classes*** are encouraged to take this practice version of the SAT. [HERE](#) is some helpful information about the digital format. To prepare, consider downloading the Bluebook software [HERE](#) and visiting [Khan Academy](#) to practice. There is a cost for Sophomores. More info to follow.

FRESHMEN:

We welcome our newest students to WHS. In the Fall, each student and parent will be invited to a Freshmen Workshop, a small group meeting (students and families) where we will discuss high school expectations, a little about what colleges look for and how to make the most of the next 4 years. Parents are strongly encouraged to attend as well. More info to come later in the Fall.

As always, the Counselors are here to assist you with whatever you need. We are available to our students on a drop in basis, by appointment or by email. And we are available to parents by phone, email or scheduled meetings during the school day. Below are the guidelines to accessing your Counselor...We wish you all a wonderful school year!

- * Our office is open and students are welcome to come down and drop by or to make appointments and see us.
- * Students can make appointments with their Counselor via email or by stopping in to schedule a time with our clerical staff.
- * We can also schedule phone conversations and correspond via email.
- * We will make every effort to respond to parents in a timely manner but please know that our priority during the school day is your children and their needs so it is possible we may not return your call or email until the following school day.

Please contact your Counselor if you are having any issues, questions or difficulty. We are here to help. We wish you lots of luck and enjoy your first few days. It's good to have you back!!

If you would like to email/call your Counselor, our contact info is below...

Guidance Phone # - (914) 769-8440

Mrs. Lauren Cody - Email: lcody@mtplcsd.org - Phone Prompt 4

Mr. Nicholas DiPaolo - Email: ndipaolo@mtplcsd.org - Phone Prompt 2

Mrs. Colette Magnan - Email: cmagnan@mtplcsd.org - Phone Prompt 5

Mr. Tim O'Dwyer - Email: todwyer@mtplcsd.org - Phone Prompt 3