

# PrepTalk™

Advice for Montgomery County Parents and Students on College Preparation • Fall 2002

## Give it Your All!

**G**ood athletes know their performance in a big game depends largely on the effort they put into practice. Getting ready for college or whatever you plan to do after you graduate from high school is no different. Work hard now and you'll be ready for all that's ahead.

This newsletter and our "PrepTalk" television show exist to help both students and parents, as you prepare for life beyond high school.

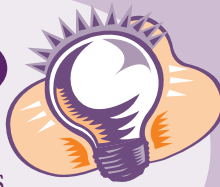
"PrepTalk" airs on the MCPS Instructional TV's Cable Channel 34 on Tuesdays at 7 p.m., and Wednesdays and Fridays at 8 p.m. It also airs on Montgomery College ITV's Cable Channel 10, on the second and fourth Mondays of the month at 7 p.m., and other times.

## Partnering for You

Dr. Jerry Weast, superintendent of Montgomery County Public Schools and Dr. Charlene Nunley, president of Montgomery College, discuss how today's preparation will lead to tomorrow's success for our students. See page 3.

## SuccessTalk

Students can reap the many benefits of forming a study group. See page 8 for details.



## MoneyTalk

Various Maryland State scholarships are available to eligible residents. See page 6.



## TestTalk

The College Board announces a new SAT® for spring 2005. See page 2 for details.



## The Inside Scoop...

Look for these segments throughout this newsletter to find helpful information for getting ready for college. From taking tests, planning academic schedules, and improving study skills, to paying for college and planning for key deadlines—you'll find it all here.

## TickTalk

A fall college planner for high school juniors and seniors. See page 7.



## StraightTalk

Current MC students, who attended MCPS high schools, share their thoughts. See pages 6 and 8.



## PrepTalk™

A service of the Montgomery College-Montgomery County Public Schools Partnership

## College Board Announces New SAT®

**Y**es, it's true the SAT® I will be changing—but not until spring of 2005. The Trustees of the College Board, which creates and administers SAT®s, recently voted to develop a new SAT® I. The first administration of the new test will take place in March of 2005. Until then, the current version will be used.

“The current SAT® I is the most rigorously and well-researched test in the world, and the new SAT® I will only improve the test's current strengths by placing the highest possible emphasis on the most important college success skills—reading and mathematics, and, now, writing,” said College Board President Gaston Caperton. According to Caperton,

the new SAT® I will remain a test of developed reasoning and thinking skills, as it has been for 76 years. The new test will be even more closely aligned with current high school curricula than before.

A writing test will be added, including multiple-choice questions and a student-written essay; Analogies will be replaced by more critical reading

**A writing test will be added, including multiple-choice questions and a student-written essay...**

passages from a variety of texts that range from science and history to humanities and literature (what is now called the Verbal Reasoning Test will be renamed the Critical Reading Test to emphasize the importance of reading); the math section of the test will be expanded to include topics from Algebra II, and quantitative comparisons will be eliminated.

“Research has shown that the addition of a writing test provides increased validity in predicting college success, but, more importantly, it sends a loud and clear message that strong writing is essential to success in college and beyond,” said Linda Clement, chair of the College Board Trustees and vice president of the University of Maryland at College Park.

The new SAT® I will be introduced following thorough research and field testing over the next three years.

Source: The College Board Web site, [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

### TickTalk

#### Mark Your SAT® Date



- Upcoming SAT® test dates:
  - January 25, 2003 (SAT® I, SAT® II, and ELPT)
  - April 5, 2003 (SAT® I only)
  - May 3, 2003 (SAT® I and SAT® II)
- SAT® registration deadlines:
  - December 23, 2002 (SAT® I, SAT® II, and ELPT)
  - February 28, 2003 (SAT® I only)
  - March 28, 2003 (SAT® I and SAT® II)

Applications are available at your high school career center or online at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).

Source: The College Board Web site, [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

### TestTalk

#### Why the SAT®?



You may have to take the test because it is an admission requirement of the college you are interested in attending. Many colleges require the SAT® I for admission because it is a standard way of measuring a student's ability to do college-level work. Because courses and grading standards vary widely from school to school, scores on standardized tests, like the SAT® I, help colleges compare your academic achievements with those of students from different schools.

Source: The College Board Web site, [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

## PrepTalk™

A newsletter for Montgomery County parents and high school students on preparing for college. Produced in partnership by Montgomery County Public Schools and Montgomery College. Please direct queries to:


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## Today's Preparation, Tomorrow's Success

*A Note from Superintendent Dr. Jerry D. Weast and  
Montgomery College President Dr. Charlene R. Nunley*

ontgomery County Public Schools and Montgomery College have something very important in common. In the midst of booming enrollment and tremendous diversity, both institutions have even greater expectations for improved academic performance. We want to ensure that students leaving high school are ready for college or a career.

### A Common Goal

Our two institutions are working closer together today than ever before. We have a joint goal of ensuring that students graduating from our high schools are prepared for post-secondary success, no matter what their plans. The MC-MCPS Partnership's primary purpose is to help improve the career and college readiness of students exiting high school.

*PrepTalk* supports our goal by giving you helpful tips and advice for college preparation and for life after high school.

### A Family Focus

Together, we are working on a variety of initiatives that are helping to improve student performance and career/college preparation, including early administration of the PSAT<sup>®</sup>, teacher training, and more. But we need your help. The involvement of families and students is a critical part of our collaboration.

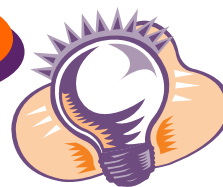
In addition to *PrepTalk*, schools now have a new tool for you to use. Planning software and Internet sites are available for you and your students. Students can obtain a password from the career/guidance offices at their schools.

### Start Early

Parents, and guardians, please work with your students early in their academic careers to make sure they are taking the right courses and otherwise preparing themselves for success after high school. Middle school students, who understandably may not yet be thinking ahead, should access available planning information, take challenging courses, develop good time management and study skills, and get involved in volunteer work and other activities.

The best way to ensure success tomorrow is to prepare well today.

## SuccessTalk



### Get the Guide

Each academic year, the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) produces its *Student Guide To Higher Education and Financial Aid in Maryland*. This 116-page guide offers a wealth of information about academic programs, colleges and universities, and grants, scholarships, and financial aid. The guide is available online at: [www.mhec.state.md.us/StuGuide/guide02.pdf](http://www.mhec.state.md.us/StuGuide/guide02.pdf) or contact MHEC at 1-800-974-0203 to request a copy.

Source: Maryland Higher Education Commission, [www.mhec.state.md.us](http://www.mhec.state.md.us)

## TestTalk




### What's TOEFL?

The TOEFL is the Test of English as a Foreign Language and is designed to determine the English proficiency of students whose native language is not English. These students may take the TOEFL in addition to the SAT<sup>®</sup> I (Scholastic Aptitude Test) or ACT (American College Test). Students should call 301-718-9893 (Bethesda) or 301-314-0319 (College Park) to schedule a convenient testing time at least six weeks in advance of the desired testing date. TOEFL is a computer-based test and the cost is \$110. Information bulletins are available in the Career Center, on the TOEFL Web site at [www.toefl.org](http://www.toefl.org), or by calling 1-800-GO TOEFL.

Source: Sherwood High School Guidance Department Web site

## MC Launches College Institute at Wootton High School

 all it senioritis. Call it senior slump. For many high school students, the senior year is a vast wasteland of skipped classes and easy courses. Many lose their focus and interest in high school by winter break, thanks to pending college applications or early acceptances in hand.

The U.S. Department of Education thinks it's a serious issue, and appointed the National Commission on the High School Senior Year to study the problem. In "The Lost Opportunity of the Senior Year: Finding a Better Way," the Commission prefaced the report by saying, "The nation faces a deeply troubled future unless we transform the lost opportunity of the senior year into an integral part of students' preparation for life, citizenship, and further education."

To attack the problem, Dr. Rebecca Newman, principal at Wootton High School, approached Montgomery

**"...if you bring the college to the high school, students transition to college better..."**

College President Charlene Nunley with a bold request: conduct college classes at Wootton for the school's highest performing seniors. Newman invited Gaithersburg High School Principal Stephen Bedford to join forces with her to push the proposal for the two schools, through a pilot effort.

Montgomery College officials took up the challenge, and with backing

### Recommended Program of Study for College

As students plan their high school classes, their focus should be on meeting graduation requirements, as well as college admission requirements. The following courses are highly recommended for college-bound students.

#### English

Four years required for a Maryland high school diploma. Focus on:

- Rules of grammar
- Communication and problem-solving skills
- Writing techniques
- Library research skills

#### Mathematics

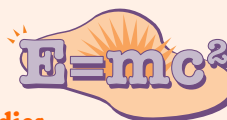
Four years required, including algebra and geometry. College-bound students should also take:

- Advanced algebra
- Trigonometry
- Calculus

#### Science

Three years required. Recommend three years of lab sciences:

- Biology
- Chemistry
- Physics



#### Social Studies

Three years required.

- American history
- World history
- National, state, local government

#### Foreign Language

Minimum three years recommended.

#### Additional Requirements

Minimum one year required in each of the following course areas:

- Arts and Music
- Technology Education
- Physical Education

Minimum one semester required in:

- Health Education

from the Montgomery County Council, the new College Institute at Wootton High School was born this fall.

The College Institute has 98 seniors from Wootton and Gaithersburg for the fall semester at Wootton, and hopes to expand to the Gaithersburg campus in the future.

"The literature seems to indicate that if you bring the college to the high school, students transition to college better," said Mary Kay Shartle-Galotto, Rockville Campus vice president and provost, who helped create the program.


"For some students, this is a really important transitional step, and we're excited to support it," she said. "This is a comprehensive approach, with coursework, tutoring, and advising, and is unique in this metro region."

The courses do not compete with current Advanced Placement courses; rather, they supplement and enhance them. And most importantly, students planning to enter other colleges after high school should not encounter problems with transferring their MC credits.

Wootton High School senior Erin Fitzpatrick, 17, signed up for Principles of Chemistry. She thinks it will give her a leg up on her college career. "We'll have a lot more freedom," she said. "When we don't have classes, we can go over to MC for the labs. It'll be more like college really is."

For more information about this program, contact Janet Johnson, MC College Institutes director, or Jane Storck, MCPS College Institutes coordinator at 301-517-8170. **PT**

## Choosing the Right College for You

 The most systematic way to end up with a good fit between you and the institution is to gather a great deal of information about colleges, then narrow your search based on personal characteristics and preferences. The process is time consuming and sometimes tedious, however, and many students try to take shortcuts that almost always fail. Below are some of these shortcuts and the dangers associated with using them.

### **Mistake #1: Limiting your search to institutions with which you are already familiar.**

Many students rely heavily on family and peers as sources for determining which colleges they should consider. Do your own research in guidebooks and on the Internet to become aware of new options. Remember, you will attend the college you choose, but your parents and friends won't. You need to be happy with the choice.

### **Mistake #2: Limiting your choice of institutions based on your standardized test scores.**

Many students compare their standardized test scores to the average Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT®) scores or American College Test (ACT) scores of students attending institutions and use this information to determine colleges they'll apply to. It's important to remember, however, that test scores are just one piece of information that colleges use to evaluate students. Every campus has students who scored much higher and much lower than the average against which you're measuring yourself.

### **Mistake #3: Limiting your search to colleges you think you can afford.**

Many financial aid options are available, including grants, scholarships, loans, and work-study arrangements. High school counselors, publications, and Internet resources can provide you with information about paying for college.

### **Mistake #4: Choosing a college because your friend or girlfriend/boyfriend is going there.**

Just because a campus is a strong match for your friends or loved ones does not mean that it is the best choice for you. Did they do their homework in exploring colleges? Be sure you do.

### **Mistake #5: Making your decision based on the rumor mill.**


The rumor mill can be a great source of inside information as long as you seek many different people's opinions so that you can evaluate the institution from several different perspectives. Don't make a major life decision based on one person's opinion.

### **Mistake #6: Making your decision based on false assumptions.**

It is important to read widely and try to get the most accurate information possible in order to make a sound decision.

Source: Parent Brochure, Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), [www.eric.ed.gov/resources/parent/collegepath.html](http://www.eric.ed.gov/resources/parent/collegepath.html)

## Q & A: Why Should You Visit Colleges?

 If flipping through brochures and dry college guides at the library does not give you a full enough picture of the colleges—which it shouldn't—another way to learn about them is to take a field trip.

The next time your family goes on a vacation, check if you will be passing by any of the colleges you might want to attend. If you are, why not stop by for a short visit? While you're there, take a campus tour, sit in on a class if you can, or take a walk around campus absorbing its ambiance.

You can learn a lot from observing: the size and environment of the campus, what

surrounds the campus, and how happy the students appear. Your goal is to get a feel for your options and have a sense of what's out there. After visiting a few campuses you'll find that there are definitely certain things you like and dislike. You may even discover something you never knew about yourself—like you are ten times happier if a college is near the beach!

By getting an early start on thinking about where you want to apply, you will have a tremendous advantage when the time to apply really comes.

Source: Kelly Tanabe, co-founder of SuperCollege.com and co-author of *Get Into Any College*

## State of Maryland Offers Scholarships to Eligible Residents

**M**aryland residency is required for scholarships from the state of Maryland. Ten percent of the funds can be used in reciprocating states and the nation's capital: Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont. For majors not offered in state, such as forestry, Maryland State Scholarships may be used at other state universities sponsoring that program of studies.

### Distinguished Scholar Program for Academic Achievement

Awards provide \$3,000 per year for Maryland high school students who are nominated by their high school. Juniors with a GPA of 3.7 or higher (based on freshman, sophomore, and junior years) are eligible through guidance department nomination. You must take the SAT®, ACT, or PSAT® no later than January of your junior year.

### Distinguished Scholar Program for Talent in the Arts

Awards provide \$3,000 per year for Maryland high school students nominated by their high schools

and demonstrating talent in art, music, dance, or theater. Nominations and auditions take place in the spring of your junior year.

### Guaranteed Access Grant

The Guaranteed Access Grant (GA Grant) provides assistance for students whose family income qualifies and have a 2.5 GPA. The GA Grant will pay all educational costs if you attend a state college or university. Applications are due March 1, and the maximum award is \$8,400.

### Educational Assistance Grant

The Educational Assistance Grant (EA Grant) is for students whose parents can help them pay for some of their college cost but not all. EA Grants are also based on family need—the difference between how much it costs to go to college and how much your family can afford to pay. Awards range from \$200–\$3,000 per year, and may be renewed for up to four years.

### Senatorial Scholarship

Awards and the amount of the awards are determined by the senator. They are between \$200–\$2000. Contact your senator's office for an application.

### Delegates Scholarship

Awards and the amount of the awards are determined by the delegate. A minimum of \$200 for full- or part-time study is awarded. Contact your delegate's office for an application.

### Tolbert Award

Awards of \$200–\$1,500 per year assist students attending private career schools (state approved). To be eligible, students must be nominated by their high school's career/guidance department.

### Distinguished Scholar Teacher Education

Awards provide an additional \$3,000 for Distinguished Scholar Award recipients who would like to become teachers. You must agree to teach full time in the state of Maryland.

### Maryland Science and Technology Scholarship

Awards assist students with a B average in core courses who enroll in computer science, engineering, and technology programs.

Source: Montgomery County Public Schools ([www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/publishingservices/PDF/GetReady.pdf](http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/publishingservices/PDF/GetReady.pdf))

## StraightTalk

How is college different from high school?



"We get more freedom—time to go outside and think. [We] make new friends from all over the world. [We] learn something useful for us in the future."

Katie

John F. Kennedy High School Graduate

"You choose your own classes, make your own decisions as to what major to pick, and nobody's really watching over you to tell you to get to class or not be late."

Rosa

Springbrook High School Graduate

# PrepTalk

## Start Preparing for College this Fall



college education can help prepare you for the challenges of the future—whatever those may be. As you develop new skills you will learn to think more for your yourself, come up with your own ideas and insights. You will meet new people and make new friends.

Remember these tips as you prepare for college:

### Ask a lot of questions

Talk to your teachers. Talk to other people who have been to college. Ask about their experiences.

### Don't worry about cost

Don't let the cost of a college education keep you from your goals. Check out the many sources of financial aid and scholarships. Consider beginning at a community college and transferring to a four-year school.

### Focus on your goals

Remember that a college education is about helping you learn many new things that will enable you to achieve your goals.

Keep these hints in mind as you make your college decision:

### Know yourself well

Know your strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, hopes and dreams.

### Research your options

What school has the programs you are interested in or services you might need? Will you attend a community college to start, then transfer to a four-year school? What size college do you want? Where will you feel comfortable? What is the admissions process like?

### Consult others

Consult people who can help you to evaluate the situation—parents,

counselors, teachers, relatives, financial aid experts, and friends.

### Make your choices

Choose where you will apply, and ultimately, where you will attend college. Every school choice has positive and negative factors. Your task is to discover what is right for you.

Source: Montgomery College Web page ([www.montgomerycollege.edu/Departments/studevgt/Connection.htm](http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/Departments/studevgt/Connection.htm)), prepared by Lois Robertson, counselor

## TickTalk



### FAFSA Arrives in November

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is available in your high school's career center usually by Thanksgiving.

Source: Springbrook High School Guidance Department and Career Center Web site

## Fall College Planner: A Checklist for High School Juniors and Seniors

### Juniors

- Take the PSAT/NMSQT®.
- Attend college programs sponsored by the guidance department and career center.
- Acquire part-time volunteer or job experiences related to career plans.
- Monitor student service learning hours.
- Meet with counselor about your progress.
- Meet with college admissions representatives who visit your school.

- Get information on programs and schools that interest you.
- Take career interest inventories.

### Seniors

- Visit schools, if appropriate.
- Review scholarship information and apply, if appropriate.
- Attend college and career programs at your school.
- Honor school and college deadlines for admissions, recommendations, transcripts, and financial aid.
- Register for the tests you need.

- Learn your school's transcript procedure.
- Seek letters of recommendation, if needed.
- Look for the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) to arrive at your school's career center in late November; if appropriate, have your parents complete and file the form after January 1, 2003.

Source: Montgomery College Web page ([www.montgomerycollege.edu/Departments/studevgt/Connection.htm](http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/Departments/studevgt/Connection.htm)), prepared by Lois Robertson, counselor

## The Benefits of Forming a Study Group

### Shared Knowledge

Students can learn from one another. To have individual students pass on their knowledge to each other in a study group requires less time and energy than for each of those students to learn all of the material alone.

### Solidified Knowledge

When you discuss concepts or teach them to others, you reinforce what you know and strengthen your critical thinking. Part of the benefit comes from simply repeating information aloud and rewriting it on paper, and part comes from how you think through information in your mind before you pass it on to someone else.

### Increased Motivation

When you study by yourself, you are accountable to yourself alone. In a study group, however, others will see your level of work and preparation, which will increase your motivation.

### Increased Teamwork Ability

The more you understand the dynamics of working with a group and the more experience you have at it, the more you will build your ability to work well with others. This is an invaluable skill for the workplace, and it will contribute to your personal marketability.

Source: The University of Illinois at Chicago Web site: [www.uic.edu/depts/counselctr/ace/studygroup.htm](http://www.uic.edu/depts/counselctr/ace/studygroup.htm)

## PrepTalk™



This publication provides information on what students should know to ensure their success beyond high school. We hope you'll find it useful and that you'll share your feedback.

Available in alternative format by contacting the MCPS Department of Communications, 301-279-3391 or TDD, 301-279-3323.

For more information on the Montgomery College–Montgomery County Public Schools Partnership or *PrepTalk*, call Charla Levine of MCPS at 301-279-3489 or Elena Saenz-Welch of MC at 301-279-5150 or e-mail [partnership@mc.cc.md.us](mailto:partnership@mc.cc.md.us).

Montgomery County Public Schools  
Montgomery College

Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Institutions 11/02

## StraightTalk

How is college different from high school?



“Freedom. It [college] is a lot of fun, but remember to study. It is really easy to fall behind. Get a job that is flexible, because you will need more time sometimes and less time other [times].”

Doug

Col. Zadok Magruder High School Graduate

## Miss an issue?

Visit the MCPS Web address: [www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/publishingservices/PDF/preptalk/](http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/publishingservices/PDF/preptalk/) for back issues of *PrepTalk*.

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