

PrepTalk™

Advice for Montgomery County Parents and Students on College Preparation • Fall 2003

Passing the Test

A record number of 8,954 Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) tenth grade students took the Preliminary SAT® (PSAT™) in fall 2002, more than a 50 percent increase since fall 1999.

The PSAT™ is offered to all tenth grade MCPS students—free of charge—as part of the MC-MCPS partnership's mission to prepare high school students for the rigors of a college education.

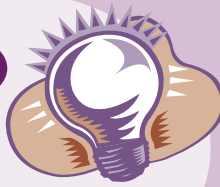
Testing is one of the four areas on which the partnership focuses, in addition to identification and monitoring, acceleration and support, and professional development.

Aiming High

Dr. Jerry Weast, superintendent of schools, and Dr. Charlene Nunley, president of Montgomery College, reinforce their mission to encourage *all* students to pursue a college-prep curriculum. See page three for a recent report providing current market returns for education and skills for post-secondary success.

SuccessTalk

Find some great tips for organizing your schedule—and space.
See page 2 for more.



MoneyTalk

Discover tips that simplify the process of applying for financial aid.
See page 5 for more.



TestTalk

Record numbers of MCPS students took the PSAT™ in 2002.
See left for details.



PrepTalk™

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

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

Find out how to make the most of your senior year of high school. *See page 8.*



StraightTalk

Current MC students who attended MCPS high schools share their thoughts.
See pages 3, 6, and 8.



Organize Your Schedule—and Space

It's up to you to set yourself up for success. Focus on getting your day, your materials, and your study time organized.

Use a daily organizer and planner.

Purchase a daily planner or organizer to record your schedule and your assignments. Or, design one for yourself, either on a computer or in a notebook or folder.

Organize your notebooks.

Locating your notes and homework is easy if you set up a system. Label your folders or sections of your notebooks. Clearly label your notebooks so that you can quickly spot the ones you need in your

locker. Use a bold marker to write the name of your textbook on the spine of each bookcover.

Arrange your locker and keep it clean.

Lockers are small. Consider purchasing a locker organizer. Clean out your

Find a spot in your house where you can complete all your work and study.

locker regularly. Every Friday, take home those items you don't need.

Choose a study time.

Look at your daily schedule and plan at least an hour a day of standard study time. Use it to complete homework, review notes, study for tests, or read. Building this time into your day is one of the best habits you can form.

Select your study space.

Find a spot in your house where you can complete all your work and study. Pick the spot that works for you. Ask your parents to help you select a quiet spot that you can use consistently.

Pick a "bookstop."

Select a location in your room or house where you can place all your materials at the end of your study time. A spot close to the door makes it easy to grab everything as you leave in the morning.

Source: Adventures in Education Web site, www.adventuresineducation.org

SuccessTalk

Secrets for Study Success



- Get help when needed—In most classes, learning builds on learning, so if you're confused now, you will fall behind more as time goes on.
- Don't procrastinate—This may be the toughest one. It's easy to put off big high school projects. But waiting until the last minute leads to panic and lower grades. As soon as work is assigned, make a detailed plan for finishing it.
- Break it up—Studying for hours on end without a break isn't wise. Stop and take a walk or have a healthy snack. Try to avoid junk food and caffeine, which may make you edgy and less able to concentrate.

Source: Springbrook High School Guidance Department Web site

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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TickTalk

Mark Your SAT® Date



- Upcoming SAT® test date:
January 24, 2004
(SAT® I and SAT® II)
- SAT® registration deadline:
December 22, 2003
(SAT® I and SAT® II)

Applications are available at your high school career center or online at www.collegeboard.com.

Source: The College Board Web site, www.collegeboard.com

All Students Should Prep for College

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

In its Winter 2003 issue, "A New Core Curriculum for All," The Education Trust, an independent nonprofit organization working for the academic achievement of students at all levels, kindergarten through college, underscores the importance of *all* students participating in a full college-prep curriculum in high school, whether they plan to attend a two- or four-year college, attend a vocational school, or enter the workforce.

According to Kati Haycock, director of The Education Trust, "It's a new century. It's time to set aside our Industrial Age curriculum and agree on a common core curriculum for the Information Age."

Here are some of the report's findings:

Current market returns for education

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics, young adults with a high school diploma earn up to \$2,000 more annually than their peers who leave high school early. But they earn \$6,000 less per year than those with an associate's degree, and nearly \$20,000 less per year than those with a bachelor's degree.

Skills for success in postsecondary education

Research conducted by the U.S. Department of Education shows unequivocally that the single biggest predictor of college success is the quality and intensity of a student's high school courses—greater than test scores, class rank, and GPA.

Not just credentials, skills count, too

The economic advantage of education to our children's future is obvious. The greatest returns convey to those with at least a bachelor's degree and the most developed skills. Nonetheless, having some college or postsecondary training offers young people a better shot at good jobs and decent wages than a high school diploma alone.

Partners in promoting postsecondary success

Montgomery County Public Schools and Montgomery College are working in partnership to help your children succeed. We must ensure that our students are being adequately challenged and are taking the right courses to be prepared for the challenges of postsecondary education.

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Financing the Future

Montgomery County Public Schools offers free financial aid workshops at county high schools.

December 2003 dates:

8	Walter Johnson H.S.	7 p.m.
9	Poolesville H.S.	7 p.m.
10	B-CC H.S.	7:30 p.m.
11	Rockville H.S.	7 p.m.

Source: www.mcps.k12.md.us/curriculum/careercenter/financialworkshops.htm

StraightTalk

How did high school prepare you for college?

"All my high school classes were really intense. This really prepared me for college."

Leo

Springbrook High School Graduate

Dollars Add Up

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, full-time workers with a bachelor's degree earned \$2.1 million between age 25 and 64, compared to \$1.2 million for workers whose education stopped at high school graduation. Analysts for the Bureau expect these differences to increase in the coming years.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000

How to Make Your Senior Year Count

Seniors have worked hard for three years, taking tests, completing projects, and preparing for college admission. When senior year rolls around, some students just want to get through college applications and relax before they head off to the college of their choice.

Taking it easy during senior year, sometimes known as “senioritis,” may seem like a nice break, but is likely to do more harm than good. According

A successful senior year can help launch you on the path to a successful future.

to recent reports, incomplete high school preparation can contribute to academic problems in college.

Senior year is your opportunity to strengthen your skills and broaden your experiences, in school and out, to prepare for all of the challenges ahead. A successful senior year can help launch you on the path to a successful future.

Maintain a Challenging Course Load

You should take the most rigorous courses available, and be sure to continue taking college-track subjects.

Stay Active and Involved

Your continued involvement in activities, sports, volunteer work, etc. will help you stay active and focused throughout your final year. A great internship or career-focused job

Spring College Planner: A Checklist for High School Juniors and Seniors

Juniors

- Register for ACT, SAT® I and/or SAT® II.
- Consider career goals as you select classes and complete your plans for the next year.
- Use computer search programs to identify appropriate colleges or trade/technical schools.
- Consider an internship for your senior year.
- Attend college fairs and school-sponsored programs.
- Attend career information programs.
- Spend time in career center exploring materials.
- Assemble a file of the information you collect.
- Become familiar with college and job applications.

- Make interview appointments for early fall, if appropriate.
- Develop your resume/personal references.
- Consider completing service learning hours.
- Make an appointment with your counselor to discuss your plans after high school.

Seniors

- Maintain good grades and good attendance.
- Notify your counselor of your application status.
- Request final transcript be sent to college you will attend in the fall.

Source: Montgomery College Web site, www.montgomerycollege.edu/Departments/studevgt/Connection.htm, Lois Robertson, counselor

opportunity can help motivate you to start considering your career options. Meaningful and significant experiences will help prepare you to make informed decisions about your education and career goals.

Try out College Early

If you're interested in pursuing a subject further, and have excelled at your high school classes so far, consider taking a class at a local college. This challenge can help you avoid sliding into an academic slump and stimulate your interest in the possibilities of college.

Source: The College Board Web site, www.collegeboard.com

SuccessTalk

Start College in High School



Get a jump on college credits by taking courses during your senior year in high school. Montgomery College offers an Early Placement Program, which allows high school seniors to supplement their class schedule with college-level credit course work—and experience the independence of college-level study.

Source: www.montgomerycollege.edu

MHEC Offers FAFSA Preparation Tips

For Maryland high school seniors and others who have begun the process of applying for federal financial aid for the 2004-2005 school year, the Maryland Higher Education Commission offers the following tips to make

Electronic filing is faster and easier. By filing electronically, students can avoid delays...

filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) easier.

- If using the paper FAFSA, applicants should print carefully and clearly using only blue or black ink or pencil.
- Have Social Security numbers ready for students. Have parents' Social Security numbers ready

also if filing on behalf of dependent students.

- To ensure that the most current financial information is used in calculating aid eligibility, 2003 federal tax returns should be completed. If this is not possible, it is fine to estimate tax information.
- The forms are processed by computer, so do not attach additional materials and write only in the marked spaces on the application, never in the margins.
- Applicants (or parents, if the applicant is a dependent) without personal identification numbers (PINs) must sign the application or print out and mail a separate signature sheet if filing electronically.
- Students can file electronically or on a paper application. Students are also encouraged to talk to the financial aid directors at the schools they hope to attend to learn about financial aid packages

and other sources of assistance.

- Electronic filing is faster and easier. By filing electronically, students can avoid delays because the software immediately identifies errors and allows for on-the-spot corrections.

This year, MHEC will award more than \$80 million in financial aid to Maryland students. For additional information visit MHEC online or call 1-800-974-1024.

Source: Maryland Higher Education Commission, www.mhec.state.md.us

TickTalk

FAFSA Now Available



The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for the 2004–05 academic year is available now and can be filed beginning January 1, 2004.

Source: Montgomery College Financial Aid

Students and Parents Score Big on College Goal Sunday

Hundreds of counselors and financial aid professionals—and thousands of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) students—will take part in College Goal Sunday, a program designed to make higher education a reality and alleviate the financial burden for many.

The program will be held at Wheaton High School, Sunday, February 8, 2004, at 2 p.m.

College Goal Sunday offers free professional assistance to college-bound students in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), the financial aid form required by colleges and universities. Financial aid professionals, primarily from colleges and universities, will help students and their families complete the FAFSA form and learn more about applying for college financial aid.

Spanish-speaking professionals will be available; if possible, professionals conversant in other languages may be available.

College Goal Sunday is sponsored through grants from The Lumina Foundation for Education, and USA Funds. Comcast is the media sponsor for the event. For more information about College Goal Sunday, visit www.usafunds.com or www.luminafoundation.org. **PT**

Restaurant Management Major Fills Her Plate in County

If Wheaton H.S. then-sophomore Nubia Medrano hadn't picked up a crumpled flyer about the Edison High School of Technology, she might have taken a different path.

Something compelled Medrano to read the flyer, which announced an open house for the restaurant management program at Edison, part of Montgomery College's Tech Prep Program. She checked it out, and signed up for a two-year stint, taking academic courses at Wheaton H.S. and restaurant management courses at Edison.

Her interest in the restaurant industry grew, and so did her desire to run her own Latin-American restaurant. At the suggestion of Lisa Fanning, head of Edison's restaurant management program, Medrano enrolled in Montgomery College's hospitality management program.

"I'm the first in my family to go to college," said Medrano. "Money was a big issue. Why should I spend three times more on another school?"

Medrano graduated from MC in May 2001. She then enrolled as a junior in the hotel and restaurant management program at the

University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) at Shady Grove. She will finish at the UMES/Universities at Shady Grove program this December.

"It's [Tech Prep] a great program," said Medrano. "You learn what you need to know in the real world." **PT**

Q & A: What is the College Tech Prep Program?

The College Tech Prep Program at Montgomery College enables students to earn college credits, receive work-based training—and ultimately get a jump on the competition. The program offers high school-to-college and high school-to-college-to-graduate school tracks in more than 15 academic areas, including biotechnology, engineering technology,

finance, and health science.

Students can earn as many as 20 college credits in high school if they receive a B or better in their course work. Plus, they make a smoother transition from high school to college. And, since tuition is free in the high school portion, parents can save a lot of money.

For more details about Tech Prep, call 301-610-4141. **PT**

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Explore Careers Online

Students will find the CX Online Web site exciting and informative, with fun articles about careers, recreation, education, and skills. Hundreds of occupations are arranged by career cluster in Zones. Career Finder is a quick and easy self-assessment of your interests and skills. Career Research Tool guides students



through skills, values, interests, and personality inventories to generate career research leads. The site license for CX Online allows students to explore each suggested career in detail on the Internet—both at school and at home. Students can also find Web links to professional associations, colleges that offer the required courses, and additional related articles. Visit your school career center or library for details on accessing the CX Online Web site services.

Source: Montgomery County Public Schools

StraightTalk

How did high school prepare you for college?

"The classes I took and the teachers I had were all extremely helpful in helping me pick my courses. When I came to MC, it was much easier for me to choose my classes and what interested me."

Neha
B-CC High School Graduate



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How a Career Center Can Work for You

Each Montgomery County public high school has a career center with a wealth of information on colleges and careers.

Each career center has brochures, bulletins, viewbooks, and other information produced by higher education institutions, as well as CDs and video cassettes produced by colleges and universities.

Students can access commercially produced college directories in the career center. These directories provide quick, reliable sources of information about colleges.

Also available at the career centers is computerized search information on careers, two- and four-year

colleges, and trade and technical schools. In addition, the centers have Web access to sources of information about colleges, financial aid, scholarships, and testing.

Representatives from many colleges and universities visit local high schools throughout the year. School career center coordinators maintain a list of these college representatives, along with the date, time, and location of their visit. Students can sign up to meet with these representatives in the career center.

Students and their parents can schedule a visit to their high school's career center, which is open year-round, Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. **PT**

SuccessTalk

A Resume Paves the Way



When filling out your college application, prepare a resume or summary of your high school experience. Include honor roll, awards, activities—both in and out of school, leadership positions held, and community service (number of hours and a description of what and where you performed your service). If you had paying jobs, list your employer, dates of employment, and the number of hours worked.

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

Preparing for College—Outside the Classroom

Interpersonal and leadership skills, interests, and goals are all important for college preparation. Independent reading and study, extracurricular activi-

Many colleges view community service as a valuable experience...

ties, and work experience all will help your child develop his or her skills, interests, and goals.

Independent reading and study

Encourage your child to read all kinds of books for fun—fiction and nonfiction.

Extracurricular activities

Colleges are often interested in a student's extracurricular activities, such as school clubs, the student newspaper, or athletics, especially if a student has excelled in one or more of these areas.

Work experience and community service

Work experience—paid or volunteer—can help to teach students discipline, responsibility, reliability, teamwork, and other skills. Many colleges view community service as a valuable experience that enhances a student's college application.

Source: www.ed.gov/pubs/Prepare/pt2.html

TickTalk

Deadline for 529



The Maryland Prepaid College Trust's enrollment period is December through mid-March; however, enrollment is year-round for newborns. Online enrollment is available at the College Savings Plans of Maryland Web site.

Source: www.collegesavingsmd.org

MoneyTalk

Maryland, My Maryland



Always list at least one Maryland college on your FAFSA so you can be awarded state aid.

Source: Montgomery College Financial Aid

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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 also should 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

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 additional information about 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.

Montgomery County Public Schools
Montgomery College

Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Institutions 11/03

StraightTalk

How did high school prepare you for college?



“The counselors and teachers were helpful...letting us know what to expect each year, and how the things that we did would apply when we got to college.

Emem

James Hubert Blake High School Graduate

Miss an issue?

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

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