

# PrepTalk™

Advice for Montgomery County Parents and Students on College Preparation • Spring 2001

## PrepTalk Speaks to Your Needs

**T**here is life after high school. And that time is fast approaching for you (or your student).

Whether you're a parent or a student, you've got questions on your mind.

Is college on the horizon? Are you financially and academically prepared? Are you emotionally ready?

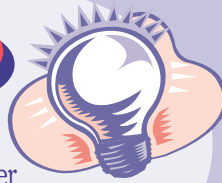
*PrepTalk*, a joint publication of Montgomery County Public Schools and Montgomery College, is intended to provide you with information you can use about financial aid, testing, study skills, time management, and the college planning process.

### Addressing Success

Dr. Jerry Weast, superintendent of schools, and Dr. Charlene Nunley, president of Montgomery College, highlight an innovative partnership between the Montgomery County Public Schools and Montgomery College. See page 3 for more information on this partnership.

### SuccessTalk

Bright ideas and techniques for better learning and study skills and personal growth.



### MoneyTalk

Useful information about the college financial aid process and tips for applying for aid.



### TestTalk

What to expect from the various college-prep tests and what scores mean.



## 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

Deadlines for high school testing and the college planning process.



### StraightTalk

Quotes and anecdotes from current MC students who graduated from MCPS high schools.



### PrepTalk™

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

## Get Credit for an Early Start on College

**C**hurchill High School senior Laura Moy wants to study architecture in college. She got a head start at Montgomery College last semester by enrolling in a History of Architecture course—and earned three credits in the process.

The College's Early Placement Program allows high school seniors to supplement their class schedule with college-level credit course work—and experience the independence of college-level study.

"The Early Placement Program is a great way to study fields I normally couldn't study in high school," according to Moy.

To be considered for the Early

Placement Program, students must have completed the junior year of high school, achieved a 2.75 overall grade point average in a college preparatory program by the end of the junior year, planned a schedule for high school and college attendance during the senior year, and received approval from the high school guidance counselor and principal.

For more information on the Early Placement Program and admissions procedures, call the Counseling and Advising Center at the campus you plan to attend: Germantown Campus, 301-353-7734; Rockville Campus, 301-279-5063, 5088; or Takoma Park Campus, 301-650-1480. **PT**

## MoneyTalk

### Junior Achievement



To qualify for scholarship consideration, high school students must take the Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test (PSAT™) in their junior year.

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

## TestTalk



### How Good Are Your Test-Taking Skills?

Use your Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test (PSAT™) Student Score Report to identify your strong skills and those you need to develop.

Take a close look at the Overview of Answers. Locate the questions you got wrong. Then look at your test book and ask yourself:

- Did the questions cover material you need to learn?
- Did you get the easy questions right and leave the harder ones blank?
- Did you guess when you didn't know the answer?
- Did you get stuck on a couple of hard questions and run out of time?

If you had trouble with the analogies, for example, work on your vocabulary. Try reading every night for at least 15 minutes before going to bed. If math was a problem, get help from your teachers.

Source: The College Entrance Examination Board, [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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## TestTalk



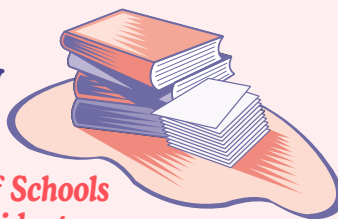
### Is That Your Final Answer?

Because you lose points for wrong answers, how you guess on multiple choice questions can affect your score. When you don't know the answer, do you make "wild" or "educated" guesses? Guessing wildly means that you pick any answer.

Educated guessing means that you eliminate answer choices you know are wrong and guess from those remaining. With educated guessing, you improve your chances of picking the right answer with each choice you can eliminate.

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

## Start Preparing Today for College Success



**A Note from the Superintendent of Schools and the Montgomery College President**

**A**s educators, our goal is to ensure that our students receive the best possible education and that when they leave our doors, they depart well prepared for success beyond high school.

The reality, today, is that more and more careers demand that applicants have gone to college and that virtually all jobs in our technology-driven world now require some form of education beyond high school, though not necessarily a four-year college degree. Simply graduating from high school is not enough. Students must emerge from high school with the necessary skills in reading, English, science, and mathematics to succeed.

To make sure our children are truly ready for the rigors of a college education, we at Montgomery County Public Schools and Montgomery College have teamed up in an innovative partnership. Together, we are focusing our efforts in four main areas:

### Identification and monitoring

We start by identifying the students and the areas of learning most in need of attention. An example of this came last fall when we introduced the offering of the Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test (PSAT™) to all 9th and 10th grade students.

### Acceleration and support

Once we've identified those students and areas needing more attention, we'll dedicate additional staff and resources, as appropriate, to help our students accelerate the learning process. We must ensure that our students are being adequately challenged and are taking the right courses to be prepared for college-level work.

### Professional development

Teacher and staff training is a critical component of our success. In this arena, we are both enhancing our resources and combining some of our efforts in professional development.

### Parent and community outreach

The more you—the parents and students—know about what it will take to be prepared for college, the better you, and all of us, will succeed in this important mission.

Dr. Jerry D. Weast, Superintendent  
Montgomery County Public Schools

Dr. Charlene R. Nunley, President  
Montgomery College

## TestTalk



### Making Analogies

In preparation for the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT®), encourage your child to express relationships and connections in terms of analogies (i.e., a bat is to a baseball as a bowling ball is to a bowling pin).

Source: Sherwood High School's Top Ten Tips for Parent Coaches

## MoneyTalk



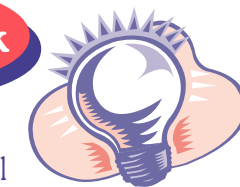
### Timing Is Everything

Did you know that timing and accuracy are the critical factors in applying and receiving maximum financial aid?

And, did you know you don't need to file your Federal IRS 2000 tax return before you submit your FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)?

Source: Dr. Herm Davis, author, *College Financial Aid for Dummies*

## SuccessTalk



### Work Weak?

If you're in school for seven periods, don't work more than 10 or 15 hours per week. Most people begin a downhill slide in the quality of learning if they work much more than this.

Source: Watkins Mill High School's Secrets for Success in School

## Getting Started on the Right Track for College

**M**ake no mistake about it: the courses your child takes in high school will have a tremendous impact on his or her chances of getting into college, in his or her career, and in life. So it's especially

**...expect your child to go to college—no matter what he or she may be thinking at this point...**

important that your student takes a rigorous curriculum in English, the sciences, and math.

Encourage your child to enroll in honors and advanced placement (AP) classes, based on his or her abilities. Ask your school's teachers and guidance counselors for help in deciding whether these courses are appropriate.

Even if your child is set on a technical career, he or she will need

*For specific advice on your student's needs, call the Guidance Office at your high school.*

education after high school to prepare. Reading levels in technical manuals and mathematics requirements in many technical fields are more challenging than ever, so a serious focus on these skills will

pay big dividends in the future.

And, most important, expect your child to go to college—no matter what he or she may be thinking at this point—and begin preparing for it now. **PT**

### 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

### StraightTalk

"I felt prepared [for college], except for math. I wish I had taken harder math courses in high school, then I would have been able to take more advanced courses when I first got to college."

Noel

Walt Whitman High School Graduate



"My teachers and counselors were totally preoccupied with the [college] application process. I wish my high school offered a class on what to do after being accepted to college. I would like to have been more prepared for the registration process and buying books."

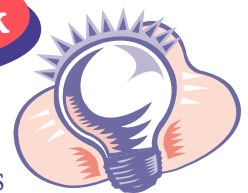
Liselle

Montgomery Blair High School Graduate

### SuccessTalk

#### Write Stuff

Improve your writing. Writing is for life, not just English class. Write something everyday—the more you write, the better you write.

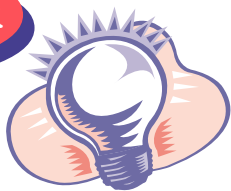


Source: Watkins Mill High School's Secrets for Success in School

## SuccessTalk

### Get Active

Get involved in school activities. Understand why you are in school. Your high school experience will be much more productive if you can identify specific goals you wish to accomplish.



Source: Watkins Mill High School's Secrets for Success in School

## MoneyTalk

### Feds for Co-Eds

Did you know that more than \$60 billion in financial aid will be awarded during the 2001–02 school year and more than 76 percent will be sponsored by the federal government by using the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) instrument?



Source: Dr. Herm Davis, author, *College Financial Aid for Dummies*

## Preparing for College— Outside the Classroom

**I**nterpersonal and leadership skills, interests, and goals are all important for college preparation. Independent reading and study, extracurricular activities, and work experience will all help your child develop his or her skills, interests, and goals.



### Work experience and community service

Work experience—paid or volunteer—can teach students discipline, responsibility, reliabil-

### 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, athletics, especially if a student has excelled in one or more of these areas.

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

ity, 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](http://www.ed.gov/pubs/Prepare/pt2.html)

## Why Younger Students Should Take the PSAT™

**T**his year 33 percent of Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test (PSAT™) takers were sophomores.

For younger students, taking the PSAT™ is not so much an assessment as an opportunity to gain early awareness of college as an option. By taking the test earlier, students are given the

opportunity to see what kinds of skills they need to develop in order to succeed in college.

Students who take the test as sophomores should be encouraged to take it again as juniors to monitor the development of their reasoning skills.

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

## TickTalk

### Mark Your SAT® Date

- Upcoming SAT® test dates: March 31, May 5, June 2
- SAT® registration deadlines: February 23, March 29, April 27

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

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



## Education Commission Report Warns of “Senioritis”

**A**s many as half of all high school students are under-educated or miseducated, and some students who have already been accepted to college routinely ignore the high

**A high school diploma is no longer a guarantee of success...**

school's academic demands,” said a report recently released by a commission appointed by the U.S. Department of Education.

In “The Lost Opportunity of the Senior Year: Finding a Better Way,” the National Commission on the High School Senior Year prefaced its report by saying “This is not a report about the failure of American schools, but about possibilities for a brighter, more productive high school senior year.... The nation faces a deeply troubling future unless we transform the lost opportunity of the senior year into an integral part of students’ preparation for life, citizenship, work, and further education.”

Visit the Commission’s Web site at [www.commissiononthesenioryear.org](http://www.commissiononthesenioryear.org) to see the whole report. **PT**

### Some of the report’s findings...

- A high school diploma is no longer a guarantee of success in either postsecondary education or the world of work.
- The goal of the American high school needs to be reoriented from preparing some students for college and others for work. High school needs to prepare all students to live and prosper in an increasingly complex and interdependent world, one in which they can continue to grow, change, and learn throughout their lives.
- The conditions of modern life require that all students graduate from high school with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in both postsecondary education and careers.
- Ideally, beginning in the middle school years, every student would have a “learning plan,” a formal but flexible outline of what the student hopes to accomplish in young adulthood and which education, work, and service experiences can best help him or her to attain those goals.
- At the middle and secondary school levels, every student needs strong connections with adults, preferably many of them, as they explore options for school, postsecondary education, and work.
- Attention must be given to structuring work experience in school to improve student learning. Research indicates that all students can benefit from quality, structured, “work-based learning” (including community service and internships). Good work experience can help students understand why literature and physics are important in high school; equally clear, too many hours working in low-level service jobs can complicate learning.

Source: “The Lost Opportunity of the Senior Year: Finding a Better Way,” National Commission on the High School Senior Year

### StraightTalk

**How did high school prepare you for college?**



“To a degree I was prepared [for college]. High school has equipped me for the real world and allowed me to maximize the opportunities I had to go to college.”

Charles  
Paint Branch High School Graduate

“I was very prepared [for college]—especially because I was in the business program at Einstein. The program helped me to get a scholarship at Montgomery College.”

Esther  
Albert Einstein High School Graduate

## Get Prepped for Success in High School

**M**ore than 2,000 students a year earn college credits, obtain valuable work-based training—and ultimately get a jump on the competition through Montgomery College's College Tech Prep Program.

The program offers high school-to-college and high school-to-college-to-graduate school programs in more than 15 academic areas including biotechnology, computer applications, engineering technology, finance, health science, hospitality management, interior design, and marketing.

Former Gaithersburg High School student Jose Estrada, now studying at the University of Maryland, is one of the beneficiaries of the Tech Prep

**Students can earn as many as 20 college credits in high school (if they receive a B or better in their course work)...**

program. Estrada's good grades in the Tech Prep Academy of Finance in high school earned him a one-year scholarship at Montgomery College. "The [Tech Prep] program is amazing," said Estrada. "Not only did it lessen the academic burden for me, but also it lessened the financial burden for my parents."

Lisa Carvallo, coordinator of the College Tech Prep Program, says there are three important benefits of the program. Students can earn as many as 20 college credits in high school (if they receive a B or better in their course work), 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.

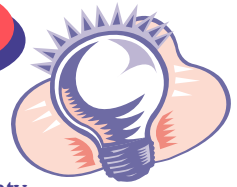
In addition, students receive on-the-job training. In their senior year of high school, Tech Prep students intern at jobs related to their career path.

For more information, call Lisa Carvallo at 301-279-5026, Barry Burke at 301-279-3567, or log on to: [www.montgomerycollege.org](http://www.montgomerycollege.org) **PT**

### SuccessTalk

#### Career Boost

Students in the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) career and technology education (CTE) program had higher earnings over a six-year period than other MCPS graduates.



Source: *Post-Secondary Employment and College Enrollment among Montgomery County Public Schools Graduates: The Role of Career-Focused Programs*, MCPS.

## Study Underscores Importance of Career and Technology Education for College and Workplace

**A** unique new study of the education and employment patterns of 1993 graduates of the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) demonstrates that high school students who participated in career and technology education (CTE) performed as well, if not better, in the workplace and college than did other graduates.

The study and related information demonstrate that more graduates would benefit from career and technology skill development. This is consistent with the national trend in which a greater proportion of the American workforce is employed in skilled areas (65 percent last year compared to just 20 percent in 1950).

The study, completed by the MCPS Applied Research Unit and the Division of Career and Technology Education, stresses the impor-

tance of career focus and preparation—from business education to trade skills. The study found that CTE graduates were more continuously employed, had higher earnings, and were more confident about their post-secondary education and career plans than their non-CTE classmates. These findings were true among CTE graduates even when compared to similar background characteristics and post-secondary college and work activities of the non-CTE graduates.

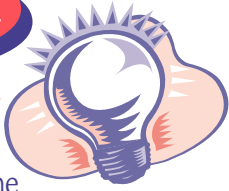
"The preparation of students for college enrollment and success still remains a priority for the school system, but the study demonstrates that the attainment of skills related to 'real life' experiences are increasingly important for all students," said Dr. Jerry D. Weast, superintendent of schools, in a report to the Board of Education.

Source: *Post-Secondary Employment and College Enrollment among Montgomery County Public Schools Graduates: The Role of Career-Focused Programs*, MCPS

# PrepTalk

## SuccessTalk

### Are You Ready for College?



To complement the MCPS academic year calendar, Montgomery College will offer a special summer session of college-level courses beginning June 18. These courses are geared to high school seniors and recent graduates. Courses can be used as credits toward a degree at the College or at other colleges or universities. Check your high school career center for more information.

In addition, MC will offer a special program “How to Succeed in September” for students who will be attending Montgomery College in the fall and would like a head start on how to be prepared for college. Enrollment is limited. Applications for this free program are available at your high school career center.

Source: Montgomery College Admissions

## PrepTalk™

**T**his new publication will provide 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.

Montgomery County Public Schools  
Montgomery College

Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Institutions 2/01

## Surfing for Schools

**L**ast year, more than 80 percent of college-bound seniors used the Web in their search, up from 57 percent three years ago, according to Stamats Communications, a higher education marketing firm in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Another recent study found that half of high school students turned to the Web at least six times during the previous month in search of college information.

As early as sophomore year, kids are heading to college search engines like those at [usnews.com](http://usnews.com), [Embark.com](http://Embark.com), and [CollegeView.com](http://CollegeView.com) to start creating lists of possible schools.

Source: [www.usnews.com](http://www.usnews.com)

## TickTalk

### MC Open House



Montgomery College offers both student orientation and parent information sessions at all three campuses throughout April. During these sessions, you'll get placement test results and financial aid information; meet faculty and counselors; get advising and registration; and take a campus tour.

Call the campus of your choice for times and dates—Germantown, 301-353-1993; Rockville, 301-279-5088; Takoma Park, 301-650-1469; TDD, 301-294-9672.

Source: Montgomery College Admissions

## TestTalk

### Entering MC?



Did you know that the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT®) is recommended, but not required for entrance to the College? However, students must take placement tests. Placement testing determines the English and math courses students are eligible to take at MC.

Take practice tests at [www.montgomerycollege.org/admissions/placement.htm](http://www.montgomerycollege.org/admissions/placement.htm).

Students are exempt from English testing if they have a verbal SAT® score of at least 500, or a TOEFL of at least 575 (paper and pencil) or 231 (computer). Students are exempt from math testing if they have a math SAT® of 550 or higher.

Source: Montgomery College Admissions

## TickTalk

### MC Test Dates

Montgomery College offers placement testing at all three campuses in March. Students must submit an MC application and high school transcript to their high school career center by March 1 to take the test. If you apply by March 1, the College will waive the application fee.

Call the campus of your choice to schedule testing—Germantown, 301-353-1993; Rockville, 301-279-5088; Takoma Park, 301-650-1469; TDD, 301-294-9672.

Source: Montgomery College Admissions