

NOTES FROM SOPHOMORE CLASS OF 2011 MEETING SEPTEMBER 15, 2008

PTO Announcements

Freshman BBQ - was our first great opportunity to participate in 2008 and many sophomore parents did. Explain bbq; Fed 600+ freshman, jr. mentors and staff; organized and run by parent Mimi Levine rousing success

Other Great opportunities to get involved and learn about or contribute to BHS activities:

Sophomore Parent Meetings

: Attend our monthly meetings to learn about significant events happening at BHS, hear presentations from BHS faculty and staff and others regarding topics of importance to Sophomore parents and our BHS students, and meet other BHS parents and engage in discussions on broad range of relevant BHS issues.

Class E-mail List best way to keep informed as to these meetings and other important events at BHS; sign up on BHS website.

September 27th 8:30 AM Noon - 5th Annual Senior College Essay Workshop terrific opportunity to volunteer to help BHS seniors prepare for their college application essays; have helped 1,000 seniors in last 4 years.

October 6th Progress Reports will be sent home

October 6th 7PM - Conversazione with David M. Kennedy Pulitzer Prize Winning Historian "Our National Character : Who are we in October 2008? seating is limited so make reservations soon Carol Dyer 617-713-5005003

October 7th 7-8:30 PM - Next Meeting of FOPA- a a parent led volunteer committee that supports the performing arts at BHS - for more info subscribe to FOPA email list on BHS website

BHS Back to School night 10/16

PTO sponsored Staff and Teacher Appreciation Breakfast on 10/17 - we need donations of baked goods, etc...to be dropped off at Back to School Night in the MLK room or by 7am Friday morning.

www.BHS-PTO.org a lot of useful information is on the

website.

No School on Sept 30 (Rosh Hashana); Oct 9 (Yom Kippur) and Oct.13 Columbus Day. Our next meeting on October 21, 2008

PTO Presidents Adelaide Ketcham and Karen Hirsch reminded parents to contribute to the PTO this year. Your money helps support teacher grants and BHS community programs, such as the College Essay Workshop for Seniors, the After the Prom Party, Conversazione and staff appreciation breakfast in the Fall and luncheon in the Spring, just to name a few. The PTO spends approximately \$24 per family to produce the Directory and the Newsletters. So a donation that exceeds \$24 can help support the PTO's many other events and grants.

This year for the first time advertising space will be available in the back of the BHS Directory. Information about rates and sizes will be available in the October issue of "News and Views".

Welcome to Sophomore Year

In welcoming parents, Dean Mims handed out a list of 15 Tips for Successful Students:

1. Do their homework every night;
2. Take notes in class;
3. Take notes on reading at home;
4. Review their notes on a regular basis;
5. Look up the definition of unfamiliar words;
6. Make flash cards for new words (add: synonyms, antonyms, parts of speech);
7. Make flash cards for new material (answer questions like these: WHO? WHAT? WHERE? WHEN? HOW? WHY?)
8. Construct and take their own "practice" tests;
9. Go to teachers for extra help;
10. Seek assistance from a friend/peer who does well in the subject;
11. Form study groups with other students who want to be successful;
12. Avoid friends who distract them from getting their work done;
13. Avoid television and other daily distractions;
14. Proofread their writing (C.O.P.S.= capitalization, organization, punctuation, spelling) and check their arguments (P.R.E.P.= point, reason, example/evidence, point).
15. READ newspapers, READ magazines, READ books (for pleasure, for knowledge, for practice, for expanding the imagination).

Dean Mims and Assistant Dean Scott Butchart each share responsibility for half of the sophomore class. Your student's guidance counselor can tell your student which Dean is assigned to him or her.

This year the Math Center in Room 131 is staffed with 2 math teachers and is available for sophomores before school during Z block. For academic help, the primary source is always the teacher. All teachers have office hours.

The Activity Fair is coming up. Cyprus Field will be filled with tables for all kinds of clubs imaginable. Clubs meet during X Block on Thursdays. Some do not require attendance every week. It's a great way to meet new friends who share similar interests. An example is "One Child at A Time" sponsored by faculty member Robert Grant which raises funds to pay tuition for a girl's school in Kenya.

The PSAT is being given on October 18th at BHS. Sign-up is September 22 through October 10. The fee is \$27.00. Checks should be made out to Brookline High Guidance Department. There are different opinions regarding whether sophomores should take the PSAT. It doesn't count as a sophomore and can be used as test-taking practice. However, some of the math may be unknown to students who are not taking honors or advanced math. It is possible that a student will not do as well as he/she will do as a junior.

In the spring, sophomores will have guidance seminars which will focus on the use of Naviance, the new software being used by the Guidance department. More information about Naviance will be provided in the months to come.

Sophomore Steering Committee meets during X-block on Thursdays in Room 318A. Everyone is invited to join this leadership committee to choose fund-raising goals for the sophomore class, such as raising money for humanitarian causes, the prom, etc. The group will meet as often as necessary to accomplish their goals.

Dr. Weintraub

discussed BHS' #1 ranking in Boston Magazine for academic excellence. Strong increases are seen in MCAS scores. We are constantly striving to get better. It is stunning that BHS does innovation seamlessly. The new schedule is running smoothly. BHS is a culture of respect, freedom and responsibility.

Both Dr. Weintraub and Dean Mims speak throughout New England on the topic of "High Schools for Real Teenagers." It takes hard work over time. The staff at BHS comes to school to teach and to love the kids. There are always bumps in the road. We strive to seek simplicity on the other side of complexity!

Questions:

Q: How can I find out who is the Dean for my student?

A: The guidance counselor can inform the student or the student can stop by Dean Mim's office.

Q: What testing takes place sophomore year?

A: MCAS in English/Language Arts in April and Math in May. PTO usually provides snacks and water.

Q: What about the PSAT?

A: There are differences of opinion about it. It is a practice test for the SAT. The math questions do involve statistics and probability that sophomores may not have had yet in math. It depends on the individual student. Parents and students should discuss this with the guidance counselor.

Q: How can we find out about internships and summer jobs.

A: There will be a new website that is under development now called: Teen Life Boston; more about that to come. You can contact Janet Gottesman in the Career Office. There is also a link on the BHS website.

Q: How do the students know what subject SAT II tests to take in the future?

A: Speak with the guidance counselor, but always check with the subject teacher, i.e. science or foreign language. The guidance counselor will also know what colleges accept the ACT test.

Q: What if a day other than Saturday is required to take the test?

A: That also can be arranged through the guidance department.

After the meeting, some parents still had questions about the pros and cons of sophomores taking the PSATs. We asked Jackie Browne, Coordinator of Pupil Support Services, to clarify. Jackie writes,

Traditionally, high school juniors are strongly encouraged to take this test for several reasons:

Its a diagnostic tool which highlights a students strengths and weaknesses; it qualifies students (juniors only) for consideration for a National Merit Scholarship indicates how a student may score on a SAT exam.

Sophomores are welcome to take the test and a few always do, however: They will not be considered for a National Merit Scholarship and they sometimes have not had enough mathematics to do well on the math sections. The BHS Career Center offers a free PSAT workshop and a free PSAT practice test for

BHS sophomores in April. By this time of year, students are better prepared for this test and we encourage all sophomores to participate.

Regarding a sophomore's math preparation for the PSAT, Adrian Mims also responded that

The question as to whether a sophomore should take the PSAT is pretty complex because everyone has their own opinion...none of which to my knowledge is based on statistical data. When students become juniors, our goal is to have 100% of the junior class register for the PSAT. Why? It is good practice for the SAT and at that time, they will have had enough exposure to the material they will see on the PSAT (especially math).

Based upon my experience tutoring kids on SAT math, sophomores who are taking IMP 2 and Intro. to Algebra 2 are at a greater disadvantage than sophomores taking an honors or advanced math course. I believe this is true because the PSAT covers content in Algebra 2 that students in IMP 2 and Intro. to Algebra 2 have not mastered yet. I believe IMP 2 kids are at an even greater disadvantage [as sophomores]because the PSAT is a traditional assessment, while IMP assessments are more of an open-ended/response. Some math teachers may not agree with my position. According to math teachers who support IMP, students who take IMP score just as well on the SAT as students who take more traditional math classes. This is misleading because their data is based on students who are enrolled in IMP 4 and it does not identify students who receive SAT prep tutoring. I guess what I'm trying to say is depending on the kid and their academic history (and current strengths and weaknesses), the results of the PSAT may not be a reliable or valid indicator of a student's potential for earning a high score. In some cases, an extremely low score may hurt a student's self-confidence and cause anxiety when taking the test again the following year. For some kids, positive or negative test results will not bother them at all.

We hope to have someone from Guidance at our next meeting to answer any lingering parent questions regarding the typical high school chronology of college prep testing (SATs, SAT IIs, ACT), along with our previously scheduled speakers.

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