

GUIDANCE GAZETTE

Mt. Vernon Township
High School

mvths.org

January, 2009

The first semester ended on December 19, 2008. First semester report cards will be mailed home to parents during the week of January 5, 2009.

Students will report back to school for the start of the second semester on Monday, January 5, 2009 by going to their first semester Block 1 class at 8:20 a.m. ***They will receive their second semester schedule at that time, and be instructed to proceed to their second semester Block 1 class.***

Financial Aid Seminar: The MVTHS Student Services Department will host a Financial Aid Seminar on Wednesday, February 11, 2009, at 6:30 p.m. in Room 119H. More detailed information can be found on page 2 under *News for Seniors*.

Beyond the Books

How to Help Your Teen Stay Drug-Free

Do you want to help your teenager to be drug-free? Give them less, not more—less spending money, less unstructured time, and less stress, say researchers.

An annual survey of students and parents conducted by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University revealed that teens who say they're bored, stressed and/or have more than \$25 a week in spending money are twice as likely to smoke, drink, and use illegal drugs.

CASA Chairman and President Joseph Califano, Jr. said these factors "are a catastrophic combination for many American teens. But it is a catastrophe that can be avoided through parental engagement." He advises parents to be sensitive to the stress in their children's lives, to understand why they are bored, and to limit their spending money.

The survey's results helped to answer the question parents ask when they find out their otherwise typical teen is using substances: Why did *my* kid do this? We tend to think that young people who use alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs have experienced emotional hardship or have a learning disability, eating disorder, depression, or some other mental illness. This can be the case, however, this survey shows that other factors can be just as influential on kids' choices about drugs.

Parents' attitudes also strongly affect kids' choices. Teens whose parents believe that future drug use is "very likely" are more than three times likelier to become substance abusers than teens whose parents say future use is "not likely at all."

So keep telling your children that you believe in their ability to stay drug-free. Also make it clear that you find drug use unacceptable and unhealthy. Be strong in your convictions so that your children can be equally strong in theirs.

Source: *Helping Hand*, Region VII Comprehensive Center

News for Seniors

According to state law all seniors wishing to get a regular high school diploma in the State of Illinois must take the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE test). The PSAE is normally taken during the junior year.

Seniors who still need to meet the PSAE graduation requirement must take the ACT test on one of the remaining national test dates in 2009: February 7 or April 4. Registration packets and vouchers to pay for the ACT test are available in the Guidance Office. The voucher must be mailed along with the ACT registration form by the deadline: January 6 for the February ACT; February 27 for the April ACT.

Most seniors have filed applications to the college(s) of choice, and nervously await that important notification of acceptance. What to do during this waiting period? Start by learning the basics about financial aid:

⇒ **ATTEND the Financial Aid Seminar** at 6:30 p.m. on **February 11**, in Building H, room 119. A financial aid consultant from Rend Lake College will be on hand to conduct this seminar to address the important issues that families face as they sort through the maze of paying for college. For example:

\$ What is a FAFSA form, and why is it filed?

\$ How can a family find out what their expected contribution will have to be? How does that information become part of a school's financial aid package?

\$ What forms of financial aid are available, and what are the requirements for each of them?

The list of questions can go on and on; the consultant will address the most common concerns about filing FAFSA, then allow time to address specific concerns from the audience. NOTE: FAFSA forms will be available at the seminar, or can be picked up in the Guidance Office or Career Center.

⇒ **Have you filed for a FAFSA PIN?** A PIN number is helpful because it allows you to file FAFSA electronically, check on the status of your FAFSA application, make up-date or correction changes. To request a PIN, go to the web site www.pin.ed.gov.

⇒ **CHECK** out the website, collegezone.com, sponsored by the Illinois Student Assistance Commission. It offers a wealth of information for both students and parents about grants, loans, and scholarships.

⇒ **APPLY, APPLY, APPLY!** Ask your student: Have you stopped by the Guidance Office lately to check out the newest scholarship opportunities? A list of "What's New" and "What's Due" is posted on the bulletin board. For example:

Scholarship Information

What's New? (Pick up and return applications in the Guidance Office .)

◆ **Local Scholarships:** Each year a number of local organizations offer scholarship opportunities to our seniors. Graduating seniors are generally awarded over \$60,000 in local scholarship money. The application titles and descriptions are listed in a handout which will be given to all seniors at the end of January. The applications will be available to seniors beginning February 2, 2009, and most will be due in early March.

◆ **Phi Delta Kappa Scholarships for Prospective Educators:** Seniors who plan to major in the field of education may apply online for this award. The web site is www.pdkintl.org. Applications must be submitted online by February 1.

Scholarships continued on next page . . .

- ◆ **Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce “Student of the Year” Program:** A \$1,000 scholarship will be awarded to a senior student who best meets the criteria of leadership, service to community, and scholarship. Applications will be available soon.
- ◆ **University of Illinois Children of Veterans Scholarship:** If you are the child of a veteran and are planning to attend the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, Chicago, or Springfield in the fall of 2009, you are eligible to apply for the Children of Veterans Scholarship. Due: February 19.
- ◆ **Rend Lake College Foundation Scholarship:** The RLC Foundation prefers that scholarship applications be submitted online at www.rlc.edu/foundation. Students are responsible for mailing at least one letter of recommendation and a transcript to back up their online application. This is important because the status of the application will be based upon receipt of these accompanying documents. Online applications must be completed by February 27. Paper applications will also be accepted and are due in the Guidance Office by February 20.
- ◆ **National Defense Transportation Association:** The Scott/St. Louis Chapter of the NDTA will award five scholarships in 2009. Preference is given to students pursuing a degree in business, transportation logistics, physical distribution, and related studies, however, any student may apply. Due: February 20.

What’s Due in January?

Wal-Mart (online) —Due: January 31

- ⇒ **CHECK OUT THE WEB:** If web-surfing is something your student loves to do, check out other financial aid search websites: Try the College Board’s site (collegeboard.com), or listings on FastWeb (fastweb.com). Other listings can be found on Sallie Mae’s site (collegeanswer.com), and the Scholarship Research Network Express (srnexpress.com).
- ⇒ **BUYER BEWARE:** Scholarship scams exist, and the Federal Trade Commission offers these cautions to parents and students. Be cautious if the scholarship source claims: “The scholarship is guaranteed or your money back,” “You can’t get this information anywhere else,” or “I just need your credit card or bank account number to hold this scholarship.” Generally, if it seems too good to be true, it probably is! If an offer seems suspicious, check it out thoroughly.

Scholarship for Juniors

The **Discover Scholarship Program** (formerly *Discover Card Tribute Award*) is for junior students with a minimum GPA of 2.75 and who can demonstrate special accomplishments in four of the five specified areas (special talent, leadership, obstacles overcome, unique endeavors, and community service). Students who feel they qualify should consider applying for this scholarship. Apply online at <http://discoverfinancial.com/community/scholarship.shtml>. Due date for applications is January 31.

Quote of the Month

Be always at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors, and let each new year find you a better man.

Benjamin Franklin



News for Juniors, Sophomores, & Freshmen

It soon will be time to sign up for classes for the 2009-2010 school year. Think about what you have taken, and decide what you need next.

Students must earn a total of 23 credits to graduate from high school. Four of those credits must be in English, three in math, two in science, two in social studies, and one in vocational education, art, music, or foreign language. Students are also required to take physical education classes. All students must take and pass Career Education and Algebra I. Additional elective courses can then be taken to make up the total of 23.

- * **ASK YOURSELF:** How many classes do I need to take each semester?
Students will sign up for 7 classes. It will be important to choose classes very carefully. Consult the *Student & Parent Handbook* to see a listing and course descriptions for classes that are taught at our school.
- * **ASK YOURSELF:** How close am I to meeting the core requirements for college entrance? Which courses do I need to take this coming school year?
Students who plan to attend a two-or four-year college after high school must plan to reach a higher standard within the total of 23 credits. College-bound students need four credits in English, three in math, three in laboratory science, three in social studies, plus two units in foreign language, art, music or vocational education. The additional credits can be an elective of the student’s choice. NCAA requirements may also be found at www.ncaaclearinghouse.net. Click on “Core Courses.” MVTHS code is 143080.
- * **ASK YOURSELF:** Which class or classes will help me make a decision about a possible career for my future? Or teach me skills that will help me in life, get a part-time job, or ease my way into college?
Sampling a variety of elective courses in addition to required courses each year gives students an opportunity to try out the subject area. (Example: an art or music class may lead to career options, while a college prep writing course sharpens a student’s writing skills.)
- * **ASK YOURSELF:** What is an AP class? How is that different from a Dual Credit class?
Advanced Placement (AP) courses are advanced academic courses that are open to juniors and seniors in the areas of English, math, social studies, and science. Students who elect to take an AP course will receive a weighting when their high school GPA and class rank are computed, once all requirements are met. Students may also earn college credit in AP classes only if they score well enough on the national AP test at the end of the year.
Dual Credit allows students to concurrently earn high school credit and college credit in certain classes. Those classes include: Honors English Seminar, Trigonometry, College Algebra, AP Calculus, Biology II, Political Science, Spanish IV, Accounting I & II, Keyboarding & Formatting, Information Processing, Computer Operations & Programming, Computer Concepts & Software, Business & Technology Concepts, Web Page & Interactive Media, Marketing, Music Appreciation, AVC Drafting/CAD, AVC Culinary Arts, AVC Health Care Aide, AVC Health Occupations Core Skills, AVC Digital Electronics, AVC Child/Day Care/Educational Services, Basic Horticulture Science, AgriBusiness Management, and Physical Education III & IV.
- * **PLAN AHEAD:** After you have answered all of the above questions, the next thing to do is consult with your parents, your teachers, and your counselor. Develop a logical plan that not only satisfies what you need for the 2009-2010 school year, but also for your future career plans.