

November 18, 2008

Dear Parents:

I have recently talked about the importance of GPAs to your children. I spoke to the 9th, 10th, and 11th graders during one of their English class periods in the past two weeks. We also discussed other factors that affect the college application/acceptance process and what needs to be done to prepare for this.

As I am sure you are aware, students' **GPAs are cumulative beginning in the 9th grade.** For those students who took H Algebra I in the 8th grade, that course's grade also averages into their GPA. Essentially, each course's semester grade corresponds to a certain GPA; these corresponding GPAs can be found on page 10 of the student handbook (some of these values have been updated by the SC Department of Education and the NEW table is available for viewing on the OPS website in the handbook, p.10). Every semester, the GPAs for each previous course taken are averaged in with the most current semester's GPAs; this average creates your child's current cumulative GPA. **Previous high school GPAs do NOT go away**, they are just added onto. Non-academic courses such as **Art or PE** receive a half unit, but the grade in the class does **NOT** count into the GPA.

Of course, **colleges consider a student's GPA, SAT or ACT test scores, and the rigorousness of courses taken** when making the decision to accept or deny entrance into their college. **If your child is advised by OPS to take an honors or AP course**, this means that careful consideration and analysis by your child's teachers has gone into the advisement and the student should be challenged with that course. After that, colleges also review what types of extracurricular and community service activities the student has participated in, what types of honors he/she may have been chosen for, and any leadership roles taken on by the student. Of course, these same things are considered by many scholarship committees when selecting winners; most are chosen on the basis of grades/SATs, but there are some that base the awards heavily on community service activities done throughout the high school years.

If your child has not begun to take the SAT and the ACT by December of his/her Junior year, please register him/her for a January test session, or as soon thereafter as possible! Registration may be done online; **our school's CEEB code is 411553**. When scores are returned, compare those to the score average of the college/colleges that your child is thinking of attending. Then you may see how much improvement needs to be made to gain probable acceptance into the college. **Please have your child take the ACT in addition to the SAT;** you may find that your child scores better on one than the other, which may mean that that particular test needs to be pursued for college acceptance.

Remember, college applications are sent off in September and October of the student's senior year; therefore the senior year is too late to "bring your GPA up" for college acceptance purposes!

I am requesting that you talk to your child about the importance of the above things, in particular the cumulative GPA. It is also a **good idea to periodically remind them** of the above fact (they tend to forget if not reminded often). **In addition, you will want to view either the college websites** or the college announcement catalogs in the guidance office of the colleges your child feels that they are interested in possibly attending. **If this is done, your child will have a goal to strive for** and will bring the connection between their schoolwork and future college/career/financial goals closer to home. Several weeks ago I sent out to parents **two new websites that can help in surveying the many**

college majors/plans and future careers in SC and our world today. PLEASE have your children search around on the following sites over an extended period of time; this will allow them to realize the many careers that will be available to them after college. The sites are www.bls.gov/oco/ (US Bureau of Labor Statistics) and www.scpathways.org (SC Pathways to Success). **IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR YOUR CHILD TO HAVE A PLAN for the future and NOT TO ALLOW LIFE TO JUST HAPPEN!**

Hopefully, being aware of the above earlier rather than later, and planning and assessing your child's progress, will lead to less disappointment and more success when your child's time comes to apply to the college/s of choice., to choose majors, careers, etc.

If you have further questions, please feel free to call me in guidance. I will try to answer, or find the answer if needed, to your questions.

Thank you,

Rose Marie H. Craft
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OPS Guidance