

THE ADVOCATE

SPRINGFIELD HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELING OFFICE ~ 885-7914

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DECEMBER 2014

Monday Morning Meetings

Building community one week at a time

For high schoolers, Monday mornings may be their least favorite time of their week. In an effort to combat that sentiment and, more importantly, to give students the chance to celebrate the positive accomplishments of their peers and of the greater school community, Principal Thibault has implemented Monday Morning Meetings. The weekly school-wide gatherings take place in the auditorium during advisory. They feature announcements about upcoming events and student achievements, as well as a feature presentation from students or staff about a special project, trip, initiative, or opportunity going on at SHS.

These lively meetings have given the student body a chance to recognize their peers for such accolades as: Student of the Month (congrats to 10th grader Emily Antonivich for being our

November winner), RVTC Students of the Quarter, Honor Roll and High Honor Roll status, and athletic and performing arts recognitions.

With the community building mission in mind, the most valuable component of the meetings has been the student-led presentations. Senior students have told stories and shared photos of international travel, dual enrollment Biology students have discussed using local watersheds as living laboratories to test water quality, Governor's Institute attendees have described the skills and friendships they gained on college campuses, and Miller Arts Center interns have presented on the challenges and intrigue of sharing Springfield's history through investigative research and interactive art displays.

School-wide News & Events



Fill Out Your Forms Night

Jan. 8th from 6-8PM in the SHS computer lab. Senior parents who want help submitting their FAFSA, please attend and bring your 2013 tax returns!

1st Semester ends on Jan. 16th

Midterm and final exams will run on Jan. 21st, 22nd, and 23rd

PLAN Testing and RVTC Visits offered for 10th graders on Feb. 12th

Scheduling for 2015-16

Course request sheets will be handed out the week of Feb. 23rd; students will submit course requests online during the week of March 9th

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"There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children." -Nelson Mandela

Thus far, our presenters have represented a wide variety of grade levels and social circles. Students have offered a lot of positive feedback about learning from and hearing from these diverse groups and

staff members have enjoyed seeing so many individuals get the chance to "be in the spotlight" and share their unique experiences with the SHS community. If students or families want to offer

suggestions about topics for future Monday Morning Meetings, feel free to contact the assembly coordinators, Ms. Thepaut-Hasselback or Ms. DeCuollo.

Naviance for Parents

Sharing college and career readiness tools with the whole family

For the past several years, SHS students have been using an online tool called Naviance to explore colleges, take career interest inventories, and manage college application materials. Soon, Springfield students in grades 7-12 will also be using their Naviance accounts to build and manage their Personalized Learning Plans or PLPs (see article in the June 2014 edition of the *Advocate*). Student Naviance accounts are funded by the school and the counselors have been pushing to offer this same resource to parents and guardians.

This month, our hope has finally become a reality. All SHS families now have a Naviance account of their own, known as the "Family Connection". This will allow

parents/guardians to track and support students during the PLP process, explore college, career, and scholarship opportunities as a family, and to stay up-to-date with student progress on college applications.

In order to start using Family Connection, families will first need to complete a short registration process. The school counselors will be sharing this information with parents/guardians at various events and workshops, but if you are interested in getting registered with Family Connection right away, please feel free to call or email our office so we can help you to start taking advantage of this wonderful tool!

*The Counseling
Department would like
to wish our students
and families a safe,
happy and relaxing
holiday season!*



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12th Grade

VSAC Scholarships

Thank you to all the 12th grade students and families who attended the VSAC-sponsored “Paying for College Night” on November 14th; we had a strong turnout and families came with valuable questions. For any 12th graders and families who were not in attendance – don’t panic! We have plenty of copies of the VSAC resources in our office and students are welcome to come in and collect them. Also, Mrs. Costello and Mrs. Haskell scheduled two workshops during FLEX to talk with seniors about the VSAC scholarship booklet. We showed students how to use the booklet to search, select, and apply for VSAC scholarships and grants. In the past, the VSAC scholarships have been confusing for some students; attention to detail is important and various awards require different essays, school records, recommendation letters, etc. This year, VSAC has streamlined this portion of the process and the counselors worked hard to give students clear directions and step-by-step guidance. It is our hope that more SHS

students can take advantage of this fantastic financial aid resource. If your student was unable to attend one of the official FLEX workshops, they are welcome to come to our office and pick-up a scholarship booklet. We are happy to meet with students one-on-one who have questions about the application process. The entire booklet can also be viewed online at:

http://services.vsac.org/60RenDer?library=resources&name=Scholarships_Booklet.pdf

11th Grade

Signing up for SATs and ACTs

Although 11th graders still have a little time remaining before they are plunged into the stressful college process, one step many students take during their junior year is sitting for the SAT exam, the ACT exam, or both. These are the two most common and widely-accepted college entrance exams and the majority of four-year colleges will accept either the SAT or ACT as part of their application requirements. Springfield High School

administers the ACT onsite in April and administers the SAT onsite in May. We strongly encourage all 11th graders who are considering post-secondary education to take both of these tests at SHS this spring. By taking the exams during junior year, students have the opportunity to get more familiar with the testing formats, to make a determination about which exam better suits their strengths and learning style, and to figure out whether they want to study for the exams and re-take them during the fall of senior year. It is also wise for students who are interested in a *specific* college or university to visit that school’s admissions website and find out the average SAT and ACT scoring range for students who are admitted to that institution. This will help SHS students to steer their goals and efforts around the SAT and ACT testing process. If students or families have questions about the difference between SATs and ACTs or about acquiring fee waivers for the exams, please contact the Counseling Office. Below, we have listed

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the onsite testing dates, the registration deadlines for those exams, and the registration websites.

SATs

Test Date: 5/2/2015

Reg. Deadline: 4/6/2015

Website:

sat.collegeboard.org/register

ACTs

Test Date: 4/18/2015

Reg. Deadline: 3/13/2015

Website:

www.actstudent.org/regist

10th Grade

10th Grade Conferences

This December, the school counselors decided to implement a new tradition, 10th grade conferences. The rationale behind these 25-minute check-ins is threefold: 1) 10th graders tend to be the student population that "falls under the radar" of counselors and other support staff; they are no longer new, needy 9th graders and they are not quite on the brink of important post-secondary planning, 2) many students are transferred to a new counselor after their first year and don't have adequate opportunity to bond with a new adult, and 3) we've found that when the course scheduling/academic planning process starts in

February, many 10th graders feel confused, nervous, and unsure about who to turn to. It is our hope that these individual conferences will help to eliminate students' anxiety and increase their comfort level with their counselor as they move into more upperclass(wo)man issues and stressors. We also believe that these earlier meetings will greatly reduce time away from class during the course scheduling process in February and March.

9th Grade

Preparing for Finals

This coming January will mark the first time the Class of 2018 will experience final exams. With a shift in the format of 9th grade classes to semester-long, this mid-year testing will be a new undertaking for teachers and freshmen students (in past years, 9th graders took year-long courses and only took cumulative exams in June). The staff will work closely with the students, reviewing exam content and preparing them for the length and format of the tests, but it is also important that the students spend time studying outside of the classroom. Students should also try to take advantage of FLEX and afterschool help nights during

the two weeks leading up to finals. Both of these resources allow students to complete missing/make-up assignments and to get one-on-one support for challenging content areas. If families or students are concerned about stress management during the lead-up to finals, please feel free to visit the Counseling Office for support. Below we have listed some general tips in keeping yourself healthy and sane during final exams – good luck!

1. Give yourself enough study time – do a little every day and avoid "cramming"!
2. Practice on old quizzes and tests from throughout the semester.
3. Plan study groups with friends, but be sure to stay on task (not on Facebook!)
4. Make yourself an exam schedule so that you are punctual and prepared!
5. Snack on "brain food" like yogurt, berries, nuts and dark chocolate.