

October 26, 2017

Dear 11th Grade Families,

It was great to have the opportunity to talk with so many of you at the 11th-grade parent meeting. If we haven't had a chance to talk in person yet, I hope we'll be able to do so soon.

Preliminary Comments

You should have already received your student's preliminary comments in the mail, but if for some reason you didn't, e-mail me and I will send you a copy. I hope you find the conference with your child's advisor – which should happen before Thanksgiving break – to be a helpful check-in and a useful exchange of information and ideas about how to encourage and support your child's growth and development. As advisors, we're always grateful for your perspective on your child's progress. If you haven't yet scheduled your meeting, please contact your child's advisor to do so.

As your child's advisor will surely emphasize, preliminary comments are intended not only to give students a snapshot of their work so far but also to provide suggestions on how they can improve in the coming months. As you work to support and encourage your child, keep in mind what we discussed at the junior parent meeting: focusing on specific goals for growth is always more helpful than getting bogged down in grades and scores. Please continue to remind your junior that teachers are here to help and guide students, and it is easiest for teachers to do so when students communicate with them. At the same time that we're firmly committed to lending our support and encouragement, we want to do all we can to encourage students to advocate for themselves.

College Counseling Kick-Off Night for Juniors and Parents

Looking ahead, remember that your child will have the opportunity to select a college counselor in November following the College Counseling Kick-Off Night on Thursday, November 16. Since we'll share a lot of important information, please make sure at least one parent attends the meeting with your junior. You won't want to miss it! While there isn't anything your child needs to be doing between now and then – other than being the best student he or she can be – please feel free to contact Nanette Tarbouni, director of College Counseling, if you have any questions.

Thanksgiving Holiday

There will be no school the Wednesday before Thanksgiving to give students a longer break and to make it easier for families to leave town for the holiday. Please do not take your student out of school early on Tuesday, November 21. Doing so puts unnecessary pressure on students to catch up and on teachers who need to help them do so. As you can imagine, it's also very disruptive to classes when several students are absent. As I mentioned in my summer mailing, students who miss school that Tuesday will not be excused from assignments and will earn detention hours.

Smartphones in the News

A recent article in *Time* ("[We Need to Talk About Kids and Smartphones](#)") explores the negative impact mobile devices can have not only on young people's mental well-being but also on their ability (and

even desire) to take part in face-to-face communication. Even those experts who point out that correlation doesn't prove causation readily agree that it's important to establish clear limits on teenagers' use of devices. In many ways, the article adds weight to our school's limitations on the use of personal devices during the school day. In fact, all you have to do is compare the ways students interact in the Commons during the school day to the ways they interact once their phones come out after the final bell to know that the concerns highlighted in this article are very real ones playing out around us every day. Other research suggests our dependence on smartphones risks changing the very way we think. If you'd like to explore this issue further, check out this recent episode of *On Point* ("[How Smartphones Are Draining Our Brain Power](#)") dedicated to exploring the ways smartphones change our brains. I hope you find these resources as thought-provoking as I did.

The next *Principal Link* will come out in early December. Until then, Happy Halloween and Happy Thanksgiving!

Sincerely,

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