

GUIDANCE NEWSLETTER November 23, 2009

The Guidance Department would like to wish all the Blind Brook families a Happy and Healthy Thanksgiving. Thank you for sharing your children with us each day. There is not a day that goes by that they do not cease to amaze us with their energy, intelligence, sense of humor and determination.

This Thanksgiving may we all focus on what is good in our lives. Every day let's try to put everything aside amidst our busy days to reflect and recognize all the people, things and circumstances for which we are grateful.

Thanksgiving Day comes by statute, once a year, to the honest man comes as frequently as the heart of gratitude will allow. – Edward Sandford Martin

A Message from Ms. Mediate

Is it Really the Grade That is Most Important?

Within the next day or two you will receive your child's report card. It can be a stressful time for your child as he anticipates your reaction. As a parent, how will you respond to and what significance will you attach to the grade?

Education in the 21st century is about developing intelligences. There are many ways to demonstrate "knowing and learning." Our Vision of a Blind Brook Graduate" defines success based upon each student's ability to:

- Accept and appreciate individual differences
- Respect others
- Value different points of view
- Embrace lifelong learning
- Understand and practice ethical behavior
- Act with the understanding of the effects and consequences of actions
- Respond with reflection, adaptability and resilience
- Take risks, make mistakes and learn from experiences
- Effectively problem solve
- Act with honesty, integrity, compassion and empathy
- Advocate for ideas and causes
- Understand democratic principles
- Practice good citizenship

- Demonstrate good sportsmanship, the ability to cooperate and teamwork
- Generate innovative ideas and products that tap interests, passions and curiosities

Intelligence in the real world is based not only on the “grade earned” but also upon an individual’s capacity to apply knowledge, to adapt, to be resilient and to shape interactions with society and the environment. Success is being confident in one’s own ability. It is about passion and enjoying the journey more than the required result. It is about setting reasonable goals that are reasonably a stretch and the independent effort that goes into achieving the goals. Success is about taking reasonable and well calculated risks. It is about not being afraid to make a mistake with the knowledge that mistakes teach valuable lessons. Success is about being optimistic and believing that you can do what you set your mind to do. It is a willingness to take repeated or different actions to overcome obstacles. Success is in believing you can make a positive difference in the world and in the lives of others. In the words of Master Hsing Yen, knowledge and the essential things in life take “a moment to learn but a lifetime to master. It is not good enough to just understand something, you must live it.”

An “A” does not define a student. To focus on the goal of attaining an “A” or “A+” recently added to our grading scale can cause a student to chase perfection focused on results and not the value of the process. A more worthy goal may be to strive for excellence. Striving for perfection can create barriers to learning because one seldom, if ever, achieves perfection. To provide an illustration, I will quote an anecdote provided by Rodney Kissinger,

“A sculptor carves a statue out of a block of marble and calls his co-workers to see it. They are awestruck. This is a masterpiece! It is a masterpiece to everyone except the sculptor, who happens to be a perfectionist. And with the critical eye of a perfectionist, he sees just one flaw. All this statue needs to be absolutely perfect is to take one more chip off the top left corner. He gets out the mallet and the chisel and takes off that last chip. Then he steps back and surveys the statue again. Now he sees that taking that last chip off necessitates taking one off the opposite corner. And then one off the bottom. And then another chip all around again, and again. When he gets finished there is a pile of marble chips on the floor and no statue.”

Perfectionism brings on stress. It sets expectations in life that are too high. A perfectionist child does not enjoy himself and feels miserable when he does not earn the perfectionistic “A or A+.” If we demand perfection we will destroy the essence of a child. We will destroy what is good: passion, energy, creativity, innovation, motivation, spontaneity, trust, a willingness to take a risk, a willingness to be wrong and confidence. These are qualities that truly determine success. Perfection is impossible and we lose when we try to achieve it.

When report cards come home, view them with perspective. Focus on the effort and praise the effort. Focus on the initiative to apply what has been learned intellectually, socially and emotionally. Focus on the lesson learned in a mistake and not on the mistake. What is worse – to try and to fail or to never have tried at all? Encourage your child to demonstrate his intelligence and talents beyond the classroom. Encourage him to take the time to teach a peer by sharing knowledge and to provide service in school and

in the community not because he wants to be perfect, not because it is required, and not because it looks good to colleges but out of compassion and love. What is the benefit of intelligence and hard work if one does not take the initiative to apply one's talents and skills somewhere? How smart one *appears* is not what is important.

"Making your mark on the world is hard. If it were easy, everybody would do it. But it's not. It takes patience, it takes commitment, and it comes with plenty of failure along the way. The real test is not whether you avoid this failure, because you won't. It's whether you let it harden or shame you into inaction, or whether you learn from it; whether you choose to persevere."

-Barack Obama

PSAT Scores for Sophomores and Juniors

PSAT scores are in. The Guidance Department will be sending home the PSAT results, the original PSAT exam booklet and a brief explanation of the exam before Thanksgiving Break. After reviewing the results, please contact your child's counselor with any questions.

College Transcript Request Reminder for Seniors

If you plan to apply to a college with a December 30th, January 1st or any other deadline that falls within our holiday break, please be sure to submit your transcript request form to your counselor no later than December 16th. If this is your first application sent this year, the transcript request form must be in by December 4th as your counselor must have sufficient time to write a letter of recommendation to accompany the college admission materials.

First Quarter Grades

Seniors who have done well in the first quarter should consider sending first quarter grades to colleges to supplement materials that have already been sent. These requests must be in the guidance office by December 4, 2009.

Academic Support

Teachers are recommending students for academic support based upon their first quarter performance. If a student has free time at the same time academic support is scheduled, he will be assigned to academic support until his performance improves. If a match with an academic performance period is not possible, the student will be asked to should see the recommending instructor during activity period. A parent or student may also request academic support. To explore the possibilities, please contact your child's counselor.

Community Service

All students are required to perform twenty hours of community service per year in order to meet graduation requirements. Please note the number of hours your child has completed which appears on the report card. Contact your child's counselor or Jane Romm with any questions.

A Message from Project Success Counselor Ms. Marciano



Helping Your Teen Stay Healthy During the Holidays

The holiday season can provide special challenges to the parents of teens due to more parties/social gatherings, driving under the influence, frequent arguments due to stress, etc. The following are a few tips to help keep your teen safe:

- Make sure that your teens are in a safe and supervised environment during the day and in the evening.
- Have a “code” phrase that your teen can say to you over the cell phone that translates into “come get me now “in the event they find themselves at a party that got out of control.
- Talk to your child about the dangers of drinking.
- Send clear and consistent “no use “messages.
- Be a good role model for your teen .It is important to be aware of your social practices and how that impacts your teen because they will model behavior. Are your social events are focused around “cocktails”? What is the message?
- Discuss the dangers of drinking and driving and teach your teen what to do if confronted with alcohol poisoning.
- Make sure your teen understands the need for adult intervention in serious situations.
- Be aware that prescription and over-the-counter drugs might be available at the homes of friends and families that you visit over the holiday period.

It helps to deal with the challenges of the holiday season by eating properly, exercising, and getting enough sleep. When family members are over tired, things can seem overwhelming. Even the most perfect holiday celebrations are usually accompanied by some frustrations and disappointments. Healthy eating, sleeping, and exercising help to keep everyone and everything in perspective. Have a wonderful, safe holiday season. Feel free to contact Ms. Marciano for additional tips at 937-3600 x 3144.

Scholarship Opportunities

Gates Millennium Scholars Program – These scholarships are awarded to outstanding students who have significant financial need and demonstrated leadership skills. The student must complete the Gates scholarship application form (www.gmsp.org) and have a nominator who is an educator and a recommender who is familiar with their leadership and community service. These people will complete the Nominator and Recommender forms. To be eligible you must be a U.S. citizen or resident; African American, American Indian, Asian Pacific Islander or Hispanic American; have a minimum cumulative unweighted grade point average of 3.3; demonstrated leadership skills; community service; extracurricular or other activities; and meet the Federal Pell Grant eligibility criteria. All forms must be completed by the deadline of January 11, 2010

Ithaca College – Park Scholar Awards cover the full cost of attendance for students intending to major in cinema and photography, communication management, documentary studies, film photo and visual arts, integrated marketing communications, journalism, television or radio. Scholarship information and the Ithaca application should be completed by January 1, 2010. www.ithaca.edu/parkscholars.

National Multiple Sclerosis Society's Scholarship Program is for anyone who has Multiple Sclerosis or is the child of someone who has it. Awards range from \$1,000 to \$3,000. Online applications are being accepted through January 15, 2010 at www.nationalmssociety.org/scholarship. A personal statement on how MS has impacted the applicant's must also be included.

KFC Colonel's Scholarship Program is for any high school senior with a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.75 with financial need. The applicant must be a United States citizen and have an entrepreneurial spirit. The financial award can be up to \$5,000 per year for college costs. Students need to complete their online application by February 10, 2010. The online application will be available starting December 1, 2009 at www.kfcscholars.org. It is also important that the FAFSA be completed at the same time.