



December 5, 2016

Dear Junior Parents,

Now that the new year has arrived, we turn to our junior agenda in college counseling. We're writing to address three topics that require your attention now: standardized testing, individual family meetings, and college visits. These and many other topics compose our series of classes with your students over the next several months as well as the agenda for our **College Meeting for Junior Parents on Thursday, January 12, at 7:00 p.m. in the Theatre**. We urge you to consider this meeting **MANDATORY**. Yes, it really is that important and helpful!

Standardized Testing

We recommend juniors take the ACT and SAT (the versions **with Writing**) later this school year, preferably between February and June. While students typically achieve their highest test scores in senior year, juniors benefit from testing for a few reasons: 1) Junior-year testing gives us important information in your student's search phase as we suggest colleges that might be a good fit. 2) Junior-year testing secures at least one initial set of scores your student may need for especially early fall deadlines. 3) Because students rarely achieves all their highest subscores on a single test date, junior-year testing added to fall retesting arms them with multiple score reports that, together, represent their best.

Why take **both** the ACT and SAT in junior year? First, almost all U.S. colleges and universities accept both tests. Second, students who do notably better on one or the other test can target the stronger test for retakes in late spring of junior year and/or fall of senior year. Students *may* take the SAT or ACT any number of times, but we highly recommend **no more than three times** each because 1) students have typically reached their "level" after three attempts, and 2) at colleges that require all score reports of either test, having taken it several times can make a student appear desperate (not a good impression!).

If your student really doesn't want to take both tests, we recommend s/he do a few practice tests of each under timed conditions, decide which one feels more comfortable, and then register for that test.

A third type of standardized test is the SAT Subject Test. These are one-hour, rigorous, subject-specific tests required by a small number of extremely selective colleges. Other equally selective colleges recommend but do not require Subject Tests, and still others accept the ACT with Writing or other alternatives in lieu of Subject Tests. Colleges that require them have various rules about how many and in which subjects a student must test, so potential applicants to those colleges should carefully note those details. The best time to take most Subject Tests is May or June if the student is completing a course in that subject. Any student who anticipates needing Subject Test scores should save the May 6 or June 3 SAT test date for that purpose. (A student may take up to three Subject Tests on a single date but may NOT take Subject Tests on the same day as the regular SAT). May 6 may be best for students taking AP courses in corresponding subjects because they will have prepared for the AP Exam at the same time.

Formal test preparation is important for **all** students because the more selective the college, the more likely your student will be competing with peers across the country who have prepared thoroughly. We will discuss options for test preparation at the Junior Parent Meeting on January 12 and in our individual meeting with you and your student.

If your student is just beginning their college search, doesn't know where they want to apply, and is testing for the first time, please do **not** order score reports for colleges this spring. Students will have plenty of time to do that next fall as they're applying. However, in your student's test registration, please do enter Prairie's code (501918) so we receive their scores.

Students must register online for the ACT at act.org and for the SAT at collegeboard.org. A flyer noting these websites, test dates, and registration deadlines is attached. Each test is available on only three or four remaining dates this year and space is limited at testing sites, so we recommend you register as soon as possible for spring tests.

Family Meetings and College Lists

It's important that we meet with you and your student this winter to discuss various aspects of the college search process and an initial list of colleges recommended for your student. We tailor each list to the student's interests and credentials and typically include a couple dozen, variously selective colleges to ensure options across the "safety" to "reach" spectrum. The list is typically the starting point for each student's research and campus visits and is open to ongoing revision according to the student's developing preferences, interests, etc. Obviously, the sooner we can meet, the sooner you'll have a targeted college list and more time for a thoughtful, thorough college search. **Please call or email our College Counseling Assistant, Christine Uebe (752-2627 or cuebe@prairieschool.com), to make your family meeting appointment!**

College Visits

A student's college search is most successful when it includes multiple campus visits. We vigorously recommend that, if at all possible, you plan college campus visits between now and September. You may postpone a few visits until fall or winter, but by fall your student should have completed most of the groundwork for deciding where to apply.

We cannot stress enough the importance of seeing college campuses in person and "officially." It provides invaluable information and gives students a clearer sense of fit. Plus, from the college's viewpoint it's an important gesture of the student's interest. Colleges note and value such "demonstrations of interest" because they know students who have visited are making a more informed decision to apply, which in turn can give students an advantage in the admissions process.

To arrange an official campus visit, register on the college's web site or call their Admissions Office. An official visit typically comprises a group information session and tour, but it's often possible to add other forms of individual interface, including an interview with an admissions officer (if required, recommended, or offered), class observation, conversation with a faculty member in an area of interest, or simply a meal in the dining hall. To schedule an interview or inquire about these additional options, contact the Admissions Office in advance. In early February one of our junior classes will focus on campus visits and interviews, but if your student is scheduled for a visit or interview before then, let us know so we can help them prepare.

If you're wondering how you can be expected to visit a dozen or more campuses, be assured that colleges know visiting is not always possible! Good alternatives to campus visits are meeting with a

college representative visiting Prairie or traveling through our area, attending a college fair where the college is represented, or meeting with a local alumna/us or student ambassador from the college. For information on these possibilities, call the college's Admissions Office.

And So We Begin!

Please see our checklist of Next Steps below and the attached schedule of ACT/SAT dates for the current school year.

We look forward to meeting and working with you.

Sincerely,

Maggie McDonough and Jim Zielinski
Co-Directors of College Counseling

Attachment: ACT/SAT Test Dates 2016-2017

NEXT STEPS CHECKLIST:

- ___ **Attend the College Meeting for Junior Parents on Thursday, January 12, at 7:00 p.m. in the Theatre.**
- ___ Call or email Mrs. Uebe now to set up an individual family meeting with your college counselor (752-2627 or cuebe@prairieschool.com).
- ___ Register soon to take the ACT and SAT (both with Writing) between February and June. The tests are not offered every month. See flyer attached.
- ___ Arrange for formal test preparation before spring testing. We can discuss options in your family meeting.
- ___ Visit as many colleges of interest as possible before next fall.

ACT & SAT National Test Dates and Registration Deadlines 2016-2017

Students must register for the ACT and SAT on their own through ACT and College Board, respectively. The ACT and SAT are administered at various locations in southeastern Wisconsin and northern Illinois. Further information regarding registration is available at the websites below.

We strongly recommend that students **not** send test results to colleges until the fall of senior year.

ACT Test Dates

Website: www.act.org

~~~~~ *Students SHOULD register for the optional Writing test.* ~~~~~

| Test Date          | Regular Registration<br>Postmark Deadline | Late Registration<br>Postmark Deadline<br>(additional fee applies) |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| September 10, 2016 | August 5, 2016                            | August 19, 2016                                                    |
| October 22, 2016   | September 16, 2016                        | September 30, 2016                                                 |
| December 10, 2016  | November 4, 2016                          | November 18, 2016                                                  |
| February 11, 2017  | January 13, 2017                          | January 20, 2017                                                   |
| April 8, 2017      | March 3, 2017                             | March 17, 2017                                                     |
| June 10, 2017      | May 5, 2017                               | May 19, 2017                                                       |

## SAT Test Dates

Website: [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org)

| Test Date        | Test                | Regular Registration<br>Postmark Deadline | Late Registration<br>Online or by Phone<br>(additional fee applies) |
|------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| October 1, 2016  | SAT & Subject Tests | September 1, 2016                         | September 20, 2016                                                  |
| November 5, 2016 | SAT & Subject Tests | October 7, 2016                           | October 25, 2016                                                    |
| December 3, 2016 | SAT & Subject Tests | November 3, 2016                          | November 22, 2016                                                   |
| January 21, 2017 | SAT & Subject Tests | December 21, 2016                         | January 10, 2017                                                    |
| March 11, 2017   | SAT Only            | February 10, 2017                         | February 28, 2017                                                   |
| May 6, 2017      | SAT & Subject Tests | April 7, 2017                             | April 25, 2017                                                      |
| June 3, 2017     | SAT & Subject Tests | May 9, 2017                               | May 24, 2017                                                        |

***Not all subject tests are available on each date.  
Refer to College Board's website for more details.***