



May, 2010

Black River Families,

Let's talk! My new "Since You Asked..." column will seek to provide answers to the very good questions often asked by members of our school community.

Specifically, I'll start out by addressing some issues brought up in our recent Parent Survey – including questions, concerns and suggestions. I hope this new means of communication will help to keep everybody informed about important issues at school, and I encourage you to send me any questions you think would be beneficial for all our Ripples readers.

The topic for this first column is College Counseling. I hope you find it helpful

*Shannon Brunink
Head of School*

Question:

Academic counseling seems limited. What are you doing to make sure my child is taking everything they need to for graduation? Maybe there should be an individual academic plan for all students. Should we hire a full time counselor? Parents could use more help with financial aid information.

Answer:

College preparation is what we're all about. In addition to our rigorous curriculum, we are always working on better ways to make sure our kids are informed about their choices and responsibilities in getting ready for advanced education.

We feel that the daily time spent in small groups with their CAP teachers provides more consistent attention to academic and college planning for each student than a single counselor could provide. For example, CAP teachers have instituted an Educational Development Plan (EDP) for every student in their class. This EDP provides a road map through graduation, and is reviewed by them with students as they register for the coming year to make sure they are taking the required courses. Our Curriculum Director has provided CAP teachers with a detailed power point presentation to walk students through an overview of credit /course requirements and how they will meet those requirements year by year. Registration sheets for the coming year were completed in CAP and sent home with each student. And, in the spirit of parent communication, these schedules now require both parent and CAP teacher signatures so everyone is on the same page.

While we continue to work on the consistency of the program, the goal is for all CAP teachers to monitor each student's Educational Program, check in with them on grades and homework, and provide the increasing amounts of college-related information required at each successive grade level. Conversations, explorations and presentations in these classes provide information and feedback that help students to think about their aptitudes and career interests.

Along with our innovations in CAP, our college counselor, Cessie Wright stays very busy meeting with students, organizing college applications and presenting evening programs during the school year to offer

information to students and their families on college options and financial planning. Also, as a way to get all of the important information to our students, Ms. Wright began doing “Senior Announcements” regarding scholarship opportunities and college applications. Juniors can look forward to a similar publication from Ms. Wright next year highlighting events like college or career fairs as well as other local resources that may be helpful to students looking at colleges and planning for their own futures.

Beyond our own resources of teachers and Ms. Wright, Black River also asks outside resources to share their knowledge. As a means of giving students first-hand information, we have compiled an index of Black River parents who have volunteered to make available their personal career and college experiences. They are called upon to speak to interested students about their careers and their alma maters. Annual visits by many excellent colleges and universities round this process out with representatives who provide information about their schools and recommendations for students to meet their entry requirements.

Please visit our web site under **Academics** to see a wealth of information including our current Course Catalog. The College Reference page provides you a year-by-year timeline and checkpoints, as well as information on doing college visits, a summary of standardized testing available or required, steps for applying to colleges, financial aid/scholarship references, test preparation and a host of online resources.

Coming up, this column will discuss other school matters, including academic support, our sports program, Infinite Campus, facilities, school nutrition and other issues of interest to students and their families. Our doors are always open here at school to talk with you about concerns specific to your child.

As always, thanks for taking the time to inquire about our great school. I look forward to seeing you at the many upcoming spring events.

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