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Helpful Links

For info about SAT I, II, and AP Tests go to:

www.collegeboard.com

For info about ACT test go to:

www.act.org

For info about test optional schools go to:

www.fairtest.org/university/optional

For info about financial aid go to:

www.FAFSA.ed.gov

www.fastweb.com

www.finaid.org

For college search info go to:

www.collegenavigator.gov

www.collegeprowler.com

To take a virtual tour of college campuses go to:

www.youniversitytv.com

www.youvisit.com

To learn about Colleges That Change Lives go to:

www.ctcl.org

Dear Students, Family, and Colleagues:

No one can deny this has been a year of tremendous loss, despair, and destruction. Lives have been lost, homes destroyed, businesses forever closed. But even as we experience the despair, we cannot overlook the small embers of hope starting to emit light as they rise from the ashes of 2020. Our ability to think outside the box is remarkable and the human capacity for compassion and genuine concern cannot be overlooked.

As we enter the season of Thanksgiving, we at AcademicAlly, LLC are grateful for your continued support of our mission to help empower students across the lifespan. Thank you for allowing us to be a part of your student's journey.

Happy Thanksgiving!

Tales from the Other Side: What Our Teachers and Counselors Are Experiencing During COVID 19

We know it difficult to face the daily demands of life in the world of COVID 19. In an effort to create a culture of support and understanding, we thought it might be valuable for the students and their families to hear the school's perspective of the situation.** Next month, we will hear from our parents!**

Teachers and guidance counselors in Pennsylvania and California were asked the following questions:

- 1) What is/are the greatest challenge(s) you face as a counselor/teacher?
- 2) How can parents and their students, as well as the community, better support you?
- 3) What gives you hope?

The greatest challenges our educators face vary. Technology is difficult for some; not only are teachers and staff grappling with new technology, but they are also trying to outsmart and anticipate technological "difficulties". Wi-fi connectivity gets

Keeping on Track: Seniors: Finish up your college admissions essays and your Common App. Still struggling with those college essays? We can help you to choose the appropriate prompt, formulate some ideas, and finish with a final draft that captures the essence of who you are! We can also help you to present your best self on your application. Call today to schedule an appointment. Keep working on those classes, as some schools may require a first-quarter grade report.

Juniors: Well, you are two months into your junior year, and it is not the junior year you envisioned by any stretch of the imagination. Just do your best. Get your work done on time and to the best of your ability. Figure out ways to stay involved at school and safely contribute to your community. Start a fundraiser for first responders. Arrange a Toys for Tots Drive for the holidays. Conduct a diaper drive for a local agency. Organize a food drive for Thanksgiving. Do not rest on your laurels and assume that colleges will not be looking closely at your activities. On the contrary, colleges will be curious to see what your class does **despite** COVID 19. Be creative and innovative. Think outside of the box. Attend virtual information sessions and tours of colleges. Speak with students you know who attend the schools to which you are considering applying.

TEST UPDATES

ACT: Here is the link for the latest ACT information:
<https://www.act.org/content/act/en/covid-19.html>

SAT: Here is the link for the latest SAT information:
<https://pages.collegeboard.org/sat-covid-19-updates>

compromised; sound conks out; and mechanisms to share material fail to connect to the Zoom call. Students can't or won't turn on their cameras or mute buttons fail to release, despite even the most valiant of efforts.

Technology may bring people together, but it does not necessarily facilitate emotional connectivity. Building rapport with students is a critical component of teaching. Screened interactions sometimes create a barrier to this process, so teachers have had to utilize creativity to overcome this obstacle. Pull-out sessions have been a useful way to engage with students in a more personal, one-on-one arrangement. Ironically, it is not very often when a teacher can utilize individualized meetings during "normal" teaching circumstances, so, in some ways, this is a silver lining of COVID!

Logistics can be difficult during these pandemic days. In California, many teachers interface with dual-language students. One colleague of mine who works as a language assessment coordinator must meet with her students in-person since virtual meetings will not lend themselves to proper testing conditions. Normally, she would be able to pull children from their classes to test them. Now she states, "Finding space, obtaining proper PPE, and arranging for parents to bring their students to school at a time that works for them, has been a challenge."

The number one ask educators made when it comes to supporting their efforts is support from parents. Another veteran California teacher emphasized the importance of parental support. "I find that students who have parent support do well, yet the students who are on their own, responsible for younger siblings, have very little supervision, and are not [encouraged] by parents to do well in school tend to fail." Having the ability to collaborate with parents is valued by many of the teachers and guidance counselors who participated in this discussion. Teachers and guidance counselors both stated there were important steps parents could take at home to support their comrades in school:

- 1) Establishing and maintaining structure at home in the form of: bedtime, meals, protocols for homework completion, creating clear lines of communication about "their learning and what they are getting out of it"
- 2) Modeling time management and organization with the use of calendars, school schedules, and the tracking of appointments and homework deadlines
- 3) Checking grades (and making sure students are tracking their grades) on a regular basis
- 4) Encouraging students to check their assignments and due dates on the on-line portals and track their progress in some kind of assignment book -either digital or hard copy.
- 5) Being flexible and understanding if inquiries of teachers are not answered on the same day
- 6) Checking in on their children and asking them how they are doing, not just academically, but more importantly, emotionally. What they are learning? What, if anything, can they, as the parents, could do to be of more help to their children?

All of these steps are viewed as helpful, not just to supporting the educators, but the students as well.

When it comes to hope, one PA guidance counselor wanted us to remember that though this situation is extremely trying and

uncertain, "...this will not be forever. Seeing the bigger picture in the grand scheme of life and reducing this to a period of time in what will hopefully be a long-lived life" may help to put things into perspective. A teacher in Southern California stated that her students' resilience is what gives her hope. "What gives me hope is the kids and their resilience. Their willingness to be honest with me about the challenges and their respectful nature. They are patient with me as I learn and sometimes struggle with delivery. They are so supportive. I also have a lot of hope to make an impact because of how distance teaching is set up. I am able to check in one-on-one so much more with students and offer more strategic support and make connections because of the ability to create more one on one time. I have had far greater opportunity to cultivate relationships teaching virtually then I seem to in person because I can send messages privately and use break out rooms to check in so frequently." Another Pennsylvania teacher shared what brings him hope. "What gives me hope is that everyone is on the same side of this pandemic, and that is to get rid of [COVID 19] and get back to normal. Before [COVID 19], I would have students laugh at the idea of having a pop quiz early on a Monday morning. If I were to tell them [tomorrow] that next Monday we will all be in school, unmasked, back to normal, and have a pop quiz Monday morning, I can't think of any[one] who would not welcome that idea."

We are all facing challenges in the wake of COVID 19. It is our hope that by sharing the experiences of different groups of people, we can establish a sense of appreciation, insight, and empathy which can evolve into respect and understanding. With this sentiment as our framework, we can all get through this difficult time together. We look forward to hearing from our parents next month!

Pay it Forward: Do you know someone who is struggling with the shift to virtual classroom learning?? Send them this newsletter or forward us their contact information. We want to help!

Contact Us

<http://www.Academic-Ally.com>

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