

# High School Counselor's Information for December 2011/January 2012

## IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

December 5, 2011	First day for students to make 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester Schedule Changes
December 9, 2011	Last day for students to make 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester Schedule Changes
December 9, 2011	Seniors Submit Final College applications for Fall 2012 acceptance
December 10, 2011	ACT National Test Date
December 12, 2011	Teacher recommended schedule changes (Dec. 12 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> and January 5 <sup>th</sup> through 11 <sup>th</sup> )
January 5, 2012	First day of second semester
January 13, 2012	ACT registration due date for the February 11, 2012 test date
January 16, 2012	No School Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
January 24, 2012	FAFSA Completion Night 4:00 to 7:00 (call the high school for an appointment) (Snow date: Feb. 9, 2012 from 4:00 –7:00)

## SCHEDULE CHANGES FOR SECOND SEMESTER

Schedule changes for second semester will be considered December 5 through December 9, 2011. Changes may be made from 7:45 a.m. till 3:30 p.m., on Monday, December 5<sup>th</sup> through Friday, December 12<sup>th</sup>. Please stop by the counselor's office for schedule changes during study hall, lunch, or before/after school.

**C**ollege **Z**one [www.collegezone.com](http://www.collegezone.com) and **W**hat's **N**ext Illinois [www.whatsnextillinois.org](http://www.whatsnextillinois.org)

College Zone along with What's Next Illinois are trusted sources for college information set up by the State of Illinois. Whether you're a student or parent you will find valuable information on grants, scholarships, loans, financial aid, prepaid tuition, **financial aid estimator**, **loan repayment calculator** and much more.

The **State and Federal Aid Estimator** provides an estimate of how much financial aid, including the State of Illinois' Monetary Award Program (MAP) grant, may be available to help pay for college. Results are based on estimates and may not reflect actual awards. Access the calculator at [www.collegezone.com](http://www.collegezone.com). Click on College Zone, then under Resource Center click *Calculators*, then *State and Federal Aid Estimator*.

Use the **State and Federal Aid Estimator** to:

- Estimate an **Expected Family Contribution (EFC)** for both public and private colleges.
- See how "what-if" situations (inheritance, bonus, moving, etc.) may impact your financial aid eligibility.
- Estimate education loan payments for Stafford, PLUS, Perkins, and others.
- Print your own EFC Report for future references.
- Estimate current year MAP and Pell grant eligibility.

Use the **Loan Repayment Calculator** to estimate what a student's monthly payments will be once they enter the repayment period. The calculator can help students decide how much they should borrow based on what they reasonably will be able to repay once they complete their training and are working.

**For more scholarship listings and college/loan information please visit the following web sites:**

1. **College Zone** - <http://www.collegezone.com/index.htm>
2. **What's Next Illinois** <https://secure.whatsnextillinois.org/Default.aspx>
3. **Fastweb** - financial aid - [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)
4. **Scholarship Aide** - [www.scholaraid.com](http://www.scholaraid.com)
5. **Plato** - [www.plato.org](http://www.plato.org)
6. **Financial aid** - [www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org)
7. **College View** – [www.collegeview.com](http://www.collegeview.com)
8. **Federal Student Financial Aid Homepage** – [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)
9. **Pre-Paid Tuition** – [www.collegeillinois.com](http://www.collegeillinois.com)
10. **Student Award Search Aid** <http://www.studentawardsearch.com/>

## ACT/ETM PREP CLASSES

The Regional Office of Education, in cooperation with the school districts in ROE 27, is offering ACT Preparation classes over a nine-week period in two locations. The ACT preparation course that the Regional Office will be offering is through Education Testing Methods, Inc. (ETM) and is divided into nine weekly sessions with each session lasting three hours. The registration and textbook fee for this class will be announced in mid December. For more details contact the counselor's office at 582-2223 ext. 3.

## **FAFSA COMPLETION WORKSHOP FOR SENIORS AND THEIR PARENTS**

Seniors and their parents may sign-up for the FAFSA completion workshop scheduled for Tuesday, January 24, 2012 in the high school computer lab. Parent/students should sign-up for a half-hour appointment, anytime between 4:00 and 7:00. Students and parents will need their: W-2's, federal tax return for 2010 or 2011, social security number, and driver's license number. It is important to file the FAFSA early, which may require students and parents to use their 2010 tax return as an estimate and then change the figures at a later date after completing their 2011 taxes. Local college financial aid personnel will help walk families through the process of submitting the 2012 FAFSA. The State of Illinois is encouraging all seniors to complete the FAFSA using last year's tax information by February 14. Keep in mind that money is limited and will be available to eligible families on a first come first serve basis. That is why it is important to file with last year's taxes then make corrections when you have completed your 2011 taxes. Please call 582-2223 Ext. 3 at the high school to set up an appointment time for the January 24<sup>th</sup> workshop.

## **ATTENTION FRESHMEN, SOPHOMORES, JUNIORS & PARENTS**

Now is the time to visit colleges. Check the school calendar in the student planner for days out of school and make arrangements to visit colleges. Keep in mind that most schools are open for Saturday visits. Reminder: Juniors get one excused college day second semester and seniors get two excused college days for the year.

No school or In-service Days are Good Days to Schedule College Visits. Check out the following dates:

Martin Luther King's Birthday	January 16, 2012	President's Day	February 20, 2012
Teacher's Institute	March 30, 2012	Spring Break	April 5-9, 2012

## **JUNIORS RESEARCH POST-SECONDARY PLANS**

During the month of January juniors should discuss and research post-secondary options with their parents. Parents are asked to help students narrow the post-secondary selection to three schools by August of 2013. The graduating class of 2013 will be asked to submit post-secondary school/job applications starting September 2012. Please note the following suggestions to help with the post-secondary search:

1. Take a career interest inventory on-line.
2. Research post-secondary schools on-line for chosen career fields.
3. Arrange post-secondary visits with schools of interest.
4. Compile a list of local scholarships & collect applications to review scholarship criteria.
5. Prepare to take the ACT/PSAE on April 24 & 25, 2012 at Mercer County High School.
6. Meet with college representatives in February, March & April as they visit MCHS.
7. The following are excellent websites to access as post-secondary plans are developed:

[www.collegezone.com](http://www.collegezone.com) (Illinois Student Assistance Commission)

[www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) (College Planning Resources)

[www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) (Educational Tax Credit and Benefits)

[www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com) (Private Scholarship Search site)

## **CAREER INFORMATION FOR JUNIORS & SENIORS**

In January juniors will be assigned to small group information sessions during advisory hour to work on career and post-secondary plans. Students are encouraged to use the following web sites as they develop post-secondary plans.

ASVAB – [www.asvabprogram.com](http://www.asvabprogram.com)

Military – [www.todaysmilitary.com/](http://www.todaysmilitary.com/) or [www.armedforcescareers.com/](http://www.armedforcescareers.com/)

College Zone - [www.collegezone.com](http://www.collegezone.com)

Peace Corp – [www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov)

Job Corp – [www.jobcorps.dol.gov](http://www.jobcorps.dol.gov)

College View – [www.collegeview.com](http://www.collegeview.com)

List of Colleges and universities – [www.ute4xas/index.html](http://www.ute4xas/index.html) Vocational Schools – [www.vocationalschools.org](http://www.vocationalschools.org)

Illinois Student Assistance Commission - [www.whatsnextillinois.org](http://www.whatsnextillinois.org)

Juniors who take the ASVAB will be given a personal user access code for [www.asvabprogram.com](http://www.asvabprogram.com). Students/parents are encouraged to use this site as career options and post-secondary plans are explored.

## **2012 GRADUATES (POST-SECONDARY UP-DATE)**

1. All seniors should have submitted their college applications at this time. If you need further assistance with this process please contact the counselor's office by December 13, 2011.
2. Seniors should collect recommendations from teachers and community members for scholarship applications by mid January.
3. Since housing will be limited at most colleges, seniors should notify colleges in January and state their plans. Students should then make a housing deposit in about four to six weeks.
4. Seniors planning to enter the workforce immediately after high school should be completing job applications and setting up interviews during late January and early February.
5. Many colleges will allow seniors to take the ACT on campus, with the understanding that the ACT scores are only valid at that school. Seniors may want to take advantage of this opportunity to raise scores so they are eligible for admission or scholarships at that college.

6. Seniors please stop by the counselor's office by mid-January if you are interested in an apprenticeship program.
7. Parents are encouraged to call the counselor's office if they have any questions concerning their student's post-secondary plans. (Phone 582-2223 ext.3)

## **UPCOMING SCHOLARSHIP DUE DATES**

Please note the following information regarding scholarships.

1. **New applications are announced in the monthly bulletin and on the daily announcements. Scholarships will be accessible through the High School Counselor's Page at [www.mercerschools.org](http://www.mercerschools.org) through either a pdf file or direct link to the sponsor's website. The site will be update as scholarships arrive. Last year's scholarship due date and/or scholarship will be left on the list until the new due date/scholarship is available so students can check criteria and have a general idea of due dates. Pay close attention to scholarship criteria, deadlines and instructions for submitting the application as each scholarship is different. If you have any question or cannot access the scholarships please contact the counselor's office.**
2. Start the application process at least three weeks prior to the due date when possible.
3. Check to see if reference letters are needed and allow time for individuals to write the recommendation.
4. Provide a current student fact sheet when asking individuals for recommendations.
5. Follow scholarship instructions carefully. Make sure that you meet all criteria for a scholarship before starting the application process.
6. Please note some of the scholarships listed are only available to students after they have contacted the sponsoring agency. (Please contact the sponsor two months in advance when possible.)
7. **Follow instructions for returning the scholarship and meeting the scholarship deadline. Some scholarships must be returned to the counselor's office. Other scholarships must be mailed by the student. Allow at least five days extra for mail delivery. Photocopy completed applications for your records before mailing.**
8. **To ensure that applications have been received include a self-addressed stamped postcard with a line for the date received and the scholarship name, as shown.**

<b>Scholarship</b>	<b>Click On the Link Below to Access Scholarship</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
AXA Achievement Scholarship	<a href="http://www.axa-equitable.com/axa-foundation/AXA-achievement-scholarship.html">http://www.axa-equitable.com/axa-foundation/AXA-achievement-scholarship.html</a>	Dec. 1, 2011
Iowa/Illinois Regional Auto Show	<a href="http://www.cfgrb.org/scholarshiplisting">www.cfgrb.org/scholarshiplisting</a>	Jan. 5, 2012
Simon Youth Foundation	<a href="http://sms.scholarshipamerica.org/simonyouth/">http://sms.scholarshipamerica.org/simonyouth/</a>	Jan. 5, 2011 (TBA)
John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Essay Contest	<a href="http://www.ifklibrary.org/">http://www.ifklibrary.org/</a>	Jan. 7, 2012
Burger King Scholars	<a href="http://www.haveityourwayfoundation.org/">http://www.haveityourwayfoundation.org/</a>	Jan. 10, 2011 (TBA)
Quad City Engineering and Science Council	<a href="http://www.quadcityengineeringandscience.org/">Quad City Engineering and Science Council</a>	Jan. 28, 2011 (TBA)
Community Foundation of the Great River Bend	<a href="http://www.cfgrb.org/scholarshiplisting">www.cfgrb.org/scholarshiplisting</a>	Feb. 1, 2012
AXA Achievement Community Scholarship	<a href="http://www.axa-achievement.com">www.axa-achievement.com</a>	Feb. 1, 2012
DAR Scholarships (2 scholarships available)	<a href="http://www.dar.org/">General Dearborn American Hist. Scholarship Illinois DAR</a>	Feb. 1, 2012
CBAI Foundation for Community Banking		Feb. 7, 2011 (TBA)
KFC Colonel's Scholars	<a href="http://www.kfcscholars.org">www.kfcscholars.org</a>	Feb. 8, 2012
World Class Mediacom	<a href="http://www.mediacomworldclass.com">www.mediacomworldclass.com</a>	Feb. 15, 2012
1 <sup>st</sup> Farm Credit Services	<a href="http://www.1stfarmcredit.com/AboutUs/Pages/ScholarshipPrograms.aspx">http://www.1stfarmcredit.com/AboutUs/Pages/ScholarshipPrograms.aspx</a>	Feb. 15, 2011 (TBA)
FFA Scholarships	<a href="http://www.ffa.org">www.ffa.org</a> Under Programs, click on Scholarships	Feb. 15, 2012
Best Buy Community Volunteer Service Awards	<a href="http://www.bestbuy-communityrelations.com">www.bestbuy-communityrelations.com</a> Application available end of Dec.	Feb. 15, 2011 (TBA)
Illinois PTA Lillian E. Glover	<a href="http://www.illinoispta.org/">http://www.illinoispta.org/</a> (Under Programs, click on Scholarship)	Feb. 17, 2012
Charles Curry SMART Bus	<a href="http://www.charlescurry.org/">Charles Curry SMART Bus</a>	Feb. 15, 2011 (TBA)
American Legion O'Fallersans Post # 121	<a href="http://www.americanlegion.org/">American Legion Aledo</a>	Feb. 25, 2011 (TBA)
Frank E. Smith Family	<a href="http://www.frankesmith.com/">Frank E. Smith</a>	Last attendance day in Feb.