

# PrepTalk™

Advice for Montgomery County Parents and Students on College Preparation • Spring 2002

## Tune to PrepTalk

**T**hree installments of PrepTalk's TV version, are now airing on the cable channels for Montgomery County Public Schools and Montgomery College.

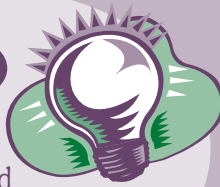
The show features MC and MCPS students, parents, faculty, and staff, and draws upon the expertise of local business people and other community members. It covers such topics as the value of education, what courses to take, and what role parents play in the college planning process.

PrepTalk airs on MCPS Channel 34 on Mondays at 7 p.m., Tuesdays at 10 p.m., and Wednesdays at 7 p.m., and periodically on MC Channel 10.

## Collaborative Efforts

Dr. Jerry Weast, superintendent of Montgomery County Public Schools and Dr. Charlene Nunley, president of Montgomery College, discuss how the county schools and the college are collaborating to improve student preparation for college and the world of work.

### SuccessTalk



A rigorous high school course load looks good on transcripts. See page 4 for details.

### MoneyTalk



Maryland's 529 plans are a great way to save for college—and get a tax break. See page 6.

### TestTalk



Use the summer to enroll in an SAT® prep course. See page 5 for details.

### PrepTalk™

A service of the Montgomery College–Montgomery County Public Schools Partnership

## The Inside Scoop...

Look for these segments throughout this newsletter to find helpful information for getting ready for college. From taking tests, planning academic schedules, and improving study skills, to paying for college and planning for key deadlines—you'll find it all here.

### TickTalk



MC/MCPS to provide a program on the importance of the PSAT®. See page 5.

### StraightTalk



Current MC students, who attended MCPS high schools, share their thoughts. See page 3 and 8.

# PrepTalk

## 10 Ways to Jumpstart College Planning

**I**t's amazing, but decisions you make as early as 8th grade have a huge effect on your college career. They affect how soon you'll go to college, how good the college you go to will be, and even whether you'll go to college at all.

### Get involved

Getting ready for college isn't all work. Find something you really like doing, then dive into it. Maybe you're drawn to sports, student council, music, art... you get the picture. You'll develop skills and be more appealing to colleges (they like students who'll add something to campus life).

### Do the work

If you expect to go to college later, expect to study now. No one can do it for you. Don't talk the college talk—"I'll go to college to get a great career"—without walking the walk.

**Read what interests you—magazines, novels, whatever. People who read more know more.**

### Take challenging courses

Colleges look at your grades, sure, but also at how difficult your courses are. They want to see that you've challenged yourself. Plus, if you pursue advanced courses, such as AP®, you may be able to get college credit.

### Get help

Having trouble in a class? Many schools have peer tutors, students in upper grades who'll help you (for free). Talk to teachers or counselors—let them know you want extra help.

### Read

Read at least 30 minutes every day, beyond study and homework. Read what interests you—magazines, novels, whatever. People who read more know more. And when you take PSAT/NMSQT® and SAT® tests, knowing more will really pay off.

### Don't delay

You take the PSAT/NMSQT as a junior (or even as a sophomore). So you have a few semesters before then to take the solid math and other courses that get you ready.

### Get the college-bound facts

How do you know all the right moves to get into college? Ask someone who's done it. Get to know your counselors. Ask a career planner at a local college, or a trusted teacher. Do Web research.

### Involve your family

When parents or guardians haven't been to college themselves, they may think they can't help you. That's not true. They can talk to counselors and help you stay on the right path.

### Look for a mentor

If you don't find support at home, look for other adults who can lend their enthusiasm and help make sure you succeed. You might look to a counselor, a teacher, or someone else you trust.

### Confront personal roadblocks

If you have a problem that's really getting in the way of schoolwork, try to sort it out. Talking to friends helps, or look for an adult—parent, coach, nurse, counselor—who can offer advice.

Source: The College Board Web site, [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

## SuccessTalk

### Just "Due" It

For each college you are applying to, prepare a folder and staple an index card on the outside of the folder with key deadline dates noted for FAFSA, college profile, application, and institutional aid.

Source: Springbrook High School Guidance Department and Career Center Web site

## PrepTalk™

A newsletter for Montgomery County parents and high school students on preparing for college. Produced in partnership by Montgomery County Public Schools and Montgomery College. Please direct queries to:

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## Working Together for Student Success

*A Note from the Superintendent of Schools and the Montgomery College President*

**M**ontgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) and Montgomery College (MC) are partners in helping students focus on college and career goals early in their school career. We know that collaborative efforts between secondary schools and higher education can improve students' preparation for college and the world of work. The MC/MCPS partnership efforts currently include more than 31 joint projects ranging from early administration of the Preliminary SAT®, programs to increase rigor, and programs to provide interventions for students.

Families and students also are a crucial part of this collaboration. Parents and students can work together to consider decisions regarding courses and activities and examine how they fit into the student's goals and interests. Even middle school students, who may not yet envision attending college, should work toward college readiness by taking challenging courses, developing time management and study skills, and getting involved in volunteer work and other activities.

We hope you will use this fourth edition of *PrepTalk* as one of your planning tools. The publication offers a wealth of information and suggestions. A companion piece to the newsletter is a new half-hour *PrepTalk* television program airing on MCPS's Cable Channel 34. Videotapes of *PrepTalk* TV programs soon will be available in the Career Information centers in all MCPS high schools. These centers are full of additional resources that you may want to explore, including access to two Internet college planning guides—MyRoad.com and Bridges.com—free of charge. See page 7 for more details. The more information you have, the better choices you will be able to make.

Dr. Jerry D. Weast, Superintendent  
Montgomery County Public Schools

Dr. Charlene R. Nunley, President  
Montgomery College

## StraightTalk

**How did high school prepare you for college?**



"In high school, the teachers made sure you did your work, and approached you if you needed help. In college, your work is your responsibility."

Monica  
Damascus High School Graduate

## TickTalk

### Mark Your SAT® Date



- Upcoming SAT® test date: October 12 (SAT® I and SAT® II)
- SAT® registration deadline: September 10 (SAT® I and SAT® II)

Applications are available at your high school career center or online.

Source: The College Board Web site, [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

## Joint "Co-op"eration

**S**tudents who participate in MCPS's Cooperative Work Experience (CWE) Program can gain on-the-job experience while applying the skills they've learned in class. It can also help them gain early entrance into MC's Cooperative Education and Internship Program.

CWE students entering MC may receive advanced eligibility for the Co-op Program if they use their high school work assignment as the MC co-op job.

The benefits of MC's program include earning up to six credits through co-op; spending less time in class and more time on-the-job; and earning college credits while making money to pay for tuition.

For information and an application, call 301-650-1360, e-mail [abeemer@mc.cc.md.us](mailto:abeemer@mc.cc.md.us), or visit the College's Web site at [www.montgomerycollege.edu/Departments/cooped/](http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/Departments/cooped/).

## In Plotting a Course Load, the Harder, the Better

The following article is excerpted from the Washington Post's Homeroom Section, February 14, 2002.

**S**tudents often say something like, "I want to make sure I get an A, so I'll take an easier course rather than risk a B or C in a harder course." Parents may buy those arguments, thinking it's more important for a child to be successful than to struggle in a harder class. Even highly educated parents who want their children to go to selective colleges sometimes agree with this logic, thinking that grades are the main factor in college admissions. Unfortunately, too many guidance counselors encourage kids and parents in that thinking.

But in fact, credible data demonstrate that students who take challenging courses in high school—even if they don't do particularly well in them—are more likely to graduate

**...the absolute key is to at least master most of Algebra II by graduation.**

from college than those who do well in unchallenging courses. Besides, any good college counselor will tell you that the first thing selective colleges look at on a transcript is whether the student took rigorous classes. They look at grades second.

So students should be aiming for the most challenging course work they can possibly handle. In math,

### Recommended Program of Study for College

As students plan their high school classes, their focus should be on meeting graduation requirements, as well as college admission requirements. The following courses are highly recommended for college-bound students.

#### English

Four years required for a Maryland high school diploma. Focus on:

- Rules of grammar
- Communication and problem-solving skills
- Writing techniques
- Library research skills

#### Mathematics

Four years required, including algebra and geometry. College-bound students should also take:

- Advanced algebra
- Trigonometry
- Calculus

#### Science

Three years required. Recommend three years of lab sciences:

- Biology
- Chemistry
- Physics



#### Social Studies

Three years required.

- American history
- World history
- National, state, local government

#### Foreign Language

Minimum three years recommended.

#### Additional Requirements

Minimum one year required in each of the following course areas:

- Arts and Music
- Technology Education
- Physical Education

Minimum one semester required in:

- Health Education

they should aim to take calculus by the time they're a senior, which means passing Algebra I by the end of eighth grade. If it's too late for that, they should aim for pre-calculus in their senior year, which means they should pass Algebra I in ninth grade.

That is the ideal, but the absolute key is to at least master most of Algebra II by graduation. Without that, students have a very high chance of ending up in [developmental] classes when they get to college.

Before you dismiss that as a remote possibility, keep in mind that of the students who went directly from Montgomery County public schools to Maryland colleges last year, 27 percent of those who had been on the college-preparatory track needed

to take [developmental] math classes. The proportion was higher—41 percent—among students who hadn't been in college prep.

That's a lot of kids who basically have to redo part of high school before they move on to college-level work. They could prevent such a waste of time by doing high school work in high school.

Any student who thinks he or she isn't going to college should rethink the issue. Montgomery College has lots of students who never planned on going to college when they were in high school.

To underscore this, here's an excerpt from a letter that the president of Montgomery College, Charlene R. Nunley, [sent] to the

*Continued next page*

# PrepTalk

Continued from previous page  
parents of county eighth-graders:  
“When I spoke with students throughout Maryland who are enrolled in [developmental]—or pre-college level—classes in college, they told me they intentionally avoided tough classes in high school. They said they didn’t think their high school achievement really mattered for their future. Some said they didn’t think then that they’d be going to college.

“Nearly every one of these students said they regretted having made poor choices while in [high] school. Help your child not to repeat similar mistakes by actively involving yourself with his or her course selection. Both they and you will be glad you did.”

Source: Karin Chenoweth, the *Washington Post*, February 14, 2002, [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)

## TickTalk

### PSAT® Pointers

Montgomery College and Montgomery County Public Schools will offer three programs on Using the PSAT® to Help Your Child to Achieve Success offered at:

- Germantown Campus  
May 21, 7:30–9 p.m., 162 Sciences and Applied Studies Building
- Rockville Campus  
May 30, 7:30–9 p.m.  
158 Campus Center Building
- Takoma Park Campus  
June 5, 7:30–9 p.m.  
207 The Commons Building

The program will provide parents with information on what the PSAT®



is and why it’s important to students, how parents can prepare their children for the test, what parents, students, and teachers can learn from the PSAT®, and how to improve their child’s performance on the test.

For directions to the campuses, visit [www.montgomerycollege.edu/explore/mc/](http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/explore/mc/) and click on the campus of your choice, or call 301-279-5150.

Source: Montgomery County Public Schools, [www.mcps.k12.md.us](http://www.mcps.k12.md.us)

## TestTalk

### Prep for SAT®

If you need to take an SAT® prep course, sign up for one now. There are also many good references in the public library you can use to review for the SAT® test. Decide whether you will have more time and energy to devote to a prep class in the summer or when the school year begins.

Source: Springbrook High School Guidance Department and Career Center Web site



## Take the Fast Track at MC This Summer

**G**raduating seniors who wish to improve their placement in developmental math courses at Montgomery College may enroll in Fast Track. This course is a fast paced, intensive review course for prealgebra and elementary algebra. Fast Track prepares qualified students to potentially place into a higher level math class. It is offered at all three campuses this summer.

### Rockville Campus

June 17–28, 9–11 a.m.

(Course ID: CRN 42038)

June 17–28, 6:30–8:30 p.m.

(Course ID: CRN 42039)

August 5–16, 9–11 a.m.

(Course ID: CRN 11703)

August 5–16, 6:30–8:30 p.m.

(Course ID: CRN 11702)

### Takoma Park Campus

August 5–16, 6:30–8:30 p.m.

(Course ID: CRN 11704)

### Germantown Campus

August 12–23, 9–11 a.m.

(Course ID: CRN 11706)

August 12–23, 6:30–8:30 p.m.

(Course ID: CRN 11701)

For additional information, call the Math/Science Center at 301-279-5200 or Workforce Development & Continuing Education at 301-279-5188.

## SuccessTalk

### While You Wait

Use waiting time for studying. Five minutes waiting for the bus or 20 minutes waiting for the orthodontist can add up. Have some study tasks ready for these times like memorizing vocabulary or equations. A solid review of a lecture can be completed in 15 minutes.

Source: Watkins Mill High School Guidance Department Web site



## New Tax Law Benefits 529 Plans

**O**n June 7, 2001, President Bush signed the Economic Growth and Tax Reconciliation Act of 2001 into law. This law does several things to increase the benefits of Section 529 plans like the Maryland Prepaid College Trust. Here are a few of the new benefits:

- Federal tax exemption on earnings when used to pay for eligible college expenses
- Allows benefits to be transferred to the first cousin of the beneficiary (child)
- Provides for a “rollover” to the same beneficiary once every 12 months between eligible college savings plans (previously, rollovers had to include a change of beneficiary)

The legislation also makes it easier for those with existing Education IRAs to participate in Section 529 programs. The Maryland Prepaid College Trust is working closely with the Maryland Office of the Attorney General to determine the extent of the benefits of this new law.

“Every improvement, enhancement, positive change, or benefit we will be able to glean out of the new tax laws will be incorporated into the Trust’s current 10,000 plus contracts and passed on to future participants in both the Trust and the Investment Plan,” stated Edwin S. Crawford, Chairman of the Maryland Higher Education Investment Board.

Source: Maryland Higher Education Commission, [www.mhec.state.md.us](http://www.mhec.state.md.us)

## MoneyTalk

### Get a 529 Plan

One way to pay for college is through a college savings plan, also known as a 529 plan. Section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code enables states to set up tax-deferred college savings plans. Maryland has two kinds of 529 plans—the Prepaid College Trust and the College Investment Plan. To learn more about each and their benefits, visit [www.collegesavingsmd.org](http://www.collegesavingsmd.org).

The state of Maryland does not assess taxes on 529 plan earnings, and provides a state income tax deduction of up to \$2,500 for each account annually. Both federal and state benefits allow earnings to compound faster than in a taxable account. The earlier you establish a 529 plan for your child, the greater the earnings in the account and the benefits to your family.

Source: Montgomery College Financial Aid

## TickTalk

### Deadlines for 529s

The Maryland College Investment Plan has a year-round enrollment period. The Maryland Prepaid College Trust’s enrollment period is December through mid-March; however, enrollment is year round for new-borns. Online enrollment is available for both plans at the College Savings Plans of Maryland Web site.

Source: [www.collegesavingsmd.org](http://www.collegesavingsmd.org)



## Q&A: Can We Still Apply for Financial Aid?

**If we enroll in the College Savings Plans of Maryland, can we still apply for financial aid?**

**Y**es. Participation in the College Savings Plans of Maryland does not limit your ability to apply for financial aid. It also should not affect a student’s receipt of merit-based financial aid, including academic or athletic scholarships. It may, however, affect your ability

to receive need-based financial aid. The most significant amount of the need-based financial aid offered to students today is in the form of loans, not grants or scholarships. Typically, loans have to be repaid with interest. Families that plan ahead and save for college using the College Savings Plans of Maryland may be able to greatly reduce their need for financial aid.

Source: [www.collegesavingsmd.com](http://www.collegesavingsmd.com)

## Helping Grow Maryland's Teachers

**W**ith the retirement of baby boomer teachers, Maryland's demand for new teachers has never been greater. In fact, the state's 22 public and private colleges graduate only 2,500 teaching candidates a year—about one-quarter of the number that the state needs.

To help solve the problem, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), Montgomery College, and several state universities formed partnerships to recruit, educate, and train qualified teachers.

The 2+2+2 partnerships will enable high school students to become degreed teachers through articulated programs between Montgomery College and three specific teacher education programs offered at Maryland's public four-year universities and colleges:

- An elementary education program with the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, with a content major in interdisciplinary studies;
- An early childhood education program with Towson University;
- A joint special education/elementary and middle track program with Towson University and Coppin State College, offered at the University System of Maryland's Shady Grove Campus.

Starting in the junior year of high school, MCPS will introduce participating students to the teaching profession and provide pre-internship experiences and internship opportunities. Students who enter the program apply to both Montgomery College and the desired four-year

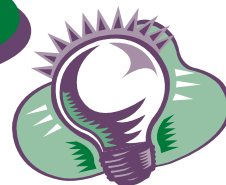
school and follow a structured, four-year curriculum, drawing on the resources of both institutions.

Students will graduate with an associate's degree in teaching from Montgomery College, a bachelor's degree from the four-year school, and Maryland teacher certification. MCPS will work with students throughout their collegiate career, to provide internships, and prior to their graduation, will recruit successful candidates to teach in Montgomery County.

"As the state's largest employer of teachers, we have a vested interest in the success of this partnership," said Dr. Jerry D. Weast, superintendent of MCPS. **PT**

## SuccessTalk

### Managing Study Time



- Minimize distractions—do what you can to stay focused. Eliminate phone calls while you study, discourage visitors and turn off the radio or TV. Study difficult (or boring) subjects first.
- Use a regular study area—you will focus your concentration more quickly. Don't eat, sleep, or watch TV where you study. Use your study area for study and make it a habit.

Source: Watkins Mill High School Guidance Department Web site

## Surf the Net for College Success

**M**ontgomery County Public School students can now access two Internet-based college planning guides—free of charge—in their high school career centers.

### MyRoad.com

MyRoad, the Internet-based guidance solution from the collegeboard.com., assists counselors, students, and parents better manage transitions between high school and college and between school and work.

The strength of MyRoad lies in its depth of original content, which focuses on helping students plan for college, select majors, and learn about careers.

### Bridges.com

Bridges is North America's leading provider of career and educational planning solutions. More than 15,366 schools, libraries, employment centers, post-secondary schools, and rehabilitation facilities subscribe to Bridges' customized products. Bridges serves the career development needs of millions of students and adults seeking educational or career planning assistance. Its resources are also uniquely adapted to service a wide range of corporate, consumer and global markets.

For information on the MyRoad and Bridges guidance programs, call your career center. **PT**

# PrepTalk

## How to Take Control of Your Time

**H**ere are some tips for taking control of your time and organizing your life.

### Make a “to do” list every day

Put things that are most important at the top and do them first. If it’s easier, use a planner to track all of your tasks.

### Use spare minutes wisely

If you can get some reading done on the bus ride home from school, for example, you’ll kill two birds with one stone.

### Get more bang for your buck

You’ll work more efficiently if you figure out when you do your best work. If your brain handles math better in the afternoon, don’t wait to do it until late at night.

### Review your notes after class

You’ll reinforce what you’ve learned, so you need less time to study or cram.

### Communicate your schedule

Let’s say that phone calls are proving to be a distraction. Tell your friends that you take social calls from 7 to 8 p.m. It may sound silly, but it helps.

### Become a taskmaster

Figure out how much time you have each week to do certain things, such as watch TV. Give yourself a time budget and plan your activities accordingly.

Source: The College Board Web site, [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

## PrepTalk™

**T**his publication provides information on what students should know to ensure their success beyond high school. We hope you’ll find it useful and that you’ll share your feedback.

Available in alternative format by contacting the MCPS Department of Communications, 301-279-3391 or TDD, 301-279-3323.

For copies of the three previous issues of *PrepTalk*, call Elena Saenz-Welch at 301-279-5150 or Charla Levine at 301-279-3370 or e-mail [partnership@mc.cc.md.us](mailto:partnership@mc.cc.md.us).

Montgomery County Public Schools  
Montgomery College  
Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Institutions 5/02

## StraightTalk

**How did high school prepare you for college?**



“My AP physics teacher explained everything I needed to do to succeed in college. All my teachers went out of their way to help me.”

An  
*Springbrook High School Graduate*

“I breezed through high school. Everybody told me MC was just an extension of high school. I had no idea how hard it would be—especially English.”

Tiffany  
*Wheaton High School Graduate*

## PrepTalk™

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