

From the Office of Principal Tom Gwin - March Newsletter 2010

March features the course registration process that will kick off during the week of March 1st. From March 2nd through 8th, guidance counselors will visit social studies classes to give out the *2009-10 Student Guide and Course of Studies* and discuss the registration calendar, graduation requirements, new courses, and other important registration-related information. The *2009-10 Student Guide and Course of Studies* will also be available on the WHS Edline website.

Faculty will make course recommendations for students during the same time period. Teachers make recommendations based on the current course level and student performance during the year. Please consider teacher decisions seriously as courses are recommended that both challenge your children and provide them the best opportunity for academic success. There is an appeal process if the parent/guardian(s) and student disagree with the teacher recommendation. Course appeal forms will be available on Edline website, and should be submitted to the appropriate director or coordinator by Friday, March 19. Parents will be notified of appeal decisions by April 14. A special evening for parents of incoming 9th graders will take place on Monday, March 1 at 7 pm in the WHS auditorium. The evening includes a presentation from the directors and coordinators on ninth grade course options as well as a Parent-to-Parent program featuring current WHS students and parents.

The *Course of Studies* includes a change in the 9th Grade World History Course, moving to an unlevleed curriculum. The Social Studies Department feels there has been too great a focus on leveling students as they begin their journey through high school. The department would like to focus, rather, on the development of reading skills that foster the careful and thoughtful examination of primary and secondary sources. Although much of the content will remain similar to the present World History curriculum, the expectations for every ninth grader would be to focus on his or her skill development. Teachers of this course will differentiate instruction to meet the individual needs of the students and more personalize their education. All students, rather than just honors level students, will participate in the National History Day competition during the 9th grade. In addition, WHS receives a great deal of feedback on the high levels of academic stress experienced by students in 9th grade taking a heavy load of honors courses. This change should alleviate some of this stress. WHS will be piloting this change and evaluating it during the course of the year. This change has been endorsed by the department directors and the WHS School Improvement Council, and approved by the school committee.

March also brings the first round of MCAS testing for 10th graders. English Language Arts testing will take place on the mornings of March 23-25. Later in the year, 10th graders will also take the MCAS mathematics while 9th graders will complete a biology MCAS.

I hope you are able to attend our musical, *The Pajama Game*, taking place on the nights of Thursday-Saturday, March 4, 5, and 6 at 7:30 pm in the auditorium. Please come and support our young performers.

MESSAGES FROM THE ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS

STUDENT ILLNESSES AND MEDICATION/S ~ Except in an emergency a student who becomes ill at school should obtain a pass from a teacher before going to the Health Office. When a student is too ill to remain in school, a parent or the person designated on the contact sheet will be notified. Students must report to the nurse in cases requiring dismissal for health reasons. If they fail to do so, the absence will be considered a cut. Students are not permitted to carry prescription or over the counter medications in school. This is mandated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. All medications must be registered with the school nurse. Any student who is returning to school following a contagious disease, extended illness or hospitalization must be readmitted to school by the school nurse. Any student returning to school with a cast, crutches, braces, etc., must be readmitted to school by the school nurse. Students who need to be excused from active participation in physical education class for a medical reason must provide the nurse with documentation from a physician in order to obtain a PE excuse. Academic participation will still be required. Students, with a doctor's note or a parent note stating that they cannot use the stairs because of an accident, injury, etc., may obtain an elevator key at the Nurse's Office with a \$10.00 deposit. A lost or non-returned key will result in an additional charge of \$10.00 dollars. Students who are injured during school hours must report to the school nurse and file an accident report if necessary. If an injury occurs during an after school activity, it should be reported immediately to the advisor, trainer or coach.

Student Health Records

Graduating Seniors: Your original school health immunization record will be mailed to your home. Copies of this document will no longer be kept on file by the high school. It is advisable to make additional copies and maintain this important document for your records.

Health Services ~ A registered nurse who is in the building throughout the school day staffs the Health Office. All students are required to have an up-to-date record of physical examination on file, along with an up-to-date immunization record. Students who have special medical circumstances i.e. life threaten allergies, seizure disorders, diabetes etc., should have appropriate medical records on file.

STUDENT IDENTIFICATION CARDS ~ If your student had their photograph taken by Burlington Studios a student I.D. was issued to each student. Students must carry the Identification Card with them while on school grounds. These cards are used for attendance purposes, lunches, library use, etc.

GUIDANCE SERVICES ~ Students are generally assigned to a Guidance Counselor alphabetically, although to balance caseloads students are sometimes assigned out of sequence. Every effort is made to keep a student with the same counselor for all four years. The assigned counselor assists with course selections, course changes, personal issues, and post-high school planning. Counselors are trained to help students make college selections and career choices and they have access to computerized programs that assist with research in these areas. Each counselor is willing to help students find the source of assistance needed to solve any personal or academic problem. The Guidance Office maintains a cumulative folder of academic records. Arrangements for official transcripts must be made in writing through this office.