

Guidance Department Handbook for All Students and Parents

Mission Statement:

In conjunction with the school's mission statement, we are here to educate young men and women to grow in character, community and commitment through a knowledge of the love of Christ. By encouraging students to challenge themselves and to seek out a fulfilling educational experience, we hope to develop each student emotionally, academically and socially through an extensive curriculum, projected testing techniques and supportive monitoring.

All students will be interviewed and followed-up academically once each semester and further individually if requested or referred. In addition small groups of students are seen by the individual counselor to interpret test results and to review the results of the ACT. Students and parents may, at any time during the school year, request to see a counselor. This is encouraged through many guidance announcements both in school through classroom announcements, through fliers and of course the web site. Our website is updated in a timely fashion and we encourage you to check it on a regular basis. The site contains relevant information for all the grade levels. Many of the topics are time sensitive so it is helpful for you to visit often.

In addition to academic, personal and vocational counseling, the guidance department offers parents and students resources on topics that cover financial aid for college, college planning for juniors and seniors, a college fair in September of each school year and appropriate testing at each level. Follow-ups on these topics and many more are available on the website. In addition, we have a research room with CD's and college catalogs for your personal review.

Freshman Guidance program:

The focus of the ninth grade guidance program is to help students gain a better knowledge of self. This will be done through personal interaction with each student by their counselor. Interest tests and the results of skill sets will be used. There is constant reinforcement of study skills and organization techniques. Each ninth grader will take the Self-Directed Search. This interest inventory serves to help students identify their interests based on their likes and dislikes. It merely serves as a spring board for the counselor to engage the student and to initiate further research. Each student will review the findings with his/her counselor. As a follow-up, the ninth grader is introduced to the onetcenter which is a career based website. Based on the individual findings for Self-Directed Search, the student can then begin to research those careers in the cluster which he/she scored the highest. Written papers on careers and other evaluative tools are used to insure that the students follow through on their research. Parents can also familiarize themselves with the same career website by going to: www.onetcenter.org.

Academic Counseling:

Each ninth grader will receive counseling individually to assess his/her standing each quarter. Those who are not meeting minimal standards are encouraged to take steps to remediate their individual difficulties. This may include a parental contact, teacher-coordinated tutoring or peer tutoring. Lack of progress in a course will serve as a cue for the teacher and the counselor to sit down with the student to help identify difficulties and devise a plan for remediation to help the student attain success. Often times, parents are also called in for conferences to help resolve these issues. Students will be encouraged to challenge themselves by taking advantage of the honors and advanced placement programs.

Career Counseling:

All 9th and 10th graders will take the Self-Directed Search by John L. Holland. The SDS is a self-administered, self scored and self-interpreted career counseling tool. The uses of the results are multi-purpose. The SDS can be administered to large groups or individuals. The results are then reviewed. Students enjoy discussing what the SDS means. They quickly learn the classification scheme, contribute information about their lives and often take a positive stance toward the exploration of vocational possibilities and the resolution of vocational problems. It provides a great spring board toward establishing an open student/counselor rapport.

Students will research their personality types and the careers that are geared to their particular typology. The onetcenter.org site is used to follow-up on careers. The counselor will guide the students through this site and its use. This site will provide an extensive job description for all career cluster information. Once a particular student's interests have been narrowed down, relevant courses and possible college majors can be established. The SDS lends itself to repeated use by the same person. Such periodic personal stock-taking is consistent with a development conception of career counseling.

Tutoring:

Upper classman can be a source of tutoring. These students are not paid. They give up their time to help underclassman. The student receiving academic support has the responsibility to take this help seriously by being present, on time and prepared. We maintain a list of professionally licensed tutors which is constantly changing. They do charge a fee and in most cases, the fee can be negotiated. We do not intercede in that area. That is between the parent and the tutor. The counselors can provide this information to you upon request. Teachers are the most available as they are required to be in school by 7:45 and do not leave until 3pm. Most teachers will remain if the students come to them to schedule an appointment. ALL teachers are available to ALL students. A student who is having difficulty with a particular subject may go to any teacher who can provide them with the instruction they need.

Clubs and Activities:

Counselors will have a list of the activities and clubs the meet after school. Ninth graders can always go and seek out this information and are encouraged to do so. It is a proven fact that students who are engaged in nonacademic clubs or after school sports do better academically and socially. Morris Catholic has many sports and activities to meet varied interests and abilities.

Testing:

All freshmen take the Terra Nova Tests and the PSAT test. The PSAT is traditionally given for practice and preparation. The Terra Nova test is not used for placement in high school but rather to determine those academic areas that may need remediation. In the case of borderline results, there is additional support students can receive.

This year, the Explore Program that is offered through ACT will be offered to all ninth graders. ACT test will be administered this year during the school day to all freshmen. The results are returned to each student by his/her counselor. The guidance counselor will meet with the students to discuss the results. The interpretation of the test results is explained.

Getting Organized:

Each freshman will purchase a Student Handbook/Personal Organizer. It is a known fact that organizational skills and the ability to manage time efficiently reduces stress and increases self-confidence. By owning and using these planners, we are giving students the opportunity to develop these skills. Each planner provides the student with a daily schedule, school rules and regulations. It also provides space to list homework assignments, meeting times, and due days for long term assignments. If a student loses his or her planner, another must be purchased immediately. Planners can be purchased through the main office.

Guidance Appointments:

The doors of the Guidance Department are always open. Students may request to see their counselor by completing a guidance appointment slip. These are available from Mrs. Dougherty, the guidance secretary. She will give the slip to the appropriate counselor who will schedule an appointment as soon as he or she is free. Before coming to an appointment, you must be sure to show the appointment slip to your teacher and then report to your counselor. Feel free to drop by between classes to say hello. If you have trouble getting an appointment, regardless of the reasons, see Mrs. Hatcher, Director of Guidance.

Keep Informed:

Each morning the announcements are made during homeroom. It is important to pay attention to these announcements. Additional information is also available on the Morris Catholic website: morriscatholic.org under the Guidance link.

The College Fair:

Every September, Morris Catholic hosts colleges from all over the country. All students in all grades and their parents are extended an invitation. It is never too early to speak with representatives from colleges and universities who will be able to explain their evaluation process and what they are looking for in a college freshman. College selection is gone into in much more detail junior and senior year.

Suggestions for Success:

- Always carry your Planner.
- Keep a separate notebook or folder for your work for each class. You can put handouts on one side of the folder and use the other side for assignments.
- Number each page of your daily notes in every class and record the date. The teacher's objective for that lesson should also be on the top of the page.
- Each evening review your notes for the next day's class. Record questions you may have so that you can address this with the teacher. If you need more time than class allows, think ahead and make an appointment with your teacher for that day or for the next either in the morning or the afternoon.
- Seek help from your teacher immediately. Need additional help? See your guidance counselor. They will have additional study hints or help suggestions for you.
- Be sure to read your Student Handbook.

Sophomore Guidance Program:

Welcome back to Morris Catholic. We hope that you have had a relaxing summer and that you are ready to begin an action packed school year. To new students, welcome to Morris Catholic.

Academic Counseling:

With your freshman year under your belt, this is the time to review what has worked for you. Will you rejoin the same clubs and play the same sports? Assess these accomplishments. Continue if you feel the endeavor is worthwhile. College admission counselors want to see a consistency in all areas: academics, sports and clubs. It is more important for you to play one sport for four years than one sport that is different each year. Get involved. Initiate leadership whether it is in your community, your church community or in school.

Your counselor will continue to meet with you each quarter to reinforce your strengths and to help with any concerns you or your parents may have. We want you to be successful. You are the key ingredient in this formula. We can make suggestions and help you follow through but it is ultimately up to each individual student to have a designated place at home to study, to review the assignments given each day to prepare for classes the next day and to seek outside help when needed. Your counselor is someone who can be a great resource for you.

Career Counseling:

All tenth graders will have taken the Self-Directed Search. As sophomores, they will be given additional website information to allow them to investigate in depth very specific careers. Career sites such as: onetcenter.org and collegeboard.com will be used by them to select various careers. Options will also be discussed such as internships and shadow days. Results from the PSAT will also help to define individual strengths.

Parents and students need to give strong consideration to employment. Even a part-time job is instructive when it comes to building responsibility, punctuality and dependability. Adding a job into your son/daughter's daily program is another way to strengthen organizational skills and time management.

Informative Web Sites:

By going on to collegeboard.com, parents and students can get a wealth of information concerning colleges, careers, paying for college and strategies for college selections.

Preparation for Testing:

When you receive your PSAT scores in December, you can use the access code on the score report that you receive and sign in to MyCollegeQuickStart. With this personalized planning kit that is presented to you at this link from College Board, you can prepare for the SAT using the study plan based on your PSAT results. You can also explore lists of colleges, majors and careers

Tutoring:

Tutoring is available within the school through the teaching staff and through a student based program that is all volunteer. If you wish to have additional paid tutoring, we do have a list of New Jersey certified teachers for all academic areas.

Clubs and Activities:

Stay involved. If you are wondering which club or activity to join, counselors will have the list of the different organizations in school and the names of the advisors for you to review. An important part of your college application is your activity resume throughout high school. It is important to be well rounded and be able to show your academic ability and your school commitment and spirit. Don't wait until junior year when it is too late to be a standout! Perhaps you are very involved in your community working toward your Gold Award or your Eagle Scout. You may be more Church centered and actively participate as an Altar server or Search leader. These are all great areas to shine and show your interests and leadership skills.

Testing:

Sophomores will be taking the PSAT Test and the Terra Nova Tests. In November, the Writing Assessment, an evaluative tool which is part of the Terra Nova test, is administered to all 10 graders. This will assess their writing proficiency. The results are used to determine those writing areas that require remediation or demonstrate mastery. The PSAT test will be administered in October and the results of this test will be returned and explained to the sophomores by their counselor. The students then bring home the results and their test questions to review with their parents. When the tests are received and returned, it will be announced on the Morris Catholic website to keep parents informed.

When you receive your PSAT scores in December, you can use the access code on the score report that you receive and sign on to MyCollegeQuickStart. With this personalized planning kit presented to you from College Board, you can prepare for the SAT using the study plan based on your PSAT results. You can also explore lists of colleges, majors and careers.

Getting Organized:

The sophomores will also be responsible to purchase a school planner. This is an extremely helpful tool. Students are told to write down assignments in all subjects. Parents can ask for and check the planner on a daily basis if they wish. It is an excellent way to find out what your son or daughter is assigned in school. If there are discrepancies, the individual teacher can be contacted directly through the school email. Each teacher must also have updated information on school notes.com. In the case of absences, the parents and students can go directly to school notes.com and find out the assignments. In the case of longer absences, (a week or more) consult the student handbook and call your student's counselor.

Guidance Appointments:

The doors of the Guidance Department are always open. Students may request to see their counselor by completing a guidance appointment slip. These are available from Mrs. Dougherty, the guidance secretary. She will give the slip to the appropriate counselor who will schedule an appointment as soon as possible. Before coming to an appointment, you must be sure to show the appointment slip to your teacher and then report to your counselor. Feel free to drop by between classes to say hello. If you have trouble getting an appointment, regardless of the reasons, see Mrs. Hatcher, Director of Guidance. Parents are also encouraged to come to the guidance office with an appointment or to just browse to see what is available.

The Transcript:

The high school transcript is the record of a student's work. At the end of four years, the transcript will be kept on file at Morris Catholic so that an academic record is always available. Your guidance counselor will be happy to show it to you and your parents. Since it is sent to colleges and other post secondary educational programs or institutions, it is important that your grades, your selection of courses, your attendance record and your extra-curricular activities combine to present a positive image of you as a strong candidate.

Suggestions for Success:

- Use your planner
- Read your Student Handbook
- Stay organized. Write down short and long term assignments in your planner.
- Stay on top of upcoming events by reviewing your calendar.
- Seek out teachers for help.
- Visit with your counselor when you need help with courses, want to discuss career options or personal problems. If you want some information on summer programs, college courses or online coursework, visit the counseling office.
- Get involved in the school community.
- Get a summer job.
- Strive for good grades and honor level courses.
- Keep a folder for all courses.

Junior Guidance Program

There are many areas that will be defined and explored in depth junior year that concern career interests, college testing, resume writing, essay writing and the college application process. In addition, the importance of good grades, continued involvement in school activities/athletics and employment are emphasized.

Academic Counseling:

Grades are reviewed throughout the year. Students who fall short of meeting passing grades are encouraged to seek tutoring. The options for this are discussed with them and with their parents and when necessary with the teacher or the counselor. Progress reports are sent home mid quarter every marking period, and it is up to students and their parents to review their options together. The counselors are here to reinforce their decisions and to offer additional possibilities when asked.

The grades received junior year will be one of the final opportunities for students to raise their academic standing before those college applications are sent out. A strong finish to junior year will leave a positive impression on admission counselors and work to the benefit of the individual student.

Career Counseling:

- Shadow Program- all juniors will be required to intern at least two career interests as identified through personal preference and testing results as predicted by the ACT and the Self-Directed Search. The juniors will be required to submit a well written summation of their intern experience. The papers will be graded. The guidelines are defined by the MLA version for writing research papers and a rubric for all grading will be used. This rubric is the same criteria used for all writing assignments.
- The fundamentals of writing a personal resume will be covered. Specific guidelines and outline will be taught.
- Selecting the right college for me: This activity culminates all the career testing, shadow experiences and personal research done with their counselor.
- College Workshop for Parents and Juniors will cover the application process and financial aid options.
- The College Essay – The How To's of writing a successful, relevant college essay will be taught.

Tutoring:

Upper level classman can offer their services to help other students with core courses. These tutors are volunteers. Parents who want extra help for their students can call their child's counselor. Please keep in mind that student tutors are volunteers and will do their best to help with clarifying lessons. They are not teachers.

Interpreting Test Results:

Juniors will be taking the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) in October. The results of this test can be used to clarify those academic areas that need further review or additional in depth instruction. As in previous years, the results will be interpreted with each student. Their individual score report and test booklet will be returned to them in December.

Throughout the United States, the score results of all juniors will be reviewed by College Board and those in the top 1% could become National Merit contenders. For most juniors, taking this test will serve to prepare them for the SAT and the ACT that they will take in order to complete their college applications.

In March, May or June of their junior year, Juniors will need to take the SAT or the ACT. Those juniors who are applying to certain colleges may also be expected to take the SAT II's which are also individual subject tests.

Senior Guidance Program:

Emphasis is again placed on academic counseling. Preparations are made in finalizing the college selection list, completing each college application and continuing to explore their career options.

1. Career Selection - An additional year to "Shadow" a specific career is required. This is a bonus opportunity to continue the quest to find a career that fits the individual and a work profile that could lead to an internship and even employment. A final visit to the College Fair held at school in September may provide college alternatives not previously considered.
 - Senior College Seminar- This presentation further prepares Seniors and their Parents to negotiate the college application maze.
 - Review application procedures
 - Preparing the College Essay and Activity Resume
 - Transcript, Rank and GPA are explained
 - Testing requirements necessary for admission to college
 - Time management
 - Additional workshops will be available for the seniors: returning MC grads will field questions from the seniors on college life.
2. Financial Aid Workshop - an experienced college financial aid director will show parents the ins and outs of financial strategies:
 - Completing the FAFSA
 - Grants, Loans and Work Study
3. The College Fair - an opportunity for the seniors to meet with and in some cases briefly interview with colleges of their choice.
4. The Senior Questionnaire - a personal hand written query into the students' past experiences and interests as well as a final list of all in school, community and church-related involvement throughout all four years at Morris Catholic.

Coordinator of Special Services:

The thrust of the Guidance Program centers on the successful academic development of each student. In order to accomplish this goal given the varied learning styles of each student, the role of the Special Services Coordinator evolved. The role of the coordinator is to work with students who have learning issues that impact their learning in a school setting. Conferences with teachers, students and parents take place to help the individual be successful at Morris Catholic This includes but is not limited to developing individual learning plans. The department also works with additional resource teachers who will offer help to students who are having minor difficulties within the classroom situation itself.

Important Numbers and Web Sites for Additional Information:

Guidance Office Secretary – 973-627-6674 X 135

Director of Guidance/Counselor grades 11 and 12 – 973-627-6674 X 123

Guidance Counselor 9 and 10 grades – 973-627-6674 X 121

Coordinator of Special Services – 973-627-6674 X 138

Helpful Web Sites:

schoolnotes.com – seek homework assignments for your students when they are out of school for the day.

collegeboard.com – great site for gaining information about college and testing.

fastweb.com- use this sight for a student profile and to get information for your junior/senior regarding scholarships.

petersons.com- research colleges

For additional telephone numbers and addresses of school personnel, go to the high school website: morriscatholic.org