

MCNEAL SAMS COLLEGE CONSULTING NEWS AND NOTES

JUNIOR CHECKLIST

- SCHEDULE:** If you have not met with your consultant to create an initial list of suggested schools for you to explore, do so now.
- REGISTER:** It's time to begin testing! Register through these links:
 - ACT
 - SAT
 Not sure which test to take, consult [this description](#) of the differences and reach out to your consultant.
- RESEARCH:** Now that you have a list of schools, it is time to do some detailed and organized research. Not sure how to proceed? Contact your consultant.
- PLAN:** It is time to line up what you will do this summer. Make it productive, but also be sure to plan some down time to relax and refresh, too!



TESTING: LOTS OF QUESTIONS AND SOME INSIGHTS

There are few things in the world of admissions that generate as many questions as standardized testing. Reality is it's hard to have a conversation about the college choice experience without someone mentioning the ACT or SAT. And yes, these tests can be a helpful component in your applications (we will discuss this more below.)

But what about the positive traits you bring to a college community that can't be quantified by filling in a bunch of bubbles on a Scantron or a computer screen?

Here are just a few: Creativity. Curiosity. Compassion. Critical thinking. Courage. And that's just the qualities that begin with the letter C! What about resilience? Tenacity? Flexibility? Enthusiasm? Empathy? Leadership?

A high score on a standardized test cannot possibly predict your ability to be a thoughtful roommate, a loyal teammate, a talented artist, or a perceptive friend. Testing is one data point in your application, and often a useful one. But you know you are more than a set of numbers. Give yourself credit for all the ways you make the world a better place.

Having said all of that and acknowledging that most schools these days are test optional, does that mean you don't have to prepare for tests or even take a test?

Not exactly.

It simply means that your application will be considered complete without test scores, if you choose to apply test optional to that college.

Is that a good idea? It depends.

Still confused? We can help!

In our work, we try to keep as many options open for students for as long as possible. With time and a plan, we believe the vast majority of students should engage fully in a test choice, test prep, and test taking process. Together, we evaluate not only scores but, on balance, what makes sense for an individual student. We consider previous scores, grades, level of commitment to preparation, the proposed list of schools, expected field of study, stress, and overall health.

Each recommendation we make is individualized to your particular situation and goals. If you have not yet had a discussion with your consultant about testing, please make an appointment to do so.

CONTACT YOUR CONSULTANT: NAME@MCNEALSAMS.COM

CORNELIA MCNEAL
NELIE@

BARBARA SAMS
BARBARA@

JEANIE GRIMM
JEANIE@

ELIZABETH SCHNELL
ELIZABETH@

ANN MCCURTIES
ANN@

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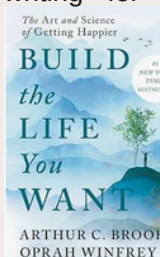
TALK AROUND TOWN

Some items we have found interesting recently:

Article: As you plan for the summer or consider joining some new extracurricular groups at school: [Allie Volpe at Vox has written about the value of exploring new activities even if we aren't good at them.](#)

Podcast: "[How I Built This](#)" features accomplished people talking about their innovations, often revealing non-linear and serendipitous paths, along with creative, interdisciplinary thinking. It provides an entertaining, accessible route to discussing and contemplating a variety of career fields. Older episodes may be found here.

Book: *Build the Life You Want* by Arthur Brooks of Harvard Business School, who has specialized in teaching high achieving entrepreneurs and leaders how to find more balance and satisfaction in life. This time he collaborates with Oprah Winfrey, writing for a general audience.



KINDNESS CORNER - HOW TO KEEP YOUR SANITY AND YOUR FAMILY INTACT

What's a remarkably effective way to lower your stress level?

It's absurdly simple: deep breathing.

Taking the time to breathe slowly and deeply does wonders for your nervous system, ability to focus, and [capacity for handling difficult situations](#).

Try this exercise: inhale for 3 counts, hold for 4 counts, exhale for 5 counts. As you do, breathe from your stomach - as though you're trying to fill your entire upper body with oxygen. Don't limit your intake to your lungs. Feel the air fill you from your nose to your abdomen!

[Deep breathing exercise \(DBE\)](#) has been shown to lower blood pressure and stress. You don't need special equipment to do it. And it's free!

So the next time you feel yourself tensing up about any of life's many challenges, pause for a moment and take a few deep breaths. It works!

SPOTLIGHT ON SUMMER

It may be the early days of winter but it is not too early to begin planning your summer. The summer after your junior year is the perfect time to explore a potential career, develop your leadership skills, hone your expertise in a favorite area, earn some money, or share your talents with others. Whatever you choose is okay: it is just important to make this summer productive. And, don't forget, you will be spending some time with your college consultant working on your applications, too!

Click on the images below to explore some fascinating options. Please note, the links below **are not exhaustive lists** of all the opportunities available.

Ask your consultant for suggestions that make sense for you.

RESEARCH



CAREER EXPLORATION



THE ARTS



VOLUNTEER

