

Youth & Education

Test Prep:

Summer Not A Time For Slouching

It is hard to believe, but summer is here, and with it comes changing schedules and a break in the routine. It's easy to let the weeks slip by. But remember that summer never seems to be as long as we expect.

For rising seniors, the summer is a critical time – this is your chance to get ahead on all your college applications. Students can officially access the Common Application starting in August. However, that doesn't mean there's nothing to do before then. First, rising seniors should make sure to check out the essay topics for this year's Common App Essay (find them on commonapp.org). Use the summer to work on this. Keep in mind that this is a personal essay, and so it may take some time to get it right. The best essays are almost never the first draft that you write. Give yourself plenty of time to brainstorm and try out a few different topics. You'll regret leaving

this to the last minute, and you have all the information you need to start writing it already. In addition, some colleges will have their supplemental essay topics on their websites. Check your potential schools and start making a list of all the different essays, portfolios, and other material that you will need to have for each school.

What else can you get started on? We know that the Common App (and most applications to other schools) requires that you submit a list of activities. Get started on that now. Think about this list as a resume: you want to include any leadership roles that you may have held, as well as short descriptions of what things you were responsible for. Overall, most schools are looking for depth



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of involvement. That means you want to highlight the things that you are passionate about, where you spent most of your time.

If you aren't yet satisfied with your standardized test scores, make a plan for how you're going to handle them. There is an SAT date on Aug. 25. This will have scores back in plenty of time for early deadlines.

However, the test centers fill up fast for this date. Plan on signing up soon. There is also an ACT date on Sept. 14, for those who prefer that test. When it comes to studying for each of these tests, keep in mind that you haven't been in school all summer. That means that your math (and your sitting in one place for a long time) skills may be rustier than you expect. Start your prep earlier than you might otherwise.

Summer is a good time to get some college tours in – especially if there are schools on your list that you know you are interested in, but haven't gotten a chance to see. Many schools include "demonstrated interest" in their application criteria. That means they like to see applicants who have come to campus, registered for a tour, and otherwise made themselves known to the admissions office.

Are you a rising junior? Look for our article next month on what you can be doing to get ready for the marathon that is college applications.

James Maroney, is the owner of First Choice College, which has been helping local students prepare for college since 1999. James is also the former co-chair of the Financial Aid Working Group for the Connecticut State Planning Commission for Higher Education.

Orange Students Trade iPads For Chromebooks

By Andy Yu

We are rapidly entering a more digitalized age where technology has a hand in almost all facets of daily living. Naturally, there is the question of how this fast-changing technological landscape will affect education.

Matt Ullring, director of information technology at Orange Public Schools, said, "Technology has improved so much that it has helped to streamline the workflow for teachers and students."

He recently brought Chromebooks to the kindergarteners through second-graders at all four of the Orange Public Schools: Mary L. Tracy, Peck Place, Turkey Hill and Race Brook. Previously, these grades used iPads because they were fast and had a touchscreen interface.

However, too many problems arose from their usage. There weren't enough for everyone. The devices and the apps were outdated and expensive, slow, and expensive. The young students weren't able to have as immersive a technological experience as with Chromebooks. They are also harder to manage for the IT staff.

Ullring, seeing these problems, proposed buying the Chromebooks for younger grades to the Board of Education in November 2016. The proposal was well-received, and with the support of superintendent Vince Scarpetti, it was implemented for the 2017-18 school year. The third through sixth grade students had already received them the previous year.

The initiative became popular with the children and teachers alike.

Lisa Hines, a kindergarten teacher at Mary L. Tracy School said, "We utilize Chromebooks throughout the day in both reading and math. The students are able to log in and work independently in Lexia Core5 and Moby Max, which tracks individual progress. Chromebook sites are easily accessible and students can use the touch feature or type, whichever they choose. This makes them more desirable than iPads."

Many curriculum applications on the iPad function better on Chromebooks. There are also some laptop features that iPads don't have. Collaboration is much easier, and students can start learning how to type on the keyboard earlier.

Ullring also started the students using a program called ClassLink that allows a student to use a quickcard badge for signing into their Chromebook effortlessly.

"Each school's students have badges that they display in front of the Chromebook's camera that will scan the badge and log them into the Chromebook," he said. "This way, students don't have to remember their login credentials, allowing the children to quickly sign in and start working."

The kindergarten students received Asus flippable touchscreen Chromebooks, while first and second graders received HP Chromebooks.

"I wanted the kindergartners to have a touchscreen Chromebook tablet since they are used to the iPads," Ullring said. "I believed that students in grades 1 and 2 could learn the laptop keyboard."

Orange Students Honored With Superintendent's Award

Sixth grade students from Orange's public elementary schools were honored May 21 at a ceremony held during the Board of Education meeting at Mary L. Tracy School with the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents' Superintendent/Student Recognition Award.

Criteria for the award include leadership, service to school, academic prowess relative to ability, and service to others in the community. Orange public schools superintendent Vince Scarpetti and the

school principals made the presentation as part of a program designed by school administrators to recognize students who have served their schools and communities while maintaining good scholastic progress.

The awardees included: Jeslyn Jacob, Suhail Mohammed, Dana Pletter, Emily Russo from The Peck Place School; Luciana Dottori, Sarah Ginsberg, Devin Maroney from Race Brook School; and Vivian Cain, Meghan Kirck, and Justin Palmer from Turkey Hill School.

Orange's Amity Middle School Students Participate In Video Production Program

Amity Middle School in Orange has had a cadre of eighth grade students participating in a video production program run by former Amity student Tristan Douglas again this year. The program was made possible through a grant from the Jamie A. Hulley Arts Foundation.

Douglas met with the students 16 times over the course of the school year and introduced the students to the art of video production. Students learned how to storyboard, set up and use a professional video camera and equipment, navigate the intricacies of filming a video, and more.

The students who participated this year were: Mason Beaudette, Jake DeMattia, Gillian Fuchs, Carly Gravitt, Emma Hatjopoulou, Zola Kneeland, Jade Krukar, Daniella Landino, Alexandra Louros,

Kayley Mingione, Ky Moore-Horton, Melissa Musante, Mikey Pickett, Colleen Shaw, Dan Slugoski, AJ Soldra and Nolan Young.

Amity Middle School does not currently have a course in video production like Amity Regional High School does; however, many students are interested in that aspect of art and drama. This opportunity was embraced wholeheartedly by the students. The program was a resounding success, and if offered again next year, there are several seventh graders who are interested in participating in it.

The final video will be shown at the Amity Middle School in Orange Moving Up Ceremony in June and will be viewed by the nearly 900 people who will be attending the ceremony.



Mary L. Tracy School student Alexis Fuehrlein uses one of the Chromebooks recently purchased for by Orange Public Schools. Contributed photo.



Amity Middle School students participated in a video production program this school year. Top row, from: Daniella Landino, Colleen Shaw, Zola Kneeland, Gillian Fuchs, Michael Pickett, Nolan Young, Mason Beaudette, Tristan Douglas, Kyheem Moore-Horton, Andrew Soldra, Daniel Slugoski, Emma Hatjopoulou and Alexandra Louros. Bottom row from left: Carly Gravitt and Jake DeMattia. Photo by Kristin Yeakei. Contributed photo.