

# MCNEAL SAMS COLLEGE CONSULTING NEWS AND NOTES

## WHAT TO DO NOW CHECKLIST

- Course Selection:** Many of your schools will soon begin the enrollment process for next year. When planning next year's course schedule, you want to ensure that you are taking equally as or more demanding courses than you did this year. Your McNeal Sams Counselor can help direct you, tailoring the recommendation to meet your goals.



- SUMMER:** There are great opportunities to pursue over the summer that require an application. We recommend you schedule time with your McNeal Sams Consultant to set your intentions for the summer. For many of your options applications opening soon or are open!



## NEW YEAR, NEW THOUGHTS: TESTING IN COLLEGE ADMISSION

There are few things in the world of admissions that generate as many questions as standardized testing. The reality is that it's hard to have a conversation about the college choice experience without someone mentioning the ACT or SAT. And while your testing may be down the road a bit, we wanted to reassure you about what role testing may or may not play in your college choice experience.

Testing is one factor in admission, 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, 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.

If you are a sophomore, you have already taken a practice SAT and many schools will offer or have offered you a practice ACT. (If your school does not, let your consultant know, we can arrange for you to take one for free.) Now is the time to discuss what role testing may play in your college choice, which test makes the most sense for you, what test preparation may be necessary, and a testing calendar. Each recommendation we make is individualized to your particular situation and goals. Just like all parts of your college choice journey, your path is unique to you.

If you are a freshman, you will take a practice SAT and a practice ACT next year. No need to spend time or resources preparing for them at this point. We will have conversations with you next year. For now, focus on establishing good study habits and getting involved on campus and in the community.



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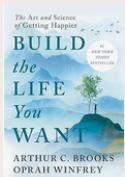
# NEWS AND NOTES

## TALK AROUND TOWN

Some items we have found interesting recently:

**Article:** Something to think about as you plan for the summer or consider joining new extracurricular groups at school this term: Allie Volpe at Vox has written about the value of exploring new activities even if we aren't good at them, provocatively titled "[It's Okay to S@#\\$ When You Try Something New](#)"

**Book:** Build the Life You Want is the latest from 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.



**Blog:** You will soon learn we really love Rick Clark's blog. He's at Georgia Tech and has a wonderful way of presenting the realities and complexities of college admission in the US. Here's one of our recent favorites: "[College Admissions - Middle 50%, Test Optional, \(... and Country Music?\)](#)"

## KINDNESS CORNER: STRESS RELIEF IS SIMPLER THAN YOU THINK

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 are 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 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. 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.

### CAREER EXPLORATION

#### RESEARCH



#### THE ARTS



### VOLUNTEER

