August 19, 2010

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

I am very excited to be working with your student this year in GT Seminar! I am a big proponent of this course as I believe that it will be of enormous benefit to my students as they prepare to enter college. As a former National Merit Finalist and a recipient of numerous scholarships based on PSAT, SAT, and ACT test scores, I know how important it is to score well on these exams. We will be spending an extensive amount of time working on test preparation, first for the PSAT (which is the qualifying test for National Merit standing and subsequent scholarships, to be given October 13) and then for the SAT and ACT. Along with the test preparation, we will also address the “how-tos” involved in selecting a college, applying to college and for scholarships, and writing essays for college applications. When this course has ended, your child will have created an online portfolio with a detailed plan of action for obtaining his/her higher education!

We will also use the vocabulary workbook, *Soaring at the Top*, and Latin vocabulary instruction to increase and enhance students’ vocabulary. The *Soaring at the Top* vocabulary workbook will be purchased by the school district and will be kept by the students at the end of the year. Dictionaries and thesauruses will be provided in the classroom for student use, but I urge students to purchase their own inexpensive paperback dictionary for use in this class.

The #1 educators’ choice for teaching targeted test taking strategies is the Cambridge SAT Victory Prep book and we will be using this text *extensively*. I understand that this textbook has been little used for the past few years, but I am planning to use it on a weekly basis. There is simply no better textbook for preparing for the (P)SAT than the Cambridge book. If your child were to take the class offered by Cambridge, they would pay between $695 and $825 for the class and the book. We have worked with Cambridge to purchase the book at a steeply discounted rate: $32! By purchasing this book for use in my class, the students will be able to take notes, work through lessons, and use the book as a study guide—not only this year but over the next 2 years as they prepare for college and the college entrance exams. I **strongly** recommend that you purchase this book through CHS so that they will not only benefit by its use now but will be able to use it to study in the coming years. **You may purchase the Cambridge prep book by sending a check made out for $32.00 to Cabot High School.** If for some reason you are unable to purchase this book, one will be provided for your student’s use in class, but he/she may not write in the classroom copies and will be expected to take the notes on his/her own paper and keep up with them in a binder for future reference.

During the course of the year, your student will be involved in many self-evaluations which will enable him/her to identify individual characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses. These evaluations will be incorporated with the study skills and test-taking strategies to develop a personally tailored plan of study for your student! Students will be provided with college and scholarship computer searches which they may continue to use throughout high school. Within the GT classroom, there are numerous guides and handbooks containing college and scholarship information which are available to the student for his/her use.

Rules for the classroom are relatively simple and few as I cannot think of an area not addressed within these three rules. They are:

1. **Respect for self**…*be prepared to learn by being on time, having supplies ready, adhering to dress code, and being responsible for all work assignments and/or makeup work*
2. **Respect for others…** *be tolerant of others, if someone needs help, give it: be polite and considerate to teacher and other students; application of the Golden Rule is a good rule of thumb here*
3. **Responsibility for ALL of your actions…** *personal accountability allows you to move away from the mindset where things happen “to you” in your life without your consent or influence, and embrace your role in the way your life is shaped by moving to a place of true power and freedom*

Needed supplies for GT Seminar:

1. 1” 3-ring binder with pockets (according to class color)
2. Notebook paper
3. 2 highlighters
4. Blue or black ink pen
5. Several No. 2 pencils
6. Calculator--\*For standardized testing, students should have a calculator with which they are very comfortable. The calculator they may have purchased for use in math or science class will be perfect for G/T Seminar. I will provide basic function calculators in the classroom.
7. Paperback dictionary \*optional

Grades for GT Seminar class come mostly from work done in class. There will be very little homework assigned unless a student does not finish the class work or is absent. Vocabulary quizzes are given every week and are an important part of the student’s grade. Grades will be posted in Pinnacle once a week. I will use the following system to record grades:

* X: stands for “exempt.” You will see this when your student has missed a day and cannot make up an assignment or activity that we did in class. An X does not factor into grades *at all*; it neither helps nor harms the grade.
* Z: stands for “zero.” This is entered when your student has not turned in an assignment that I have graded. If he/she turns in an assignment for which has received a Z, the paper will be graded and will replace the Z. Zs calculate as *zeroes* in the grade. Simply turn in the assignment to eliminate the Zs!
* Any number: this is a final grade. Numbers indicate an assignment has been graded. Numbers will never change. Once a grade is entered, it will be there forever. It is important to do assignments right the first time!

Please feel free to contact me about concerns you may have during the school year. My school phone number is 843-3562. It is my desire to instill an intrinsic love of learning in each student, and I look forward to a successful and highly productive year! Please sign the attached form and return it with your student as soon as possible. Thank you for supporting all of our endeavors in GT Seminar!

Sincerely,

Sarah Cantrell

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