

High School at MSA Panel Discussion
January 11, 2007 at 7:30 PM

Student Participants: Sam Cialek, Lauren Foley, Will Grant, Brianna Hammiller, Carly Johnson, Ellie Schroeder, Mary Speckhard, Nathan Trulsen, and Hannah Walsh.

Parent Participants: Anil Mehta, John Foster, Debbie Johnson , Alice Lee, Julie Kosanke, Ginger Rook, Sheila Schroeder and Marci Speckhard

Approximately 60 parents attended.

Welcome & Intro by Sandy Tevlin, Debbie Johnson, Sheila Schroeder & Alice Lee

Sandy – Introduce the group: Now we will have some of our PT officers and BOD members lead the HS@MSA Session

Debbie - Welcome . We are glad to see you all here. The Parent Team is sponsoring this evening for the purpose of pointing out the necessary resources that MSA has available for students and their families as they navigate through the MSA high school program. We have several Parent Team officers here, our Parent Team BOD liaison and several board members that are parents of older students. We also have a panel of experienced parents and students to help us out.

We have put together an important hand out with valuable information that has been collected from official MSA publications. We will not be going through it step by step, because you can read it later and we strongly encourage you to do so.

What we will do tonight is to go over the highlights of the handout and then open up the floor for questions from the audience to this experienced panel of parents and students. As I said, you can read the handbook later, but you might not necessarily be able to find all these people later, so this is your chance to ask questions.

We will be describing different programs without going into too much detail. The hand out will point out resources where the details can be found.

PSEO – Post Secondary Education Opportunities will, be thoroughly addressed on Feb. 8th right here. So for the most part, we will not provide technical details on that process. Information will be presented by the school to the students.

The school gives all this information to the students. Everything we are presenting here tonight is available in the MSA Handbook, Coursebook, Website, or other handouts given to students at the appropriate time. So this is not your only chance to hear this information. The handout we give you will help you know what is coming up and what sort of information to expect your student to bring home. I think there was one time when my daughter didn't bring something home.....

Our Focus this evening will be information sharing. We will be describing the High School program that MSA has in place at this time. If during the evening a certain topic grabs your attention or if you have a certain interest in a certain area, we encourage you to attend a BOD meeting, a Parent Team meeting or talk to the director, BOD member or Parent Team officer to find out more about that topic.

We want this evening to be informal, yet worthwhile and we hope you find it beneficial.

I'll now turn things over to Sheila and Alice who will go do an overview of the handout.

Sheila: Explained how Handout is formatted (via grade and category) and gives Pep talk.
Covers Focus, and Important Resources

Alice: Covered Tests, Extra-Curriculars, Sports and Service Opportunities, and Miscellaneous

Question and Answer Time

Question/Answer limited time per question to cover as much as possible

Handout: Resource document for parents, prepared by the Parent Team. Divided into five sections, it describes focus, resources, tests, extra-curriculars/sports/service opportunities, and miscellaneous information for the high school in general and individually for grades 9 through 12.

Discussion was then opened to the audience.

1. An audience member suggested that a student start by describing their experience at MSA.

A. 6th grade was really hard coming from an elementary school where we didn't get letter grades. I really struggled at first. Talking to teachers and study groups really help.

2. What's a study group?

A1. There are times when you just can't do it alone. For example, when a physics lab book is due we work together. When web assigns are due, we call each other for help.

A2. They are not arranged by the school, you just get together.

3. How often do you know you can't do it alone?

A1. Maybe once a month

A2. It really depends on the class

A3. We use study hall time too.

4. I have a 6th grader who has to do a math textbook. Do all of the math classes do that?

A1. Students make textbooks for CMPII, CMPIII, Algebra 1 and Algebra 2. After that we have bound textbooks.

A2. Pre-calc is a big change from the other classes. Everyone thinks that pre-calc is really hard. Calculus seems easier.

A3. Sometimes you can re-take classes if you need to. For example, my child took pre-calc twice – not because of a failing grade, just to get a better one.

5. How many classes do you take at MSA and at college?

A1. 3 at Century College and 1 at MSA. I'm involved in a lot of activities at MSA too.

A2. I take all of my classes at Century College, but I come to MSA when I can and to participate in activities such as band

A3. I take 2 classes at Century College and 2 at MSA. I'm also involved in MSA activities. I'm here a lot.

A4. also take 2 classes at Century College and 2 at MSA and I am also involved n MSA Activities. I'm here almost everyday for something when I don't have class.

A5. I take all of my classes at MSA. MSA has done a good job of making classes for upper classmen. I take History, British Literature, Zoology, Physics Project, Calculus and I'm also a teaching assistant for Mrs. Bartlett.

A6. First semester I took half of my classes at MSA and half at St. Kate's. This semester I'm taking half of my classes at Century and half here. I'm also involved in other activities at MSA.

A7. I take all of my classes at MSA.

A8. I have 3 classes here and 2 at Century College and participate in activities at MSA.

A9. Last year I took 4 classes at Century College and had an internship. I'm continuing my internship this year and will be studying abroad starting in February.

6. Where do you GO when you are here when you are not supposed to be?

A1. I come to MSA for lunch sometimes or Study Hall where my friends are

A2. I live close so I pop in to ask a teacher a question or have them sign something for college applications

A3. We sit in the hall and do homework

A4. I come in to work on College Applications

A5. I come for lunch or advisory sometimes

A6. I'm working on a video project for graduation

7. How many of you are full time at MSA?

A. 7 out of 27 students

8. How big are your classes at MSA?

A. They range from 3 to 18 students. Some classes are a combination of juniors and seniors such as English and History.

9. Can you compare your experiences at MSA with those of students at Woodbury High School?

A1. I wouldn't change schools. I have a good friend who transferred to WHS because she wanted the experience of a bigger school, the football games, pep rallies, etc. It's so much bigger and she was overwhelmed. The teachers there aren't as connected to their students as MSA teachers are. My friend's teachers don't know her as well. That's a detriment when asking for things like letters of recommendation. I think she would have liked to come back

to MSA. She doesn't even know her principal, but we can go talk to Mr. Simone whenever we need to.

A2. I think it really depends on the student. My sister transferred to WHS and loves it there, but I wouldn't have wanted to go there. I would have run away from home if they told me I had to go there.

10. How do you think you rank with other students in your classes at Century?

A1. We thought the teacher was kidding in our English class when she asked us to do things that we'd been doing since 6th grade - like Topic Sentences and how many sentences in a paragraph.

A2. MSA prepares you well for classes at Century.

A3. An MSA friend of mine and I got an award for being the most helpful students.

A4. It's college classes, college students, college credits, but the classes seem pretty easy

11. Do you take classes with other college students at Century or only high school students?

A. It's a mix of college and high school students in the classes. We are part of regular college classes.

12. What classes are you taking there?

A. Classes that are required for MSA graduation and classes that aren't offered at MSA. You have to get your graduation requirements done first.

13. Will your classes apply to an Associate of Arts?

A. Yes, the classes that I'm taking will, but it depends on which classes you take.

14. Are you getting high school credit and college credit at the same time?

A. Yes. Some classes will transfer to 4 year colleges and some won't. It depends on the course.

15. What is it like to lose half of your class since you started in 6th grade?

A1. It doesn't seem like we lost a lot of our class. Those of us who are still here have gotten closer.

A2. We knew that some students were only here until high school. We knew that they were going to leave.

A3. I dreaded it, but you still have friends here and we are close.

16. Do you have time to connect with your classmates who have left?

A. Yes, there's time but you have to make the effort. It is similar to when you go off to colleges, if you don't make the effort you'll drift apart.

17. Coming from MSA, have any of you had any trouble with interviews for college?

A1. Yes. It wasn't a problem. It's a plus coming from MSA. Alums have done good things to pave the way for us.

A2. I've never had to explain myself or tell them what MSA is.

A3. MSA focuses on college prep. I don't think that WHS does that as much.

18. How many of you didn't think that you'd make it through Calculus?

2 students raised their hands

19. How did you work through that?

A1. I came in early on a regular basis to work with the teacher.

A2. The second half of class is working on problems so there's time to ask questions and work with others then too. Problems are put on the whiteboard and then we work through them. It's not as scary as it might seem.

A3. The teachers all have cell phones and are available to talk to or leave a message. Don't be afraid to call. If they aren't available to talk, they'll turn their phone off.

20. Do you feel you were more prepared for MSA going into 6th grade or has MSA prepared you more for PSEO?

A. Definitely!

21. Did you apply to take PSEO classes at St. Kate's?

A. Yes. Different schools have different application requirements, but they do limit the number of students they accept and limit the number of courses that you can take. St. Kates had a limit of 2 classes

22. Is there a cost for PSEO classes?

A. No, colleges can't legally charge for PSEO classes.

23. Does MSA supply a list of schools where you can take PSEO classes?

A. What No, but the state of Minnesota has a list. We get a list of which college courses are MSA course equivalents.

24. What was awesome and what was challenging about your MSA experience?

A1. One of my classmates and I came to MSA in 9th grade. I didn't have the math classes before I came. It was challenging getting used to the atmosphere here, having the freedom to contact teachers. MSA helped us catch up o the classes that we missed in 6th -8th grades.

A2. It's small. I think about who's left, not those that we've lost from our class. We're really close – students and teachers. I know almost all of the kids in school, even in lower grades.

A3. The hardest thing is getting through all of the classes. The best thing is the relationship that I have will all of the students and teachers.

A4. My favorite story is one day my friend and I came to school dressed just alike. We saw Mr. Simone and I faked being mad at my friend for being dressed just like me. Later, Mr. Simone pulled me out of class and took me to his office where we searched for a pair of lime green gardening gloves that he had. He gave them to me and told me to wear them so that I could be dressed differently than my friend. I wore the gloves.

A5. MSA is bigger than the private school that I came from. I felt behind coming in 9th grade and I had to work really hard. MSA is small and close so you get to know everyone. There are more opportunities to do things at MSA that I might not have elsewhere.

A6. I like the closeness of the school. The hardest thing is the homework. You have to want to do it and work hard.

A7. The hardest thing was facing Calculus but I can go to friends and teachers for help. I can name everyone in my grade, I know where they live and their favorite color.

A8. I like the size. You build a special relationship with teachers and it helps with learning because you really don't want to let them down. They know your strengths and weaknesses. Classes are tough, but you learn a lot.

A9. I agree with everyone else about the size and closeness of the school. I know that I can go to Mr. Simone and talk to him when I need to. You can come back and feel welcome. The bad thing was losing friends from our class in 9th grade.

25. Are there kids who stayed through high school that shouldn't have?

A. No, we don't think so. We know at least one student who left in their junior year and had completed all of their core classes at MSA. When the student got to their new school, all he/she had to take were electives their senior year.

26. I don't know if you've encountered this in PSEO yet or not, but do you think you are prepared for a big, 500 person lecture class like many colleges have?

A1. That's why most all of us are only looking at smaller colleges.

A2. Taking classes at Century is a good transition. Some of the classes are small and some are really big. Large classes don't bother me.

27. Where do you plan to go to college and what do you want to major in?

Schools listed may include those where students have applied as well as those where they have been accepted

A1. Gustavus Adolphus – physics. I really like Physics. Though a lot of people want to hit me for that! After studying physics you can go on to most anything....

A2. UMD, U of M Twin Cities, Wheaton, Loyola – political science

A3 St. Thomas and others, but I really want to go to St. Thomas – writing

A4. Macalester – not math, not science

A5. Creighton – biology or chemistry

A6. Small private schools in the mid-west – I DO want to major in math, science or engineering

A7. St. Scholastica – undecided

A8. I have applied at a lot of small private colleges that nobody has ever heard of so I won't list them.....

A8. Macalester, St. Thomas, Boston University, U of M – undecided, maybe political science

The audience thanked the students for taking the time to participate on the panel.