



SMArticles



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National Math and Science Initiative Making Way at Aberdeen High School

By: Mitchell and Alyssa

In January, Aberdeen High School (AHS) was recognized as the National Math and Science Initiative's School of the Year. This honor was presented to only one of almost 500 schools participating in the NMSI programs. The NMSI program gives AHS students access to Saturday study sessions with experienced AP teachers and graders and reward students for passing exams. Students receive a \$100 stipend for each Science, Mathematics, or English AP exam they pass. The NMSI grant is a three-year program, making the upcoming school year the final year for AHS. AHS was recognized for its outstanding performance during its first year, which included a 137% increase in passing AP scores.

There was a celebration attended by representatives from NMSI, Harford County Public Schools, and even officials from the White House. The celebration included speeches from Ms. Liberto and AHS student Elasha C., as well as performances by Aberdeen's band and Dance Company. At the conclusion of the ceremony, AHS was presented with a check for over \$100,000 from the sponsoring company, Boeing. After another year of NMSI study sessions, AHS students and teachers hope to see another great improvement in scores from the recent AP exams.



Advice for College-Bound Juniors

By: Abby and Natalie

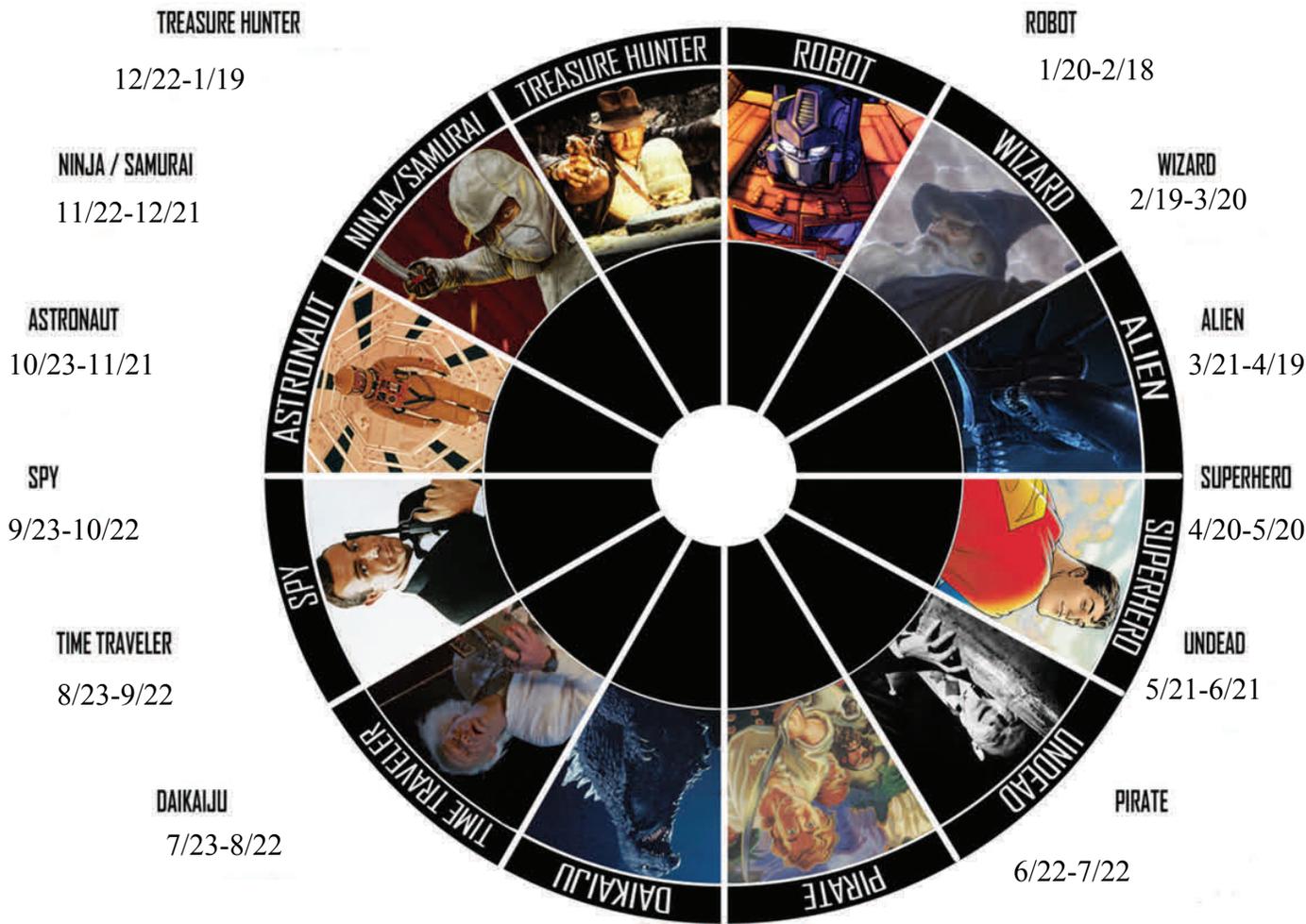
Senior year is a daunting time for students, facing many AP courses and the senior capstone project. However, perhaps the scariest factor is applying for college. The average student will apply to six to eight colleges. Most schools require at least one supplemental essay, in addition to the one required through the Common Application. So one could be looking around 10 essays to write, and that's not including scholarship applications. Stressed out yet?

There is no doubt that the application process requires a good bit of work, but with planning and time management, it can be manageable. Some of this year's graduating seniors offer a few pieces of advice:

- Do research. There are lots of different colleges out there for lots of different people. Find ones that fit you.
- Have a list of colleges that you want to go to prepared before applications are released. Apply to these schools before you worry about any other applications
- Create a deadline for yourself to have each application done. For example, try finishing two applications a month.
- Let other people revise your essays, but not too many. Having a parent, peer, or teacher read through your essay is a great way to make sure your writing is strong and your ideas are fluid, but don't let them edit your voice. The essays are meant for the colleges to get to know you.
- Start early. The sooner you start college applications, the sooner you can end them, and the sooner you can start scholarship applications. Also, starting early allows time for all of your materials to reach the college.
- Pay attention to deadlines. Make note of the different deadlines required for things like school-funded scholarships and honors programs because they can vary from the regular and early decision deadlines.

- Don't apply to too many colleges. You will have a hard decision to make in the spring if you get into all of them.
- Challenge yourself. Apply to a few schools that are harder to get into (also known as reach schools). You might surprise yourself.
- Know yourself. Don't apply to too many reach schools and not enough safe schools. You want to make sure you have lots of options.
- Be true to yourself. When selecting the school you will attend, there are lots of factors, money, location, size. These could influence your decision. In the end, it is you who will be there for the next four years, so make sure you pick somewhere that you will be happy.

We cannot guarantee that these ideas will make the application process easy; it's not supposed to be easy. Hopefully, these tips will help everything go a little more smoothly next year.



Robot:

Being a Robot is about being perfect. There is little room for failure or not measuring up to the task at hand.

Wizard:

You move through life absorbing and gathering knowledge. from everyone encounter.

Alien:

The Alien overflows with the need to succeed. every single way.

Superhero:

You expect from those around you what you expect from yourself.

Undead:

You live through the struggles and hardships of life and beat the odds.

Pirate:

The Pirate always has his eyes on the treasure, but his head in the clouds.

Daikaiju:

The Daikaiju is a formidable opponent since your attention to detail, methodical learning and pure stubbornness will not allow you to give in.

Time Traveler:

The Time Traveler wants to discover the secrets of life and what lies between worlds.

Spy:

You operate undercover. You love playing games, and often what you see is not what you get.

Astronaut:

You are gifted in being innovative and unique in every way.

Ninja/Samurai:

You are a force to be reckoned with. You are crafty and unpredictable.

Treasure Hunter:

Life is one big adventure- the more excitement and variation, the better it is.

Editor's Note - NMSI: Friend or Foe?

By: Micah (Senior)

When Principal O'Brien first announced that Aberdeen High School would be taking part in the National Mathematics and Science Initiative (NMSI), I was skeptical. This was not only due to my predisposition for critical thinking with which the SMA had aptly instilled me. At the time it seemed to set a disconcerting precedent, in which organizations with deep pockets could alter or influence the public school system's pre-established curriculum. The initiative also offered study sessions with monetary incentives and reduced testing prices exclusively for students taking math, science, and English classes. Not only did this promote bias, but it also potentially deprived students of well-rounded and diverse exposure to all college-level classes, if their course selections were subjected to factors such as convenience and affordability. During my junior year Mr. Freda's AP psychology class was one of the most enjoyable and thought-provoking courses I had the pleasure of taking and Mr. Freda is one of the funniest and most easily approachable teachers I have ever met. For the 2013-2014 school year he saw his AP class enrollment cut in half the year after NMSI was implemented due to the fact that psychology is a "social" science. In my opinion, high school is a transition period – a time when students explore various subjects until their passions may present themselves. NMSI appeared to be a formidable chain-linked procession towards dark damp laboratories and dusty equation-laden chalkboards.

I recently, however, had a slight change of heart. No, it was not the pomp and circumstance of the recent NMSI celebration or a shift in the initiative's order of operations. It was one of the program's tri-annual English Saturday Study Sessions, on a cold rainy December day. The event had such minimal attendance that the lunch was overbooked and students later went home with towers of leftover pizza boxes.



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I was sitting with my peers in the next to last session. This was typically the most trying time period, as the suspense of the remaining weekend seems too distant and you are reminded of the invaluable hours of Saturday you have voluntarily allowed to fade into nothingness. The teacher entered and asked us to open our provided packets to the first page of Barbra Kingsolver's *Poisonwood Bible*. I was instantly taken aback by how intensely the work began – five women walking through a treacherous forest with deceptive animals and an unsympathetic narrator. We all finished with looks of conceded enjoyment on our faces. As we discussed the novel the analysis became deeper and deeper, as everyone contributed some form of in-depth analysis, and created the effect of an accelerating locomotive. It was in this moment that I realized the power, potential, and promise of NMSI.

The achievements of the students and teachers have been all their own. I believe we have been lucky with the success of the NMSI program, however. I still warn that we should be cautionary about the precedent it sets and the paths it subtly pushes students towards. Special moments, like the one mentioned above, do occur through the NMSI program, allowing students to share and build unique and interesting intellects as a collective, and I sincerely believe these events would not be as prevalent if not for NMSI.