

PTSA begins preparing for All Night Grad

Pam Burke, PTSA President • Pam.a.burke@gmail.com

OHS MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to provide equal access to all curricula by forming a partnership with families, by communicating our expectations clearly and often, and utilizing the resources of FCPS in challenging all of Oakton's students to achieve their academic and personal best.

OHS VISION STATEMENT

We agree that all students should have access to a rigorous educational experience, and we are dedicated to helping students achieve the individual goals that will strengthen their intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development. We understand that in order to lead youth, we must be willing to model a passion for lifelong learning and personal growth and development.

SUBMIT

If you have an article that you would like to have included in Access Oakton, please forward it to Kirsten Rucker at: kkunklerrucker@verizon.net. The due dates for articles for future publications this year are: March 31, and June 2.

It is hard to believe that even with all the snow we've had, plans are in full gear for the end of the year and graduation.

The PTSA sponsors, and is most proud of, our All Night Graduation celebration. All Night Grad is a long-standing tradition at Oakton and is meant to be a fun, memorable and safe celebration of their years at Oakton.

This is a final chance to say goodbye and get ready for their future endeavors. All Night Grad really needs to be seen to understand all the hard work that is needed to put on this event. The committee meets the third Thursdays of the month at 7 pm in the library. Over 200 volunteers are needed to plan, set-up, run and take down this event. I urge parents of all grades to volunteer for this event.

This year, All Night Grad is June 20 and runs from 10:30 pm to 5:00 am. Since we really want it to be a surprise for seniors, I can't mention all the details, but it is a night to remember. Parents of all grades should really consider volunteering. This is your chance to 'pay it forward' so parents of seniors can enjoy their out-of-town guests. Or parents of seniors and guests can come and continue to celebration. Over 450 graduates attend and, speaking from my own experience, you really do not see your child. There is plenty of work to be done

before and after the event, so perhaps working then may fit better into your schedule. Parents in other grades should come and see it, so when your turn comes to plan this for your seniors, you will know what it is. A Keep in Touch will have a link to the volunteer website, please look at it and see just how great the needs are for this event.

Next month the PTSA will have our nominating committee in place to recruit officers for next year. I have been president for three years, and my terms are up. We also need some committee chairs such as Membership and Hospitality. Please come to a PTSA meeting and learn more about us. We meet the first Wednesday of each month at 7 pm in the library. We do have an informal portion of the meeting where Dr. Banbury can answer any questions we may have about the school, classes, current teenage trends and anything else. This portion runs from 6:30-7 pm, then the meeting begins so that we can stick to our agenda. We have lively discussions about any topic that parents wish to discuss with the administration. It is a very worthwhile event and is only once per month.

As always, thank you for your support and remember, if you haven't joined yet, the membership form is on our website and we can accept your \$15 dues at any time.

Upcoming Events at Oakton

Feb. 14 - March 4 Counselors Meeting w/ students for curriculum selection

Feb. 15 Cougar Dinner Theatre

March 17 Junior Parent Night-College Admission

April 17 Sophomore Parent Night-Standardized Testing

COUGAR MART

The Band Boosters are continuing their citrus sales. Citrus can be ordered at the beginning of each month. Please look at the website, oaktonbands.com under the fundraising tab. These can be paid for through PayPal.

Writing Center now available on Blackboard for all students

The Oakton Writing Center site is now available on every student's Blackboard account. Visit the Oakton Writing Center tab on your Blackboard account to find out all about us. You can check our "About Us" tab to find FAQ's, general information and tutor bios. You can also communicate with the Writing Center through the "Ask Writey" tab. The "Ask Writey" tab is a place where you can ask specific questions about the Writing Center. Tutors will then respond to your question through the "Ask Writey" discussion tab. We hope this makes the Writing Center more accessible. Visit our site soon!

Keep on Writing,
Oakton Writing Center

Guidance emphasize importance of spring course selection

As the year progresses, the Oakton Counseling Department continues to support student achievement. Focus begins to shift at this time of year to new projects and challenges. Helping students choose the proper courses is one of our main goals and we try to make certain every student gets one on one attention. Counselors have already gone into classrooms for pre-registration to discuss the class options and graduation requirements. The students were given a draft course selection sheet to fill in prior to meeting with their counselor during registration. Course descriptions are available from a "Course Catalog" link under the "School Counseling" menu at the upper right of the Oakton home page. We will meet with our rising 12th graders between February 14 - 18, our rising 10th graders between February 21-25, and our rising 11th graders Feb. 28 - March 4th. Counselors will also be visiting the middle schools

in the next weeks to begin transitioning our rising 9th graders.

We hope you were able to attend our Curriculum Night February 9th when our teachers got to show off a little of what they offer our students each year. Attendance at our evening programs is a great encouragement to our students and staff. Also coming up: *Junior Parent Night: College Admissions* March 17 at 7 pm, and *Sophomore Parent Night: SAT and ACT Process* April 7th at 7 pm.

In addition, counselors are striving to provide personalized support for all students. The department is dedicated to the success of our student body and has expertise in a surprising number of issues. Whether academic, social or "other," we have probably dealt with it before. Please feel free to contact your student's counselor if we can be of help.

Drama to present One Act Plays at Cougar Dinner Theatre

News from Theatre Arts - www.oaktondrama.org

Our December field trip to NYC was a huge success. The students had an incredible experience seeing the much talked about musical *Spider-Man*. It's been great to have a point of reference as this production continues to be in the news as well as going through many re-writes.

We have just finished performing at the Concorde District VHSL One-Act Play festival. Our drama 3 & 4 students presented *The Swimmer* which was student directed by Chris Papas. We took 3rd place for the 3rd year in a row (we are consistent!) and we are very proud of our own Ian Lindsay who walked away with the Best Actor award for his portrayal of "the drunk." You will have an opportunity to see this production plus three others at our 3rd annual Cougar Dinner Theatre on Tuesday, February 15th. Festivities, sponsored by our boosters, will start in our lobby at 6:00 pm. Tickets are \$10 at the door or use your season pass. Dinner and dessert will be served and it's always a wonderful evening to see so much of theatre family represented. The Drama 2 class will present their Shakespeare production of *Prospero's Island* followed by the Drama 3 & 4 performances of *4 A.M* and *Going To School*.

Ms. Powell and I are starting the rehearsal process for our spring musical of *Oklahoma!*. This is a huge production and a beautiful show. We can't wait to start putting it all together. Mark your calendars now for May 5-7th to be in our audience.

I would like to say a special thank you to all my theatre and tech kids. During these last few days of snow and ice they made sure that our production wheel didn't stop turning. They found houses to meet in or came in on the weekend to work with me. This kind of dedication is what makes me so proud to be their teacher. So please take a moment to tell your kids, how great they are.

Vanessa Gelinas

ORANGE CONES. NO PHONES. Distracted Driving on the Capital Beltway

When the Capital Beltway HOT Lanes open in late 2012, they will provide commuters with the option of a faster, more reliable trip. In the short-term, the 14-mile HOT Lanes corridor will be an active work zone – leaving no room for driver error. Approximately 210,000 individuals drive on the Capital Beltway each day – and more than half do so while distracted by cell phones. According to a recent survey conducted by Transurban-Fluor and AAA Mid-Atlantic, 56 percent, or 117,600 Beltway drivers, use their cell phone to make calls or read/write text messages.

These behaviors are frequent – one-third of all Beltway drivers admit to using their cell phones while driving “most times.”

Distracted Driving is Dangerous

Cell phone use is a factor in an estimated 342,000 auto accident injuries and costs \$43 billion each year in property damage, lost wages, medical bills and loss of life. According to the Transurban-Fluor and AAA Mid-Atlantic survey, along the Beltway:

- A driver using a cell phone is twice as likely to have had an incident or near miss than a driver not using a cell phone
- Texting is even more dangerous – drivers reading texts are nearly twice as likely to have had an incident or near miss than those using cell phones just for calling
- Additionally, drivers who are writing as well as reading texts are more than three times as likely to have had an incident or near miss than other drivers on the Capital Beltway Drivers should

change their behavior in construction work zones - a constricted, constantly changing environment – but don't. Nearly half of all Beltway drivers make no change to their cell phone behavior in the Beltway construction zone. Just 16 percent say they make a conscious effort not to read or write texts or e-mails in the construction zone.

Distracted Driving is Illegal

The Commonwealth of Virginia bans:

- Text messaging for all drivers
- Cell phone use for school bus drivers
- All cell phone use for drivers under 18 years of age.

However, many drivers on the Capital Beltway are not aware of laws pertaining to cell phone use:

- 17 percent of drivers think there are no Virginia laws pertaining to cell phones
- 37 percent do not know of any Virginia laws pertaining to cell phones

Drivers Know Better

Capital Beltway drivers are aware that cell phones and driving don't mix:

- 95 percent of Beltway drivers believe that reading a text while driving qualifies as distracted driving
- 99 percent of drivers believe that reading or writing a text presents a threat to other drivers

However, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety found that 67 percent of drivers said they had recently talked on the phone while driving and 21 percent had recently texted. Courtesy of the Fairfax County Police Department and the Virginia Department of Transportation.



Letter from the Principal: A Look Ahead

John A. Banbury, Principal • john.banbury@fcps.edu

Dear Parents,
I know it's hard to believe, but first semester is behind us, and we have already started registration for 2011-2012! To help you and your students make those important decisions about courses to choose, we are continuing this month with the second in our series on "Everything You Always Wanted To

Know" about each of the various departments at Oakton High School. This month will highlight the Oakton Science Department brought to you by Mrs. Kathy Martin, the Science Department Chair. Enjoy and think Spring!

Sincerely,
John Banbury

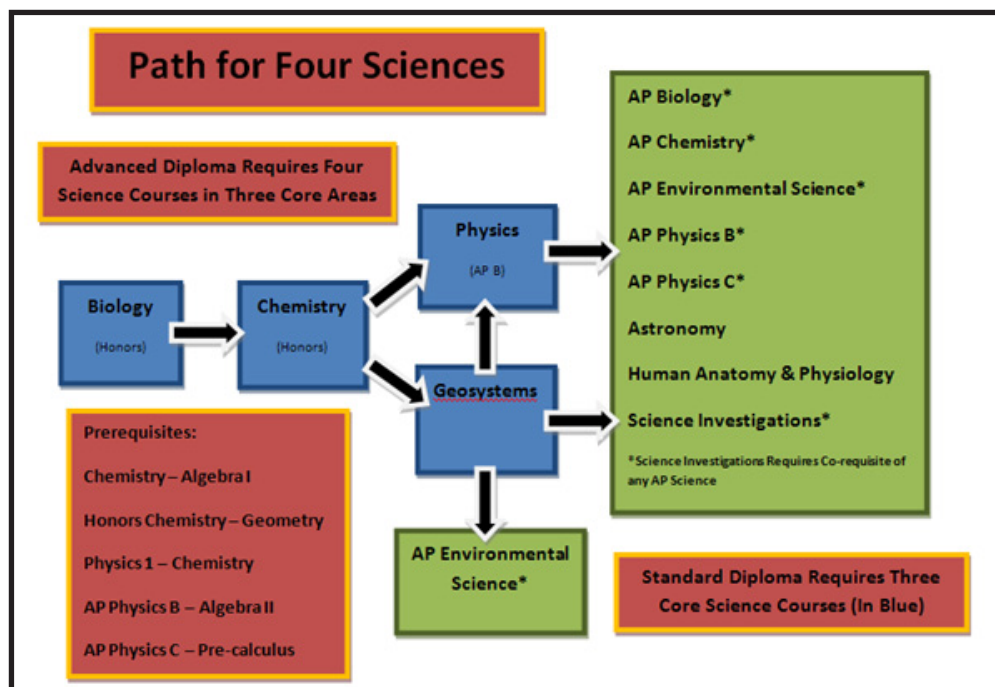
Everything You Always Wanted To Know About the Science Department

I am Kathy Martin and I am the department chair for the Science Department at Oakton High School. I am delighted to be able to follow in the footsteps of the Math Department

and write an article for the PTSA newsletter to introduce you to the science department and the wide variety of courses that your student can take in the four years of high school.

Who We Are:

Our department consists of 23 science teachers. We are lucky to have one of the best science departments in the county that works as collaborative teams. If you haven't had a chance to meet them all, the biology team consists of: Jackie Fernandez, Sandy Leathart, Kay Mikula, Melissa Murphy, Jeanine Musgrove, Brenda Saikkonen, Alaina Szykowny and Grace Wang. The chemistry team consists of: Susan Bingham, Abbey Giordano, Kathy Martin, John Masters, Kathy Plecity and Marianne Scales. The geosystems team members are Ryan Faubert and Wendy Rodgers. The physics team consists of: Brooke Davies, Tim Moore, Peter Rothfleisch, Deborah Roudebush and Stephanie Stehle. Ryan Faubert, Sean Greeney and Ann Star teach the various science electives.



We teach the 2300+ students at Oakton High School in 95 sections of science this year, consisting of the SOL classes, AP classes, and electives. Our department has grown over the last five years with more students taking four to six science courses. All students are required

to take a biology and a chemistry course before branching out into our other science courses. The diagram above shows all the science courses we teach and the general sequence of classes that students at Oakton can take.

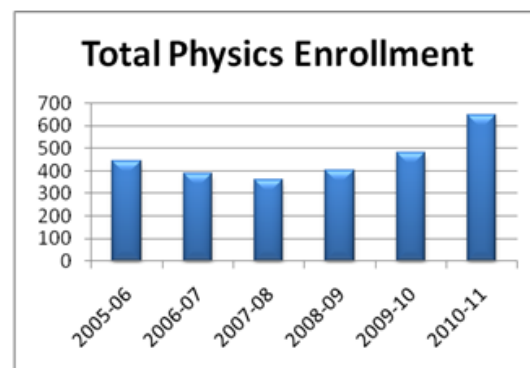
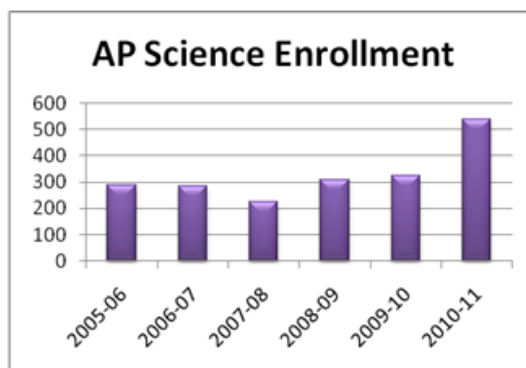
What We Do, Now vs. Then:

With the push from the county to have all students take Algebra 1 before entering high school, students are able to experience higher levels of science courses. Oakton has made a conscience effort to have our students experience at least four science courses and for one of those courses to be physics. We also believe that there is an AP science course in which all of our Oakton students can find success. According to the American Physical Society, "Research shows that students who have taken high school physics do better in college physics courses,

and are more likely to graduate from college." ("7 Myths about High School Physics," brochure produced by The American Physical Society, American Association of Physics Teachers and the Society for Physics Students, 2010.) Therefore, we at Oakton High School decided to change with the time to pilot the AP Physics B as a first year physics course at Oakton during the 2010-2011 school year. Dr. Zuluaga, our Cluster Superintendent, contributed greatly to this pilot process, both by providing grants as well as administrative support.

What We Do, Now vs. Then (cont.) :

The science department is well on its way to achieving the goals of increased physics enrollment and increased enrollment in AP science classes. As can be seen in the graphs to the right, our enrollment figures for AP Science have increased dramatically. In the same time period physics enrollment figures also increased substantially.



Our department works in groups of highly effective collaboration teams. Fairfax County strongly encourages, and in most cases requires, the use of collaboration teams. Our principal, Dr. John Banbury, not only encourages the teams, but offers and teaches challenging graduate-level courses to our teachers and administration for curriculum development and collaborative growth. Our teams meet officially every Wednesday morning, but unofficially we do very little with our classes without consulting our teams

first. We no longer have a simple set of guidelines to teach by. We now have benchmarks and standards that we need every student to meet every year. Research shows that this is best achieved by the use of collaborative teams.

Our collaborative teamwork has allowed all of our science teachers to feel part of a community dedicated to improved education for all of our students. We develop assessments designed to address all Fairfax County Public Schools Curriculum strands and indicators to maximize

student success on SOL tests and AP science tests. Grades for assessments and homework are weighted the same in a given curriculum. Instructional techniques are discussed and best practices are shared throughout the teams and across the department. We have begun the practice of comparing results of assessments to guide our instruction. Using this assessment data analysis, we are better able to identify student misconceptions and gaps in understanding. This in turn impacts our instruction and the cycle continues...

What You Can Do To Insure Your Student's Success :

Remember all the resources that are available to you as a parent. All science teachers have a Blackboard site available to your student with regular updates documenting happenings in the classroom. Your student can download worksheets and PowerPoint presentations. Many teachers provide external links for additional practice and enrichment. You can have parent-access to that site by contacting the main office. I recommend that you get this access immediately if you do not already have it. Even if you don't use it on a regular basis, when you do need it, it will be there.

Attendance is crucial to success in science. The lab experiences reinforce the underlying concepts. If students are absent and miss the discussion, it is difficult to duplicate the learning that occurs. Similarly, homework is important for students to complete. Homework provides essential practice for skills necessary to be successful on SOL tests and AP science tests.

In Conclusion:

Thank you for the opportunity to showcase the Science Department at Oakton High School and all that we have to offer your student. My email address is kamartin@fcps.edu and my phone number is 703/319-2954. Remember, parental involvement is crucial. I look forward to hearing from you.

Science teachers welcome questions and concerns that you may have about your student's progress. We encourage you to talk with your student about their progress in class, but please feel free to email their science teacher. It takes a community to educate students and parental involvement is a crucial part of the community.

As the scheduling process continues, we encourage you to have the discussion with your student about which path through the science courses at Oakton High School will best prepare him/her for life after high school. We have a strong science curriculum that will allow your student to keep options open for future career goals. We are in a highly competitive region with many students with high grade point averages. We want our students to stand out from other high school students. An important way to achieve that goal is for students to take challenging science courses throughout their years at Oakton High School.

Alcohol and Drug Youth Services STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Jessica Williams, M.A./M.A.
Substance Abuse Counselor

Phone: (703) 488-6386 Email: jlwilliams4@fcps.edu

The Alcohol and Drug Youth Services (ADYS) Student Assistance Program is a partnership between Fairfax County Schools, Safe and Drug-Free Youth Section and the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board Alcohol and Drug Youth Services.

Our primary goal is to help at risk students succeed academically and socially by addressing any concerns related to drug and/or alcohol use. The team provides substance abuse prevention, intervention, education, consultation and treatment referral services for students and their families.



The referral process is simple and free. Teachers, administrators, social workers or other professional staff can refer identified students and their families. Additionally, parents may refer their child directly for an initial screening if they:

- Have found their child under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol
- Suspect their child might be using alcohol or drugs
- Have found their child with drug paraphernalia
- Have seen a change in their child's attitude, behavior and/or school performance
- Want to know if substance use/abuse is contributing to their child's problems
- Want to recognize the signs and symptoms of substance abuse

When a student participates in a screening at school by the Substance Abuse Counselor, it may involve a brief conversation to determine if a student has used, or is currently using, drugs and/or alcohol. It is a preliminary step to determine if the student may need a more formal drug assessment. In other circumstances, the parent can request a formal assessment without the child being seen. If it is determined that a formal assessment is needed, the counselor will work with the family to arrange an appointment at ADYS. The assessment for school referrals is **free of charge and all information is confidential**. The parent accompanies his or her child to the assessment where the counselor gathers information from the student and family about major life areas including details of their substance use/abuse history. Additionally, a free urine drug screen will be provided. If treatment is necessary upon completion of the assessment, it is at the family's discretion to determine if they will follow through with recommendations. There is no obligation to follow through; however the family now has all information necessary to make an informed decision regarding treatment options for their adolescent.

**** Please note that all referrals are kept **CONFIDENTIAL!** Information is only released when proper consent is given. Please call Jessica Williams at (703) 488-6386 with any questions.