

# SHS' NEW ACADEMIC MONITORING CAMPAIGN

As more focus shifts toward college and career readiness, Schaumburg High School has rolled out a school-wide academic monitoring campaign to help students stay on track in school and after graduation.

The campaign is entitled, "What's Your Score? What's Your Target? What's Your Plan?" The purpose of this campaign is to create an awareness of the importance of the measure of growth on the assessment series known as EPAS (American College Testing's Educational Planning and Assessment System). This integrated series of assessments and reporting services supports educators as they help students set and reach goals for life after high school.

"We understand that not every student that comes to us is college or career ready, and we're certainly OK with that, but we want our students to build the skills that are necessary for whichever path they choose," said SHS Assistant Principal Rico Matarazzo. "I handle disciplinary matters, but when I meet with a student, one of the first topics we discuss is what was your score and what your target score for next time is. This initiative has created a buzz in our school, faculty and staff are having these types of conversations, and they are stressing the importance of college and career readiness with our students. The idea is to make state testing on April 24 and 25 the culminating activity or Super Bowl for our students."

The components of EPAS are EXPLORE, PLAN and ACT assessments. This year, the State of Illinois will determine a school's adequate yearly progress (AYP) based on a series of multiple measures of student growth known as the Illinois Multiple Measures Index. The EPAS testing series will be the testing series that measures academic progress and growth starting with freshmen (EXPLORE), sophomores (PLAN), and juniors (Prairie State Achievement Exam consisting of the ACT and WorkKeys exams). The tests will be administered during the third week of April.

EPAS assessments provide information about academic progress at crucial points in a student's educational career. Information provided by EPAS assessments is linked longitudinally to provide an academic information management system. These linkage reports can be used to monitor student progress over time, detect trends, and evaluate instructional outcomes in support of school improvement efforts.

These scores serve as important benchmarks and are necessary for students to know because they measure where a student is at on their journey to career and college readiness. Understanding what that test score means is a starting point. Identifying the target tells a student exactly where he or she needs to be, and perhaps the most important part of the SHS program is the development of a remediation and growth plan to close the gap in learning should one exist.

The Student Services Department in coordination with the Saxon Academic Center will be the place where students can get help developing their plan. In addition, SHS teachers will identify College Readiness Standards through curricular alignment where key aspects and/or components of the EPAS testing system can be taught and/or

reinforced. "What's Your Score? What's Your Target? What's Your Plan?" are critical questions that when answered prepare students for post-high school opportunities.

Incoming freshmen are monitored closely by SHS staff and administration to help ensure their success. Based on test scores SHS receives students who need additional help meeting standards will work towards meeting target benchmarks in math, science, and reading through remediation during study hall. Each student is assessed, and then works with staff to create manageable goals for them to reach. Students are divided into groups of 10 to help focus remediation efforts, and SHS has ordered remediation software that will help students in each grade level reach their goals.

Another aspect to improve student success is focusing on positive behaviors. Students earn privileges through the Privilege Option Program; (POP) operates in conjunction with Positive Behaviors Intervention and Support method (PBIS).

"This program allows kids to earn privileges throughout the building, with the first goal being to increase academic success by increasing time spent in a structured academic setting, such as a study hall or the Saxon Academic Center. The second goal is to provide a deeper understanding of our school culture and climate," Matarazzo said. "If students are not meeting an academic standard, then they shouldn't be hanging out in hallway during a free period. Instead they should be in a remediation. If they aren't behaving appropriately, they need to be taken out of the social environment until they can meet standards and behave accordingly"

Matarazzo said creating opportunities for students to earn privileges and rewarding students for good behavior are two key interventions to assist with college and career readiness. These changes have also been made at the classroom level. Teachers have been given the ability to discipline students on the spot for tardiness, and this change has created an early intervention and a crucial dialogue between the teacher and the student about the importance of being in class and on time.

"Students have the opportunity to earn their privileges back through positive behavior and meeting remediation goals, and we give them six weeks to prove it," he said. "If they don't meet those goals, we will continue to hold them accountable because we cannot let our students slip through the cracks."

The plan is to launch the full "What's Your Score? What's Your Target? What's Your Plan?" campaign in early October. Until then, Matarazzo said these new initiatives have created a buzz within the school community, helped prevent some student discipline matters, and built excitement for the staff.

"It takes everybody to be able to do this, everyone in the school," Matarazzo said. "Our scores need to get better, our behavior needs to get better, so why not do it all together?"