The Counselor Connection

Junior Class Edition – Quarter 2 Newsletter

Welcome to the second quarter! You are officially midway through your 5th semester of high school, and we want to take a moment to tell you how incredibly proud we are of your growth. While the pressures of moving closer to adulthood can feel heavy, please know that you are not doing this alone. We are so excited about all that lies ahead for you, and we are deeply committed to walking beside you as you continue to explore and discern God's path for your life.

Counselor Conversations

Counselors have been meeting monthly with each grade level with four key areas in mind:

ACADEMIC • CAREER • SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL • STUDENT LIFE

Our goal: Help students better understand themselves, their strengths, interests, goals and possible life paths.

Junior Meetings

Junior meeting scheduling information will be sent to families in mid-November and will be scheduled through the Pick-a-Time platform. Meetings will take place Thursday, December 3, through Wednesday, January 20. Student attendance is mandatory, and while parent attendance is not required, we strongly encourage at least one parent to attend whenever possible.

Families will receive information in advance outlining what to expect during the meeting, followed by a summary of the topics discussed. Please schedule meetings outside of your student's class time to avoid missing valuable instruction. We look forward to connecting with your family!

Junior ACT Testing

Pius X is excited to offer all juniors the opportunity to take the ACT right here at school during the school day! A strong ACT score can support college admission and may help students qualify for merit-based scholarships. Taking the exam during junior year provides a valuable opportunity to establish a score and determine whether additional testing may be beneficial.

Date: Tuesday, March 9, 2027
Time: 8:00 a.m.
Cost: $48 per student (regular ACT fee: $75)
Exam: ACT with Science; no Writing section

All juniors will be automatically registered unless a parent or student completes the ACT Opt-Out Form by **Wednesday, November 18, 2026**. The $48 testing fee will be charged to the student's FACTS account. We encourage families to take advantage of this convenient and affordable opportunity. Please contact your assigned school counselor with questions.

National Testing Dates and Waivers

While the ACT Fee Waiver Program cannot be applied to the Pius X school-day exam because of its already discounted $48 fee, eligible students may qualify for ACT fee waivers for other national Saturday testing dates. Students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch may be eligible for up to two ACT fee waivers, which cover the test registration fee and include free ACT preparation resources. These resources include a self-paced ACT prep course, practice questions, and full-length practice exams.

Upcoming national ACT test dates:

Saturday, December 12, 2026
Saturday, February 27, 2027
Saturday, April 10, 2027
Saturday, June 12, 2027
Saturday, July 10, 2027

Students interested in additional testing opportunities or learning more about fee waiver eligibility should contact their assigned school counselor.

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Tip #1: Keep your SchooLinks profile up to date, including your career goals and career clusters. Career exploration opportunities are sent to students with matching goals and clusters.

Tip #2: Make sure you have notifications turned ON for Canvas and SchooLinks to get teacher and counselor information and announcements!

College Visits

Juniors have been invited to college representative visits at Pius X this semester. More opportunities will be posted through SchooLinks and Canvas during second semester. Check these accounts regularly for visit details and sign-up information. The best way to figure out if a college is the right fit is to experience it firsthand. Junior year is the ideal time to step onto college campuses to compare different sizes, locations, and cultures.

How to Schedule a Campus Visit

Do not just show up to a campus; an official visit ensures you get a spot on a tour and clear information from admissions officers.

- **Book through Admissions:** Go directly to the "Visit" or "Admissions" tab on the college's official website. You can typically choose between a large Open House event or a standard small-group information session and tour.
- **Coordinate with the School Office:** Remember that our school allows juniors **two excused absences per year** for official college visits. You must pick up a college visit verification form from the counseling office *prior* to your trip and have it signed by an admissions official during your visit.
- **Request Special Appointments:** When booking your tour online, look for options to meet with a professor in your major of interest, sit in on a live freshman class, or meet with a financial aid counselor.

Critical Questions to Ask on Campus

While on your tour, don't just ask things you can easily find on Google (like the school colors or student population). Ask the tour guide or current students these revealing questions instead:

- **Academics:** *"Are introductory classes taught by the main professors or by graduate teaching assistants (TAs)?"*
- **Scheduling:** *"How easy or difficult is it to get the classes you actually need to graduate on time?"*
- **Majors:** *"When do students have to officially declare a major, and how easy is it to change your mind?"*
- **Weekend Vibe:** *"What do students do here on the weekends? Does the campus stay lively, or do people tend to go home?"*
- **Housing:** *"Is campus housing guaranteed for all four years, or do upperclassmen have to find apartments off-campus?"*
- **Honest Feedback:** *"What is one thing you wish you could change about this school or the surrounding area?"*
- **Career Support:** *"How early can freshmen start working with the career counseling center for resumes and internships?"*
- **Recruiting:** *"Do major companies or local employers actively come to campus to recruit students from this school?"*

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TCA Info Sessions

The Career Academy (TCA) 2026–27 information sessions will be offered in person at TCA (8800 O St.) on Tuesday, December 8, and Tuesday, February 9, at 5:30 p.m. Virtual information sessions will be held on Thursday, December 10, and Thursday, February 11, at 5:30 p.m. To receive the link for a virtual session, email jjones7@lps.org.

Academics & Grades

Check PowerSchool Weekly: Do not wait for report cards to check on academic progress. We recommend that parents and students sit down together **every Friday** to review grades.

- **What to look for:** Missing assignments, incomplete tests, and sudden dips in percentages.
- **Need access?** If you have trouble logging in or need to set up your parent account, use the following link: https://www.piusx.net/parents/powerschool/

Final Exam Study Tips: Semester finals are approaching quickly on December 15-17. High school final exams require a different level of preparation than a standard weekly quiz.

- **Space it out:** Study in 30- to 45-minute blocks over two weeks rather than cramming the night before.
- **Use active recall:** Don't just re-read your notes. Create flashcards, take practice quizzes, and explain concepts out loud.
- **Attend review sessions:** If your teachers offer before- or after-school review sessions, make every effort to attend.
- **Resource Rooms:** Be sure to utilize the Math and Science resource rooms open every day during 5th period.

2027-2028 Registration

Registration for the 27-28 school year will open to Juniors on January 26th. Counselors will come to AP/US History classrooms on that day to go over reminders for the registration process. This process will also be discussed at Junior meetings. Course descriptions and graduation requirements can be found in the Student Handbook.

Wellness & Counselor's Corner

Junior year can be incredibly stressful with the mounting pressure of grades, testing, and future decisions. Remember to prioritize sleep, physical movement, and breaks away from screens.

Our doors are always open. Students can schedule an appointment with their assigned counselor using the "Request an Appointment" form on the Pius X Counseling Center website.

Important Links

SchooLinks CANVAS PowerSchool

Community Resources for Families

Lincoln-area resources for food, housing, utilities, health care, and other family needs during the holiday season

The holiday season can bring additional expenses and stress for families. If your family could use extra support with food, housing, utilities, health care, or other basic needs, the following Lincoln-area resources are available.

Food Assistance

- **LPS Emergency Pantry** — Provides food assistance to families with school-age children while school is in session.
  Location: Bryan Community School, Door #12, 300 S. 48th St., Lincoln, NE 68510
  Hours: Mon, Wed, Fri 3:00–5:30 p.m. (when school is in session)
  Phone: 402-466-8170 | **Email:** info@lincolnfoodbank.org

- **Good Neighbor Community Center** — Provides food, household goods, personal-care items, emergency assistance, and perishable food distributions.
  Address: 2617 Y St., Lincoln, NE 68503
  Phone: 402-477-4173 | **Email:** info@gncclincoln.org

Housing & Financial Assistance

- **Community Action Partnership** — Provides homelessness prevention, rent and utility assistance, financial coaching, food access, and other services.
  Address: 210 O St., Lincoln, NE 68508
  Phone: 402-471-4515
  Website: communityactionatwork.org

- **Family Service Lincoln** — Helps families prevent housing crises and provides financial assistance, case management, and other family support services.
  Address: 501 S. 7th St., Lincoln, NE 68508
  Phone: 402-441-7949
  Website: familyservicelincoln.org

Utility Assistance

- **Nebraska Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)** — Helps eligible households with heating and cooling costs. Assistance may also be available for certain energy emergencies, deposits, and repairs or replacements.
  Call: 402-323-3900 (ACCESSNebraska – Lincoln)
  Toll-Free: 800-383-4278
  Website: dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Energy-Assistance.aspx

Health Care

- **Clinic with a Heart** — Provides free medical, dental, vision, behavioral-health, and spiritual-care services for uninsured and underinsured individuals.
  Address: 1020 S. 13th St., Suite 101, Lincoln, NE 68508
  Phone: 402-421-2924 | **Toll-Free:** 888-317-8608
  Website: clinicwithaheart.org

Safety & Support Resources

- **Friendship Home** — Confidential services for survivors of domestic violence and their children, including 24/7 crisis support, shelter, and advocacy.
  24/7 Crisis Line: 402-437-9302
  Website: friendshiphome.org

- **Voices of Hope** — Provides free and confidential crisis intervention, advocacy, and support for people affected by domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and other forms of abuse.
  24/7 Crisis Line: 402-475-7273
  Website: voicesofhopelincoln.org

Transportation Assistance

- **Matt Talbot Kitchen & Outreach** — Offers outreach and transportation-related assistance. Limited gasoline vouchers may be available to eligible individuals.
  Address: 2121 N. 27th St., Lincoln, NE 68503
  Phone: 402-477-4116
  Website: mtko.org

- **Nebraska 211** — A free information and referral service that can help families locate transportation resources and other essential needs.
  Call: 2-1-1 | **Toll-Free:** 866-813-1731
  Text: Your ZIP code to **898211**
  Website: uwm211.org