



Tempe Preparatory Academy & Tempe Preparatory Junior Academy

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Headmaster's Fall 2009 Report

Our students have completed the first quarter of this 2009-2010 school year. This Report seeks to provide you with information about several issues important to our community to support our continuing success for the rest of the year.

Winter Wardrobe and Uniforms: Now that fall is upon us, the “winter” uniform standards apply. That means that no shorts should be worn as part of the uniform dress code until March 1, 2010. Also, we now see students wearing a host of “outer wear” that does not fit the dress code. Such items, including jackets, coats, “hoodies” and other outer wear *may* be worn to and from school and during the lunch break, but they must be free of logos and advertisements. Further, during class periods, such items must be stored in students’ lockers and are not allowed in the classrooms. We very much want our students to be comfortable and warm this winter. However, the dress code to which we all have agreed requires that students choose from the “outer wear” styles selected for our Academies. Those include a sweater, a sweater-vest, and a sweatshirt, all in the school’s selected styles and “navy blue” color. To reduce the cost of the sweatshirts, we have eliminated the requirement that the Academy crest be included on sweatshirts, but we request that families be faithful to the color and style of sweatshirt that have been specified in the dress code. If you have any questions about whether an item meets the dress-code standards, or where to purchase them, please contact Lisa Hicks in the office for help at 480-839-3402, ext 100.

Finally, based on some language in the dress code that left room for interpretation, we have clarified several provisions of the dress code. A copy of the clarified version is available on the Academies’ web site under the “Downloads” tab. We ask that parents consult the dress code to avoid purchasing items that do not comply with the uniform standards. We will not be enforcing the clarifications to the dress code until the second semester for those families and students that may have interpreted the code’s provisions in good faith and, as a result, previously purchased items they believed to be within the code’s terms and gave rise to the need to clarify the code. We appreciate all our families’ patience as we seek to improve our approach to this and other issues.

Attendance Reporting: Earlier this year, I attempted to provide our families with information about students’ attendance. Unfortunately, I learned from that effort that our computer program calculates absences and attendance differently than the staff here understood it would. As a result, many families received letters that were overly harsh in light of their students’ actual absence and tardy records. For that I take full responsibility and apologize to our community for creating a bit of a stir for a number of families.

On the other hand, our Academies have not done a sufficient job tracking and reporting tardies and absences to our parents. We will continue to seek improvement and look forward to a more accurate reporting system that provides parents with the information to be sure we are accurately reflecting students’ attendance.

We also need to ask that all parents timely report their students' tardies and absences. If your child will be missing some or all of a school day, call the attendance line, at 480-839-3402, ext 300, and report the tardy or absence and the reason for it. This information is required for our reporting to the State of Arizona. When parents fail to call the school, our staff must make telephone calls to parents to confirm the tardy or absence. With increasing numbers of parents now failing to call, significant staff time is being spent on what should be a simple task for our school to perform.

Discipline and Detention Program: Earlier this year, I supplied all of our Tempe Prep families with a letter describing the results of the lengthy faculty and staff discussions that occurred before the start of school and concerned our discipline and detention program. Based on the resulting faculty consensus, we developed a program that seeks to achieve students' voluntary compliance with Tempe Prep's behavior standards and discipline code, and creates a productive detention program for those students who breach our code and standards.

We recognize that we need parents' participation and support of our discipline program to make it effective. Accordingly, if a Detention is issued to a student, the issuing Faculty Member must call and/or email the students' parents to inform them of the basis for the Detention. Further, a student also must receive a written Detention Referral and must have it signed by a parent and returned the next school day. Detentions are to be served at the end of the school day on Tuesdays and Fridays (at 3:10 on a normal school day and at 12:35 on half days).

A student also may be asked to serve in the Saturday Detention Work Program if the student receives three Detentions in any 30-day period, or if a student's single infraction is sufficiently severe. In the case that a student is assigned a Saturday Detention, we ask that at least one parent of each student attend the Saturday Detention to help supervise the student in the work program for that day. This is an essential part of the program. Parents need to keep in mind that two Faculty Members are also supervising each Saturday Detention work program; it seems only fair that parents understand the necessity that they participate as well. While I have made exceptions to exempt parents when they must work Saturdays, we have discovered more than a few parents have not participated for other reasons that have raised questions among those who have attended, worked and supplied the needed supervision of their children. While we appreciate that parents' schedules often are quite full of important matters, we will work diligently with our parents to schedule Saturday Detentions for their students to accommodate difficult schedules. However, we ask that all parents take the Saturday Detention Work Program as a sincere effort to build in their students a desire to comply with Tempe Prep's behavior code and standards.

State Budget Crisis Impacts Tempe Prep: We have faced two small budget challenges so far this school year and we are likely to face a large budget crisis shortly. The two small challenges were that the State threatened to withhold all schools' monthly payments, first in mid-September, and more recently in late October. Such threats challenge our ability to operate smoothly and, for example, make our faculty and staff payroll payments on time. Accordingly, we have put in place one emergency line of credit with a bank and a second through parents volunteering to supply home-secured lines of credit if emergency cash-flow is needed.

The State also has accelerated our monthly payment by two weeks, which doesn't currently hurt our efforts. However, the State did this in connection with its decision to eliminate its July, 2010 payment that otherwise would be made to schools, including Tempe Prep. We now have to plan to make up the shortfall in our cash-flow that this challenge presents.

Worse still, the State of Arizona's current budget is still badly out of balance for THIS year; it is between \$2 billion and \$3 billion short. As I am writing this, the Governor has indicated she may call the Legislature into special session. The best information we can gather is that the Legislature is likely to make significant cuts to K-12 Education funding, including the funding to charter schools like Tempe Prep. Legislative leaders privately have indicated that schools like Tempe Prep likely will face additional cuts of at least five percent. If the cut is not instituted until January, in the last six months of our fiscal year, it will have the same effect as a ten-percent cut on the remaining school budget for the year.

In anticipation of the Legislature making a mid-year cut in our funding, we have, with Board, Faculty and Staff concurrence, instituted an across-the-board salary cut of five percent; the full-time administrative leadership has taken a ten percent cut in salary. These cuts may not be enough and so we need to pull out all the stops in our fundraising efforts as well.

In light of the faculty and staff's continuing generous support of our students, if your family can afford to make additional financial contributions to Tempe Prep, now would be the time. You can do so through the Academies' website at www.tempeprep.org under the "Support TPA" tab. Use the "Community Investment" choice for general donations. You also can merely mail a check made to TPA, TPJA or the TPA Foundation to the schools' address of 1251 E. Southern Avenue, Tempe, AZ 85282.

Extracurricular Tax Credits: One way you can make a donation that will pay you back as much as you give is to make an "extracurricular tax credit" donation. As a public school, Tempe Prep is eligible to receive donations of \$200 per person, \$400 per married couple for extracurricular programs under a tax credit program offered by the State of Arizona. Such contributions allow the donor to receive a dollar-for-dollar tax CREDIT against any Arizona income taxes owed. That means if you pay Arizona income tax this year, you can donate to Tempe Prep and receive a FULL REFUND of the donation up to the amount of the donation or your Arizona income tax obligations, whichever is smaller. There are two other similar tax credits (for charities that support the "working poor" and for private school tuition). An Arizona taxpayer can donate under all three programs, but Tempe Prep only qualifies for the Extracurricular Tax Credit.

If you have not yet done so for this tax year, you have until December 31, 2009 to make this type of donation. Tempe Prep is in desperate need of these donations. They are the means by which we keep the cost of our extracurricular athletic, fine arts and other similar programs down, and the only way our Academies can provide these programs. Tempe Prep's current budget assumes that Tempe Prep will receive almost \$250,000 in such donations. Unfortunately, to date, we have only received \$15,000. Are your child's extracurricular programs worth a "cost-free" donation to Tempe Prep? Without this help, we will face increasing fees and trimming programs. Please show your support now.

In addition, even if all of our families gave the maximum amount in tax-credit donations, we would receive less than half of the amount we need to be able to fund this year's programs. So we also need you to ask your other family members (grandparents, aunts and uncles, in-laws) and friends to contribute as well. For more information about this essential program, visit the Tempe Prep website at www.tempeprep.org and, at the front page, on the upper left under "Popular Links," click on the "Tax Credit Page" link. You also can merely mail a check made to TPA (and only TPA for the tax credit donation) to the school's address of 1251 E. Southern Avenue, Tempe, AZ 85282, but please indicate the donation is intended to qualify for the "tax credit."

Continuing Efforts to Avoid the Flu: So far this semester, we have only had a few of our students reporting flu-like symptoms. For two weekends in a row, we have had our students who were serving Saturday detentions work with faculty to sanitize our classrooms and other public areas, including the Zelman Center and the Student Union.

While the flu vaccine has become available for some populations, because Tempe Prep does not belong to a large school district, we are not part of any of the proposed school-based clinics that may offer vaccinations when the flu vaccine becomes more readily available. Please consult your own physician or medical-plan provider for information on when your students and family members may receive vaccinations. You may get more information on where you may be able to get flu vaccinations at www.flu.gov.

If your child exhibits symptoms of the flu, please make arrangements to keep your child home until your child is free of any fever for at least 24 hours without the application of fever-reducing medication. The symptoms of the seasonal and this new strain of flu include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people may experience vomiting and diarrhea as well.

If a student shows such symptoms during the school day, we will phone the student's parents or other emergency contact and ask that the student be picked up from school. *If your child wakes up with a fever, please do not send your child to school.*

To help students who miss school because they remain home to avoid spreading the flu, we are going to apply additional academic accommodations for students suffering from prolonged absences (more than two days) due to flu. These include:

- For students with the need for multiple days of absences, you may email your child's teachers and seek a list of daily homework assignments from the teachers; we will also ask teachers to make class notes for missed classes available to students on their return.
- Teachers have been asked to provide students with additional time, beyond that which is normally provided, to complete missed homework and testing.
- Narrative evaluations at the end of the semester will take the need for time missed due to flu into consideration, particularly as it relates to student participation.

If your student is diagnosed with the flu and will be absent for more than two days, please be sure to provide relevant information to Mrs. Hicks when you call to excuse your child's absence.

PASS System: Before Fall Break, we supplied all students' families with a letter announcing our effort to reduce the mailing and printing costs for our students' quarterly evaluations and reports. That letter explained how you can access the Academies' secure website and get your child's school-related information. Not only can you retrieve your child's grades, you also can access and review your child's attendance data, immunization information and the host of other information the school must maintain on each student. This information is available to you only with the use of a student's unique identification number and unique password associated with it. If you no longer have your child's identification number and associated password, please contact our Registrar, Dannette Flores, at dflores@tempeprep.org or 480-839-3402, ext 101.

Thanks for reading,
Hugh Hallman
Headmaster