



# THE GOVERNOR'S SCHOOL for SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



## Prospective Student Pipeline Newsletter #3

The Prospective Student Pipeline is a virtual community for families who want to learn more about The Governor's School for Science and Technology (GSST). By subscribing to this newsletter, you'll get information about what's happening at GSST plus notifications of upcoming events for prospective students.

### Director's Notes: Ms. Vikki Wismer

#### New Computational Science Course for Seniors:

GSST has designed a new cross-disciplinary, college-level course for seniors. The curriculum will include C++ programming plus data science materials and research opportunities stemming from collaborations with Virginia Tech and the College of William and Mary.

The first semester will integrate C++ programming with curricular material from an innovative data science course at Virginia Tech. The Governor's School is honored to be collaborating with VT to provide our students with critical thinking and programming skills to analyze data from a range of areas, skills we believe are foundational for any future academic or career endeavor in a STEM field. In keeping with our belief at GSST that students learn best when putting knowledge into action with their academic peers, the course will rely heavily on collaborative labs and group projects.

Our new instructor, Mr. Gaelan Venturi, is uniquely qualified to teach this course. He has a B.S. in Mathematics from Old Dominion University and is currently completing a master's degree in computer science, with a special interest in data science.

Additionally, Computational Science seniors will collaborate with Dr. Albayrak and the seniors from the Engineering strand, offering new opportunities for cross-disciplinary learning in the Engineering, Design, Innovation, and Entrepreneurial



(EDIE) Lab. In the EDIE Lab, students will explore the design process - from ideation, conception, modeling, prototyping, testing, and final product fabrication - in authentic, real-world contexts. This component of the course will also include participation in a large-scale, National Science Foundation funded research project being conducted at The College of William and Mary. The EDIE Lab provides the opportunity for the engineering and computer science students to learn independently and in teams in an engaging, interactive environment.

This is one of the most exciting curricula we have ever been able to provide for our students, and we believe they'll find it to be both enjoyable and valuable.

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## College Planning Corner with Dr. Ellen Fithian:



### The PSAT: How to Take it and Why

The PSAT is a standardized test patterned after the SAT. It's given at a student's home high school on one of three dates in October; most schools will administer it this year on Wednesday, October 13th. A student's *junior year score* - and only the score from that year - serves as his/her qualifier for the National Merit Competition. Top scorers can go on to become Commended Students, Semifinalists, Finalists, and Scholars, and possibly win scholarship money, so the PSAT is a test worth taking - and preparing for. To learn more about the National Merit Competition, [click here](#).

### Why take it in 10th grade?

Since a student's score from 10th grade doesn't count toward the National Merit Competition, why should students take it that year? First, it gives them experience with the test format and generates a score that provides a preliminary evaluation of strengths and weaknesses so that they can prepare for the 11th grade test more efficiently. Second, for students aspiring to attend the Governor's School, there is an additional reason; GSST uses a student's 10th grade PSAT score to help evaluate whether GSST would be a good fit for him/her. The PSAT score is not a requirement for students to apply to GSST, but when submitted, it serves as one component of a holistic admissions process that includes a review of courses taken, grades earned, and teacher recommendations. Students are strongly encouraged to take the test, as it provides a benchmark measure of their academic strengths that can help them select courses and programs in which they are likely to be successful.

### How does a student sign up?

This varies from school to school. Some high schools sign up all 10th graders and pay for them to take the PSAT. Others require students to sign up through their school counseling office and pay a modest fee (~\$18). To find out what the process is at your school, ask your school counselor.

### How can you prepare for it?

There are two free online sites that should be a student's first lines of test prep.

- College Board: For free resources from the organization that administers the test, including two practice tests, [click here](#).
- Khan Academy: It's a non-profit organization that has paired with the College Board to provide free prep software that's customized to each student on the basis of either a diagnostic test on the website, or a student's previous PSAT or SAT (which can be sent to Khan Academy from College Board with a few quick keystrokes). [Click here](#) to go to Khan Academy's test prep site.

### What's the "PSAT 10?" Is it different from the PSAT?

The College Board website refers to PSAT 8/9, PSAT 10 and PSAT/NMSQT as three different tests. What's the difference between them? Will my tenth grader be taking the PSAT 10 or the PSAT/NMSQT?

Let's start with the PSAT/NMSQT. This is the test that's given to juniors in mid-October and that serves as the qualifier for the National Merit Competition (hence the NMSQT). Schools often allow 10th graders, and even younger students, to take



this test at the same time, in which case those younger students have taken the PSAT. Schools also have the option of administering *the same test* to sophomores in the spring, in which case it's called the PSAT 10. The PSAT 8/9, on the other hand, is a somewhat abbreviated form of the PSAT - there are fewer questions and its content is meant to be more appropriate for younger students.

Bottom line: PSAT 10 and PSAT/NMSQT are the same test, just given at different times of the year. Most likely, your teen will be taking it in October, but check with your school counselor to be sure.

## Virtual STEM Conference for Teens & Parents

Check out this FREE virtual conference entitled **Teens Love STEM 2021**. Representatives from multiple STEM associations will provide separate, interactive workshops for parents and students on STEM careers, college majors, and professional organizations.

When: 9 AM to 2 PM on Saturday, October 16th

Where: Online

For more information, and to register, [click here](#).

## Tell a Friend About the PSP! Everyone is Welcome!

If you know someone who might be interested in learning about The Governor's School, or who would benefit from any of the more general information provided here, please encourage him/her to subscribe by signing up on the [Prospective Student Pipeline](#) tab of our website.

### The Governor's School For Science & Technology

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