

The Garden City News

‘Stay at home’ means ‘get going’ for college admissions

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By Rikki Massand College admissions consultant Mike Binder believe’s time not at school is a good time to ramp up activities for high school students working on an evolving college admission process.

According to *U.S. News and World Report*, the College Board canceled the May 2 SAT exam and postponed the April 4 ACT to Saturday, June 13. Binder’s updates from the College Board included an announcement on IB tests scheduled between April 30 and May 22 are canceled *even if schools are in session*; students will be awarded either a diploma or a course certificate which reflects their standard of work and coursework this year. He expects several colleges to implement “test-flexible” admission protocols, at least for 2020-’21.

“For colleges that are not test-flexible, especially competitive schools, they know you have fewer opportunities to take tests. Therefore it’s especially important to score well once you do take exams, or a second and last shot for a higher score. Study now! This is the opportunity to prepare,” Binder said in an interview with *The Garden City News*.

He’s preaching to students in the process to keep in mind Newton’s First Law: an object in motion stays in motion while an object at rest will remain at rest or in uniform motion unless acted upon by an external force.

“How can you be an object in motion during the pandemic — what can you do either on your own or via the Internet?” Binder suggests to students.

Test preparation is not the only way students can ‘hit refresh’ during COVID-19 closures. He’s hoping that students — like many adults recently involved with changes to their workplace situation — take on new ways of learning and ‘upskilling’ this spring.

“On my website I have a link to 400 Ivy League classes high school kids can take online. There’s a volunteer tutoring website offering things for them to do. LanguageBird learning has created five different languages of chat groups called Chirp, where you can

chat under the guidance of a proctor — you can chat daily with other students in French, German, Spanish, Mandarin, and build language skills for free,” Binder said.

Binder was scheduled to present on College Admissions planning and success at the Garden City Public Library on Monday, April 6, but with GCPL’s announced closure beginning Friday, March 13, that and all other library events were canceled.

He presented a complimentary College Admissions planning lecture at the Mid-Island Y Jewish Community Center on Wednesday March 11, but several families who had signed up to attend decided to cancel coming. As of March 10, Binder had 51 scheduled attendees signed up for the Mid-Island Y presentation but under a dozen showed up.

In light of shutdowns and staying-at-home implementation, on Wednesday March 25 Michael Binder presented a special webinar, “Curvebreakers and Your College Navigator present: *How to Prepare for College During the High School Shutdown*” made accessible through ycnavigator.com. Despite minimal promotion, 71 students and families participated from the convenience of their homes.

The message Binder’s extending to students now is to make lemonade out of lemons. Are theatre productions, sports seasons, Robotics events or other high school activities now cancelled? Here’s a moment to seize with added time to work on technology and create interactive features or initiatives supporting your college application, Binder notes.

He suggests creating Zoom meetings or webinars for clubs to continue working while schools are physically closed.

“Get everyone together, have a discussion and create a network for research. YOU can be the one to start a webinar or chat group. You can then tell colleges about your initiative and goals — and find self-driven projects to carry on. What were you always interested in doing but you just didn’t have the time to do?” he asked.

‘Connecting’ to school is part of the “object in motion” plan. Binder says if there’s school faculty that you enjoy learning from, an email could lead to a new opportunity.

“Ask schools if there is anything you can do to help them *without going in*. Maybe they need help preparing documents, or teachers need additional info — a student can volunteer. Someone is going to take you up on this. There’s so many opportunities,” he said.

Many recent webinar attendees hail from the competitive Long Island districts his consultancy normally serves including Garden City High School, Jericho High School,

Kellenberg High, Syosset High, Our Lady of Mercy, Plainview-Old Bethpage JFK and other leading schools.

“Questions from students mostly centered around ‘What can I do right now and how can I plan for summer? Or how do I explore college choices when I cannot visit?’ I provided thoughts and information with online resources from the College Board, plus other links that address these issues students and parents are facing across the country,” Binder said.

From the standpoint of an independent small business, he’s working remotely and meeting students via Zoom, Skype and other video conferences or teleconference setups.

Information is sent to him directly from individual colleges nationwide as well as industry organizations including the nonprofit College Board, which represents over 6,000 of the world’s leading colleges, schools, and other educational organizations.

“The ycnavigator.com webpage is being utilized as a home site for notifications directly from the College Board, the ACT and ETS. We include many links as colleges continue to send many emails daily to inform the globe about what they are doing with the COVID-19 shutdowns and virtual learning, or interactions for prospective students. For those admitted, colleges are telling them what to be doing and where the online/telephonic resources are,” Binder says.

Usually ‘commitments’ by colleges are to notify everyone of acceptance by the end of March, and the students would normally have a timeframe to notify the college of intended enrollment for fall by the last day of April. Many colleges would like to have enrollment responses back by May 1, as normal this time of year, however so many have changed that date to June 1. Binder notes that there’s an entirely separate grouping of colleges for admission, including a number of state universities and the CUNY system and smaller private colleges, which normally extend admission into the late summer and fall term regardless of ‘makeshift’ situations.