

# How to Prepare for College Admissions

ICB Wayland Conversations  
May 6, 2012

# What's all the fuss about?

If you are the adult in this process...

- Be ready to set expectations for your child and for yourself at the right level rather than being in a competition
- Be ready to guide and support your child through the process, but not do the work for him/her
- Realize that the sheer number of students applying to top colleges is 3 times what it was 25 years ago, but there is no need to apply to 3 times as many schools

# What's all the fuss about?

If you are the student in this process...

- You are not the first one in the world to go through this process.
- You will need to do some soul-searching in the next years, which never really had to do before.
- Your parents will be paying for your education, so they have some say.

# The High School Years

- Don't stress about 6-8th grade, but enhance your talents.
- Make friends with teachers.
- Take courses that challenge you, especially if it's in your area of interest
- If you are recommended for honors or AP courses, take them whenever possible.

Figure out your strengths. Do your talents fall into specific categories?

# Academic Preparation

Should I take SAT prep

Take enough SAT II. Different schools have different requirements for testing

Some people take the ACT

What if the SAT is not required?

AP classes/ Honors classes

# Extracurricular Preparation

- What do you really like to do?
- Don't just try a smattering of activities and drop them.
- Show that you can budget your time.
- Take on leadership roles  
Create your own club
- Don't just be a passive participant

# Summers

*How do your summer activities tie into how you want to showcase yourself?*

- Colleges know what programs are rich kid magnets.
- Do summer academics if you want to dig deeper into something not available at school.
- Volunteer
- Travel, but be prepared to talk about it
- Jobs
- Creative/artistic exploits

# The Pressure

- Kids put pressure on themselves
  - Parents put pressure on kids
  - Peers put pressures on kids
- In retrospect, none of these pressures is worth it.*
- As parents our expectations are very high, which is fine, but keep your child's strengths and weaknesses in mind.



# Selecting where to apply

- What kind of limits will you set for your child: Geographic? Financial? Brand-name? The sky's the limit?
- Never put down or disparage a school in front of your child. It's okay to discuss the pros and cons though.

*Look at the sheer statistics for the colleges you select. Applying to 5 schools with a 10% admit rate doesn't mean you have a 50% chance. It means you have a 10% chance.*

# How your school can help

*Make the most of your high school experience. High school is not just a means to getting to college.*

- Naviance
- College/Guidance counselor
- Teacher recommendations
- Don't decide based on friends' preferences

# The College Tour

- Visit on your own or when the colleges have their open houses
- Make sure the admissions office knows you came. Sign in, give them your email address. Show your interest!
- Do not let the parking garage/cafeteria/view of the city define your impression.
- The tour guide is just one student at that school with one point of view.

# The Application

- START early.
- Different applications types: EA, ED
- Make a list of everything you have done outside the curriculum since 9th grade
- Make a resume, even if it is for your own use
- Look at the Common App when it becomes available
- Look at each school's supplement
- Short questions
- Listing awards
- Making it clear what you are passionate about.
- Start EARLY

# Personal Statements / Essays

Write about yourself

Funny or introspective, minor or major topics

Don't write about the school (they already know how great they are)

Ask for your English teacher's advice or expand on a class assignment

*Proofread everything on the applications many times. If it sounds like it was written by a 6th grader, then it is not college application material.*

# The Interview

- Is it really optional?
- Be relaxed
- Make conversation
- Know yourself, your strengths, your weaknesses
- Rehearse with a trusted adult (not mom or dad)
- Don't claim you have wanted to go to the school since the day you were born.
- What gets asked:
  - Tell me what you are passionate about.
  - Why do you think you are good fit for our school?

# The Money

- Plan to apply even if you don't think you qualify.
- Fill out FAFSA and CSS forms.
- Fill out all forms early, and fill out your taxes as early as possible too. (by 2/1)
- Listen to what they tell you at the information sessions.

*Many school award scholarships based on merit, if they really want the student. But they won't award anything if you don't submit your application.*

# The Gamble

How can my child know at age 17 what will make her happy?

- How do we stay positive through the process?
- Will the number of Asian American applicants hurt us
- What about legacies?
- What if we can't afford it?
- Most of the top schools can admit 3 classes worth of students that fit their criteria, but they are limited by numbers, so they try to build a rounded class.





# Our personal experiences