

COLLEGE BOUND

YOUR APPLICATION MENTORSM

New Year, New Beginnings

Learning from Failure, Planning for Success

January, 2010

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7:30 PM

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Happy New Year! First off, congratulations to most of you on completing all of your applications and to those of you who were accepted Early Decision, you can relax for the rest of the year.

Over the last month, I have been thinking a lot about failure and success and realize that most of my later successes started with failure. Below are some tips on how to use failures as a launching pad for success.

LEARNING FROM FAILURE

"I'm failing Chemistry!" My daughter wailed.

"No you're not."

"Yes, I am."

It turns out she wasn't, but that's not the point. She felt like it. Ironically, I had those same feelings 30 years ago in my ninth grade Introduction to Physical Science, or IPS as we called it. I routinely sat in class with an utter sense of confusion at what we learning. I was not alone. My lab partner, Julia, was equally confused. We sat during every test clueless as to a) what the questions meant and b) how in the world to answer them.

First lesson: making decisions in uncertainty.

During the labs, I blew up a test tube (who knew that you couldn't burn a test tube with a stopper in it?) *Second lesson: cause and effect.*

For our final, we had something called the "sludge test". Each group was given a different unknown substance and through a series of experiments we had to discover what the substance was. Well let's just say that we completed the test in my kitchen using my Mom's fondue pot as a Bunsen burner. Oh and did I mention, that as I was taking the test tubes with our results back to school, they were crushed in my backpack? *Second lesson learned twice: cause and*

effect.

Julia and I did not fail IPS. We were able to piece together all of the information we collected and deduced what our substance was based on our observations prior to the mishap. We ended up with the highest grade in the class.

Third lesson: problem solving, intuition, persistence, teamwork, and resourcefulness.

Below is an article I wrote about how to tie these skills into the College Application Process.

The New York Times

[NY Times Blog on Learning Life Skills through the College](#)

[Application Process](#)

PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

I was in Los Angeles over winter break and I spoke with my nephew, a sophomore at Berkeley studying architecture. He had some very clear goals about what he wanted to achieve over the next few years, but was not quite sure how to get there. So we developed a plan for study abroad, internships, and graduate school.

The same planning goes for high schools studnets. January is a great time to take stock of yourself and assess how you are spending your time and energy. It is also a great time to set goals for the coming year to shore up areas of weakness and go deeper into your areas of strength. So how do you know where to focus to prepare yourself for the college application process? Below are some areas to think about; keep in mind that it is extremely difficult to be strong in every area, so focus on *your* strengths.

Leadership: Junior year is the year to pursue leadership in whatever you are involved in. If you are an athlete, can you become captain? If you are a journalist, can you become editor-in-chief? If you are a scout, what do you need to achieve Eagle Scout or the Gold award? Identify what you need to do to achieve your goal and develop a plan.

Academic: Are you challenging yourself enough in your classes? Are you getting the best grades you can, or can a little extra studying help you change that B+ to an A? Set a goal to improve at least one grade.

Standardized tests: Do you do better on the SAT or the ACT? Identify which test works better for your test taking skills. Set a goal to focus on improving either test by the equivalent of 50-100 points in the SAT.

Extracurricular activities: Are you enjoying the activities you are doing? If not, find ones that you love? Are you doing enough? Are you doing too much? Set a

goal to get involved deeper in something you love. This can mean taking a leadership position or spending more time practicing an instrument.

Athletics: If you are involved in athletics, figure out if you want to play in college. Junior year is the time to start contacting coaches. Set a goal to identify target schools and send out a letter and athletic resume to the team's coach.

Special talents: Do you have a special talent? Are you a gifted musician, actor or artist? Do you have a facility with languages? Are you a natural entrepreneur? Whatever your talent is, set a goal to pursue it to the fullest and share your talent with others. Take a risk with your talent by auditioning for a state orchestra or choir or entering a writing contest.

Intellectual curiosity: Do you have innate curiosity for a particular topic? Do you find yourself researching topics outside of school? If you have a love a science, identify a way to pursue that further through a summer research opportunity. If you love to write creatively, why not take a summer writing seminar for high school students. You can find a host of interesting summer opportunities on the College Bound Mentor Version of Naviance under Colleges/Enrichment Programs.

Financial: Speak with your parents about their financial commitment to your college degree. Understand how much they are willing to pay and what you will need to contribute. Set a goal to understand the financial differences among schools and which schools are in your financial reach. Identify schools that can give merit awards.

STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DIFFERENCES AND/OR ADHD-TAKE INITIATIVE (Advice from Diane)

SENIORS

Self Advocacy

One of the differences between college and high school is that you must be your own advocate at the college level. You will have to seek the support you need by contacting the Office of Disability Services and making an appointment to receive your accommodations for each semester. It is critical that you are able to express your own strengths and weaknesses and also to know what accommodations will help you in your college level classes. Attend your exit IEP meeting with your parents and practice being your own self-advocate.

JUNIORS

Current Documentation

Now is the time for you to determine whether or not your Psycho-Educational Evaluation is current and includes the necessary testing required for the colleges on your personalized list. Traditionally, the guidelines state that testing has been completed within the past 3 years. However, when visiting college support services this past year, some of the program directors have changed that requirement to the past 1-2 years.

SOPHOMORES **Standardized Testing**

Allow enough time (4-6 weeks) to process the necessary paperwork when applying for testing accommodations for the College Board or the ACT. If you will be applying for accommodations for the PSAT, SAT, SAT Subject Test, or ACT you need to do the following:

1. Go to the College Board website and read through the Student Eligibility Form.

[SAT Eligibility Form for Accommodations](#)

2. View the ACT Policy for Documentation

[ACT Eligibility Form for Accommodations](#)

SOPHOMORE AND JUNIOR CONSULTATIONS

If you haven't already, please call to set up a sophomore or junior consultation.

JUNIORS For those of you with whom I met last year, I will be calling you shortly to present your list. Otherwise, contact me to schedule a needs assessment to develop your college list.

SOPHOMORES We can meet to discuss classes and a plan for the summer and next year.

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