

Education

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Staying 'home' for college: Options abound in Westchester

By LINDA LEAVITT

While most local high school graduates head out of state to college, a sizeable number take advantage of Westchester schools offering associate or baccalaureate degrees. For some, the lure is nearby Manhattan. For many others it's a chance to save money.

A report by the consulting company Eduventures, identified seven "decision segments" that influence college applicants:

- Affordability;
- Availability of a desired program;
- Reputation/academic quality;
- Career outcomes/job opportunities;
- Value of education for cost;
- Feeling of fit;
- Proximity to home.

Proximity to home ranks highest on the list when college is a financial stretch. Students who live at home save on room and board, which costs \$16,000 or more at Westchester colleges. Even if they board at a nearby college, they can save on transportation for vacations, and possibly on food and laundry expenses as well.

Local college students can more easily attend family events, religious services and holiday gatherings. For students with special needs or health issues, staying near doctors and therapists may be a deciding factor.

Taking advantage of the reduced in-state tuition rates at public universities makes a lot of sense, too. (All tuitions listed below are approximate.)

In-state tuition at Purchase College in Harrison is \$6,870, compared to \$16,650 for out-of-staters. And inexpensive does not mean inferior: U.S. News and World Report ranked Purchase College No. 10 in the nation's public schools.

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STRUGGLE NO MORE HOMEWORK HELP IS HERE

By TODD SLISS

If you're a parent whose child sits down, does his or her homework and then moves on to the next phase of the day, this isn't for you. It's for the rest of us who have kids who have the super power called Turning 15 Minutes of Homework into Two Hours of Homework (or something like that).

Yes, that's a real thing and while it seems like it might be more brutal for the parents, imagine how the kids feel losing all that valuable free time.

And, no, bribes to get the work done faster don't work. There's more to it.

For kids, as they get older, the distractions become more distracting, especially as they start getting tablets and phones at a younger and younger age. Bill Blank, the high school psychologist for Solomon Schechter School of Westchester, suggests having kids do their homework in a "public" place in the house, such as a dining room or kitchen table so parents can casually check in from time to time.

With teens, if the phone is constantly being used for texts and social media during homework, parents can let the kids know it's time to put the phone away, not as a punishment, but to make the time more productive.

"By high school, certainly by the end, we're hoping that parent intervention should really be minimal because these kids are getting ready to go to college and their parents aren't going with them," Blank said. "We're hoping that the parents don't have to do too much."

Multi-tasking, said Blank, is a "myth," causing more distractions than necessary.

"Even people who think they are doing it really well, what they're really doing is they're quickly and fairly efficiently shifting attention back and forth," Blank said. "It's just never going to be as efficient as not having to shift attention back and forth."

One exercise Blank has students do is to — with decent penmanship — write the numbers 1-18 on a line. Then they write "multitasking is a myth" on the next line. The third part is doing the exercise all at once, but writing "1" then "m" then 2 then "u" and so on. Which option is more efficient?

"I remember hearing the old phrase, 'Do one thing at a time and do it well is a very good thing as all will tell,'" Blank said. "Most of our kids for whatever reason don't seem to get that. They're always multi-tasking and we know that multi-tasking is less efficient than doing one thing at a time and devoting your whole attention to it."

Some students put off their homework, while others can't get used to the ebbs and flows of homework.

"There are times when kids have a very reasonable amount of homework or very minimal," Blank said. "They feel like they're on vacation. Then a couple of nights later the have more than they can reasonably do at once."

Schechter Westchester has been working with teachers to improve that and create more balance for students. "We've made some improvements, so we still have some work to do there," Blank said.

With students being overloaded with schoolwork, while also participating in multiple activities that can be extremely time-

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Answering an impossible question about the future of education

By TODD SLISS

When you create a topical section such as the one you're reading, you take some time to brainstorm various story ideas. Some of them sound good, but don't turn out how you expect. Kind of like how I wanted to know what education will be like when today's kindergartener's graduate high school.

Yeah, I guess I was looking to predict the future. As fast as technology changes and improves, I don't think we'll be in Jetsons territory in 2031, so it's not like the world will be that much different barring some sort of catastrophe or epic breakthrough. Certainly seeing that year, 2031, is scary to anyone, seemingly so far in the future. But as someone with sixth-grade and third-grade boys, I can tell you how fast it goes.

But back to my story idea where I would need to gather a fortune teller, a psychic, a palm reader and an astrologist, it certainly wasn't going to go well. That, however, didn't stop Ridgefield Academy Head of School Tom Main from returning my message and giving me a call.

Even though we didn't get to the bottom of what 2031 will look like in terms of education, Tom gave me excellent insight into the ideals of education and what he wants kids to take away from their time in school. It's not about gauging what the next Common Core or fad will be, but it's about staying true to what makes for a good education no matter what's going on with technology or testing companies or any outside influences.

Here's a bit of what Tom and I spoke about, in his words, and maybe my topic wasn't so crazy after all.

There are so many changes in education from when a child enters to when they graduate. How much do things change in general terms over that time?

TM: Probably for 200 years or so they didn't change much at all and I think now we're in a period where there are quite a few changes in education and probably some more out there on the horizon. It's an interesting time in education because of how much change is occurring around us, which is creating the need for education and educators to make appropriate and thoughtful adjustments as well.

Is it technology, the world around us? What's pushing these changes?

TM: It's a little bit of everything, but one thing that is for sure is that we are facing children that are growing up with vastly different experiences than they were even 10 years ago. There's a wonderful book out called "iGen" that talks about this iGeneration, which the author refers to their birthdays as 1995-2012. Just count the hours they spend on smartphones. We're seeing in our classrooms kids with very different intellectual and social and emotional templates because they're growing up very differently. That forces a significant amount of adjustment and we know that the world they are going into is not only vastly changed, but is changing at a rate that has never been experienced before. It's hard to predict what a kindergartener will need when he or she graduates as a senior in high school. That 13 years, who can really predict what the world will look like?

How long does change take? Does it take so much time that it's not appropriate anymore or that it's



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Some guidance on school counseling for both children and their parents

By TODD SLISS

Education is constantly evolving. The same can be said for Guidance Departments. Or I should say School Counseling.

That term might only last until another word or rebranding comes along, but for now it's the department that solely used to help students in their college selection process. In today's age it's so much more than that.

Terence Houlihan, director of school counseling at Iona Preparatory School in New Rochelle since 2017, said many areas of the country have a 1 to 500 counselor to student ratio, whereas places like Westchester County finds itself most often well under the 1 to 250 ratio suggested by the ASCA. At Iona Prep and Scarsdale High School, where Oren Iosepovici runs the counseling department of nine "deans," that number is just below 200 per counselor.

"Each of us have students whose abilities, whether social, personal academic, range across the spectrum," Iosepovici said, noting he as the director and the Alternative School dean both have slightly fewer students. "We all work with students who are classified or who have 504 plans or students who are athletes or students come from international schools. We're all generalists in that we're all trained to work with all different types of students."

When Houlihan joined the counseling department at Iona Prep in 2007 after a decade in the classroom, he was a guidance counselor. It took him until 2012 to help transition the department to the counseling model.

Guidance traces its roots back to 1908, well after Boston educator Frank Parsons planted the seeds for what would eventually become vocational guidance at the time. That evolved into traditional guidance, with college destinations becoming a key piece of the job. In the 1970s, aspects like communication and social issues started being introduced to the role, but it was the '90s where the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) pushed for more interaction with students on the mental health side, which included more classroom time for guidance counselors.

Today's job is a little bit of everything. "It's a different type of work," Houlihan said. "It's not negative. It is how it is. It's how the pendulum has swung. That's



why it's important to use the word 'counselor.' Our role has changed. We're different. Our training is different. The ways in which our days are structured are different. I do individual meetings with students, but I'm also in the classroom doing groups, running parent workshops, things along those lines."

At Iona Prep, Houlihan called counseling "the first line when it comes to mental health issues." Many students are more comfortable going to a counselor over a social worker or school psychologist they are not as familiar with.

"The title is a little less intimidating," Houlihan said. "It all depends on who the kid feels comfortable with and knows. I think there's more exposure in high schools and middle schools with the school counselor to the students."

The counselors also spend time in classrooms with the students, a class called Group Guidance. In those sessions many different topics can be addressed, whether developmental psychology, bullying, careers, social media, drug and alcohol education, colleges and even one of the newer problems arising for teenagers: vaping and

Many students are more comfortable going to a counselor over a social worker or school psychologist they are not as familiar with.

Juil.

"We have a wonderful opportunity to make connections to students, but also educate them," Houlihan said. "The kids really do get a thorough exposure to developmental issues while getting to know their school counselor so by the time they get to their junior year and start working on their college research, many of them feel like they are already connected to their counselor."

One of the obstacles Houlihan faces from the latest generation — iGen, Gen Z, App Gen — is that "this happens to be one of the most anxious generations to come along." He said some "stealth bomber" and "snowplow" parents — well

beyond "helicopter" parents — have gone as far as to add colleges to their children's lists without consulting them. Students are to the point where they struggle to push the send button on their applications.

"They don't want their kids to experience discomfort, anything negative, and I think that's had a negative affect on the development of many teenagers," Houlihan said. "We do see some teenagers actually struggling with making decisions for themselves."

Counselors spend time educating parents, too. That, Houlihan said, is the main way the job has changed over his 20 years as an educator.

"In many ways people have complained that parents aren't strict enough, so part of the school counselor's role is educating parents about what's appropriate, what to expect from their teenagers, when to intervene," Houlihan said. "Some of the things we struggle with is letting parents know it's OK for their kid to make mistakes."

One of the biggest parents mistakes is seeing college as a brand, not making sure the college and the student will mesh well together.

"If it's about a name and the kid gets in

and goes there, they may not necessarily be successful, they may not necessarily be happy, but if they choose a college where they fit, they're going to be happy and they're going to be successful," Houlihan said. "To some degree the kids get that."

While Iosepovici called Scarsdale's department "fairly traditional," there are many programs for students and parents that make it stand out.

"We have the typical structure, but the reality is we also have some unique structures here at Scarsdale High School that are not commonly found in most high schools," he said.

The high school deans begin their relationships with students as eighth-graders as they are about to transition to a new world. Eighth grade orientation is the first step and that continues until the students are handed their diplomas.

"In-between we work with students across all academic, personal, social issues that might come up in their high school experience," Iosepovici said. "While we certainly take pride in the sort of academic counseling we provide, we see ourselves as much more than that and we are there for a resource for students. By extension we're also there for families, as well. We're also here for teachers. We see ourselves as sort of a hub, liaisons among students, teachers, parents to be able to services and support the many, many stakeholders in our community."

Come September, freshmen are part of 1 of 2 programs, either Civic Education for up to 40 percent or Freshman Seminar for the rest of the class. "Every single freshman at Scarsdale High School is part of a transition program," Iosepovici said.

Each smaller freshman team includes an English teacher, a social studies teacher and a dean, meeting with ninth-graders on a weekly basis most of the first semester.

There are also seminars and programs for sophomores and juniors, which are a mix of individual meetings and small groups.

"We have structures in place where we're not just relying on students to come to us," Iosepovici said. "We're also out there in small group settings availing them of our services."

For transfer students there is the Scarsdale High School Introduction, a semester-long program run by a dean and a youth outreach worker. "It's a wonderful orientation for them," Iosepovici said.

For parents there are programs throughout the year on topics like financial aid, student-athletes and college choices.

Yes, the college process remains a major focus in the upperclass years.

"Scarsdale High School is a college preparatory school," Iosepovici said. "We try not to focus too much on the college process early with students, but we try to recognize that a lot of the conversations, especially those that relate to academic issues, have the college piece that's imbedded into that conversation."

The process really gets going December of junior year. Deans meet with students and families to "discuss their needs" starting in January. "There's a tremendous amount of support we provide the students and parents regarding the college process," Iosepovici said.

Iosepovici likes to get out in front of the typical issues parents ask about.

The deans at Scarsdale spend a lot of time educating students and parents about the seemingly endless choices for college, focusing on the right fit for the student over the name of the institution.

"I think the myth here is that students are applying to the same 20, 30, 40 schools," Iosepovici said. "We take great pride in the fact that every year kids apply to 330, 350 different schools. Part of that comes from introducing different schools to students, trying to get them to think outside the box."

Much like Frank Parsons in the late 19th century.

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Finding the right school for your family

By GINNY BACHMAN

Finding the right school for your family can seem like an overwhelming task, especially if you are considering private school for the first time.

You're not alone.

As admission director for St. Luke's School, I've met hundreds of parents who have been in your shoes. In fact, I'm one of them. Not so long ago, I was searching for the right place for my three very different children. I'm hoping my experience — on both sides of the admission process — can make your journey a bit less bumpy.

With that in mind, I boiled down all the things you might consider into five essential areas:

1) Mission: This is the promise a school makes to families. It should be concise and clear... and align with your values.

2) Head of school: Who leads the school and how long has he or she been at the helm? Take the time to learn about the person in charge.

3) Innovation: Make sure this is not just tossed around as a buzz word. Ask each school to articulate exactly how their programs are innovative and prepare students for the future.

4) Campus facilities: Space matters. It impacts how students feel, interact and learn. As you visit each campus, ask yourself, "Would I want to learn in this space?"

5) Gut Reaction: When you visit a school, you will have a reaction. Your family's campus visit will be the most telling part of your research. Take a moment to let your instincts do their job.

The right school for your child is out there. You just need clarity about what's most important to your family and time to explore schools to find the right match.

Ginny Bachman is Director of Admission & Financial Aid at St. Luke's School in New Canaan, Conn. Visit stlukeect.org.

'Home' for college: options in Westchester

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For a student interested in the arts, individualized programs and interdisciplinary studies, Purchase checks a lot of boxes, in addition to value for money. The campus is home to a bustling performing arts center and the beautiful Neuberger Museum of Art.

According to its website, Purchase College offers "the value and quality of a renowned SUNY education, but in a rigorous, focused setting that feels small, quirky, and curious."

Another prestigious school that focuses on the individual is Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville. Under a five-credit system — three classes per semester and independent study — students attend seminars and meet with instructors to work on independent projects. Mentors help plan the overall course of study.

Sarah Lawrence offers a full range of liberal arts courses and is known for the humanities and sciences, as well as the intellectual and civic engagement of its students and faculty. Originally a woman's college, its enrollment of 1,399 is now 71 percent women, 29 percent men. But Sarah Lawrence is not for bargain-hunters: its \$55,900 tuition is the highest in the county.

Students at Manhattanville College in Purchase also enjoy individual attention thanks to a 12:1 student/faculty ratio. A program for freshmen helps students adjust to college life, they can choose from 45 liberal arts majors and minors and get involved in campus activities. A career center and junior year internships help Manhattanville students prepare for employment or graduate school.

A centerpiece of the campus is Reid Hall, known as "The Castle," and a landscaped quad designed by Frederick Law Olmsted of Central Park fame. Formerly a Catholic college for women, Manhattanville is now nonsectarian and co-ed. Its 1,725 undergraduates pay tuition of \$38,820.

At Pace University's 200-acre Pleasantville campus, students can choose from 100 majors, including traditional subjects like biology, literature and history, and career-oriented subjects like information technology, business and criminal justice. Pace offers online programs, summer sessions, mentoring programs and the Pforzheimer Honors College for students seeking additional challenges and opportunities.

According to its website, Pace's mission is to provide "knowledge in the professions, real-world experience, and a rigorous liberal arts curriculum."



Tuition is \$43,624.

Mercy College, a co-educational and nonsectarian college in Dobbs Ferry, confers undergraduate and graduate degrees and certificates in business, education, health and natural sciences, liberal arts and social and behavioral sciences. Mercy is especially welcoming to students who may be demographically underrepresented in higher education and/or have high financial need. At \$19,042, Mercy's tuition rate is the lowest of any private college in New York State.

Three liberal arts colleges in the county are affiliated with churches: Iona College and The College of New Rochelle are Catholic and Concordia College is Lutheran. With over 3,000 undergraduates on its New Rochelle campus, Iona offers 60 degree programs, 40 minors and eight five-year combined bachelors/masters degree programs. Tuition is \$38,812.

The College of New Rochelle, formerly for women, is co-ed. All arts and science students take a liberal arts core program. Pre-professional programs and certificate programs are also available. Tuition is \$36,152.

Bronxville's Concordia has small classes, practical, job-oriented majors and an associate degree program. Tuition is \$32,900.

The preceding schools all have residential housing, but Westchester Community College in Valhalla, does not. Part of the SUNY system, WCC is the largest college in the county, offering associate degrees in arts and science for students transferring to four-year schools and an associate degree in applied science for those seeking immediate employment or to change careers. Associate graduates are guaranteed a seamless transfer to the bachelor's degree

level in the SUNY system.

A partnership with area businesses allows WCC to provide cost-effective, customized training for their employees. Certificate programs qualify students for employment as computer programmers, medical coders, paralegals, paramedics or digital filmmakers. Tuition at WCC is \$4,380.

A realistic assessment of a student's chance of acceptance at a college or university is another factor in deciding which colleges to apply to. And sometimes, let's face it, there are unpleasant surprises. For students who didn't get into any college they wanted to go to and those who just weren't into academics while in high school, WCC offers a second chance. They can build up their academic credentials — or explore new areas of interest — and then transfer to a four-year institution. Those who are itching to get into the "real world" of work can more easily do so with a focused associates degree.

Another option for unconventional students is Empire State College in Hartsdale, also part of the SUNY system. There's no campus here; with a mentor, students earn degrees through guided independent study, online courses, study groups and residency-based studies, or a combination of approaches. An assessment identifies prior learning that may provide credits.

In addition to the colleges described above, there's also a branch of Fordham University in West Harrison, Berkeley College in White Plains, Monroe College in New Rochelle, three nursing schools and a for-profit college in White Plains.

For some high school seniors, the grass may actually be greener in their own back yards. And there's no need for a lengthy road trip to check it out.



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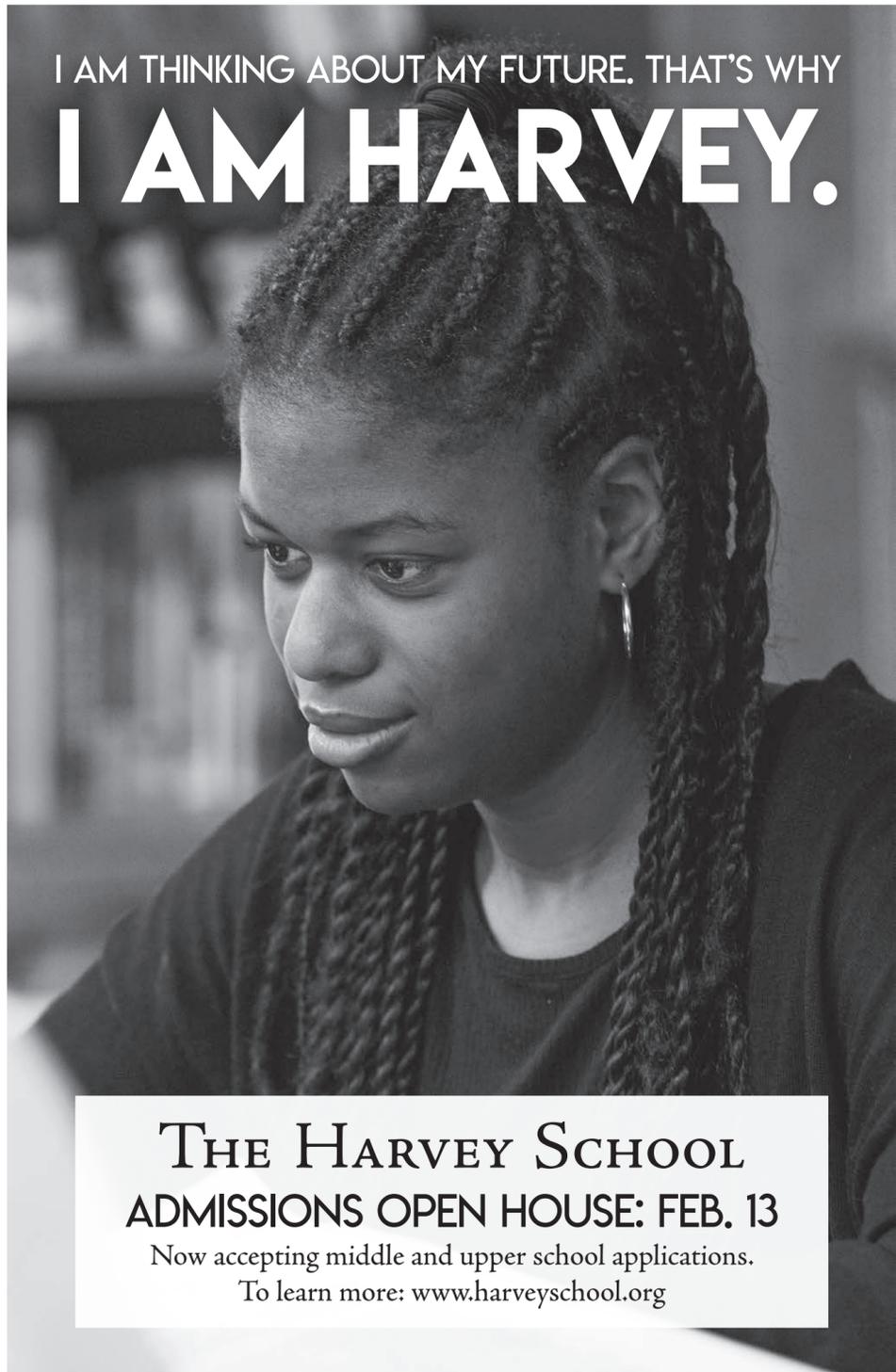
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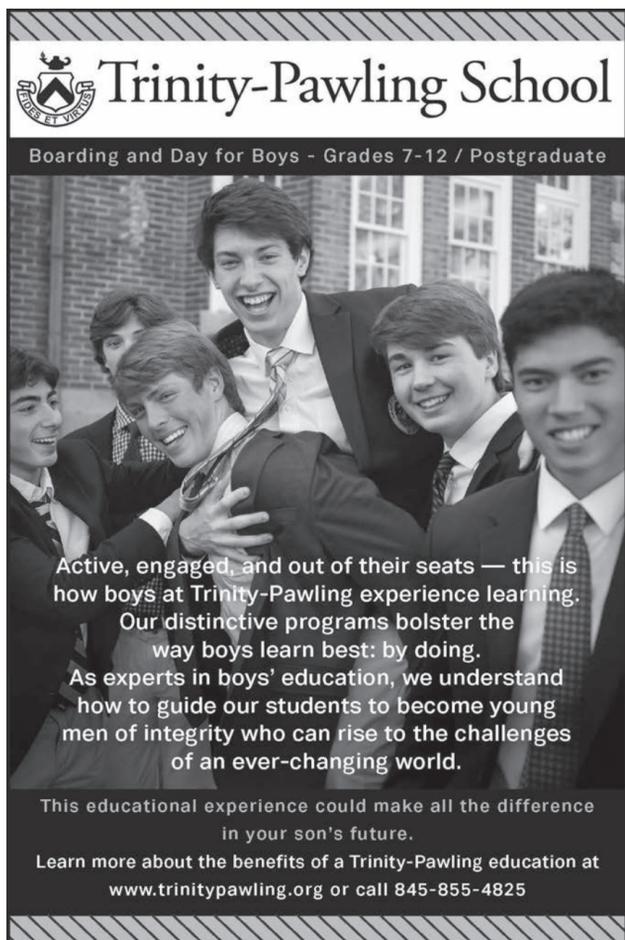


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Fun and accessible STEM resources for kids

Inspiring kids' interest in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) now could help prepare them for the jobs of tomorrow. Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that occupations related to STEM are projected to grow 13 percent by 2022, faster than projections for all other occupations over the same time.

Although the need for professionals with STEM experience is growing, a recent survey of U.S. high school students shows that only 24 percent of boys and 11 percent of girls are interested in STEM careers. Research also shows that youth who have extracurricular STEM experiences before graduating from high school are more likely to explore higher education and career opportunities in STEM.

To help meet the future demand for tech leaders, private companies are stepping up to help inspire kids' passion for STEM and develop the next generation of skilled professionals. HughesNet, which provides satellite internet, supports 4-H, America's largest positive youth development organization, to give youth across the U.S. the opportunity to engage in STEM activities. Since 2014, the two organizations have worked together to increase youth access to STEM education and, this year, introduced STEM Lab, a free online resource offering exciting, hands-on activities for youth ages 4 to 16.

"I found great activities for my kids on the STEM Lab website," said Tracy Colliton, a mom from Maryland who tried the STEM Lab projects with her preschool-aged daughters. "STEM is exciting when you can teach ideas through hands-on activities that engage all the senses. They loved the Fizzy Foam Fun and Windmill experiments, and I will be on the lookout for the next cool project."

With STEM Lab, parents are empowered to guide their children's early exposure to STEM, which is proven to increase their chances of pursuing those fields. Each



STEM Lab activity includes easy, step-by-step instructions, discussion questions to help guide the experiential learning process and clear explanations of the scientific concepts at work. In addition, each activity includes a list of supplies, which are mostly basic household items, and a Messy Meter, ranging from "clean" to "mega mess" to help parents plan their budding scientists' activity. And to keep kids immersed and excited, new projects are added regularly for continual enrichment.

"HughesNet wants to ensure that all children, no matter where they live, have access to hands-on, experiential STEM learning," said Peter Gulla, senior vice president of marketing at Hughes. "It is a part of our company's larger commitment to bridging

the technology divide."

Another fun way for kids to get involved in STEM is 4-H National Youth Science Day, which was celebrated throughout October. This program centers on the Code Your World four-part challenge, which teaches kids and teens with little to no coding experience to apply computer science to the world around them with fun, interactive challenges.

For instance, Code Your Dance, an unplugged activity, uses the power of dance to teach concepts like algorithms, loops and conditionals. With another activity, Color Your World, kids color and create maps to learn about graph theory, patterns and algorithms.

—BPT

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· **Comprehensive:** Physical education, athletics, world languages, visual arts, music, character building, service learning and wellness are integrated at every grade level.

· **Community-oriented:** With locations in Bedford and Mount Kisco, RCS attracts a diverse, active and vibrant community comes from Westchester, Fairfield, Putnam and Bronx counties.

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Answering an impossible question about the future of education

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headed out in a year or two by the time it's established?

TM: Change does take a long time in schools because you've got to determine what sort of programmatic change you want and plan that out. You've got to train teachers and adjust curriculum. I do think the pace of change in schools is faster than in the past. I think good schools are becoming really agile places and are adjusting thoughtfully as they proceed, while hanging onto things that are important to stay connected to.

What are among those things?

TM: Teaching kids to be strong critical thinkers. Teaching kids strong written and verbal expression. Teaching strong mathematical skills. It's interesting that while we change there are things that we really need to make sure we do not lose our focus on.

Are there some things you wish hadn't chanced over the years?

TM: I don't know that I wish there's anything that hadn't changed, because I think we always learn from what we try. Some of the things that are really important on the horizon and that good schools are focusing on now are making sure we're teaching a lot of skills and concepts that can be applied to a wide variety of situations and can be



applied to a lot of things that might come up in futures that we can't predict. Good schools are focusing kids on intellectual flexibility, adaptability to change on a regular basis so they can be successful negotiating. Good schools are focusing on the concepts of grit and perseverance. One of the things kids and young adults really benefit from is an ability to focus and stick to things. Problem-solving and critical thinking and collaboration, these are all 21st century skills that schools need to focus on.

What areas do you find most important?

TM: Things like judgment and character, and you can approach those in a whole bunch of different ways. Things like curiosity are important. Successful people in the future are going to be curious. They're going to ask questions and they're going to dive into things. Schools that find ways to

incorporate these and so many other things into an overall educational program that has an equal commitment to traditional approaches to math and science and English and history, I think we're going to see those sorts of schools be really successful.

So these are cores of education you hope are still there when today's kindergartners graduate from high school?

TM: I hope when this year's kindergartners graduate they are able to be really effective communicators, which is what reading and writing and speaking and debating is all about. I hope they are mathematically and scientifically literate in ways that are appropriate for that era, whatever that is. I hope schools are committed to character programs and that those character programs have adapted to the challenges that are out there.

What challenges do you see?

TM: If you were crafting an adolescent character development program 15 years ago, you wouldn't have incorporated anything on managing social media. Now that's almost all you would do. Whatever is going to be the challenges and issues of the time, I hope we have character development and leadership and judgment programs that address those challenges effectively.

What are some positive ways tech is used in education and what's the balance of not

using too much knowing how much kids use outside of school?

TM: Technology has a tremendously positive impact on education in a variety of ways. The simplest way for me to describe my position is that technology simply offers kids lots of different opportunities and avenues to do lots of important things. Technology offers ways to communicate, to present, to research, to collaborate. Those are things we've always wanted kids to do, but now you can do them in so many different ways. When I went to school you had a big piece of cardboard and you glued lots of things to it. Now there's all kinds of incredibly sophisticated presentation software where you can include images and video clips and audio clips and all sorts of things. You can put together a presentation that is profoundly well-researched and presented.

What becomes the challenge?

TM: The thing is not to confuse teaching technology with teaching the subject. Technology should serve those subjects and allow us to go deeper and to explore more and have more opportunities to learn. But we don't want to turn an English class into a technology class. The discipline of computer science is there for that. Technology serves the educational process, rather than leading it.

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Getting children organized ... and then keeping them there

By LAURIE SULLIVAN

How do kids learn organizational skills and how young can they learn them? According to educators, it can be as young as 3 and 4 years old, a foundation that can be built upon as they grow older.

Teaching and reinforcing organizational skills can start with establishing simple nighttime routines for little ones to get them on the road to a lifetime of good habits, the benefits of which they will continue to reap the rest of their lives.

Starting with bedtime routines, like making sure they wind down before hitting the hay, is essential. Establishing a nightly bath time and teeth brushing schedule is also key. Finally the last nighttime routine is a story and a snuggle for little ones before the lights go out. There is no age limit for reading to kids — some enjoy it long past the age when they can read themselves. The bonus there is kick-starting a life-long love of reading.

Teaching kids to use a “to-do” list can go a long way to make sure kids can visually see what assignments need to be completed, as well as household chores that are expected of them. It also helps for kids to keep a small notebook or pad dedicated just to keep track of homework assignments and projects. When each assignment is complete, he or she can cross it off. Aside from the satisfaction it brings to see items completed, it will also give kids a sense of accomplishment.

Here are some more keys to an organized student:

Relax before homework

Make sure kids have some time to relax and unwind before they start their homework. Some kids need to refuel with a healthy snack after school.

When they're ready to begin, look over what they have to do and help them pick an assignment to do first that's not too long or complex. Keep in mind that the longest or hardest shouldn't be left for last. Also study and homework should be done at the same time each day to establish a routine.

A schedule to count on

Make sure that your child has his or her own space that's designated just for them to do homework and study every day, with supplies and materials readily available. It doesn't matter whether it's in the child's room or somewhere else as long as it's quiet. Make the decision of where to study jointly with your child. Young children may want to study near a parent, which should be encouraged. At that age parents can monitor their child's progress and encourage good study habits.

Tips to make it easy

Using binders or notebooks are a great way for kids to keep track of their papers and remember the material needed for each day's classes and organize the material later to prepare for tests and quizzes. Divided or color-coded notebooks to separate class notes from other material makes it easy to keep track of what's what. Separate “to-do” and “done” folders help organize worksheets, notices and stuff to be



signed by parents, not to mention giving a central place to store completed assignments. With all their work in separate folders, it will make it easier for them to find their work to study later for tests and quizzes.

As much as kids might complain about having bath time at a time they may want to watch TV or going to bed at a certain hour, kids need a schedule. Among other reasons, it gives them a sense of security.

Avoid rush hour

Take the rush and hurry out of mornings by preparing for the day the night before. Pick out outfits the night before, including shoes, socks and accessories. Make sure your child has his or her schoolwork and books in the backpack by the front or back door so they're ready to leave in the morning. With that done, mornings rush hour will be avoided and your child can prepare for the day ahead.

Weekly cleanup

At the end of each school week you and your child — depending on age — should clean out his or her backpack to see what needs to be filed and put in its appropriate folder. See what if any notes were sent home for parents and what can be recycled. Old tests and papers should be filed to use to study from for future tests. It's also important to set aside time to do a weekly or bi-weekly clean-up of your student's workspace, putting pens, pencils and markers in the containers, a general straightening of the work area.

Educators weigh in

Local educators had their own advice, some of which overlapped each other. Janice Barnes is the executive director of The Little School preschool and Kids' BASE, the K-5 before and after school program in Scarsdale. Here's what she had to say: “Everything we do with the

kids teaches organizational skills. We have visual schedules in the classrooms that tells the children what's going to happen throughout the day. Schedule and routine helps organize children... it's very important in preschool.”

Barnes stressed that giving kids the basic skills to organize themselves in early childhood helps and “keeps the kids calm and organized.” She added, “We do encourage parents to have a routine... a regular bedtime, keep them calm [before bedtime], pick clothes out the night before.” Barnes noted that for those kids having trouble, “We might give them their own visual schedule on flashcards.”

Learn to be organized

In Mt. Kisco, owner of the Learning Resource Center, Laura Rice, is a reading specialist who works with children as young as 5 through adults taking graduate school boards and citizenship tests. Rice, who previously taught first grade, said children as young as 5 should learn responsibility to get their homework home, finished and back to school ready to hand in. Rice said organizational calendars help with material management. Backpacks need to be organized, noting that kids have to know what they're doing each day of the week.

“I work with anything the child is using...” she said. “A lot of schools are posting their assignments online... Occasionally kids are using their phones. It's important for kids to look at and know what they need for the week.”

“I work with parents to have a chart to for what kids need to do. If a child needs to clean their rooms, their parents should take a picture of what a clean room looks like so they know what they need to do to clean up.”

Rice suggested using sticky notes with reminders of what kids need to do. If kids have questions for a teacher, they

should use sticky notes placed on their folders to remember what they wanted to ask. For older kids they can put reminders in their phones and set their alarms to get set for the week.

Skills to grow on

An article on schoolplanner.com offered additional ways to help teach kids to be organized, recommending that students start by sorting their work into separate folders broken down into handouts, class notes, tests and quizzes, homework, take home forms and graded assignments. High priority assignments or information can be sorted in a separate folder in front of his or her binders.

Kids should use a checklist, which will show them how to prioritize tasks. For elementary school kids it's helpful to have checklists to get familiar with deadlines and project details. A print-out of a checklist is especially good for kids to have a visual reminder. Remember, the purpose of a checklist is to help kids stay organized, not for them to be overwhelmed. If the list is too long it might overwhelm them and cause them to put off their assignments. A concise list successfully completed helps students meet their goals.

In this age of computers and handheld devices, studies show that when students write their deadlines and assignments down, they can actually increase retention. And using visual tools like stickers and color-coded labels can remind kids about important deadlines. Visual tools are also an easy way to maintain organization in and outside of the classroom.

Regardless of their age, all students benefit from learning organizational skills and employing them, from toddlers to teens. With the right organizational skills, which they will carry with them throughout their lives, students can achieve their goals.

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Local author Rob Bernstein has a new award-winning book, “*Uniquely Normal: Tapping the Reservoir of Normalcy to Treat Autism*,” with the foreword by Temple Grandin, and is a great resource for parents with a child on the autism spectrum.



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“Any reader who has been drawn in by Oliver Sacks's marvelous case studies will be drawn to Rob Bernstein's new book, *Uniquely Normal*.”

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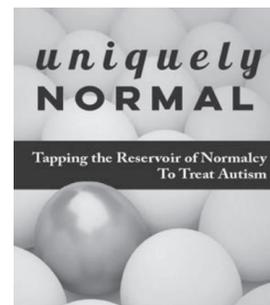
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— Will Shortz, *The New York Times's* crossword editor

“*Uniquely Normal*” has won six awards, including two in the category “Psychology/Mental Health,” three for “Parenting and Family,” and one for “Autism Assessment and Treatment.”

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Robert J. Bernstein with Robin Caster-Cooke
Foreword by Dr. Temple Grandin

Available on Amazon.com

STRUGGLE NO MORE: Homework help is finally here

Continued from page 1A

consuming and demanding, many stay up late doing their homework into the early hours of the morning.

"At least in our school there are more students that stay up late doing their homework than I think is healthy," Blank said. "Other than twice a year under the most extreme circumstances, kids should not be up until 1 in the morning doing homework."

The recommended amount of sleep for a teen, according to Blank, is 9.25 hours each night. "I don't know a single teenager, not one, that actually gets 9 and a quarter hours of sleep," Blank said.

With some students it's the various types of work that can create issues. Perhaps a student can whip through the math, but the reading takes longer, or vice versa. For younger students it's best to address the problem early on.

"This is a topic where there are so many reasons why something that should take 15 minutes takes two hours," Blank said. "I think finding out specifically what's going on with your kid and what's taking him or her so long and then speaking to the school about it is probably the best way to go."

Dr. Iman Rasti, a grade 7 humanities teacher and co-director of the RCS Wellness Initiative at Rippowam Cisca, a K-9 school with campuses in Mount Kisco and Bedford, has been studying executive function of the brain and how all the different parts of the brain work together, and sometimes against each other. This gives him a lot of insight into how young kids see the world — homework included — as compared to

teachers or parents, who are better able to express themselves and manage expectations for themselves.

Rasti encourages parents to imagine they have just gone through the school day of a young child. While there is time for movement at recess and physical education, academics represent a majority of the day. That equates to quiet time sitting at a desk. That's not what a child wants to relive when he or she gets home after a long day.

"You have to shift the lens through which you see your children and one way to do that is to understand that these are not behavior issues," Rasti said. "These are cognitive, related to some other aspect of their life."

Some kids have trouble finding their books or a pencil, which causes them to be late for classes or a disruption in the classroom. They are seen as lazy or forgetful, and even told that by teachers, parents and peers.

"Think about the emotional toll it takes on a kid like that, a third-grader, sixth-grader, fifth-grader, teenager, who is self-conscious about his or her self-image and they go home only to see they have a lot of homework to do or to see the parents are also going to yell at them," Rasti said.

There are other factors that can come into play when there is this perceived defiance when it comes to homework. Among them are issues in school with other students, stress about not seeing a parent who may work long hours or be away on business or perhaps they were bombarded by questions about school from a parent.

When this type of background is clear to parents they can begin to empathize with their children and be there to help them

through the difficulty instead of making it worse.

"They are focused only on the child not doing homework," Rasti said. "Seeing behavior through this lens can't help them. The holistic approach is considering all the other factors around the behavior."

For a parent, the logical thing is to immediately give a child a snack and sit right down to get the homework done, relieving that stress for everyone and offering the child the opportunity for free time and chores the remainder of the day. The snack is a good start, but some time for movement before homework is a positive next step.

Movement helps with circulation of blood and sends more oxygen to the brain. "This will help the child be more receptive and more productive," Rasti said.

You can also have a little activity to do before or during the homework. Rasti used magnets with his kids. They could create something of his suggestion or their own idea. Use of the senses also relieves stress and releases more dopamine. "You want to make the mundane, really boring activity slightly more interesting," Rasti said. "The more interesting it is, the more dopamine is released."

Rasti encourages parents to include the kids in the development of the homework structure to find what works best for everyone.

Part of the problem is the homework itself, according to Rasti, who rarely gives homework to his students. And when he does, he wants it to be "as exciting as Fortnite."

That might be a tall order, but the con-

cept is on target.

Busy work as homework is not engaging. Nor are the questions in the textbook at the end of a social studies chapter.

"They are not personally relevant to the life of children," Rasti said. "There is no immediate connection to what they do and what is happening around them in the real world. Lack of personal engagement does not release dopamine."

Another issue is the homework can be either too challenging or not challenging enough.

"If they do it in two minutes or three minutes, what's the use? What's the point?" Rasti said. "Sometimes it takes a long time. But that can be because it's too challenging and they don't have the skills to express the frustration, so it manifests itself in the behavior."

Rasti's homework is thought out, creative and meaningful. When it's not, he expects students and parents to let him know.

Parents should work with teachers, hold them accountable, communicate with teachers, encourage teachers to give their children homework assignments that are meaningful, not just busy work," he said.

Parents can also allow their children to "fail" when it comes to homework, which means sending them to school to explain to the teacher why the homework is partially completed. The teacher needs to know.

"If a kid comes to class and feels uncomfortable for not finishing his homework the night before, that's a learning, teachable moment that teachers use to teach that skill," Rasti said. "This change will not take place overnight."

Translating college knowledge into action makes students stronger

By JANE C. HOFFMAN

While students and parents think that the process by which colleges choose whom to admit is all about the qualifications of the applicant, in reality it is about a whole lot more. Ultimately colleges are self-serving. Many of their admission policies and practices are designed with their own interests and agendas in mind. Knowing that fact and understanding what colleges generally value in the process helps parents and students. Translating that knowledge into action makes students stronger applicants.

A college's decision to become test optional is a perfect example. There are currently over 1000 colleges and universities, including more than 300 "top-tier" institutions, which are test optional. These schools allow students to opt to not submit the ACT or SAT. In so doing, they generally increase the number of applicants which has the effect of lowering their admission rate and making them more selective. Schools generally report the test scores of students who enroll. Being test optional also allows them to admit some students without having to report their lower test scores when having to do so would have hurt the colleges' position in the rankings.

Colleges review a student's academic profile (transcript, test scores and, to put that performance in context, the high school's profile) to help them predict the likelihood of academic success in a student's chosen area of study. Reviewing essays written by the student and information written about the student by others (recommendations by teachers and guidance counselors) enables colleges to consider information about a student's interests, character, activities, ambitions, motivation and more. All applicants can't be the Brainiac. Many have other strengths and qualities, like a high emotional IQ. Through the visit process and the development of their applications, students have various opportunities to let colleges know about these positive and highly desired traits.

Colleges want to know that if they offer a student admission the student is likely to

enroll (yield). Their admission decision is partly based on their assessment that the student will be someone teachers want to teach and other students want to live with on the dorm floor. They want to know that the student will contribute in the classroom and to the residential life of the college, graduate and then continue to contribute with money or good will as a successful and proud alumnus! Every step of the way, it's useful to keep these points in mind. Currently, it can be very important to visit or engage with schools that may have been classified earlier as "safety schools."

Since colleges want to know that an applicant has been thoughtful about the process of researching and considering colleges in general and their unique institution in particular, it's important to engage with them and "demonstrate interest." For starters, students should go to a school's website to sign up and get on their mailing list. (Try going to admissions and the link for requesting information.) They should visit colleges. If a college offers interviews, they should take advantage of those opportunities to engage with them, learn more about whether or not the college provides the kind of opportunities they are discovering they might want, and present themselves in their best light. (However, I don't recommend interviewing until later in the process when the student has a clearer sense of colleges and themselves.)

Students should learn about the individual mission of the colleges they are considering by listening for information about it during the information session or searching and reading about it on its website. On the applications, some colleges ask supplemental questions about why a student wants to attend that school or what the student wants to study and why at that school. Drafting essays through the lens of understanding what the student is looking for in a college environment and how that fits with the college's unique mission will ensure strengthened, targeted and more effective essays.

Jane C. Hoffman, MBA, CEP of College Advice 101 can be reached at jane@collegeadvice101.com. Visit collegeadvice101.com.

Bet Torah Nursery School registration open

Registration for Bet Torah Nursery School is underway for families wishing to enroll their children in preschool programs for fall 2019. Two-, three- or five-day morning classes are offered for 2-year-olds from 9:30 until 11:45 a.m. Children in the 3s and 4s program meet Monday through Friday, 9:15 a.m. until noon.

The Bet Torah Nursery School program is designed to promote cognitive, social, emotional and physical growth of each child. An outstanding, nurturing and creative staff strives to provide opportunities for children to learn through play each day. The curriculum includes regularly scheduled visits by

music and movement specialists.

Special events throughout the year include monthly Gan Shabbat Saturday morning services, several Shabbatini Friday night services with dinner, school-wide assemblies and celebration of the Jewish holidays. Bet Torah serves as a leading center for Conservative Judaism in Northern Westchester.

Bet Torah Nursery School is located at 60 Smith Avenue in Mt. Kisco.

Parents wishing to arrange a tour of the school or receive information about the program should call 666-7595. Visit bet-torah.org.

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Serving the families of Northern Westchester since 2000, ThistleWaithe Learning Center in South Salem provides an integrated Montessori learning environment for children ranging from 18 months through 6 years of age. On 6 acres of rolling woodlands with an enchanting rain garden and pond, the children enjoy meaningful hands-on work in the outdoor classroom each day. One goal of the school is to instill the practice of environmental stewardship. Children have abundant opportunities to connect with the natural environment through bird watching,

pond study and gardening.

ThistleWaithe builds habits of excellence in the youngest learners through a multi-sensory approach to education, customized to meet the needs of the individual student. As a compassionate citizen of the world, the ThistleWaithe child learns about community, from protecting natural habitats to being a friendship ambassador to the newest and youngest members of the school, who begin to see the world differently.

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NEWS NOTES

Katonah Arts Center for visual arts, camps, parties

The Katonah Art Center is accepting registrations for its winter sessions. KAC, at 40 Radio Circle in Mt. Kisco, has long been Northern Westchester's go-to hub for students looking to learn about and excel in the visual arts. Drawing, painting, pottery, sculpture, photography, fused glass, jewelry-making, 3D printing, digital arts and more are available. All ages and all levels welcome. After school and weekend classes are also available.

Summer camp is also a staple of KAC's programming. The Art & Imagination Camps are designed to provide a warm, welcoming environment geared specifically towards the creative spirit of young children ages 3.5-5.

Kids Camp is a great alternative to full-day summer-long programs. KAC's small camp groups enable students to receive in-

dividual attention in a warm, family-like atmosphere. All of the art camps are one-week sessions with half-day, full-day and extended-day options for grades 1-5.

Teen Camp is for those in sixth grade and older who love art and might be too old for, or bored by, traditional day camps. Each one-week session will focus intensively on a single topic. KAC's goal is to instill in each camper the skills needed to continue to explore the subject independently.

Art Parties are also available for children, teens and adults. KAC offers several different packages allowing you to choose your project, decorations and party theme. Options include hammered letter jewelry, clay silver, beading, painting and pottery.

Call 232-4843 or visit katonahartcenter.com.

Enrich the year at Music Conservatory of Westchester

Enrich your child with music lessons from the Music Conservatory of Westchester, a nonprofit school in White Plains that is a musical community like no other. MCW offers one-on-one instrumental and vocal lessons, ensembles and performance opportunities for all ages and experience levels.

Private lessons are the key to success as students select their pieces for spring NYS-SMA festivals. The Conservatory's world-class teachers expertly prepare students to excel in their NYSSMA performance. Start weekly lessons now so your student has the best chance to score high and gain acceptance into All-County, Area All-State, or All-State ensembles. College admissions officers look favorably on students who have earned their way into these top ensembles.

Students taking private and group instrumental lessons have access to free classes that boost their musicianship, including a new sequential curriculum for younger students in First Notes and Music Skills, advancing to Music Theory and AP Theory as they grow.

For students with a creative flair, the



Conservatory's new Singer-Songwriter program offers private lessons with professional recording artist Melissa Frabotta, who tours nationally under the stage name, Mosa. This unique opportunity helps students develop their style while honing songwriting and performance skills.

The Conservatory's Suzuki Program for violin, cello and piano is growing exponentially. Students ages 4 and up learn their instrument in private and group lessons with highly-qualified teachers, developing motor skills and focusing ability.

Visit musicconservatory.org or call 761-3900.

Hoff-Barthelson open house, summer arts program

Enrollment for Hoff-Barthelson Music School's Summer Arts Program (SAP) is underway. SAP provides a joyous, transformative opportunity for artistic exploration for students in grades 1-10 where students form lasting friendships that help catalyze and reinforce learning. Each participant's program is individually tailored to his or her needs and interests.

An open house will be held Thursday, Jan. 31, from 7-9 p.m. (snow date Feb. 7), at the school at 25 School Lane in Scarsdale. Program director Joe Piscitelli, SAP faculty and SAP students and parents will be on hand as attendees learn about the many facets of the program, enjoy student performances and participate in a demonstration class to experience the fun first hand. There will also be a special open house registration discount.

Taught by top-flight faculty, offerings include instrumental classes, orchestra, chamber music, visual arts, world drumming, music technology, chorus, piano for non-pianists, jazz, rock, musical theater and frequent performance opportunities.

Unfettered by schoolwork and the scheduling challenges faced during the school year, SAP students have the latitude to try additional instruments, experiment musically, take lessons every day and perform each week. Consequently, they're able to



STEVEN SCHNUR PHOTO
Students enjoy playing trumpet in the orchestra during Hoff-Barthelson's Summer Arts Program.

make tremendous progress over the program's five weeks from July 1 through Aug. 2. Morning-only, extended day and afternoon-only options available. Early bird discounts are available through March 29.

"At the Summer Arts Program, my kids grew as young musicians and as people," mother of two participants Carolyn Zhu said.

Mary Margulis-Ohnuma, mother of three participants, said, "The program offers opportunities to work with a world-class faculty in a fluid format that catalyzes learning, and provides a warm, welcoming environment."

Visit hbms.org or contact summerarts@hbms.org or 723-1169.

Easy ways to spark your infant's natural curiosity

It's the way your baby gazes into your eyes, as if pondering the meaning of life. It's how your infant grabs onto your shirt to play with the buttons and collar. It's your toddler stacking and sorting, as if addressing a problem that only he or she can solve. These are all examples of curiosity at work, and it's something all kids have in common.

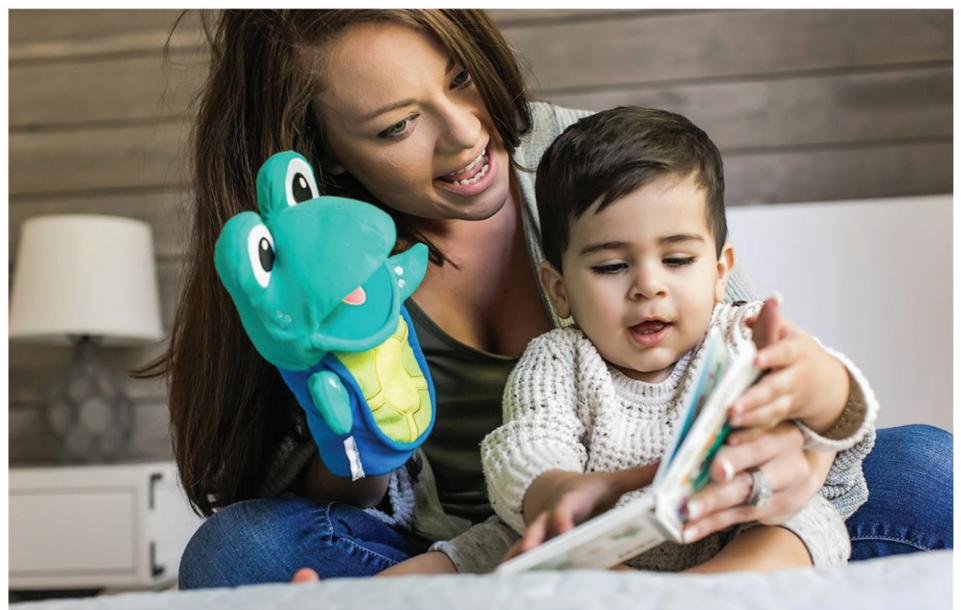
"Curiosity is an inherent characteristic that starts when we are babies and is important for brain development throughout life," said Rochelle Wainer, Ph.D., vice president of global insights at Baby Einstein, a leading baby product and toy brand. "For parents and caregivers, it's important to celebrate and support this curiosity as it's a trait that will help them lead a successful life. It helps cultivate many fundamental skills while building confidence and a love of learning."

While kids may be naturally curious, you can help plant the seeds of success by nurturing their drive for curiosity. Wainer offers simple research-backed ideas for inspiring curiosity at home:

Engage through play

Play-based learning is one of the most effective ways for small children to develop basic skills that set the stage for educational success. Kids are always interacting with their surroundings, so parents can foster this important exploration by engaging with their little ones through talk and touch as they discover everything around them. In fact, getting on their level and checking out the world from their vantage point is the perfect way to start.

Next, parents can inspire curiosity and creativity in infants by setting out basic child-safe instruments for kids to interact with as music plays. Art is another great activity for young children. For example, get some non-toxic finger paint, cover baby in a smock and let him or her go



to town as a little Picasso. Finally, get a plastic bin or table and transform it into a sensory space by placing a variety of different items infants can explore, including utensils like wood spoons and items made from different materials like stuffed animals and fabric swatches.

Stack the toy bin

Quality is more important than quantity for toys, and not all toys are created equal when it comes to inspiring curiosity and fostering development of critical skills. Because playing with toys is a favorite pastime for kids, be sure to stock your collection with toys that inspire curiosity and learning. Plus, according to a

Baby Einstein survey, 90 percent of parents agree that toys that encourage curiosity interest their child for a longer period of time than toys that don't.

Read, read, read

It's never too early to start reading to your child. Reading is one of the most valuable ways to help children's language and imagination grow. A whopping 77 percent of parents in the Baby Einstein survey said they read with their children at home or at the library to help fuel their curiosity. Whether it's board books for babies or picture books for toddlers, try sitting down daily with your child and a good book.

You can make reading an interactive activity for you and your little one by having them pick out the book and help flip the pages. Ask them about the things they see on the pages. Have them point to different pictures and feel different textures. Even if they can't speak yet, you'll be communicating and building language skills.

"Encouraging your child's curiosity today will cultivate their confidence, creativity and discovery for tomorrow," Wainer said. "These are just some of the countless activities that can help set your child up for success as they grow and develop throughout life."

— BPT

Non-traditional students spur the growth of online learning

Today's college students are just as likely to be moms and dads themselves, full-time and part-time employees or members of the U.S. armed forces. Many students juggle work and family, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, which found that 62 percent of students work full- or part-time, and 29 percent have at least one dependent. Needing flexibility and variety in course offerings, more students are turning to online learning to design a path that fits their lifestyle.

As a result, online learning is seeing significant growth. A recent study found more than 6 million students take online courses across the U.S., and that number continues to rise. At ASU Online, programs have grown significantly, with a 60 percent increase in freshman enrollment since fall 2016 to more than 35,000 students in over 175 undergraduate and graduate degree programs. As part of ASU EdPlus, created to advance inclusion, efficiency and innovation, the online program implements technologies students need to succeed, paired with committed coaches and academic advisors.

"At ASU, we work diligently to lay the right groundwork for each student at a personal and individual level because we know there is no silver bullet to student success," said Leah Lommel, chief operating officer of ASU Online. "Each learner is unique — what works for one may not work for an-



other. This reality requires a tireless commitment to innovation on the part of higher education."

Career success

Access to higher education remains the best pathway to career success, directly impacting employment opportunities and wages. The Center on Education and the Workforce found that bachelor's degree holders earn 31 percent more than workers with an associate's degree and 74 percent more than those with a high school diploma.

Further, emerging technologies and the changing nature of industries have created a demand for new types of skilled workers.

Higher ed programs need to be flexible and adaptable, allowing students to study during the hours — or minutes — that fit their schedules. With online programs, students can gain practical knowledge throughout their program that can be immediately applied on the job, making them even more valuable in their current roles. As online programs continue to expand, stu-

dents are more closely able to map coursework to their desired field of work.

Support structure is key to success. Adoption of online learning is fueled by the fact that universities are discovering that it can be just as effective as face-to-face learning. However, support and guidance are essential to success. From strong faculty support to success coaches and career advisors, universities providing high-touch student services throughout a student's journey see the best outcomes.

For students stepping back into school after many years, support and encouragement are key. The ASU Online Student Success Center, which pairs each student with a personal success coach, has seen enrollment scale five-fold. Coaches are a lifeline as students juggle life with studying and coursework. Facilitating conversations with students related to academic and personal goals, and career aspirations, coaches offer support, help students overcome obstacles and connect them to other campus resources.

Online learning allows universities to meet students where they are, academically and personally. Today's student is approaching education from a new standpoint, with different requirements and needs. The power of innovation in online learning means that each student can complete a degree in a way that was simply not possible before.

— BPT

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Above & Beyond

Khush is St. Luke's Valedictorian 2015. Ten out of St. Luke's last fourteen Valedictorians and Salutatorians started at St. Luke's in fifth grade.



Khush in fifth grade at St. Luke's

“Yale reminds me a lot of St. Luke's. It feels like a home away from home because the people here are genuinely kind. St. Luke's is where I learned to enjoy every subject and the process of working through challenges.”

- Khush Dhaliwal '15, studying biology at Yale University

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