

College Acceptance Season

The results of college applications are rolling in. For seniors, who have limited life experience, these responses can pose answers to questions as personal as “Am I worthy of admission anywhere? Was all the hard work worth it? Am I a success or failure?” **As the adults in their lives, our role is to resist the urge to see the final results as a measure of a student’s worth.** We can offer reassurance while reminding ourselves that while these decisions seem life shaping right now, the future cannot be determined by admissions decisions alone and, in fact, college will be what the student makes of it.

No one possesses the answer as to why one student is accepted and another is not although many are eager to offer their opinions! So what can the adults in a student’s life take away from this maelstrom? We can remind ourselves that college officials do NOT know students personally and are making judgements based on a dizzying array of factors. In addition, all of these factors vary from school to school and year to year.

We encourage you to focus on how you can support high school seniors as they rejoice and grieve over the final results. We offer the following thoughts and suggestions to make the task a little easier.

- 1) **Expect emotional ups and downs.** Students can veer from wildly excited to disappointed and terrified in one day. For them, choosing a college is the biggest decision they have ever made and all the feelings they have about leaving the familiarity of home are lurking beneath the surface.
- 2) **Help the student fall in love with a college that loves them back.** Don’t save your rejoicing for the dream college acceptance – celebrate every single one! Students are looking closely to see adults’ reactions.
- 3) **Resist the urge to waste emotional time, energy and endless conversation on “why.”** Engaging in endless conversations will only increase feelings of anger and bewilderment. Also, the student will be bound to sense your disappointment.
- 4) **Resist the urge to find someone or something to blame.** Move forward without engaging in a review of your child’s grades, essay, recommendations, etc. There is nothing to be gained from such an exercise.
- 5) **It’s NOT personal.** Over and over, remind the student that the college does not know him/her.
- 6) **Plan an enthusiastic trip to consider the choices the student has.** Now, students can go back to campuses as a consumer asking critical questions such as, “Can I see myself on this campus?” and “Will I get access to the courses and professors I need to make this experience worthwhile?”

The Staples Guidance Department has watched thousands of students progress through the college admissions process. At every stage, we encourage students and the adults in their lives to be both optimistic and realistic. The time before graduation is quickly dwindling down and we believe that the last few months of high school are best spent relishing close relationships and family while contemplating an exciting future of possibilities.

The Staples Resilience Project is an ongoing endeavor by the Staples Guidance Department aimed to promote the well-being of our students and foster a positive, inclusive school community.

shs.westportps.org/departments/guidance/staples-resilience-project