

## Resilience in the Face of College Admission Decisions

*“A yes from a college doesn’t make you somebody; the work you put into earn that yes did that. A no from a college doesn’t make you nobody; that happens when you decide their denial is a character indictment, instead of an opportunity to build a great life at another school. Either way, your worth isn’t waiting in an e-mail that’s going to drop on 12/13/14 at 15:16 o’clock. Your worth is within you, and it isn’t waiting for much of anything, other than your recognition of its existence.”*

*--Patrick O’Connor, College Counselor*

With college admissions decisions beginning to come in, Staples’ counselors hope that all of our seniors and families can take Mr. Connors’ words to heart. **For some students, being denied (or even deferred) from their first choice college may be the first major disappointment they have faced. It’s our view that, if they were lucky, somewhere along the way they’ve had to bounce back in the aftermath of other disappointments:** maybe they were cut from the travel soccer team only to discover a love for piano; maybe their middle school circle of friends dumped them, and they took that as an opportunity to recreate themselves, finding new friends in the process; maybe they got their first D on a test, then mustered up the courage to seek help from a teacher, learning new study strategies as a result. Somehow *this* rejection feels exponentially bigger, as if their entire life path has been thrown off course. At 17 or 18, **our seniors are still young; they haven’t yet experienced the reality of life moving on in more interesting directions than they might ever have anticipated. So, at this very moment, they may be devastated.**

For a parent, this is difficult to witness, and your first urge may be to look for something to blame: the ineffectiveness of your child’s counselor, the poor judgment of college admissions officers, or the complete inequity of the whole process. No, it’s not fair, but there are greater injustices in the world. Don’t even go there. Then, because you love your child and can’t bear to see them so sad, you will want to rush to “fix” the situation. As counselors, here is the best advice we can offer you at this very moment:

- 1) **Validate your child’s feelings—they’ve just put their best self forward and faced rejection (see the attached [editorial](#) from the Los Angeles Times for more on this)**
- 2) **Let them grieve for a day or two, before you...**
- 3) **Move into the problem solving phase. This might include consulting with your child’s counselor, revisiting other schools that are more within the student’s reach, adding an additional college to their list, or coming up with an entirely different plan for the next year.**

**When that proverbial “fat envelope” finally does show up, it will be that much sweeter, holding the promise of heretofore unexpected opportunity and adventure.**

*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](https://shs.westportps.org/departments/guidance/staples-resilience-project)