

2023 PARENT UPDATE

on

WHAT JUNIOR PARENTS NEED TO KNOW – SENIORS SHARE LETTERS ABOUT PREPARING FOR COLLEGE AND LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

Overwhelmed...uncertain...stressed...fearful...

BHS students say junior year can be really tough, but the recent Junior PTO meeting with Brookline Parent Education Network offered parents an opportunity to hear how they can best support their students over the next year. Junior Peer Leaders read letters from seniors reflecting what their experience was like and what they hoped parents could understand. Students referenced the pressure of high expectations. They wanted respect for their own vision of the future and what they might want out of a college education, as well as support for non-college options. They wanted parental trust to take responsibility for their own actions with room to make and grow from their own mistakes. And occasionally, they just really need a break, some time to be social, and a little encouragement

Guidance counselors and staff, including Lenny Libenzon, Rich Gorman, Kathy Whelan, and Darby Neff-Verre, offered helpful insight, starting with the reassurance that everything will work out for BHS graduates. The school is preparing them well and helping guide them through the process of getting them to a college where they can succeed. The school system has fantastic resources, so rather than nagging and transferring anxiety to your child, parents are urged to just be supportive and preserve your special parent/child relationship.

And keep an open mind – college after senior year may not be for everyone and could instead mean the military, a gap year, volunteering, internships, apprenticeships, even a post-graduate high school year. College-bound kids don't have to know what they want to study – a liberal arts education gives them freedom to try a lot of different things before deciding on a career.

Here's a link to a short video from [BHS Guidance Counselors](#)

Students' Top Tips for Parents

1. Take your child's lead on talking about life after high school and college. Help them explore ALL of the options. There are so many choices they can look into. Just because one school/career worked for you doesn't mean it will work for us.
2. Ask family members and friends not to talk too much about what we or our friends are doing after high school or where we are applying to college.
3. And help us keep perspective when acceptance letters come in, that decisions can be based on criteria that are not a reflection on the student, and there is a "right fit" out there for everyone.
4. Offer help that is specific – editing an essay, applying to the military, helping with some of the organizational tasks.
5. Try not to feed into the culture of competitiveness. Be open if your child is not ready to go to college or wants to explore other options.
6. Help us to calm down and put things in perspective – whatever the outcome, we'll be fine.
7. Know your child and how much help they might need with figuring out what do after high school and the college process. If you are worried your child needs help, you could set up a time once a week to talk. You can help us by breaking down the process into smaller steps, helping us keep track of what is due when.
8. Have an honest conversation about college financing early on in the process.
9. Understand that even though we may have a long list of things to get done, sometimes we just need some down time to chill out - the school day can be long and stressful.
10. We understand parents have their own worries, but try not to add on to ours. We learn from your example how to deal with stress.
11. We may not let you know, but underneath we may be scared to leave home.
12. We may want to go a different direction in college than you think, but we are listening to your suggestions.
13. We really appreciate when you do little things for us, bring a snack, give us a ride, help us print out a paper.

In summary:

Let your kid lead, give your child a lot of space, find a communication strategy that works for your family, and have some fun. The process does not need to be as stressful as it may seem and can actually be a rewarding experience.

Check out B-PEN's page on [COLLEGE TRANSITIONS](#).

Link to short video from [BHS Guidance Counselors](#)

Link to short video from [BHS Peer Leaders](#)

Link to [helpful Atlantic article](#)

Blog post about [toll of college process on students](#)

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