

THOUGHTS & STORIES FROM THE COLLEGE ACCEPTANCE / REJECTION ROLLER COASTER *(From BHS Parents who have been there...)*

No one prepares senior parents for the period between April 1st and May 1st. For many families, this will be the hardest part of the process.

- Suddenly, reality hits. A life decision must be made and it can be overwhelming.
- Visit weekends for accepted students all happen this month, and last minute travel is pricey. For parents wanting to accompany their student, this requires getting time off from work and possibly the need to make child care arrangements. The visits may overlap with April vacation plans and/or Passover.
- This can be a high stress period for both the kids who had disappointing results (they need to recalibrate) and kids who were accepted everywhere they applied (they are overwhelmed).
- Students may oscillate for almost the entire month among the schools in their choice set. The process does take time, and students should feel free to take every last day, if necessary.

Waitlists are a great opportunity, but they add to the emotional roller coaster. Waitlists are an opportunity to have an extra shot at a school your student really wants, a time to submit more information and signal a deep interest in the school. But it is also very hard for most students not to have closure come May 1. It is especially difficult when there are AP tests, Prom, and other end-of-senior-year events. It is hard for parents to know how to support their student. Encourage them to give-up on a dream or to hang-on?

If your student knows they will definitely not be attending a school to which they have been accepted, please encourage them to tell the school of their decision ASAP. Remember, someone else's child is on a waitlist for that school. Telling a school of your decision will also impact other students' financial aid packages.

If differences in financial aid packages are complicating your student's decision, call the school that isn't measuring up. At times, they will offer to match another school's package or at least try to improve upon their initial package. We know of a student who was admitted into her top two choices, but the first choice school did not offer sufficient financial aid. The student made her peace with the second school and moved on. The mom, however, kept calling the first choice school inquiring about a better aid package. She had no success until waitlist season. At that point, with the mother really on it, the girl's first choice school came through. By that point, the student had already psychologically moved on. She had mourned not going to her first choice school and was focused and excited about the second school. Ultimately, the student reversed her decision, but it was a period of intense stress and emotion.

Keep in mind that the system is designed to result in good matches between students and schools. This is in everyone's best interest. Rejection is not a total negative, it can be very helpful in narrowing the choice set, and can help focus the student on schools where they will

succeed. Schools want to accept kids who will find success on their campus. When a school rejects a student, it may just be they were unlucky: there were 10 applicants for every spot. Or, the school may be telling the student that in that environment, the student wouldn't find the kind of success they deserve. The thrill of getting into a "reach" school can be a double edged sword. We know students who attend their "reach" school and struggle on campus semester after semester. It is not unusual to hear of a student dropping out of their reach school and starting over at a community college before transferring back to a four-year program. A good match is much more important than a good name.

Some students are devastated by their rejections. Others seem to just shrug it off. Students help each other out a lot through this process. There is a lot of peer support and encouragement. In years past, students created walls of "rejection" where they all posted their rejection letters. Older friends and relatives who have recently been through the process are also great sources of support. When a child was dealing with a rejection from her early decision school, a friend who was a freshman at college, called to tell her "Don't worry, you'll end-up somewhere that you'll love." She was right. Often the school a student thinks they really, really want to go to in the fall of the senior year, is NOT the school they really, really want to go to in the spring.

WHAT can parents do to help?

- Encourage your student to make good decisions by modeling good decision-making: encourage them to collect all of the relevant information and weigh the pros and cons of the alternatives.
- Stay calm.
- Let your child know how pleased you are that they have good choices.
- Tell your child that you trust them to make a good choice for himself/herself.
- Be clear -- you will support your child whatever choice they make.
- REMEMBER: your child is the one spending the next four years at this school, not you. Embrace and celebrate whatever choice your student makes. When the decision is finally made, invest in the choice. Go on-line and order "gear" from the school: sweatshirts, auto decals, and coffee mugs (especially good for the grandparents). There is something for everyone at the bookstore.