



Are Good Grades the Only Key to College Admissions?

If you were asked how best to prepare your child for college, you might say that a well-rounded high school curriculum would be a good start. It may be true that your child needs to be a good student to compete for admission to a college or university. Today, however, *getting into* college and *graduating* are two distinct challenges.

Admissions: Increasing the Odds

Each college and university has admission guidelines that are followed when applications are reviewed. Naturally, the first items most likely to be examined are your child's high school academic record and SAT or ACT scores. However, academics are not the only items that catch the eye of an admissions officer.

Sometimes acceptance to a school depends on the applicant's participation in extracurricular activities and his or her civic involvement. Many admissions committees are as interested in grades as they are in the quality and character of individuals who may attend their college or university. Therefore, it is important for your child to include a résumé of achievements, interests, and volunteer efforts with his or her application.

Any of the following may enhance your child's college application:

- Awards demonstrate formal recognition of an applicant's ability to excel in a particular area.
- Sports participation demonstrates an applicant's competitive spirit and winning attitude, along with the ability to be a team player.
- Extracurricular activities highlight an applicant's enthusiasm, leadership qualities, and specific interests.
- Volunteering or religious involvement can often indicate that an applicant is active in the community and possesses moral character and integrity.
- Political activity can demonstrate an applicant's strong leadership skills and awareness of current events.
- Work experience may indicate motivation, responsibility, and a strong work ethic.
- Hobbies and special interests can provide a better understanding of who the applicant is, in addition to highlighting areas of knowledge.
- Building the Foundation for Long-Term Success

Many children today are exposed to an array of social pressures that may be unfamiliar to most adults. So parents and other role models may need to work harder to set positive examples and instill good values, in addition to teaching respect for others and emphasizing overall common sense.

Besides making the grade academically, a candidate for college needs to demonstrate a good attitude. Parents can help children recognize the value of learning and how education is often linked to future success. Learning to make sound choices is equally important. Being an individual rather than a follower isn't always easy, however, and your college-age children need ongoing encouragement to continually examine themselves and strive to reach their goals.

Although you hope your child will use sound judgment while navigating the maze of activities associated with college life, remember that maturing is a process, and there may be mistakes made along the way. The key is to encourage your child to learn from those mistakes, rather than keep repeating them. If you, as parents, and other role models can provide emotional support, encouragement, and guidance during these difficult years, the chances of your child transitioning smoothly to adulthood will be greatly enhanced.