



# Approaching the College Admissions Process

## Questions:

1. College acceptances and rejections will soon be sent out. What should you do if your kid does not get into their first choice college – or even their second choice? How can parents help their children handle the news?

There is no greater disappointment than that of your child. And honor this and the fact that if nothing else, your child is likely embarrassed. It's hard to face these letters because their peers are getting in and there is a lot of pressure coming from a variety of sources, including you! Acknowledge the disappointment, the anger, the embarrassment and let your kid feel the pain. You can't solve this for them - you can support them and help them find a solution, but you can't control the outcome.

First of all, with any disappointment for you and your child, get perspective. Are they into any schools that look promising for any reason? Secondly, this isn't do or die - there are options. You have to work through what those are... maybe a second- or third-choice school, maybe taking a year off, maybe a wait lists, transfer options, and a variety of high-quality community colleges out there where your student can start their college credits. We often write these off with hopes of a four-year college, but don't be too quick to do that. Remember, college is pricey, and this is an affordable option and an opportunity for your student to explore different courses of study.

Help your student understand that you have choices - even if they aren't your favorite ones. And this should be of concern and priority, but it doesn't have to suck up every conversation topic that you have.

Don't get caught up in prestige - think about your choices and what makes them special, not about what you can't have. You and I both know you could play that game about everything.

Help your child look forward - no use in blaming yourself for a missed opportunity in a grade or an AP class - you need to move forward. The truth is rejection feels awful - and when your child gets through it they will develop resilience and know they can handle it - even if they don't want to.



2. For the lucky kids who get into more than one school, who should make the choice about which college they will attend?

Whenever possible, give your student the choice.

You have every right to set parameters (tuition costs, distance from home, etc), but in terms of what kind of school (big, small, city, rural) let your child choose.

Then the question is, HOW do you help your kid make the choice?

Spend time on the campus if at all possible

Talk to current students at the colleges you are considering or maybe alums

Consider the offerings - courses of study, any extracurriculars that might be of special interest

Money is always a consideration

Trust your kids' instinct - if you have major concerns, share them

his decision is not final - it's big, but it's not set in stone.

3. At what point in the process should parents talk to their kids about financial realities and responsibilities? If the family can't afford an expensive school how should they approach the topic if an expensive school is on their child's wish list?

The sooner you start this conversation the better prepared you and your student will be.

You want to be realistic about your choices - you don't go looking at houses you can't afford to live in with real expectations and neither should you look at colleges you cannot afford. Tuition is a reality - that said, figure out your options. If your child really wants to pursue a school that is out of financial reach, encourage them to apply and look at options. There are a variety of financial aid opportunities and loans and your student can work a job. Many students qualify for academic scholarships - your guidance counselor at school and often your library will have information on this. It's good to find out what your options are. A loan is a huge commitment and you need to be clear about who is taking that on.

It's hard to be the bearer of bad news, but if something simply isn't an option for financial reasons, and you've explored all your options, that's a harsh reality that your student is old enough to understand.



4. For kids who are starting to think about the admissions process – how involved should parents be in choosing the schools they will apply to?

- Parents should take the role of advisor - not manager. This is a very exciting and stressful time.
- Try to enjoy the process
- Try not to make this the focal point of EVERY conversation - talk about other things.
- Encourage your child if this is a priority, but also let them express themselves and discover what will be their best next step.

5. Should parents help kids write their college entry essays? Why? Why not? Should someone else review the application and essay or should this be completed entirely by your child?

If you're in doubt, you're probably too involved:)

Here's the thing - parents should support their kids throughout school, including the application process. BUT, the student applying is the student that needs to do the work in college. The essay is a demonstration of your student's ability, interests, personality... it should represent that. There's a fine line between proofing and editing. They should absolutely seek a second reader to help with that, but the construction of the essay should be theirs. And, if you're in doubt - you're probably doing too much. When you hear yourself saying things like, "We're applying to x number of schools..." it's a sign you're too involved. You'll hear arguments like, but everyone is doing it - and we all know that is not necessarily true and also doesn't make for a good excuse. The expectation is this is your child's application and so it should be just that.

6. What if your child decides that college is not for them?

This can be a harsh wake-up call for parents. We often have dreams for them and just like when ballet wasn't for your little three-year old girl who preferred cleats to slippers, college might not be for your 18-year old. I would encourage you to have a conversation about it - make it clear what you expect and hope and keep an open mind. Really listen. Is this a passing moment, is this a reaction to the acceptances, is this fear driven by the anxiety of the college process? If you can support any of those issues... for example, if it's fear of the process, try to keep it as calm as you can.

Keep in mind, this is not a final decision. Taking time doesn't mean never doing it. There are options for kids who aren't ready and they should be seriously considered. College is a huge investment of time and money and should not be pursued if the student is not game for the challenge.

