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Preparing for College Acceptance

How to choose the right academic support system for your child

By Deepak Thadhani

It's no secret that the college admissions process for students today is much more competitive than in years past, and this trend is here to stay. Recent stories in the Houston Chronicle and on ABC's Good Morning America cite diligent, hard-working students unable to get into schools often thought of as their "shoo-in or fall back" college or university—all because of the rapidly increasing level of competition among college applicants.

While these reports may scare many parents, they should really serve as a wake up call. Parents need to get an early start in preparing their children with an academic support system that is structured to not only build a better grade card, but also to aid aspiring collegians to strategically distinguish themselves from the masses.

Where Do I Begin?

The next question parents will often ask once they have decided that providing a support system for their child is necessary is, "How do we know what service will work best for our child?"

Because all students are unique, it is important to identify their learning styles and habits before enrolling in a particular preparatory service.

Because all students are unique, it is important to identify their learning styles and habits before enrolling in a particular preparatory service. This is the most critical step of the entire process, but it is often overlooked by parents when selecting services. Once again, parents should think about several questions:

- Is our child an audio learner, a visual one, or both?
- Will our child benefit from individualized training, or should we look into a classroom setting involving other students?

A student's learning technique regularly falls into two very common categories: 1) "mean" students, or those students who have a balanced grasp of mathematical and verbal concepts, and 2) students who are more gifted in one area, while requiring extra assistance in the other.

Are There Specific Guidelines to Follow?

When selecting an academic support system or tutoring service there are a few rules of thumb to consider while researching agencies. Larger test prep outfits will tend to cater to the "mean" student. If a student does not fall in the "mean" learning category, this could potentially result in a frustrating and expensive venture, which is why it is critical to do the research and identify the student's needs first. Parents should take the following steps as they go through the selection process:

Step 1: Talk to the student's guidance counselor, and identify several different types of academic support services to interview.

Step 2: Consult with friends and neighbors about their experiences. See what worked and what didn't, and ask for references.

Step 3: Base selections on the child's personality, commitments and work style. Will he benefit from one-on-one help or a classroom setting?

Step 4: Determine if the support systems have relationships with the child's teachers (this should be asked as part of the original consultation).

Step 5: Establish goals to achieve as part of the program.

These are just a few examples of the steps parents should take in order to provide their children with the greatest opportunity for success at the next level. Regardless of what type of preparatory service is chosen, it is important to involve the child at all stages of the selection process.

Cram Crew has been offering academic support in the Houston area "One Student at a Time" since 1994. For more information about Cram Crew and its one-on-one approach to academic support, please contact Deepak Thadhani at 281-579-1188 or visit www.cramcrew.com.



Garrett Rosenbaum and his parents.

Lamar Consolidated High School Seniors Serve Dinner

Lamar High School ProGrad is a nonprofit organization raising money to pay for a safe graduation night party for seniors, as well as to pay for scholarships that will be awarded the evening of the graduation party. The Senior Serve Dinner, where seniors picked themes for their tables and then served a catered dinner to their guests, was ProGrad's biggest fund-raiser. The dinner took place Feb. 10 at the high school. ProGrad organizers are still accepting tax-deductible donations and prizes for the party. For more information, please contact Jan Russell at 281-545-8303.



Terry High School students Roger Alvarado and Williamina Ali, with sponsor Patty Stupka, advanced to the state Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America competition.

Terry Students Shine at Regional Competition

Two groups of the students at Terry High School recently excelled at the regional level of Family, Career and Community Leaders of America competition.

FCCLA is a nonprofit national career and technical student organization for young men and women in family and consumer sciences education in public and private schools through grade 12.

Roger Alvarado and Williamina Ali will advance to state after placing fourth with their Focus on Children project, "Miles of Smiles."

A second group of students had outstanding results on their Leadership Enhancement Opportunities tests; Ali, Jessica Villanueva and Jean Faustino achieved gold status, while Alvarado and Lyslee Tovey earned silver.

All the students are sponsored by Patty Stupka. The state competition will be held April 12-14.