

DOES SITTING IN THE FRONT ROW REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Margaret Coughlin watched as her only son, John, went off to college. She reminded him to “sit in the front row.” He sighed and walked back into his college dorm.

“Getting my son to sit in the front row was really difficult,” Coughlin said. “He fought me at every turn because he thought where he sat in class did not make a difference. It was not until he sat in the front row and saw his grades improve that he really embraced my suggestion.”

Does sitting in the front row really have that much of an impact on a student’s grades? Researcher Gene Fay, president and founder of Great Grades Strategies, thinks it does. Throughout the last four years, he has been working with high school and college students at learning institutions such as Boston College, Northeastern University and Rutgers University, teaching them core study and life skills. One of the lessons in his program focuses on sitting in the front row.

“Until I did my research on the importance of sitting in the front row, I knew a student’s grades would be better by doing this; however, I didn’t have the facts to support it,” Fay said.

In a study done by Great Grades Strategies in 2005, Fay surveyed more than 250 college students. The questionnaire asked them their GPA (grades point average) and where they sat in class — front row, middle of the class or back row. The study showed that students who sit in the middle and front of the class have a 20 percent higher GPA than students who sit in the back row.

One of the reasons students with higher GPAs sit in the front row is to improve “professor perception” of the student.

“I have spoken with professors who agreed that they may view students who sit in the front row as the smartest in the class because these stu-

dents usually answer many of the questions asked in class and do well on tests,” Fay said. “I always tell students if you sit in the front row on the first day of class, you start with an A in the professor’s mind; if you sit in the back of the class, you start with an F.”

The hardest part about convincing your children to sit in the front row is their perception of what their friends will think. Many students feel peer pressure to sit where their friends sit. Also, they don’t want to look like a “geek” or “brown-noser.”

“The best way to explain the importance of sitting in the front row is by using a sports analogy,” Fay said. “I tell the students that if I took them to their favorite sports arena and told them they could sit wherever they wanted to watch a game, where would they want to sit? They always say the front row. Then I tell them the same is true of the classroom. To see the action, you need to be in the front row. I also tell them that in college, you have ‘assigned seats.’ This is something they always disagree with me on. So, I tell them to look around their classrooms after a week of classes and notice that people sit in the same seat at each class, even though there is not usually assigned seats.”

Sitting in the front row is something almost all good students do. Teach your child to sit where the smartest students in the class sit — in the front row. Sitting in the front row can be the one thing that ignites their passion for the classroom.

For the last four years, Great Grades Strategies has been working with students and student athletes in many prestigious U.S. colleges and universities. Clients include Boston College, Boston University, Northeastern University, Rutgers University and Tufts University. To learn about Great Grades Strategies, go to www.GPAGrowth.com. ■

Keys to
successful
college
planning

Visit your
guidance
counselor

Take the
right classes

Prepare for
ACT / SAT

Check
deadlines

Visit
schools

Apply
early



PITFALLS OF APPLYING TO REACHES, LIKELIES AND SAFETIES

Safety,” “likely,” and “reach” are terms frequently mentioned in the context of college applications. Guidance counselors all over the country tout a three-tiered strategy, which encourages students to apply to colleges where students have varied chances of admissions success. Reach colleges are desirable schools that might be beyond the student’s reach. Likely colleges are those that are good bets to accept the student. Safety colleges are practically “sure things” — a fall-back position when all else fails.

This strategy maximizes students’ chances of being admitted to the most selective colleges and minimizes their chances of not being accepted anywhere. It sounds simple, but following this strategy is easier said than done. And it is important to be aware of loopholes that can cause this favored “three-tiered” approach to become costly and inefficient.

Don’t Lose Focus

Just because a student should consider three levels of colleges does not mean that he or she should blindly pick dozens of schools. One of the biggest wastes of time and money is visiting and applying to too many colleges. Considering application fees and the cost of sending test scores to each college, applying to even three extraneous colleges could cost applicants more than \$300. Tack on hundreds or thousands of dollars more if your family plans to visit those colleges.

So, how do you know how many colleges are too many? The answer to this question lies not in a number but in a way of thinking. The number of colleges is up to you, but to ensure that you are not throwing away money, you need to make sure that you are applying to the “right” colleges in each tier. Why apply to a reach school where you have a 5 percent chance of getting in when you could apply to a reach school where you have a 30 percent chance of admission? To use your time and money wisely and to increase your chances of admission, play the odds.

Don’t Play Russian Roulette

Just as some students apply to too many colleges, other students take the

opposite approach and apply to too few. For example, applying to one safety, one likely and one reach college is like playing Russian roulette — a risky game in which the odds are against you. By applying to too few colleges, you increase your chances of not being admitted anywhere. Your problem could be compounded if you apply to colleges where your chances of admission are low. You might think that you can get into Williams College because your SAT scores fall into their average and you are captain of your soccer team, but if your realistic chances of admission are 50–50, then you might wish you had a back-up plan. Sure, you might be admitted, but is it worth taking the risk if you are not admitted?

Be Realistic

Some parents overestimate their child’s chances of admission. Rightfully so — most parents see their children through rose-colored glasses, and it is difficult to shed parental biases. Nonetheless, competitive colleges are more difficult to get into today than they have ever been. Believe it or not, Harvard has rejected valedictorians with nearly perfect SAT scores. Yet how many parents of above-average, honor-roll students think their child is a shoe-in at an Ivy League college?

The most competitive colleges do not have enough room to accept every good student who comes along. Not to mention that having great SAT scores and a high GPA are probably not enough to get admitted to a competitive college anymore. Today, colleges consider a breadth of criteria when selecting candidates for acceptance that stretch far beyond academics. So, try to have a realistic perspective when looking at college options. On the other hand, while some parents overestimate their child’s chances of admission, other parents are discouraged by the difficulty of admission and take a defeatist approach. These parents encourage their child to apply to too many colleges in the safety range and assume that reach colleges are completely unrealistic.

Again, while it is important for the student to apply to at least one college where he or she is highly likely to be admitted, it is also worth giving one or two reach colleges a chance. You never know what the outcome will be, and you can’t win if you don’t play. ■

INTEREST RATES AT THEIR HIGHEST IN YEARS

A 2003-2004 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study indicated that two-thirds, or 65.6 percent, of undergraduate students graduated with an average Stafford and Perkins Student Loan debt of \$19,202, and the average Parent or PLUS Loan debt was approximately \$16,218.

In addition, student loan interest rates have increased to their highest level in years. Interest rates for Stafford subsidized, unsubsidized (Direct and FFEL) loans with a first disbursement date after July 1, 2006, are fixed at 6.8 percent while Parent or PLUS loans disbursed on or after July 1, 2006, will have an interest rate of 8.5 percent.

Many financial aid offices encourage students to apply early or before the financial aid deadline to receive priority consideration of federal, state, institutional and private grants, scholarships and work study programs as alternatives to paying for college, instead of taking out massive amounts of student loans.

For more information on the financial aid and student loan process, parents and students are encouraged to visit early with their high school counselor or financial aid advisor or view helpful Web sites such as www.finaid.org or www.fafsa.ed.gov. ■

LEARNING STYLES: AN ALTERNATIVE FOR ACHIEVEMENT

Learning Styles: An Alternative for Achievement is an efficient and reliable approach to assisting counselors, teachers, administrators and curriculum planners in addressing the ever-changing needs and strengths of today's students. The CAPSOL styles of learning inventory identifies nine learning preferences that are critical to student learning and planning. The recipients' preferences are determined by responding to 45 questions on an NCR form.

The inventory is quickly and easily scored by the participant, resulting in an individual profile with prescriptions for use of the counselor, teacher, parent or learner. The CAPSOL learning prescription is divided into high preferences and low preferences. The high-preference section provides for teaching to the student's preferred style of learning. The low-preference section indicates areas that need improvement. The inventory is offered in two forms, which are age-specific. Form A is for grades 3–8 and Form B for grades 9–adult.

The areas measured include the following: visual, auditory, bodily-kinesthetic, group, individual, oral expressive, written expressive, sequential and global. The two-page inventory consists of the survey, the student profile and the prescriptions. The inventory can be completed and scored by the student within 15 minutes. Within the learning styles field, the CAPSOL assessment is recognized as a diagnostic/prescriptive approach, identifying the student strengths and strategies for supporting student success.

Counselors find the CAPSOL styles of learning information valuable and helpful in individual academic and career counseling and advising, construction of individual education plans, assisting teachers in addressing student preferences, and helping parents to understand their students' learning strengths. Instructionally, the CAPSOL styles of learning impact curriculum planning, differentiation within the classroom, individual-student and whole-class lesson planning, and professional development for staff members.

As all educators are aware, each student is a composite of many valuable strengths. Learning and teaching cannot reach their full potential without addressing the specific needs of each student, not only the student struggling to be a successful learner, but also the successful student seeking in-depth understanding. Without the information provided by the CAPSOL inventory, educators are left with the challenge of attempting to meet the instructional needs of students without important data. The CAPSOL inventory was most recently revised in 2005. CAPSOL has been successfully used during the past eight years by more than 700 schools, colleges, agencies and private-sector organizations.

To learn more about the CAPSOL styles of learning, visit www.stylesoflearning.com or call (800) 578-6930. ■



Where can I get in?

Problem

"Looking at the average GPA and test scores for different colleges, I can't figure out where I stand. I'm below average on some statistics and above average on others. How do I know if I can get in?"

Solution

A **highly accurate** technology that assesses hundreds of variables—from extracurricular activities to GPAs—and tells you how likely you are to get into each college.

Find out your probability of getting in to any of the top 150 U.S. colleges. Since 2001, we've made tens of thousands of predictions with greater than **98% accuracy!**

Go4College.com

Find out your chances of admission today!

FACTS ABOUT THE ACT

- The ACT is an ability test focusing on skills learned over time, so continue to work hard and retain as much information as you can.
- You can re-test as often as you like, but no more than three times are recommended.
- Colorado's average score is 21 on the ACT. Scores can range from 1–36. You should know what range of score your school(s) of choice will want for admission. You can usually find this information on their Web site or by speaking to a counselor at the college or at your high school.
- Remember that the scores you receive on these tests are only one indicator that your school(s) of choice will consider.

- The ACT consists of four sections: English, mathematics, reading and science. Knowing the directions and the strategies for each section and type of question is one key for succeeding in the test.
- On the ACT, timing can be a major factor in how well you do. Be aware of how much time you are spending on each question. If you are unsure of something, skip it and come back if you can. Wearing a watch and setting it to 12 before each section is a good way to keep track of your time.
- On the ACT, wrong answers and unanswered questions receive no points; whereas, each correct answer is worth 1 point. Answer every question, even if you don't know the correct answer or

don't have time to complete the test. Pick a letter, either B or C, and stick to it throughout the test.

- If you are stuck on any question, you can always circle it or put an X on it and come back to it if time allows. Do not linger on any question too long.
- Cross out any answer choice that you know is wrong. It is much easier to focus on what you have left after you have eliminated some choices.
- Practice, practice, practice! The makers of these tests have to keep the tests looking very similar year to year. After practice, you will begin to see the same types of questions over and over and will be able to handle them better. ■

TOP COLLEGE MAJORS 10

1. Business Admin / Man.
2. Psychology
3. Elementary Ed.
4. Biology
5. Nursing
6. Education
7. English
8. Communications
9. Computer Science
10. Political Science