

The Biggest Problem We Encounter

In my work in schools and school communities throughout the United States and Bermuda, the greatest contributing factor to students' lack of college preparation is that the conversation and planning begins far too late. As a result, students fail to maximize the learning opportunities available to them in preschool through middle school. Subsequently, far too many students enter high school behind academically, and years behind in developing the gifts and talents that could pave the way to full college scholarships.

Each of the five areas outlined in this brochure has 5 strategies, resulting in 25 strategies parents can pursue—no matter where you live, what school your child attends, or your family's socioeconomic background. Whether you have a Ph.D., or did not graduate from high school, the 25 strategies will help expand your child's college and scholarship opportunities.

#1: Academics

Academic achievement in the form of grades, test scores, and rigor of course taking represents a direct pathway to college admissions and thousands of dollars in private scholarships and institutional financial aid. As soon as children begin school, parents must consistently affirm their expectations of their child's attitude toward learning and classroom engagement. Parents must encourage and support their child's academic growth by:

1. *Setting academic goals, "What grades do you want to earn in each of your classes?"*
2. *Celebrating academic success, "We are going to celebrate your qualifying for the Honor Roll."*
3. *Regularly engaging in academic discussions, "Tell me what you learned in school today and how you will apply what you have learned."*
4. *Exceeding teacher expectations, "I know that the teacher only requires a one-page report, however, ask the teacher if you may do a longer report for extra credit."*
5. *Placing importance on their child's schooling by attending school-based functions, volunteering, reviewing school work, and responding to teacher communications.*

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Mychal Wynn

Parents Students Educators

Parents are provided with strategies to guide their children from elementary school through high school.

Students are inspired and provided with all they need to pursue their college aspirations.

Educators are provided with everything they need to frame conversations with parents and students regarding elementary school preparation, middle school exploration, high school course work, community service, extracurricular activity involvement, and leadership development.



"Thank you, for all of your of advice, your tips, and encouragement throughout this process. The college planning notebook and seminars were a true blessing. It made our 'College Bound' process just that much easier to tackle."

— Parent of a 2011 Gates Millennium Scholar

"Mr. Wynn made me laugh so much that I cried. He forced me to talk to my daughter and to listen to her dreams. Oh my God! Thank you so much, Mr. Wynn, for helping me to 'connect' with my daughter."

— Parent of Elementary School Student



#2: Gifts and Talents

As children reveal their gifts and talents, parents must be mindful to expand their child's opportunities to develop their gifts to the extent of their abilities. Although athletic gifts may rise to the level of providing a pathway to a full college scholarship, they may also tip the balance in a child's favor to a college or university that does not award athletic scholarships, but has generous financial aid policies for admitted students which can substantially reduce or eliminate college costs. However, children demonstrate gifts in much more than athletics, such as art, music, dance, math, science, writing, public speaking, chess, leadership, service, culinary arts, fashion or architectural design, and even double-dutch.

Children reveal their gifts and talents at different times and in different ways. Parents must be watchful and proactive in identifying opportunities to develop their child's gifts, such as:

1. *Enrolling their child in classes, programs, and summer camps.*
2. *Supporting their child's participation in competitions, organizations, programs, or teams where they are challenged, developed, encouraged, and celebrated.*
3. *Identifying teachers, coaches, mentors, and support programs.*
4. *Providing continuing encouragement and exposure to their child's development of multiple gifts in areas that may be outside of traditional cultural or gender norms.*
5. *Working in collaboration with their child in identifying and developing those gifts and talents that can expand college and scholarship opportunities.*

#3: Collaboration with Teachers

Developing a collaborative partnership with teachers and school-based personnel expands each child's opportunities for personal growth, academic success, social development, and nurturing of his or her gifts and talents. It is important that:

1. *Expectations regarding student learning and student behaviors are clearly communicated to both student and teacher.*

2. *Teachers are aware of student's strengths/weaknesses, best/worst learning situations, gifts/talents, and dreams/aspirations.*
3. *Teachers are aware of parents' postsecondary aspirations for their child.*
4. *Parents are open to suggestions of how their child can be a more successful learner or more fully develop his or her gifts and talents.*
5. *Parents are accessible to teachers (i.e., phone, email, text messaging, and face-to-face conferences).*

#4: Appropriate Pathway to College

Parents must determine the most appropriate pathway to college based on the individuality of each child and unique situation of each family. While some students are well suited to attend a large university, others are more suited to enroll in a liberal arts college, community college, technical school, or certificate program. Subsequently, parents must:

1. *Identify the most appropriate college pathway based on their child's gifts, talents, personality, academic abilities, and family circumstances.*
2. *Identify the primary means by which their child acquire's the necessary financial aid, i.e., scholarships based on academic merit (i.e., grades, test scores, class rank), scholarships based on such areas of merit as athletics, creative arts, leadership, and service, or getting accepted into institutions that have financial aid policies that meets your family's financial needs.*
3. *Take advantage of opportunities for their child to visit colleges, talk to current college students, and be exposed to their areas of interest (e.g., dance, music, laboratories, athletic events, competitions, and theatre performances).*
4. *Begin developing a college list and working backwards to identify the type of preparation needed throughout elementary school, middle school, and high school to become a competitive candidate for admissions into each college.*
5. *Identify the necessary college admission counseling or support programs to support their child's college and career aspirations.*

#5: Track the Data

It is important for parents to be aware of what their child is learning, how their child is progressing, and that their child is reading on a level at or above their grade level. Parents must:

1. *Review the assessments their child receives in the form of progress reports, report cards, transcripts, and test scores.*
2. *Regularly communicate with their child's teachers to ensure their child is actively engaged in learning, performing at or above grade level, and is understanding the material being covered.*
3. *Ensure timely and appropriate intervention in the critical areas of reading, writing, and math to ensure their child has full access to all of the subjects being covered and developing the necessary foundation to succeed at the next grade level and in their career pursuits.*
4. *Track their child's school performance from year-to-year by organizing a binder, folder, or box for filing their child's report cards, transcripts, and test scores.*
5. *Be aware of the scholarship opportunities associated with their child's grades, test scores, class rank, and highly developed gifts and talents.*

Implementing the 25 strategies outlined in this brochure as your child enters preschool and continuing them through your child's senior year in high school will greatly expand the college and scholarship opportunities for any child, from any family, attending any school, and living in any community. These are the strategies that my wife and I used to guide our older son to Amherst College (2013 BA in English) and our younger son, a 2012 Gates Millennium Scholar, into his current enrollment in Morehouse College.

For complete college planning resources and materials:

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