

Finding the Right Fit

As we lead into the excitement and feeling of accomplishment that is graduation and the completion of another successful school year, I have asked Dr. Don Austin to share a few reflections on the process of a college going culture. In particular, the concept of what school should I choose for this next step in my educational journey. I am appreciative of his thoughts, and with his own son being a senior this year as well, his work and mindset is quite fresh on this topic! Lastly, many thanks to our entire school community for helping to create a very smart and powerful culture this is sharply focused on college and career readiness.

By Dr. Don Austin, Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services

It is the time of year when students receive acceptance letters from colleges across the country. The task of making a final selection is often confusing, convoluted, and a little scary. It is further complicated when students begin comparing their options with peers. It is easy for students to find themselves having less fun than they should and anguishing over their decisions.

There are some things to consider that may help your kids to feel a little less stress as they navigate the process, understanding that their original decision may not be as high-stakes as they believe. The New York Times reported that roughly 1 in 3 students will transfer from their college. Other reports indicate that 80% of all students will change their declared majors. The average student will change majors three times during their career.

There is plenty of research that identifies academic conditions that can increase the odds of graduating from a college or university. According to the College Board, the most important predictor of college success is the rigor of their high school program. Students who do not begin their careers in remedial courses have a significantly higher probability of graduating in six or fewer years. That is great news for our students, who are guaranteed a college preparatory academic program.

One condition that is sometimes viewed as a secondary consideration is the concept of 'fit'. Most of us would agree that 'fit' matters when selecting a place to live, a spouse, a friend, or even a place to vacation. It matters just as much when selecting a school. The Princeton Review strongly suggests visiting schools early and often to develop a level of comfort with the campus

and community. Many articles highlight the importance of exploring stores, restaurants, and local attractions when visiting potential colleges. Academic preparation is essential, but the 'fit' may be the most important part of the equation. Good luck with your decisions and don't forget to buy college shirts for the whole family!