

Are parents too involved in the college process?

The college process is a difficult time for students and parents alike

by May Paddor

While the New Trier website boasts a 98% college enrollment rate, parents and student alike are feeling the pressure of the college process. It isn't a question of whether students go to college but where they go and how they get in.

Getting into a good college isn't solely about the grades. Most colleges consider standardized tests scores on the ACT and SAT.

"The hard part is SAT and ACT is written for a second semester junior. We have kids who are taking it in the sophomore year and the beginning of junior year." Department Chair of the post high school counseling office James Conroy said.

According to the New Trier website, New Trier's average ACT score for the class of 2016 was a 27.8 out of 36, seven points above the national average of 20.8.

Some students consider taking New Trier's prep courses. Senior Josh Lariosa said, "I prepped but only through the New Trier-provided ACT/SAT prep course. I planned on taking both tests as many times as possible until I am satisfied with my scores."

The number of tests a student takes is up to them. College Freshman Andrew Philips said, "I took the ACT four times and it was voluntary. My parents wanted me to take it a fifth time and I did not."

"I took it once. I knew I had to take it to get into college. My parents asked if my score was the score I wanted and didn't really pressure me to take it more than once," senior Anna Hughes said.

Parents have more of an influence when deciding what college students will apply to.

"My mom went to Indiana and my dad went to a smaller school in Wisconsin. I feel like they both influenced me," Philips said.



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Hughes added, "It wasn't exactly a personal decision. College has always been something you had to do, so it was mostly my decision. But [my parents] influenced where I visited. It was good guidance because I was new to the college process. But it would have been nice to do some things by myself."

Knowing what school is the best for a student is hard.

"The problem is in this idea that parents want their kids to go to the best school they can get into," Conroy said. "The US News report and world rankings are not how you find the best schools. We sit here all day talking about a hundred of the same schools. We're talking about the same a hundred schools here that every high school like New Trier is talking about across the country."

Rejection is always a possibility. Conroy said, "Life is not always working hard and being rewarded with what you want. Parents want to hear that in sophomore year, that C in math is what did it. But there is no one thing. That's hard for a lot of people to accept."

The college process doesn't just start at the beginning of junior year.

Conroy said parents of students as young as 7th grade have contacted him.

"Things can be talked about but not to the point where they are beaten and re-beaten. There's a lot of hysteria amongst the parents feeding off each other," Conroy said.

New Trier's college process officially starts freshman year.

Sophomore Advisor Chair Juliet Smith said, "We have a program that is called 'The Four-year Plan' and freshman advisories would kick it off with the parents and students. It's the time to look at what their overall high school plan is and make sure that it's in place for what they might want to do before they graduate."

Lariosa started thinking about college around middle school, when his sisters ended up going to the University of Illinois in Chicago. "By the time I was heading into high school, I started talking to my parents about colleges. By freshman year, I settled on majoring in biotech."

With each passing year, students are given more independence. Smith believes "the high school experience is for kids to learn how to do things on their own." "I think I do see that parents are letting students drive their

decisions a little more," she said.

But parents aren't always ready to let their kids grow up.

"Some parents have very strong ideas about what they think is best for their kids and the type of school or the major they're pursuing," Conroy said.

Having ownership of the future can be tricky. Figuring out the right balance between AP classes and standardized test scores has been a concern for Senior Julia Jezykowski.

"The idea that to get into selective college, you need AP classes and good test scores has certainly been on my mind. Especially when we were in the process of choosing senior classes, I'm wasn't looking at slacking or taking any easier classes than I took during junior year," she said.

For Lariosa, parent influence has not affected the decisions he has been making as much.

"I rarely talked to them about registration for my high school courses, and when I did, they insisted it was up to me," he said. "This can be frustrating because of the lack of guidance I have when deciding over two or more classes," he added.

There are other options besides

going straight to college. The gap fair organizer Gretchen Stauder said, "On average there are about 10-15 different students that will take a gap year every year. More and more people are accepting of it and the take the leap of faith."

Stauder said that taking a gap year is an important experience for students to help define what they want to do in their futures. Although some parents are worried about their students taking a gap year, they typically support them.

For students interested in a Gap Year, Stauder will also run an informational session on the Senior Institute day on April 3.

Lariosa considered the possibility of a gap year for an alternative pathway to college. "I thought negatively of it at first, because that means I'd be one year behind when I did attend college later. However, I realized having an older or younger age than the majority of your grade doesn't have the petty reputation it has in junior high or high school."

The outlook of gap years factor into the logistics of making a structured plan.

"It's less about the questions and more about the concerns that people have," Stauder said. "With parents, it's always the sense of whether or not it will hurt their chance of getting into college. I think the central theme is really what will the impact be."

"I've never thought about any other path, because I know what I want to do and that is go to medical school, and for that I can't really afford to take a gap year. My parents are certainly open to the idea of a gap year if I ever wanted to choose it, but my mind is pretty set," Jezykowski said.

The post high school planning process will never be like Cinderella's glass slipper. Conroy said, "There's no perfect school out there. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder and you have two different eyes in two different places. It's the human element that's being entered in here."

Freshman Vaping

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perception that juuling is 'safer' than cigarettes doesn't mean it's "safe". Juuls still contain harmful chemicals and nicotine," he said.

Juul Labs, which manufactures Juuls, made their purpose clear: "JUUL Labs' mission is to eliminate cigarettes. Our product is intended for adult smokers who want to switch from combustible cigarettes."

Someone who believes the school needs to display this trend more deliberately said, "Instead of useless posters telling you whether Juuling is bad or not, New Trier should invite a guest speaker because students never read, or take the posters seriously."

Howard is planning to partner the Freshmen Advisor program with the Kinetic Wellness department to put together an informational lesson that includes how vaping specifically is not safe and how to make good decisions."

While the school will address the health concern, it is up to the students to make the ultimate decision. This is the real battle, to convince students that think vaping is not acceptable and cool.

"I've tried it [vaping] a couple of times. I think students do it

because it's pretty common in any high school."

"Some people think students Juul because they try to look cool, and fit in," said another freshman.

Williams believes that vaping has become more socially acceptable and viewed as "cool."

"We view vaping and use of other electronic devices, such as the e-cigarette, the exact same as a cigarette. The policy supports this as well," said Williams.

According to the Student Guide Book, "It is the policy of this District that the use and/or possession of tobacco and/or Nicotine by students is strictly prohibited in school buildings.

Also prohibited are any devices that stimulate tobacco or nicotine (e.g., an electronic cigarette, vaporizer, or any other electronic nicotine delivery system or any device capable of delivering nicotine).

Howard said, "Ultimately, we want students to make good decisions. We don't want our students to regret anything in the future. Juuling does not define a student, but they should be aware of the consequences."

Sophomore twins take over



44 sets of twins and one set of triplets gather in the student lounge to document setting the Guinness World Record for the most twins in one graduating class.

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