College Readiness Series

SOUTHFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

THE COLLEGE ADMISSION INTERVIEW: PUTTING YOUR BEST SELF FORWARD

General Information

- What is an Interview?
- Why do colleges interview?
- What are colleges looking for

The College Interview: Putting Your Best Self Forward

- The purpose of this session is to provide tips for helping students learn how to articulate their strengths, creativity, and character during the college admissions interview.

What is a college admissions interview?

- A college admissions interview is basically a conversation or interaction between a college or university representative and a potential student.
- The activity is designed to identify the student's strengths and weaknesses

Why Do Colleges Interview

- Each college treats interviews differently.
- If a college offers interviews, they are telling you they value the insights they can gain
- Some Interviews are for Admissions
- Some Interviews are for Scholarships
  - Some Interviews are Conversations
  - Some Interviews are Projects/Presentations

What Are College Looking For?

Colleges are looking to gain information in at least five major areas.

- **Academics**
- **Demonstrated Excellence in Activities outside the Classroom**
- **Personality**
- **Motivation**
- **Balance**

Academic Excellence

- What kind of grades did student earn
- How challenging were the courses taken
- Were they IB, AP, Honor or Dual Enrolled Courses
- Were the classes taken the most demanding programs available to them.

Demonstrated Excellence Outside the Classroom

- What else is student involved in:
  - Athletics
  - Debate
  - Band, Music, Artistic Activities
  - Clubs and Organization
  - Community Service
  - Summer Enrichment
- Employment during high school

Personality

- Attitude and Aptitude
- Ability to communicate clearly,
- Handle complex issues, manage stress and successfully interact with a diverse group of people
- Demonstrate a happy, healthy, well-adjusted personality with a strong commitment to leadership.

Motivation

- What is specific interest in the College or University
- Why did student decide to apply
- Why is student suitable for school
- Why is school suitable for the student

Balance

- Well-rounded and well-adjusted
- Successful applicants are animated, full of life
- Enthusiastic about their family, friends and the world around them
- Knowledge of current events,
- Sustained interest in hobbies and outside interests
- Strong interactive role in their communities.

Specific Information

- What do you as a student need to do

Preparing for the Interview

- Confirm your interview via telephone and make sure you have proper directions
- Confirm exactly who you will be speaking with and their professional titles.
- Go on the schools website and research the person(s) that you will be interviewing with

Preparing for the Interview, cont.

- A week or so before the interview, send a copy of your resume to each person you are scheduled to meet.
- Bring along another copy with you to give to each person on the day of the interview.

- Arrive at the interview on time and properly dressed
- Review your formal application to make sure you remember what has been submitted
- Take a copy of your application with you

What You Will Be Asked

- About your childhood, personality, family, school, hobbies, sports and outside interests
- What you know about the college and your motivation to enroll in college
- Your career goals and interests

Tips to Answering Questions

- Listen closely to the question
- Keep your answers short, but informative. Be prepared to offer a 4 to 6 lines response.
- Avoid sounding self-centered, watch too much “I”
- Accentuate the positive and don't dwell on the weaknesses
- Walk in and Speak with Confidence

Tips to Answering Questions

- Watch your tone
- Don't get defensive
- You may be asked a few stressor questions that are designed to test your ability to handle conflict.
- Listen carefully to the interviewer

Tips to Asking Questions

- Only ask about topics you genuinely care about
- Research the topic thoroughly before mentioning it so that you can engage in a subsequent discussion
- Make sure the answer isn't obvious or has not already been answered
- Ask the appropriate person
- Watch your tone of voice and your body language

Best Tips for Interview Success

- 1) Prepare for the interview extensively: review your application, learn about the school, and prepare answers for the typical questions
- 2) Practice answering questions aloud before the interview until you can handle all types of questions confidently
- 3) Walk into the interview with an air of confidence and professionalism. Offer a firm handshake and a professional demeanor

- 4) Listen carefully to the interviewer's questions and answer accordingly. Don't babble incessantly about a related topic or answer the question you wish he had asked
- 5) Be yourself. If your answers are ambiguous or inconsistent, the interviewer will likely consider you a poor candidate. Don't send out any unnecessary warning signs

Traits Colleges are Seeking

- Maturity
- Communication Skills
- Honesty
- Motivation
- High Energy Level
- Confidence
- Pride
- Initiative
- Listening Skills
- Sense of Humor
- Analytical Skills
- Leadership Potential

College Interview Mistakes

- **Be Late**
- **Underdress**
- **Talk Too Little or Too much**
- **Make a Prepared Speech**
- **Chew Gum**
- **Bring in Parents**
- **Show Disinterest**
- **Fail to research the College**
- **Lie or make up answers**
- **Be rude**

Follow Up

- Send a thank you note to the interviewer.
- It is good manners; and it's an opportunity to underline any points you made in the interview.

Two-Way Interview

- The student is being interview
- The student is also interviewing the college
- Visit the library, the computer area and classrooms
- Invest every available minute checking out the school to determine if it is the right place for you

References

- Information presented in this session was gained from conversations and interviews with Admissions Representatives and from the two references presented below.
- I have highlighted information. It is recommended that parents and students visit the sites below and read in more detail.

References

- **College Lab. Admission and Alumni Interviews. Retrieved from http://www.collegelab.net/1117781.html**

- **Grove, A. *10 College Interview Mistakes: Make Sure the Impression You Make is a Good One*. Retrieved from About.com Guide**