



A+ Test Prep and Tutoring Newsletter

February, 2008

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What's Friendship Got To Do With It?



By Tina Gregor, Admissions Counselor, College Pursuit

We all know about the competitive nature of the college admission process. We read the daunting statistics about our high school students' chances of being admitted. We observe our college-bound youth working diligently in hopes of gaining an advantage over their accomplished peers in their prospective applicant pools. We are painfully aware of the climbing cost of a college education and the financial stress that this causes a family.

One less publicized and subtle phenomenon is the effect that this competition and stress have on students' friendships. Many of the students we work with report how difficult it is to maintain the same closeness and level of comfort with their friends during the college admission process. One student reports "it is like a double-edged sword -- if you share your successes, then you are showing off, and if you keep them to yourself, then you are not being the same friend you once were."

Our counselors often witness the heightened insecurity that students experience after a lunch period filled with college admission "one-upsmanship." Because a friend is supposedly "done" with the process, students begin to question their approach. Once logical and well-devised plans on how to tackle the demands of the college admission process go flying out the window.

Parents often notice significant change in their teens' moods due to the stress within their friendships. Friendships are a critical part of the teenage experience and play an important role in overall happiness, so when these relationships are strained, our teens' confidence and attitude suffer.

Although there is no perfect formula for keeping every friendship and relationship intact, we offer some advice in this complicated area. Here are a few best practices and points to consider:

Deal with it First and foremost, be aware that this is a common difficulty. Recognize that it can heighten the stress that already exists during this competitive and demanding time. Being prepared and aware that it occurs typically takes the sting out of it.

What can a student control? Some teens become resentful of a friend who they believe is "competing for their spot" simply because that person possesses a specific talent, such as athletics or theater. Although your teen's chances of admission may be affected by such things, he cannot control where his friends are applying. He can, however, improve *his* chances for college admission, by bolstering a grade in a particular subject, preparing for the SAT or ACT, or polishing his college application essays. He should create what we call a "Smart List" and then trust it. If his list is truly smart, he'll be fine.

Smoke and mirrors We explain to our students that not everything is the way it appears. For example, the students who claim they have finished their applications and that the process was a cinch are perhaps the same students who are lying awake at night worried about their grades, SAT scores, or their lack of extracurricular activities. Keep attention on your child's timeline and action plan-- this will quiet the noise and allow her to stay focused.

Keep it close to the vest We advise our students that less is more. Although it is natural to share information with friends, this is a time in one's life when being a bit more private is wise. Sometimes students are criticized by their friends for hiding information when they heed this advice. However, this yields much less drama than when students are updating their friends on every aspect of their college process. We suggest students find other topics to discuss with friends. Try not to allow the college admission process to become the focus of every conversation. After all, there was plenty to talk about before they began applying to college! Students who feel a need to communicate their feelings may find it helpful to share them with a friend or confidante who is outside of their immediate group of friends. Another helpful strategy is for teens to keep a journal.

Parents -- strike a balance Although your involvement and input are needed, it is most beneficial to be supportive but not the one driving the process. Be a sounding board for your child if their friendships are a source of conflict. Help them see the guiding principles that are causing this to happen and allow them to consider their options. We use the analogy of moving from the driver's seat to the passenger seat and eventually being able to get out of the car.

We hope this article provides some insight and equips you with some strategies to manage this aspect of the college admission process. If you have any questions or would like to know more about College Pursuit, visit [their website](#) or call Tina Gregor at 215.542.7512.

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Featured Tutor



Tana Connolly

Tana joined the A+ team in 2007. Her love of teaching began in her undergraduate days at Lafayette College where she was a peer writing mentor as well as a teaching assistant and tutor in the Psychology Department. She



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graduated from Lafayette College in 2002 with a bachelor's degree, and obtained her certification in education from Arcadia University in 2006. She is currently enrolled in Arcadia's Master's Program in Education.

Upon graduation from Lafayette, Tana initially thought she would like to pursue a graduate degree in psychology, but she decided to broaden her horizons, both literally and figuratively, and applied to JET (the Japanese Exchange and Teaching Program), an international exchange and foreign language education program. She was accepted into the program and, with 2 years of college Japanese under her belt, moved to the town of Matsuida, located in a rural area of Japan about 3 hours north of Tokyo.

For a year, Tana lived in a modest, unheated apartment in Matsuida and taught English courses in 6 elementary schools and 4 junior high schools. Her experience abroad was overwhelmingly positive-teachers are highly respected in Japanese culture, and, being one of the few Americans in the town, she was the object of much curiosity! She found her Japanese students to be both polite and well-behaved.

Upon her return to the United States, Tana worked as a Health Educator at Fox Chase Cancer Center for 2 years. She currently balances her work as an A+ tutor specializing in SAT and ACT prep with substitute teaching. Tana is a "people" person who draws a lot of personal satisfaction from teaching. She enjoys connecting personally with each student, and the one-to-one A+ tutoring format is well suited to doing just that.

Tana's other activities and interests include being a Sunday school teacher at her church, an administrator of the church's library, making homemade cards, quilting, sewing, camping, and backpacking. She lives with her husband in North Wales.

community. The exam is scheduled for 8:45 AM-1:00 PM on Saturday, March 29, 2008, in Glenside, PA.

This is a great opportunity for students to take the exam under actual test-like conditions, prior to sitting for the "real" thing. Students will receive a detailed score report which includes an analysis of their strengths and weaknesses on the exam. [Click here](#) to view a sample score report.

Space is limited, so call our office today at 215.886.9188 to register and reserve your spot!

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