

OLYMPIADS SCHOOL/IB/TOPS/MACS/HANDOUT 22

PART 1: STUDENT STATEMENT TIPS AND EXAMPLES

TIPS FOR WRITING YOUR STATEMENT:

Composing a student statement can be intimidating, so we encourage you to begin well before the deadline in order to take pressure off yourself and improve the quality of the final draft.

In your Student Statement-describe the following as it applies to you:

- Your educational & career goals
- Why have you chosen these goals
- Include any personal experiences that have impacted the pursuit of your education
- Special circumstances or unusual hardships that you have faced

Do:

- Write it yourself.
- Include brief descriptions of your specific achievements.
- Keep your statement focused.
- Make your statement easy for the reader to follow.
- Use spell check and proof read your statement for missing words, typos, and repeated words.
- Show the reader you have taken time writing this statement and that it was well thought out.

Don't:

- Spend too much of the statement describing other people and their lives. The statement should be about you.
- Spend the entire statement writing about the hardships or obstacles you have faced or overcome. Readers want to know where your life has been, but it is equally important to discuss your goals and what led you to them.
- Use odd or creative fonts on your application or personal statement. Make the documents easy to read and let the information speak for itself.
- Copy or plagiarize. Share thoughts or ideas with others, but do not use someone else's statement as your own.

REFLECTION

Discuss the following personal statement that was part of a college application. Underline words and phrases that would be useful for your own personal essay writing. Pay attention to its structure. What does each paragraph accomplish? What are its strengths and areas that need improvement?

I am a Mexican American who was born and raised in Watsonville. This is my second year attending Cabrillo College. My long term educational goal is to obtain a Masters Degree in Biology. I plan on getting my Associates degree at Cabrillo College then transferring to UCSC for my undergraduate studies and perhaps my graduate studies. My life time goal is to improve myself and the standard of living for my child through higher education. My career goal is to teach biology at a community college level, and ultimately teach at a university. Three years ago, I could not even see myself pursuing any goals that I had set for myself. I got pregnant at eighteen, and decided to drop out of college so I could work full-time as a co-manager at a retail store. Needless to say, my parents were not happy. They had worked so hard to teach me important values.

My parents did not realize all the important values I had learned from them. Seeing my parents struggle to support me, my older sister, and younger brother has helped me to learn some valuable rules to live by. First, you must work hard to achieve your goals. Second, you must never ever give up working for your goals. Third, that anything is possible if you try hard enough. I apply those rules to my life even more so now that I am a single mother of one terrific boy. He is the very reason why I am so driven, and determined to make a better life for myself. His father is, unfortunately, uncooperative and does not support his son by any financial means.

Being a single mother is not easy. Sometimes I do not know how I will do it to raise a fine young man. I will do anything to ensure him a good and stable future. When he was six months old I realized the only way to ensure his future was through higher education for myself. Knowing that was the key factor to happiness I enrolled at Cabrillo College the summer of 2009.

Cabrillo College has helped me to realize even higher goals than I could ever have imagined for myself. I had always loved the sciences, but taking a biology class at Cabrillo emphasized that. This class showed me the fundamentals of Biology, and I enjoyed the class immensely. By the time high school came around I already knew that I wanted to take classes in Biology. After taking this class I decided that teaching Biology at a community college or university level would be the best job for me. Through my love for science I know I can make a difference in the lives of my fellow Latinos. I want them to see science as a wonderful field of exploration. In America, Latinos are very under-represented in science. I want to change that, but I do realize that I must take it one step at a time. Currently, I am taking twelve units. I have completed thirty-four units with a cumulative GPA of 3.57. Also, I was just accepted as a member of the Alpha Gamma Sigma Honor Society.

Although my parents are helping me, my financial situation is not good. I do not receive any child support or welfare from the government. My parents are left with the bulk of expenses that my son incurs. I work as a temporary administrative assistant only when I can find a qualified, yet decently priced babysitter. Unfortunately, good childcare is expensive, and eight dollars an hour is not enough to pay for baby-sitting and living expenses. I have even had to stop working because of a lack of higher quality, affordable childcare. Luckily, my parents try and help my son the best they can.

I hope one day to pay help my community be recruiting other Latinos into college. I feel this is the only way we can truly advance ourselves and be heard. We must prove that we too are a strong, powerful, and intelligent people. I plan to help my fellow Hispanics by helping local organizations that deal with the prevention of drugs, alcohol, and gangs. I also hope to enroll at UCSC where I can be a part of their Latino Studies program, as well as the Latino organizations and clubs that support the advancement of all Hispanics. Most of all, as a single mother, I plan to succeed, advance, and survive with a good education.

PART 2: ESSAY WRITING

You are applying to competitive junior high school programs. Insofar as you have to satisfy certain admission criteria, the application process is similar to applying to college programs. Read the following article about responding to essay questions for college applications. In addition, pick a question and brainstorm ways to respond to it.

SAMPLE ESSAY QUESTIONS FOR COLLEGE APPS



Prepare yourself--plan your admissions essays in advance.

By Roxana Hadad
March 09, 2009

The essay: It's one of the most important parts of your college application, and it can be the hardest. But it doesn't have to be. Take a look at some of the most commonly asked essay questions and use them to prepare for your applications. Brainstorm ideas, do some research or create your own "stock" of application essays from the commonly used questions below.

Current Events and Social Issues

To test your skills at problem-solving and check how up-to-date you are on current issues, many applications include questions about problems and issues facing society.

What do you consider to be the single most important societal problem? Why?

Pick a controversial problem on college campuses and suggest a solution.

What do you see as the greatest threat to the environment today?

Personal Achievements

Colleges are looking for students who have achieved in some area of their lives. So you shouldn't be surprised to find essay topics that ask you to brag a little.

Describe how you have demonstrated leadership ability both in and out of school.

Discuss a special attribute or accomplishment that sets you apart.
Describe your most meaningful achievements and how they relate to your future goals.

Background and Influences

Who you are is closely tied to where you've been and who you've known. To learn more about you, some admissions committees will ask you to write about your background and major influences.

Pick an experience from your own life and explain how it has influenced your development.

Who in your life has been your biggest influence and why?

How has your family background affected the way you see the world?

How has your education contributed to who you are today?

Future Plans and Goals

Colleges look for applicants with vision and motivation, so they might ask about your goals and aspirations.

Briefly describe your long- and short-term goals.

Where do you see yourself 10 years from now?

Why do you want to get a college education?

Random Topics

Some essay questions don't seem directly related to your education or life experience, but committees use them to test your creativity and get a better sense of your personality.

Choose a person or persons you admire and explain why.

Choose a book or books that have affected you deeply and explain why.

While you can't predict every essay question, knowing some of the most common ones can give you a leg up on applications.

THE END