**Academic Planning Tips**

Courtesy of Kevin McMullin at Collegewise.com

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Students, as you progress through your high school academic career, here are a few tips to make it more productive and enjoyable.

**1. Take the most rigorous schedule that academic abilities can handle.**

It is always better to get B’s in harder classes than it is to get A’s in easier classes.  It is especially important to take the most rigorous courses in the subjects that you find the most interesting and for which you have the most innate ability. But you want to avoid C’s.  So challenge, but do not over-extend, yourself.

**2. If you find a subject that fascinates you, get more involved in it.**

If you absolutely loved your US History class, that is the perfect opportunity to show love of learning.  So, dive in.  Do additional reading on the subject.  Take a history course over the summer at a local college.  Set aside a Sunday to watch the PBS Civil War special that you recorded.  Make a point to visit Gettysburg.  The colleges will reward you for it. This is what that love of learning is all about.  And remember, it doesn’t even have to be a purely academic subject for you to pursue it.  If you really enjoy drawing and you regularly take art classes at the local community center in addition to a course at a local college on art history, that’s love of learning at its best.

**3. Practice the art of becoming involved in your classes.**

Contribute to class discussions, ask questions, and don’t be afraid to talk to your teacher before or after class.  Classes are always more enjoyable when you’re involved, and your teachers will appreciate that you do more than just sit there in class.  When we discuss letters of recommendation in a later chapter, you’ll learn just how important this kind of participation is.

**4. Students, not parents, should initiate all discussions with teachers and counselors.**

It’s important for you to demonstrate that you, not your parents, are taking responsibility for your academic success.  If you are having trouble in a class, go speak with the teacher.  If you want to know what you’ll have to do to get into AP Biology next year, go see your counselor.  Remember how important initiative is in the college admissions process.  Here’s your opportunity to show a great deal of it.

**5. Don’t hyper-focus on perceived weaknesses.**

The surest way to make school seem like drudgery is to spend all your time trying to fix perceived weaknesses.  Sure, if you’re getting a D in algebra, that’s something you need to address.  But if you’re getting all A’s and a B in algebra, resist the inclination to get an algebra tutor. Instead, rededicate that time to your favorite subjects (see tip #2).  Perfection is not necessarily a prerequisite to getting into college.  And enhancing your strengths is likely to be a lot more enjoyable than polishing perceived weaknesses ever could be.