

# Welcome to College Night!

## Topic: Writing the College Essay



**Kevin McCarthy**  
**kevinmc@ckschools.org**

# Common Pitfalls



- 1) Not writing about the student**
- 2) Manufacturing hardship**
- 3) Making vague references**

# Thirteen Points to Remember



- 1) Write to the prompt. Read the instructions first. Don't write too soon. Think about what you want to say.
- 2) Write your own essay. The authentic voice of a 17 year old can be heard.
- 3) Be wary of essay-writing books. Admissions officers can tell where you borrowed your approach or material.
- 4) Don't mistake a list for an essay. There are other places for that in the application.
- 5) Once you have written your first draft, let it sit for a day before you get back to it.
- 6) Read the essay to others. Ask for feed-back.
- 7) Don't try to be wildly funny or too creative.

## ...Continued...



- 8) Avoid the trite and cliché. An example of what NOT to write – “I want to leave the world a better place.”
- 9) Don't manufacture hardship. The further back something happened, the less it relates to now. What you are doing now is most important.
- 10) Don't be cute with font and format.
- 11) Don't force one essay to fit other schools. If you do send in an essay used for another school, be sure to proof read and change school names where appropriate!!!
- 12) Proof read and edit thoroughly. A sloppy essay and application will be held against you big time.
- 13) On the other hand, a very polished essay is suspect.

# Rhetoric Counts!



- 1) Who is my audience? Dean of Admissions. What is it about my essay that will make colleges take a chance on me?
- 2) What voice should I use? A confident 17 year old.
- 3) What is the purpose? To distinguish students from other candidates.

## For Example...



### **A. Scotland trip – broken ankle**

- Dance
- “Aplomb”

### **B. Parents move to the U.S.A.**

- Grandma
- Middle C –

### **C. Found a gun**

- Desire to study criminal justice/law

### **D. Volunteer at Harrison**

- Recognize plight of others