

A Middle School
Plan for
Students with
College-Bound
Dreams

This book belongs to:

College class of:

A Middle School
Plan for
Students with
College-Bound
Dreams

M Y C H A L W Y N N



Other books by the author:

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A High School Plan for Students with College-Bound Dreams: Workbook
A Middle School Plan for Students with College-Bound Dreams: Workbook
A Senior School Plan for Bermudian Students with College-Bound Dreams
A Middle School Plan for Bermudian Students with College-Bound Dreams
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A Middle School Plan for Students with College-Bound Dreams

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I would also like to thank my nieces, Tishandra deCourcy and Kymberly McKay, for their efforts in ensuring that this workbook is usable and doable for any student in any situation; Dr. Glenn Bascome for his editorial assistance; Dr. Melvyn Bassett, Ms. LeeAnn Simmons, and Deana Ingham for their critical insight; and Dr. Genevieve Shephard and the staff at Tom Bradley Elementary School in Los Angeles, California, who are giving their students a jump start on their futures by creating a college-bound culture.

Lastly, I would like to thank my mother and father who encouraged, sacrificed, and inspired me to become the first college graduate in our family.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my sons, Mychal-David and Jalani, the thousands of students and parents I meet each year who have college-bound hopes and aspirations, and to those who sacrifice each day on behalf of students and their dreams.

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About the Author



Mychal Wynn was an unlikely college-bound student, having been expelled from Chicago's De La Salle Catholic High School and barely earning enough credits to graduate from Chicago's Du Sable High School. Even more miraculous was his being accepted into Northeastern University, at the time, the largest private university in the United States and the only college that he applied to. Without a mentor to advise him or the benefit of the type of college-planning that is outlined in this book, he had not taken the required courses to be admitted directly from high school into college. He received a *conditional acceptance*—conditional upon his taking and passing classes in Physics and Calculus (courses which were not offered at his high school). As a result of his not having the opportunity to take the necessary classes in high school, his college dreams were deferred as he was required to enroll in Chicago's Kennedy-King Junior College for one semester in the fall of 1974. While working the night shift at the U.S. Post Office from 10:30 p.m. until 2:30 a.m., he took classes in Physics and Calculus during the day, receiving an 'A' in Physics and a 'B' in Calculus.

In January 1975, he boarded his first airplane as he flew from Chicago, Illinois to Boston, Massachusetts where he entered into the Northeastern University College of Engineering. In June 1979, Mychal Wynn became his family's first college graduate, receiving his Bachelor of Science degree. This once unlikely college-bound student was a highly-recruited college graduate and has worked for such multinational companies as IBM and the Transamerica Corporation. In 1985, he and his wife, Nina, founded Rising Sun Publishing, where his wife serves as the Publisher and Chief Executive Officer and he serves as the principal trainer and Chief Financial Officer.

Mr. Wynn is living his dreams as a husband, father, entrepreneur, and author of over 16 books. He, his wife, Nina, and their two sons, Mychal-David and Jalani, reside in Georgia.

Introduction

When our older son was in the first grade we were called in for a parent-teacher conference. His teacher was concerned with his lack of concentration and his continual failure to complete his class work. As an example, she showed my wife and me worksheets that were completely blank, with the exception of stick people running up the right side of the page, stick airplanes flying across the page, and stick people parachuting down the left side of the page. My wife and I, in collaboration with his classroom teacher, developed a series of strategies to not only get our son to complete more of his class work but to provide greater opportunities to nurture his passion for “stick people.”



Over the ensuing years, my wife and I developed the type of comprehensive plan contained in this book, the accompanying *workbook*, and the high school books, to help nurture our son’s passion for drawing while ensuring that he had a well-rounded and rigorous academic schedule that provided a broad range of college opportunities. Subsequently, he not only had a choice of some of the country’s top-ranked art schools like the Savannah College of Art and Design and the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California, he was a candidate for such Ivy League schools as Yale and Dartmouth, and was admitted into his first-choice, Amherst College.

Our younger son is now in middle school and well into his college-bound plan. As a fifth-grader he visited several colleges and proclaimed, “I want to go to Yale” after listening to an admissions officer describe Yale’s residential philosophy of creating a family environment where the same students live together for their entire four years.

I have written this book because I believe that every student deserves to be nurtured in the pursuit of his or her dreams and if those dreams include college, then every student needs a plan. On pages 142 and 143 of the *workbook* are worksheets to gather important information about your current middle school and the high school that you anticipate attending. You must take full advantage of the opportunities (i.e., classes, after-school programs, extracurricular activities, clubs, etc.) available at your current middle school and future high school if you are to expand your range of college choices and financial-aid opportunities.

Foreword

Students and families may question, “Is middle school too early to begin planning for college? Is that something you do during your junior year [of high school]?” It is never too late to begin developing your college plan; however, it is also never too early! In many school districts your high school plan will be greatly influenced by your elementary and middle school academic record and/or performance on standardized testing. For example, in one school district, a student must earn A’s and B’s in fourth and fifth grade to be placed into the AT (Academically Talented) middle school classes; in another school district, students’ fourth-grade CTBS (Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills) scores determine middle school math and science placement; and, in another school district, placement into the Talented and Gifted program is determined by students’ third-grade ITBS (Iowa Tests of Basic Skills) scores.

Your sixth-grade math placement may determine the highest level of math you will be able to take in high school! As you leave middle school and enter into high school, the scope of the colleges and the majors to which you will be able to apply may have already been determined. A student interested in studying engineering in college may have had the opportunity to take Pre-Algebra (sixth grade), Algebra I (seventh grade), Geometry (eighth grade), and four years of high school math that may include Algebra II, Pre-Calculus, AP Calculus, and AP Statistics. Good grades in such classes will put a student on track to apply to a broad range of colleges and universities, whereas the student who does not enroll into advanced math until the ninth grade will have very different course selections (e.g., Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, and Algebra III/Trigonometry), which may not meet some colleges’ admissions requirements.

As the author’s younger son entered middle school he knew that he wanted to attend a local high school that offers magnet programs in math and science and in the visual and performing arts. Acceptance into the math and science magnet program requires middle school report card grades no lower than ‘80’ in math and science during each year of middle school and that the student successfully complete Algebra I by eighth grade. Acceptance into the visual and performing arts magnet will require that he showcase and further develop his singing talent during his middle school years. His son is also utilizing his summer learning opportunities to attend academic and athletic camps. Between the sixth and seventh grades he attended the Summer Institute for the Gifted at Emory University, the NASA-sponsored Space Academy, and a football camp. After suffering a season-ending

injury while playing on his middle school football team, he is already looking forward to the summer between seventh and eighth grades to return to the Summer Institute for the Gifted program and to undergo extensive training for a return to football.

Some may ask, “Why all of this fuss about college planning? I know people who did not graduate from college and they have good jobs?” In today’s competitive workplace the quality of your education will enhance your ability to follow your dreams and enter into the type of career that you really want. As a young person growing up in the 21st century, you have much to encourage you. There are more jobs and career opportunities for college graduates than there are people to fill them. Every year, companies and organizations throughout the world have to recruit teachers, doctors, lawyers, nurses, policemen, business managers, hotel workers, computer technicians, and bankers. Opportunities are everywhere and you must consider yourself more than just a resident of your local community, town, city, state, or country. An education opens up the gateway to the world—to opportunities that will be yours—if you are qualified to pursue them! The opportunities for college graduates are virtually endless!

There are many books and resources that can help you to make a decision on choosing a college. There are, for example, reviews and rankings of colleges and universities by *Newsweek*, *U.S. News and World Reports*, *The Princeton Review*, *The Kaplan College Guide*, international publications, and Internet web sites. You also have your parents, middle school and high school counselors, and many private agencies to assist you in making your college choice based on your interests and career aspirations.

This book, and the accompanying *workbook*, provides guidance through the middle school years to assist you, the student, or parents, teachers, counselors, coaches, and mentors in developing a high school plan that will make you a strong candidate for admissions into a top college and prepared to succeed once you get there. Following the advice and strategies outlined will help to ensure that a student’s dreams of attending college will not be delayed, deferred, or destroyed, as a result of not knowing how to maximize his or her opportunities by taking advantage of the wide range of programs and opportunities available during the middle school years.

As part of the plan that resulted in his acceptance into Amherst College, the author’s older son played varsity football and ran the 400 Meter on his high school varsity track and field team. Not many high school track and field athletes choose to run the 400 Meter. It is a tough race that requires sprinting ability and endurance.

A successful race requires a good game plan, i.e., a strong start during the first 20 meters, sprinting while pacing yourself through the next 80 meters, breaking into a steady stride through the 200-meter mark, using your momentum to carry you around the curve through the 300-meter mark, and conserving enough energy to carry you into a full sprint during the final 100 meters.

Pursuing your dreams of attending college is going to require sprinting, steadying your pace, endurance, and a strong finish. If you are diligent at following the steps outlined in each chapter, completing the *workbook* activities, responsibly doing your schoolwork, and later, making a notable contribution to your high school and local community, you will be on your way to a successful high school experience. In addition, you will develop a strong foundation that will prepare you for college success.

Remember that part of your planning must include financing the cost of college tuition, room, and board. You and your parents must begin this aspect of college preparation as soon as possible, if you have not already done so. There are hundreds of scholarships, fellowships, grants, and low-interest loans available to assist young people in the pursuit of their college-bound dreams.

If you have a passion and/or talent in areas such as academics, sports, art, music, writing, public speaking, dance, drama, or automotive mechanics you must continue to explore every opportunity to showcase and develop your talent. Today's passion may become tomorrow's career or it may be the means of paying your way through college—the route taken by many students who have received scholarships to college because of their academic attainments, sporting abilities, creative or artistic talent, or their noteworthy contribution to their school and/or community.

There is an enormous amount of information, as well as many opportunities and support programs to pave the way for any student to attend college. In essence, there are no excuses!

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Chapter 1

Despite the constant influence of peer pressures to conform—to dress like, behave like, and follow the crowd—the uniqueness of our personalities should be as valued as the uniqueness of our signatures. Our personality represents our signature upon this life. Our personality type is unapologetically, unashamedly, and inexplicably who we are. Whether shaped divinely or through the experiences of our childhood, we must recognize who we are and accept or discard it as we continue on our journey toward becoming who we want to be.

— Mychal Wynn

Understand Who You Are

This chapter will assist you, your parents, your counselor, and perhaps your teacher or mentor to better understand you. The information that you gather in this chapter will assist you in developing your *Pre-college Profile*® (refer to *workbook*). Whether you are in elementary school, middle school, high school, or already in college, the *Pre-college Profile*® will assist you in your academic planning, personal development, and career aspirations. While race and gender are the two most obvious things we know about people, there are many more things that we can understand about ourselves and others. The activities in this chapter will assist you in learning more about:

- your personality,
- how you learn,
- how you are smart,
- how to explore your interests, and
- how to further develop your talents and abilities.

Notes:



Taking the time to explore and appreciate the divinely unique person you are will help you to have a positive middle school experience. Understanding who you are can be a pretty complex and scary undertaking. For some people, after a lifetime, they still know very little about who they are, what makes them happy, and what is really important to them in life. For many students, the transition from elementary school to middle school and from middle school to high school can be difficult, disheartening, distressing, and/or disappointing. One of the major reasons for all of this confusion is that few young people, or older people for that matter, ever come to terms with who they are and how they are different from everyone else.

Each person is uniquely and divinely different. Yet, middle and high school students often focus their attention on wanting to be alike or to hide their differences. Self-consciousness, fear, and the need to be accepted cause many students to shun their differences as they spend every waking hour trying to look like, dress like, talk like, walk like, and be like everyone else. Be who you are and learn how to become the best you that you can be.

One of the first steps in understanding and appreciating your divine uniqueness is identifying your personality type. Are you the life of the party or do you enjoy quiet, meditative time? Do you prefer to focus on the facts or on people? Do you prefer to take time to gather your thoughts and create a plan of action or do you prefer to just jump right in? The answers to such questions provide insight into your unique personality.

Review the Personality Type Tables and circle each statement that best describes you when you are in public situations—those situations when you are around classmates, teammates, or at school. People oftentimes behave differently around close family and friends as opposed to when they are around other students, peers, or strangers. Since you are going to be spending a lot of time in school you should focus on the personality traits which describe how you feel about and behave in school.

Personality types

Why do we like some people or easily get along with some people while always having conflicts with others? Why do we appear to easily understand some people while being constantly confused by others? Understanding the uniqueness of our personality can help us better value and appreciate ourselves and become more understanding and accepting of others.

One of the most important factors to succeeding in school, and experiencing happiness throughout your lifetime, will be the quality of your relationships—the relationships between you and family members, between you and teachers, between you and other students, and, between you and your friends.

The relationships between ourselves and others can be better understood, and possibly strengthened, through an understanding and appreciation of personality types. As you go through each of the Personality Type Tables, you may discover that you frequently fall somewhere in the middle.

Notes:

For example, you appear to be an *Extraverted* personality at times and an *Introverted* personality at other times, or you appear to be a *Feeling* personality in some situations and a *Thinking* personality in other situations. As you complete each of the Personality Type Tables, think in terms of your most common traits; few people fall totally on one side of the table or another. Most people, however, can readily identify their dominant traits. It may also be helpful to have a parent or friend complete the tables about you. Compare your results with those of your parents or friends and attempt to discover the “real” you, which may or may not be the person whom you think that you are.



Also, keep in mind that we often demonstrate traits at school or in public that may be very different from the personality traits we demonstrate at home or with friends.

[Note: The term Extravert on the pages that follow is commonly referred to as Extrovert in contemporary literature on temperament. The term used here is Extravert as was originally used in the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.]



Entering middle school can be scary but avoid believing that you have to blend in and be like everyone else. Take time to understand who you are, and better yet, to appreciate the very special person you are.

A PLEDGE TO MYSELF

Today I pledge to be
the best possible me
No matter how good I am
I know that I can become better

Today I pledge to build
on the work of yesterday
Which will lead me
into the rewards of tomorrow

Today I pledge to feed
my mind: knowledge
my body: strength, and
my spirit: faith

Today I pledge to reach
new goals
new challenges, and
new horizons

Today I pledge to listen
to the beat of my drummer
Who leads me onward
in search of dreams

Today I pledge to believe in me

— Mychal Wynn

Personality Types Table I

(E) Extrovert (75% of population):

1. I like variety, action, and working with others.
2. I easily meet, get to know, talk to and socialize with others.
3. I enjoy talking while working.
4. I easily communicate my thoughts and ideas in lively, even loud discussions, where people frequently interrupt others.
5. I frequently talk about things (often unrelated) as soon as they enter my mind even if I occasionally interrupt others.
6. Words that might describe me are:
Sociable, Interacting with others, Outgoing, Talkative, Lots of friends and relationships, Friendly

(I) Introvert (25% of population):

1. I like quiet, uninterrupted time for focusing and concentrating.
2. I do not easily meet new people and sometimes have trouble remembering names and faces.
3. I prefer to think about my ideas and talk after completing my work.
4. I sometimes avoid sharing my thoughts, ideas, and opinions in large group settings unless it is agreed that everyone has an opportunity to speak.
5. If people interrupt me when I am sharing my thoughts, ideas, and opinions, I tend to stop talking and keep my thoughts to myself.
6. Words that might describe me are:
Protective of my feelings, Territorial, Inwardly Focused, Internal, Serious, Intense, Small circle of friends

I am more of an: E or I (Circle One)

Personality Types Table II

Notes:

(S) Sensitive (75% of population):

(N) Intuitive (25% of population):

1. I prefer regular assignments and consistency.
2. I prefer working through things step-by-step.
3. I prefer to know exactly what needs to be done before starting a project.
4. I am patient with routine details but I can be impatient when details become complicated.
5. I prefer an established way of doing things and I get frustrated by changes.
6. I feel good about what I already know and would prefer not to waste time experimenting with learning new ways of doing things.
7. Words that might describe me are:
Experienced, Realistic, Hard worker, Down-to-earth, Focus on the facts, Practical, Sensible

1. I like solving new problems.
2. I prefer working on a variety of things.
3. I do not like wasting time talking; just tell me what to do so that I can get started.
4. I do not like working on repetitive work and find myself driven by inspiration.
5. I am constantly thinking about how to redesign, improve, or change things.
6. I like solving new problems and continually expanding my knowledge.
7. Words that might describe me are:
Multi-tasking, Future, Focused, Speculate about the possibilities, Inspiration, Ingenious, Imaginative

I am more of a: S or N (Circle One)

Personality Types Table III

(T) Thinking (50% of population):

1. I do not usually show my feelings. I prefer dealing with facts rather than feelings.
2. I prefer to know what you think rather than how you feel.
3. I unintentionally hurt other people's feelings.
4. I like analysis, order, figuring things out and being in charge.
5. I prefer sharing my thoughts and ideas by focusing on the issues instead of on people and feelings.
6. I tend to be analytical, focusing on thoughts and ideas instead of people.
7. Words that might describe me are:
Objective, Principles, Policy, Laws, Firm, Impersonal, Justice, Focus on the problem, Standards, Analysis

(F) Feeling (50% of population):

1. I am concerned about other people's feelings and may overlook facts to avoid hurting someone's feelings.
2. I prefer to know how people feel rather than what they think.
3. I prefer harmony and avoid discussing controversial issues to avoid conflict.
4. I do not handle personal conflicts well and may be upset long after an argument.
5. I sometimes view constructive criticism as a personal attack.
6. I am sympathetic to other people's feelings.
7. Words that might describe me are:
Subjective, Caring, Humane, Understanding, Sympathetic, Harmonious, Appreciative

I am more of a: T or F (Circle One)

Personality Types Table IV

Notes:

(J) Judging (50% of population):

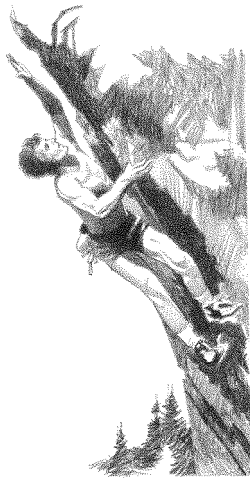
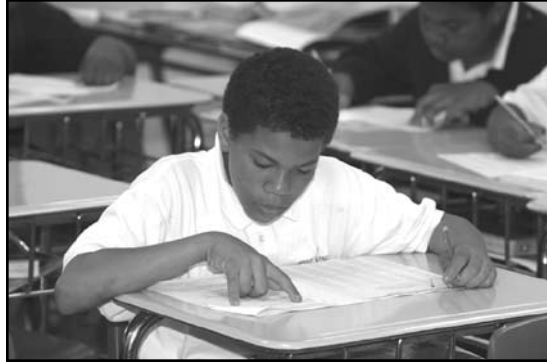
1. I work best when I can plan my work and follow my plan.
2. I like to reach closure. I want to complete projects, resolve issues, and move on.
3. I do not take long to make up my mind.
4. I am usually satisfied with my judgment or decision.
5. After completing a project I am ready to move on to another.
6. I do not like interruptions. Interruptions can cause me to lose my train of thought or forget some of the details.
7. Words that might describe me are:
Settled, Decided, Fixed, Plan ahead, Closure, Decision-maker, Planner, Completed, Decisive, Wrap it up, Urgent, Deadline!, Get the show on the road

(P) Perceiving (50% of population):

1. I sometimes do not plan well.
2. I sometimes work on projects without a clear plan and find myself frequently changing my mind.
3. I sometimes leave things incomplete while I reconsider my choices.
4. I sometimes find myself having trouble making decisions; as a result, I often reopen discussions or revisit issues.
5. I occasionally jump from project to project leaving all open and incomplete.
6. I do not mind interruptions.
7. Words that might describe me are:
Pending, Gather more data, Flexible, Don't be in a hurry, Reconsider your decision, Tentative, Something will turn up, Let's wait and see, Are you sure?

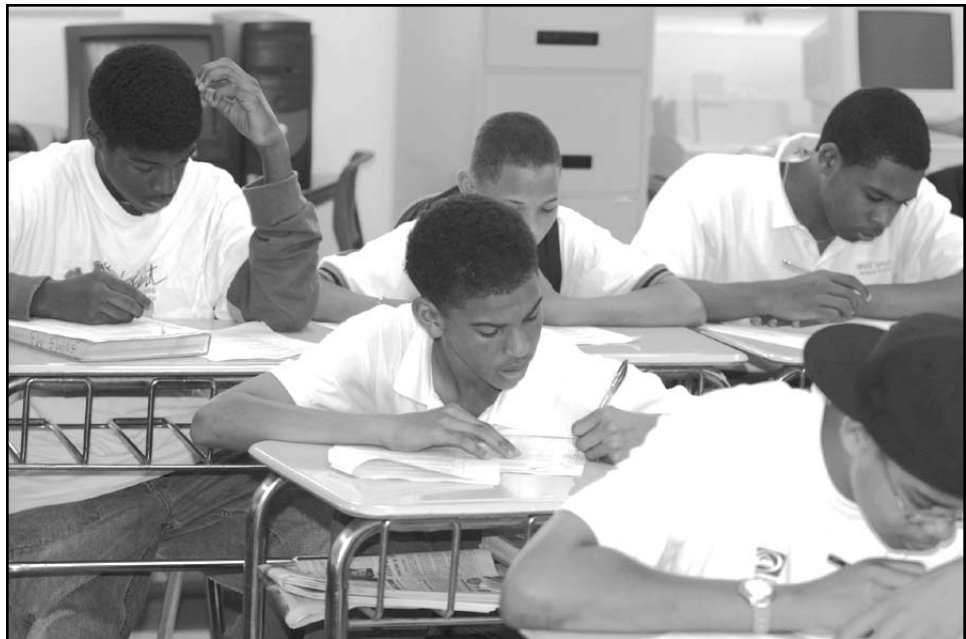
I am more of a: J or P (Circle One)

Notes:



No matter how much you want to fit in and to be like everyone else, one day you will have to climb alone, you will have to discover who you are and where you are going.





Learning styles

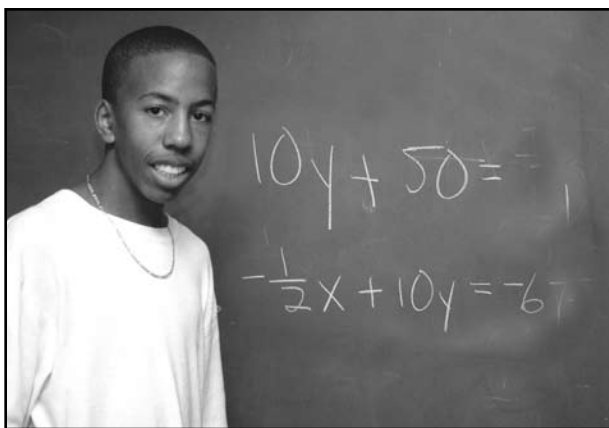
Another important factor that will help you to understand who you are and to experience greater success in your middle school and high school classes is to gain an appreciation for how you learn best, or your *learning-style*. Students who learn “how they best learn” have much greater control over their success in school. While you cannot control your teacher’s teaching-style, the curriculum that is being taught, how fast the curriculum is being taught, or many other dynamics in your various classrooms, you can control how you approach learning based on what you know is your unique learning-style.

Everyone has a learning-style and everyone has learning-style strengths. It is easier to learn through your strengths than it is to learn through your weaknesses. When teachers teach an entire class in exactly the same way, some students are being taught through their strengths. These students are making a connection with the teacher and appear to easily understand, process, internalize, and store the information that is being taught. These students are subsequently better able to recall the information when tests or exams are given. These students are considered to have a *teaching-style-learning-style* match. The way that the teacher teaches and the dominant way in which these students learn are in sync.

Your *learning-style* represents the way in which you best concentrate on, process, internalize, understand, and remember new and difficult information.

At the same time some students are experiencing a *teaching-style–learning-style* match, other students are being taught through their weaknesses. These students oftentimes struggle to understand what the teacher is teaching and experience difficulty processing, internalizing, storing, and subsequently, recalling the information when taking tests and quizzes. These students have a *teaching-style–learning-style* mismatch. Most of us have experienced this *teaching-style–learning-style* mismatch.

Our older son is an example of a student who experienced a *teaching-style–learning-style* mismatch. An ‘A’ student in his middle school advanced math classes, however, in his tenth-grade Honors Algebra II class, he found himself experiencing difficulty understanding his teacher’s teaching-style. Despite spending long hours following football practice studying, working problems, and reviewing his class notes he continued to struggle. Believing himself to understand what was being taught in class, he was baffled why he was getting failing grades on major tests. Despite having previously excelled in mathematics, he was beginning to doubt whether or not he could be successful in his math class.

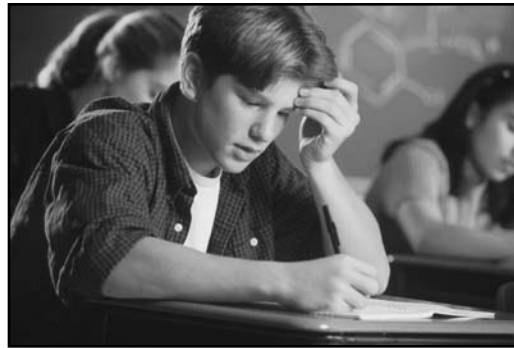


His bleak outlook dramatically changed after a tutoring session with another teacher who was able to explain the material in a way that made a better connection with his learning-style. His understanding increased and his grades soared from a 30 and 50 on his pre-tutoring tests to 89 and 91 on his post-tutoring tests!

Notes:

Take ownership of your learning

Most people have learning-style preferences, but individuals' preferences differ significantly. Learning-styles



reflects an individual's personal reactions to each of 21 elements *when concentrating on new and difficult academic knowledge or skills*. To capitalize on your learning-styles, you need to be aware

of your:

21 Learning-style Elements:

Environmental:

1. Sound
2. Light
3. Temperature
4. Design

Emotional:

5. Motivation
6. Persistence
7. Responsibility
8. Structure

Sociological:

9. Self
10. Pair
11. Peers
12. Team
13. Adult
14. Varied

Physical:

15. Perceptual
16. Intake
17. Time
18. Mobility

Psychological:

19. Global/Analytic
20. Hemisphericity
21. Impulsive/Reflective

- reactions to the immediate classroom environment—background noise such as music and talking versus silence, bright light versus soft lighting, warm versus cool temperatures, and formal (i.e., desk and chair) versus informal (i.e., bed, floor, or bean bag) seating;
- emotional state—motivated, persistent, responsible, and able to exercise control over the learning environment versus a classroom setting that is largely controlled by the teacher with teacher-imposed deadlines, rules, etc.;
- social preferences—working alone, with friends or classmates, with an adult, and/or in a variety of ways as opposed to teacher-determined patterns or routines;
- physiological preferences—perceptual strengths (auditory, visual, tactual, and/or kinesthetic strengths), time-of-day energy levels, intake (snacking while concentrating), and/or mobility needs.

The belief that there is one best way for students to learn is a widely-held misconception. Many teachers attribute student failure to lack of motivation, lack of interest, poor study habits, or simply lack of the intellectual capacity to succeed in certain subject areas. However, the reality is that people remember new and difficult information through different