



ADMISSIONS AND THE INTERVIEW

HYDE
Education Character Family

ADMISSIONS AND THE INTERVIEW

statement to the prospective student
the interview
hyde school statement of purpose

I often tell our faculty that I doubt they will be effective teachers unless they are able to get in touch with the feelings and motivations they had as teenagers. Perhaps I should practice what I preach: I was not a strong student as a kid. Part of the reason for this stemmed from the negative perception I had of school as an institution. School seemed an exercise in futility. I believed school was "rigged." I believe this today.

In junior high school, I knew that I was never going to be one of the top students. I remember watching schoolmates receive the highest awards at school assemblies with full belief that no matter how hard I tried, I would never get one of those awards. I felt that everyone knew this was true, but that no one would say so. It was an unwritten rule, like the "Emperor's Clothes." I believed that if I studied as hard as I could, I would merely be a two-way loser: 1) I'd spend a lot of time performing tasks I'd rather not perform; 2) I wouldn't do appreciably better anyway. The enthusiasm I had toward school in my first few years of elementary school gradually gave way to a cynical disposition. I wound up getting Cs and Ds in the lowest academic track at our local junior high school.

I did try my hardest to excel in sports because I believed that the athletic field was a fairer place than the classroom, that I had more control over my destiny there. I wanted to do well in school, but I was not interested in being an also-ran. I responded to my teachers with a rebellious spirit in my early teens. I thought to myself, "If I can't be good at being good; I'd prefer to be good at being bad." I wanted to make some kind of a mark. I was an educational saboteur.

From where I sit, there are an awful lot of them in our schools today. There will be more as long as schools in America continue to place a great deal of focus on variables that are not within the control of the students; as long as we value aptitude over attitude, ability over effort, and talent over character.

the interview

The primary requirement for membership in the Hyde Community is a desire to grow. Students, faculty and parents accept a commitment to honor the Five Words of the school and strive to live according to Hyde's Five Principles. To keep us on track at Hyde, we repeatedly utilize three questions:

Who am I?

Where am I going with my life?

How do I get there?

While the interviewer will ask student and parents many questions and discuss several issues, the entire process serves as a framework for the examination of these three questions. A good candidate for Hyde is someone who strives to answer these questions honestly and with a searching curiosity.

The interviewer will begin the session with a focus on the prospective student. With mother and/or father present, the interviewer will ask the prospective student to honestly discuss his or her character. Typical questions include:

How is school going?

How do you feel about it?

How could you do better? How do you feel about how you're doing?

What are your friends like? Do your parents like your friends?

Give an example of a recent challenge you accepted and assess how well you met it.

Assess your character. Which of the Five Words is your strongest suit?

Which of the words do you feel you need to work on?

How do you get along with your parents?

What's the thing in your life that you're proudest of?

What are you ashamed of?

What do you hope to be doing with your life ten years from now?

Which values will be important for you to uphold?

How would the students in your school evaluate you?

How about the teachers?

It should be obvious that these questions are basic and logical to ask. Nevertheless, we have learned that they lead to a discussion of the dynamics and issues pertinent to the prospective family. As fundamental as these questions seem, we find that families seem to be discussing them less and less. Children and parents are on an accelerating treadmill these days. The interview allows the family to step off the treadmill and assess its own effectiveness. Reactions run a gamut of emotions. Sometimes students feel affronted and become very defensive. It is also common for parents to jump to the aid of their children and offer answers whenever the child seems stumped on a question. Usually, a dynamic emerges and is examined by the interviewer and the family.

After the interviewer speaks with the prospective student, the conversation turns to the parents. They are asked to assess their own effectiveness as parents:

What are your family's values?

Is there a consensus in the family on these values?

How well are you teaching those values?

What were you like in school?

How do you feel about your child's progress in school?

Are you proud of your child? Do you identify with him or her?

What are the strongest aspects of your child's character?

What are the strongest aspects of your character?

What aspects of your character need improvement?

Again, we continue to learn that the contemporary family does not typically address these very basic issues. We do not view the interview as a test, where there are correct and incorrect answers. We merely seek to determine whether or not the family possesses a willingness to tackle these issues. Is the family truly ready to enroll in a program where each member will be expected to accept responsibility for his or her own personal growth? Perhaps the ideal Hyde family is one whose excitement towards new challenges outweighs the fear of them. We are not looking for families who are experienced in regarding their education in this light. We simply attempt to assess a family's willingness to give the Hyde education an honest effort and try to determine if there is sufficient strength in the family to enable this to happen.

The interview will conclude after approximately two hours. Near the end, the interviewer will summarize the interview and will explain the Personal Goals paper required of all candidates. This is a commitment paper written by parents and students after all have had the opportunity to reflect upon the interview. This enables members of the family to place the interview into perspective.

An admission decision is made soon after the Personal Goals papers are submitted. The Personal Goals papers are also valuable after the student enrolls at Hyde. It serves as a reference point for the family and the student, helping them stay on track.

The Hyde interview is actually older than the school. The school's founder, Joseph Gauld, who began experimenting in the late 1950s with the best way to interview students, developed it. In the early years, the headmaster of the school interviewed all candidates. Today broader ranges of faculty members, trained in the proper techniques of the interview, conduct them.

In some cases, a follow-up interview is necessary. In this instance, the interviewer includes another interviewer for a second opinion. For example, a difficult task of the interviewer can be to determine the consensus of the family. Often, the members of a family will react to the interview differently, making it difficult to ascertain the commitment of the family as a whole. Sometimes divorce, adoption or re-marriage can make consensus especially difficult to achieve. In some cases, it is even necessary to have an additional interview at a later date. The follow-up interview can assist the family and the school in determining the appropriateness of Hyde for the family and the potential for effective cooperation.

In all cases, the interviewer follows some basic rules. For example, with younger students, the school may consider the commitment of the parents more heavily than might be the case with an older student. Many young students do not want to leave home and others are not always keen on the notion of committing to the rigidity of Hyde's structured program. In these cases, it is probable that the parents will need to "carry the ball" in the early days in expressing the commitment of the family. The older the student, the more is expected of him or her. While there are certain rules of thumb, each family is unique and each is considered individually.

The interview often serves as a reference point for students as they continue at Hyde. It is common for a student and the interviewer to get together a year after the interview to assess the progress that has occurred since that initial meeting. It is an important reference point. When all is said and done, in the interview we are attempting to determine a student's and a family's commitment to excellence, while recognizing that each family's level of excellence is personal and unique. Every family has a unique potential. Our efforts to help bring it to fruition begin at the admissions interview.

Once enrolled, students and their parents are expected to honor the Hyde School Statement of Purpose, a document that perhaps best expresses our mission as a community.

hyde school statement of purpose

Each of us is gifted with a unique potential that defines a destiny. A commitment to character development enables us to achieve personal excellence and find fulfillment in life. To paraphrase Martin Luther King, Jr. we strive for a school where the members of our community will be judged not by their inherent talents or native abilities but by the content of their character.

Our primary goal is the personal growth of Hyde's students, but our experience has taught us that all constituents — students, teachers and parents — must strive for personal growth in order for Hyde's teenagers to achieve it. As we narrow the gap between what we want to foster and how we foster it, we continue to believe that our successes are due more to an adherence to a belief system than a set curriculum. The cornerstones of that belief system are the Five Words and the Five Principles.

The Five Words have adorned the school's shield since its founding:
Courage — Integrity — Leadership — Curiosity — Concern

The entire community adopted the Five Principles in 1988:

Destiny	Each of us is gifted with Unique Potential.
Humility	We believe in a power and a purpose beyond ourselves.
Conscience	We achieve our best through character and conscience.
Truth	Truth is our primary guide.
Brother's Keeper	We help others achieve their best.

We value these words and aspire to reflect these principles in our individual and collective endeavors. Our respect in this community and that which we accord our peers is a reflection of these efforts.

Malcolm W. Gauld, 1991

Updated 2000

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Education Character Family

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What are you ashamed of?
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