

How can students handle acceptances and rejections?

By Elizabeth Lowe

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High school and college guidance counselors and admissions officers in the Archdiocese of Baltimore offer 10 ways to help students and their families navigate the high school and college application and admissions process.

Their advice comes as students are receiving acceptance and rejection letters and deciding which school to select.

Accepted? Here's what to do:

1. Be excited

"The best thing for a student to do is to be excited, be happy, but not jump into a commitment right away," said Heidi Fletcher, vice president of enrollment management at Notre Dame of Maryland University in Baltimore. "Be happy you have at least one option, then see how it all plays out."

2. Hear from all schools, then decide

"With acceptance letters students are like 'OK, the first one I get into I'm going to go there.' That's not necessarily the best idea," Fletcher said. "It's best for students to wait and see, hear from all the schools."

3. Take another tour

"Talk to other people going to the college, what they like about it, what they don't like, investigate with alumni what they've found beneficial," said Beverly McIntyre, guidance director at The Seton Keough High School in Baltimore. "Sometimes you need to do a little extra digging to make sure it's the right fit."

4. Consider all aspects

"They (prospective students) have a lot of factors to weigh," said McIntyre, who cited an institution's size, distance from home, cost and if a particular major is offered. "It's being open to all of the information they receive."

5. Trust your gut

“I’m a proponent of visiting a college, in particular if you can do it a couple of times, to give somebody a gut feel of how they feel in that environment,” said Tom Whedbee, school counselor at St. John’s Catholic Prep in Buckeystown. “‘I could see myself here, I feel comfortable’ or ‘I’m not sure how I feel about that.’”

Not accepted? Consider the following:

1. Acknowledge the rejection

“It’s perfectly understandable to be disappointed,” Whedbee said. “It’s going to happen and there’s nothing wrong with it. It’s almost like a grief process in some ways. Just be sensitive to the fact that disappointment is a real thing and needs to be understood and accepted to some degree.”

2. Do not be discouraged

“Schools have a lot of applicants and we have to make tough choices,” Fletcher said. “Not everyone is going to get in. If you didn’t get in, give them a call and find out why.”

3. Anticipate rejection

“The best thing to do, when they come up with their list of schools, include schools they’re sure they’ll be accepted to if their dream school doesn’t pan out,” McIntyre said. “Be happy with the schools they are accepted to.”

4. Reprioritize

“I remind them to go back to their top three priorities and focus on those,” said Rachel Stechsulte, college counselor at St. Mary’s High School in Annapolis. “Where will be the best place for my son or daughter to thrive and continue to grow as a young person? What are those priorities and focus on those throughout the process.”

5. It wasn’t part of God’s plan

“It’s very difficult,” said Tom Rose, director of admissions and advancement at Our Lady of Mount Carmel School in Essex, “but they may look back at it in 10 years and say that was a better decision.”

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