

# **How College Admissions are Changing**

**PTSA General Membership Meeting**

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# Holistic Admissions

## Looking beyond student GPAs and Test Scores

Colleges are increasingly taking a holistic approach to admissions, meaning they look beyond just grades and test scores. While academic performance remains important, many schools now **focus more on understanding the student as a whole person.** This includes evaluating **personal qualities, extracurricular involvement, leadership experiences,** and **how students contribute to their community.**



# Stronger Emphasis on Extracurriculars & Passion Projects

Colleges are looking for students who are **passionate about their interests**, whether it's **sports, arts, volunteer work**, or other **extracurricular activities**. They want to see **sustained commitment, initiative, and leadership** in these areas. Instead of participating in a wide range of activities, students are encouraged to **focus deeply on a few things that truly matter to them**. Passion projects, such as starting a community initiative or conducting independent research, can also stand out in a college application.



# Test-Optional Policies

**Many colleges** have adopted test-optional policies, meaning **SAT or ACT scores are no longer mandatory for admission.** This shift is largely in response to concerns about access and equity, especially after the disruptions caused by the pandemic. The key takeaway here is that **test scores are just one part of the equation,** and for many students, other aspects of their student profile can carry more weight.



# Essays & Personal Statements

With more schools adopting a holistic admissions process, **personal essays have become a critical part of the application.** Colleges want to understand **each student's story, their motivations, challenges, and aspirations.** A well-written essay allows students to showcase their unique voice, reflect on their experiences, and explain how they will contribute to the campus community.



# Adaptability and Resilience

Colleges are looking for **students who have shown resilience and adaptability in the face of challenges**. Whether it's **overcoming personal obstacles, managing academic or personal setbacks, or taking initiative during difficult times**, these qualities are **increasingly valued** by admissions committees.



# Recommendation Letters

Recommendation **letters** from **teachers, counselors, administrators, or mentors carry significant weight**, as they offer insight into a student's character, work ethic, and potential. **Colleges value these letters** because they come from individuals who know the student in an academic or personal context and **can speak to their readiness for college.**



# Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Colleges are placing a greater emphasis on building diverse and inclusive student bodies. They are **actively seeking students** from a **wide range** of backgrounds, including **socioeconomic, racial, and geographic diversity**. Additionally, many schools are particularly interested in students who have demonstrated a **commitment to social justice, leadership, or community service**.





# Demonstrated Interest

Some colleges are paying closer attention to "demonstrated interest," which refers to **how much a student has engaged with the school** during the admissions process. This can include attending virtual or in-person campus tours, contacting admissions officers, or attending information sessions. **Showing genuine interest in a college** can sometimes give students a slight edge in the admissions process.



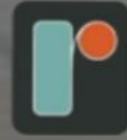
# Fostering Independence & Responsibility

Middle school is a time for students to **begin taking ownership of their learning and responsibilities.** Parents can foster independence by **allowing their children to make decisions, make mistakes, handle consequences, and solve problems on their own, while offering guidance** as needed. This helps build the self-reliance needed for college life, where students have much more freedom.



# Promoting a Growth Mindset

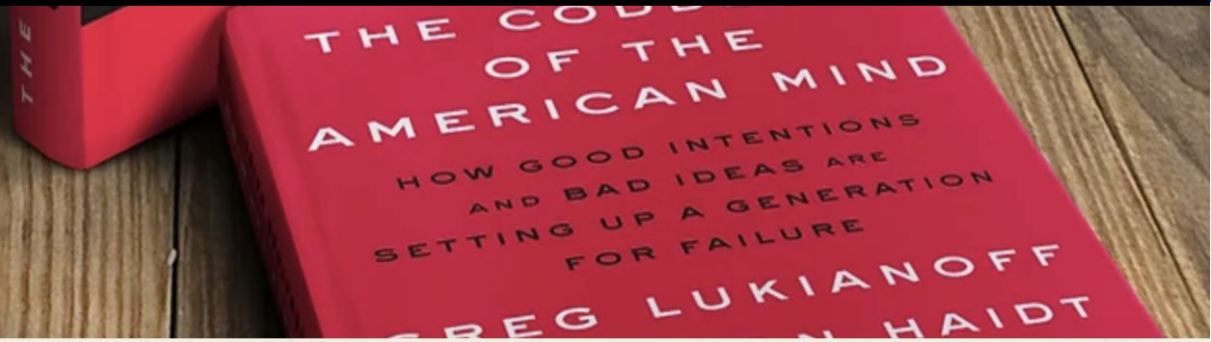
Encourage a **growth mindset**, where students see **challenges as opportunities to learn rather than failures**. School can be tough at times, so helping your child understand that **setbacks are part of the process will better prepare them to handle academic and personal challenges** with **resilience and persistence**.



- **1 in 10 writing their child's resume**
- **16% submitting job applications for them**
- **25% going with their kids to the job interview**



# Wiser Kids

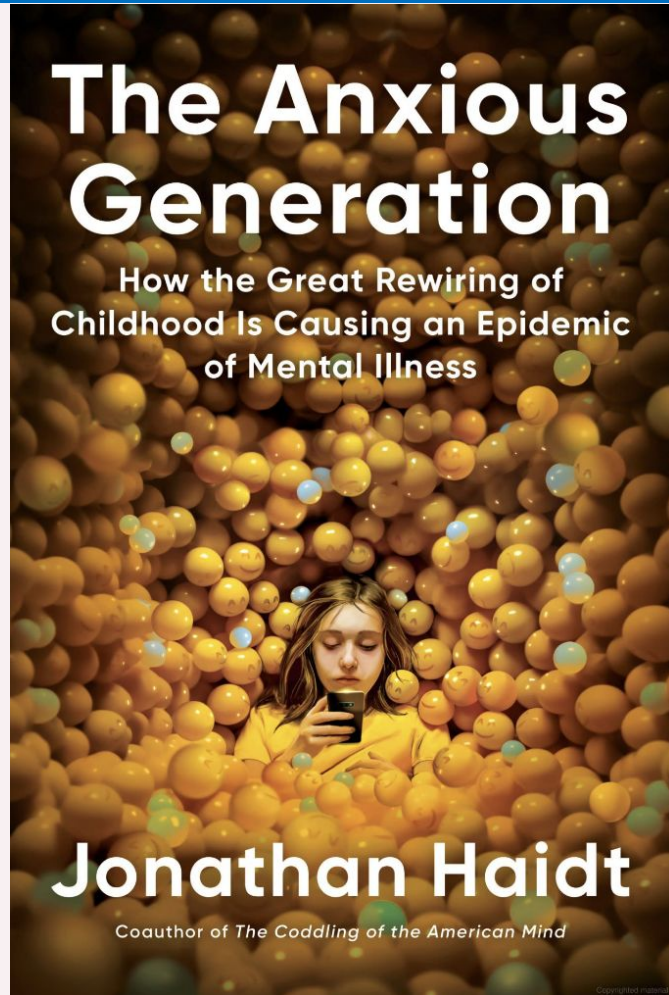


In Chapter 12, we organized our suggestions for raising wiser kids into four categories. Here we repeat the outline of that chapter and add in links and resources, including those we found after publishing the book. We also have a [handout for parents](#), that they can take when they talk to teachers and principals, to urge reforms. Teachers should see our page of advice for [wiser K-12 schools](#)





**Highly  
Recommended  
Reading  
for all Parents/  
Guardians**



Got a 2.4 GPA my first semester in college. Thought maybe I wasn't cut out for engineering. Today, I've landed two spacecrafts on Mars and am designing one for the moon. STEM is hard for everyone. Grades ultimately aren't what matters. Curiosity and persistence matter.

Ben Cichy



**R**espect, **I**ntegrity, **S**afety, **E**mpathy

It is not what you  
do for your kids,  
but what you have  
taught them to do  
for themselves that  
will make them  
successful  
human beings.

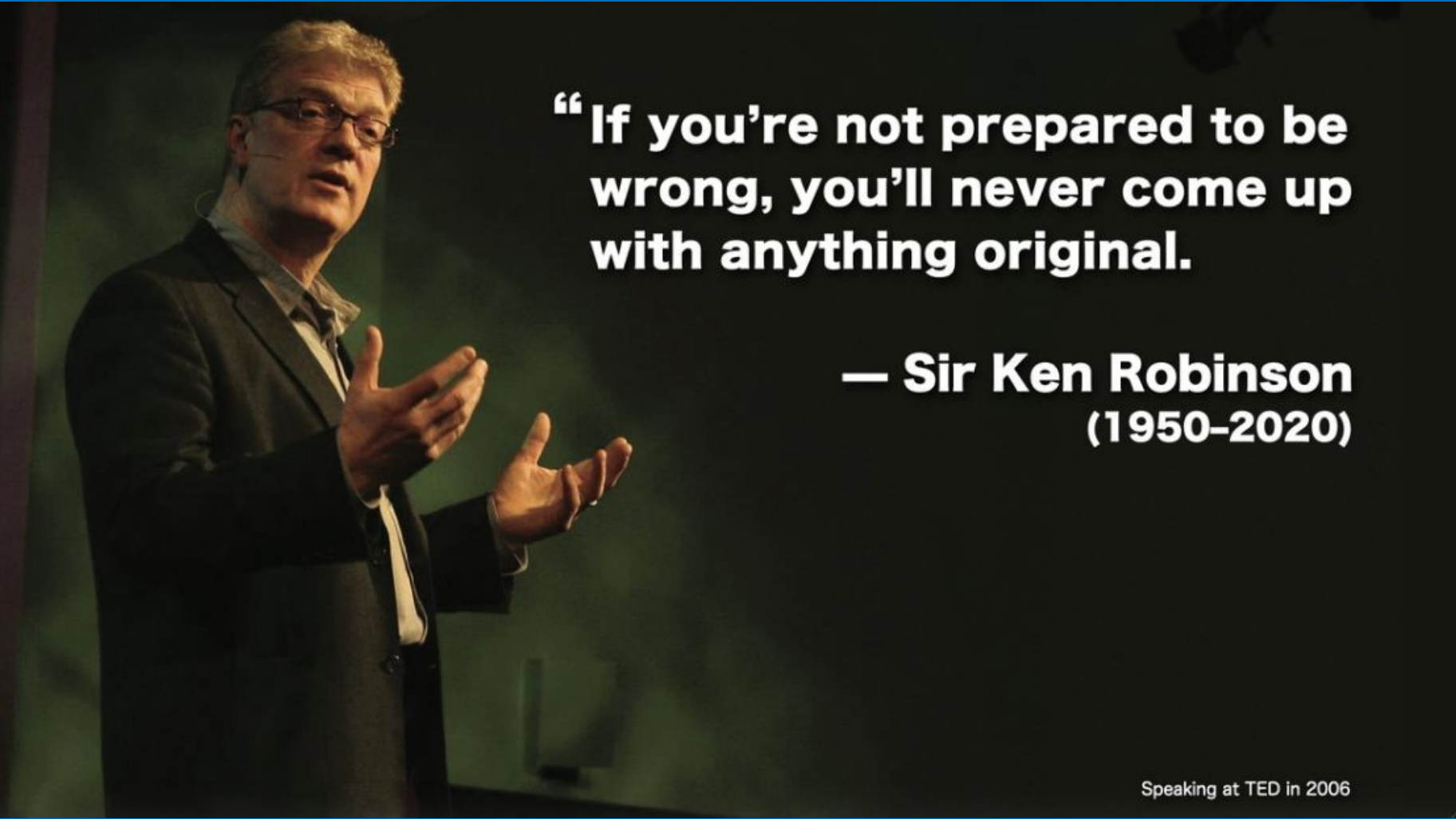
*Inspired by Ann Landers*

*Youth Dynamics*



**R**espect, **I**ntegrity, **S**afety, **E**mpathy



A photograph of Sir Ken Robinson, a man with glasses and a dark suit, speaking at a TED event. He is gesturing with his hands as he speaks. The background is dark and out of focus.

**“If you’re not prepared to be wrong, you’ll never come up with anything original.**

**— Sir Ken Robinson  
(1950–2020)**



Famous Failures

# Famous Failures

<https://youtu.be/zLYECIjmnQs>



**R**espect, **I**ntegrity, **S**afety, **E**mpathy

*\*Some content in this presentation was informed by responses generated using ChatGPT, a language model developed by OpenAI (October 2024 version).*