



Westford Challenge Success Accomplishments



- ★ Homework-free weekends
- ★ Longer passing periods
- ★ Monthly CS team meetings
- ★ Updated homework policy
- ★ Improved mid-year exam schedule

- ★ Challenge Success Schedule: added 10-15 minute break to school day one week per quarter
- ★ Created Challenge Success Student Team
- ★ "Fishbowl Activity" to give voice to student concerns
- ★ Guidance Counselors now meet with every 9th grader in the first 3 weeks of school in order for our new students to have a point of contact at W.A.
- ★ Principal Antonelli "Town Meetings" with students

- ★ Regular CS team meetings
- ★ New community-building activities
- ★ BMS Honored Citizen assemblies
- ★ Updated homework policy
- ★ Improvements to lunch/advisory schedule
- ★ "What I Wish My Teachers Knew?" student voice activity
- ★ Blanchard Success Squad: student advisory group meets regularly with administration



Blanchard Middle School



Stony Brook Middle School

- ★ No-homework weekends
- ★ Project-Based Learning classrooms in 6th and 7th Grade
- ★ Flexible seating / standing desks
- ★ Updated homework policy
- ★ Sleep awareness efforts
- ★ KIND Campaign: fostering healthy

- relationships in middle school girls
- ★ Flexible learning environments around campus

What is Challenge Success?

"At Challenge Success, we believe that our society has become too focused on grades, test scores and performance, leaving little time and energy for our kids to become resilient, successful, meaningful contributors for the 21st century. So every day, we provide families and schools with the practical research-based tools they need to raise healthy, motivated kids. Success, after all, is measured not at the end of the semester, but over the course of a lifetime."

I.C.Y.M.I.

(...In Case You Missed It...)

"Success Stories" Event: If you couldn't join us at our January event to hear our seven storytellers describe their windy and bumpy paths to happiness and fulfillment, you can watch the video on [YouTube](#) or find it on our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/WestfordChallengeSuccess

Maria Furtado, Colleges That Change Lives: For the second year in a row, Maria Furtado came to Westford to share her wisdom about creating a healthy college search process for students and parents. If you missed it, don't worry; we'll try to bring Maria back next year, and, in the meantime, you can find plenty of helpful college search tips at CTCL.org.



For more information about **Westford Challenge Success**, [sign up for our Parent Group](#), [email us](#), or [follow us on Facebook](#)



CHEATING and the College Admission Process

The recent college admission cheating scandal has shone a light the lengths that some parents are going to get their children into selective colleges and universities. Many of us parents, while condemning the cheating and bribing, at some level can understand how parents might think that getting their student into the “right” college is a make-or-break proposition. We might even believe it a little bit, too, telling ourselves, “*There are some number of ‘good’ colleges that will help ensure my child’s future success and happiness....right?*”

In a [recent article](#), Challenge Success co-founder Jim Lobdell asks, “What happens when the most resourced, educated parents give in to fear and anxiety and focus on narrow markers of ‘success’ -- grades, test scores, resume-building accomplishments, and college admissions?” Here are some of the answers he provides:

- *They send messages to their kids -- sometimes subtle, sometimes direct -- about the make-or-break nature of academic and extracurricular performance. Kids internalize that "good" won't cut it, and many feel forced to cheat their way to the top.*
- *They allow their kids to participate in the academic and extracurricular arms race, even as the load means compromising sleep, mental health, and overall well-being.*
- *They mortgage their kids' adolescence with a schedule most adults couldn't maintain, at a time when teenagers should be forming their own identity. It's a debt that will eventually come due, often in the form of a quarter- or mid-life crisis.*
- *They and staff of well-paid tutors, coaches and counselors helicopter to monitor progress and snowplow to remove obstacles, undermining their kids' agency and resilience along the way.*
- *They see parenting as a zero-sum competitive sport, and the college bumper sticker on their car as the scoreboard.*

And then there's this one:

- *They discount research that dispels myths about the importance of attending prestigious universities.*

As detailed in the Challenge Success white paper [A “Fit” Over Rankings](#), the research shows that “**college selectivity is not a reliable predictor of student learning, job satisfaction, or well-being.**” The paper also concludes that college rankings aren’t reliable, and that **engagement** is a more important predictor of future success and happiness than where you attend college. Student engagement can come in many forms, but it often looks like real-world experience via an internship or co-op, project-based work, or having a trusted mentor. For a brief summary of the Challenge Success white paper, check out this video: <https://vimeo.com/292846230>.

So if you have a child who is traversing the college admissions process, take a deep breath in..... and exhale. Smile at your student and tell them you’re proud of all that they’re doing well and learning to do well. Help your children define success for themselves in a way that will bring them lasting, long-term fulfillment.

AND, get involved with the Westford Challenge Success Parent Group! Helps us plan a parent education event for the 2019-2020 school year. Contribute to our newsletter. Host a small discussion group in your home. Spread the word on social media. And reach out to us by email (WestfordChallengeSuccess@gmail.com) or on [Facebook](#).