

2017 RHS Senior's Speak: What do Our Senior Parents Say?

If you had 5 minutes with a parent/guardian of a 9th, 10th, or 11th grade student at Redwood, what advice would you share?

- Make sure you let your son or daughter understand that the focus should be on learning and loving the coursework and not college. I did not push my son, he will remember his time at Redwood (writing for Bark, developing his passion of sports analytics and writing) - I am INDEBTED to Redwood. Two sons, Redwood 2009 and 2017.
- Don't spoil your child. They will learn to be responsible when they realize their own choices matter.
- Don't get caught up in the Race to Nowhere. Let your child make mistakes and learn from them. It's their journey, not yours.
- Stay involved and join Be the Influence to learn great tips on how to keep your child safe.
- Listen more than speak. Stop what you are doing when they have time to speak with you, and listen without interrupting with advice or opinion. Ask open-ended questions. Don't try to solve their problems or give them advice. Trust that they know more than you give them credit for - and let them know that you know. Tell them when you do nag, cajole or beg them to do something that you are doing it because you've been there - then leave them with that knowledge to figure it out for themselves.
- Involve yourself! If you haven't done so before, do so now. These years FLY by. I just attended my 9th consecutive year of Open Houses and sadly, this will be the last of our 3 kids to graduate. Get to know other parents! Redwood is big and getting bigger. Make it smaller! Kids NEED to get involved and stay involved with extra-curricular activities. All boys should play frosh football just to meet other kids before school begins. Who cares if they never get in a game?! They are going to love it! Don't think that college is the ONLY acceptable outcome from Redwood! Yes, it's a great college prep school but more importantly, through programs such as Peer Resources it's a LIFE prep school. Use the Wellness Center! Use Student Leadership! There's room for EACH kid, EACH path, EACH dream! Savor the moments. Know that your child will be challenged, beckoned, and yes, intimidated by some serious grey matter in the student body. Teachers are humans, humans are flawed. But this is a GREAT group of teachers lead by a great Administration. Ask when you need help. Don't wait! Set up a great foundation for doing homework, communicate with teachers BEFORE you see an issue, and stay involved. You deserve it... more importantly, your KIDS deserve it.
- I would suggest they read the twig for info about what's going on at school. I would also suggest they get involved with the RHSF or PTSA - it's a wonderful way to feel connected and make a difference for our kids and the school.
- Stay involved in your student's selection of courses & if you disagree, your opinion should over-ride. Even if you start to get the message from guidance counselors & teachers that you are supposed to let your student make their own decisions by 11th & 12 grade. I DIDN'T KNOW THAT if my student took an AP Statistics class, that if he got a D, that both UC's & Cal State schools will RESCIND THEIR OFFERS OF ACCEPTANCE. NO EXCEPTIONS. (Even though he's getting an A+ in his other AP class & his GPA is higher than it was on his college ap's). So because of one 'over-reach', we were looking at an \$80,000.00 increase because w/one D, he could ONLY GO TO A PRIVATE College. I had STRONGLY disagreed w/ the guidance counselor but was treated like I was supposed to back off. Yet I'm the one who will be responsible to pay for it. Luckily, he seems to be pulling his grade up to a C-, but it's been SO STRESSFUL, & unnecessarily so. There's a lot of myths floating around & just general ignorance.
- Stay involved with your student. Know their school schedule. Read the Bark!
- Help them find their "tribe" at Redwood...if it's through a sports team, or club or activity. If a student finds a healthy and like-minded group of friends from the start they will thrive. Also - pay close attention to everything - social media, texts, friends. Be a snoop in the beginning. This is a big new world and there are many temptations.

As your child graduates from Redwood, what are some parting thoughts you'd like to share about your experience and/or your child's experience at RHS?

- High school can be a bumpy road and presents many opportunities for your child to get involved in scary things (from riding in a car with a teen driver to drinking to not coming home some night). The best thing I did was to make connections with the parents (mainly moms) of my son's friends. We ended up forming an informal group and when one of us was having trouble finding our son or was worried, we would check in

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with the others. All the moms got to know the boys and in the end we had a real village looking out for the boys and for each other. I strongly recommend making the extra effort to connect with the parents of your child's friends.

- Take advantage of the wonderful opportunities at Redwood. The teachers are supportive and the level of dedication of these teachers is amazing. Plus, as an educator myself, I can tell you that what the students learn is pretty cutting edge.
- The counseling staff is terrific. The help provided our son has been tirelessly patient and affirmative.
- It's important for your child to feel connected to an adult on site. Get to know a coach or someone familiar with the school who can be an advocate for you (or your child) when trying to navigate the new atmosphere.
- Redwood does a great job of meeting the needs and desires of curious and motivated students no matter where they fall on the academic scale. It is important from the start to encourage your kids to get to know not only their teachers and their counselor but to grow those relationships over the 4 years. Have them ask the questions about coursework and curriculum and testing so that when the time comes for applying to college or other post secondary education, they have a team they can work with and trust.
- This is our third child. We're sad to know that we won't be part of the Redwood family. It's been 9 incredible years. Redwood offers just about everything a high school student and her family could hope for. There will be moments of stark terror about an assignment, or about a social matter, or about a team, or about a dance, or about.... Fill in the blanks. But, you are NOT alone. Redwood CARES. That's not lip service. If you don't know what you don't know, find out! Ask. Ask again. Email. Call. Show up. BE THERE in one way or another. Don't get ahead of yourselves! Let your freshman be a freshman. S/he will change dozens of times in the four years. Body. Mind. Interests. Tastes. Opinions. Prepare to get dumber as they reach their junior and senior years. There's got to be a graph that shows the aging of teens and the dumbing down of parents! But, THEY ARE STILL KIDS! Be the parent they need and they will need you! NONE of the kids are 'exempt' from the pressures, real or imagined. They ALL see, hear, know what's going on around them. Don't try to fool them or yourselves. ASK QUESTIONS. Make the effort to meet and get to know their friends. Trust that your child is going to be confused at times about his teacher's requirements or the homework, etc. Encourage him to be a SELF ADVOCATE. Redwood wants kids to learn how to speak for themselves. It's good training for that thing called reality. Encourage your child to raise her hand, to speak up, to take a stance. Heck yes that's frightening but far less so than sitting back and feeling like a 'victim'. Encourage your kids to seek out other kids who may think the Meat Club is the best thing on the planet! (It is :) or who think that frisbee golf should be an Olympic sport (nah...). No matter what...Redwood is OPEN to your student to explore, to try and test and nudge himself. Just be there to support him. Be there to let her know that you care and will do whatever you can to help her face things head on and that Redwood has staff who care!! Mark your time: these years will fly and you'll look back and wonder where it went...
- I couldn't have asked for a better place for my children to attend high school. I loved everything about the school - the principal, faculty and staff are amazing, and the students have an opportunity to excel in their areas of interest, be it academics, sports or the arts (music and drama were my kids' passions and, thanks to the incredible training and preparation they received at Redwood, they are now able to pursue those passions in college and beyond!). The financial and volunteer support the school gets from the parent community is remarkable and allows our school to compete with any private school in terms of facilities, equipment and resources, things not normally found a larger, public school.
- It's not official but there's a sailing team. They practice at SFYC in Belvedere tues-thurs & they travel & race in regatta's locally & elsewhere & it's awesome. It's co-ed- they don't have to have experience, it's a great sport if your child is on the smaller, leaner side, there's lots of camaraderie & I wish I'd known about it when my son was in 9th grade.
- My student transferred to Redwood as a junior and it has been fantastic. There are many class choices and the counseling staff is helpful. The college process was pretty smooth and extra help was available if needed. Great kids here and great staff! Stay involved with your kid and the school and you will be happy!
- It can be an excellent school for many kids. Having had one who has done extremely well another who has not, I would say know who your child is and pay attention to whether they are thriving at Redwood. If they are not respond quickly. Reach out to teachers, counselors. It's a wonderful community of professionals. Take advantage and don't be afraid to ask for advice!