Preparing for GSA's High School Fair

Take the Lead

Parents typically feel invested in their child's High School search process. However, at a High School fair, students need to take the lead. Depending on how crowded the fair is, you only have a short amount of time to make an impression. While choosing where to attend High School is often a family decision, making an impression is solely on you. You want the admission's representative to see you as a confident young person that's taking their future seriously.

Talk with your parents ahead of time and set boundaries. You may decide that it's best for them to walk around on their own. They can visit booths and ask their own questions without distracting from your first impression.

Ask Specific Questions

Reading a High School's website can give you plenty of information about application deadlines, academic programs, and available athletics. Don't waste time asking questions with answers that you can easily find online.

Here are some examples of good questions to ask at a High School fair:

- **What makes this High School distinct?**
  By asking this question, you're giving the admissions representative the chance to explain what the school values and what it's known for. They might talk about the school's mission statement, unique study abroad opportunities, diverse student population, renowned internship programs etc.

- **I'm interested in studying ____. Is there a special application process or different admissions criteria for this program?**
  Some High School programs have stricter admissions requirements or require supplemental applications materials. For example, an art program likely requires an art portfolio. When you ask this question, not only are you requesting information that you need, but you're also sharing about yourself.

- **How can I make my application stand out?**
  If you're planning to apply to a school, be bold and ask this question. Their answer could make all the difference. Let it guide you as you write your admissions essay or prepare for an in-person interview.

Remember Who You Talk To

Write down the name of the person you talk to at each table. Better yet, ask for a business card. Send follow-up emails to the schools you're still interested in. Thank the person for their time, ask additional questions, and express your continued interest in their school. Depending on your year, they may recommend summer programs that you could apply for.

Mention the High School Fair During the Application Process

Schools love knowing that you're taking your High School search seriously. If it makes sense, reference the fair or the individual you met in your application. Incorporate it into any question related to why you think you'd be a good fit at the High School or why you're interested in their school. If it doesn't seem relevant to include in an essay, mention it during your interview.

A Few Other High School Fair Do's and Don'ts

Do: Bring along a small notebook to take notes and a bag to hold brochures

Don't: Keep your head buried in your notebook as you talk to a representative

Do: Dress presentably and act professionally

Don't: Joke around with friends or walk around texting as you meander through the fair

Do: Make a list of the schools you want to talk to ahead of time

Don't: Tell school A that school B is actually your first-choice school