

DELINEATING ARGUMENTS: CASE STUDY

Course Scheduling Conflict

ISSUE

It is spring and a seventh grader named Nicole is choosing classes for her eighth grade year. She is an excellent, well-rounded student with dreams of attending an Ivy League University. As they review the possible courses she can take next year, she and her parents discover that dance class and honors math will be given at the same time. Nicole has shown real talent in math and her teacher would like her to enroll in 8th grade honors math class. Nicole has been studying dance since she was 3 and wants to continue dancing in high school and perhaps beyond. The school's dance instructor

used to be professional dancer and believes that if Nicole keeps studying, she may win a college scholarship for dance.

The guidance counselor has met with Nicole to explain the options. He always tries to allow students to select at least one course that they are really interested in taking. He has decided to hold a meeting with Nicole and her parents to make a decision. At the meeting, both Nicole and her parents present their positions.

PERSPECTIVES

NICOLE'S PARENTS

Nicole's parents have supported her participation in dance class since she was a young girl. They believe the extracurricular activities are important and want her to continue doing them. However, they believe the opportunity to take 8th grade honors math cannot be passed up because it will prepare her for upper level classes in high school and beyond. They consider taking this honors math class to be more important for providing her with those opportunities than taking the dance class.

Nicole's parents present the following argument:

We believe that being asked to take the honors math class presents an opportunity that cannot be passed up, regardless of other courses that Nicole may want to take.

The honors math class will prepare Nicole to take upper level math classes like Calculus in high school. Taking Calculus in high school will allow her to earn college credit and start college in an advanced math course, thus, lowering the number of courses she has to take in college.

To get into a good college or university, students usually need to score over 31 on the ACT and/or 70 on the SAT. There are other important components of college applications, but strong SAT/ACT match scores will show Nicole's academic talent.

Also, many high paying careers require a strong background in math and science. You need to be an innovator and have strong reasoning and problem-solving skills in today's job market. Nicole can develop these skills in higher-level math classes.

In conclusion, if Nicole wants to attend an Ivy League school and have the opportunity to get a good job, she needs to develop her abilities in the honors math class. It is difficult to give up on dance for a year but perhaps we can find another way for her to take dance class the following year. The opportunities the math class will provide her over the course of her life are limitless and are more important than one year of dance class.

NICOLE

Nicole wants to attend an Ivy League school and is committed to working hard to get good grades, participating in extracurricular activities, and volunteering to help boost her resume. She loves to dance because she has been doing it since she was very young, her best friends are all dancers, and she knows that to be considered for an Ivy League school, you have to have more than just good grades and test scores. She wants to take the honors math course, but not if it means giving up on her dance class which she believes is just as important.

Nicole presents the following argument:

Dance is not easy. It takes a lot of training to do it well. Dancers practice steps thousands of times to become good at them. This type of dedication is something that dance has taught me and something I know will be required in Ivy League schools. I know it is not an academic course, but the skills of persistence, perfection, and passion I am learning through dance will be transferable to school.

Participating in extra-curricular activities like dance is very important in the college applications. I know that schools expect you to be well rounded. This means participating in non-academic activities inside and outside of school. My dance career will look very nice on my resume when I am applying to school.

I am still a kid. I know I have ambitious goals and want to go to college and have a good career. But, I'm 12 years old and dance is who I am right now. Shouldn't I be able to still have fun, socialize with my friends, and follow my passions? Isn't that what most adults do? I already get straight As, volunteer, and have become an exceptional dancer. What is wrong with the path I'm on?

So, I would not be the person that I am without dance. I want to take the honors math course but not if it means missing a year of dance class with my dance teacher and friends. I do know the importance of developing my math skills and preparing for college admissions examinations, but I also cannot consider my life without dance in it right now.

OTHER PERSPECTIVES:

Guidance Counselor - Dance Instructor - Nicole's older sibling - Nicole's friend