

A MSJ Parent Perspective Corinna Fong

CO 2019'
CO 2021'
CO 2024'

My name is Corinna Fong and I have been a parent to three MSJ kids. As a parent, I have been actively volunteering at schools since my kids were at elementary school, by participating in PFAs, Boosters, and school trip chaperone.

"Is Mission tough?" - this's a question I have been frequently asked by others since my first child started high school here in 2015. As my third child is ready to graduate this year (2024), my answer to this question remains the same. "Yes, Mission is tough but so is college and life!"

Let me backup a little bit and explain myself, Missions is tough for various reasons:

1. Classroom Experience:
 - a. In some classes I saw more material taught than the curriculum requires. While this is great in terms of acquiring knowledge, it does lead to a heavier burden.
 - b. In some classes I noticed that the homeworks and class assignments did not match the difficulty of the tests.
 - c. Unreasonable expectations. e.g. during Covid remote learning year, 10% of your grade was from "classroom" participation and that meant you needed to be the first one to "raise your hand" to get your name called. If you don't get called, you get 0% in participation grade. So what happens if you have a slower internet or an older laptop than others?
2. Culture:
 - a. Parents: APs and Ivy League are frequently discussed topics in parent chat groups. Parents get anxious and start believing that your child has to take a certain number of AP courses and to get accepted to one of the top 10 colleges (ranked by US News) is the only way to succeed in life.
 - b. Students: Same thing, when your peers are in leadership, sports and taking 5-6 weighted classes every year, you feel like you need to do more. Otherwise, you are not good enough.
3. College acceptances:
 - a. Let's face it, the acceptance rate for the well known colleges are going down year after year. UCs are a lot harder to get into compared to many years ago. The demographic here wants to major in a STEM field.. That makes it even harder to get into a certain college than before since the applicant pool is growing but the number of these spots stay the same relatively.

I am sure there are other reasons that make Mission difficult than what I have listed here. However, is "tough school" really a bad thing? Maybe or maybe not.

Two main reasons that I insist on keeping my children at Mission are:

1. They are well prepared for college after they graduate from Mission. I have to say, our students know how to take notes in class and how to study. They know how to manage their time and pressure to a certain extent, and that will help them to succeed in college when they are not under our watch anymore.
2. There are fewer opportunities to go astray at Mission because almost all the Mission kids genuinely want to do well in school and they work hard for that. While the atmosphere is competitive, there is also positive peer influence.

Do I wish something could have been changed at Missions? Absolutely!

- I wish the school could coordinate better with their test schedules so my child wouldn't have 5-6 test assessments in the same week.
- I wish the teachers could be held more accountable for their actual work in the classroom and in educating our students. We have our share of good teachers and the ones that are not so good.
- I wish our school facilities are a lot better than the current sad state.
- I wish we had a more diverse student body.

If I have to send my children to high school all over again, will I pick Mission again? I'd like to say "Yes" but I think I would do it a little differently - I would pay more attention to their mental health and stress level, and I would encourage them to communicate more with their teachers.

Thank you for reading!