

Dear Mom and Dad,

This year I have a lot of plans and a lot of pathways to choose from. Sometimes it seems like too many. School is starting to feel busy but not overwhelming. I know that my best is good enough and that you'll love me even if I fail, but I'll try not to let that happen.

I feel like a hobbit in my corner of the world learning how to think for myself and how to survive outside of my comfort zone. Maybe even someone as small as I can influence the world for good. The question is how will I do it.

I might become a chemical engineer, dentist, biomedical engineer, forensic chemist, or maybe even a teacher, but for all the paths I might take, my plan is simple: remain optimistic, work hard, and see the big picture. It's a hard combination, especially with all the challenges I'll be facing, but I'll try to put a smile on my face and enjoy the journey.

College Composition, another part of my life journey, is a challenge that will help me to communicate my thoughts quickly and clearly. Although it is tough to have my my dad as a teacher, it's even tougher being his aid. Oh, the turmoil of organizing folders, the monotony of labeling baskets, and the hours spent in front of a computer screen. I laugh because lots of other kids don't get the opportunity to be in awkward situations like mine in which their dad becomes someone completely different at school than at home. No more Dad, now it's Mr. McClure, yes sir, Mr. McCure, and I am Mark McClure the "student" that everyone still sees as the stereotypical teacher's kid. Organized. Sheltered. Over-achiever. But I don't care about the stereotype. As I said before, I compare myself to a hobbit. I like most of the stereotype as long as I'm not rejected because of it. Also, awkward situations, like having a dad for a teacher, help me prepare for the unexpected circumstances I will encounter in college and later on in life. There's

nothing like personal experience to prepare me for a journey full of unexpected twists and turns to success.

As I journey to success, I will wander because the path to success forks off in many directions. I know that success isn't necessarily money, that the car I drive doesn't solely symbolize my success, and that success isn't always having a family with seventeen kids. It's really hard figuring out what success is because everyone shows me a little piece and tells me "This is success."

It's difficult in life with all its flashing lights, neon-painted billboards, and over-abundance of TV commercials to distinguish what true success and fulfillment is and how to achieve it, but I hope that on my life journey, I will be able to define my own version of success and strive for it every day with optimism and vigor.