

NYSAIS Conference
Mohonk Mountain House
May 8, 2019 @ 10:45AM - 12:15PM

WRITING THE COUNSELOR RECOMMENDATION

Beth Pili
Carolyn Middleton

Horace Mann School
Berkeley Carroll School



“Put it before them briefly so they will read it, clearly so they will appreciate it, picturesquely so they will remember it, and, above all, accurately so they will be guided by its light.”

-Joseph Pulitzer

WHAT DO YOU HOPE
TO LEARN FROM THIS
SESSION?

THE BASICS

FLOODLIGHT VS. SPOTLIGHT

GIVE CONTEXT

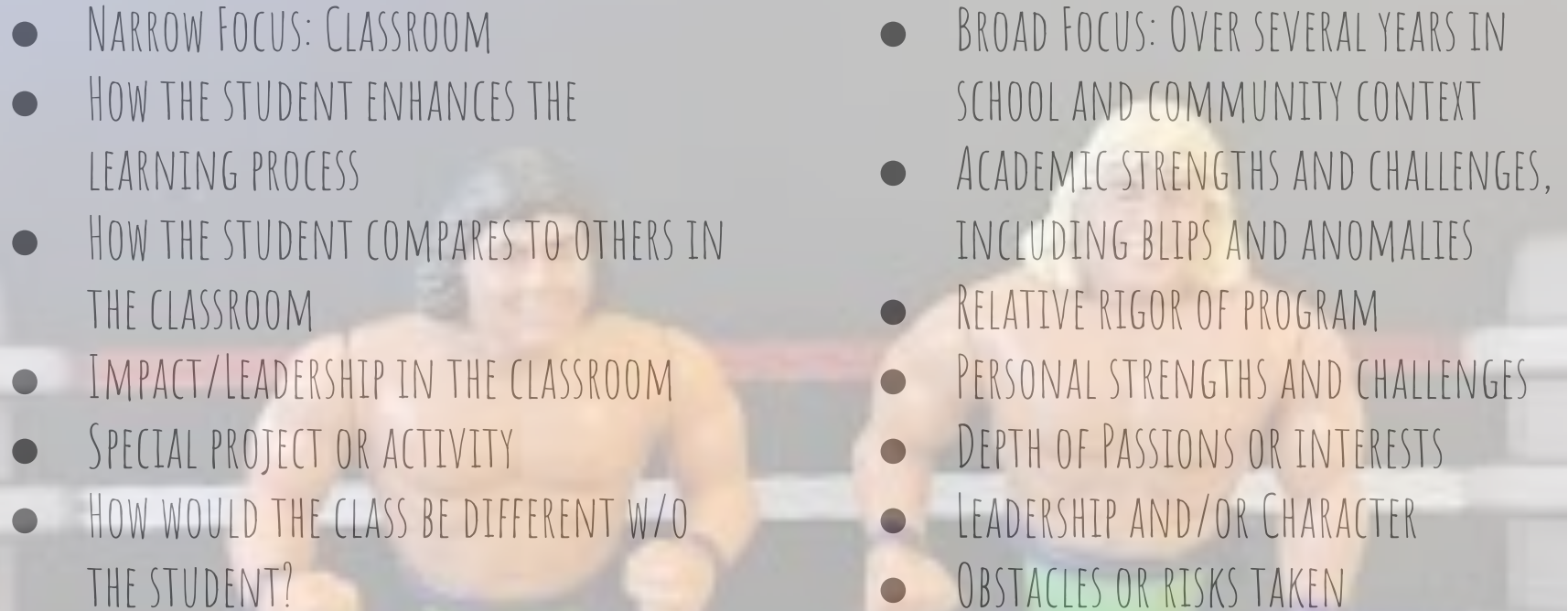
USE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES

HIGHLIGHT REEL

TELL A COMPREHENSIVE STORY



TEACHER LETTER VS. COUNSELOR LETTER

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- The background of the slide features a blurred image of two young boys in a boxing ring. One boy is wearing green boxing gloves and the other is wearing purple boxing gloves. They are both looking towards the camera with slight smiles. The text is overlaid on this image.
- NARROW FOCUS: CLASSROOM
 - HOW THE STUDENT ENHANCES THE LEARNING PROCESS
 - HOW THE STUDENT COMPARES TO OTHERS IN THE CLASSROOM
 - IMPACT/LEADERSHIP IN THE CLASSROOM
 - SPECIAL PROJECT OR ACTIVITY
 - HOW WOULD THE CLASS BE DIFFERENT W/O THE STUDENT?
 - BROAD FOCUS: OVER SEVERAL YEARS IN SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT
 - ACADEMIC STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES, INCLUDING BLIPS AND ANOMALIES
 - RELATIVE RIGOR OF PROGRAM
 - PERSONAL STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES
 - DEPTH OF PASSIONS OR INTERESTS
 - LEADERSHIP AND/OR CHARACTER
 - OBSTACLES OR RISKS TAKEN



GATHERING RESOURCES

ARE THERE CREATIVE WAYS YOU GATHER YOUR
INFORMATION ABOUT STUDENTS?



HOW HAS THE READING
LANDSCAPE CHANGED THE
PURPOSE/FUNCTION/ROLE
OF THE COUNSELOR REC?

"TRADITIONAL"

NARRATIVE

WHAT'S YOUR

APPROACH?

INTRODUCTION

ACADEMIC STRENGTHS

ACADEMIC GROWTH

EXTRACURRICULARS

CONCLUSION



BULLET POINT FORMAT

BULLETS AND THE NEW REALITY

Admissions Realities:

- Time spent/file = 6- 15 minutes
- Online reading - more restricted (briefer) note taking
- 50 - 70 files/day
- Growing # of apps - burnout
- Many admissions staff are young and not used to reading expansive narratives
- Less time to cover more ground

College Counselor Realities:

- 2 hours of prep and writing time
- At times wrestling with the prose/flow/transitions, especially for weaker students
- Format allows for different writing strategy--work on multiple letters at a time b/c not worried about prose/transitions/flow

WHAT DO (DON'T)
COLLEGES WANT TO
READ?



DO'S AND DON'TS?

Do

- Connect the dots
- Provide evidence to support your argument
- Be both honest and supportive
- Draw conclusions
- Tell a story: a word picture
- Explain extenuating circumstances (with permission)
- Be brief if possible



Don't

- Repeat your school profile
- Rewrite the resume and transcript in prose
- Overquote teachers, parents, the student
- Assume the colleges will get what's obvious to you
- Use the boilerplate approach
- Worry too much about general checkboxes

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE
YOUR KIDS: FROM THE ONE
NOTE JOHNNY TO THE MOST
DYNAMIC DARIA?



QUESTIONS AND BEST PRACTICE?

