

Planning for Ninth Grade - Vince

Vince will be going into the ninth grade this fall. This will be his first year in a new town. Over the summer, Vince and his family moved to a new suburban community from a nearby, large and depressed mill town. Vince's parents were very happy about the move. The town in which they were living had become increasingly dangerous over the last few years, and they were relieved to have their only child, Vince, out of that community.

Vince's parents felt like they had earned their place in the new community. They immigrated to the U.S. from Southeast Asia shortly before Vince was born, and neither one had completed high school. Vince's father started working as a clerk in a shop when he arrived. He was an extremely hard and diligent worker, and put in overtime just to make ends meet. As Vince grew, his father progressed from clerk, to manager, to part owner, and now he owned four shops in the area. His father was a very hands-on manager, and worked long hours to keep everything running smoothly. The only part of the business that he let anyone else handle was the finances, which his wife took care of at home part-time.

While he did not spend much time with his father, he did strive to meet his father's high expectations. Vince was not academically gifted, but he worked extremely hard to do well in school. He had attended public elementary school, but by the time he was in middle school his parents had earned enough money to send him to a local reputable private school. Vince was fairly popular at school, and he was an extremely gifted artist. The well funded, albeit small, school that he attended emphasized extracurricular activities. So Vince put his artistic talents to use in a variety of clubs and organizations including the newspaper, yearbook, and arts magazine.

Vince was sorry that this school ended at eighth grade. He would like to have attended that school for four more years. Some of his friends were heading off to different private schools, while others were going to public school. Vince was not excited about attending public school again. He had bad memories of elementary school. The high school in his new town is very small and traditional. It offers some extracurricular activities, but few opportunities for him to express his artistic talents. During his visit to the school last spring, he felt like an outsider and was not welcomed by any of the clubs. His sense of feeling like he didn't belong was exacerbated by the fact that every student he met at this school was white.

With their recent move to a more expensive house in a city with high quality schools, Vince's parents feel like Vince should attend the public school. They are not sure that they can afford a private school with their current mortgage payments. However, they recognize that Vince's talents might be wasted at his new school, and they also see that he is not comfortable about the atmosphere in this new environment. Should they send him to the new public school? Or try to budget and take out loans to send him to one of the private schools with his friends? Should they consider a charter school in another community to which they have access? Or maybe Vince's mom, who works at home, could try her hand at homeschooling? What do you advise?