

# Tips on Securing Recommendation Letters

Elaine Wilder, Ed.S.

Jefferson High School English Department

- ❖ Consider what the recommendation letter is for (college admission, scholarship grant, leadership award, etc.) and who would be best to provide that information regarding your specific traits for that area. Choose people who can write about specific positive attributes.
  
- ❖ When asking teachers to write a recommendation, give them at least one-two weeks before it is needed, and ask in person. Avoid just emailing a link to a scholarship site or having the school send the link beforehand- you should always ASK ahead of time. These letters take time if you want them to be personalized and specific. (If you need additional recommendations and the person you are asking has already written one, it may be easy to tweak it to fit another, but you still want to ask first.)
  
- ❖ Never have your parents ask teachers to write one for you. Take the initiative yourself; you are the one going to college.
  
- ❖ After you ask, and your teachers are awaiting the link, it is usually a good idea to also send an email, letting them know if you want them to focus on just their classroom observations of you, or if you are attaching a resume, in hopes that they can also highlight those items with which they are familiar. (Your teachers communicate with a lot of people during the day; having this in an email will help ensure they get the details correct.)
  
- ❖ If your teachers need to fill out a hard copy of a form and attach a copy of the letter, be specific and tell your teachers what it is for, where to mail it, to whom it should be addressed, etc. Make sure you have filled out the portions you are supposed to fill out, and if it should be mailed, give your teacher a self-addressed envelope with postage. (Most hard copy forms say “confidential,” so teachers are not expecting to hand these items back to you; that’s just not the professional procedure.)
  
- ❖ Most teachers are happy to write recommendations to brag on their brilliant, fun, engaging, talented, and hard-working students; following the tips above will help you do it in a way that is respectful of their time and garners the best letters for you. And ... a *thank you* is always appreciated!

