



A “BLUEPRINT” FOR EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT (Lessons from the life and calling of a once failed student)

By Dr. Harry Edwards

Owing to academic deficiencies, I attended a community college for a semester. I did not qualify to enroll in any of the 4-year colleges offering me an athletic scholarship in football, basketball, or track and field. Three and a half years later, I graduated with honors and a B.A. degree in Sociology from San Jose State University and accepted a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship to attend Cornell University, where I earned both an M.A. degree and a Ph.D. degree before later joining the Sociology faculty at the University of California at Berkeley. Outlined below is what more than 50 years of experience as a student and teacher has taught me relative to meeting the challenges of educational development: a “blueprint” for academic achievement and success.

- I. **Follow your bliss.** Seriously explore and consider paths that might lead not just to achieving a career interest but to realizing *your calling* – that educational option and emphasis that *for you* lies at the confluence of *talent, passion, productive potential, and opportunity*.
- II. **Cultivate the habit of high expectations of yourself and of every effort** that you undertake in pursuit of your educational goals.
- III. **Respect the challenges and demands of your calling by learning to dream with your eyes open.** The achievement of a calling *always* means meeting demands and surmounting challenges – known and unanticipated. There will be routine educational requirements and there will be those educational “mountains and valleys” that you never could have fully foreseen.
- IV. **Learn to “behave as if”.** Cultivate the habit of behaving, of “acting” as if you are *already* an outstanding, accomplished student. Ask yourself at every turn, “what would a committed student choose to do at this juncture, in this situation, at this “fork in my path”?. Every outstanding student that I have ever encountered shared my own experience of having *thought* like, *worked* like, and made *choices* like an outstanding student long before they became outstanding students.
- V. **Commit to a strategy, practice, and disciplined program of hard work.** I have often been asked if there is a “short cut” to educational achievement and success. *Hard Work IS the short cut* – every other path is more difficult. Maximize the results of your hard work – organize, prioritize, and have a plan for meeting the challenges of your calling.
- VI. **Persevere. Stay on course by employing a strategy of “living in anticipation of tomorrow.”** Living in anticipation of tomorrow means cultivating and abiding by the *understanding* that what you do today never fully recedes into the past with the passage of time. Rather, your commitments, actions, and experiences, in some substantial part or measure, advance in life with you, strongly influencing who and what you are becoming.
- VII. **And, lastly, learn and abide by the work-rest cycle of your mind and body.** When fatigue sets in even the most inspired and committed student can become dull and increasingly less educationally productive. On the other hand, *hard work followed by a well-earned period of rest and “re-creation” often reinvigorates and re-energizes educational effort and even insight. Rest and re-creation make critical contributions toward maximizing the productivity of hard work.*

Dr. Harry Edwards is Professor Emeritus of Sociology at the University of California at Berkeley, Distinguished Scholar at the Texas Program in Sports and Media, University of Texas at Austin, and a staff consultant with the San Francisco Forty Niners.



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