

Every family will have their personal reasons when deciding to enroll their child at Randolph-Macon Academy. Our goal was to provide our child with the best education possible and prepare our child to compete in the global marketplace. How we arrived at the consideration to send our child to R-MA, was not that simple, as we live seven hours away by car.

Our son's name is Ian, and in his 6th grade year, the mediocre public school he attended got much worse. The citizens of the district made a significant decision not to support the school financially with the failure of tax levies. The enrollment had been shrinking over the years, as new families chose not to stay in the district and the majority of the citizens remaining in the district did not believe in supporting the schools. Taxes and the economy played a role in the citizen's attitude within the district but an arrogant superintendent, as well as, the teacher's union entitlement mentality did not help. The majority of families in the district had two priorities: FFA and athletics; and those areas were given the greatest priority when it came to cuts within the district. The number of families who felt college preparation was important were in the minority, and thus AP classes were easy to eliminate. Ian came home in his 6th grade year and said, "I do not want to attend this school next year." We supported our son's decision, as we felt trapped in our child's public education quality being dictated by other family's choices.

We sat down as a family to attempt to decide what the best course for Ian's education was. Local private schools would be difficult, with both parents' employment obligations, we were not sure how we could support the logistics of getting him to and from. As a family, we discussed Ian's goals for his future which centered on military service and possible medical school. This led us to consider college preparatory military boarding schools. We found R-MA in an on-line search, and were pleased of its affiliation with the USAF. The visit was arranged and after the visit Ian stated, "This is the school I want to attend."

At our first visit in his first year (7th grade) at R-MA, we asked Ian, "Did we make the right decision for you?" Ian's response was, "Yes Dad, because I am being challenged."

The question that most families' would want to know is, why was this a good decision for our son? Ian's classes are truly preparing him for the college preparatory courses offered at the upper school.

The option of taking a foreign language at his previous school would not have been offered until he was a sophomore in high school. The emphasis on English-grammar-vocabulary-literature provided in two classes/year, the challenging science classes, challenging math classes, and the overall academics focus is a source of pride for our family. The many athletic and extracurricular offerings at R-MA, with teacher/mentor coaches and leaders is a nice benefit, with an emphasis that all students participate. Ian participated in golf for 2 years and been voted most improved golfer two years in a row.

The opportunities for mentorship, with the family being so far away, has been a blessing. Student mentors, via the Big Brother/Big Sister program, teacher mentors, and dorm mentors. The mentorship program starts at the top with administration. Fellowship of Christian Student Athletes, Rotary Interact, and Chapel are just a few of the examples that have positively influenced our son so far in assisting him in becoming a better citizen.

We have made the correct educational decision for our son, because he is thriving and has a clearer plan for his future with mentorship from the entire R-MA community and a history of academic success.