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A starring role in life for Stacy Chbosky

Counting down to the announcement of the 20th annual All-USA High School Team on May 18, USA TODAY each week will spotlight one student from the previous 19 years, with the student's advice for today's high school students.



Stacy Chbosky was a member of the USA TODAY 1991 All-USA High School Academic Team.

By Bob Riha, Jr., USA TODAY

This week:

Stacy Chbosky, 1991, Upper St. Clair High, Pittsburgh.

Then:

Wrote a children's book about freedom and slavery, *Who Owns the Sun?* The book was published by Landmark Editions and adapted to film by Disney and later to ballet by the Pittsburgh Youth Ballet; editor in chief of school literary magazine; lead role in school musicals; student council senator.

Later:

Bachelor of fine arts in acting, Carnegie Mellon University; trained at the Groundlings, where she studied improv and sketch comedy; toured Europe with *The Rocky Horror Show*; lead roles in two films; co-founded, wrote and performed with Shirley Chickenpants, an all-female sketch-comedy group; lead singer in New York punk rock band Skum; featured in the pilot of *The Jamie Foxx Sketch Show*.

Now:

Actress in Los Angeles training with the Actors' Gang; starring in an independent horror movie written and directed by her husband, John Dowdle.

Her advice:

Try not to drown out your own imagination with distractions. Allow yourself enough solitude and calm to keep your depth alive.

Advice from other 1991 teammates

Enthusiastically pursue your interests, even beyond what is typical for students in your high school. Ask your friends, parents and teachers to help you find and create opportunities to learn and do. And then follow through — become fluent in Chinese, finish that science fair project, publish your short story, perform in the recital, become vice president of the youth group. —**Lauren Ancel Meyers, assistant professor of integrative biology, University of Texas**

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Get involved in as many aspects of your high school and community as possible. Being well-rounded in a variety of disciplines early-on will reap dividends in your future. —**Tom Lin, country director in Mongolia, Intersivity Christian Fellowship**

Focus on diversity — both in your studies and life outside of school. The "broader" your education, the more likely you will be a success in your chosen field. There is plenty of time to specialize and focus. —**Sahil Parikh, MD, chief resident, Johns Hopkins**

Distinguish yourself from your peers by excelling in one or two activities (research, hobbies, writing) and choose depth over breadth. Of course, depth AND breadth would be ideal. —**Raga Ramachandran, medical resident, UCSF. MD/PhD, Penn**

Pursue the goals which will satisfy your soul, and not only win the respect of others. —**Ashley Reiter Ahlin, at-home mom, PhD in math, University of Chicago**

Focus less on grades and more on what you are learning. Consider how the things you are learning fit together; finding the connections between knowledge allows you to see things in context and to derive new insights for yourself. Most importantly, don't shun the arts — whether writing, painting, photography, dance, or theatre. You may have no intention of becoming an artist and the time invested in such classes or programs may seem a distraction, but ultimately from study of the arts you will learn creativity in thought and self-expression. —**Matt Sigelman, CEO, Burning Glass Technologies**

Focus on the things that are most meaningful to you, and that bring the most joy in your life. Work hard at these areas, and you will be amazed at how far you can go if you believe in yourself. Anita Srivasta Rich, MD and full-time mom

Don't get caught up in the day's dogma. Have a hobby. —**Cliff Wang, post-doc, microbiology, immunology UCSF**

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