

## STUDY SMARTS **Valedictorian's secrets to college success**

**E**VER wonder how the smartest kid in class does so well?

Ask Stefanie Weisman, a former valedictorian at Stuyvesant High School. Today, at age 31, the Queens resident has had time to gain perspective on her most effective study habits and techniques for acing the grade. She's now sharing them in her book, "The Secrets of Top Students: Tips, Tools, and Techniques for Acing High School and College," (Sourcebooks, \$14.99).

Here are some of Weisman's best secrets revealed:

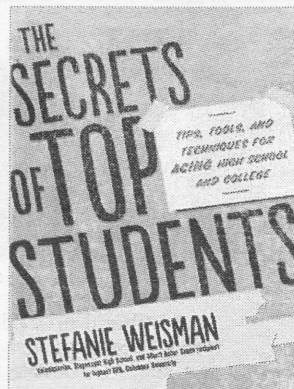
### **Do not cram.**

It leads to very poor retention of material. Study every subject a little at a time.

For research papers specifically, make a schedule that allots time for deciding on a topic, doing research, creating an outline, writing the paper, revising the paper and getting feedback.

### **Challenge a grade.**

Don't be afraid to appeal a grade if you feel something



was miscalculated, something in your notes contradicts the test-maker's answer, the question can be misinterpreted, or the grader didn't understand what you meant on an essay question.

### **Take killer notes.**

Be an undercover classroom reporter. When taking notes, pretend you're at a press conference. Your goal is to record enough information to write an article on what you just heard (main points, juicy facts, headline, the first line, each paragraph's point).

Also, create your own shorthand. For example, "arch" for architecture and "comp" for computer.

### **Develop a study time playlist.**

When you listen to music you enjoy, your mood and concentration tend to improve. Weisman's favorites include Mozart's violin concertos, but whatever you choose, it should fade in to the background and not demand your attention.

It should also be instrumental only (lyrics are distracting) and have a steady, upbeat rhythm and constant volume. If you're not into classical, try smooth jazz, electronic music or movie soundtracks.

### **Get your timing right.**

When you get your test, flip through it to get a sense of how long it is, the types of questions, and how to pace yourself. Check your watch sparingly. Skip questions that stump you and return to take a second stab at them again later. — Erika Prafder