

## Me Learn a Lot One Day

Math is hard. I was good at when it only consisted of numbers, but someone decided to toss in the alphabet in there and call it good. As I continued in my education, more concepts arose left and right. Logarithms appeared, so did different theorems and methods to solve a variety of problems. Sometimes the lines blurred and I couldn't decipher what was in front of me. However, I persisted even though salvation was nowhere in sight. In the end, even with late night study sessions and ever-flowing tears, I managed to get an A in all my math classes. Unlike some of other classmates, the current education system works for me, proof being that I am in the running to be my class' valedictorian and have a 4.0 unweighted GPA. However, that's not to say that the current system is perfect, in fact it is far from it. I have witnessed others undergo struggles that come easy to me, but are so talented in other areas. However, they were never given the opportunity to shine.

As teenagers, an awkward and uncertain time by definition, we are expected to act like adults, but be as obedient as children. We are supposed to fit this box created by previous generation and expected to fit all prim and proper. Some of us, like me, do fit in well, while others fit in like a camel through the eye of a needle. However, that's not their fault. As Albert Einstein once professed, "Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid." He may have died 62 years ago, but his words still ring true. Students are under constant pressure and judgement to be the best we can be, but the way they measure greatness doesn't work for all of us. For some, we need something different in order for us to truly exhibit our true potential.

I go to Benson Polytechnic and while we are known for our innovative programs and diversity, we are more economically disadvantaged than other schools, with most of the money going to the richer more white schools. Yet we still thrive because Benson has “tech classes” which provide an in depth knowledge of different fields of study. There are three academies that Benson has. The first is the industry academy, which is composed of Architecture, Automotive, Construction, Computer Science, Electric, and Manufacturing. Second, there is the Communications Academy containing Radio and Digital Media Production. Lastly is the Health Occupations Academy comprised of Medical Professions, Nursing, Dental, and Emergency Medicine. Here students are able to choose from a plethora of different majors and get a feel of what it’s like being a health professional, web designer, electrician, and so on. These majors are the entire reason why students come to this school, we wanted the chance to be able to choose what we want to learn. Students may disregard other classes like English or Math because they may feel that it’s not important, which one can find in any high school in the USA, but the difference is in Benson, these very same kids still go to their major and actively engage in learning about the next circuit board or disease or drafting technique. So why can’t this be true with other subjects as well?

Every high schooler in Oregon must take 3 years of math, namely Algebra 1-2, Geometry 1-2, and Algebra 3-4. They cannot choose something else. The same is true for the Social Sciences, a high schooler must take Modern World History, U.S. History, Government, and Economics. Once again, we are restricted to subjects that may not interest us causing us to brush it off easily, but if we were able to choose classes like one does in college, the success rate for high schoolers would go up as we would be taking classes that fit the requirement, yet interest us

greatly. So why don't we change it to a college-like system? One could argue that the public schools system does not have enough money to fund schools like this, but I question this because if the general public did care about the future, then shouldn't they put the students' education first. After all, they are going to be the next generation of change makers. Surely money could be generated or diverted in some way to at least increase the diversity of classes a student may pick. For the Humanities especially, I suggest classes that shine more light among the history and achievements of people of color.

If we are to truly advance the education of everyone, this includes us, minorities who are quite frankly, tired of hearing about that genocidal maniac Christopher Columbus. In my 12 years within the educational school system, I have learned about him about 7-8 times and it was even going in depth. It was the same information repeated over and over and over and over and over and over and over and over again. Surely, that time could be used for other subject matters, like Asian American history, or Black History or anything that does not glorify a homicidal, greedy rapist who came to the Americas inciting the death of millions of Native Americans.

In short, I propose an increase in diversity of classes within the educational system because the youth are the future of tomorrow and if we invest in them, then we in turn invest in the future. These classes will be the cornerstone of inciting the intellectual vitality within future students. More students will be excited to learn and perhaps go on into college where they will hone their skills more. Who knows, maybe a future student may hold the cure for cancer and other diseases in their brain, but the current system does not work for them so they drop out and become a manager at McDonald's.

I speak as someone that the system works for really well, but I advocate for those that the system doesn't work well for. To be frank, more people do not succeed in the system than those who do. Consider that. There is so much untapped potential and ideas within these minds who have been conditioned to believe that they are dumb and stupid. Others believe that no one would care about their education unless they are paying for it, and that may be the most despondent point of view ever. How can one stand by and witness the current system kill the innate joy we all have for learning something new? Please tell me for that is why I am writing this letter to you. Kids are out here genuinely eager to learn something new about themselves, but instead are fed information for one specific purpose, to raise our test scores. That may seem like we are doing good, but in the long term it hurts us, as a community badly. But when we give kids the opportunity to find joy in learning again, we give them the actual tools they need to be independent and answer the questions previous generations couldn't. That's why I wrote to you, I read a book of essays titled *Me Talk Pretty One Day* by David Sedaris which is the basis of the title of this won essay and Sedaris tackles themes of being out of place and wonders if there is a place where he would fit in. Now I am here to answer that there may be a place for people like him who wish to "talk pretty" one day that can fit in.

Thank you for reading,

A Hopeful High Schooler