



TEACHING WITH PURPOSE
CONFERENCE

Students Speak

Presented to: Senate Education Committee Members

Presented by: TWP



BSU Short Essay Contest

The education system in the United States has been functioning on the same platform of curriculum for decades, and there has not been any form of change to adjust it in a way that intends to set all students up for success. This cycle has progressed with little to no positive change. The people who have the ability to make improvements still have not addressed the question, "Why are at least the majority of students not becoming successful in the education system?"

Students should have a say in what they are taught in the school curriculum so they have the opportunity to learn about subjects they as a majority feel are important to them, and will affect them. Students want to see apart of themselves in the curriculum they are learning, but also showcases of their culture and a variety of other cultures to spread awareness to avoid ignorance. Speaking from my personal experiences, growing up going to public school I did not know about my history, black history, unless it was the watered down version. Whether it was African- American history or my ethnic history within Africa. That experience shaped my feelings about the subject of history.

I did not come to a turning point with history until I attended a predominately black school in North Portland called Rosa Parks Elementary School, in which we did learn about Black history due to the school name's historical significance. Even then my education was limited. It was not until my freshman year of high school in which I began to educate myself. I came to figure out we were not taught things about our culture and history, but we were taught about a specific other. I knew more about Europeans than myself and where I came from. We spent half a standard textbook learning about Europeans and what they did for the rest of the "undeveloped world"; but only a chapter on African- Americans here in the US and they made it seem like the beginning was slavery. They also included a chapter on how Europeans colonized



My Education! My Way

By: Kayla Grisby

My education means the world to me, how I do in High School will determine my future and how my life will be. Having a high GPA is crucial for me because I want to get into a nice college to become a pediatric nurse. This road has not always been easy, but the district makes it hard for kids to want to learn. Now it's just about passing the class and not actually learning the topic.

If teachers would actually focus their curriculum towards students, we will be more likely to participate and engage. For example history, why when discussing African Americans we start with slavery? Instead of how life was really like in Africa and other countries in the world. How come we don't hear how my ancestors paved the way for a lot of scientist and mathematicians. A lot the math formulas and chemical bonds were discovered by African Americans thousands of years ago but caucasians take over and claim everything. Most kids won't even know this because their history teachers want to serve us watered down version of history. Because they know knowledge is power, and if we know better we will do better! They want to keep African American students at the bottom of the barrel, giving us unjust referrals, suspension and constant reminders to be quiet. As if we can't express ourselves and if we show our creativity we get punished, it is in our nature to be free spirited & talkative.

English as well, why don't we ever read African-American literature, but read the odyssey and romeo and juliet because they are classics right? But so is Black Nativity and the Watson's go to Birmingham. Those are books I had to read on my own, and I'm not a big fan of reading but if the topic is intriguing I enjoy reading. Black poetry is so powerful and tells a story that most writers can't get across. Why do we not get the equal opportunity? Why?



Aniyah Borders

February 9, 2017

Changes in High School Curriculum

Throughout my elementary and middle school career, I was never taught about the African influence all around the world. Not until recently was I exposed to the influence and creations of Africans, from Europe, to many parts of Asia. Growing up without much knowledge on my people has lead me to explore information on my own. When I began to learn about my people's history my whole view on life began to change for the best, not only was I inspired, but I was motivated to educate other people around me to explore the information that is out there for them, but not taught in their yearly history class.

When I first learned about anything related to my history, I felt sad, disappointed and confused to why anyone could be treated so cruel. As I have gotten older I always realized something was missing. Slavery is a sad reality that every kid in the black community has been expected to learn about, but is that it? Although the fight to end slavery is a part of my history, why is it the most highlighted. Whenever exposed to information in history classes, I've always been taught the sad history of my people, "the struggle". When learning about the history of Europeans we see the amazing and brilliant things they have accomplished. The land they explored, and conquered, to the people they have "imperialized", and many other "accomplishments" you can find by picking up any text book.



Mariamou Abdoulaye
02/09/2016

Hello everyone,

My name is Mariamou and I'm going to be delivering an argument about what curricula that I think should be taught in school. I want everyone's culture and history to matter. I want to learn about where we come from and what our culture has experienced throughout history. I want to learn about things that I'm actually going to use in my life, things that I will remember. I don't think like the math problems that we're never going to use. Problems that have no relevance to the real world.

I desire something that will teach me how to be a better me, be a better friend, and a good family member. It's not all about academic classes, I want to take classes that will teach me how to help people so I can be a contribution to making this world a better place.

I want to be able to teach people that women in my religion aren't just the scarf around our head. I want to know about my culture and where I come from because people automatically judge me by my scarf and my skin color. But, I'm way more than that. I am a proud immigrant woman and I want to be able to show the world who I am and share with them my story and who I am inside. I want to be taught not to judge people by the way they look or act because even the worst people have a good side and a reason to be bad.

Because I'm from Africa and I'm black, people expect me to be dumb. They think where I'm from is a wasteland of poverty and that there's no city. They think that we move to other people who are "better" or "more" than us, we are all equal and I want to be taught about this and how I am and how we are all equal.

When I'm at the max stop and white people look at me weird because I'm wearing a scarf and because I'm black. This makes me feel hurt and I'm on the outside. They judge us by what we wear and not the look in our eyes. They don't see the pain we go through because some Muslims have done bad stuff they don't think that we are hurting inside.

This is my country too, we go through pain everyday waking up in the morning and having to put up with one more day of being judged and claims to be something we're not. I am more than just a religion I am a human being and I am equal to everyone.

I don't want my children to grow up in a county or society that points at them and judges them by color of their skin and what they wear. I want them to grow up and feel able to be free and feel like they can do whatever they want and not be judged by their looks. I want to be a good parent and be able to teach them that there will be people who will judge them and they are going to be strong and be proud of who they are and where they come from.

I want to learn about my culture and who I am and where I come from, not only about the American culture.

This is my country, but I want to know about my roots and my ancestors.

I want to learn things that I will actually use through my life and journey, I want people to remember me as a human who was a straight forward and proud of my culture and who I am.

That's who I want to be.



Simeon Johnson

February 9, 2017

Grade 12

In the schooling environment, many students seem to space out because of their disinterest in what they are learning. It seems like every school teaches the same thing and that is where it can make us lose interest. We always learn the basics like who Columbus was but it seems we never learn about things that can benefit our future. I am writing this essay to give the schooling systems my thoughts in what I think we should learn to keeps students engaged and learning at all times in school. Hopefully my voice is heard.

I think the most convenient thing that will help us with staying engaged is learning about something that we actually want to learn about. What I possibly think we should learn about is what our ancestors did before we went into slavery. In history, all our teachers ever seem to speak about is what our ancestors did during slavery and nothing more. Nothing about where we come from and that makes me upset because it's like they try to tell us we came from slavery which isn't right at all. I'm very sure that if we were to learn about where we actually come from, the teacher would be able to keep us engaged with the lessons.

Another thing I think we should be learning in school is our career majors before we get to college. At Benson, we are one of the few schools to have majors but I feel we are too limited when it comes to picking. Like college, we should have a spans of majors to choose from to create an image of our future in our heads before we even reach college. Many college students seem to change majors to frequently and I feel this problem would be solved if high schools provided majors that you'd also see in college. I believe that having an idea of what you want to do in school at a younger age will help more people in succeeding with their futures.

