

Preparing Students for Life on Their Own

I have had a great experience over my four years at Jefferson C-123 High School. I built friendships, excelled in sports, learned new things, and had a lot of fun along the way. As long as I can remember, Jefferson has been known for having great success in academics. Not only is that attributed to the very intelligent individuals we have at Jefferson but also to the great teachers that put in so much time and effort to their jobs, along with the great people that put them in that position.

Although I myself had great success in academics throughout my high school career, there are a few things that I wish I would have been taught or worked on more. To improve the education of those that follow me I believe that schools should go outside the traditional curriculum and spend time on more of the real life skills that students will need to have after graduation and beyond. After graduation students are often put in situations in life that high school didn't adequately prepare them for. I believe that schools should find time to teach important skills students will need to have in the adult world such as critical thinking, managing finances, negotiating, and finding a job/working for an employer. When it comes to critical thinking, too often do students just memorize facts and information and forget it the next day. I myself am guilty of this. Students are not taught to think through to solutions, yet just learn information that they only actually retain half of. The stakes are high in our responsibilities in life and the decisions we make have real-world consequences affecting ourselves and others. Schools need to equip students with the ability to think through scenarios and situations which inevitably arise in our lives. As for managing finances, while we do have a personal finance class at our school it only teaches generic financial values instead of applications to those values such as things like filing taxes and applying for a loan. Along with managing money schools could also do more in preparing students in the art of negotiating. I believe that negotiating is a great life skill to have and that it should be taught in school. This would allow students to be better equipped to work with other people and not get taken advantage of. After graduation whether students go into the workforce or continue their education they will eventually have to find a job. Schools could have classes for seniors on how to start a job search and how to find the right job for them. They could teach how to successfully go through the application and interview process and how to effectively communicate with a company during that time.

While I don't yet see it in my community I have noticed that today's youth are less and less independent and becoming more reliant on others. It is becoming more common in school to preserve every student's sense of self confidence. Many times in a student's life is the knowledge of how to deal with failure properly being avoided instead of learned. This has a tendency to make students mediocre and fearful of taking risks. Life is rough, and no one is going to hold your hand every step of the way. In the real world inadequate work results in negative consequences, such as losing one's job. I believe that competition should remain in school settings. Students will learn from failures to improve for the future and will be more capable of navigating life's ups and downs.

Many people graduate high school knowing that the mitochondria is the powerhouse of the cell and yet have no idea how to file taxes, handle a professional interview, apply for a loan, change a flat tire, or deal with failure. A student's ability to get good grades and their ability to

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function in the real world aren't necessarily related. While the core subjects taught in school are very important, there also should be time spent toward educating students on skills that have real-life applications. Therefore I believe that schools should incorporate knowledge on essential life skills into required classes or create new electives on these subjects. This would better prepare young adults to adjust to life on their own.