

## Essay

Over the past 13 or so years of my life, I have attended Springfield Public Schools and I am extremely thankful for the education this school district has afforded me. It is here that I learned how to read and write, how to tie my shoes, and almost everything I know within the world of formal education. SPS has given me many opportunities to take initiative in my own education and has provided many pathways for me to gain a higher education and take my learning outside of the classroom. I think that SPS is one of the most advanced and most forward-thinking school districts around; however, during my years of schooling I have noticed some aspects of my education that could be improved to even further the educational experience and learning outcomes of future students.

The main problem is that students don't have the opportunity to pursue their passions, and this results in a lack of interest and motivation for many students. I don't believe that any student is incapable of learning and that every student is capable of succeeding. I think it because the way education is structured throughout the United States that many students are left behind. These students don't fail to succeed because they are not genetically blessed or because they simply can't comprehend the subject matter, but rather because they are being forced to fit into a cookie-cutter mold that they don't fit into. Students who are naturally inclined to enjoy working with their hands, such as carpenters or farmers (both of which are critical careers in any society and shouldn't be looked down upon), will not be as inclined to succeed in classes that don't require hands-on experience and are entirely built-upon abstract thinking as those students that are naturally-inclined to be mathematicians or physicists. This problem would be solved by shaping formal education around the passions and inclinations of students rather than national standards. I realize that this would an extremely hard task to complete as it is radically different than the current system; however, I think that small steps towards this can be made by incorporating classes that encourage students to pursue their passions. This could start in elementary school by having a few hours set aside every week to let students learn about themselves. To learn about what they like to do and to learn who they are outside the rigid structure of public education. Guests could come in from different disciplines to allow children to realize the plentitude of options they have before them.

I envision a structure in which students find the topics that they are passionate about, maybe its math maybe its art, and are allotted time to pursue them. Whatever it may be, they have the option to pursue that topic and become experts in it while still being well rounded with the basics of other disciplines. I think that this would work best as people's passions about

certain topics tend not to change while their career goals change many times throughout their lives, at least this has been my experience. The school board can help to facilitate this change by incorporating time into every students' schedule not to learn from a standardized curriculum but to take time to figure out and pursue their passions. This may look like having an aptitude test as a baseline for students to figure out what they are passionate about and beginning them on a tract in specialized classes while still giving students flexibility to switch tracts if the student doesn't demonstrate passion about that topic. It may not necessarily look like this, but the main change that needs to happen is a shift of focus to the individual needs and desires of the student rather than those passed down from national level. I believe that this would fix the problem of disengaged and unsuccessful students as it would be shaping education around them and not what the ideal student should be. It would create a society in which people operate out of passion rather than obligation, which would radically improve the conditions of life for everyone.