More Time

I feel as if there is a common complaint all students will rattle off when asked what they would change about school: teach something practical. After all, not everyone will be using trigonometry after graduating, and there's no real reason why anyone *needs* to read Shakespeare. However, I find this answer to be fundamentally ignorant. Many students disregard the true reasons for teaching a subject. Sure, you may not be using calculus at the grocery store, but it's been shown that by learning complex math, students learn how to better solve problems. Maybe you don't care about analyzing a book written decades ago, but by doing so in school, you subconsciously gain an understanding of critical thinking and purposeful writing, which is an extremely practical skill. Instead, if I were to look back and change one thing about my preparation for the so-called next step, I would only wish for one simple thing: more time.

I'm not asking for teachers and guidance counselors to bend time and space; rather, I just wish that I had gotten a head start on some of the many tasks that awaited me once I jumped into senior year. In all the time I spent worrying about grades and my ACT score, there were steps I neglected that could have helped me later in the process of college admissions-- some that I wasn't even aware of at the time. No matter how much I scoured the internet on college preparation websites, I never got a full picture of the work I needed to complete before and after I sent in my college applications. For some students, who haven't even figured out what they want to do after graduation, this process starts entirely their senior year. In roughly ten months, swaths of eighteen-year-olds are expected to have their lives figured out. It just isn't enough time.

It wouldn't have to be any extensive work either. Give freshmen a sheet to write down all of their extracurriculars and volunteer hours. Encourage juniors to begin on scholarships, and show them the best strategies on finding ones that fit their demographic. Anything would be better than having the entirety of work fall onto students' laps. I know I'm not the only one who feels the pressure of upcoming deadlines, the heavy weight of balancing school, work, and extracurriculars with the entirety of the future planning that senior year entails. Perhaps some students won't care, but the right ones will, and will wholly take advantage of the opportunities laid out for them.

I have been raised to believe that success comes with proper planning and preparation, and sometimes it's hard for students to find that on their own without any help. I know it was for me, with no real idea of what would be expected of me come my senior year. In fact, I was confident that I had everything planned out: I knew where I wanted to apply, I kept good grades and showed involvement in my school and community. I was unaware of how little I was prepared for the work ahead of me, and I had nobody to tell me otherwise. Had there been more opportunities in years prior to my senior year to begin the process of planning for life after graduation, I firmly believe that I would have less stress now as a current senior.

If I were to change the ways I was prepared for life after graduation, my only wish would be for a prolonged process. Were students given the tools to prepare at a younger age for college or other future paths, seniors would be better equipped to complete their future planning, and allow them to enjoy their senior year rather than worrying it away. Not only would this help students, but I believe it would alleviate a lot of stress for our teachers and guidance counselors. Students that are dedicated to their future after high school will be wholeheartedly grateful for the help and support the school district provides and will be fully prepared to face the world outside of high school.