

Ellie TenEyck

Highland High School

Preparing for Success

As I prepare to leave high school and tackle the real world, I realize that I am lacking knowledge in many significant areas. I can factor a polynomial, balance a chemical equation, and name at least thirty conjunctive adverbs, no problem. Some of these abilities are more valuable than others, but I find I am alarmingly uneducated when it comes to real life skills. Highland High School really does attempt to raise us to be intelligent, well-rounded, capable citizens of the world, and I know others will agree. I am very grateful for the opportunities our school has given me, but the current curriculum which afflicts many high schools just does not prioritize the teaching of life skills.

At the beginning of junior year, I was thinking about and preparing for my future. I could finally take classes that reflected what I wanted to do in life and catered to what I wanted to be in life. In addition to my career interest classes like Advanced Biology and Farm Management, I took Business Personal Finance (BPF). BPF is a required class to graduate, which I believe holds a lot of significance. Missouri found it important enough to teach students how to be financially literate, and I was ready to absorb all the life advice my teacher had to offer. As the year progressed, I realized the curriculum did not coincide with economic issues I noticed around me. I was not learning how to take out a loan, file taxes, budget, or invest. As a community, state, country, and world, we have seen where the lack of personal finance education can lead. Millions of individuals struggle with their money, living paycheck to paycheck, only to

end up with loads of debt. My biggest concern is not being financially intelligent enough in college and the rest of my life.

Another key component our district could improve is educating students on different career paths. In small town America, the job market is limited. I remember thinking I was going to be a teacher because that was all I knew. As I grew older, I became aware of the multiple opportunities I could take advantage of, but I did not actually start thinking of a career choice until junior year. In April, the current juniors get the opportunity to job shadow a career that interests them. Although this is a wonderful chance to start investing in our futures, I found most of my classmates overwhelmed and nervous for the experience. They were so bombarded by the information that some just settled for a job shadow that they found safe but not interesting. Personally, I took advantage of my day, and shadowed two different positions and companies. I thankfully fell in love with one of the jobs, but I know this was not the case for a lot of my classmates. Many had regrets for choosing the occupation they did and wished they had another chance to shadow. I believe our school district can assist with and/or resolve these problems by providing students with designated time to research and discuss job options. Also, offering more job shadow days to students can help them understand what they want to pursue in life. Due to the high percentage of Americans that do not like their jobs, I believe this reinforcement will help students prepare and be confident in their life choices.

The last issue where I believe there is room for improvement is catering to students who do not wish to seek secondary education. Growing up, students are told that in order to get a good job, you need to attend college. I believe this is not only false, but discouraging to those who want to succeed without furthering their education. Throughout high school, students should

be presented various options to explore with support from counselors and teachers towards an individualized path post-high school.

I am excited to continue my education and life after high school. I feel well prepared due to all the hard work our school district puts into their students. With a few minor changes, I am certain all graduates will feel this way!