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### Improving The Hazelwood School District

Hazelwood School District is home to 29 schools spanning over 70 square miles across suburban St. Louis. In these schools, the district caters to about 18,000 students, each with varying levels of educational backgrounds, thus leading to different levels of achievement. Due to these challenges, the district has many areas where it can improve on how it caters to its constituents. I feel that my district can greatly improve on how they acknowledge academic achievements as well as the resources that it offers to support lower performing students.

To improve how my school prepares students for their future, I would suggest that they encourage the academic achievements of their students more than they do. At my school, there seems to be continuous praise of extracurricular activities such as football, soccer, and cheerleading, but a lack of any praise for the academic achievements made by students. During conference week for sports, the athlete's lockers are decorated and they are called out of class for certain activities. To celebrate the students who scored proficient on their End Of Course exams, they were sent a letter with their scores in them, same as the students who scored below basic. In order to increase the academic successes of the school, they need to praise, or at the least, acknowledge their achievements to encourage other students to improve academically. In addition to praising students that excel intellectually, Hazelwood should also work on providing resources for students to improve their skills. There may be some scholars that attend Hazelwood that have great potential to excel at any scholastic challenges given to them, but are lacking the resources to allow them to access their abilities. Although some teachers offer to stay after school to help students for two hours one day of the week, some students need more than that. Some students might need extra time to go over material taught in class, or maybe one on one sessions with the teachers so the material can be explained in ways that they understand. I understand that it would be hard for every student to get one on one time with teachers which is why the district would benefit from employing a tutoring program involving the students. This would allow well performing students to tutor and provide aid to students that might need a bit more help. This way, students will be more receptive to the material being taught as it is coming from a peer. Not only will this encourage academic growth of the students at the schools, it will encourage unity and school spirit in the district.

Another resource that I feel would be beneficial to the students that reside in my school district is allowing more ACT and SAT prep to be implemented into the curriculum. Currently, my school offers only one resource for standardized testing, ACT Prep, which has recently become an optional class. Additionally, the class is only a semester long, so students taking the class in the fall semester wait approximately 4 months before they actually take the test. This leads to a lack of retention and ultimately, lower performing students. When my school took the

test last year, they only let a certain percent of students take the test. At my school, the average ACT score is a 17.6, almost 3 points below the national average. Furthermore, it places our students in the bottom 31st percentile of people taking the ACT across the nation. Likewise, our school has no resources available for students wanting to take the SAT. Due to my school only allowing certain students to take the test, others are left with little to no resources if they want to take another standardized test, such as the SAT. There are no classes available and there is little to no information about how to register for the test. This can cause students to be lost and confused on their next step towards their futures.

All things considered, I hope that my school district can improve on their resources for students as well as how they view academic achievements. This would greatly benefit the students and would better prepare students for their plans after graduation.