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The Mythical Education System

The educational system is idolized to be this perfectly smooth process where students are flawlessly prepared for their transition upward into a higher educational program. Growing up in Arlington, VA I was fortunate enough to have been raised in their educational programs.

Arlington Public Schools (APS) have a very competitive and intensive learning initiative that pushes their students far past their limits, in order to prepare us for post-secondary education. For Arlington, the 'norm' would be considered too advanced and rigorous than most other counties educational programs I have come across. My secondary school experience had mostly aided my transition into college with pushing me past my limits in 'suggested' course load, topics, and classes while also helping me with deciding on what career is best for me to help change the world for the better. However, nothing is perfect and because of abiding to their programs of strict memorization I was denied the adaptive skills that are necessary for transitioning into college.

In my secondary schooling APS programs consisted of taking a more advanced path that was 'suggested' (the other option was being looked down upon). We were to take at least one Advanced Placement (AP) class or an International-Baccalaureate (IB) class in our freshman year and had started our math program one step ahead of other public school districts' 'regular' program. Every student in Arlington was set on a path some would claim too challenging. For example, in my senior year I was in all AP/IB classes. Most of us students at APS did not take a

‘regular’, ‘normal’, or ‘easy’ class our senior year. Nonetheless, abiding to this path had made my transition into college a lot more smoothly. The classes in my high school curriculum prepared me for what the college course load could be. With this I am able to have a positive outlook that college will not be able to break me, and, therefore, I am now becoming eager to learn because I am not fearful that this is something I can't accomplish.

With the rigorous program of my high school they did allow some leniency with our course load to help us students find out our dream careers, for we were lucky enough to be able to pick classes that most schools are not able to teach. These classes of ours were held at a separate building that all students in APS have access to, the Career Center (CC). The CC had the whole spectrum of classes such as cosmetology to pharmacology to being able to learn car mechanics. This important factor that I was lucky to have allowed me to then confirm what I want as my future career early on by taking free classes. Therefore, being a significant part of my transition upward because it impeded me from going off to college with any uncertainties and wasting thousands of dollars by switching majors long into it. I was able to learn the path, steps, and classes I need to take in order to achieve my goals.

While APS has its benefits with being very hands on with their students, this in turn has caused some negative effects. I was coddled and was taught to follow a strict pattern: to memorize the exact formula and to strictly abide to it. It didn't teach us the adaptive skills, the necessary skills of being able to apply the knowledge to do well in college. Instead they always focused on their ideal world of just memorizing it, testing on it, then moving on completely. This is not helpful in my transition to college for I am learning that every class is different and requires different strategies for the same outcome. I am learning that college is not just about the simple ability to memorize but also the ability to apply the concepts in the real world.

My post-secondary school, for the most part, was able to help accommodate my transition into my post-secondary education by setting me up with challenging classes and allowing me to find out what I want as my dream career and the steps that lead to it. However, it did not aid me with my transition, for I was not able to learn the adaptive skills it takes to ‘make it’ in college. As a consequence I am now required to shift the way I learn, the way I have always been learning and the way I was specifically taught to do, into a new technique that will help me throughout my next four years here in college. I will have to restructure the way I use new information and not just memorize but add another step of actually applying the content. Every high school idealizes the mythical college for being able to pick up where they left off just as much as every college idealizes the mythical high school, but not even the most perfect educational program can meet every single necessity for the transition upward.