

2011 Winning Essay
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“How My Education is the Key to a Successful Future”

717 words

My brother was, and remains, the very definition of a child prodigy. A gifted child since he could crawl, he got straight A's all through his school years. He no doubt would have skipped several grades if my parents had let him. He received several scholarships in high school, became valedictorian, and was warmly welcomed into one of the most prestigious schools in the state. Currently, he is taking advanced college courses in science and math, the sort of classes that most people can't even pronounce the names of—and doing quite well in them, too. He hopes to become an engineer or a physicist, and I'm certain he will be an excellent one.

I am not my brother. It is actually a very easy mistake to make. Any educational entity would only have to look at our grades, our extracurricular activities, even hear the comments of our teachers, and think that we were exactly the same. It is a great source of frustration for me, being indistinguishable from him. In fact, the most noticeable difference between the two of us is that he is, was, and always will be better than me in all of my various interests.

As contrary as it sounds, education is actually one of the relatively few ways available to me to step outside of my brother's shadow. While it's true that I go to the same high school he did, I do have options to differentiate myself from him. Today's educational system is a surprisingly versatile institution. The average high school allots a student six to eight classes at one time.¹ Usually only around four have the required fixed positions of math, science, English, and Social Studies. I can walk down paths that he had ignored...or I can just as easily not.

I do wish to earn high marks throughout the remainder of my school years, but I do not have to earn them in the same fashion that he did. When someone is a quarterback on the football team or plays the cello, they are either good or bad. They either do the techniques and movements right or wrong. Despite the common misconceptions, education is not nearly so black and white. No one has to learn the same things or in the same way that the others around them do, not even in school.

I am looking forward to going to college, because there is even more flexibility within the education system there. A college can have up to six hundred different majors to pick and choose from.² Even though I will still have to get credits in a wide range of subjects, most of my classes will be built around the venue (or venues) that I am most interested in pursuing.

¹ <http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20100112171716AAqZ0kg>

² http://degreedirectory.org/articles/How_Many_Different_College_Majors_are_There.html

I do not plan to devote much of my energy towards my brother's chosen subjects: math and science. I hold some interest in science (I hate math, and will not be shy in telling you so), but I am far more drawn to writing, theatre, and art. I hope to have a career in the field of writing and, if I am very lucky, become an author. I will take any and all classes necessary to achieve my dream, and I feel confident that I will enjoy a great deal of them. I am sure that once I have entered college, my academic life will be much easier to tell apart from my brother's.

Most students view school as a prison, a dull, gray place that sucks away your personality and individuality. I choose to view it as the exact opposite—a place where one's personality and individuality can be discovered and encouraged. Education is often considered the mindless repetition of meaningless facts and figures, but true education is enabling people to think for themselves and create their own opinions and ideas. Because of this, everyone's education is unique from all others, no matter what the report cards or progress reports may say. The core idea behind education is really to help students discover who they are as individuals and what their place will be in the world. It is as much learning about oneself as it is about learning dates, facts, and formulas. And that is why education is so very important to me and my future.

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