

As someone who was never really a fan of school, I often worried about what that would mean for me as I was forced to think about my plans after graduating high school. However, knowing a secondary education is of the utmost importance, not going to college was never an option I considered. Throughout school, I could never appreciate or understand the importance of reading novels, writing essays, learning about historical events, or working on projects that seemed so irrelevant to my interests. I was, and continue to be, someone who enjoyed working independently, doing things with my hands, figuring out how to make things work, and staying as far as I could out of the limelight. I enjoyed math and science, mostly because they made sense to me and didn't require memorization or lots of studying, but I didn't really understand how to use these interests to select a career.

Upon entering high school, I was required to pick a career pathway and take relevant coursework throughout the next four years. Knowing my interests, my Guidance Counselor suggested the STEM program with a science, engineering and technology focus. Initially, I thought that was a horrendous idea. Why would anyone who dislikes academics take the most challenging coursework offered? Wouldn't this kill my G.P.A, making it even harder to get into college? When I shared my concerns, my Guidance Counselor encouraged me to give it a try and then he told me about the "Project Lead the Way: Pre-Engineering" program that allowed students the opportunity to take engineering courses that focused on "hands-on" learning. That was something I could get behind. I pursued this direction and found my passion!

The next four years gave me an entirely different perspective on education. Once I found something I really enjoyed, I gained a new appreciation for learning. I looked forward to classes, took interest in projects, and even started to be more comfortable working with and communicating with others. Presenting things that I understood was much easier for me and

writing didn't seem to be quite as unbearable. I found that I was gaining greater self confidence and a little more tolerance for the subjects that I didn't really care so much about in the past. Most importantly, I finally found my direction in life and was eager to pursue a college education. I also became a much better student graduating with honors.

I am now a sophomore studying Civil Engineering at York College of PA. The program, much like my High School curriculum, has a hands-on focus, which has made it perfect for me. I feel very fortunate that my high school education helped me find my pathway. It truly did change my outlook on learning and helped me to become a more confident and hardworking student. Looking back, I'm thankful that I had to work hard to find my passion as I believe it made me who I am today.