

# OUR VOICES

## ESSAYS BY THE TCS MIDDLE LEVEL 2018-2019

### LET'S TRY THIS...

TCS Middle Level students each spent 10 weeks this school year in a twice-weekly Language Arts content block. The essay, as I told each group of students at the beginning of their block, is an almost infinitely flexible literary form. Through the writing process, the essay-writer tries to follow some idea or experience to a conclusion. (The word "essay" comes from the French *essayer*, to try.)

This year, TCS Middle Level writers attempted two main types of essay: the personal narrative essay and the argumentative essay. Essays were brought through multiple drafts, with feedback and revisions. Each writer then selected one finished piece to be included in this collection. We hope you enjoy the results!

Ms. Mitchell

# ANIMAL TESTING

WRITTEN BY:  
KYRIELLE A.

The states should ban animal testing except when it's needed to fight fast spreading, life-threatening illness. Thousands of animals suffer or die for animal testing and it's not stopping. Sometimes it's only for cosmetics and hair products.

Animal testing is cruel and inhumane. According to the Humane Society International, animals can be deprived of food or water, hurt or burned, and sometimes physically restrained for testing. The Humane Society of the United States states that 500,000 animals suffer and die because of makeup testing each year. Treating animals like this for makeup testing is cruel, especially because no one's life is in danger without makeup.

Animals and humans are not the same creatures. "It's very hard to create an animal model that even equates closely to what we're trying to achieve in the human," Paul Furlong, a Professor of Clinical Neuroimaging at Aston University, states. Researchers have found that vitamin C works on humans but not rats. Testing animals that aren't the same can lead to problems like it not working on humans, and that can waste the life a lot of animals. Animal testing can also lead to things being overlooked and so we might miss a way we could cure something.

We might not have needed animal testing, anyways. There is no evidence that we wouldn't have found out anything without animal testing. Maybe if more funding were going to alternative ways, we could find ways to test that could be faster and more effective, and of course would save the lives of a lot more animals.

Animal testing can be a faster and safer way of finding cures for life-threatening illnesses, and it has saved a lot of people. The California Biomedical Research Association states that almost every medical breakthrough in the past 100 years has been thanks to animal testing. So banning animal testing completely before we have alternate solutions could lead to slower solutions being found.

In the end, I think that the states should ban animal testing except for fast-spreading, life-threatening illnesses. I think at least cosmetic animal testing should be banned. Animals are important to the earth and having them be tested on is cruel and inhumane, and it hasn't stopped. Animals deserve better than this.

# GUN CONTROL

WRITTEN BY:  
IAN A.

Gun control will help our nation be safe. Here are some facts about this issue. The United States had a population of 319 million people in 2014. Roughly 371 million firearms were owned by U.S. civilians and domestic law enforcement in 2014. Of these, about 146 million or 39% were handguns. Civilians accounted for 80% of non-military gun industry revenues in 2012. I say for gun laws, we need to ban bump stocks. Also, we need stronger background checks. So if you are on the no-fly list, you should not be able to get a gun.

Gun control will help reduce the amount of gun deaths. According to David Frum, an author for The Daily Beast, "American children under age 15 were nine times more likely to die of a gun accident than children in other advanced wealthy countries... About 200 Americans go to emergency rooms every day with gunshot wounds" (2013). In a 2004 article published in a peer-reviewed journal, Lisa Hepburn and David Hemenway said, "We analyzed the relationship between homicide and gun availability using data from 26 developed countries from the early 1990s. We found that across developed countries, where guns are more available, there are more homicides." This shows that if there are more guns, there are more deaths.

Gun control will reduce the amount of suicide by gun. A study published by Justin Briggs and Alexander Tabarrok in 2014 found that "firearm-related suicides accounted for 61% of the gun deaths in the United States between 2000 and 2010." A study published by the Military Suicide Research Consortium on July 18, 2012, says, "A person who wants to kill him/herself is unlikely to commit suicide with poison or a knife when a gun is unavailable." This means that gun control will not completely stop suicide, but it will make it so there are fewer suicides. This is why we need gun control to keep our country and us safe.

We should care about and act on putting gun control in place. We should do this because as seen in the data, more guns being available means more guns that can be used for murder, suicides, and accidents. 200 Americans go to hospitals with gunshot wounds each day. That is 1,400 people a week and 73,000 a year. So if you don't care about this, it's because you don't care about the thousands of lives changed by guns. If you do, you should go out and vote for people who will create new laws, or go out and protest for the change of these laws.

# THE BOBCAT SKULL

WRITTEN BY:  
SOFIE B.

It is a cold and sunny day out. I zip up my sweatshirt. I blow in my hands to keep them warm. When I blow I feel a warm sensation in my hands. I hear my sister yell, "Sofie, come on, let's go take a walk in the woods."

I can barely hear her voice over the crashing of the waves against the shore. Looking out on Lake Michigan is a beautiful scene; you can see the white caps building up. If you look across the bay you can see Traverse City and little houses across the bay. I run down the steps and smell the fish and hear boats' engines roaring over the waves.

I meet my sister in a little area that we usually meet at. It is a tree that has been uprooted and you can see all the little roots if you look close enough. We are in the woods and you can still see the house but only a little bit. Right as I get into earshot, without yelling, I ask her, "Aren't you cold?"

My sister replies with a nod and follows up with, "Yes, now could you please hurry up?"

OK, I signal, and run towards her as fast as I can. The wind blows the hair off my face and whistles in my ears, but I still keep running, I hear a crunch and I see I have stepped on a bobcat skull!

I pick the skull up with a tissue I find in my pocket. When I pick it up, I can smell the scent of decaying flesh and dead animal. I examine the skull and I see there is some sand on it, also little rocks and I could see where the eyes had been. I can tell the texture of the jaw bone and teeth. The teeth were rotten and moldy. Clearly, this animal did not brush or floss. I hold on to the skull looking at it for what seems to be for 5 minutes.

When I catch up to Estelle she says, "Ew, you should go show Dad." I give her a closer look and she says, "Wow, you can see the jaw and everything! I will come with you to show it to Dad."

As she says this, she takes off running. She yells, "Dad, Dad, Dad, look at this!"

As I walk into the garage, I see that my dad is looking at a crawfish claw. I show my Dad the skull and exclaim, "Dad, look, it's a bobcat skull!"

"Wow, honey, may I see the skull?" I give him the skull and walk into the house to tell my mom and to wash my hands.

The reason this memory is so memorable is because it was really amazing to find a bobcat skull in the woods. I had never found one before, and it was our first time being at my lake house, so it was pretty amazing and cool to find a bobcat skull accidentally when I wasn't even looking for one.

We ended up keeping the skull because we had gotten a snake skull before, so we wanted to start a collection.

Now we have all sorts of skulls and bones that we have found on the beach and woods.

# LICENSING SERVICE DOGS

WRITTEN BY:  
SAMANTHA B.

**Claim:** It should be illegal to own a service dog in every state without the proper training and papers.

When it comes to training a dog to become a service dog, there are many requirements. According to the Americans with Disability Acts (ADA), "A service dog in training must be capable of handling a person with a disability." This means handling certain tasks that can make the handler's life easier. It also means that the service dog's handler has to have a mental or physical disability. Other requirements for owning a service dog include the following; having a leash, having a harness, and being housebroken. These rules not only make it easier for the dog to work, but also for other people to go about their lives.

Something that comes with owning a service dog is also following the laws that are in place for your state. As of 2018, the state of Arizona put a law in place stating that "Any person or entity that operates a public place shall not discriminate against individuals with disabilities who use service animals." If someone in the state of Arizona doesn't follow these laws, they could be fined \$250. In Chicago, we have laws of our own. If a service dog causes damage, you have to pay for what they broke. Store and or business owners are allowed to ask someone with a service dog two questions: what task the dog is trained to perform, and if the dog is a service dog. They cannot ask the owner if they have papers to state that they are a service dog. They may also not ask what the person's disability is. Not every state has laws that ensure service dogs are properly trained. Allowing a service dog into a store without providing papers is troublesome because someone who doesn't need a dog could easily pass their dog as a service dog by not providing papers. When a dog gets certified to become a service dog, they are handed a piece of paper stating that they are legally trained to provide help. Online, however, you are able to sign your dog up to be a service dog without even leaving your house or giving any personal information. The biggest issue with all of this is that it is not illegal to own a fake service dog in 29 states in America. This should change.

Not every dog is a good candidate to be a service dog. When you own a real service dog or are in the process of training one, you have to look for certain traits. According to the website Everything Pawsable, the dog needs to be 2 years old or

older. The dog also must be in well and stable conditions before taking on a job; this means having a good diet, good skeletal bone structure and in general, acting like a well mannered dog. Even though you may want to take your furry friend everywhere you go, they should meet the standard guidelines before becoming a service dog. If the dog is not in good condition, it could lead to long term effects for the dog and the owner's financial state. A few general rules of taking a dog out in public are: not jumping on people or furniture, not barking / and or being loud, no urinating etc. It is okay to let your dog do these things at a dog park or in your own home. We all know that dogs will be dogs! A real, certified service dog should focus on their owner and their owner's needs, walk close to their owner/handler, and respond to trigger signals and alerts. The reason these are important manners for a service dog to follow are because the dog is supposed to make sure their owner is in fine health. If the dog gets distracted by someone or something they could miss an alert, and this could put their owner in fatal danger.

In 21 states it is now illegal to own a fake service dog. You could get anywhere from a \$100 to \$230 fine depending on the state. This still doesn't change the fact that we are not in the clear of stopping fake service dogs from being permitted into public places. An idea that was proposed by one petition suggests that "disabled people with real service dogs can complete a form and have it signed by a physician, submit it to the DMV, and receive a small paw print sticker or something similar on a driver's license or ID card to signify a genuine and legal need for a service dog."

In conclusion, there are many things wrong with the current system of owning a service dog. It would be beneficial to everyone if we pass and enforce laws to ensure proper licensing of service dogs.

# EVERYBODY SHOULD SIDE WITH VACCINES

WRITTEN BY:  
JADA B.

Years and years of research, science, studies, and tests have brought us to the point of civilization where we can protect society and prevent diseases with just a few shots. That, to me, is incredible. We have the power to stop viruses before they even start, which goes to my claim: Everybody should side with vaccines, though one false study is empowering those who are in the anti-vaxx community. The anti-vaxx community is a group of people who believe that vaccines are terrible and that vaccines are a hazard to our health. This study, made in 1998 by Andrew Wakefield and his 12 associates, states that the MMR (Mumps, Measles & Rubella) vaccine causes autism. It is false and has been discredited by multiple people including Dr Paul Offit, a teacher in Pediatrics at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania and the director of Vaccine Education at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

One thing that I like to mention is that vaccines have caused death rates to drop and the decrease is continuing. For example, tetanus deaths have gone down 99% since 1947. The World Health Organization (WHO) stated, "Two of the three strains of wild polio seem to be eliminated, India and the entire WHO South-East Asia Region have been declared polio-free, and outbreaks that started in 2013-2014 in the Middle East and Horn of Africa have been stopped." Not only that, but WHO also made a major movement in both Americas to stop measles, mumps and rubella, and in fact it worked, though it took 22 years of mass vaccination. But that's not all; in 2018, the first vaccine to fight off and protect kids from malaria was piloted into 3 African countries. Though vaccines are still being developed and tested to this day, it just shows how far we've progressed through these years and how we should keep siding with vaccines to keep them progressing.

One might say, "Since the diseases are dying out in our area, eventually we won't have to vaccinate." Even though that would be awesome, sadly, the diseases will come back if we stopped vaccinating. And in fact, some other diseases could come along with it as well. Dr Flavia Bustreo, Former Assistant Director-General of Family, Women's and Children's Health WHO has written, "Deadly diseases that seem to have been all but eradicated have a nasty habit of making a come-back when immunization rates drop..." and "Even with better hygiene, sanitation and access to safe water, infections still spread. When people are not vaccinated, infectious



diseases that have become uncommon can quickly come back to haunt us.” This can also be linked back to Andrew Wakefield's study that said the MMR vaccine caused autism. Why? It's because after the study was published, multiple cases of whooping cough spiked in infants and older around the globe., just because a false article said to not get vaccines. But it still means we need vaccines and we should keep using them.

The last thing I would like to bring up is how people say “vaccines can be fatal.” This can be true, but only if you are allergic to the ingredients used. Sanjay Gupta, Chief Medical Correspondent for CNN and practicing neurosurgeon, said, "you are 100 times more likely to be struck by lightning than to have a serious allergic reaction to the vaccine that protects you against measles." That being said, there really is no reason to not side with vaccines. Even if you are allergic, there are other ways to be vaccinated and not get a reaction severe enough to get you into an emergency room.

From vaccine development to the need for vaccines, I truly stand by my argument. Vaccines protect all of us, even the people who can't get vaccinated because of age or medical reasons. And that being said, I hope this whole essay has made you think about your view on this side of the medical field or maybe even how you'd want to improve or adjust the practice of vaccination.

# CHILDREN SHOULD PLAY OUTSIDE MORE OFTEN

WRITTEN BY:  
ANNA B.

In the last generation, there were a lot more kids and people in general going outside, but now most of our life is indoors. For example, in our schools, we only go outside for about a half an hour to an hour a day and we are at school for 7 hours, so for 6 of those hours we are all cooped up inside, sitting at a desk. Children don't spend enough time outside.

According to the study Play In Balance, 12,000 parents from across the globe were surveyed about their outdoor habits with their kids, and how it compares to their own childhood. Shockingly, the survey showed that the "average child spends less time outside per week than a prison inmate. 74% of kids spend less than 60 minutes out in the fresh air each day, which is what is recommended to those behind bars as essential to mental and physical health." Therefore, all of these kids are going outside the same amount or less than a prisoner, and we have no idea what mental and/or physical problems children could get from not going outside. In addition, The National Trust research shows "that children are playing outside for an average of just over four hours a week. This compares unfavorably with the 8.2 hours their parents spent when they were children. Also, a study by the UK government found that 10% of respondents have not even been in a natural environment such as a park, forest or beach for at least a year." This shows that overall, the outside engagement is low in this generation, and as you might expect, highly dependent on the parent's attitudes to outdoor activity. This suggests that parents may want to consider taking their kids outside to play.

Outdoor play benefits children's physical health in several key ways. It boosts Vitamin D levels dramatically, making children less vulnerable to bone problems. In addition, the exposure to the sun can help with your children's eyesight. Children can also receive a great boost to mental sharpness in thought, vision, and hearing. Also, there are higher levels of fitness, better sleep because of the exposure to natural light and the physical activity, and a longer lifespan, meaning a healthier adult life. Therefore, if we want physically healthy children, we need to get them outside to play.

Outdoor play also benefits children's emotional health. One of the positive impacts on emotional health includes learning to interact with other children. Then there is a less likelihood of depression, anxiety and hyperactivity, and it also

increased creativity. This is because time in nature is soothing, improves moods, and reduces stress. It also increases kids' attention span, children have a better school performance, and children build more creativity from being outside. Thus, if we want emotionally healthy children, we need to get them outside.

That is why children should spend time outside. Consider all of the benefits of going outside and remember these are our children. These are the people we are leaving the world to someday and we need to make them care for themselves, and the world, because we only have one!

# MY GRANDPARENTS' HOUSE

WRITTEN BY:  
ADAM C.

Ever since I was five years old, I have been spending 2 weeks of my summer at my grandparents' house. Until they recently moved, they lived in the white farmhouse about 1 hour away from Kansas City, Kansas. It was on the side of a highway, secluded and protected by an army of tall trees. A gravel driveway led to the front door and garage, as well to a wild pasture behind the house. The land was green and welcoming, secure yet open. It was no Van Gogh, but was beautiful in its own right.

That house is full of memories. Long nights spent doing a movie marathon of Star Wars, snacking on homemade popcorn, made from the popper upstairs. Having breakfast on the screen porch, sipping on coffee with way too much sugar and cream, making huge cities out of Lincoln Logs, only to destroy them gloriously while having a large scale toy soldier battle with my brother.

At least once a year, we would head to a small thrift store in a neighboring town not so far from the house. It was small, not very many things for a kid older than 6 or 7, but for the first few years, it was magical. This thrift store in my developing mind had everything. I would hide in the corners of the store, and gaze endlessly into the aisles of toys. I found trinkets and treasures that I remember to this day.

My grandparents own 2 dogs, named Sunny and Olive. They weren't specifically playful (though Olive would let you pet her for hours, if she was in the mood), but they were nice. When we were on the porch in the morning, they would get in an open chair and sit with the rest of us, and wolf down dog treats.

The view off the porch was perfect for stargazing since there wasn't much light pollution, so you could clearly see the night sky in all its glory. There were shooting stars, constellations, and the Milky Way stretching across the sky.

The food was amazing. We had these "Muffin Rounds," we called them. They are an English muffin covered in a spread of cheese, sausage, onions, and some other ingredients I don't remember. Then they were put in the oven and baked. To this day it stands as my favorite breakfast meal.

About 2 years ago, they moved to a smaller house near Tucson, Arizona. As it is a tradition, I will most likely see them.

# ZOO EXPERIENCE

WRITTEN BY:  
MATTHEW E.

When I was young, even younger than I am now, around 3 to 5, I remember vividly going to the Brookfield Park Zoo nearly daily. Usually with my grandmother but once in a while with my mom as well. This is at the time my mom was studying in college, like she also is now. But this will mostly be about my experience with my grandma. Currently, my grandma has moved away to South Dakota to take care of her mother, who I believe is 98.

My grandma babysat in River Forest, where I met a close friend of mine due to this and now go to Boy Scouts in River Forest. The child my grandma would babysit, however, very much enjoyed animals. He is about 3-4 years older than me. So we would often go to the zoo, to see his favorite animal in particular, dolphins. They have a lot of dolphin shows and such where you can watch dolphins do tricks. This was mostly in the summer however, because when he started school back up, me and my grandma would often go alone. I was probably either still on summer break in preschool or just got out earlier than he did.

I loved the zoo. I think I was interested in learning about the animals and just seeing how they interact. However, it was never something I wanted to pursue a career or education in. I remember always wanting to ride the animal carousel. I enjoyed the “thrill” at the time of going slightly up and down in a circle slowly. It was of course amplified in my tiny body preschooler’s mind. I always also enjoyed choosing my animal to ride on, which I remember to be quite a difficult decision to make. Also one I probably should’ve considered in line so I didn’t hold up the ride. Again, a preschool mind.

One of the other things I really enjoyed at the zoo were those coin printing machines where you put in a penny and it smushes a print onto it and reshapes it, stretched out. Often they’re in museums and such. Also those machines they have at a lot of zoos where you put in like \$5 and it gives you a plastic figure of some sort that it melted together (often of an animal). I loved those and the excitement of waiting for it to come out, only for it to be too hot and my grandma to have to hold onto it until it cooled down. I would constantly ask, “Is it cool enough yet?”

Then there were the exhibits. My favorite exhibits were: the monkeys and gorillas, the lions and the seals. But in particular, I loved the monkeys and gorillas. Silverback Gorillas to this day are my favorite animal. I loved going up to the glass and

getting them mad or observing their emotions. Yes, they did actually get mad, if you made certain movements, and sometimes I would come up to the glass and start banging. I was just extremely fascinated by them for some reason and still am.

Lastly, I loved the room where you could create different projects relevant to things in the zoo. They were usually some sort of small craft you could make to bring home. I don't remember really anything specific I made but I remember spending much time in this room. Definitely it was something I enjoyed.

I very much did enjoy going to the zoo with my grandma. Maybe if she visits, we'll have to go for nostalgic purposes. Zoos are definitely good learning opportunities and a fun place to be, but I think there is something to be said about the kinds of experiences you can have in these places intended for learning (i.e. museums), just as you gain these shaping experiences in school, you can gain them here. I believe these experiences often stay with us, because humans really do enjoy learning. Now you may not love going to a math class, but I think humans really do want to know new things. Some of these early childhood learning experiences stand out more because you're doing things that you enjoy, you're learning what you enjoy; you don't know what you enjoy yet. This is why I appreciate these experiences.

# SELF-DRIVING CARS

WRITTEN BY:  
ABBY F.

I think self driving cars will be safer than human driven cars when we get the technology right. Self driving cars can be safer, but we need people to agree with that. Self driving cars are not ready for people to buy, but they will be soon.

Self driving cars will be safer than human driven cars. According to the Auto Insurance Center, self driving cars will lower the amount of car crashes. More than 80% of car crashes are from driver error. Self driving cars can help that because the car will drive the car so the person won't have to and that will lower the amount the car crashes. Also a lot of car crashes come from the person not slowing at the right time and having to slam on the brakes and that turns into a car crash. A self driving car can predict when to stop better than a human can by having a computer brain and can predict another car's movement before it moves.

Self driving cars would benefit disabled people. Disabled people can go in the car and the car will take them wherever they want to go. Disabled people can have the freedom to have less assistance in getting somewhere. Another reason is that disabled people don't have to rely on public transit to take them where they need to go.

You don't have to worry if you get too old to drive; the car will do it for you. The car will drive you where you want to go. You won't ever get too old to drive in a self driving car. And you won't even have to find a parking space and walk as much, because the car will drop you off at where you need to be and find a parking space a little distance away!

Overall, self driving cars will be safer and a lot more useful, too. The cars will be safer than human driven cars. The streets will be safer in the near future at last! The makers of self driving cars devote a lot of time and effort and it costs a lot, but the payoff will be BIG and worth it. The roads will be safer, so support self driving cars!

# A STRANGE TRIP TO UTAH

WRITTEN BY:  
MAX F.

This Spring Break, I went to Utah. More specifically, I went skiing near Park City. My dad invited some people that went to college with him and who had been married for over 25 years. They were very nice at first; however, they eventually started bickering and taking little sarcastic jabs at each other. It was quite interesting watching how they interacted with each other, but it started to get annoying. They didn't take into account how we felt about their arguing. This kind of interaction was normal for them, I suppose.

On our first day in Utah, we spent a lot of time in a rather small car, and speaking of cars, my brother is a massive fan of cars. While we were going to our hotel, my brother saw a Youtuber, TheStradman, who lives in Utah, has a purple Lamborghini, and was parked on the mountain. Now, it wasn't necessarily *on* the mountain, but there was this little indent where he was parked. Anyway, we stopped and kind of admired the car. I'm not that big of a fan of cars and my brother was too shy to say anything to the Youtuber, so we kind of just stood there awkwardly. I still have no idea why a mildly famous person was randomly standing on a mountain, with his car.

While we were in the car, there were skis next to my head, almost decapitating me. There was basically no room in the car and I was squished up against my brother. He continuously took out his airpods (unfortunately) and started obnoxiously wiping his face with them, saying, "Oh, this is just so difficult," because I was scrunched up next to him in the back seat.

Around 4:00, we got to the hotel and we set our stuff down in the room. It wasn't a massive room, but I didn't really mind, because it was cozy and we were only going to be there for a few days. There were 2 sets of bunk beds in the room I was staying in with my brother. We both chose the top bunk, worried we were gonna hit our heads on the top bunk if we slept on the bottom. Once we were settled in, we were immediately rushed out the door to go rent skis and go grocery shopping, because there was no room service or restaurants nearby. We were basically in the middle of nowhere... but also not.

Since everyone was exhausted because of all the driving that day, my brother and I had little patience for each other while grocery shopping. We simply tolerated each other and our dad let us pick out things we liked. I chose Diet Coke and a party



size bag of Takis, which led to my brother saying I have an addiction. After shopping and going completely overboard with groceries, we sat in the car while listening to the couple that came with us argue about where to eat because they were hungry. Neither my brother nor I were hungry, so we just sat there doing nothing. After eating, we headed back to the hotel and unpacked our groceries. I collapsed in my bed.

For my first official, non-traveling day in Utah I woke up at about 10:00 am and just lazed about for an hour. At 11:00, I emerged from my cocoon of doing nothing and started skiing. At 1:30 my family +2 went to lunch. One of the two people who came with us, let's call him Bill, somehow forgot to pay for his drink and got away with it. He forgot his wallet in the car, which was luckily not stolen, and walked *past* the checkout area without anyone saying anything. How he's alive, we have no idea.

After lunch, we continued skiing and while I was on the chair lift, I saw some teenage boys skiing shirtless down a black diamond. Note that it was 20 degrees out, it was snowing, and they were on a black diamond. Idiots. Anyway, what I'm about to say is the scariest thing I have ever experienced while skiing. As I was almost near the exit point of the chair lift, someone dropped their bag and the person who was managing the lift abruptly stopped the lift, causing my chair to move forward, and since I was close to the exit point, the bar was up. I ended up falling off. Since it was snowing, my fall was cushioned but I was also near the end so it wasn't that bad.

After that, I was still kind of shocked, from the fall. I haven't skied in 2 years and this was my first day skiing. I was still getting used to the lifts and runs. I immediately went back to the room and stayed there for the rest of the day. That night we went to dinner and had mediocre food. It was good food but they accidentally overcooked my steak. It was still decent though. The restaurant was cozy, however my dad and the couple were cold. It was really warm in the room, so I don't know why they were cold. We went back to the room and I had Takis for dessert. I couldn't care less if it's not an actual dessert. It tastes good. Don't judge me.

On our second day of skiing I didn't really do much. I mostly stayed in the room watching Marvel movies in different languages. Before he left for skiing, my dad sent us all on a search for his glasses, which were on his head. Eventually, I went out skiing. I started to get used to things. My brother tried snowboarding this year, since last year he took lessons. Last year I went with my dad and brother on the trip, but was sick the whole time. I passed my brother several times on the skis, and we went through the trees. We both sang "In the Jungle" extremely off tune and ended up crashing into trees.

On our last day of skiing, my brother and I went down a green run to get used to it and wake up. On our way down, my dad's friend passed us on a chair lift and told

us to watch where we were going. A few minutes later he zoomed past us and said watch out. It was funnier at the time. After waking up a little I started to get faster. I lapped my brother and told him to eat my dust. We went through the trees on the mountains and I sang "In The Jungle" really off tune. To be honest, the trees were really cozy and quiet. There wasn't much sound other than my skis gliding across the snow. My brother crashed into a tree like 3 times and fell down a bunch.

The next day, we returned our skis and we left the hotel. I don't know if the staff members had some sort of secret that they were keeping from me, but all of the staff called me "pal". Not my brother, just me. It was really weird and awkward. We went on our way to Salt Lake City, where the airport is. We stopped for food and then went to the park because my dad insisted he need to take a walk. We met several dogs who were interested in us for reasons I don't know . I met a chihuahua who had an underbite and a lazy eye. It was also very fat. It was adorable. At about 5:00 pm, we said goodbye to my dad's friends and boarded our plane. We got home around 9:30 pm. My dogs freaked out and ran around the backyard several times. Exhausted from all the walking, sitting, traveling, etc, I collapsed.

I suppose the things that make a family trip fun are the same things that make it stressful. There are upsides and downsides but that's kind of what we sign up for when we go on a trip with our family. Our experiences are what make it memorable, even the bad ones, like me falling off a ski lift. I'm really looking forward to what my next trip is like. Maybe I'll fall off of something else.

# ANNA MARIA ISLAND

WRITTEN BY:  
JACK F.

We sat on the beach in lawn chairs, my back still aching from the two day drive, watching as the sea swallowed the sun, only for it to reappear the next day like a never-ending magic trick. I walked back with my family past rows of palm trees and short white houses that sat uniformly flanking the street, some showing colorful displays of flowers and fish, others dark and empty. We crossed a quiet street to where we were staying, preparing for the long beautiful day of sun ahead.

It was a bright day as I looked out the window at the shining sun climbing out of the water. The one fine detail I remember from that morning is meeting our charter and asking nervously, "What if we catch a shark?" and him replying "I will pull it onboard and let you pet it." The rest of the morning went by slowly, driving place to place and catching foot-long fish. After landing and thanking our charter for a great morning, We went mini golfing at a cool place called the Fish Hole where each hole had info on a local fish. The last part of that day was driving to arrive to the now colorless feeling we had in Berwyn, hoping to go again next year.

It was a terrible day. The rain outside howled and ripped at the windows, trying to escape the wind. I sat with my dad and brother working on a jigsaw puzzle that didn't seem to have been cut right. The day before, we could swim in the ocean; today, we were being sieged by a hurricane, constantly making sure the windows had not been smashed by the trees that were like feathers waving in the wind. There was so much rain I feared it would drown the island, flooding through the floors, even in my room. I got no rest as I watched a tornado turn into a water spout over the ocean, throwing water out all around as if it were a child playing in the shallows.

When the hurricane finally let up, everything was muddy and damaged and the **for sale** sign in front of our house was in the middle of the street, blown out of the ground. Chairs from the balcony lay shattered in the yard. We had stayed inside for a week. We came here to enjoy the beach for summer; instead, we got to watch it get destroyed by an angry storm. We really hope that next time goes better.

# THE PURPOSE OF TREES

WRITTEN BY:  
ZEKE K.

Over the years, tree climbing has slowly become banned in public parks. All trees in public parks should be available for climbing, especially ones that are dedicated as memorials to people. Tree climbing is good for children to learn social skills, risk taking, and to build strength. Trees are meant for climbing.

Climbing trees is an excellent activity for strength. Climbing trees helps with physical development. Climbing trees can help children become more flexible in body and mind. In the article *15 Reasons to Climb a Tree and Other Benefits of Risky Play*, published by Rhythms of Play, when climbing a tree, children have to move in a way they don't typically move on land. Children have to squeeze their bodies up, over and under the branches. Climbing trees is physically challenging and helps build hand-eye coordination in a natural environment.

Climbing trees is good for brain function and psychological health. Climbing trees promotes problem solving, is a good way to reduce stress, and is risky play, which is good for children. According to Annasophia Richards in her article *The 7 Benefits of Trees*, when climbing a tree, children think and determine the best path to navigate a tree while testing their limits. Climbing trees is a good way to reduce stress, by focusing on nature and interacting with branches.

Climbing trees promotes socialization and play. Climbing trees helps to build social skills, helps a person connect with nature and it can boost self-confidence for a person who conquers a tree. Children can climb trees while socializing with their friends. They can enjoy nature as they cooperate together to maneuver up, over, and through the branches.

People who are opposed to allowing children to climb trees have some objections to the obvious benefits. These critics claim that climbing trees is a dangerous activity. The skeptics also say that children playing in the trees can damage the trees, which is especially inappropriate when the trees are memorials dedicated to important people.

The belief that climbing trees is an inappropriate activity is completely wrong and overprotective, both of children and the trees. According to *Why Children Climb* by Joe Frost, children naturally know how to climb and they need to take risks. Children learn to test their footholds and the strength of the branches so that the tender limbs, both of the children and the trees, do not break. When children see

trees, they want to climb. Children gain awareness and focus when climbing trees. Children learn good judgment and self-restraint when they climb up and around the branches. Playgrounds that are made of metal and plastic try to simulate trees, but trees in the wild are the best natural playgrounds.

In recent years, tree climbing has been discouraged. But, in public parks, children and experts agree that trees should be available for climbing. Trees that are dedicated to important people should not be off limits. As citizens of Earth, we should care about trees and their climbability. Trees are nature's playgrounds that help children build strength and brain function. These natural beauties also promote socialization and play. A tree fulfills its purpose when a little person climbs up and over its welcoming branches.

# FORM OF SCHOOLING MATTERS

WRITTEN BY:  
FRANCIS K.

To me school is like a form any object can take: solid, a liquid, or a gas. It is like this because public school is like a solid, stuck together and not very flexible. Private school is like a liquid because it's sort of structured, but is still semi-flexible. And then finally we have gas, which is homeschool: very far-apart molecules and very flexible and easy to move around.

First I'm going to talk about my public school experience, the solid. It was very structured and not very flexible with how you learned, unlike TCS. I remember, at an old school I previously attended, the weird smell of old gym shoes in the hallway and the weird feeling of everyone bumping into you as you walked your 9 classes. I remember the system of having to walk to the right coming by, and how the lady controlling the flow of traffic was about to yell at my friend for walking on the wrong side before I pulled him to the other side. Now let's weigh a pro and a con. Pro, you had quite a bit of structure and never really went off a routine that was quite easy to follow. Con, it's not as flexible and you don't get to do individual-type learning or learn what you want. They kind of tell you what you can learn.

The second form of schooling I'm going to speak of is private school, the liquid. It is not necessarily unstructured, but it's not necessarily only structured. I do not do something necessarily different every day, but I do something different quite often, such as more field trips, more spending time in nature, and more diverse projects. An example is TCS. We have a schedule for each day, but the schedule is different every day throughout the week. And also quite often, we go on field trips. Just the day I am writing this, we went to a park for choice which we don't do very often. It was quite enjoyable. When I say we don't do these things very often, that means we don't do them every day. I remember a time when we were going to a "Town Hall" downtown. But it really was a political debate. Now let's weigh a pro and a con. Pro: to learn a little bit more of what you are interested and less of what you're told to learn. I have not found a con for a private school system yet.

Finally, I'm going to speak of my last form of schooling: homeschool, the gas. It not only had no routine, you kind of made your own routine, with restrictions, of course. Like for when a normal school would have gym, in homeschool I could work out at a gym, or go on a bike ride like me and my brother did. And you could do online math programs like Khan Academy for math, and for reading, Lexia. Now, for

the final time, let's weigh a pro and a con. Pro, it's very flexible and allows you to do other things during the day instead of school. Once, we had a certain event, I don't remember what, and since I was homeschooled I was allowed to go. Con, it can be too flexible sometimes, and for me, I need structure and I need a daily routine that is similar every day. Homeschool sometimes is like that but sometimes not.

I have gone through a lot of schooling in different schools throughout the years, I have been to six schools, and had four months of homeschooling over the past eight years. As you can see, each one has its pros and cons. Overall, my favorite one has been private school. It has had enough structure to work well, but still enough individualized learning that I can make the learning my own. As you can see, school has taught me the metaphor used throughout this story.

# ALIEN PLANET

WRITTEN BY:  
LYD K.-C.

Imagine a world where you are being surrounded by aliens who are not able to truly understand or interpret what you say and what actions you take, however subtle they may be, and being followed by a seemingly unstoppable and possibly endless presence of worries, intertwined with the lack of true belonging. The aliens are scattered around the planet like pebbles on a beach, and they are familiar, normal, but strange and unreal at the same time, like swimming through a stream of oil and water, harsh currents pulling you along, forcing you to move, days melting together into a distant image, blurred to make way for other experiences. You cannot control this world, this planet, even though you wish to look down upon it as if admiring a miniature replica of an old neighborhood, a place to simply forget about and move on. Wishes seem to get you nowhere, though, only causing stresses to form into a blanket of blank-mindedness. The planet that you pointlessly reside in seems simple, the shapes and colors that are placed around, buildings and structures created by the aliens, are sharp but dull and ultimately boring, one could even say that they are frustratingly un-creative and maybe even hideously unimaginative. The planet is so bland that you don't even truly know what to think of it. But the planet is also very complicated at the same time, aliens that look like unborn chickens but with skin smoothed out like microwaved butter, they have many stressful feelings that you do not always understand. Their emotions make YOUR anger boil and sizzle like a pot full of burnt stew.

There are so many things to say, think, and wonder about the aliens, those creatures that resemble fatty yogurt that had been transformed into animal skin and stretched out to dry on a witch's clothesline, then filled with clumpy jello. The aliens find some things amusing that are unreasonably boring and plain to you, it is as if you are trapped in a badly decorated fish tank. They say things behind your back as if you are *stupid* or simply cannot hear them. Some of the aliens say things that aren't true, or are just honestly ridiculous. The creatures do not always care or think about what they let out of their gaping mouths, so it seems very unrealistic to respect them back when they do not respect you. This distorted burst of upsetting madness makes your body hurt every minute, the chest aches and burns, it stings like a wasp buried inside you, nestled underneath your skin, and laying its fowl eggs inside of you. This feeling grows as if it were fungi on a decaying log, it becomes more common and is an



everyday experience. It is a *real, physical* feeling. It sits there in your alien body, waiting to give you a stingful burst of pain. You can't always control your weak, pathetic body. It is attached to you. It is yours, the body, but it honestly doesn't feel like that at all. It feels like an alien was successful in absorbing itself around your mind, invading your space so much that it becomes part of you. Even though you have your body, the ugly body that is made to be an alien's body and happens to be attached to you, the aliens sense that something is wrong with you and seem to HATE you just for being you. *That is the worst feeling in this world.*

The aliens are "normal," though, so they are an everyday experience, but you cannot fully grasp their minds and language, and they cannot fully understand yours. They are a normal occurrence, yet very strange, mysterious, and maddening, all at once. What if you could enter their minds and scan their thoughts and twist their thoughts to make them different, so that they could understand you? So you could actually make sense of their brains? This is impossible, really, and that fact is one of many things that weigh you down, your body is an anchor and your mind is held down with it. But the aliens are different from one another (even though sometimes it seems as if the aliens are all the same), so a judgment or an assumption toward all aliens may not actually apply to many of them. There is a search in your mind for aliens that are like you and can appreciate you, even if you are weird and different and don't seem to fit in with the rest of the flow. They can relate to you. You know that while it may feel like the otherwise, you are not the *only* one. While there are some aliens that may harm your existence on this planet and make you feel terrible, there are others that may even relate to your situation and improve your situation just slightly more, make things a little less bad. If more aliens even do the *slightest* action that resembles what they call kindness, or friendliness, it can shape your day. These actions, feelings, and emotions are contagious, spreading through alien to alien, a telephone line of *being*. Just being, existing, is what you are used to doing, no matter how difficult it is, but it isn't so simple. You never know what someone is thinking, or struggling with, or how they were told to run their lives.

Something else that matters, that actually, especially makes a difference to the condition of the alien planet is the room you are in. A room, or building, is a box, and you are told to do things in it, such as to learn, move, and even live in it. You are required to travel from room to room, box to box, building to building. The shell where you live, enter, or exist in, even if you are only visiting for a short amount of time, it changes how you function. The rooms that you need to enter and stay in are very overwhelming. Rectangular ceiling lights dotted with patterns that seem to move as if they are waves on an ocean, or stairs on an escalator, but instead filled with a sheet of atrocious white light. Those lights flicker speedily and intensely and the pattern reflects onto your work space, creating a harmful environment. Bright and

diverse colors give you a headache. Colors that burn and sizzle in your mind like someone bursted open a bubble of eye-bleedingness. Don't the aliens care about how you function daily? Don't they know that the sharp, harsh images, lights, and colors that they place around your existence are physically uncomfortable for you, and that hurts the way you function? Or do they just not care? Maybe the aliens think the things, the objects, sounds, and senses they cause help you and look good to other aliens (hint: they don't, or maybe those things look good to most other aliens, just not to you)? Well, the aliens should care, because one thing's for sure: they want you to do what you're told.

Now, look back to and remember the beginning of this text, when these letters that are placed on this page formed a word. Not just any word, a specific word. The word *Imagine*. Imagining is that something aliens and other creatures automatically do on their own. But when you are told to imagine something, you are told to picture an image, a memory, a fantasy, or even someone else's life. When you were asked to imagine this life, even if it may not be relatable to you, or if it *is* relatable, everything written here is a true experience. This is not about how horrible aliens are and how sad life is, this is a truth anchored down, held in place by the blanket of reality.

# MY GRANDFATHER

WRITTEN BY:  
REBECCA K.

About two months ago, my grandpa passed away. We had a day off of school and it was a Friday. My mom was working in her home daycare and I remember I was playing my cello. After I was finished practicing, my mom came upstairs crying. I asked what happened. "Is everything ok?" She blurted out, crying, in a soft, shaken voice, "Becca, grandpa died." I was crying so hard that I felt sick to my stomach. I did not want to do anything but cry. I was very close to my grandpa. When I was at my old school, he would always pick me and my brother and sister up from school and bring us home and he would always bring us great snacks! After my mom was done working, we went straight to the hospice where my grandpa was. When we went into the room where he was lying on a bed, the first thing I saw was my grandma and she was crying. Then, I started to cry again. All I thought about was how he was a great grandpa, and now he's just gone, and I'm never going to see him again.

I remember he would play hand games when we were waiting for my sister and brother to get out of school. He would always make me laugh. Whenever I spent the night at my grandma and grandpa's house, he would say, "Becca, would you like a cookie?" My grandma would say "Jim, not before dinner." But he did not really listen to that when I was around! Everytime we went out to eat, he would always mix up his food, and it would always make me laugh and it would gross my grandma out! After dinner, we would get our pajamas on and watch a movie.

I remember that I lost my favorite mood necklace and was very sad. One day, my grandpa picked me up from school and he had a new one for me and it was exactly the same. I was so happy and surprised! My grandpa was in hospice for 8 months. I went with my Mom to visit him a lot during that time. It was sad to see him get weaker and tired all the time. But he always made jokes and told me he loved me. He would always save his cookies or treats from his hospital meals and give them to me when I came to visit. :)

# TEENS AND TECHNOLOGY

WRITTEN BY:  
FLYNN M.

Teens should limit themselves on technology. Teenagers have a life of their own on technology and social media; they are constantly on their devices. I am writing this argumentative essay to make a change in the way things are with teens and technology.

Technology can be addictive. Google's former in-house ethicist Tristan Harris states that technology companies make them so people/teens can get addicted. Because companies make it so teens get addicted, it could lead to addiction (obviously) and it could lead to being on phones too much, and the best way to get rid of this addiction is to limit themselves altogether, or not be on technology at all. Also according to Pew Research, 80% of teens check their phones every hour. Teens also say they feel addicted. Because teens feel addicted, it is possible they are on technology too much and should limit themselves.

Parents and technology companies are trying to stop the current problem at hand. Pew Research says more than half of parents state that they put time limits on their kids and teens phones. Because it is likely for parents to put time limits on their kids and teens phones, it shows that they are trying to fix this and teens should limit themselves and step up. Also according to Pew Research, Google and Apple stated they would add features to help people limit themselves on technology. Because Google and Apple are helping to stop this, it could lead to limitation on technology.

Teens don't know how to make a change. Pew Research claims that teens are aware of the issue but don't want to make a change. Because teens don't know how to make a change, it could be very bad for them in the sense that change is a good thing. Also according to Pew Research the first/top emotion with not having their phones is anxiety (42%). Because anxiety can be tough it can be hard to make a change and limit themselves. I feel this anxiety sometimes and I have to tell myself that I don't need my phone near me and I should calm down.

Teens should be able to limit themselves on technology and have a real life conversation some times. Some teens would say that it is not addictive to be on technology and should not limit themselves. I would say that we all should limit ourselves and like I said have a real life conversation instead of being on technology.

# JUSTICE'S BIRTHDAY PARTY

WRITTEN BY:  
MERISSA M.

Friday, September 28

I can't wait to leave school! My mom is going to drive me to see my baby cousin for his birthday! It is finally time to go. I grab my stuff and leave. My mom is driving while I am reading *Before We Were Free* (it's a really good book). We are in the car for about 3 hours before our first stop. It's around 6:30; we stop at a Denny's for dinner and to use the restroom. Once we finish our dinner and use the bathroom, we go back on the road. This time I fall asleep. My mom wakes me up around 10:00 p.m. to go inside the hotel she Hotwired. I don't want to get up, but I get up anyway. When we get into the room, I just take off my shoes, slide under the covers, and go right to sleep.

Saturday, September 29

It's morning even though it still feels like night. It's 6:30 and we are packing our stuff to hit the road again. I am really tired, but I have to get up if I want to see my baby cousin. We are driving once again; this time, we are driving for 3 hours before we finally get there. We lightly unpack and find out that my cousin is at the doctor getting his two year-old shots. When he comes back, he is all grumpy from getting his shots. He doesn't feel good, which makes me sad. He quickly feels better when I bring up from the car one of the billion toys I brought him. I decide to bring up the cars and the Little People garage that includes a car wash, gas station, and phone booth.

We play with that for a while, then I help him get dressed in his Max costume for his Where the Wild Things Are birthday party. After he gets dressed, we walk down the road to the park where the party is being held. When we arrive, I find out my sister is there, so me, my sister, and Justice (my baby cousin) go over to the playground. I am climbing on the playground when Justice says "Marlow, help!" I go over and help him down the ladder so he can go back up to go down the slide. He's so happy that I am there helping him up and down the slides.

After a while, I get hungry, but Justice doesn't want to go eat, so I have to bribe him to go. I ask him if he wants to go be with Baba and Rowen, his two friends that came to the party, and he says yes. I finally get him over to the tables so we can eat. I sit him down, which I can tell he doesn't like so much, but he stays there anyway while I get food for myself. I head back to where I sat Justice down and start

eating. Justice realizes that I have watermelon and asks for it, so I give it to him because I know it is his favorite fruit. After he is done with that, I think he gets hungry, because then he wants some of my ribs.

When I am done eating, I go help Justice with his ice cream cone cupcake; it has fallen onto one of the plastic benches we had brought to the park. I get all the frosting off and and put a little more frosting on.

After everybody eats dessert, Justice, Baba, Rowen, and I open Justice's presents. Most of the presents are unwrapped, so my Aunt Maggie brings the rest of her presents from the car, including play dough. After the play dough is brought out, none of the little ones helped me open the rest of the presents. After everybody leaves, we go back to the house, my sister and I walking and the rest in cars.

When we get back to the house, one of Justice's uncles and cousins give Justice practically the rest of the stuff they wanted from ToysRUs. We take most of the stuff inside while Aunt Mandy (Justice's mom) and Justice's cousin collect acorns. After they go inside, Justice, his cousin and I play with almost everything.

While they continue playing, I put away what they were not using. Soon we are only playing with the water guns that my grandma had gotten for me and Justice. I can't believe how exhausting it is just pretending to die and fall to the floor. After I die, I don't know how many times Justice's cousin had to leave. They are also taking my sister back home because she lives really close to them. After they leave, Justice and I continue to play with the water guns. After a while, Justice starts to get tired but did not want to go to bed and realizes that if he pretends to die it is like taking a mini nap, so he starts to pretend to kill himself.

We finally get Justice to go to bed, but me, my mom, and my uncle Martian stay up and continue talking for a while. Then I get tired and go to bed, soon followed by my mom. Uncle Martian's real name is Martin, but we call him Uncle Martian because we joke around that he is from Mars. Sunday, September 30 I am waking up and it is around 6:45 a.m. Nobody else but my mom and I are awake, so we start talking about something, I don't know exactly what, because I am so tired. Finally, I hear a door to one of the rooms open and close. I am hoping it is Justice, but it's just my grandma. A little while after, my grandma comes in and sits down with us. Justice comes out of the room he is staying in, followed by my Aunt Mandy. Aunt Mandy and Justice sit by me, and my grandma gets up to go try and make green fried tomatoes.

Soon everybody is awake and eating or making breakfast. I am playing with Justice and forget to eat my egg and the rest of my breakfast. Soon it is time to leave, and I am still not done with my breakfast, so I quickly heat up some ribs and wrap them up in paper towel. I am saying goodbye to everybody else before I say goodbye to Justice, because I can already feel that it will take a while to say goodbye to Justice.

When I get to Justice, I find that I guessed correctly: I pick him up to give him a hug and he puts his head down on my shoulder. I just stand there hugging him and absorbing all the love. I finally put him down. I know he does not want his Marlow to leave, but I have to. The ride home goes by very quickly. I finish *Before We Were Free*. Overall, it has been a very loving and memorable experience.

# THE BENEFITS OF MINECRAFT

WRITTEN BY:  
CEDAR M.

Minecraft is good for kids. The video game teaches kids how to be creative, work on a project and basics about natural resources. It's a lot like Lego but many parents don't like their kids playing it.

Everyone thinks Lego is a great kids' toy, but many parents don't like Minecraft, which is just a computer version of Lego, but with endless possibilities and is very creative and is cheaper, too.

Lego and Minecraft are similar in many ways. They are both made of blocks and kids create their own worlds and use their imagination and creativity. In Minecraft you get to choose a character and decide either if you want to play in the survival mode or creative mode.

In creative mode, your character has the ability to fly and has infinite access to every block in the game. In Survival Mode, you can begin in the middle of a map and your character has to farm trees and craft tables and tools to begin building a fortress to protect yourself from other characters. As you play the game, you advance and start mines and adventure off and find new locations. Your character can build any type of building, like a huge wooden mansion decorated as you like it with a vegetable garden or a swimming pool. In Lego, blocks are made of different colored plastic but in Minecraft, blocks can be made of many different materials including wood, stone, ores, plants, glass, sand and other earthy materials which make this game much more creative than Lego.

Minecraft is also very educational. It is now offered as a program in some schools. According to a study of 118 6th graders who played Minecraft in school researchers found through a survey of the students that 77.1% of students found playing Minecraft at school "extremely" fun, and it encouraged them to participate in school more. This research highlighted 24 other educational benefits of playing Minecraft in school. From better understanding of scientific concepts to greater self esteem at school, students learned and enjoyed playing Minecraft in their classrooms. For instance, in Minecraft you can brew potions and there are many different spell books that kids can memorize which can improve reading comprehension and scientific elements. Kids can learn about natural resources and the way that they work together to build different elements in nature. For example, if you craft a stone slab with three sticks you can create an armor stand. If you add one stick and two



diamonds you create a sword. Kids memorize these so that they can build new things in their worlds. Research shows that kids both enjoy and learn from playing Minecraft, therefore it should be more accepted for kids to play in homes and parents should learn the educational uses of Minecraft. Parents might think that their kids are not playing with other kids when they play Minecraft, but it's actually a very social game. Most kids like to talk about Minecraft and exchange stories about what they are making in their worlds. Minecraft can include up to 4 people in each console so that kids can play together. Kids can also play online together and about 1000 people can play together. Kids can play online with their friends or even far away cousins like they are right there in the room together. Researchers have found that when students play Minecraft in schools, there is increased collaboration between students as many students choose to work in groups and help each other troubleshoot gameplay issues.

Conclusion: Minecraft should be available in schools and parents should be more accepting of this fun learning tool.

# PROSTITUTION

WRITTEN BY:  
MARIAH M.

Prostitution should not be legalized. Prostitution is when you have sex for money. It's a risky job and the government should be helping this situation. Problems they should look at are the increase of STDs, also most prostitutes are children, and many more. Prostitution has been legalized in 22 states. Some say it's good and some state the opposite, but where is the question being asked if prostitution is actually a job or a last resort?

Prostitutes have to go and sell themselves for money. Now when a person is sleeping around, there should be consideration of catching a disease. A study done in Minneapolis, Minnesota displayed that 15% of prostitutes had an STD when they were working within 6 months. A study done expressed 73% of men would pay more for sex without condom. Knowing that they need money, the prostitutes would say yes, passing STDs on. The prostitutes also took gynecological examinations and the result was concerning. They were at greater risk of cervical cancer and could spread papilloma virus around the state during sexual or non sexual acts. Going back to the statement that prostitution should not be legalized, this shows the connection because of how many people it can affect, as in future partners, their children, clients, and the prostitutes themselves. When women have the disease and give birth, it passes to the baby/ babies, which causes the percent to go up even higher. Another factor is STDs take weeks or even months to show up in a test. In states where prostitution is legal, they have to get tested daily and have a card stating what they have (if they do have an STD). Even when being tested daily for the card, you can still have an STD, and the buyer doesn't need a card, so it's unknown on their end, too. So it can be passed both ways. Therefore the policy stating, "We'll have safer sex and HIV/Aids control if we examine the women under a regulated or decriminalized system of prostitution" is like saying pregnancy test prevents pregnancy. It doesn't make sense because the same actions are happening, just now, if caught in the act you can't get arrested. According to several articles, an average number for how many people prostitutes sleep with in a day is around 15. So in that week they've affected about 105 people, just because they thought they were clean. This problem makes our population have an increase of STDs every day, and the number keeps getting higher and higher. That being the case, if it is not prevented soon, we'll be at 100%.

There is a high rate of prostitutes being killed and abused either by their pimp or the person they are sleeping with. This cause females to have a shorter lifespan from how much abuse they are getting. On average, 965 prostitutes get beaten a year that hotlines get cases of. It's uncommon for these beatings to be expressed because the pimp will make them stay and it puts them more in danger than they already are. But 58% report abuse from clients. So those are the cases that should be investigated. In states where prostitution is legal they have brothels, which is supposed to be "safer" for the women. 60% of women in one brothel said they haven't been abused but thought they were going to die. Prostitutes' death rate is 20 times the national average.: 204 out of 100,000 in one estimate. New Jersey in 2015 had 14 homicide victims who were prostitutes. That's higher than usual in this city that has 280,000 residents with the rate of 7 homicides per 100,000 people. This is dangerous for humans in general because you get beat to death. The government should be seeing this as a problem. For men to do this to prostitutes without consequences leads them to believe they can do it to other women who aren't prostitutes, making more abusive relationships, and making more generations scared of men and having this idea that they have more power, which should be prevented because it should be equal. There should be investigations after the cause of these deaths or abuse expressed to lock up the pimp and/or abuser, which can decrease the percent of abuse.

The government should be seeing prostitution as a problem and not a job. Most families go into this path because they need money or they are runaways. But the government isn't looking at this issue. The laws for the US for prostitution all look at "aliens." This proves that even people who look for our country as help, they can't find support for their family. Which is the same case for citizens born here; they need support and necessary needs which they are not getting. In states where prostitution is legal, the government get taxes from the brothels and prostitutes. Therefore they are benefiting from what we are suffering with, and most likely that was the reason of legalizing it. For money. In Illinois if caught in the act and if you are the buyer you get up to 1 year sentencing. If people were to hear why the prostitute did it, the common answer would be they needed the money. Many studies show that 80% of prostitutes say they wish to no longer be in prostitution. But 92% of women say they can't leave because they lack money and/or food. Prostitutes in the United States, Venezuela, and Philippines were asked if prostitution should be legalized and they specifically stated NO, saying that they would only have more danger from pimp and customers. So, there shouldn't be a question if prostitution should be legalized if the people doing this for a living are stating no, it would only benefit the buyers. This is a problem that our communities and government should not ignore. We need more legitimate jobs for people without college degrees and in lower class communities, and a change needs to be done soon.

In conclusion, prostitution should not be legalized because of the many effects it has on the prostitutes and people. The government should step in and help. There should be support groups for the women abused. Plus more sentencing should be given to those still abusing the law and investigation for the pimps and abusers so their anger can be controlled and not used on other women. We hear so much discussions of how to keep women in prostitution, but not enough of how to help them get out, which needs to be brought up soon.

# SOCIAL MEDIA

WRITTEN BY:  
MICAH N.

According to Google Dictionary, social media is “Any websites and/or applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.” Some examples of social media are Snapchat, Pinterest, YouTube, Instagram, Goodreads, the list is endless. In this essay you will be educated on what social media can really do, and why you should be more cautious while using social media.

Social media can harm your mental and physical health in several ways. According to The National Institutes Of Health, social media usage was directly related to increased depression among adults ages 19-32. Therefore, your social media use affects the possibility of you suffering from depression. A different study done by the UK government found that 41% of kids who spend over 3 hours a day on social media, on a normal school day, report suffering from mental health issues. Compared to 21% of kids who spend no time on social media. This shows that social media can damage your mental health. Another article published by Statistic Brain found that 52% of social media users have reported being cyberbullied, and according to American Journal of Public Health, middle schoolers that have been cyberbullied are twice as likely to commit suicide compared to kids who are not cyberbullied. This suggests that social media is related to middle schoolers committing suicide because of cyberbullying on social media.

Along with social media having health disadvantages, social media can lower your GPA and test scores and can help students cheat on tests. For example, in the first 3 months of 2015, a company that administers tests found 76 cases of students posting test material online. The fact that in 3 months 76 cases of students posting test material online shows that social media can help students cheat on their tests. A different study by the Computers in Human Behavior found that Students that used social media while they studied scored 20% lower on their tests, and had an average GPA of 3.06 and non-social media users have an average GPA of 3.82. This proves that social media has a negative effect on students learning, because social media users have a lower average GPA and on average don't do as well on tests.

While learning about social media, I came across an interesting study about how burglars use social media. According to Ed Smith who wrote an article In [instantcheckmate.com](http://instantcheckmate.com), 78% of burglars say they use Facebook, Twitter, Four Square, and Google Street View to find victims/properties, and 54% said that "Posting status

and whereabouts on social media is the most common mistake made by homeowners." So basically robbers are using social media as a tool to help them rob homes.

Social media also spreads false news. An article in the journal *Science* found that lies spread six times faster than the truth on Twitter, and fake news is retweeted more often than true news. A similar article published on [web.stanford.edu](http://web.stanford.edu) found that in the 3 months before the 2016 election false news stories about the candidates were shared 37.6 million times on Facebook. Therefore you are constantly taking in lies without recognizing that they are not true.

As shown above, social media is guilty of spreading false news, but here is some evidence that shows how social media wastes your time. According to Urs Gasser and John Palfrey from *Educational Leadership*, when alerted to new social media activity, such as a new tweet or Facebook message, users take 20 to 25 minutes on average to return to the original task. In 30% of cases, it took two hours to fully return attention to the original task. This shows how social media distracts people from tasks and therefore can waste their time. A different article published on [gif.com](http://gif.com) talks about employees use of social media and claims that Two-thirds of US employees with Facebook accounts use it during work hours. Even spending just 30 minutes a day on social media while at work would cost a 50-person company 6,500 hours of productivity a year. This shows the toll it can take on a business to use social media during work.

It's ironic that something that is so loved by society can be so damaging to society. It seems clear that caution should be used around social media. It would be interesting to see what would happen if all social media stopped working for a week and we had to find other more creative ways to fill our time.

# ANIMAL TESTING

WRITTEN BY:  
SHAUNA N.

Testing on animals is inhumane and painful to the animals this is why we must stop animal testing.

People have been testing on animals since 324 BC! In 2016 it has been said by the U.S. Department of Agriculture that 71,370 animals have died during tormenting and painful experiments. Stopping this will mean that animals will not have to suffer through human experiments.

Humans are no better than animals and we kill to save lives of humans. How much more can the animals take of being "killed by carbon dioxide asphyxiation, neck-breaking and decapitation" according to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA)?

The Animal Welfare Act does not cover rats, mice, fish and birds, which comprise around 95% of the animals used in research. The AWA has covered for 820,812 animals but has not covered millions of other animals that are still vulnerable to being mutated and disrespected.

Testing on humans would be 100% not as dangerous and people would volunteer to help find a cure. Many of these animals probably did not want to sign up to being tested on to help find a cure to a disease.

Some chemicals that are ineffective on, or harmful to, animals prove valuable when used by humans. Aspirin, for example, is dangerous for some animal species. Intravenous vitamin C has shown to be effective in treating sepsis in humans, but makes no difference to mice. Animals have been studied on for a long time, and many animals have been used for poor research that doesn't help us with moving on in our future, says the Humane Society of the United States.

There's nothing to show that animals have been helping us out This means that there are other solutions in the field waiting to be used by us. The animals that we experiment on cost lots of money and the research that we do on these animals may be fake.

# A DREAM

WRITTEN BY:  
CAT N.

One day I was lying in bed and thought: what if I had a dream and never forgot it. Then I fell to sleep... I started having a dream but once it started I knew it was not going to end. This went on for about two weeks, maybe more. I don't really remember. What I do remember is this is what the dream was. So let's start at the top.

I woke up in this house that is so big, huge, it is 7 floors and I'm rich and all of my friends live with me without any adults. Confused, what happened, it's like what I ever wanted in a dream house. I opened the back door which were huge brown doors with steel door knobs, and saw the biggest amusement park I had ever seen. It was like six flags. I was so amazed at what I was looking at. Then I was like, if this is this big, what do all the other places look like. I said to myself, that was just the first floor.

I took the escalator to the 2nd floor and it was a long trip up the escalator. Each room had a label in this order: Cat's room, Jada's room, Anna's room, and then 2nd floor escalator. The first stop I made what was I guess my room. I opened the really big door and saw... What looks like a floating T.V., a bunk bed, neon light that said "CAT," and an iPhone XR that opened with my face. I took it with me just in case. I closed the door behind me and moved on. I walked into the next room marked Jada's room.

I knocked, I heard footsteps, and of course it was Jada.

"Hello," said Jada.

"Hello," I said.

"Can I look around?" I said. Jada said sure. "Thanks," I said.

I looked around and said, "Nice room."

Jada said, "Thanks, you helped with it."

In my head I said, what, I don't remember that, but this is what I said: "Oh, sorry, I am working on so many things I forgot." I think that worked.

I walked out the door and knocked on Anna's door, but no one answered. I went upstairs; no one was there. I knocked on all the doors; no one answered. I did not really care. Went up another floor and saw a mini Target and I was weirded out, but again I went with it. I knew there was more to see but I was hungry. I went downstairs to the kitchen which was the first floor, and noticed everyone eating at



the table, no phones, like a family. I was surprised. Someone said, "We are happy that you joined us. We have 10 minutes until school." Yes, I guess it is still normal-ish.

"What are we eating?"

"Pancakes," said everyone.

OK, so I am still on earth. I said OK and sat down.

"Let's go to school," I said.

"OK," said everyone, and that was where we went.

Why do we have dreams like this? Is it because we think of what we want or is it just for fun? Think about it: have you had a dream like this before? No one knows but you.

# LED BULBS ARE BETTER

WRITTEN BY:  
ARCHER R.

LEDs are better than incandescent bulbs. LED, which stands for light emitting diode, is a technology that can be used to power light bulbs. LEDs are brighter and use less energy than incandescent bulbs.

They're better for the environment. that they reduce solid waste because they last longer, less to throw away means less going into a landfill. LEDs use less energy than incandescent bulbs. because most of our electricity comes from coal-fired or nuclear power plants so using less energy means less pollution and waste.

You pay more for the bulbs but you earn that money back in savings on your electric bill. some people say that LEDs cost more and they do. they save you money on your electric bill. LEDs typically use about 25% to 80% less energy than traditional incandescent bulbs. Therefore you save more money over time.

So if you have a choice, you should choose LEDs over incandescent bulbs. Not only will you be saving the environment, you'll be saving yourself money.

# CAPSTONE

WRITTEN BY:  
CLAIRE R.-F.

Hello, friends, family, who ever else is deciding to read this, today I will be telling you the adventures of my Capstone Project. If you don't know what I mean by adventures, I mean the struggles, the process, the experience, and the back story.

If you're still reading, you must be weirdly interested in my story/experience. Let me tell you a little about myself before we start because it all ties in together. I was born in Guatemala. I was adopted when I was 5 months old. Now I weirdly live in Illinois, but that's not the point. The point of this paper is explaining about my project, so I guess that's what I have to do. My goal is making a small business, and the point of the small business is I'm selling coffee and candy to raise money for an orphanage in Guatemala, and going back to my story, it makes me feel good to help out a small part of the place I was born. I love helping out people who might need it, so the money is going to hopefully help them out to buy stuff they need to make it more comfortable for the kids.

Many things happened during this process of making small business. I had to think of what exactly I wanted sell, and I wanted to make sure the things I was selling were the kids at my school liked. What I did to make that happen was I made a survey. The things I put on it are soap, candles, T-shirts, bracelets, pottery, fidgets, candy, and cups. Candy kinda won out of everything else. So I sold coffee for adults, and candy for kids.

I sent out an email to the whole TCS community saying I would be selling coffee for my Capstone, and explaining why I was selling it. I put an attachment to a form, so people could fill out their orders for coffee. After I got all the orders in I counted them up, and then doubled it so people who didn't get to order could still get coffee. If I can manage to sell all 60 bags of coffee, I will have raised \$390.00.

In the very beginning of the candy process, I looked up DIY hard candy. Then I found the candy I wanted to try making. Anna helped me out with the candy making so I went out and bought some stuff for the candy and she brought the rest. The candy making actually wasn't very hard, and it was also very fun. We made it in the TCS kitchen. My candy had a few problems; one time we burned the candy and it smelled really really bad. I first thought about making candy into little hearts with a

mold, but then we found another, easier way, where you just put the candy when it is liquid onto a cookie sheet and then, when it dried, we broke it into medium-sized pieces. I didn't make an order form for the candy but I still sold some!

Some struggles I had were at one point I wasn't here to sell. I mean I eventually did sell, and I sold a lot, but it took some time. Some things I learned about creating a small business are that it's good to be organized. Taking orders is helpful so that you know who will buy and how much they will be getting, but then it's also helpful to have more of your product in case you can sell more, like what I did with the coffee orders. On the last day of school, I will try to stand by the front door and sell the rest of the coffee that I have. I haven't counted up all the money I raised but I feel like it's a lot, and I am proud!

## FUN OUTSIDE TIME

WRITTEN BY:  
AINSLEY S.

One thing I like to do outside is go to the forest by my house, and one day it paid off. I went out into the forest and I found a tire. I was like, “Oh, this is a good tire,” so I took it home, and boy, was my mom mad. My mom was not happy with me taking that tire home. But our village manager thanked me for it. She wasn't the only one that was happy with me taking home the tire and giving it to the dumpster. My dad was also very happy with me taking it home because it's cleaning our forest. I feel like I'm making a change in the health of my forest preserve.

In Riverside, Illinois, where I live I tend to go fishing in the river nearby. I catch lots and lots of crayfish and crappies. the crayfish are plentiful and juicy. The fish are nice and plump and big. I especially like the way bass look. The snakes in the river are very very cool and I like catching them. The only reason I like catching snakes is because how they feel: they're not slimy, they're smooth. One day I took some crayfish home that my friend Luke and I caught. We cleaned them in saltwater and we put them in a boiling pot of water. The sad thing is there were 10 of them. All of them were big, but when I put them in the pot they screamed like little girls. It was horrifying. At first my mom was like, “Eww, Ainsley why do you have crayfish in a bucket?” When I told her we were going to eat them, she softened up and murmured, “Go ahead.” And then me and my friend Luke ate the scrumptious little tails of the crayfish.

Another thing I like to do is fish at my lake house. It's good outside time. One day at my lake house I fished and fished and fished until I caught 5 fish. I then filleted those fish and ate them with mac and cheese. But I didn't cook the fish and I made them seared and prepared so that I could eat them a little bit raw. I feel bad killing fish, but I love the taste.

One scary thing that happened when I was sleeping outside at my lake house one day was when dad and I slept in the tent. That night, we didn't know there was a storm brewing, but when we were sleeping the storm blew over. My dad and I had to chase the tent around all night because it came unbound from the ground. We had to catch it before it went into the lake. Miraculously, we saved it and all was well. I am used to sleeping in tents in storms. It's actually quite relaxing when all of the pitter-patter you hear is the rain on the tent walls. “snore snore snore. Z zzzzz zzzzz zzzzz zzzzz zzzzz Z.” Don't sleep in a tent when it's raining out of your wits.

One day in a forest preserve, my class and I had a stick war. I was always the assassin because I was really sneaky and I don't really like being in the group, so I would always hide around the bridge, and when someone would come over the bridge, I would attack them, be they the Hudsonians or the table trolls. It was so fun. Think of this: you are romping through the undergrowth and I jump from behind you and take you as prisoner. Playing outside with friends is so important.

# GRADES ARE NOT HELPFUL FOR EDUCATION

WRITTEN BY:  
HALINA S.

I think grading students does not help them learn. Grading students is very common in the United States. Grading is a way to test and record students' learning.

Grades can make kids cheat. CBS news says 35% of middle and high school students use their cellphones to cheat on tests. A survey by Rutgers university of 70 high schools shows that 64% of the students cheat on tests. Kids always want to get the best grades they can so this can lead to cheating in most cases. In a study published in Edutopia in 2018, Andrew Simmons says he asked students why they cheat on tests. "I wanted good grades and I didn't want to work," said Sonya. If there were no grades, there would be less cheating.

Mark Barnes, founder of Times 10 Publications, says bad grades can make kids feel bad about themselves and learning. When a student gets a bad grade, it makes them feel sad or upset. This makes them worried about learning and someone getting mad at them. When students are getting bad grades a lot it can make them feel bad about learning and not try their best. This can make it really hard for them to go to school.

If they don't go to school, they won't learn as much. Non-English speaking students and students with learning differences might not get as good grades as other kids. At a lot of schools they don't get a lot of accommodations. This makes the kids not be able to learn in the way they need. They get worse grades than English speaking students. They might be good at learning, but not get as good grades because they struggle with English.

Grading does not help students learn. Grades make kids stressed, worried, upset and feel bad. The stress of grades can make students cheat. Students don't learn if they cheat, and cheating teaches students to cheat more in life. Without grades, the kids' school experiences will be a lot better.

# HOMEWORK IS NOT HELPFUL FOR EDUCATION

WRITTEN BY:  
BEATRICE S.

Homework is a thing that teachers give students to help/make them learn. There are many different sides people take on whether homework is good for kids or not. Research shows that, in many ways, homework is not helpful for education.

Homework isn't good for kids' health. Too much homework can create stress for all ages of kids. According to Stanford University, "a poll of high school students found that 59% thought they had too much homework. 43% of respondents said that homework was their greatest source of stress, and 82% agreed that they were "often or always stressed by school work." Since kids don't learn as well when they're stressed, and kids get stressed because of homework, we shouldn't be stressing kids out by giving them homework. In addition, homework takes up time for other activities and can cause health problems. The American Educational Research Association says, "whenever homework crowds out social experiences, outdoor recreation, and creative activities, and when it takes up the time of sleep, it is not meeting the basic needs of kids." "High school kids who have good grades say the amount of homework they have leads to not enough sleep, headaches and other health problems," says social sciences writer Clifton B. Parker. When they have a lot of homework, kids don't have time for other activities, which isn't good for their health.

Homework disadvantages low income students. According to Heather Koball, a disconnected youth and immigration policy expert, "41% of US kids live in low income families and so they may not have access to the things needed in doing homework such as pens, paper, a computer, or a parent at home to help. If they don't have what they need to do their homework, then it won't get done and they will most likely get in trouble for it. They are also more likely to have to work after school or on weekends or have to look after their siblings." That leaves less or no time for homework. If they don't have time for their homework, it won't be done, and then their grades will lower.

Homework doesn't necessarily improve test scores. There isn't enough evidence that homework improves test score. According to writer and researcher Alfie Kohn, "some 4th grade students who didn't do their homework got about the same score on the National Assessment of Educational Progress math exam as those kids who did 30 minutes of homework a night. Students who do 45 minutes of homework a



night actually did worse on their tests. “A whole elementary school district in Florida created a policy that replaced traditional homework with 20 minutes of reading each night. And the students get to pick their books,” said Washington Post columnist Valerie Strauss. According to Sandra L. Hofferth and John F. Sandberg, “A study by the University of Michigan found that reading for fun - but not homework - was “strongly associated with higher scores on all achievement tests” for children up to 12 years old.” Reading for pleasure helps more than assigned reading does.

Homework doesn't help kids (or anyone) learn. I think this topic is important because it creates inequality problems and it isn't good for students' health and learning. Some schools are changing their policies and if you take that step, you could help kids enjoy their school experiences more!:)

# TEENS NEED ADULTS THEY CAN TALK TO IN SCHOOLS

WRITTEN BY:  
OLIVIA T.

I wrote this essay because my friends deal with a lot of depression. Recently I figured out that my friend has been cutting herself more, which could lead to suicide. My other friend a year ago I believe went to a mental hospital because she was doing bad things to herself. Also, my other friend recently started feeling depressed, and started cutting herself.

Teenagers always struggle to define who they are as a person. So they change their act to what people want them to be, not who they really are. Once teens change who they are, according to the blog "stress management 4 women," it can cause them to experiment with drugs, alcohol, shoplifting, skipping school or having unsafe sex just to fit in: "Everyone feels pressure to fit in with their peers and people they admire, but for teenagers, this pressure to conform and get approval is especially acute." "Mind Your Mind" says: "During puberty, you are learning how to navigate the complex and unsettling world of social interaction in new, complicated ways. Popularity is important to most teens, and a lack of it can be very upsetting. The appearance of peer pressure to try to do or other experimental behavior can also be traumatic for teens that aren't eager to give in, but are afraid of damaging their reputation through refusal."

Signs of depression and peer pressure include:

- Constant sadness, irritability, or lack of energy.
- Changes in sleep patterns or eating habits.
- Sudden weight loss or weight gain.
- Lack of interest in favorite activities.
- Self-imposed isolation.
- Feelings of guilt or self-hatred.
- Constant complaints of being bored or unengaged.
- Sudden drops in academic performance.
- Talk of self-harm or suicide.

Due to that, teens will be depressed and be less active, and you need to be active for your body's health, which is why some teens are tired, lay in bed all day, don't go to school and have a change of attitude. They are not being active, which increases teens' success in life.

NCBI.com says alcohol use can begin as early as elementary school with 9.8% of fourth graders, 16.1% of fifth graders, and 29.4% of sixth graders starting a lifetime use of alcohol . In one study, 32.1% of students in seventh and eighth grade had tried alcohol. Alcohol definitely should NOT be consumed by teens in the early ages. Alcohol is strictly for adults over 21 because of the damage it could do to the brain, your health and your relationships with others.

Cyber-bullying means a person who bullies someone online, It is happening a lot these days and this could cause peer pressure and depression. Cyber-bullying mostly happens to adolescence it can also be with Junior high and elementary school kids. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation. Cyber-bullying is a terrible thing which a teen can suffer from being bullied at school, internet and neighborhoods. It can cause depression over others bullying you.

I know for a fact that I sometimes want to fit in with others and i'm guessing a lot of teens and kids do, too. Fitting in can lead to pressure by others telling you what you have to wear to sit at the popular kids' table and what you have to do to make friends.

There are many ways we can help are teens fight anxiety and peer pressure, such as making sure there is an adult at schools that are teens can talk to. Check your teens' social media to make sure they are not in contact with people who may do illegal things. "Kids health for nemours" says that suicide rates differ between boys and girls. Girls think about and attempt suicide about twice as often as boys, and tend to attempt suicide by overdosing on drugs or cutting themselves. Yet boys die by suicide about four times as often girls, perhaps because they tend to use more lethal methods, such as firearms, hanging, or jumping from heights Suicide is the third-leading cause of death for 15- to 24-year-olds, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), after accidents and homicide. It's also thought that at least 25 attempts are made for every completed teen suicide. Young people with mental health problems – such as anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, or insomnia – are at higher risk for suicidal thoughts. Teens going through major life changes (parents' divorce, moving, a parent leaving home due to military service or parental separation, financial changes) and those who are victims of bullying are at greater risk of suicidal thoughts.

Another reason why I chose this topic was because a lot of my friends deal with depression and they often cut themselves and it scares me a lot. I don't want my friends to continue cutting themselves over things in their lives that don't make them happy. Also, a lot of my friends don't have adults they can talk to in their schools. That's why I made this argument that kids should have adults they can talk to in their

schools, because I have a lot of friends who are already struggling at a young age and I don't want them to struggle or any other kid.

Imagine a world where all you heard was "There has been another suicide" over and over and over again. That would cause you lots of depression too because it's scary to know that people are killing themselves over people who are bullying them, making them do stuff that's inappropriate, and other tragic things. Do you want a world that there are people who are depressed? mentally ill? People who harm themselves by cutting themselves? I am guessing you said no, and that's the right answer. Please help our teens by providing adults that they can talk to at schools and at home. Paying extra people is a pain when you have a ton of teachers to pay, but we need adults to help our kids so please get a social worker in your schools. Thank You.

## GOOD TIMES

WRITTEN BY:  
WIL V.

I remember Archer and Adam laughing as we filmed our first video. It was a Star Wars video, I was Qui Gon Jinn, Adam was Obi Wan, and Archer was Darth Maul. We filmed at Archer's house in his basement. It was a fun experience and I enjoyed it very much. It was important to me because we worked hard to get to that point. We made it using Archer's iPad. We got a lot of good footage. Those were good times. We are still filming to this day and I think that we have made a lot of progress. We even got more people to join in the filming. Man, I can't believe that I'm gonna be leaving next year. I have enjoyed TCS and I'm happy I got to be here. I can't wait to find out what happens next in my life.