

Terri Roberts
Rockland
LD 2118

Like many parents of gifted kids, I was aware on some level of my son's unique needs before he was 4. My despair finally disappeared last August when my 13-year old texted from MSSM that he had "found his people".

Here is an incomplete list of why he has an intense LOVE OF and LOYALTY TO his new high school:

- he is no longer at the very top of every class
- his curiosity has been restored
- his A's are finally earned through rigorous effort
- the pace of learning matches his abilities
- he is free of the 7-hour daily public-school entrapment
- he is surrounded by other kids who care and want to learn
- he tutors others and loves it
- his highly competent professors know and believe in him
- he has no reason to hide parts of himself or his interests
- he is moving up in chess club
- he has joined the highest math team
- he dances at dances where kids actually dance
- drugs and alcohol are a non-issue
- administrators care about his mental health
- he has friends of other ethnicities
- it is a safe place for lgbtq buddies
- he is earning college credit
- the academic culture is cooperative instead of competitive
- dorm-life teaches him responsibility
- he was placed in classes by ability, not by birthday
- he studies and plays with older classmates
- weekend activities and trips broaden his world
- ranking is deemphasized so sports remain invigoratingly fun
- everyone there looks out for each other
- MSSM grows, changes, and improves itself daily

My fellow CA teachers used to say that smart kids will succeed no matter what. I disagreed then. I disagree now. The brightest students deserve to be nourished in every way. A high IQ is no guarantee of success or happiness. Parental involvement alone cannot negate the simplicity, boredom, apathy, and culture of public schools.

I currently substitute teach in Midcoast and Aroostook County school districts. Often I am placed in various special education classrooms, and am astonished at the manpower and resources allocated to that needy group, compared to kids in general ed or gifted/talented.

Maine should invest as much as possible into its future leaders. Taxpayers deserve to have their money spent on tomorrow's problem-solvers. Smart kids are uniquely needy and therefore need your financial and political support. Do not make the brightest just settle for the best their town can offer. Expand MSSM. Support MSSM. Make more MSSMs. Honestly, it's a gem. They really know how to do things right up there. And they've restored my family's sense of hope and enthusiasm.

Thank you.