

Thesis: How I Have Prepared Myself for Future Success

I was in the public school system for eight years. In those eight years, I came to resent going to school. In my mind, it was an exercise in monotony. I had no motivation to spend eight hours of my day being told about subjects that didn't interest or benefit me. Not that it was all bad, I had the privilege of having a few exceptional teachers during my time in public school, and being able to see my friends everyday could definitely be described as a good thing. However, these things do, in no way, shape, or form, change my view of the system. At the end of those eight years, I was convinced that public school could do nothing but harm me, and proceeded to look into alternatives.

The prospect of Sudbury education that excited me the most was the fact that I, and I alone, was responsible for my own learning. However, taking that responsibility proved to be more daunting than I had anticipated. For a long time, I had no idea what to do with myself, and in some ways, I still don't. To this day, people ask me what I "do" at school, and I struggle to explain to them that a typical day at a Sudbury school is anything but. Some days are filled with sports, others not. Some days are filled with board games, others not, and these activities can be substituted with anything else. It's all dependent on the student's interests at that given time. The more time given time to thoroughly

unschool, the larger the variety of interests a student will pursue. I, personally, can say with complete honesty that unschooling myself was the most difficult task I've ever undertaken, but as trying as it was, it's been exponentially more rewarding.

It's very hard to discern with certainty the strengths and weaknesses of the Sudbury model, as each student's experiences in it can drastically vary. The largest obstacle for me personally was going from a system which was heavily structured, to one with little external structure at all. With others, a common issue is the misunderstanding of freedom. Obviously, complete uninhibited freedom begets only anarchy. You are free to do what you want in a Sudbury school, but within the boundaries the community describes. Herein lies the beauty of Sudbury education: that each school or community creates its own culture, its own personal laws that best fit its unique environment.

Learning in Sudbury happens through natural curiosity and genuine passion about topics students are interested in, as opposed to the mindless memorization of facts deemed important to every student in the traditional model, without exception. By saying that you are free to do whatever activity you want, students figure out what they enjoy on their own, and because of that freedom these passions flourish. Without inhibitions, I am left to my own devices to pursue my interests, and in

doing so I find those pursuits to be much more fulfilling. I think anyone would agree that planning and carrying out a project yourself is much more rewarding than having it spoon-fed to you. Truly, my experiences at a Sudbury school have made me appreciate the things I enjoy that much more.

So now, as my Sudbury career enters its' twilight years, so to speak, I am faced with a new chapter in my life. A chapter in which I'm more on my own than ever before in many ways. And although the college environment I am about to enter is much different, I have no doubt the lessons I've learned in my time at JSFS have more than prepared me for it. Lessons like taking responsibility for my actions, and being aware of the consequences. Or, perhaps, more importantly, to give others the mutual respect they deserve. I have been in charge of my education for the last four years, and the next few will be no different. The responsibility to succeed is my own, and nowhere does one learn that better than in the Sudbury model.

In life, you're always being told what to do, or what to like, rarely do we get a chance to just do nothing at all. Rarely are we able to take a step back and honestly think about what we love. I have been lucky enough to have been able to do just that for the past four years of my life, and nothing could have been a better way of preparing me for the future.

I've grown so much since I first started here, and will continue to grow because of my experiences at JSFS. I can only hope that others have experiences similar to mine, so they too can see that in the Sudbury model, where each individual has freedom to truly explore their passions, everyone flourishes.