

Dear Ms. Ettenhuber and Mr. Petrushun,

18 June 2013

I should thank you for forcing me to consider concepts that I had not considered and for teaching me things that I had not yet learned. I can say with little doubt that of all the courses I took this year, I have put the most thought into the two humanities classes. Humanities has an amazing nature of forcing a person to actually consider the connections among topics and the implications of individual ideas. I am thanking you for this thought that the two of you provoked. My experience in my first year of high school would not have been nearly as contemplative without your help.

The philosophy lessons prompted by *Sophie's World* were painful. Perhaps I feel this way because of my tendency to retain my philosophical thoughts rather than share them in a group. I think philosophy should be an internal journey of thought. I think of it as a depth-first search of concepts: inquiries should spark more inquiries, and this path should not be fragmented or interrupted by the tendency of the group to move on. I have made a lot of personal progress in my thoughts throughout the year, as I do every year, but almost all of that progress was made outside of the context of a group philosophy session. For this reason, I think philosophy in class would be better suited to a private session of thought, with the teacher's role being just to plant a few seeds at the beginning of the session to help direct the students. Revelations would need to be recorded silently on paper. This is not a great solution, because a class like this would be arguably unproductive in a humanities setting. Truthfully, I do not believe that philosophy, whether silent or as a group, is suited to this sort of classroom environment.

Relative to some of my other teachers (whose names I won't disclose), I was always impressed with how well-prepared your humanities lessons were. History lessons always had concise slideshows associated with them that gave just the right amount of information. Explanations of the causes for certain historical events were always intuitive, and everything was built off of previous knowledge. It always seemed like each lesson was part of an overall structure and flow of information as opposed to fragmented pieces. To explain specifically why this is important, I will note that another of my teachers this year often teaches the same content multiple days in a row, without adding a single piece of new information on the subsequent days. This teacher often spends the first ten or fifteen minutes of class searching for suitable slideshows or videos to show us. The preparedness that is expressed by the success of these humanities lessons is important.

I suppose I simply appreciate your passion for teaching. There are too many teachers in the field who do not share such a passion, and it is important for a teacher to be able to bestow this sort of passion upon his students. I have found myself interested in the most unexpected of topics just because my teachers were truly engaged in their topics. It is vastly easier for a student to learn when he is exposed to people who love the content that he is trying to learn. Humanities never felt dull. Whether it was excitement about guillotines during the Reign of Terror or enthusiasm about the importance of grammar, there was always a true display of passion for the topics that you were professing.

Yours,
Timothy Aveni