"Learn by Doing, Learn by Caring". When I first stepped foot into The Nueva school, I couldn't contain my smile. The natural light let in by the giant glass panes in the foyer illuminated the artwork on the multicolored walls and various furnishings. The teachers gave us the rundown of what the education plan would look like and the various group projects that we might explore during our time here. We were shown various parts of the campus before we were sat in one of the empty classrooms, ready to listen. When I went home that day, I already knew that this was going to be the perfect environment for me to socialize and enrich myself in. At least, it would've been if I actually got in.

"Maybe you should've taken that test more seriously", said my friend who was accepted into Nueva. He didn't press it but he was right, wasn't he? And so I began my high school education at a public high school. Nothing wrong with that, right? Just a normal high schooler. Nothing wrong with failing to live up to my mother’s expectations. Nothing wrong with being a failure.

Those dusty Indian Red facades were my real welcome to school each morning. I was one of only two people from my middle school that was attending this high school. In this sea of about two thousand others, I knew nobody I could call a "friend". As I looked around me during break and lunch, it dawned on me that the social groups formed from previous schools had already cauterized. There was no real outlet of people for me to break into.

One very unremarkable and normal day, my mother asked me to take public transport back home since she was going to be out of town that evening. I got off the train and absentmindedly hopped on the bus. Today had been a day like any other at school, learning next to nothing, talking to nearly nobody, and unhappily sitting alone at break and lunch. As the bus crossed the bridge to the lake blue Oracle towers, I noticed a girl in a Design Tech High School hoodie.

"Hey, you go to d.tech? One of my best friends goes there!", I asked her. “What is it like?” She described a schooling system that felt so relaxed, and different than any style of education I had heard of before. This was my chance to go to a school where my friends were, to go to a school that was anything but ordinary or normal. I emailed the office of admissions, which was really just one person, and set up a shadow date and interview.

The scent of burnt chocolate wafted into the autobody shop of the wacky and uncharacteristic "Design Tech High School". It was a scrappy school, nowhere near as immaculate as the elite Nueva school, yet it had its charm. Chairs and tables made out of various materials and formed into odd shapes were scattered around the building seemingly with no relation to each other. There was no sunlight inside the building but it was clear to see that even the furniture would not conform to a specific theme. There were no teachers who gave me the rundown of what our year would look like and there was no tour guide. My guide around school was the very same friend that I called.

Ironically, the admissions officer who interviewed me had previously worked at Nueva, although I only learned this after the fact. I loved the school, and I said as much. It was so weird, different, and free! “Great! See you in January”