

7/23/2020
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June 23, 2020

Ching-King Chieng, Ph.D.
55 Westminister Ave.,
Arlington, MA 02474

Arlington School Committee Members
869 Massachusetts Ave.,
Arlington, MA 02476

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Ching-King Chieng. I am a clinical psychologist from Massachusetts. It has taken me quite a while to have the courage to write to you regarding my growing concerns with intolerance in our society, further exacerbated by the most recent tragic incident in Minneapolis. I hope you will take the time to read this letter.

My rationale for writing this letter stems from my own observation, experience, and understanding of the current community service requirement for American High School students. From my work and personal experience, it is my understanding that our current high school graduation requirement for community service is too often fulfilled by marginally beneficial activities which seem to be motivated by a desire to satisfy a requirement rather than an honest effort of engaging in meaningful service. In lieu of the much widespread mis-understanding, mis-information, and mis-interpretation of human behavior, which partially is because we have a low comfort level with people who are different than ourselves, the following is my attempt to suggest some creative ways to encourage young people to more actively and meaningfully engage in their communities. It is my belief and hope that this experience will also have significant positive impact on their development and maturing process.

Community Service Commitment/Requirement:

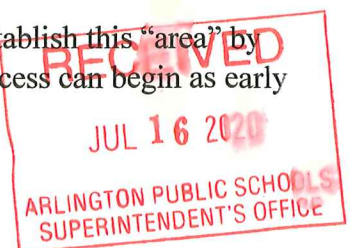
“Active learning happens when we enter into areas outside our comfort zone”

As a parent of a child who was educated through Arlington Public School System, I have witnessed and experienced high school students fulfilling their community service requirement by helping teachers, tutoring underclassmen, helping rake leaves or painting for elderly, etc. Even though such work is important, I realize that we might miss a wonderful opportunity to help our growing young minds with sensitive topics/issues facing our much-divided society of today.

Below is one suggestion aimed at encouraging young people to engage in their community more actively in a way that can create greater understanding, empathy, tolerance, and service to both themselves and society at large. As they slowly become more comfortable interacting with people who are different than themselves, it increases the likelihood of people adhering to the golden rule: “treat others the way we ourselves like to be treated.”

The how...

Allow yourself to enter an area outside your comfort zone. You can begin to establish this “area” by entering a relationship with an individual very different from yourself. This process can begin as early



as middle school and continue through high school and beyond (if you want). Take time to meet and engage with your chosen individual as often as you want, but, a minimum requirement would be once every other month (inviting him/her to your extracurricular activities also count). Toward your senior high school year, you would write a reflective essay on the benefits and challenges of that relationship from both yourself and your chosen person's perspectives. Share it with that individual, and have it co-signed. This will be 1) part of your high school graduation requirement under "community service commitment"; and 2) your college application enhancement requirement. Below are some examples of such potential relationships:

- 1) Engage/interact with a person who is different than yourself (excluding relatives and friends):
 - a. **Racial Differences**...a white student engages with a black student; an Asian student engages with an American Indian student; a Muslim student engages with a Latino student; etc.
 - b. **Different Social Status**...a privileged white student engages with a homeless black man; a poor Latino student engages with a privileged Asian person; etc.
 - c. **Mentally/physically challenged**...an Asian student engages with a mentally challenged person; a Latino student engages with a blind person; etc.
 - d. **Elderly**...a white student engages with a black senior person who has dementia; an Indian student engages with a lonely black senior person; a Jewish student engages with an Arab senior; etc.
 - e. **Sexual orientation**...a heterosexual black student engages with a white transgender person; a gay person engages with an Asian heterosexual student; a black student engages with a bisexual Latino person; etc.

Key Benefits...

- 1) Increase the student's comfort level with human-to-human interaction despite our differences
- 2) Broaden the student's sensitivity, empathy, tolerance, and awareness
- 3) Learn new ways of communicating
- 4) Potentially make a friend
- 5) Broaden the student's perspective such as its challenges and gains, and
- 6) Increase social problem-solving skills for the student.

I will be available to have further conversation with you if you are interested in the idea. I can be reached at 781-492-1415 or email address ckchieng@comcast.net. Thank you for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,



Ching-King Chieng, Ph.D.
Clinical Psychologist

