

My School, My Words

Area high school students weigh in on the issues they face as students every day.

Gateway High School is probably not all what it seems to be. Sure, it's old and there's a lot of weird people there, but it's not all that bad. When I first moved to Colorado, I said that last thing I would do is actually go to this dump of a high school. I loved my old school and I loved everyone in it. When I moved out here in the middle of my sophomore year, I was heartbroken. Life was made at my old school; I knew everybody and everybody knew me. I had great friends that were like brothers to me. But, I had no intention of wanting to attend Gateway.

My first day was the worst. I was embarrassed to death, I sat by myself at lunch, and everything was just so different. I just didn't want to do anything anymore. But probably the greatest turn around point happened to me. The basketball coach approached me and asked me if I wanted to play for him. Because I said yes, I met the best friends anyone could ever have. As a matter of fact, I'd been at the school for only three days and I was already hanging out with them that weekend. Ever since then, my friends and I from there on did everything together. We even hung out almost everyday during the summer. Call it a coincidence, but if not for Gateway, I probably wouldn't have the great friends that I do.

The next year became a whole different story. I really became open and optimistic with Gateway. I wanted to become friends with as many people as I could. As the year was going by, I made a countless amount of friends. Just as I thought nothing

could get any better, the greatest thing of all happened to me. I met a girl in my English class who I can't even begin to talk about because words just don't nearly come close to the feelings I have about her. But because of Gateway, I found one girl who I can honestly say that I love.

You see, my high school may appear different to others, but to me, I love it. Because of me moving to this wonderful high school, I have accomplished so much. I met great friends and good people, I became a captain for the basketball team which I love, I've encountered many prized moments, I have become involved with my school, and I was able to learn how to love by the girl of my dreams. I'm not calling my high school the greatest school where good things can happen to you, but for me, it was fate. My high school is a place where I feel I belong in this world and a place that has made the greatest difference in my life. Who knows what my life would be like without Gateway, but I can guarantee that it wouldn't even come close to how great it is now.

—Justin Jensen, Gateway High School

I Am An Olympian

The elastic cap that graces my head,
In goldenrod lettering
It reads 'Gateway'
I am of that place,
I am an Olympian.
The suit that's squeezing every bit of
oxygen out of me,
Midnight and a fiery, blazing orange
The color of that slick material
That makes up a swimmer's wardrobe.
I can't breathe,
Lightheaded and tipsy,
Instinctively I hear the referee's voice
My hands grasp the block,
The rough surface,

That texture that grips me
Just as hard as I grip it.
The starting sound
The explosion of adrenaline.
The absolute rush
As you hit the cold water.
You go,
You don't breathe,
You don't think,
You just go
In that moment
I am not me,
My face belongs to the blue
My identity is lost to the waves.
I am not myself when I race,
I am an Olympian.
My blood runs black and orange
And my eyes spark with golden flames
This is my territory
My pool
This is where I swim
Until I can't move anything.
This is where I build strength,
And learn to lift this entire school
Upon my shoulders.
Representing everything

In one race.
This isn't about me
Or my own performance,
It's about the pride.
It's about the people dressed in our
colors
All screaming in the stands.
I am not me when I start,
I am an Olympian,
It's not me who wins that race
It's the spirit of the racers before me
Who cut the path
And built up this team.
This race is not for me,
This is for my team,
The girls who've become my family.
This is for my school
My coaches and faculty,
My leaders and guide
This is for all of them.
This is for Gateway High School.

—Rachel Strawn, Gateway High School

Many hear the name Gateway High School of Aurora Colorado, and a shiver shoots up their spine. Gateway is viewed to those who don't live in it's halls on a day to day basis as a bad place. Gateway is seen as a "ghetto" school, a breeding ground for pregnant teens and gang bangers. I too experience a shiver up my spine, yet this is a shiver of enthusiasm and pride.

As an athlete I see a wide variety of people enter Gateway, as well as their disapproving eyes following me down the halls of their school. I am looked down upon by those who pay 5,000 dollars to play competitive volleyball, and had their college paid for before the age of five. It's almost as if simply because I don't live in a 2 million dollar home, that I am less of a person.

As an Olympian however, I am proud to say that I am three year-running class president at this marvelous school. I take pride in a great football team, own which I know certain high school teams cringe when realizing that the next game is against "Sunshine" and his Brick Wall teammates, or the team which bore "Willie P" whom no one was smaller or faster. A Basketball team containing O'Rein Hughes, who has previously averaged 60 points a game. Gateway also contains a marching band which has won multiple outstanding awards, members of All-State Choir, and most importantly, staff and students who care. I pride myself in knowing that three Beottcher scholars have come out of Gateway High School. Granted that there are a few students which aren't exactly A+ material at Gateway this fact is true about any high school in the nation. Sadly, the world dwells on these miniscule statistics, blinding them to the greatness which Gateway carries on its shoulders.

Never shall I be ashamed to say that I am a student a Gateway High School of Aurora Colorado. This is a place where I have continued to find knowledge and understanding. At least once in everyone's life, the words "don't judge a book by its cover" have been heard. I invite anyone unknowledgeable about the school to open the pages of Gateway High school. —*Stephanie Burgess, Gateway High School*

When stopping to think about what makes a *good* school, one might often immediately describe obvious factors such as academic excellence, talented sports teams, or the availability of modernized technology. However, one must look farther than these high standards in order to find the qualities of a *great* school, and Regis Jesuit High School exemplifies the qualities expected in a school of such high standards. Not only do Regis Jesuit students strive for academic excellence, good results on sports teams, and staying up-to-date with modern technology, but they also feel the need to do more. At Regis Jesuit, the Jesuit order of Catholic priests introduced the term "magis" in order to describe ones efforts to do more than what is needed or required. This commonly unknown, yet simple word can be used to describe the attitude of the Regis Jesuit community towards life. Everyone in the RJ community is encouraged to go above and beyond the norm and to push themselves to do their best in every aspect of life. Because of this attitude of "magis," most RJ students are well-rounded, participating in honors or advanced placement classes, sports teams, music programs, or other interests. Students learn dedication, commitment, organization, honesty, perseverance, and other life skills that can be applied to all aspects of life in every stage of life.

Even though students master these life skills at Regis Jesuit, they also experience an important awareness of love, compassion, and support that come directly from the school community. The strong community that has arisen within Regis Jesuit High School does not just add to the many outstanding attributes of the school, but the community *completes* Regis Jesuit. All members, including students, faculty, and families, feel a sense of belonging and support that are found only at Regis Jesuit. Classmates become not only peers, but sisters and brothers while teachers are not only faculty members, but family. Because everyone experiences an incredible sense of support from the community, all members feel empowered to accomplish any task or excel in any activity because they know that they have the entire community standing behind them. The results of this bond are easily found, and include incredible friendships, hardships overcome, and (most of all) unending love. In many ways, this love is the key to a spectacular Regis Jesuit community because it is visible in all members of the community who are connected by a special bond.

The Regis Jesuit High School community is certainly known for several admirable qualities, including its academic excellence, successful sports teams, and modern technology. However, Regis enters an entirely elite group of schools when one looks at its philosophy of “magis,” its dedication to doing more, and the sense of community found only there. Members of the RJ community feel both a sense of uniqueness as their talents are individually recognized and a sense of belonging because of the support system and love. —*Ruth Case, Regis Jesuit High School*

When people ask me where I go to high school, I always cheerfully reply, “Regis Jesuit!” This is usually followed by confused stares and the inevitable

question: “Isn’t that any all-boys school?” Not anymore, I always reply. As of four years ago, Regis Jesuit Girls Division has been in existence. We’ve begun to grow, and to create our own tradition. And best of all? We’re not going anywhere.

Simply put, I love my school. It’s an incredible feeling to know that much of what I get to do is a “first” for the school. We are creating a lasting tradition, one that hopefully numerous classes will embrace in the future. But our tradition is not something that can be defined simply in words. Our tradition is found in the spirit of the school. We are developing a uniquely (girly) tradition, one of that to many would be considered unorthodox. When I think of my school, I think of dance parties in the quad, of Spirit Week, of pep rallies to support our sports and clubs. I think of my math class, where we make up math jokes, and of my chemistry class where we have done experiments to create pink compounds because they’re pretty. Yes, we are girls. And the tradition we are building is a direct result of our common goal: to excel. We represent Regis in many ways, from our intellectuals, to our athletes, to every girl who strives for greatness in any field. Our tradition is based in the minds and hearts of countless girls who love Regis as much as I do. Our motto is “women with and for others,” and in every aspect of our lives, we strive to live out these words in and out of school.

As far as high schools go, we are still young, and in many ways not yet widely known. But, slowly but surely, we are working to leave our mark, we are working to create a lasting tradition. And as the Jesuit tradition goes, we are working to make our “thoughts, words and actions” known “for the greater glory of God.” — *Claire Sokas, Regis Jesuit High School*

My school is not merely a building to which students report daily because government regulations say we must. Thomas Jefferson High School is a place of accomplishment, of learning, and of integrity; a place where the community comes together with the common goal of preparing its students for success in post-secondary education and life. Here, everyone is welcomed with open arms and open minds; there is a cohesive bond shared between all: we are Spartans.

The importance of life outside the classroom is always stressed by our leaders and mentors. We have successful athletic programs, leadership opportunities, and performing and media arts that are all supported by our strong community. Each Spartan is different yet no one is more important than the other. We believe that regardless of race, religion, or sex anyone can do anything.

I am very fortunate to have been a part of Thomas Jefferson High School and its community. From writing for the ASPA First Place winning school newspaper, the *Jefferson Journal*, to playing varsity basketball, to qualifying for nationals in DECA, it is safe to say I have accomplished more than my fair share at high school. As I further my education at Dartmouth College in the fall, I can honestly say that the TJ community has succeeded in preparing me for life after high school, both inside and outside of the classroom. —*Turia Lahlou, Thomas Jefferson High School*

What is a school? Is it merely just a building with walls, floors, and ceilings where we as students are mandated to go everyday to get an education? To some, that may be what school is: a punishment, a prison cell, but not for me. Thomas Jefferson

High School is more than my school; it has been my home for the past three years. Here the community comes together with one unifying goal: to prepare its students for college and life, in general. We have a small community, only consisting of about 1,100 students, so here everyone knows my name; the students, teachers, and faculty all share a bond with one another that is unlike anything you will find anywhere else: we are family.

Life outside of the classroom is also a very important aspect of the school, and is encouraged by our staff. We have many successful athletic programs, as well as leadership opportunities, and the Computer Magnet program that are all supported and encouraged by the community. There is something for everybody, and no one is left out. When you look out among the population of the school we are all different, which is something that makes our school very special. However, no matter how different we are no one is treated any better or worse for it. We are all accepted for who we are, regardless of our background and beliefs. There is no judgment being passed here.

The teachers at the school make it what it is today. Without them my experience here would have been completely different. Every one of them is willing to stay and work with me to help me succeed. When I walk around this building I see students and teachers interacting on levels that I wouldn't see in other schools. Here it is ok for a teacher to be my friend. I learn from teachers both inside and out of the classroom, which I think is a great and valuable aspect of the school that many people overlook.

Already at Thomas Jefferson High School I have accomplished so much. I have been a part of the varsity cross country and track teams, I have been involved in drama, I write for the school newspaper, the *Jefferson Journal*, and I am a member of the National Honor Society. I have been a part of all that and I still have a year to go; a year to try

new things and meet even more new people. TJ has given me a solid foundation, so when I do go off to college I believe that I will be very successful; not only in school, but in whatever I choose to pursue in the future. —*Ben Gilliland, Thomas Jefferson High School*