

Free argumentative essay on why high school grads should take a gap year

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Today's education system has forever changed the way young men and women go about their academic and work careers. In earlier eras, students would enter the job world immediately after school, and many colleges and universities were out of reach for lower and middle-class Americans.

However, now that the job market has become much more competitive, the American academic experience has dictated that students go directly to college after graduating high school. While this is now the norm, it is not the ideal: students experience burnout, and they do not get valuable life experience that they need to survive by immediately continuing their education instead of entering the job world, or pursuing some of their other creative pursuits. Toward that end, it must be recommended that high school students take a "gap year" in between graduation and entering college.

A "gap" year, roughly defined, is a sabbatical from education immediately following graduation of high school, permitting the entrance into college in the fall of the following year. Evidence now suggests that more and more high school graduates are taking gap years before they embark upon their college career - 7% of all British students in 2007 deferred admission for a gap year, and in 2011 around 1.2% of first-time college freshmen also took a gap year (Strauss, 2012). There are many ways to conduct a gap year - one is by securing a spot in a preferred college a year in advance, thus securing your position and guaranteeing that you do enter college following the gap year - fifty to seventy students who attend Harvard University choose this option each year (Strauss, 2012). There are also bridge year programs and gap year programs provided by other universities to facilitate these goals.

Admissions officers also look highly upon gap years, as long as they are used

productively - students can use them to travel abroad, pursue an interest, or reflect the sense of purpose and maturity that colleges are looking for.

Internships and fellowships can be performed during this gap year, which are especially beneficial to admissions processes (Strauss, 2012).

There are many reasons that a gap year would be advantageous to a freshly graduated high school student. A gap year would permit a student to gain valuable work experience in the field of their choice. Gap years facilitate international development and travel, as many of these high school graduates move on to volunteer work and volunteer-tourism in foreign countries (Simpson, 2004). These programs "combine the hedonism of tourism with the altruism of development work," and allow high school graduates to have fun and learn more about themselves at the same time, helping others in the process (681). With regards to the third world, specifically, these gap year students provide a valuable and appreciated service, which also offers them a two-fold benefit in life and work experience.

With a gap year, high school graduates could allow themselves to pursue their specific interests on their own, thus allowing them to make their college experience more fulfilling by extension. Perspective is a wonderful thing to have in life, and high school graduates, fresh from the responsibilities and tight scheduling of school, often want to take some time to have more life experience before dedicating their entire selves to college careers. If a student has an interest they want to actively pursue, they can do so and gain that experience that potential employers might find beneficial. There are many different internship programs that provide structure and endorsement

for specific interests that might both be more attractive on a college resume and allow them to gain more life experience (Luckerson, 2012). For example, programs to mentor middle schoolers in southern Los Angeles, to travel to third world countries and help with international development, or work with companies that they may wish to be employed with in the future, are all examples of wonderful uses of a gap year. Gap years make more financial sense as well; it would provide a high school graduate with more time to apply to better schools, in addition to granting them more time to save money for college (Strauss, 2012). Paid internships and programs also provide for-profit means for students to both learn about their chosen interests, gain experience and put that money toward college expenses. Taking a job for a year is another great way to earn income and gain job experience.

Greater personal fulfillment can be found with a gap year, which then translates to college careers that are more focused and career-oriented. Students who take a gap year have the potential to learn new skills, pursue and find new interests, and generally concentrate their energies on things they want to carry into higher education. Many students entering college do not have the life experience to know what they want to major in; there are quite a few students who take longer than usual to focus their major, remaining 'undecided' until they happen upon something. This can lead to longer, more expensive stays in college, and a stunted emotional or career development, as they do not know how to leverage their academic experience into real-world practical outcomes (Simpson, 2011). With the help of a gap year, high school graduates can gain the life experience necessary

to know what they want to do with their college years, allowing them to get more out of it. In essence, high schoolers get greater life experience and perspective, which then translates into becoming better college students. Some scholars call this utilization of the gap year 'commodifying the gap,' as it becomes a necessary part of entering capitalist society. By either entering the job market or making oneself more 'marketable,' one combines career and educational prospect improvement with the sense of adventure that comes with traveling and taking time to 'find yourself' (Cremin 526). The gap year is also seen to be a fundamentally important part in personal development for the high school graduate, as it allows them the time and the experience to finally "take sides" in the relationship between the individual and capitalist society; one can effectively decide what one wants to do while still working within the capitalist system in a safe way. It is an extremely freeing and agency-providing act, as the individual is given the freedom to commit themselves to intense interests that help define their lives (540). In conclusion, a gap year would allow a high school student to enter college a somewhat more experienced, fulfilled and driven individual. With a year of work behind them, they would have more disposable and needed income saved for college and living expenses, as well as a greater work ethic. Gap years provide opportunities for high school graduates to gain greater emotional development and grow as individuals, thus preventing them from wasting time on 'undecided' periods in college where their money and their education is undirected. Due to the efficacy and the vast benefits of a gap year, it is highly recommended that high school students take one before

entering college. Not only does it help their resume and their work ethic, it helps their own personal development (Simpson, 2011).

Works Cited

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