

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is in response to recent publications and editorials regarding the state of Kennett High School. As a student at Kennett, I am appalled by the negative outlook of our community. Many people have spoken up regarding Kennett's unjustly bleak representation by the press, but we rarely, if ever, get a student perspective.

Well, here it is, your "student perspective."

Firstly, let me say that I am no straight-A student, nor am I "bottom of the barrel." Rather, I am your average student, with the same potential as anyone else. It is as this average student that I write this letter.

Kennett has been the subject of skewed, nearly malicious reports time and time again. I refuse to believe that it is a coincidence that there are so many front-page articles about "Ken-not" sweatshirts and none whatsoever about our DECA state finalists going to the nationals. What do we accomplish by hyper-focusing on petty nonessential issues like a sweatshirt misprint? This pointless piece of "news" is being used as a vehicle to tear down the educational standing of *junior high* students. How can you expect kids to feel good about their education when an authority like our local paper bashes their reading and writing skills? We are *telling* our kids they are dumb.

Let's not blame the teachers either. Countless attacks on Kennett's teaching staff have created nothing but outrage and misconceptions. Mr. Marvel's recent editorial about the English department was not only full of misinformation, but attacks what may be one of the most passionate and motivated group of teachers in the entire school. I have had my own fair share of English classes, ranging from CP English I, Honors American Lit, Writing, Journalism, AP English and more. Not once in my time here at Kennett have I been made to participate in "Sustained Silent Reading" for 40% of my class time. That goes beyond gross exaggeration to pure fabrication. In fact, the only class I have ever had any form of silent reading in has been my recent experience in Writing class, taught by none other than Penny Kittle herself. We read every day for 10-12 minutes max (which, by the way, is less than 14% of our time) in order to get us in the writing mood. Not only is this extremely effective in getting students into a writing mode, but it opens up many students to reading, as they now see how it relates to their own writing. I have watched many of my peers, even honor students, find a newfound appreciation for reading when given this opportunity to ease into it for short

bursts each day. To address Mr. Marvel's other concerns, let me say that we rarely, if ever, watch movies, never go to assemblies outside the two or three school pep-rallies each year, and are assigned numerous complex and challenging writing pieces that are returned promptly with detailed, constructive feedback on a regular basis.

Also, let it be known that there is no such "writing manual" that Mrs. Kittle uses. Like any open-minded teacher would, Mrs. Kittle keeps a library of books written by many authors with different perspectives on teaching. None of them are her "manual," rather, they are varied resources for pulling ideas and expanding concepts of what teaching can be. Do not be fooled into thinking that the Kennett English Department is some poorly-structured, by-the-books grouping of poor instructors and loose educational standards. On the contrary, it is exactly the opposite.

The teachers here are not only highly qualified, but they actively seek out ways to connect to their students where our own community refuses to. I have had the great pleasure of learning from Penny Kittle, Jason Wood, Chris Canfield, Ryan Mahan and former Kennett teacher Scott Larson. Every one of these teachers excels at their craft and demands high levels of learning from their students. These are teachers who come into their class room every day and not only teach, but become a part of their students' lives. They honestly believe in us, and while our community continues to pull us down, they see us for not just who we are, but who we can be. It is an uphill battle, to be sure, and it shouldn't have to be. What a sad world we live in when those who help our kids the most are our community's biggest targets. It is high time we stopped berating the quality of education these instructors provide. They not only do their own jobs, but they do *your* job as well, supporting us, the students, and pushing us to be more than we are.

This rampant negativity has accomplished nothing positive. Put yourself in our shoes: every day we go to a school that our community leaves severely underfunded, read a paper that attacks our student body and faculty alike, and go home questioning whether anyone really believes in us at all. Well, people *do* believe in us, and they continue to believe in us through the black cloud that *you* have painted.

Even so, never underestimate the power of a community. Did you ever consider the idea that maybe, *just maybe*, so many kids drop out of Kennett because that is what our community has said we do, *that* is what our community shows us they believe. Let's shed these false pretenses and see Kennett students for who they really are. We are not a mass of dropouts, drug dealers, and poorly educated slackers. We are scholars, athletes, and artists. We are the future poets, playwrights, and novelists of America. We are aspiring doctors, scientists, and professors. We are great mathematicians, histo-

rians, and psychologists. We are musicians, painters, and sculptors. We are more than the sum of our parts. We are more than you will ever see us to be.

“Ken-not read, Ken-not write,” goes the popular rhyme. Well, I have *read* the bad press, and I have *written* this response. What more proof do you need? I may only be one student, but I am one of many, and we deserve your respect.

—Logan Dwight