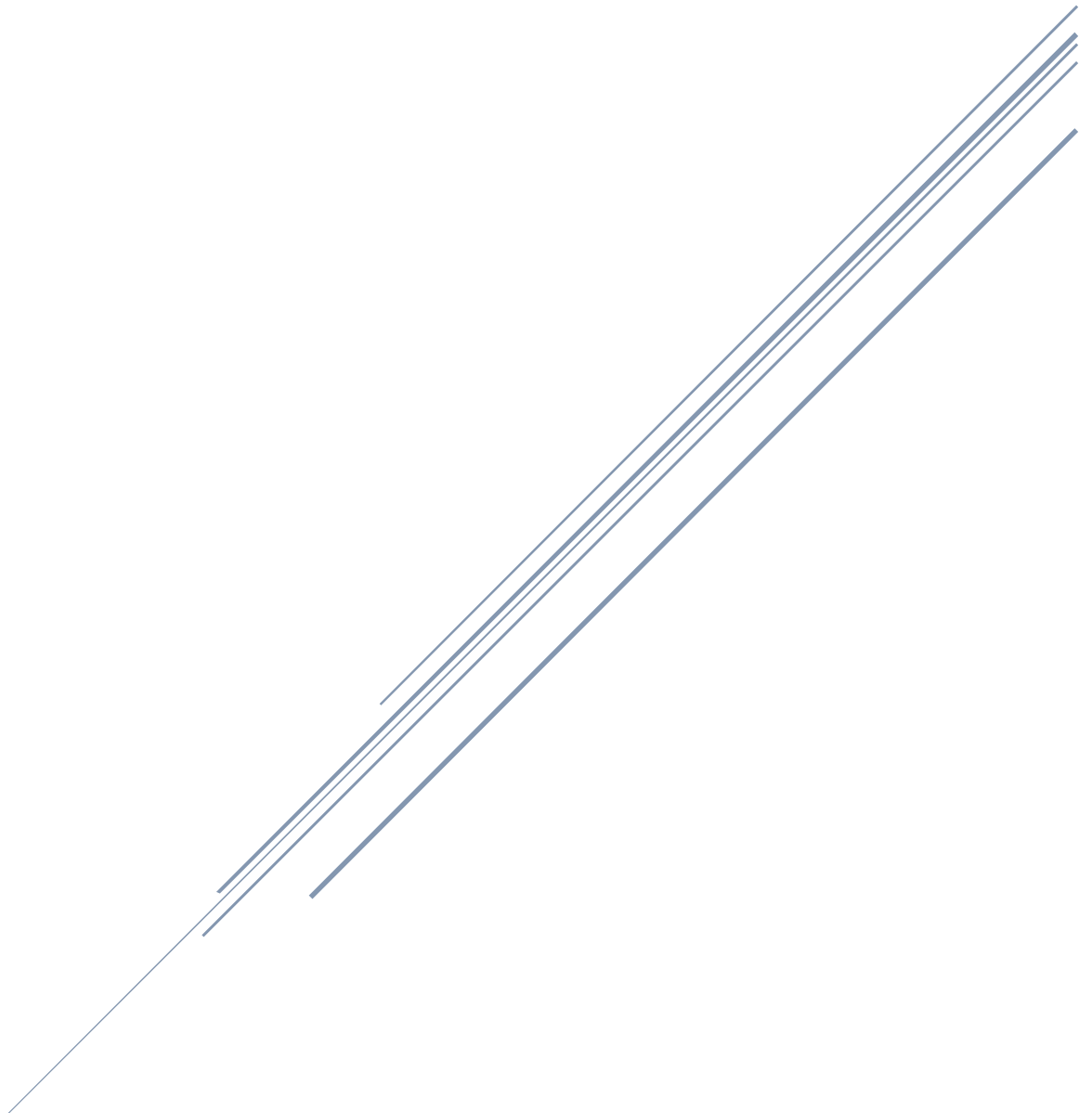


# A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO 8TH GRADERS



By the Class of 2022

MAY 2018

HOLLAND PATENT MIDDLE SCHOOL

9601 MAIN STREET

HOLLAND PATENT, NY 13354

This project was inspired by the book study for The Innovator's Mindset by George Couros. One of the many wonderful points in the book is the importance of including student voices in our education decisions. As part of this journey, I continued the book club discussion for the second year in a row with our current 8<sup>th</sup> graders - the class of 2022. We talked about what they wanted educators to know about 8<sup>th</sup> graders, and if, given a voice, what they would say and/or change about their education experience. Students were given the task of creating their own list of thoughts and suggestions, working individually or in small groups, and were assured of complete anonymity. With the exception of a few spelling, grammar and punctuation corrections (*and School vs. Learning by Mr. Couros*), this document is exactly as written by the students and I am excited to share it with you.

Mrs. Margaret McNamara

## **School vs. Learning**

by George Couros

“Here are some of the ways where school and learning can become divergent.

*School promotes starting by looking for answers. Learning promotes starting with questions.*

*School is about consuming. Learning is about creating.*

*School is about finding information on something prescribed for you. Learning is about exploring your passions and interests.*

*Schools teaches compliance. Learning is about challenging perceived norms.*

*School is scheduled at certain times. Learning can happen any time, all of the time.*

*School often isolates. Learning is often social.*

*School is standardized. Learning is personal.*

*School teaches us to obtain information from certain people. Learning promotes that everyone is a teacher, and everyone is a learner.*

*School is about giving you information. Learning is about making your own connections.*

*School is sequential. Learning is random and non-linear.*

*School promotes surface-level thinking. Learning is about deep exploration.”*



- Learn more about what we are interested in
- Pick what order are classes are in
- Be able to move around more in classes
- More hands on work rather than paper and pencil
- Able to pick other classes to take
- Be able to go out side or the gym during study hall
- Should be able to pick our own seats

Learn more about what we are interested in because students might want to go to school to learn more.

Less time in school

Make chairs comfy

Less periods

Less homework

Give us more freedom

Let us sit where we want

Let us pick our groups

Let us pick our own groups, maybe we will do better in class with our friends.

These are many ways to better our education system and students learning abilities.

1. Allow more freedom, with barriers- students are told to raise their hands to go to the bathroom or get a drink. If we allowed students to inform their teachers when they are going without permission, it would cause less disruptions and allow the students to concentrate without holding it in, or feeling dizzy.
2. Students should have more creative freedom in classes- like writing things I am interested in or making a math equation for my peers.
3. Games or conversing breaks during the day- children often loose energy or attention while sitting in class for 40 minutes, and with only 3 minutes to get to the next class it does not provide free-time.
4. Teachers should show more compassion for their students- In some situations students will show clear distress and teachers will YELL at them to continue their work though they are not disrupting.
5. Bullying should be taken more seriously- many students face bullying (obviously) but in many situations the faculty does very little about it or people seem favored in the consequences.
6. There should be hiding spots or better approaches to lock downs in emergencies.

- **Be able to eat lunch outside**
- **Choose who we want in classes**
- **Choose who we want to sit next to in classes**
- **Be able to sit on the top part of the auditorium**
  - **Be able to choose what courses to take**
  - **Be able to learn on our own levels**
- **Have less strict rules so we can experience life, and make our own choices**
  - **Have ice cold water bottles every day for free**
  - **Be able to use computers in every class**
- **Be able to choose which partner we want to work with in tech, like students from different groups**
- **Choose what gym courses to do, and if a student does not like the gym course you are doing, and if approved you can do the course you want in your gym class**

**Be able to eat lunch outside when warm: since Fortnite has come out, all kids have done is sit inside on the most beautiful days and play video games. The main and most important benefit about being able to sit outside, is that when kids eat outside for lunch, they are getting the sunlight time that they had missed while playing video games. It will also cause less obesity in the Holland Patent School District.**

- Schools should have better time management
- Better discipline
- Quicker teaching
- More interactive learning
- Less note-taking
- Trust in yourself and others
- More options for how to learn, ready to go to next lesson, etc.
- Be able to choose own schedule
- Children who do not want to pay attention/not interested will be given more interesting classes fit to their likes and hobbies
- **Everyone should have a fair learning experience, and should be able to pick which speed they learn at**
- Students should be able to pick their own classes



## **Things in School that should be Changed**

1. Students should be allowed to listen to music; with one headphone in their ear so they could still listen the teacher
2. There should be a class that teaches you about real world things like balance a checkbook and what are taxes.
3. Students should have an option on how to learn - by themselves, with partners, in a bigger group, etc.
4. The teachers should teach the lesson quicker and after the lesson if the students have a question they could ask after the lesson
5. The schools should have more discipline for kids who don't want to learn and the teachers should only target the student who did something wrong, not the group who was with the person
6. The teachers should trust the students who are always good and don't trust the students who always get in trouble
7. The students should be allowed to set up all their classes so they can choose when they have math, science, ELA, etc.
8. If the students decide to... they can take more creative/ more interactive ways of learning, like if the student wants to make a PowerPoint on the computer let them express their creativity
9. The school should have better time management, like in some classes if students are really good at the class and they are already done have them do something that is productive.
10. Students that are not interested in a class should be moved to a class that fits the need of what the student wants to be when they are older
- 11. If students have an above 90 average in the class that student should not be given homework because they have already proven that they know what they are doing**
12. Students that are bad in a class and do not listen should have to take a test right that second
13. Students that have passed all their tests in a class should be rewarded with a prize to show all their hard work and accomplishment
14. In school once a student passes 11<sup>th</sup> grade there final year should be studying on what they want to do in college/ for their job
15. Students should be allowed to bring electronics to school (if good)

16. Being able to pick your courses
17. Bigger lockers
18. More hall time
19. Lunch outside
20. Be able to have classes with whoever they want
21. Be able to sign yourself out when you turn 18
22. Cushiony seats for students
23. Let us use our phones more when told to be on a electronic device

Picking your own courses: maybe you can have a two week trial class so you get the feel of it, kids would pay more attention to the classes they like more than the classes we have now where kids sit there and don't pay attention.

- > Optional Study Halls
- > More Language options
- > Better Lunches
- > More time to move around
- > More time outside/ lunch outside
- > Bigger Lockers
- > More hall time between classes
- > Electives
- > More tech in classes
- > Use phone in class for projects
- > Seat cushions
- > All season Leather Stocking Swim
- > Reward students with good grades & attitude
- > More choice in projects
- > More say in schedules
- > Steam schedules don't change everyday
- > Choose own seats

## Optional Study Hall

Not always something to do, waste of time for electives or other classes. Try other classes or take two of one class. More/ double time to work in classroom.

## The Teachers Guide to Teaching 8<sup>th</sup> Graders

- + We get to learn how we want to learn on Mondays and Friday
- + Let us choose who's in our groups
- + If you finish early you can do other class work with other people who are done
- + You can listen to music while you work but if it distracts you, you have to turn it off

- Students should be allowed to listen to their own music during study hall, tests/quizzes, and while doing classwork (not while the teacher is talking)
- Extra-curricular classes such as music, art, and languages should be optional and if we choose not to take classes there should be study halls put in place so students get more work done
- Students should be able to work at their own pace but must catch up if they get to behind
- Kids should choose how they learn a lesson/choose what projects they want to do
- The order of classes should be chosen by students
- Students should be able to wear hats in school

## Tips for teachers

1. During tests if kids work better with music or food they should be allowed to have them
2. Comfier chairs
3. Start school a little later so kid's minds can be more awake and more cooperative in class instead of complaining they're too tired
4. All students should be treated equally, like no favorites and the not so smart kids and the smart kids should be treated the same, no special treatment
5. No extra help classes, they can sometimes make the student feel like the teacher is calling them stupid
6. Teachers can focus on more one on one with the student and can encourage after school classes for those who need a little more encouraging that their smart instead of putting them in labs



- We should be able to choose what classes we want to have like art instead of music
- To choose to move to a different class within reason
- Doing more creative writing
- Assigned partners or groups instead of choosing, I don't like "ugh, I'm stuck with \_\_\_\_" when their friend group up with others
- I feel like we should do work with the lights on almost always to avoid falling asleep during long tests/assignments or missing lesson
- Uniform dress code to avoid the issue of people being bullied based on their clothing like a plain pair of jeans and a black shirt or something.
- I think we should have music while we work
- Classes should have a creative project that is due at the end of the year for a grade
- We should learn life skills we need outside of school like learning about finances
- 8<sup>th</sup> grade should have a homeroom so they have time to remember their homework when packing to go home
- I think we should be able to carry a book bag with us so we don't constantly have to go to our lockers

- We should have a maximum and a minimum of how much homework we can have over all the classes so we don't have none one night and 10 sheets the next
- Some hats or hoods should be allowed
- We should be able to dress up for Halloween, it doesn't make sense that we get sent to the office for something that would be allowed on a spirit day

- shorter school day
- more free educational time (be able to study whatever you'd like to)
- hands on learning
- eat lunch outside
- better lunch choices
- more clubs
- students choosing clubs to make with approval of teacher hosting it

## **-virtual reality education**

- controlled Wi-Fi for student use
- have class pets
- have class outside (get chairs)
- less periods

1. If a student is working on an individual project, they should be allowed to listen to music with headphones, as this helps some students concentrate.
  2. Extra credit should be available more often.
3. Students should be allowed to have the Wi-Fi password, but if they are caught on their phones in class a referral would be necessary.
4. Our items should be left in our possession, if we are told more than once to put them away we could be sent out of the room, instead of a teacher taking our belongings.
5. Teachers should not be allowed to stop a person from using the bathroom, but there should be a time limit and if it is reached, they could be sent to the office.
  6. Bullying should be more strictly disciplined.
7. There should be another teacher in the class room. If there are a lot of students asking questions, some important ones do not get answered. Another teacher could answer more questions.
8. Students should have a say in where they sit. Some students don't get along or end up sitting somewhere they cannot concentrate, and the teachers don't do anything about it.

- 1) Work should involving more hands on learning and less sitting for the students.
- 2) We should be able to choose the order of our schedule
- 3) On Ela test we should choose the topics of the articles we read
- 4) During study halls kids should have more freedom to do things they like, for instance going to the gym to play sports
- 5) During class students should be able to discuss with partners about the topic they are learning
- 6) We should have the ability to listen to music during independent work if they can handle it
- 7) We shouldn't have to raise our hands to go to the bathroom or to get a drink
- 8) We should have the ability to take classes outside during a nice day or eat outside
- 9) I believe we should have the ability to take classes outside when we want to. If we are outside in the sun, it makes everyone feel better making it easier to work. In addition, we should be able to eat outside in nice weather. In addition, if you're outside you do not feel closed up in a room, which many students do not like. Students also are getting fresh air, which is always nice.

Shorter class time and lessons. Less lectures. Less unnecessary classes for example gym, study halls and general music. Students should be able to make their own schedule out of the classes they need to take. Students should have no homework because it makes them not like the class. The teachers should ask if there are topics students are interested in. There needs to be better food/ the school should listen to the parents and students about what they want in their lunch.

❖ I feel like we should do work with the lights on almost always to avoid falling asleep during long tests/assignments or missing lesson

If we had this it would prevent kids from falling asleep

those who participate in clubs or sports teams for at least 2 seasons aren't required to take gym class.

I chose to suggest that those who participate in clubs or sports teams for at least 2 seasons aren't required to take gym class. I think this would be a good idea to use in both the middle and high school because, those who participate in 2 or 3 sports, don't need to the extra exercise of gym classes. This would open up another free period for students to maybe take an extra class in the high school, or have a study hall to complete more work. This would most likely increase the numbers of players for each sport, which has been a struggle for some sports teams in our school.



- ❖ Comfy chairs
- ❖ Lenient dress code
- ❖ More time in between classes
- ❖ Choice of books
- ❖ More group projects (students pick groups)
- ❖ More physical activity during class
- ❖ No marking period tests
- ❖ Better food choices
- ❖ Eat outside when nice out
  - A good source of vitamin D
  - After you're done eating you can go do things outside
  - Have more time outside
  - Not everyone has to go outside
  - Have a garbage can next to each table so people can clean their own mess
- ❖ More activities to do outside during lunch and gym (field hockey, soccer)
- ❖ Distributing money equally through different sports (not all football)
- ❖ More time between staying after with teachers and sports

## More Options

- Students should choose and maybe change some courses or even teachers/classes in an easy worry-free way, some courses are mandatory (math, science, ELA, etc.)  
Art, music, study halls, and

## The Most Beneficial Improvement to the Holland Patent School System

The most beneficial improvement for the learning system is to assign more long-term and “hands on” projects. We believe that sitting for 40 minutes in math or reading class is making students bored and uninterested. We think that the students should have projects that are more hands on. Students should also have a project to focus on for a long period of time. This would help with students being more attentive during class and focus more on the project. This would allow students to learn more by being interested in the project.

More classes

Better chairs

Better gym courses

Better cafeteria seating, decorations

Nap time

Better teachers

If we just scrap all the current gym courses and let the students decide the new curriculum for gym that we could change every 3 years.

# New school ideas

- More time for phones and or technology
- Another time to socialize with friends throughout the school day
- The ability to listen to music during class
- Shorter school day
- The students decide on whether or not they take a state test, not the parents or guardians
- Higher pay for teachers

The ability to listen to music during class would benefit the students ability to learn. Studies have shown that listening to music can boost brain activity and help with learning. It can help with reading and concentration. It can also provide an alternative to shouting out in class. Music may provide meaning to a school day and even help people with staying calm and relaxed during class.

- To start school a little later
- Have better school food to get our energy up
- Have less periods
- Seeing what the students want to learn in each class
- Having snacks in class
- Buying breakfast in the morning when we get to school
- Have a better menu instead of what the cafeteria has now

### **Science classes outside:**

Once or twice a week we can go outside and observe or do a project. We can look at nature or do something hands-on. Then, if we finish early we can go inside or stay outside and talk about what we did.

## Ideas that should be heard:

- ✦ If we are participating in a sport, we shall not have to participate in gym instead we may peruse an art class, are coaches will grade us, so overall this expands are knowledge in the arts. Why should we practically take gym twice? But if someone is disinterested in arts they will continue with gym, attempting new sports, so increasing their knowledge on the sports world.



## Ten Ideas to make Holland Patent a better school for students

1. Serve breakfast in the morning for students who could not eat at home
2. Offer more club time, possibly an extra class that students can take
3. Students should be able to visit the library more often
4. Students should be able to explore more into music
5. There should be after school snacks for athletes and students
6. All day every day should not be spent sitting in a chair
7. The first bell should ring at 8:45, students need sleep
8. Supply the girls bathrooms with pads/tampons (not just the nurses office)
9. Have more hands-on activities in classrooms
10. Let students be able to choose their own schedules and subjects

- Make school later in the day because when you wake up really early you sometimes don't feel like learning because you might be tired even though you probably had 10 hours of sleep but the fact that your waking up early makes people tired.
- Have more time learning just one topic like for example if you are learning something in math class and the teacher usually gives you about 2 days to learn the topic and that's not enough time because some people learn slower than others so that means they will be behind

-We the students should be able to pick our own seats to an extent

-We the students should not have to raise our hands to use the bathroom to an extent.

-We the students want to be able to test out of that level of a subject

-We the students should be able to go outside during a study hall

Students should be able to test out of a subject we excel in. That would give the teachers more time to focus on the students that really need it.

Less notes more discussion-

If teachers give us less notes during class and do much more discussion, students would be more involved in the class and what the topic is. Also, students and teachers would have more of a connection to what the teacher is talking about. For example, if all period we just copy down notes from the smartboard, we are not fully understanding what we are learning. Also some students might find that very boring and zone out. If teachers lessen the amount

## Ideas

Game room

More class choices

Better chairs

Better lunches

Access to internet

More time for lunch

# Night classes

Better bathroom

Fruit bar

No steam

## More class choices

The benefits of more class choices is students will have more freedom to help them learn about their interests and students will be more excited to go to school every day.

For example of some class choices are:

- Cooking classes
- Agriculture classes
- Coding classes
- Mechanics classes
- Medical classes
- Business classes
- Etc.

More language options

Dress code

Cell phones

Anonymous cry closet

Shorter class periods

Test out of classes



Shorter class periods will benefit kids by them not having to sit still for so long. 40-minute class periods are too long for kids to sit still and listen to a teacher talk. Kids get restless and start to fool around and because of that teachers get salty. So shorter classes will get kids to pay attention more and the teacher wouldn't have to stop so much.

- Have brunch instead of lunch
- Have more free time
- Make good choices in classes
- Make lunch food better
- Have less school periods
- See what students want to learn about in classes

# New Student Ideas

- Students choose the order of their classes
- Students choose the people in their classes
- We shouldn't get scolded for riding the railing down the stairs, or anything concerning our health, it is our decision
- We choose our books to read
- If we don't want to learn music, we don't have to
- We should not have to sit so much
- We should not have to take tests to prove we learned our subject
- When students get tired, we should be able to take a walk
- We should not take as much notes, then expect us to study them, students don't enjoy notes, therefore do not pay much attention
- When in test mode, we should have the option to listen to music, some people work better that way
- We should not have the games blocked, so we can play games in our free time
- We should be able to go to the gym during study hall
- We should be able to type on the computer if we choose so
- Teachers should not be able to take our stuff
- We should be able to eat lunch outside
- We should be able to have more than 8 people at the round table

I think we should be able to choose the order of our classes. This does not hinder any of the administration, but the students will not be tired in first period math, or tired after first period gym. Instead we can have a specific order of what classes we want, and when.

Dress code

Shorter school days

Shorter periods

Cry closet anonyms

Be able to make our own decisions

Freedom

Game periods

Sports day

I BELIEVE STUDENTS SHOULD HAVE A VOICE WITHIN THEIR LEARNING ENVIRONMENT! THESE ARE MY IDEAS ON HOW TO MAKE OUR VOICES BE HEARD!

- .: Students should have a choice in what WE learn in that day and be offered to complete the work on the board more often
- .: The lunches served inside our schools should be healthier
- .: School should start one hour later, instead of 7:30 start at 8:30 so us students can get enough sleep and so we are more likely to be awake during our classes
- .: Students should have more "Hands-On-Learning," and that way it seems to interest us more
- .: Teachers should offer more one-on-one help to students
- .: Students should be able to choose our schedule's order for the marking periods
- .: Lunches should be cheaper or more affordable and efficient to our needs
- .: Students should be allowed to sit where they want in class each day, if students talk with one another teachers can move them to another seat
- .: Steam should be removed from Holland Patent 8<sup>th</sup> grade schedules, the program confuses students and doesn't help us in any way of learning more efficient and not towards high school
- .: More field trips throughout the year that relate to what we are learning inside of school

**STUDENTS** DESERVE OUR RIGHTS TO BE A PART OF WHAT WE ARE LEARNING AND IN WHAT IS BEING DONE IN THE SCHOOL!

- Choose the order of the classes we have
- More movement in our learning environments
- More time in-between classes
- Classes shorter, maybe more free time to be outside and explore
- More working with other students
- Be able to choose what classes we take
- Have more choice of food when you eat at lunch
- Be able to choose where and when we eat lunch
- School starting at a later time for us to get more sleep

More movement in our learning environments are good for our health and body



I think students should be able to have a say on what they want for lunches or be able to choose at least one

I think that school hours should be shorter and start at 10 am instead of 7:30 am.

- Let us pick our own seats
- Less review and learn more stuff in less amount of time aka, shorter school year :^)
- Do all homework in class aka, NO HOMEWORK!!!
- Less time in each class (except lunch :P)
- Don't block stuff on the computer

### **Less review:**

If teachers review a lot before a test, they'll be wasting time, if teachers review less, they can teach us more stuff and summer vacation can start sooner :D

- Don't say you're going to take care of something and not do it
- Give us time to go outside
- Being able to wear hats

## ● **Game/Music/Drawing/Writing Brain breaks are necessary**

- Giving us more time to get to class
- 5 minutes between classes...PLEASE, we could use the bathroom then
- Math Lab and Reading Lab should actually help you
- Stricter rules for bullying, name-calling, harassment, etc. Take seriously the first and every time No matter who the student is
- Freedom to express solutions
- Listen to music while working
- One or Two of our field trips we should be able to vote where we want to go
- Bring in some therapy dogs
- More than one counselor, or who to see when not available; what is plan B?
- You should not be afraid to be who you are and not be ashamed
- Movie breaks.....student chosen
- We should be able to show affection to a certain consent like at least hug NO matter what gender or person you are there are people who need a hug from a friend or loved one
- Make us feel safe
- If we are upset let us just take some time and relax and if we need to sit in the hall or go to the guidance counselor then let us be patient with us and if we need to report let us PLEASE...

- Game/Music/Drawing/Writing Brain breaks are necessary
- I think this is necessary because students need a break to just relax and hang out with friends. Sometimes classes are stressful and fast paced and students just need to chill and take a breather. Doing this during lunch is not enough. Sometimes we just have to reset your brain to carry on your day. People do this in different ways. If someone is having a bad day, they should be able to calm down, relax, and talk it out to someone /friends. Holding in stress and how you feel is not good for you.
- Make school later in the day because when you wake up really early you sometimes don't feel like learning because you might be tired even though you probably had 10 hours of sleep but the fact that your waking up early makes people tired.
- Have more time learning just one topic like for example if you are learning something in math class and the teacher usually gives you about 2 days to learn the topic and that's not enough time because some people learn slower than others so that means they will be behind

1. We need more time in the hallway through periods, we have 3 minutes between each period to get our stuff, get drinks/use the bathroom, and then get to class.

2. Teachers shouldn't get mad at students for asking for help. Even if the student wasn't paying attention it's the teachers' job to make sure that student is learning and following along.

3. The activities in school should be more hands on instead of sitting down and writing for 40 minutes with 3 minute breaks.

4. Students should be able to have the opportunity to have extra credit when they ask for some extra credit, students get limited homework and if they have all that done and need extra credit they can ask for some.

- ❖ More time in between classes
- ❖ Comfortable chairs
- ❖ Pick our own groups
- ❖ Pick our own classes
- ❖ Make our own schedule

If we could choose our own classes the benefit would be we could learn about what we want to go to college for instead of learning about things we may not need to know in the future.

- ❖ Have comfortable chairs
- ❖ Less busy work and more educational work
- ❖ Better tasting food
- ❖ Be able to go outside during study hall
- ❖ Less controlling teachers
- ❖ Teachers ask for our opinions
- ❖ Be allowed to choose our seats and be moved if we misbehave
- ❖ To be able to pick our own classes
- ❖ Less controlled PDA
- ❖ Less strict on the dress code
- ❖ Better curriculum
- ❖ Have a say in our education

My idea it okay that kids and young adults should be able to choice what they want to do and have more building and learning programs.

Kids should be able invent ideas



- Better chairs-comfy!!!!!!
- Later school day starting, ea. 9 am- Refer to article <http://time.com/4741147/school-start-time/> (ctrl. Click to follow)
- Backpacks!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Or bags in general!!!!
- Therapy Animals (Dogs, Cats, Puppies, Kittens etc.)-Humane society with in turn causes people to adopt them, therapy animal rooms
- Electives, more of them and the starting age is earlier
- Better food and food budget, fresh fruit and veggies, BRING BACK THE SALAD BAR!!!!
- Snack time!!!!!!!!!!!!

- Make school later in the day because when you wake up really early you sometimes don't feel like learning because you might be tired even though you probably had 10 hours of sleep but the fact that your waking up early makes people tired.
- Have more time learning just one topic like for example if you are learning something in math class and the teacher usually gives you about 2 days to learn the topic and that's not enough time because some people learn slower than others so that means they will be behind