



Anne's Plan

THE YIN AND YANG OF COMPETITIVE SCHOOLS

IN MY SOPHOMORE YEAR, I tried out for the high school volleyball team. Knowing that my school's team was highly competitive, I had done everything I could think of to improve my skills since my freshman year volleyball season—my first year ever playing. I put every ounce of effort and dedication I could into improving. By the time tryouts came around my sophomore year, I felt prepared. I ended up not making the team. This left me devastated. How could I have gotten cut despite trying so hard? The truth is, I just wasn't good enough. Barrington High School seemed too competitive.

Although that was the last of my high school sports experience, the feeling of competitive pressure prevailed through academics. Starting my senior year, my peers around me discussed their college applications. I hadn't even begun mine yet. I felt inferior to my intellectual friends. Being surrounded by those who appear smarter than me made me question myself. I started to feel the weight of the surrounding competition.

Since freshman year I felt as if I did not belong in any of my classes. I felt like a fraud in my advanced classes knowing I was putting in more work than those around me. As time went on, I began to lose motivation; it felt impossible to live up to the standards of my school. I watched the grades I had worked so hard for start to slip, my mental health alongside them. I developed anxiety surrounding my schoolwork that grew and transferred to other aspects of my life. Anxiety about a test grade transitioned to anxiety with friends. I never felt good enough for others. I never felt good enough for myself.

More stress piled on me than ever before. This led me to an important decision. I began to channel my energy into my own self-interests and well-being. I enrolled in a Studio TV class freshman year and have continued it all four years of high school. This class led me to understand my passion for videography and journalism. This year, I have joined a journalism class that has involved me in a more real-life experience of printing, writing,

and creating a magazine. These experiences have helped me figure out what I want to pursue when I graduate. I find myself excited for my future.

By living to my own standards, and not others, I have been able to take advantage of the amazing opportunities Barrington has provided me. Although difficult and stressful for me and some others, the circumstances which create a competitive environment at the high school simultaneously create diverse opportunities for the students. And for those opportunities to be successfully utilized, students must focus strictly on themselves, and try not to be concerned with external influences.

In a year from now, I will be at a college campus much larger than my high school, filled with excitement and preparedness to take on my next step in life. 

Anne Thyfault is a senior at Barrington High School. She plans to study journalism in college next year.