

TED Speech

Hello my name is Alejandro and just like any other student I have aspirations for my future. One of them is to become a writer and have my work published and spread throughout the world for people to enjoy as well as to learn from. A couple things I'm doing to help realize this goal is that I'm reading everyday and writing any chance I get; it's even a part of my senior project. I'm going to write a collection of short stories and self publish it. But another goal I have is to become a teacher. I believe that teaching is the best way to lead young people to success and a better future for everyone. As a senior I'm very nervous and anxious for what happens next but I know that being a teacher is what I need to be. That's why I'm going to apply to the Portland Teachers Program because of the opportunities they will present to me and because I know this program will better equip me with the skills, qualities, and values needed for me to succeed and better educate students.

But I've also had to face challenges along the way. A specific moment was when I was in middle school and I had gotten a good grade on a paper I had done. The teacher had given me the paper and said, "You actually did well". That was the first time I realized the real power behind language; that language could be used in a negative or positive way. That one word, Actually, was presented to me with many insinuations and expectations on how the teacher believed I would progress in school based on my background. Another thing I've had to face are the students themselves. While many students looked at me shocked at the good grades I've gotten the kids from my same background also look at me differently. They expect me to be a stereotype and hate school and do poorly. The word "white wash" has been said to me many times even from people I don't know. So I've had to face this challenge and decide whether I want to be a stereotype and act the way society has invented a person of my background to act and be accepted by everyone or divert from that social construct and just be me and do the best I can to get the most out of my education. It took a while and a lot of thinking but I will always choose what's best for me and not let others ignorant comments or perspectives dictate the way I should act.

But although I might see education as an important way for me to succeed, not many other students see it the same way. They see it as a system that's against them and doesn't care about them as much as the white students so they decide to give up. I know they feel this way because I've talked to these types of kids and because I used to feel the same way. I still feel that the system is more flawed than we excuse it to be but it's because of the great teachers who dismiss this system and teach in a way that enables students to succeed so that we can create change and progress for all students.

There are things that you as educators can do to help kids feel differently about school and better appreciate it. For one, I would say to get to know your students better on a personal level. Ask them exactly what we are talking about today. Ask them to write you a paper on how they really feel about school and what you can do to help them make school more enjoyable and important to them. But there is another thing. I've noticed with the youth today that they don't like to read. They get a book assigned in class and they immediately groan and perceive the book is bad before even turning one page. I've noticed it with many of my friends and it's really a shame. It's a shame because reading is an important foundation, an important first step to success. Reading in itself is a different language, one that we can master but never stop learning about. It's also what has motivated me to speak to you today. When you read, your reading about the world and people's experiences. Reading allows you to expand your mind with new ideas and forces you to support or challenge what it says.

It's also a very important step to success because after reading comes writing. When you write you create your own ideas from your experiences from reading. You see the world in a different light and although it doesn't seem like it, writing allows you to be heard and establish change. And that's what teachers today have to do, present reading in a different and creative light that will interest students. Because when you read from the world, you then write about the world, which leads to speaking to the world, and then allows you to change the world. And that is my ultimate goal and aspiration, to change the world in the classroom as a future educator and to change the world as a future writer.