Madison Payne

Why I Love My Charter School

I grew up in a small town; a town where every family knew the families down the street, and every family knew who was an outsider. When I was very young, my father and mother divorced, and I spent my days with my grandmother. She was a kind woman who had battled what seemed to be countless ailments throughout her life. Through the time we spent together, she passed her passion for life and knowledge onto me as I followed her through the library with wide eyes full of wonder. We were the outsiders; seeking an insight into the endless questions of the world. It was my grandmother who was the first to understand where I needed to be.

Ultimately, it was her choice that brought me to a charter school. I can still remember the first day I walked through the doors. The school I had come from had always been cold to me and my drive to learn. As I shuffled shyly into the room I was greeted by a sea of smiles, and whisked off into the crowd. I was introduced to this person and that person and then the people over in the corner, until I nodded along in a daze. It was as if I was standing in a stranger’s home, waiting to be told I didn't belong, but was greeted instead by people as generous as family.

I am one of countless children and young adults; feeling as though I was cursed to seek knowledge at every turn, but through a charter school I was given a guiding light. Where once the books I read were torn from my hands in mockery, now I was given the chance to expand my mind and live in a world of wonder. The teachers who once turned a blind eye to my struggles now stood beside me for as long as I needed to instruct me in learning. There is something within the heart of a charter school that does not reside within that of others. It is the deep understanding of struggle and empathy between the teachers and the students.

“Reading furnishes the mind only with materials of knowledge; it is thinking that makes what we read ours.” This was said by the philosopher and physician John Locke. Today, as I walk from class to class in my charter school, this statement is more prevalent in my life than ever before. My charter school has given me a myriad of opportunities to further myself and develop my character into the person I am set on becoming. I will never forget how welcome I felt when I first stepped in out of the cold and into a warm building, in both a literal and figurative sense. Whatever I do, or wherever I go, I know that the friends I have made and the support that I have will follow me on any journey I set myself upon from the front steps of my charter school.