

Dear Darian,

I am glad to see that you are such an excellent student in Ms. Madden's class. You shouldn't take the fact that you are intelligent for granted; apply yourself and you will go far. I think that a lot of people that are blessed with natural talent don't really challenge themselves because they find school to be easy. I really encourage you to seek out every bit of knowledge that you can; if your classes aren't hard for you than speak up and make your teachers give you more. When I was your age, I did not have this attitude and I regret it. It wasn't until I was done with a couple of year of college that I suddenly realized that I was never pushing myself. I had been happy with the "success" of getting decent grades and receiving praise from people around me. I had to really wake up and realize that success is not about the numbers that you have on the paper. Those numbers only tell you a very basic story about how you stack up against the expectations put forth by your authority figures and how you compare to other students. Really, this has very little to do with "success". Success should be measured against your own potential for achievement. Of which, you clearly have a lot. What this really means is that nothing should ever be easy. I know this personally because I have at times worked very hard and other times I have let myself fall behind. I have experienced both sides of the spectrum and can say that it is always worth giving things your best shot. The difficult task is discovering what it is you really like to do; I think the key at your age is to keep an open mind. It is important to stay open to new ideas and to realize that you exist in a much bigger world than your local environment. The reason why this is of such great importance is that it will be through exposure to new ideas and experiences that you will realize what your passions are. Whether it be that you find out about something you love that is completely new to you or that a new experience forces you to recognize something that is right in front of you, new experiences always change your perception.

Have you ever travelled? What is the furthest you have ever been from home and why did you go? I would really encourage you to try and find ways to get outside of your current environment and see what else is out there. With modern information technology, you don't always have to go somewhere to learn about it. There is a lot online that you can read about which will expand your horizons. Also, you can try to involve yourself with community service groups that might do service/missions trips into other communities. Anyways, I look forward to hearing back from you!

Sincerely,

Jaleal