

MAAP STARS Officer Speech: Katelyn Dorry

Albert Einstein once said, that “Everybody is a genius, but if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it’ll live its whole life believing it’s stupid.” It’s one of my favorite quotes, because one of the greatest scientific minds of all time, stating in no uncertain terms that the way the American public-school systems are set up will not work for every student. He is saying that if everybody, with their own unique strengths and talents, are judged the same way and forced to learn in the same way, we’ll all just have a bunch of fish in the trees; students believing they’re stupid for not learning like everyone else. This quote never held any meaning to me until I entered alternative education. Suddenly, this became my motto. It’s what I believe alternative ed. is all about and what I think MAAP STARS is all about. I want to take every opportunity I can to speak up for alternative programs, and I think being a MAAP STARS Officer is the best opportunity for me to do that.

My name is Katelyn Dorry. I’m a student at Northern Lights Community School(NLCS), which is a small project-based charter school located in Warba, Minnesota just outside of Grand Rapids. I transferred there for my seventh grade year and it was the best decision I ever made. It isn’t that I was a bad student when I was in traditional school. I was progressing at a pace faster than those around me while still being held to the same system and standards that others were. As a result, it seemed like I was a nuisance for not being like every other student.

Transferring to Northern Lights Community School was a culture shock. Suddenly, I had become a part of a system where the teachers and faculty asked me what I wanted to do and what I wanted to learn. I wasn’t forced to learn at the same pace as thirty other students and instead became a part of a system where I was told to pave my own way through my education. I’ve done more in the last year at NLCS than I ever have throughout my entire education at traditional school.

I was given the opportunity to attend the MAAP STARS Spring Conference, where I fell in love with MAAP STARS. I was able to learn more about myself and my strengths than I ever knew I had. I was able to make it into finals for events like team parenting, public speaking, and even being able to place second in employment interview. MAAP STARS has already skyrocketed my confidence and made me realize that I have talents that I didn’t see before. I want the opportunity to get others to see how much MAAP STARS has been able to help me improve upon myself, and what alternative education can do for countless students.

Albert Einstein was right. You can’t judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree. You can’t judge unique and diverse students in the same way, regardless of their individual interests and talents. We need to judge students by their strengths and what they’re capable of. We need to let fish swim in water and not climb trees.