

Hi my name is R'Elle Robinson and this is my senior year. I attend Jennings Community School which is a public charter school in St. Paul. I have been going to Jennings and participating in MAAP STARS for 4 years now and I have to say that it has changed my life in many ways. Before I get to my story, I just want to tell you what MAAP STARS stands for. It is a combination of two acronyms which stands for Minnesota Association of Alternative Programs(MAAP) and Success, Teamwork, Achievement, Recognition, and Self-esteem (STARS).

I started my 9th grade year at Roseville Area High School. It was hard for me to adjust to the constant classes and the workload that I had to bring home. I wanted to learn and I wanted to do good. I tried hard but I eventually started falling behind because I wasn't understanding the curriculum and could not get one on one time with the teachers so they could explain in detail what I needed to know. I am a visual learner and I'm not able to learn as well sitting in front of a teacher listening to them talk. I need hands on activities and visuals to help me understand. I knew going into my freshman year that the traditional system was not a good fit for me, even though I knew it worked well for my friends. It was hard for me to watch my peers do so well while I felt like I was drowning. I started looking into different types of schooling to see what would be the best option for me. I eventually found Jennings Community High School, Jennings is a great school that provides kids with many opportunities. Alternative education is something that some kids are blessed to have. Without alternative education I would not be where I am today. It has given me room to grow and find out my true self.

Imagine alternative education as a garden and the students as the seeds. Without the correct support system like sun and water the seeds aren't able to grow into their full

potential. Traditional schooling was the shade that was covering me and hiding me from my true potential. Yes, the traditional school system is the sun and water for some students, but just not for me.

I became a MAAP STARS officer because I want to be an advocate for alternative education and I want to see everyone grow just as I did. In my 10th grade year I went through many obstacles and decided to get a tattoo to remind me that no matter what I am going through, I will always be able to find the strength to get through it. *show tattoo*. Here's my tattoo, it says warrior. The "I" in warrior is replaced with a "semicolon" . The semicolon is a symbol for a