

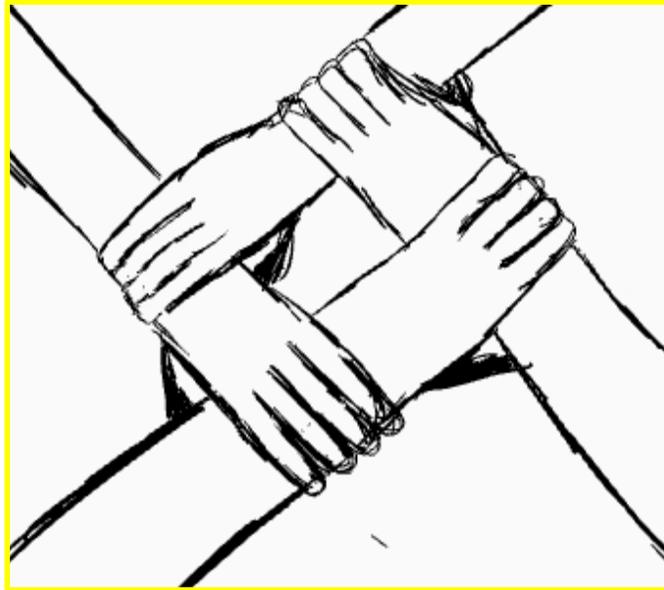
Alternative Learning Is

By Hope Hanson

Alternative learning is having an actual relationship with your teachers.

*Do your teachers have conversations with you about anything other than school? Do they know your name? Do they know your friends? Do they know what your home life is like? Do **you** know anything about **them**? What do they do outside of school? What's their family like?*

I never cared about learning until I met the teachers that cared about me.



Alternative learning is having smaller class sizes.

*Who can **focus** in a room full of people? Not me. Not kids who can't read. Not kids with anxiety. Not kids with ADHD. Not introverts. Not extroverts. Not anyone. I was never able to do my work until I was in a class of 10, instead of 30.*



· **Alternative learning is feeling comfortable no matter what class you're in.**

Would you still come to school if you felt unsafe? Would you speak your mind? Would you answer the teacher's questions if you felt judged? Would you raise your hand in class or be able to fully listen to what the teacher is saying ?

I never participated in class until I was part of a community where I felt safe.

Alternative learning is having a community you can rely on.

If you don't care about me, why would I care about you? If you show no support for me, why would I support you? If you show no interest in my personal life or my mental health, why would I come to you in a time of need?

I never trusted adults at school until I joined an alternative learning community.

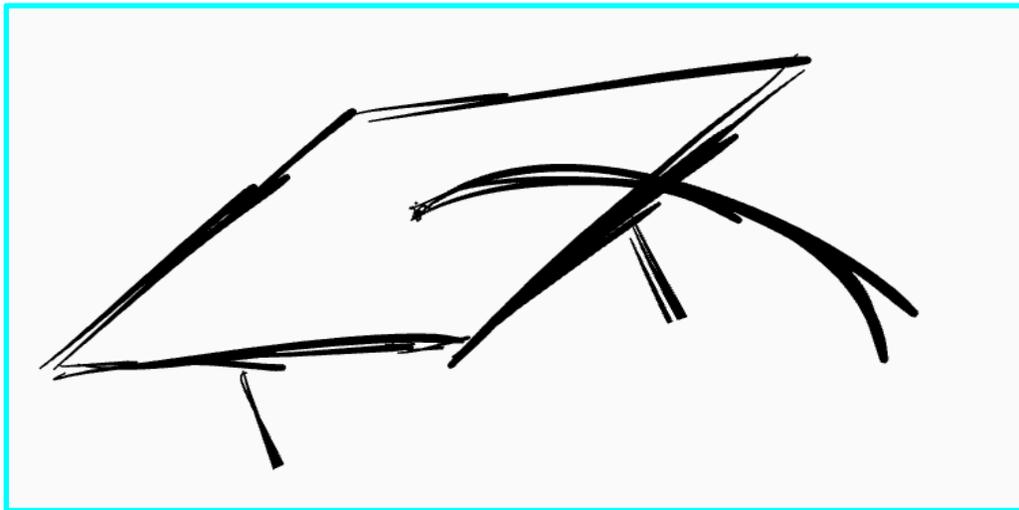


Alternative learning is making sure students are prepared for life after high school.

What's the point in going to school if everyone is lost in life once they're done anyways?

Does school teach you how to do taxes? Does school teach you how to balance a checkbook? Does school teach you how to rent an apartment, open a bank account, or buy a house? Does school teach you how to apply for college, or a job? Does school teach you any of the day to day skills that average adults need to have?

I never felt supported in leaving high school until I had teachers who provided me with opportunities to learn these skills.



Alternative learning is having class topics that are actually interesting.

*Wouldn't you want to have a unit about witches and empowered women? How about a unit where you learn how the term "bi*ch" started to be used for the sole purpose of degrading women? What about a pop culture unit where you get to watch **Beyonce's Homecoming** to learn about the significance of HBCUs? How about a class where you learn the origin of cults and conspiracies? Or a class where the students get to pick what they want to learn about - mental health, environmental racism, how to get a job, standardized testing?*

I never got excited about school until I had a say in what I was going to learn about.



Alternative learning is digging deeper than the surface and learning about things the state doesn't require teachers to teach.

Have you ever heard of the Haitian Revolution? Probably not, considering the state doesn't require highschool students to learn about the first successful black revolution that resulted

in the creation of Haiti. Did you know that algebra, medicine, astronomy, and philosophy began during The Golden Age of Islam? Has your school ever taught you about the school to prison pipeline? Or the Black Panthers' 10 Point Program? The History of the CIA? Environmental Racism? Mental Health?? 你们知道中文么 ~ Do you know Chinese ?

I didn't think so.



For me, joining an alternative program changed my life. Before joining, my grades were horrible and I didn't think I had the potential to do any better - in school or in life. Alternative learning taught me about the things that really matter in life, and I felt empowered

when I learned about how poorly the schools we have now are run. Most of the people I know in mainstream hate their classes, think they can't say anything if they know something is wrong, and experience what I would consider a form of bullying from some teachers on a daily basis. Many teachers have been known to talk down to their students, or make them feel uneducated, when it's often the classroom environment that causes them to struggle. There is scientific evidence that no human can learn in an environment where they feel unsafe or unwelcome, that's why I think *all* schools should be alternative schools. Joining an alternative program helped me realize the problems are with the system, not with me.

