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High School 101: Freshman Survival Guide

About the Project

The majority of “how to” books are written by adults. Why do they think they can advise kids about high school when they haven’t been enrolled in years? Our philosophy for this book is that we understand today’s freshman experience better than anyone else does because we have just lived through it!

As the authors of this book, we feel it is necessary to tell you our story. On the first day of school, we all stumbled into our new sophomore English class tired, worn, and depressed at the sudden and abrupt end of summer vacation. We all dreaded the outdated plays, long essays, and impossible tests often associated with gifted/honors English class. Many of us had been warned about the nature of our new teacher, Mrs. Burnette. However, try as they might, our elders had barely prepared us for the woman we’d meet at the bell’s tone.

Our zany teacher talks about 150 words per minute and teaches material even faster. By the end of the first week, we had taken a test, written an essay, and critiqued our summer reading journals to the point of exhaustion. As the second week began, we were given the surprise of our lives: We were going to write a book!

Mrs. Burnette told us that she envisioned a survival guide for high school freshmen. Once she pitched the idea, we took over. At first we had a big pile of ideas. After we decided which topics the book should address, we researched, wrote, revised, and edited the content and organized it into chapters. We voted on chapter titles, layout, and cover design. We created our own ads and website, drew cartoons, took pictures, and conducted polls. We wrote business letters to bookstores, television personalities, newspapers, middle schools, and political leaders. We even participated in the binding of the books and went to state conferences to speak to teachers about our project.

After completing the bulk of the writing, we decided on a title for the book, chose G-Ride Press as the name of our publishing company, and created our own logo. A “g-ride” in our town

refers to a golf cart, which is the main mode of transportation for most of us. In fact, McIntosh High School is the only high school campus in America with a golf cart parking lot—approximately 275 students drive golf carts to school each day.

Over the next few months, we critiqued, reviewed, criticized, and edited our way along. We worked like crazy on our Thursday “book days” during class and at our “book club” meetings before and after school. Otherwise, we went right along with our learning, never missing out on anything the curriculum had to offer. Yet, amidst Shakespeare, Aristotle, and Dante, we wrote our own masterpiece—one that we hope will shed some light on what’s in store for upcoming freshmen.

We faced a few interesting obstacles along the way. Of course there were technological glitches—servers that went down at inopportune times, files that mysteriously disappeared, etc. Ironically, we also had a terrible time finishing the first draft of the organization and time management chapter. Perhaps the greatest challenge, however, was the fact that we were working with other students from different class periods but spent a total of only three hours in the same room with them at the same time! In spite of these problems, we were all determined to make the book a reality, so we overcame every obstacle that got in our way.

Your first year of high school is a critical one, and we hope our advice will help to ease this potentially rocky transition. Our goal was to make the content of the book universal enough to apply to freshmen at all high schools and in all parts of the country. We also tried to make the content informative yet entertaining at the same time. So read on and find out how to experience high school to the fullest!

Good luck,

Mrs. Burnette’s 2004-2005 sophomores (G-ride Press)

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