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Gap Year

As the number of students taking gap years after high school rises, experts wonder what makes this break after high school so alluring and whether or not it is beneficial. The reasons behind choosing this course over the standard path of going to college immediately after high school can be numerous. The student may want to broaden their horizons, have time to save money for school, or simply have a break after thirteen grueling years of education. Whatever the cause, studies show that gap years can help define students’ life goals, contribute to their educational experience and capabilities upon returning to school, and hone life skills that would otherwise have gone underdeveloped.

Students commonly enter college unsure of what they want to spend the rest of their lives doing, or thinking they know, but changing their minds multiple times along the way. According to *The Mentor*, an academic advising journal, “An estimated 20 to 50 percent of students enter college as 'undecided'...and an estimated 75 percent of students change their major at least once before graduation” (Freedman). However, a gap year may prevent students from being a part of these alarming statistics, as “students who have taken a gap year are less likely to switch majors” (Miller). This can occur because, especially within a structured program, a gap year can cause one to rethink what they want in life, or even what their personal role in the world is. Researchers Karl Haigler and Rae Nelson found this to be true when they discovered that “the experience of taking a gap year either affirms people’s career paths or helps them to find new,

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