

Name: Liva Graarup

Date: March 29, 2024

*This letter is for the version of me who freshly joined AOSR. I felt anxious about coming here; it was completely different from what I was used to back in Denmark. I want to reassure her that it will be fine. In the end, there was nothing to worry about and I couldn't be in a better place than here.*

Dear Beginning of Eighth-Grade Liva,

The end of middle school is underrated. They say the real work begins in high school, but I can easily prove them wrong. I was a new student at AOSR this year. I had lived in Denmark for almost my whole life. I was not used to speaking English, so starting at an American school, in Rome, one of the biggest cities and having to speak English all the time was so nerve wracking. I remember the feeling of my tears slowly running down my cheeks while my mom was trying to comfort me. I had not even started at the school yet I was just scared. Scared I would not be able to follow along in class, scared I would not be able to make friends, I was scared of every single thing a human being could be scared of.

My family tried to help me. I remember my family made an all-English day, meaning we had to talk English a whole entire day. I remember just waiting for this day to be over. I thought if one English day with my family was this bad, how am I ever going to survive three years?

It was today, my first day ever at an American school as a middle school student. I knew it was going to be tough, because in Denmark I should have started in 7th grade, but here I started in 8th! I was surprised how everybody was so sweet and open. I found friends, and was great until about a month in the school year. I think the teachers just wanted to start easy, because the further we went in the school year the tougher all school work got. I was home from school at 4 pm, then I had to do three to four hours of homework. I remember always saying to myself: Was the essay really good enough? Did I study enough for the test?

I don't think I have ever thought that much about school as I have these past eight months. Because I have been thinking so much about school, I have forgotten to be myself, and just sometimes being a goofy thirteen year old. I wish I had known this at the start of the year: You can't always be the best, and you should remember to be with your friends and family instead of just always being stressed about school. I have now learned that grades don't define your individual worth, everybody has their bad times, and no one can get a perfect grade on every test. I have now learned to be more chill about it.

I do of course spend time on my work and hand in good quality work, but I'm trying to be nicer to myself mentally. I say to myself: you did your best and you can't do anything about it now. I would give every middle schooler the advice that, you may think that the most important thing in the world is your grade but it's not. The good thing about middle school is your grades won't matter for the rest of your life, and I wish I would have thought like this before. Therefore I think middle school is just as hard as high school, the only difference is the grades you get in highschool is important. Very briefly I think every middle schooler should have the mindset: Grades don't define us.

So Liva, very briefly, remember to bring all your school supplies for red and blue days, and remember all the words you've learned in English. Get started on doing some push ups and build up leg strength so you're able to walk up all the villa's stairs with your heavy backpack. You will make mistakes, but you will only learn and grow from them. There is no perfect middle schooler. You are good enough, and never forget who you are, and who you want to be.

Sincerely,

Liva in March of Eighth Grade