

A tale of two high schools

Richie Gallant will be a senior at Whitfield School, a predominantly white, college preparatory school in Creve Coeur. Tyjuan Morrow will start his senior year in August at Beaumont High School, a neighborhood public high school in St. Louis with a predominantly minority student population.

The two came together through Cultural Leadership, a program that promotes cultural exchange between African-American and Jewish teens in the metro area.

After Tyjuan spent a day at Whitfield in April, Richie accompanied his new friend to Beaumont. As a result of their exchange, Tyjuan and Richie hope to start a peer tutoring program this fall.

Each wrote an essay about his experiences. Here is how they described some of what they saw and felt:



TYJUAN MORROW

WRITING ON WHITFIELD

"At Beaumont, you have to walk through metal detectors ... at the front door. At Whitfield, you just open the door and walk in."

FIRST IMPRESSIONS



RICHIE GALLANT

WRITING ON BEAUMONT

"About to walk through a metal detector to enter Beaumont, I was stopped by one of the many security officers on duty. 'We have one white student at this school and you are not him. You may not enter!'"

"Whitfield is calm, quiet and productive. There aren't students running in the hallways making noise all the time, students don't pull fire alarms for fun and there aren't fights at Whitfield."

HALLWAYS

"Administrators file through the halls looking to hand out 10-day suspensions for anyone still trying to get to their next period classes."

"Everyone at Whitfield also has laptops. This was very different to me. The students at Beaumont don't have laptops. Most of the teachers don't have them either."

LEARNING TOOLS

At the beginning of August I go to school to pick up my books. Most years the cost is ... well north of \$400. ... I get to own my books. Write in them. Constantly look at them whenever I need to do some research. They are mine to transport to and from school. Each student at Beaumont is assigned a number. That number corresponds with the book that they get to use each class. If you have a seventh hour class that means that the book you are using now has been handled by five or six other people before you. It is difficult for teachers to assign homework because in most classes students cannot take books home with them."

"The classes at Whitfield are active. It seems that you will learn a lot with the type of instruction that was going on. The students ask questions, the teachers ask questions and the teachers have fun teaching. I believe that asking questions and having fun are two things that are needed to have a good productive class."

CLASSES

"Tyjuan's 'honors' math class was a class I took as a freshman — two years ago!"

"I wish more of our students could experience this and know what we are missing out on by being in the inner city, where it appears something or someone has failed us greatly. I recognize the things that could be improved in my school district. Such as our level of education given by teachers and the way we respect and treat each other on a daily basis. The expectations for the students should be more."

FINAL IMPRESSIONS

"Spending the day as the definite minority is certainly a very humbling experience and something I will remember for the rest of my life."

OPINION

TUESDAY | JULY 10, 2007 | ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH | STLTODAY.COM

Separate and unequal

Regarding "A tale of two high schools" (July 2): Shame on us. Shame on St. Louis. Students at Beaumont High School can't take a book home because the books are shared. What a black mark on our city that we do not educate our children in poor neighborhoods.

And people wonder and complain about crime? Tyjuan Morrow, a Beaumont student, was shown what could be but never will be.

My heart is saddened. We are back to separate but not equal.

Kate Reimer | Bel Nor

