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On October 29, 1929, the stock market crashed which led to billions of dollars in banks being lost and banks going bankrupt known as “Black Tuesday.” It led to a 10-year depression of unemployment and poverty known as the Great Depression. It affected big towns like New York and Los Angeles but it also affected small towns like Woodbridge Township. Woodbridge Township now is very different from how it was 90 years ago. In this essay, a 7th grader from 1931 will explain what it was like to go to school back then and what she wishes the future could be.

It is the year 1931 and I am getting ready to go to school. I picked out a sailor outfit to wear to school today, then realized that I didn’t pick out an outfit at all because this is the only outfit I have. Ever since the start of The Great Depression, my “better off” family has been struggling. My father is a doctor and my mother is a nurse. They are usually decently paid but ever since the Great depression, they haven’t been making enough to support our old lifestyle and we had to sell a lot of stuff including our excess clothes and our big house. As I go to eat my breakfast, I see my brother listening to the radio. He loves the radio. I like the cinema better because I get to watch cartoons like Mickey Mouse and Betty Boop. Before we get picked up by the carriage, I grab my school books, stuff them in my bookbag and then run out the door. As me and my brother go to school today, I sit and wonder what it would be like to go to high school. My older sister goes to Woodbridge High School and based on all her stories, it seems to be fun. I am currently in the 7th grade and I go to school #1 with my 4th grader brother. I don’t like or get why I have to go to school with my brother and all these little kids at my school. I feel like a giant. Hopefully in the near future, there will be a school for older but not too old kids. My brother and I don’t live close to our school so we have to take a horse and a buggy that our older cousin drives. Our family can’t afford to get an automobile because of the great depression, but I hope in the near future, automobiles will become more affordable so people won’t have to deal with the dangers of horses and buggies. As we get dropped off in front of our school and my brother and I part ways, I think to myself. It’s going to be a long day. (Historic Tour of Woodbridge Brochure)

I walk into school and I begin to remember how hard it has been since the start of the Great Depression, as people call it. My father is always reading some kind of newspaper, whether it is The Woodbridge Leader or Carteret Press. I remember my father reading about some stock market crashing 3 years ago. I didn’t understand it back then but as time went on, our way of life started to change. I saw in newspapers that schools were closing and businesses were shutting down. Even our family, that is usually better off, was affected. Our family had to move into a smaller house that ended up being across from my sister’s school. My older sister now shares a room with me and it is horrible. I’m a very tidy person while my sister just makes a mess wherever she goes. Before the depression, mom used to always buy things from the newspaper like on January 6, 1928, she bought a Thor Dishwasher even though our other dishwasher was completely fine. She said it was a must because it was “\$5 down.” I walk into my classroom that is very full. Ever since the Great depression, many of our teachers were let off and even the ones that we still have now are not paid very well. Our classroom is very small with only a few desks, chalk boards, and books students have to buy themselves. Maybe in the near future, classrooms will have more supplies, desks, and boards that don’t release dust that you choke on. Our

classroom is filled with many different ages. I am lucky I don't share a classroom with my buffoon brother but other people in my class aren't that lucky. I don't have that many friends but I do have a best friend and she shares a classroom with her younger sister that is a grade lower than her. Hopefully, in the future, older and younger siblings won't have to share classrooms with one another. She told me it wasn't that bad but I knew she was lying. The girls in our school, as well as the teachers, usually wear dresses that fall below the mid-calf and the boys usually wear flannel suits with button down shirts. I personally don't like how formal we have to be and hopefully sometime in the future, everyday dressing will be more casual. As I sit in class, I start to wonder again what middle school will be like. One day I will be going to WHS and it will hopefully be the best day of my life. (The Woodbridge Leader January 6, 1928 newspaper - Historic Tour of Woodbridge Brochure)

My older sister is always talking about her "adventures in high school." Whenever she talks about them at dinner, I act like I don't care when I am really jealous of her. She gets to be among people who are actually her age and she is not around babies all the time. She is in the 11th grade and she goes to WHS that was built in 1911. It has an auditorium, a gym, a study hall, and a laboratory. A year ago we moved to be across WHS and now she doesn't have to lift a finger to get to school. "Lucky" I said out of jealousy. They learn the usual things like language arts, math, history and science. But there are also extra courses called electives that offer mechanical drawing, carpentry, cooking, dressmaking, agriculture, and more. They also offer extracurricular activities like basketball for boys, football for boys, baseball for boys, and my favorite, cheerleading that can be for girls. I hope that in the future, there will still be electives and extracurricular activities and I hope there will be more activities for girls. My sister is a cheerleader at WHS and she knows I want to be a cheerleader so that's why she keeps bragging about it. The smart students also get recognized for being smart. On November 1, 1929, the Carter Press mentioned that many people in WHS made the honor roll and my sister was among them. I hope that in the near future, students that do really well in school will have more recognition and maybe even special activities just for them. When I finally realize I'm in school, I get picked to answer a question I didn't pay attention to. Since I got the question wrong I have to hold heavy books in front of the class for the rest of the day. I hope in the future, punishments like this will be banned and children will get more freedom to be kids. Because of the great depression and even before, many kids from poor families have to go out and get jobs because their families are too poor. I'm lucky enough that my family isn't in poverty and they believe child labor is wrong but I still know so many kids that have to work to help provide for their families. Even the jobs these kids work at are very dangerous and they don't really get paid anything. I hope that sometime in the future, there will be laws against jobs like that even being open to kids. Our teacher tells us that it is time to go home and I run out the door, desperate not to miss the carriage. (Carteret Press November 1, 1929 newspaper - Historic Tour of Woodbridge Brochure)

In conclusion, Woodbridge Township used to be way different from how it is now. The education system has changed a lot since the great depression. From carriages to buses and a big elementary school student body to having elementary, middle school, and high school, it is safe to say that education has changed for the better. We usually think that the past was this place where people didn't have feelings, but no matter what time we come from, people will be people. People have feelings, thoughts, and hopes and it is always important to remember that.