

# Is It Worth It?

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Imagine yourself waking up early every morning for ten consecutive months. Staying up past midnight multiple days a week trying to get your work done. Falling asleep in class and barely keeping up because you barely got any sleep the previous night. Trying to turn your work in on time so you don't get points deducted. Checking to see what grades you received before looking at the comments you received. Students have different qualities, some can do better on a test than they'd do on a project and vice versa. On transcripts, the breakdown of the overall average should be added so schools can see students strengths and weaknesses. Students are more worried about the higher grades than actually getting to understand the topic(s). Is school starting to be more about grades than actually learning? Psychologists think so!

In middle school, school work and good grades might've come easy to some of you. Entering high school students tend to get overwhelmed with work; some days may be worse than others. Students often become more focused and worried about getting good grades than exactly learning the content for reasons such as they don't want their parents to be mad at them, they don't want to be categorized as dumb, they don't want people to think their grades reflect them as a person, and many more. Peter Gray, an American scholar who is a research professor of psychology at Boston College, gave highschool students two options: learn the material and get a low grade, or don't know the material and get a high grade. Gray described the student's response as "unhesitantly" (Gray); most of the students picked the second option. This experiment exhibited that students believe that getting a good grade is more important than actually knowing the information provided to them. If a child is not fulfilling a parent's expectations in school, the parents typically get upset and the pressure adds on to the stress that they are feeling. Parents threaten to take away phones, punishments, and more when their child comes home with a B or anything less. In 2014, a survey was taken and researchers "found that

80% of kids thought that their parents cared more about their achievement than their happiness or altruism” (Gray). From personal experience, I felt down and as if my well-being was destroyed trying to keep up the good grades so my parents won’t be disappointed and unsatisfied. For young people, keeping parents satisfied is important, especially when they want to see their friends on the weekends and keep their phones and other luxuries. Jeffery Kluger, an editor for TIME and author, says, “if there’s one thing kids have always had it’s an uncannily good radar for what their parents think of them” (Kluger). Most of the time kids and teenagers want to leave a great impression of themselves on their parents and don’t want to get on their bad side, so getting good grades to satisfy them is important. However, the pressure from parents starts to deteriorate students’ mental state. To address this problem, some school districts restrict the number of times parents could view their child’s grades per week. According to Jessica Lahey, a writer for the *New York Times*, “The reality, at least in high-pressure school districts, is that some parents interpret the school’s invitation to constantly monitor grades and scores on the portal not as an option, but as an obligation. This obligation adds to the mounting anxiety students and parents feel in these districts” (Lahey). School systems thought adding this access for the parents was going to make situations better, and it actually made it worse in some situations. In some situations, parents compare their child to others, and this often leaves a negative effect. Alexander C. Jensen, assistant professor of human development at Brigham Young University, says, “You can help each kid feel like they’ve got a lot of good going on for them without making them feel like they’re better than their siblings” (Dell’antonia). When comparing siblings, it can deteriorate the mental health of the other sibling(s). While parents think they are trying to have the best interest for their child, it really makes it worse.

After high school, many young adults decide to attend college. In order to get into the college you’d like to attend, there are requirements that typically need to be met. Statistics have shown that after high school more young women went than young men. Sixty-nine point seven

of students after high school go directly to college (“69.7”). Since stakes are high, every grade goes towards a student’s GPA which is relevant to getting into college, job applications, internships, and more. Since getting into college is a competition, you have to perform well and get grades in order to be successful. Think about it, when you get a good grade on a test but are totally confused, what purpose does it serve you? None, in the long run. According to College For All Texans, a source of information to help students and parents plan, apply, and pay for college in Texas, “You may qualify for automatic admission to many public universities in Texas through the Top 10% Rule. To meet the requirements, you must graduate in the top 10% of your class at a recognized public or private high school in Texas or a high school operated by the U.S. Department of Defense and be a Texas resident or eligible to pay resident tuition” (“College”). Texas has created rules in order to be accepted to the college of preference. Since the expectations are high, the expectations push students to try to go above and beyond to fulfill everyone’s expectations besides their own. Some students, like myself, aren’t very good test-takers. From personal experience, I can know about a topic, but when I take a test, I perform horribly. Test grades usually weigh more than anything, so now I have a low grade in that class but I usually know what's going on.

On the other hand, there are people who think, those who learn get good grades, or in order to get good grades, you have to learn. Students should want to learn, and receive good grades. When people are presented with good grades, colleges give scholarships, your parents are happy, and you and your teachers are proud. Teachers frequently want to help you and provide help outside the class period. If you do not understand how one teacher teaches, there are other teachers that also can help you. At Buffalo Seminary, there is a period dedicated to receiving help from any teacher. Every student has free periods to be responsible and complete homework in school. Also, upperclassmen and friends can also help you get an understanding of a topic. Buffalo Seminary provides a program called National Honors Society tutoring. This program

offers underclassmen to receive help from upperclassmen. It also took some weight off of your shoulders when you completed all your homework at school. More schools should offer programs like this to benefit its students.

School is more about grades than learning because colleges and parents expect high grades. Teachers think test taking can show brightness. But everyone's brain is different. Different brains need different strategies such as talking it out. According to Catilin Littlefield, a teacher and administrator at Buffalo Seminary, "If everyone is different, why are they measured the same?" Some people's brains need longer than others to marinate and absorb what is being taught to them. It's possible to get a good grade without learning, by guessing. The pressure of the setting or authority can cause a bad reflection on a test. Since everyone learns differently, testing doesn't adequately determine intelligence, especially if everyone has the same test. Keeping everyone around you satisfied, while not having eternal happiness, can be effective in a negative way while trying to receive good grades.

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