

A Grade For Mental Health

If schools gave grades for their student's mental health, what grade would they give each student? Students should know that it is alright to be confused in class and ask a question over and over until the fog finally clears. Things will be okay if they don't know the answer, or how to do an assignment, or a project. Teachers, and parents, need to put the grades out of their minds and evaluate their *kids* minds. What many people don't realize is that students are stressing themselves out so much over their grades that it is damaging their mental state.

In America school has become a major cause of distress in teens. Students have multiple classes, a decent sized workload for each class, as well as many other responsibilities and commitments, causing their stress levels to rise to an all time high. The Washington Post stated that when the American Psychological Association took a survey they discovered, "Fully 83 percent of teens said that school was "a somewhat or significant source of stress."". Out of all the things that teens deal with in their lives school and grades ranks one of the highest causes of stress. The Washington Post also discovered that the mental states in students are declining and many teens feel overwhelmed by school and their extracurricular activities. School is normally five days a week and there is a range between six and seven classes a day. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that facing stress for long periods of time, continuously, can harm someone's mental and physical health. Teens face stress each day at school and because of this their mental health is at risk. Grades have proven to increase the distress levels within teens and actually can cause them to think negatively about themselves and their abilities. Their grades may be suffering but the more important fact is that they are suffering.

Grades mark students skills with a letter, and a GPA marks their overall intelligence with a number. However, intelligence stretches far beyond just a decimal number printed on the bottom of a report card. Despite not actually representing what is really going in their head, that small number can throw a teen into a downward spiral. Depression is a mental disease that can hurt a teen and might end their life in extreme cases. Anxiety also hinders students and it may stop them from even attempting their work. Certain students look at other students grades and grow uncomfortable with their own, which causes anxiety and discourages them from completing their work. Their grades suffer, and more importantly, the students are falling into a black hole of stress and depression. Those letters and numbers do not represent what is actually going on in a student's head; those letters and numbers can actually ruin what's going on in someone's head. Those letters and numbers do not represent what teens really know, nor do they represent what they can realistically do. Artonique Nelson states that GPA does not matter in the real world, after one graduates high school and moves on to try and get a job. So teens are actually ruining their mental state, that should last them for the rest of their lives, for something that will not matter after college.

If someone cannot draw people say that not everyone can do it. If one cannot play an instrument they say that's just fine, not everyone is good at making music. If a teen cannot run the mile that's okay, not everyone is athletic. And hearing these comments makes people feel alright about not being able to do certain things. If someone cannot understand a subject in math they are slow, because the topic is easy to figure out. If they do not get a science topic they just don't try enough because the procedures are easy to do. If someone cannot write an English paper they fail because it is so easy to write. If they cannot remember dates and places in history

they are dumb because these things are so easy to memorize. So they give students a letter grade to judge them on how well they are able to do those subjects, do those assignments, and understand the material presented to them. Students are told that those letter grades will define intelligence and decide whether or not they have a future of getting into college, and if that doesn't cause stress nothing will.

School stresses kids out. It makes them crazy. It hurts them. Grades and tests should not classify someone's intelligence. They should just be there as a roadmap, to show someone what they need to work on and improve. But it is okay if a student doesn't understand math. It is okay if they are better at drawing than writing an essay. These letter grades are important, and these tests are important... but not important enough to stress students out past the point of no return.

Students should be allowed to have a little free time to do what they want while they are still young. Teenagers in school try new things so their daily schedules are wild, busy, full, and hectic. Let's look at a high school basketball player his junior year. Here is a rough sketch of what his schedule might look like:

7:00 am- Wake up, and make bed

7:10-7:40- Get dressed, Eat breakfast, Gather stuff for school

7:50-8:10- Talk to Teacher about material going to be on test

1st Hour- Gym

2nd Hour- Pre Calculus: 12 homework problems

3rd Hour- English: 4 chapters of reading How To Kill a Mockingbird

Lunch- 20 minutes

4th Hour- Government: Research Project due in a week

5th Hour- Biology: Study for Midterm Friday

6th Hour- Chemistry: Finish the write up for the Lab

3:20-6:00- Basketball Practice

6:30-7:00- Eat dinner with Family

7:00-7:05- Help Mom with dishes

7:07-8:20- Do homework for each class

8:20-8:50- Shave and take a shower

8:50-9:20- Study for SAT for next month

9:20-9:59: Get clean clothes for gym class, finish the rest of the homework

10:00- Sleep

He's a pretty busy guy, he barely has time to himself to do what he would like; some teens are stretched even thinner than him. With school, sports, homework, and family he has no time to entertain his love for drawing. He starts skipping lunch to study and not spending much time with his family at all to keep those letters and those numbers high. Soon he begins worrying about everything, about not being good enough at math, and not getting that A plus that his family seems to expect. When he goes to bed he stays up for hours worrying about the answers that may or may not be right on his Pre Calculas homework. When he checks Powerschool he becomes depressed at seeing that his Biology grade dropped. He has panic attacks just thinking about the fact that the colleges on his list might not accept him because of the lack of that good grade in math. His stress levels are rising and his mental health is deteriorating.

Choices Magazine stresses that more and more people are suffering from anxiety disorders. An anxiety disorder can disrupt a person's daily life and their daily activities. Many students start to feel anxiety as they worry about tests, grades, and GPA causing in growing anxiety levels in their heads to ruin their daily lives. People also put things off because they want to avoid negative emotions like rejection, depression, and the feelings of stress. That is procrastination and almost everyone does it. Students may procrastinate to avoid bad feelings and that hurts their grades. But when they procrastinate they end up failing which makes those feelings even worse.

When people are at the top and their grades are close to perfection many would think that they would not feel that stress, but they are wrong. Aleya Signor an 12th grader at Hart High School said, "Even if you have the best grade you're still stressed out. You are stressed out even if your grades are good because the only place you have left to go is down.". Doctor Robin L. Goldstein agrees with this, saying that when students with good grades receive a bad mark they are the ones to take a major mental dive. Every kid stresses about grades and school no matter what grade level, no matter what classes, no matter what their grade actually is, and no matter if they say they are stressed or not.

Students do not need to stress themselves out to get that high number, or those good grades. Students still should try their hardest but give themselves time to do what they like and to let themselves relax. Having a healthy mental state is *not* worth that A plus.

Works Cited

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