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Striking a Balance

In a time where standardized test scores are foremost amongst the priorities of the educational system, the skills that will truly enable our students, the future generations, to be successful are not being taught and in some cases are being undermined by educational policy. While it is of course important to impart to students the intellectual knowledge necessary for their lives beyond high school, public schools must also give them the necessary life skills to be productive members of society. Whether the goal be a college degree or a lucrative career there are skills that all people need to become successful such as work ethic, accountability, and self-motivation. The public education system must do all that it can to not only cultivate students who excel academically but personally. Regardless of life goals, without the right social and emotional skills students are put at a great disadvantage leaving the public education system.

Perry Local Schools hasn't always been so lax about their late work policy. In years past when an assignment was due it was accepted up until the assigned due date, and not weeks after. But there has been a huge shift in the attitude towards late work in the Perry school district in recent years. As mastery learning came into vogue and teachers and administrators began to be evaluated on student performance the enforcement of due dates has almost become nonexistent. Today on their report card students receive a learning skills composite which is a score from one

to four that a student receives based on things like meeting due dates. But this learning skills composite does not is not in any way reflected in the student's letter grade or GPA which in reality is all students, parents, administrators, and college admission offices are concerned with.

At Perry Local Schools we are doing students a disservice by allowing work to be accepted far beyond the due date. Nowhere in life beyond the walls of this school will employers or professors allow students to turn in work weeks beyond when they asked for it to be turned in. While Perry Local Schools is better than most at providing students with all the classes, extracurriculars, and internship opportunities they might need to find their path in life we are failing to impart to students the work ethic and time management skills required to balance all those important parts of their education.

When asked “What is the latest you that have turned an assignment in after the due date?” of 33 current Perry students surveyed over 27 percent of students turned assignments in before the end of the grading period, over six percent of students turned an assignment in after the end of the grading period, and shockingly just over six percent of students had turned an assignment in after the end of a semester. These numbers are especially concerning considering that over 75 percent those same students plan on attending a two or four year university after graduation and 60 percent feel adequately prepared for life after graduation. Recent Perry graduate Olivia Romeo who is currently studying as Bowling Green State University thinks that, “it is important to remember not only late homework or essays but also exams and quizzes. In high school you can take a test after school or the next day if you happen to miss it, but most professors like my biology professor make it so that you cannot make up an exam or even a quiz if you are simply a minute late”. With how common it appears to be to turn in assignments late at Perry High

School and the strict adherence to deadlines in college one would think students would be best served to learn to understand how to manage deadlines before they are cast out into the world on their own.

In “The War on Stupid People” author David H. Freedman discusses the ever steepening educational requirement to hold a job in the United States. Freedman finds that increasingly in the US “stupid people” are being ostracized because although a college degree is required to hold most jobs only about one third of high-school students are capable of meeting The College Board’s benchmark of college readiness. Freedman suggests that for the remaining two-thirds of Americans whose job options robots are quickly snatching up we must offer top-notch vocational training and focus our society on the needs of the many rather than the success of those in charge.

As Freedman shows only one out of every three American students is academically ready to go onto higher education at a college or university but for the students who are not attending a college or university after high school and even for those that are policies in place at our schools that are a detriment to their success. If only a third of our students are capable of entering university that means that two thirds of our students are entering the workforce upon graduation and regardless of one's path beyond their days in high school great independence, work ethic, and accountability are required. In college assignments are due when the due date says they are not weeks after and in the job market employers are looking for employees who know how to get the job done and get it done on time. Neither professors or employers accept late work and are

willing to coddle those who fall behind and this is where our public schooling system is failing our students the most: in their emotional development.

In Emmanuel Felton's article "When Social and Emotional Learning Is Key to College" *Success* the growing focus on students emotional and social growth to increase college readiness is discussed. The author shows that more and more educators at some of the nation's most innovative schools are realizing that many of the barriers to a student's success in college is not their academic intelligence but rather their emotional intelligence. Whether a student is entering the workforce or continuing their education after high school the greatest change and challenge is in the level of personal responsibility each student takes on. The author quotes Steve Mancini, the director of public affairs at KIPP as saying, "We wanted to create schools where students can take risk and learn from successes and failures. We had to loosen the reins, so kids knew how to stumble and get back up." Felton does caution that while emotional learning is vital to students success it is difficult to measure and the ways of teaching it may vary greatly community to community.

Felton's article perfectly encompasses what all public schools need to focus on: educating students while also incorporating life lessons that will prepare them for their future. Although it can be difficult to measure the success of an emotional and social education the public school system would be doing the children of this nation a great disservice if it were to completely disregard these vital components of students growth. The Perry school system could learn a thing or two from the way that The KIPP academies provide students a safe space to fail and learn from their failures. To some extent Perry takes helping their students too far, students who are 18 years old, legal adults, are coddled and checked up on to make sure their assignments

are being completed. Time management is a necessary skill every person needs but there comes a point when the students must be left to make their own choices and if we wait right up until graduation to stop holding their hands they will be in for a nasty shock when they enter the next phase of their life.

When it comes to the Perry Local Schools system unless there is a dramatic shift to how our school is run and we move to true mastery education where a student will not advance on unless all the requirements have been met then we must hold students accountable to things like deadlines and due dates in order to enable them to handle those things on their own beyond high school. A balance must be struck between providing students with all the assistance and resources that they need to succeed but also giving them a realistic view of the standards that their employers and or professors will hold them to. The Perry Local School District will not be cultivating college and career ready students until we begin to impart them with the personal and emotional capacity to manage their time and meet their deadlines.

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