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The opportunity to receive an education, ability to go to school and to learn was simply not a fact of life for people centuries ago like it is today. Like voting rights, the right to an education, in Europe and America specifically, was first restricted to the upper class, then only to males, then only to whites, etc. whether it be from lack of resource, availability, or need or society rule itself. Fortunately, we have succeeded in creating a time in which children are allowed, expected to go to school and receive an education.

Yet why is there not the same fervor to express our educational rights as it is for all others? Why when I walk down the halls of my school do I not see the faces of teenagers eager to get back in class and learn but rather expressions of relief to have escaped the classroom and returned to their social lives? Why must I hear each day from those same students how much they hate tests, hate school, hate learning? I see the fault in it, yet if I were to reflect the lens back on myself I know I, too, would be one of those very students. Simply put, we take this right to an education for granted, in stark contrast to women and girls like Malala Yousafzai who have had to or still are fighting for their right in Pakistan today. But, it is not the fault of the students, teachers, or administration themselves that we live in an era of American education where it is seen not by students as something of great need and opportunity but as something being forced down our throats. It is the very education system we have in place, a system that has lost touch with the very reasoning for its existence in the first place and has put measures in place, thought to be of great benefit, that both greatly take away from the learning itself and end up invoking excessive stress, and

ultimately hatred toward those very measures. And by this, I mean grades. Now, you may be thinking to yourself that grades are something that students have never nor will ever enjoy; this is not a new issue, new argument, new opinion.

And, true, it is a downright awful argument for students who simply do not want to work, who would rather sit at home and waste their life away, who aren't passionate about the curiosities of the world around them, who aren't innately motivated to learn. But, one of those, I am not. And, one of those, I know many students not to be. So, I feel it would only be right to hear me out. This backwards system of education, stressing the importance of doing well on assessments that most often benefit those with natural intellectual ability and superb memorization skills, a category of which I fall into, over those actually working hard and less on actually enjoying, retaining, and effectively applying information we learn in school, hurts both students of great motivation to learn and those who have not yet realized the beauty and importance in taking in new information about our world, our lives. Now, I'd say I fall into the group of people who would prefer to see the use of grading and official assessment be completely thrown by the wayside.

However, I do acknowledge that would leave a void for universities and companies seeking employees to be able to effectively distinguish between students in their academic accomplishments and abilities. And, thus, maybe only our methods of grading and the significance we put upon them should change. In fact, I've heard countless times from teachers and parents who say that students of our era "obsess about grades" and need only to stop caring as much as we do. Personally, the very proposition that I would reap

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more of the benefits of school if I simply were to cease caring about the quality of my work exasperates me. And, whether we like to admit it or not, these grades ARE my future.

Maybe not a singular vocabulary quiz grade in English class, but that goes towards my GPA and, thus, to my probability of getting into certain universities, which means, at least how we have established it today, the difference between a job, a life, that I enjoy and will be well-paid for, and living in misery. Now, that's not to say that's how students should think, but the simple fact is that as we are progressing as a country we do set higher standards for ourselves, as we should, and it simply was not a fact of life, as it is today, for my parents growing up that you had to go to college to be successful, and where everything today is just so dang competitive. So, I hope you can see why we feel the pressure. But, these pressures have increasingly levied huge amounts of stress on students today and, plainly, are a distraction from the learning that should be taking place. I need not persuade myself any longer that grades are a hindrance, only to you. For just last night, I had the realization that, if not I were so fearful of the possibility of too heavy a workload leading to steepening grades in my classes, I would not have only restricted myself to four AP classes this year, rather I would have wholeheartedly taken the challenge of all six.

An education is the most important thing we could ever have. It is the singular thing that provides us with the most beautiful, amazing information our ancestors have worked so hard to find out, the capacity to understand the world around us and the issues we face, the knowledge needed to seek new solutions, and I also, most importantly, believe it brings us together as a

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people, not as country, not as state, not as a city, but as a world. Learning is the most exhilarating thing. To even imagine all the biological forces around and inside of us at work, allowing us to live, even be aware of our very life. To understand our history and see how far we've come as a society, look at today's issues, and only see promise, that we have the power to continue our ancestors' work and create an ever better world for EVERYONE.

The level of math that I'm currently in, Calculus, seems to bear no actual meaning or importance on how we will live our lives but we can at least appreciate our ability to even understand such complex, crazy ideas and relish in that opportunity. But, that is not where we are as an education system. Students hate school, hate grades, hate learning. Why? Because we as students have all of this information around us and what are we worried about? How we're going to cope after getting a B on a Chemistry quiz. It'd be great if I, and other students, could worry about the important thing instead: learning.