

# [Existential crisis](https://assignbuster.com/existential-crisis/)

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Modern education is number-driven. In our competitive, globalized world, numbers matter. Scores have come to be associated with success, and this success has come to be the cornerstone of our collective self-worth as modern American students. Is this satisfying? To be defined by a number and to identify with it is inherently dehumanizing.

Suddenly, our warm, pliable minds have been reduced to something cold, hard and devastatingly empirical. Objectivity has its place in education. Without objectivity, there could be no standard and therefore, no marker of improvement. Still, we must consider what it is we are quantifying. Students don’t learn algebra because the Pythagorean Theorem is an essential component of an adult’s productivity in society. We learn and execute the Pythagorean Theorem because of its cultivating power—an intimacy with the Pythagorean Theorem is not the end goal but rather, a tool in the work of sculpting minds.

It’s the work and the progress that matters. Yet we don’t quantify progress. We force students onto the unyielding bell curve—we place collective performance over individual growth and peer against peer in their campaigns for the throne on the right-most point. When the time comes for testing, for-profit institutions charge students for tests which are upheld as markers of comprehension and retention, as indicators of scholarship and elucidation. But when students must work to master the form of these tests as much as their content, is that really helpful? Students cannot merely write a good essay—they must write an essay which meets an objective standard.

In fact, this standard places little value on execution—if one meets the pre-ordained check-points, what does one have to fear? The pencil sharpened to a deadly point, the bubbles filled in clearly, words and facts scribbled on neatly-lined leafs—what is there but this? Scholarship, born out of free-thought and exploration, is squashed by the above. In fact, scholarship has no place in American high school—here, one can merely sit on the knowledge one’s been given and if one can express it in words on a page, what more must one do? Still, if one does manage to foster an appreciation for the material beyond that which is apparent, and if one wants to pursue this area of study in one’s higher education, one will be deemed impractical.” Latin is a dead language—who needs it?”” Philosophy doesn’t pay the bills.”” English majors have the highest rates of unemployment.”” Art—do you really want to be living off Ramen noodles for the rest of your life?” Perhaps one can’t speak Latin in an international business deal.

Perhaps an understanding of Socrates and Shakespeare will not equate to money in the bank. Perhaps artists do truly starve. But guess what—I like Ramen noodles. And perhaps I enjoy an understanding of the words I use every day. And perhaps, I enjoy having an insight into the clockwork of the human mind and the mystery of the human condition. Perhaps I value the act of creation. And perhaps these skills, which help to uncover the obscured meaning to the beating of my heart and expansion of my lungs, will serve me better than anything objective. A number couldn’t begin to sum me up.