

# Prison for the innocent

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**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The doors are shut and we are locked in every morning at 8: 45. We are forbidden to use the restroom without an escort. We are bound by strict rules- told what to do, what to eat, what to wear, how to act. Monitors must watch us eat, because they don't trust us.

We must walk in straight lines silently, invisible chains holding us in place. At the end of the day, they are forced to unlock the doors and let us leave, but they make sure to tie us down with as much needless work as they can.

Welcome to my prison. As a young child, I begged to go to school, so much so I went to school at just three years old. Just think- I could go experience new things, fill my head with knowledge! I could paint and play, in other words, I was happy.

I would wake up excited for school, I could go see my friends, learn new things, and have fun. Elementary school was probably the best years of my life. Sure, we had to work, but we had recess, we had freedom, time to play with our friends. Most importantly, we had fun. And then the fun ended I walk into my new school, so big and tall and full of people. Oh, the friends I could make! How much I could learn! On schedule though, the doors shut and lock, the invisible walls form around us, trapping us.

Security cameras turned to face the halls, so the man in the office could watch us- every move. Welcome to prison, the loudspeaker seemed to say. And I was trapped. It was the same schedule every day. Wakeup at an ungodly hour, go to class, scarf down the cardboard the cafeteria serves in that small amount of time, go to more classes, then stay up past midnight to finish all of my homework. What did we do? Why are we forced into this?

Does one's childhood end at elementary school's door? We are imprisoned, and no one seems to care.

Since when is growing up a crime? Does upping one grade make us criminal, or simply inhuman? There must be a reason for such cruelty, mustn't there? Or how could such malice be justified? They may call me insane. They may think I'm childish. Is it childish to want to be a kid, the kid I am? Is it wrong to want to go on the weekends with my friends instead of slaving over homework? Or must I act like an adult the moment I reach junior high? If that is so, it is only right to demand adult-like treatment, is it not? If you want me to work day and night, not complain about it, and pretend to be having a good time, then allow me to vote, allow me to drive, to drink. Just going to the bathroom without an escort would be a major step up, and that's pathetic. If I am expected to be an adult, treat me as such.

If that is too hard for you, unlock our prison, unchain our arms. Give us time to be children, because that is what we are after all. We are only children; we are not criminals. We didn't commit a crime. Don't lock us up! Don't lock us up...