

# After being in the intensive care unit

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The intensive care unit (ICU) program is a new school trend that is sweeping the nation. The program was introduced by a book by Danny Hill and Dr. Jayson Nave called Power of ICU. It explains the techniques to acquire a system that is a cross between no-zero (not accepting work that is not done) and incomplete (giving incompletes instead of zeros) grading policies that schools have recently implemented, along with information and evidence of why ICU is superior to those systems.

The main idea of ICU is to defeat “ student apathy” by disregarding due dates, giving students extra time, and making students recomplete poorly done assignments or unfinished assignments with no penalty to their grades. The idea is that students will learn more by having less stress to learn in a limited amount of time, and the “ high maintenance” (Power of ICU) students will now have no choice but to complete their assignments and complete them well. This program is getting mixed reviews from school members, parents, and students. On one side there are those who believe that the ICU program is effective in getting students to learn the material and do their work, on the other side there are those who believe we are under preparing the students and overwhelming the teachers by using the ICU program. For example: a student goes into a teacher’s classroom for help before school on an assignment they don’t understand but is due that day.

The teacher helps as much as they can, but soon the tardy bell rings and the student has to get to their first hour class. Distraught that they will get docked if they hand in the assignment late, the student copies another student’s assignment. Now the student has their assignment completed, but

doesn't know the information. When the test comes around, the student will most likely fail it. There are also other students in the same situation, but they don't care enough about their grades to get help or copy so they just turn in a blank or uncompleted assignment.

This is a prime example of the type of student that would benefit from ICU. Under the ICU program, students get access to all the resources they need to succeed. The student gets proper time to get help on their assignment and not penalized for late assignments, so then they won't feel overwhelmed because of the due date. By giving the student all these resources that they need to succeed, there would be no need to cheat or turn in guesses on homework. If the student still didn't know the information for the test, they would be given second chances to be re-taught the information and re-take the test, without the fear of penalty.

The ICU's true shining moment, though, is with the students that don't bother and turn in incomplete, blank, or poorly done work. The ICU won't let these kids off and give them a zero or poor grade, but instead the teachers won't grade the students until the work is done to the best of their ability. At the beginning, these 'high maintenance' students are defiant of the program, as they are of everything, but eventually most of these students comply and begin to learn and do their work. The Power of ICU has many examples of students that have benefited under the program. They also talk about students that could've benefited under the program, such as the student that failed math class and retook it their senior year, only to drop out because of the stress of not understanding the work a second time. To

summarize the first argument, ICU is an effective program that gives the students more resources they need to succeed.

It also gives ‘ high maintenance’ students a better chance at succeeding, while most of them wouldn’t get as far as they did under the program. It’s the school’s duty to give these students all the opportunities they need to succeed, and that is assured under the ICU program. The ICU program isn’t perfect, though. The following is an example of ICU’s biggest disadvantages. Halfway through the quarter, a teacher makes a list on the whiteboard of those with missing assignments.

Two panels later, the list is done. It encompasses assignments from the beginning of the quarter, as well as the same six names over and over. The last assignment consists of two questions, and half the class didn’t do it. There is no penalty for late assignments anymore; nothing stops them from waiting for their friends to just get the assignment back and copy the right answers—and get the same score as them. But, most of them are too lazy to cheat now.

Why bother? The intensive care unit is creating unprepared students, which will cause them to suffer as they further their education. The students will not know how to manage their time so everything gets completed in an orderly fashion, nor will they know anything about the importance of deadlines. This will surely limit them as they pursue higher education or a real life job. And these aren’t just the ‘ high maintenance’ students Power of ICU describes. These are the potential honor roll students, the future valedictorian, and the ‘ smart kids’ who aren’t discovering their potential

because ICU is limiting them. Beyond the students, ICU is putting an enormous amount of stress on the teachers.

The Power of ICU dismisses all teachers that don't support the program as 'whiny' and 'a spoiled child that thinks the world revolves them' and supports these points by explaining ridiculous grading scams that very few teachers would ever dream of practicing: from giving fake points so they don't get reprimanded from the administration to moving children along in grades because they passed gym class. Teachers can be good teachers without the ICU program, which isn't understood by the program itself. When you add the ICU program to their workload their job becomes harder.

Teachers have to be ready to re-grade any assignment, at any time during the quarter. They have to be constantly on students about where their work is. Sometimes it must feel like a backwards climb as the teacher goes ahead in a section, only to go two steps back because half the class finally got their assignment done from last week.

The teacher also has to be more active about anti-cheating, a major flaw in the program for any teacher that actually returns student's work. And none of this includes the teacher's actual teaching, which takes extra energy and also suffers greatly from the ICU program. In short, the ICU program has serious downfalls for both the student and the teacher, and the program defends this with negative statements and finger pointing at the under-appreciated teacher. The student is not given the chance to learn valuable skills that is helpful for their future career and education. A study of two schools in the same district was conducted, one that runs the ICU program

and one that doesn't. The study included scores from a statewide test over three years.

In the school with the ICU program, Southside Elementary, math scores were an average of 6 points higher, language arts were an average of 2 points higher, social studies scores were an average of 4 points higher, and science scores were an average of 1 point lower. The following behavior issues were lower in Southside Elementary (ICU) school: Disruptive conduct, bus suspensions, in-school suspensions, suspensions, other dispositions, and other infractions. The following behavior issues were higher in the ICU school: fighting/threats, dress code violations, and warnings. Upon my research into the effectiveness of ICU for the students and teachers, I had come to several points of conclusion. Although ICU's benefits are clear and backed up firmly, I do not believe that ICU is in the best interest of the students or the teachers because of the extra work unrelated to teaching and the potential shock of going to higher education that is plausible with the implantation of the program. To maximize effectiveness, I believe these 'high maintenance' students should be identified as a whole and given these privileges, but in a way so they are not at competition with other students as they are doing lower standard of work.

The teachers should be supportive, but they should get to choose to support the program and not be forced to conform to the system. In conclusion, the ICU program has aspects that can increase student participation, but it is currently implemented in a way that is ineffective and potentially harmful to students.