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College Writing II

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A. Introduction

-What is your topic?

- *Education Reform.*

-What is your angle?

- *The current system is outdated; doesn't consider those going into the arts/creative industries of the workforce.*

-What is your thesis statement?

- *As our current educational system stands, it is outdated and needs urgent reform regarding school day length, format, and standardized testing.*

-Provide some background on your topic.

- Schools are putting students in straight rows; telling them to sit still; raising their hands if they want to speak; giving them a short break to eat; and for eight hours a day, telling them what to think. Schools are also making students compete for an A, which comes from the "A- grade" quality product found in factories. The school day and infrastructure are modeled after the Industrial Age, where most kids would eventually have to work in factory-like settings. Sure, the model worked back then (we're talking 183 years ago by the way), but it still hasn't changed in its majority after so much time. Hence why urgent reform is needed.

B. Argument:**-Assert the first point of your argument:**

- *Standardized testing is hardly effective in teaching children **how** to absorb information, and it doesn't stay in their heads for long.*

-Give your personal opinion about the point:

- People hardly enjoy memorizing things that they feel have nothing to do with their objective. This is the way that the human brain is built. We are wired to do objective things, like surviving, hunting, and reproducing. If we are to have students (who are also little humans) learn about different subjects, we must focus on their **understanding** of a subject, and not on the subject itself. Repetition allows for assimilation, but only if there is a context behind said repetition.

-Provide evidence, research, testimony, and other details that support your opinion:

“Since not all students can learn in the same way, it is illogical to expect them to succeed if we test them all in the same way. Another reason why standardized testing does not work is that we, as humans, naturally pursue—and excel at—things we find interesting and relevant to our lives. Test prep does not inculcate this natural curiosity. If students have to know something for a test about a subject they are disinterested in, they will cram and then usually forget the information.”

-Assert the second point of your argument:

- *Many students around the world agree that the current system is flawed, and does not allow them to flourish as they should.*

-Give your personal opinion about the point:

- I would completely agree with these students. I have experienced similar things myself. Having Attention Deficit Disorder, **everything** I do has to somehow be interesting otherwise it becomes nearly impossible to do. It is a daily task to make my life that way, and oftentimes exhausting. Nevertheless, it works for me. I also flourish best around patient people (and by correlation teachers), who understand that I'll be late sometimes due to time blindness; that I lack certain receptors in my brain which do not allow me to be productive as efficiently as other students; that my attention is constantly fluctuating in highs and lows (and it will not always be on someone when they are speaking)- which, you could guess, is NOT all teachers- (thank god you're one of them Professor Soumakis.) Everyone should get the kind of compassion that I am able to get from some people, especially in academic settings.

-Provide evidence, research, testimony, and other details that support your opinion:

- This study was done by the By Us, For Us report. Twelve young researchers from around the world looked at survey data from 3,294 young people in 70 different countries. They found that 40% of young people believe that instead of providing them with the skills necessary to succeed in the workforce, (like interpersonal skills/entrepreneurship), schools keep being anchored to the old methods of teaching like textbook/memorization methods. 66% said that they are not given the time and opportunity necessary to get things in order and are not taken seriously by their teachers.

-Assert the third point of your argument:

The education system is too controlling over students.

-Give your personal opinion about the point:

Many students out there, are being forced to focus on meeting deadlines and grades over learning information in their own time. It is well known (or at least should be) that the optimal rate of learning happens when we get to do it at our own pace, with patience and plenty of time/repetition; this allows students to grasp the context of something, and really understand it. T

-Provide evidence, research, testimony, other details that support your opinion:

“Schools kill creativity. Students are not given the possibility to explore their areas of interest deeply, as they are forced to follow an extremely structured course of education. Ideas that do not fit within assignment guidelines are shot down and disregarded.” - Teen Ink

C. Acknowledge and/ or refute other arguments:

1. A counterargument to this is that with enough repetition, students can retain much of the information that they have learned. I would frame my refute in the following question: Sure, they are retaining information- but in what quality? Is cramming for an assignment at 1 AM in the morning better than having a whole day to grasp a well-understood concept?
2. Pressuring students to compete with each other for the “best” grade isn’t detrimental to their mental health. Refute: There is plenty of research out there correlating levels of depression and anxiety in students with the surplus amount of workload that they have to cram in for the sake of a grade.
3. We have a national (but silent by the media) problem of students dropping out of High School, and it’s certainly not because the current system is perfect.

-Summarize the counterclaims:

“Public schools? They’re fine.”

“Teachers who can’t be fired? No problem at all.”

“Our international competitiveness in education? Nothing to worry about.”

“Too many kids dropping out of high school? It’s a myth. And anyway, some kids are just poor, hence doomed, so what are schools supposed to do about that?” - New York Post

-Provide support:

“The findings indicate that most of the knowledge gained in the course is lost within 2 years. Evidence is provided that knowledge acquired at a deep level of understanding is more likely to be retained than knowledge acquired at a surface level of understanding, and knowledge tested more than once during a course is more likely to be retained than knowledge tested only once. No significant differences in retention were observed related to the material covered in a project. Implications are discussed.” -American Psychological Association.

D. Conclusion

Summarize your three argument points:

1. Standardized tests need to be extinguished as a form to evaluate a student’s proficiency in any subject.
2. The current system is flawed and keeps many students from achieving their maximum potential.
3. The system is too controlling over students, which is detrimental to their mental, physical, and emotional health.

End with a call to action, a restatement of your thesis, or a statement of implications:

- *Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid. –Albert Einstein (probably)*
- *“Tell me and I’ll forget, show me and I may remember, involve me and I’ll understand.”
– Chinese Proverb*

Works Cited

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