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Silver Stream

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Learning to Learn

Adults and educators always say that we're life-long learners. As kids, we are students who learn through school. I've never really been a "bad" student. Occasionally, I would get in trouble with the teacher, doing things like talking or playing around during instruction, but it's rare and happens every once in a blue moon. I'm friendly around my peers, participate actively during class, and do my homework every night. I'd say I'm usually a decent, even great student.

I didn't always feel this way. In my early years of education, I struggled as an English learner. I was born in America, but moved to China for the first four years of my life. When I returned to America, I found myself lost and confused in this foreign place. I didn't know what the kids in school said, and I struggled to express my thoughts.

As time went by I began to develop the traits of an avid learner. Starting from 7th grade, we received access to an online gradebook called Jupiter Grades, a place where we could constantly have an eye on our grades. This really helped me become much more aware of my them, and served as a constant reminder of my academic performance. When I did bad on a test or project, I could see exactly how much impact it made. I've virtually been a straight A student since fifth grade.

Over time, I developed self discipline to do good in school. It really put me on the right track and helped me maintain a good work ethic. It was no longer about bringing good grades

home for my parents. Whenever I got a good grade on a test or did good on a project, I felt a sense of accomplishment. I began to really care about my education. As a result however, I became extremely concerned when I had teachers who I felt I was wasting my time with. An example of this was my 7th and 8th grade Social Studies teacher.

I remember it was a cold November afternoon, and we were just transitioning from Science class.

"Today we're going to watch a fun little cartoon on the American Revolution," my Social Studies teacher announced.

Typically, students love when teachers let them watch videos during class. It's a nice little break from the usual lectures. This was a bit different, however. I knew exactly where this was going, and I wasn't looking forward to it.

"You're responsible for taking at least eight sentences worth of notes and writing a one paragraph summary on the video," she added. It was the same assignment we've had for the past week. I was sure that half the class knew this was coming.

I was absolutely furious. Why did I have her class when I can do what she does at home? Watching cartoons from 2002 was just not getting the job done, but I guess from her perspective, it was. She's a teacher, but she rarely ever taught. She never elaborated on the material, or made sure we got what was important.

If we weren't writing summaries, we were doing Webquests, essentially answering a set of questions with the links to different websites as resources. Under normal circumstances, I would be fine with this, although I prefer the teacher telling me the answer directly. However, I knew why she couldn't. Chances are, she didn't even know the answers herself. She literally

took Webquests that people made more than a decade ago, and used them as the lesson for the day. What's worse is that 90% of the links no longer even work.

Throughout your educational career, you are bound to have teachers and classmates you won't like. However, you have a choice to either do something to change it, or toughen your skin and just deal with it. I chose the latter. I think for someone who doesn't understand the importance of education, something like this would have been perfectly fine. Six years ago, I would have been that person. However, who I am today is different. Although I don't necessarily look forward to going to school everyday, I know why it exists and I accept it into my life. The person I am now simply cannot allow time dedicated to learning to be wasted on meaningless lessons. Students need a certain level of respect and admiration for a teacher for that relationship to work. How can you learn under someone who you don't think is worthy?