The Unofficial High School Freshman’s Handbook to Success

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Introduction

It has been three decades since I started high school. I have many good memories along with some really terrible memories. I remember navigating a very crowded high school during my four years packed with 3000 students taking classes, eating lunch, and changing classes. It brought many joys and sorrows over time for me. Those experiences made me stronger for adulthood now looking back on my memories. I thought to share some of the things I have learned over time to help you succeed and find your way through your high school years to your high school graduation.

Out of all of my years of schooling between kindergarten and graduating from high school I would say that my most difficult years in school were my high school years. There were so many people in the school and so many crowds or cliques to deal with at times. It felt very difficult and complex to deal with the social situations at times at the school.

I discovered in time that school was way more than academics but navigating your way in life through attending high school. During my previous years, it was pretty much that I did not have any choices in the classes that I took in school because the school district and the state dictated the curriculum. High school is set up that you are prepared for college or life depending on your chosen career path in life. Everyone reminds you of this besides the posters around school. It can get quite overwhelming thinking of your future past high school at times.

I was amazed at the amount of activities offered by my high school. There seemed to be something for everyone at times with the clubs and sports available. I never realized what an impact my choices then had on my life now until very recently by chance. Everyone at school tells you that it is your choice or not to get involved in school while others say get involved. It is a difficult decision on which path would you chose in a situation like this.

I wrote this book as a chance for you to know more than just what your high school handbook will tell you with its rules. High school is more than just rules. There is something that you can know in advance that would have a great impact on your high school career and choices in regards to it. It is more than what your school guidance counselor and maybe your parents might tell you at times. I hope by writing this book that I can help you make some really good choices and have a better experience in school thanks to these choices.

High school is a series of choices that you make which has an impact on your education and future past high school. You may not realize it at times, but it can be a very positive experience. You just need to know how to navigate it to find your place in high school and thrive. I know you can do it with the help of this book.

Dawn Lucan

Thinking About Your Grades

Every time you talk to your parents just about that they are pressuring you about your grades in school. They have high expectations for you based on your previous years of schooling. It is enough to make someone depressed, angry or frustrated over your grades at times for you. How should you view them while attending high school, and how would they impact your future plans in life? We will examine these issues in this chapter.

Grades, unfortunately, are the most important thing when it comes to determining your school and future life path. I did not realize it until a year or two ago when I considered entering a program at my local college. They had requested my high school transcript. I was shocked when I read this. I had not been in school in almost three decades at the time. I had attended college for Elementary and Early Childhood Education, and I graduated back in the 1990s. When I talked to the admissions person, I had a real shocker because it was an intense education program to get into. I learned a great deal about me after the interview.

Grades can make or break which courses you can take next year based on your performance. It might sound harsh to say this, but you are judged if you are capable of staying on the same course track or not based on your grades with your guidance counselor. Often, your guidance counselor has worked with thousands of students like yourself over the years. They pretty much know what works or not based on your grades and courses taken. If you let your grades slip or not get help when you are struggling, it could result in you repeating a required course for graduation again or end up in a lower course track. If you were bored with what you are taking now in school because of its pace, you would be even more bored with a lower level track guaranteed.

If you are struggling, it is all right to ask for help in high school. Often, teachers are required to spend time after school in their classroom offering help to their students. It is often two days a week more or less. Transportation is offered to you for free through the school. However, I have a feeling your parents would provide transportation if needed when it comes to you getting extra help in school to keep your grades up. Never be afraid to ask for help when you need it in high school because it is not a sign of weakness or held against you.

Does missing an assignment make a difference in the grade? It definitely does. When you miss an assignment, you receive a 0 for it. Even if it is a difficult assignment or you are rushing through it for a good reason, I recommend still turning in your homework. At least getting some credit for the assignment in a grade is better than not getting a grade at all for not turning it in.

When it comes to long term assignments, you need to pace yourself to get it done by the due date. You can never plan how much homework you will get in high school from your other teachers. This comes from my own personal experience. No one knows how much homework is being assigned to a class by another teacher in a different subject. Each class is run independently of another teacher. You never know if you will wind up with three hours of homework on the night before your long term assignment is due, and it could result in you rushing your project. It could also mean your grades in your other classes suffer because you had to focus on a big long term project that you should have been working on. Trust me. No teacher will take the excuse of you having a big long term assignment in why you did not get your other homework done the night before it was due because they will ask you why didn’t you work on it over time.

Even if you do not have homework that night in a class, I recommend reviewing your notes for at least 15 minutes. It can do you some good at times because everything you learn in class builds on itself later on in the course or in a future course. Just remember that the time you spend studying, benefits you in the end with your grades.

I never recommend rushing your homework or your tests at all. When you rush through things, you are more prone to making mistakes which can cost you a better grade at times. If you do it enough times during a quarter or semester, your overall grade does suffer. Before turning in your assignment or test, I recommend you review your answers or assignment because there could be something you missed in it. Just remember those extra minutes reviewing things could help you get a great grade in your class.

Grades are one of the most frustrating issues in high school. There is so much pressure to do well from your teachers, parents and guidance counselor. If you act smart, you can pull off great grades in school and not get frustrated with the expectations that go along with it while attending high school.