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PRACTICE TEXT

Seated in desks and listening to lengthy lectures, students bide their time in classrooms—holding cells that add tests and grades to confinement. Meanwhile, the rest of the world gets things done—widgets are formed, contracts forged, and ideas formulated. This separation of teens and toil prevents students from gaining practical and beneficial work experience. Work experience teaches lessons students can use for the rest of their lives. Therefore, it makes sense to allow high school students to work for pay and class credit.

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If students worked at least half a day during the week, they could gain direction for their future lives. Working in a real job would give a student a taste of the profession. This could confirm the student's thinking about future study and employment, or provide helpful recognition that the profession is not really something that interests the student. America's Career Resource Network (ACRN), an organization funded by the U.S. Department of Education, agrees, claiming "work-based learning" "can help students make informed choices about their future." ACRN tells parents, "Your child will have a better idea of what type of education or training to undertake after high school if he or she has tried out career options while still in high school."[1]

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Students gaining real work experience also learn essential skills for success in any profession. For example, interpersonal skill with people of varying ages and backgrounds is essential for professional success. In fact, an inability to get along with co-workers is a common

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reason for employee firings.[2] In school, students interact primarily with peers. By spending more time in a work environment, students would gain experience and skill in interacting with a wider variety of people.

One argument against allowing students to work is that the time away from school will interfere with their academic achievement. Research reveals a contradictory conclusion. Students who spend time in work environments actually take their studies more seriously because they relate what they learn to their work experience.[3] This connection between school and the workplace can actually promote academic achievement.

High school students benefit from participating in the world's daily activity of getting things done. Direction for the future, development of essential skills, and discovery of links between school and work are just three benefits students gain from workplace experience. These gains justify allowing students to work for pay and class credit. Such an approach recognizes that learning happens outside the classroom, and that such learning can be valuable to students' professional success.

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3. America's Career Resource Network.

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MY TEACHER'S THOUGHTS

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