resumé | responsibility | acquire | perceive | sustain

This week's issue:

ARE AFTER-SCHOOL JOBS HELPFUL OR HARMFUL FOR MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS?

Questions for Classroom Discussion:

- Why do some people think it's good for a student to have a job?
- Why do some people think it's bad for a student to have a job?
- Do you think students should have after-school jobs?

Jason's day is full of teachers, classes, and assignments. He also has an after-school job. Jason works hard to earn money and keep up with his studies. But in the past few weeks he has been working too many hours and not doing his homework or passing his tests.

When Jason first started looking for a job he was very excited. He put together a **resumé** to help him **acquire** his position. He thought having a job would teach him about **responsibility** as well as help him earn some extra cash.

Like Jason, many students think that having a part-time job is a good thing. They get a chance to make new friends with their coworkers. Their bosses and coworkers **perceive** them as responsible adults. They start to learn the value of money and to save up for the things they want, like clothes, video games, or even a car. Some even help out with their family's needs. These are all benefits of having an after-school job.

Then there are those who think students should not be working while they are in school. Jason could not **sustain** his good grades because of work. Some people claim that students who work do not do as well in school because they don't have as much time to study or do assignments. These students are also tired more often and do not pay as much attention in class.

What do you think about this? Are after-school jobs helpful or harmful to middle and high school students?

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USE THE FOCUS WORDS

resumé *(noun)* a document summarizing experience and qualifications

Sample Sentence: Most high school students learn to write a **resumé** that includes all of their work and volunteer experiences, as well as academic achievements.

Turn and Talk: What are two things that you hope to be able to include on your **resumé** when you are a high school senior?

responsibility *(noun)* duty; the ability to act independently

Sample Sentence: Jason thought having a job would teach him about **responsibility** as well as help him earn some extra cash.

Turn and Talk: Where have you learned more about **responsibility**: in school or at home? Explain.

acquire *(verb)* to gain

Sample Sentence: Jason put together a resumé to help him **acquire** a job.

Turn and Talk: How do you plan on **acquiring** the experience and skills necessary for building a strong resumé?

perceive *(verb)* to sense or be aware of; to view in a certain way

Sample Sentence: When students get a job, their bosses and coworkers **perceive** them as responsible adults.

Turn and Talk: Do your teachers **perceive** you as responsible? Why or why not?

sustain *(verb)* to keep up

Sample Sentence: As it turns out, Jason could not **sustain** his good grades while working.

Turn and Talk: What was the last book that **sustained** your interest from beginning to end?

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DO THE MATH

Many students **perceive** an after-school job as a **responsibility** that will help them build their **resumé**, **acquire** new skills, and earn money. But new **responsibilities** affect the amount of time students have for other things. Can students **sustain** their dedication to schoolwork and take on a job after school at the same time?

Option 1: According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, students who have an after-school job spend an average of 42 fewer minutes per day on schoolwork than students who don't work. If the school year is 180 days, how many more hours per year would the average non-working student spend on schoolwork than the average student with an after-school job?

A. 7,560 hours
B. 300 hours
C. 244 hours
D. 126 hours

Option 2: According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, students who have an after-school job spend an average of 42 fewer minutes per day on schoolwork than students who don't work. If we let m = the number of minutes the average non-working student spends on schoolwork each day, write an algebraic expression that shows the number of minutes the average student with an after-school job spends on schoolwork in a 5-day week.

$5(m - 42)$

Discussion Question: According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, working students spend 42 fewer minutes on schoolwork, 42 fewer minutes on fun activities, and 36 fewer minutes on sleep each day. Do you **perceive** any of these statistics as a problem? Whose **responsibility** is it to make sure that kids **sustain** focus on their schoolwork and **acquire** healthy habits like getting enough sleep?

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THINK SCIENTIFICALLY

The students in Ms. Kahn's class are talking about after-school jobs.

"I do some babysitting occasionally during the week, and almost every weekend," says Kareema, "but I don't know how I would cope with the **responsibility** of having a regular job every weekday. By the time I finish soccer practice, it's almost dinner time, and then I've got to get my homework done before maybe watching a little TV and going to bed. Where is there time to work a regular job?"

"I enjoy my job," says Sergio. "I get my homework done right after school, then after dinner I go work for three hours at my aunt's video rental store. It feels good to help her out, and it's fun to talk with the customers about movies, even though I end up not having as much time as I used to for watching movies myself. Anyway, it's great to **acquire** some spending money for the weekends."

"Money is important," says Viet Ly. "But I worry about how my older brother's job affects him. He's 17, and he works an eight-hour shift after school three days a week, plus another eight hours on Saturday. He's saving most of his wages for college, but ever since he turned 16 and started his job, he's had a hard time **sustaining** good grades. He just seems rushed and tired all the time."

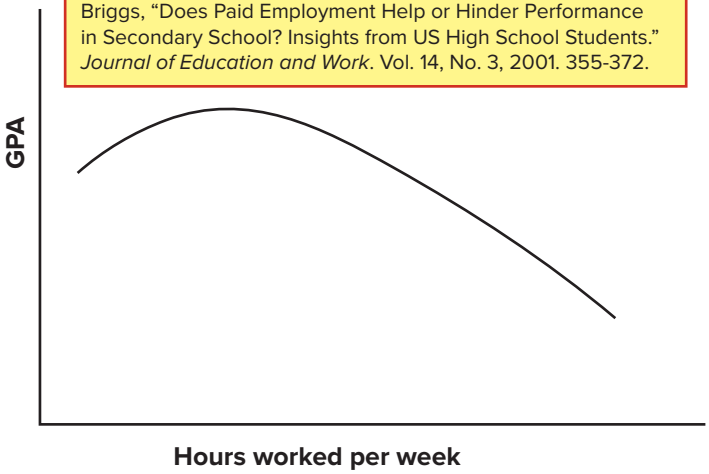
Sergio nods. "Yeah, I think I'd have a hard time keeping up with my school **responsibilities** if I spent that much time on the job," he says. "I guess it's like Goldilocks and the Three Bears: I don't want too much work or too little work. I like it just right."

"But how much is just right?" says Viet Ly.

"Good question," says Ms. Kahn. "Let's see if we can find any research data on after-school jobs and academic performance."

After doing an online search, Ms. Kahn's students find the following graph summarizing the results of some research on the relationship between after-school employment and grade point averages for middle school and high school students.

Source: Inverted U graph adapted from David Stern and Derek Briggs, "Does Paid Employment Help or Hinder Performance in Secondary School? Insights from US High School Students." *Journal of Education and Work*. Vol. 14, No. 3, 2001. 355-372.



This graph is generalized (not exact) since it is not marked off in numerical units for grade point average or hours worked. It shows an "inverted U" relationship between average GPA and hours worked, peaking at around 15 hours of work.

Discuss with a partner where you think 15 hours would be located on this graph.

What general idea is the graph trying to communicate?

Having about 15 hours of after-school employment is associated with the best average grades. Having no work, or especially too much work, is associated with having lower grades.

Assuming this graph is a fair representation for the studies it summarizes, what do you think might cause this "inverted U" relationship between hours worked and average GPA for students?

Working might make some students feel more confident and responsible, and might help them learn to organize their time better, while students who work too much may be overwhelmed. Or maybe students who already get good grades also choose to work moderate hours.

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DEBATE THE ISSUE

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

A

❑ After-school jobs are harmful to students.

OR

B

❑ After-school jobs are helpful to students.

OR

CREATE YOUR OWN

❑ _____

_____

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Jot down a few notes on how to support your position during a discussion or debate.

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Be a strong participant by using phrases like these:

"Can you show me evidence in the text that..."

"I believe that..."

"You make a good point, but have you considered..."

"I agree with you, but..."

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TAKE A STAND

Support your position with clear reasons and specific examples. Try to use relevant words from the Word Generation list in your response.

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