

Schools Should Absolutely Let Kids Resubmit Work And Retake Tests

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Since my son started virtual school in the fall of 2020, he has been introduced to a new concept in schooling: the ability to resubmit assignments or retake tests. If he's unhappy with a grade, he has two more chances to try again for a better one.

When I first learned he would have this feature built into his schooling, it sounded like a cop-out to me. Would he really learn that way? Isn't it almost like cheating to be able to find out what you got wrong and just ... go fix it and improve your grade? Wouldn't everyone make straight A's if that's how things worked? And what about the kids who study really hard and get an A on the first try? Shouldn't their grade record look better than the kid who got a C, then a B, and then an A?

But then I learned that, at least with my son's virtual school program, it's not as simple as going back to the assignment or test and fixing the problems he got wrong. He has to

redo the *entire* assignment or test — with the questions shuffled around, some questions removed, and some new questions added in.

It's not an easy fix. If he wants to actually improve his grade on subsequent tries, he has to put in the time to study. And because he doesn't want to spend more time than necessary, he is motivated to study hard the first time to get a good grade so he doesn't have to do it over. He knows I will make him redo assignments and tests if I see his overall grade slipping too much or if it's obvious he's not putting in the effort.

And I am seeing that when he redoes an assignment, he is absolutely getting more than just an improved grade out of it. If he bombed an assignment, it's because he was lazy or distracted or simply missed a critical piece of information somewhere. When he redoes the work, he identifies what he missed, refreshes his memory, and most importantly, retains the information better. Rather than moving on to the next assignment with gaping holes in his knowledge, he pieces together a solid foundation on which to build and gather new information. He gains mastery.

And isn't mastery supposedly the point?

A pre-pandemic tweet from 2019 about this concept of redoing work has resurfaced recently and made the rounds on social media.

"My parents seem genuinely shocked at my class policies," said Tracy Edwards in her tweet. "Yes, your 5th grader may redo any test or quiz. No, I don't care how many times they choose to retake it. Yes, they can turn in that assignment late. I'm a whole adult that requires grace & mercy. I can extend that to kids."

In light of the pandemic, it seems many teachers have been reconsidering how they grade their students' schoolwork. Kids have been suffering from anxiety and a general sense of impending doom. Teachers are recognizing this and adjusting their

expectations accordingly, allowing kids to resubmit work and retake tests — hence the resurgence of this tweet. Of course, **some teachers** have been doing this for a while.

Lily, an 11th grade teacher in Massachusetts, says that in her classroom, it's been standard practice for some time now to allow kids to make up almost all assignments. "Growth comes from revising and editing," she tells Scary Mommy. "And not allowing students the opportunity is taking away their opportunity to learn from their own mistakes." Lily also pointed out that the students she teaches come from highly disparate backgrounds. It would be classist, and often racist, to enforce the same rigid expectations with kids who've experienced trauma or instability in their lives as kids who are coming from a place of privilege.

April Noelle Grant also employs a "try again" approach in homeschooling her three children in Florida. "When they don't do well on tests, we sit and discuss it," the coach and podcast host of **The Other Side of 40** tells Scary Mommy. "We figure out what happened. It makes no sense to throw your hands up and push to the next subject if they aren't clear on the first one."

Some kids need repetition to reinforce their long-term memory. Some kids have testing anxiety, and the repetition of retaking a test can help them work through those jitters so they can earn the grade that accurately reflects their understanding of the material. Some kids are coming from a first language other than English. There are so many reasons that being rigid with deadlines and final grades isn't always the right answer, and in fact is sometimes the absolute wrong one.

None of this is meant to suggest that teachers should provide their students with endless opportunities for revision to the point that the teacher ends up tripling or quadrupling their own work. And clearly, part of preparing kids for adulthood means teaching them the importance of deadlines and how to meet them. Building into a

curriculum the ability to redo assignments or retake tests does not mean tossing out all accountability. As with all things, balance is key.

Still, we talk of preparing kids for the “real world” as if adulthood is a place where growth and second chances don’t exist. But being a competent adult — both in the workplace and out of it — often involves failure, revision, and starting over from scratch. And the point of school may be to gain mastery of a subject, but even more than that, it’s about growth. It’s not just about acquiring information; it’s about *learning how to learn*.

So why then would we only give kids one chance? Why not allow them the experience of learning from their own failures? If a student is saying, “I think I can do better,” it is incumbent upon us to give them the opportunity to prove themselves right. As Lily says of her 11th graders, “If a kid wants to work, and work, and work to improve, what the hell kind of teacher would I be if I said no?”

Link to article: <https://www.scarymommy.com/schools-allow-resubmit-work-retake-tests/>