



Profile of a Student Activity Student Profiles

Developed by Gene Thompson-Grove.

Student 1

You are life smart, but not school smart. You would do almost anything to not look stupid in school. You are the class clown, or the loud political protester, or the persistent talker — on the edge of being a “behavior problem.” You don’t mind being sent to the office instead of having to give an oral presentation — and you know just how to get sent there. Everyone at the office knows you well and greets you with affection, as they know you as “really, a nice kid.” The things you are really good at seem to have little place in school.

Student 2

You are a good but unremarkable student. You have figured out what each of your teachers wants, and you do exactly that — on time, and completely. You are a committed student, but take few risks, and so seldom challenge yourself to higher levels of learning. You are one of those kids people talk about — the quiet kid whose work always falls within the “norm.” Because you complete your work, get A’s and B’s, and are never any trouble, you are often overlooked.

Student 3

You love learning. You can’t get enough of it. You actually look up those books that your teachers mention in passing and independently figure out alternative math theorems — just for fun. Your only beef with school is the busy work you have to do and those classes you have to take with kids who just don’t seem to care about learning.

Student 4

Who are you anyway? It often takes teachers a full semester to remember your name, and you often feel invisible. This is either because you like it that way [i.e., you sit in the back and hide behind textbooks, hats, whatever — happily forgoing a few percentages to keep from going public, and doing decent but unremarkable work to keep a low profile]. Or, this is because you feel disenfranchised and disempowered, for all kinds of reasons. You watch the “in” students with a mixture of envy and disdain. You know more about certain subjects than they do, but most teachers don’t know that.

Student 5

In your mind, there is no way you can succeed in school. You have been a “remedial” student from before your memory kicked in. You read slowly, and seldom get a passing grade on an in-class essay. You do have strengths, but no one seems to notice or value those. You wonder if life after high school will feel like more of the same.

Student 6

You are a finely tuned teacher-pleasing machine. You know exactly what you need to do to maximize your grade and you do it (no matter what) and then some. You are organized, disciplined and focused — on your homework, on getting good grades, and on your extra curricular activities, which will look good on your transcript when you apply to college. Your teachers know you will always volunteer for anything they ask - and you often do.

Student 7

You are an efficiency hound to leave time for other things in your life — the lowest passing grade possible for the least amount of work is your mantra. Why pass a class with a 78% when you can pass with a 69.2% and a good sob story? You know all the tricks: make up tests, rewrites, re-dos, extra credit points, parental pressure, coach pressure, group work (with the right partners). You put more effort into beating the game than learning.

Student 8

You have a creative mind, love the arts (drawing, music, and/or drama) and believe that most of the significant ideas in life can't be expressed by talking or writing, which is all anyone seems to want to do in school. You have a hard time staying focused in most of your required classes. You are happy with yourself, but often feel like you are “marching to a different drummer.”

Student 9

Who said academics and classes and grades are the most important things about school? As far as you are concerned, your classes are the places where you get to see your friends, and sometimes, frankly, they seem to interrupt what's really important — like talking to your friends, and going to games, and participating in what they call the “extra curricular” activities. These activities don't seem “extra” to you at all, but instead are “central” to what school is *really* all about.



Profile of a Student Activity

Student Profiles Adapted for Equity Discussions

Adapted by Debbie Bambino, Camilla Greene and RoLesia Holman 7/06, Edited by Tom Gregory and Susan Schooler 7/06

Student 1

Your family has big plans for you. They left their homeland so you could succeed, but they don't know what it feels like to be a student with an accent whose name the teachers can't pronounce. Your teachers act like you are intentionally making their lives difficult because your parents need a translator. You're made to feel like you're a problem.

Student 2

You question why you should work hard over time, given the unpredictability of your teachers' responses to your work. You believe that no matter what you or other members of your group accomplish, your achievements are not likely to change how you are viewed by the larger society. You still won't be able to get a cab. You'll still get followed in department stores, and you'll still get stopped when you drive through certain neighborhoods after dark, whether you get a GED, or a Ph.D.

Student 3

You love learning. You can't get enough of it. You actually look up those books that your teachers mention in passing and independently figure out alternative math theorems — just for fun. Your only beef with school is the busywork you have to do and those classes you have to take with kids who just don't care about learning.

Student 4

Who are you anyway? It sometimes takes teachers a full semester to remember your name, and you often feel invisible. The stories they make you read and discuss in class never sound like anybody from your family or neighborhood. College is for rich kids and brains, so that leaves you out. You watch the "favorite" students with a mixture of envy and disdain. You know more about certain subjects than they do, but most teachers don't know that.

Student 5

In your mind, there is no way you can succeed in school. You have been a "remedial" student for as long as you can remember. You read slowly and seldom get a passing grade on an in-class essay or a math test. You do have strengths, but no one seems to notice or value those. You wonder if life after high school will feel like more of the same.

Student 6

You are a finely tuned teacher-pleasing machine. You know exactly what you need to do to maximize your grade and you do it (no matter what) and then some. You are organized, disciplined, and focused — on your homework, on getting good grades, and on your extra-

curricular activities, which will look good on your transcript when you apply to college. Your teachers know you will always volunteer for anything they ask — and you often do.

Student 7

You complete the basics of major assignments — getting the lowest passing grade possible for the least amount of work is good enough for you. It's sometimes a game to see how close you can cut it. You participate if you like the teacher, but you really don't see the point of learning most of the content that's being taught. As long as you can play sports and graduate, why bother?

Student 8

Other students ignore you or tease you and teachers pretend they don't notice the snickers and sidebars. You're not sure how you feel about your sexual identity. You've got plenty of questions about your orientation, but your school doesn't have a Gay/Straight Alliance. Even if they did, you're not sure you'd join. Joining a support group would be the final straw with your family. You're running out of options.

Student 9

Who said academics and grades are the most important things about school? As far as you are concerned, your classes are the places where you get to see your friends, and sometimes, frankly, they seem to interrupt what's really important — like talking to your friends, going to games, and participating in what they call the “extra-curricular” activities. These activities don't seem extra to you at all; they're central to what school is *really* all about.

Student 10

You complete few assignments and are repeating grade nine. Your teachers can't understand why you won't take advantage of tutoring, or any of the other supports they have offered you repeatedly. Since middle school you have been called an underachiever in all of your classes, except for science where you always get A's. You're respected by your peers, but often rub teachers the wrong way; you refuse to play their schooling game.

Student 11

You are life smart but not school smart. You would do almost anything to not look stupid in school. You are the class clown, or the loud political protester, or the persistent talker — on the edge of being a “behavior problem.” You don't mind being sent to the office instead of having to give an oral presentation — and you know just how to get sent there. Everyone at the office knows you well and greets you with affection, as they know you are basically “a good kid.” The things you're really good at seem to have little place in school.

Student 12

You have a creative mind, read lots of books and write and perform your own poetry and music. Your teachers dismiss your writing and speech by saying it's not standard English. You have a hard time staying focused in your required classes, and all these tests are a drag. You are thinking about quitting school, going to work, and getting a GED.