April McNary

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Period 1

Essay #2: Explanatory / Expository

**Those Who Don’t Graduate**

 Ben Franklin once said, “An investment in knowledge pays the best interest.” It’s too bad not all people understand the concept of Franklin’s words. If knowledge is power, it’s a shame more people don’t invest in themselves...in their own futures. Some people just don’t know how beneficial an education is until they are left without opportunities. Education unlocks so many opportunities, but sadly, not all teenagers are able to foresee what comes with lack of basic knowledge. Unfortunately, many kids will leave high school without a basic education and a diploma to show for it. The question is why? Why do some teens choose to drop out of high school. American teenagers drop out of school for a plethora of reasons which might include lack of motivation and distraction due to social media and cell phone technology.

 One reason teens might drop out of high school is due to lack of motivation. It’s not easy for everyone to get up in the morning, but most people do because they need to earn a living. Teenagers, for the most part, are lucky enough to have most (if not all) their bills paid for them. So, what *is* the drive to wake up in the morning and go to school? If kids don’t go to school, it’s not like the electricity will be shut off. The truth is, teens don’t always see the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Many see going to school as a drag and a waste of time. As a result, some are not engaged nor are they motivated to see it all the way through to graduation day. For instance, one teacher reported an interaction with a parent of a student who was failing. The teacher said she tried (several times) to motivate the student to come in before and after school for additional assistance, but the student never made the attempt. The parent replied with a nonchalant, “What do you want *me* to do about it? They are always on their phone.” Clearly, if the parents aren’t even motivated to parent, this directly reflects the child’s inability to want to do well in school. If no one (except the teacher) is holding the kids accountable, why would students show drive to have an education? As a result, a lack of parenting might be a major reason why some kids drop out of school. Parents need to be motivated to parent so kids are motivated to receive an education.

 In addition to a lack of motivation, teens might also drop out of school because they are more concerned with maintaining an online social presence and texting on their phones. In the year 2017 kids are inundated with technology. From Snapchat to Instagram to texting, kids are preoccupied with a need for an online, social presence. In doing so, many of them withdraw from their own lives with a lack of knowledge in navigating face-to-face interactions. When kids should be learning from their teachers, they are often distracted by the pinging and the buzzing of constant notifications on their phones which pulls their attention someplace else instead of focusing on receiving an education. Teachers are constantly confiscating cell phones to compete with the attention of distracted teenagers. Even though cell phones are taken away and punishments are carried out, kids continue to repeat this distracted behavior because they are addicted to being connected online. As a result, kids are not only failing to receive all the necessary, required outcome information in the curriculum, they are also failing to obtain other social lessons which come with being in a school environment. Being in a school allows for face-to-face, social interaction which prepares teens for interacting with other people in the future. It is in these teen years that kids learn responsibility, tenacity, respect, and so much more. When teens primarily focus on technology, they are missing out on so much that could help them be productive adults in the future. With teens so distracted by technology, it’s no wonder they are failing and dropping out of school. In the end, maintaining an online presence and constant texting are doing more harm than good when used in excess amounts which wastes valuable time learning and interacting with others.

 While there are many reasons why American teenagers might drop out of school, lack of motivation and maintaining an overly active online social life (and texting) are some of the leading causes of failure.  Ben Franklin had it right -- people need to put in time for the knowledge to gain from it later on. Without a basic education life is difficult. Couple this with the lack of education, little motivation and an online/texting addiction is a recipe for an unsure future. Something needs to change. Schools need to look closely at providing a more engaging, relevant curriculum. At the same time, parents need to work closely with teachers to help their children be positive, productive members of society. It will be up to the adults, the ones who know better, to work together to elevate the children to the success they should have a fair shot at. Until then, kids will continue to drop out of school, and adults will continue to scratch their heads and wonder why.