

GRADES VS. SKILLS: WHICH REALLY MATTER IN THE LONG RUN?

by:

Hannah Lee F. Eugenio

Teacher I, Mariveles Senior High School – Sitio Mabuhay

If grades were the only measure of achievement, every top student would go on to alter the world. However, history presents a different image. Despite the fact that Steve Jobs left college early, Thomas Edison was once ridiculed for being "too slow to learn," and Albert Einstein was seen as an ordinary student, their abilities, inventiveness, and perseverance helped to design entire industries. These kinds of stories serve as a powerful reminder of a straightforward fact: your abilities, not your grades, which may indicate your current level of knowledge, will define your future potential.

Of course, grades are not without value. They demonstrate discipline, responsibility, and focus, and they generally unlock institutions, scholarships, and beginning jobs. The National Bureau of Economic Research discovered that by demonstrating reliability and a strong work ethic, greater grades can potentially provide early career benefits (2023). Such benefits, though, are short-lived. When you finally enter the real world, no one will be asking to see your report card. Employers care more about whether you can use what you've learned, how you adapt to challenges, and with whom you get along than they do about numbers on a page.

Skills, on the other hand, stick with you. They live in your actions, not on a piece of paper. In welding, for example, you can ace a written exam on safety protocols, but if you cannot control the arc or lay a strong bead, you will not last long on the job. The World Economic Forum's 2025 report highlighted that the most appreciated skills today creativity, adaptability, problem-solving, and communication are the ones that allow workers to thrive in fast-changing industries. Unlike grades, skills last throughout our

lives and become more powerful with practice. They shape careers, but they also shape character. We may overcome challenges and uncertainties with perseverance, patience, and adaptability—qualities that cannot be documented on an exam paper. When students experience teamwork when putting together a group project or perseverance after burning through a weld that didn't hold, those lessons stick. They become part of who you are, ready to guide every step forward.

Your skills are what keep you going after you're inside, even though your grades may open the first door. Although it may look excellent on the wall, a diploma cannot convey your personality, inventiveness, or flexibility. The things you've practiced, the obstacles you've surmounted, and the lessons you've learned are what really count in the end. Grades change throughout time, but the person you become as a result of your abilities endures.

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