JumpStart HANDBOOK
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"Why go to school?" It's a little late to be dealing with this question, right? Wrong. It's never too late to deal with the crucial question of why school is such a valuable institution. And Grade 12 – with its unique pressures, obligations and rewards (hopefully) – is the perfect setting.

When you've battled to get up in the morning, when it's cold or when you've missed the bus and simply can't face the thought of another school day, you've probably asked, "Why do I have to go to school?". And your parents have probably answered, "To educate yourself", "Because it's the law" or "So that you won't be left behind". Although there are seeds of truth in these answers, you'll probably agree that they aren't very motivating. So here's a better answer:

"School is an institution created by society to equip individuals with the knowledge they need to be valuable members of society. School teaches young people the skills required to be productive adults; to help their communities to survive, grow and prosper."

Our communities also respond to the results we produce while we're at school. Enthusiasm and good effort often indicate a willingness to learn what's expected of us and an eagerness to make the best of our abilities. Disinterest and poor effort often indicate a reluctance to contribute to the betterment of our societies and apathy (laziness) when it comes to realising our potential. If you haven't done so already, Grade 12 is really your last chance to show yourself and everyone else what you can do! It's your last shot to change the rest of your life. Why? Because:

Poor results suggest poor effort and can lead to:

- unemployment;
- low-paying jobs;
- financial burdens;
- few career choices;
- little trust and responsibility; and
- little respect from peers and people in positions of power.

On the other hand, young people who do well are embraced by society. They have a good chance of obtaining:

- a wider range of life choices;
- bursaries and funds to study further;
- better job opportunities;
- trust and responsibility; and
- respect from peers and society.

So where do you want to be? At the top or at the bottom? Feet firmly on the ground or head in the clouds? Remember that it's not difficult to do well, but it does require a lot of discipline. Take yourself seriously and apply yourself. This is the only life you have.

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National Youth Service