

*PROMPT: Educators debate extending high school to five years because of increasing demands on students from employers and colleges to participate in extracurricular activities and community service in addition to having high grades. Some educators support extending high school to five years because they think students need more time to achieve all that is expected of them. Other educators do not support extending high school to five years because they think students would lose interest in school and attendance would drop in the fifth year. In your opinion, should high school be extended to five years?*

*In your essay, take a position on this question. You may write about either one of the two points of view given, or you may present a different point of view on this question. Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.*

The Senior Itch—the incurable chaffing we all crave to scratch. The cure? Graduation. As we progress through our high school years growing with wisdom and maturity, we all yearn for freedom. Yet what we desire most is not always what is best for us. Although most won't want to admit it, extending our high school career to five years would make an important and beneficial impact on our future. With the four years that are currently provided, there is not enough time for motivated students to accomplish their goals before college. Merely being accepted by a selective college or university requires much pre-planned effort that is literally unavailable to students already concerned with grades and other activities.

Colleges look most thoroughly at how an applicant used his or her four years of high school. Leadership roles, a dedication to an organization, and a well-rounded, involved student is appealing to the most elite educational institutions. Often, students desire leadership positions in numerous extra-curricular organizations, but face limiting regulations on the number of offices they may hold at one time. Even if a school doesn't limit students' involvement, students eventually reach the limits of what a 24-hour day can hold. Too often, students cannot participate as much as they want in as many extra-curriculars as they want because there just isn't time. With an extra year of high school, those involved in more than one activity could successfully find the time to contribute to and to lead each one. Colleges would see a longer, more developed individual's resume that included a time for each of their interests. The organizations would benefit from stronger student participation and the students would be recognized for their true efforts as well.

Because they struggle to gain leadership roles and become the well-rounded students colleges desire, the task of maintaining a respectable grade-point-average during high school is a struggle for many students. It is difficult to be involved in activities of interest while still keeping high grades. However, colleges don't consider this when they seek applicants with high grade-point-averages in their admissions pool. Elongating the span of high school would allow more students with both grades and activities on their agenda to spend more time focusing on each separate interest. Rather than feeling forced to crunch a large block of "weighted" classes together in hopes of elevating their GPA, students would find more time to spread out their difficult classes and make the most of every single year. With less pressure and more time, grades would improve for all dedicated students, as would the enjoyment of studying those subjects and the increased retainment of what we learned in those classes.

Education aside, many high school students find that four years is not enough time to accomplish their varied goals. For instance, a student may desire a job in addition to school. The money they earn may help pay their way through college. With such a short preparation period before college, they can hardly be expected to make a successful life for themselves without the proper funds. Also, many students are interested in community service prior to attending college, but find they do not have enough time in the four-year high school period. Colleges are drawn to students with a rich assortment of community service and evidence of responsibilities such as holding a job, but students have a hard time finding the hours to put into these tasks.

High school is the foundation of the rest of our life. Like money in the bank, the investment of an additional year when we are young can make all the difference. With the additional time, motivated students would be able to become more involved in their schools, boost their grades, and find the time for a job and community service. Colleges admire these attributes, and for the sake of high-schoolers' acceptance into these institutions, more time should be provided for their endeavors. High school students work hard toward their future. Another year would help ensure their success.