

Famous Failures

Education is replete with examples of people who failed academically in one way or another but who achieved excellence and recognition nonetheless. So when your next paper is returned pulsating with four different colors of ink and you fail miserably on a midterm, console yourself with these anecdotes.



Comic Relief

Woody Allen claims he never did a lick of homework. He spent all his spare time writing jokes. This artistic dedication went unappreciated by his teachers, who called his parents to school so often his former classmates still recognize them on the street.

The homely comic attended both New York University and City College of New York, but was quickly kicked out of both schools.

"I never actually failed a college course," Allen has said. "It was always a very indefinite 'D.'"



Thrown Out With Style

Buckminster Fuller would have been a fifth-generation Harvard man had he graduated. But he soon grew to loathe the closed social systems of

Six Convincing Examples That Grades Aren't Everything

by LISA GREENBERG

the ivy-covered institution.

Fuller wanted to leave the university, but with style. Merely flunking out or withdrawing would have been too mundane.

While his classmates sweated over midyear exams, Fuller left for New York with his tuition money. He attracted the attention of several Ziegfeld showgirls by sending champagne and flowers to their dressing room, and treated the ladies to a lavish dinner that far exceeded the price of tuition. When word of his exploits and unpaid bills reached Harvard, Fuller was promptly expelled for "irresponsible conduct."



Easy Essays

Essay exams may have gotten *Washington Post* reporter Carl Bernstein through high school. He was a terrible student in everything but English.

"The only thing I could do was write," he once said. "I'd pass the essay exams and flunk the true-false."

Bernstein, who broke the Watergate story along with *Post* reporter Bob Woodward, rated homework low in priority. At 16 he spent all his free time working as a copyboy in

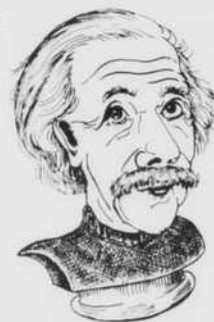
the *Washington Star* newsroom, waiting eagerly for even the smallest writing assignment to come his way.



Remedial English

Sir Winston Churchill, famous for his eloquent oratory, did not always have an impressive command of the English language. The late British prime minister flunked grammar in primary school. He credited his later mastery of the tongue to the help of an excellent remedial English teacher.

Churchill also had trouble passing his army entrance exam. Aided by a mathematics "crammer" (tutor), the late statesman passed the test on his third try.



Rebellious Attitude

Albert Einstein hated high school and was asked to leave because his "rebellious attitude" had a negative effect on other students.

The independent thinker

found it meaningless to memorize facts and grammar rules, so he lagged behind his classmates in most subjects. But he was light-years ahead of them in math.

After dropping out of high school, Einstein applied to a technical university. But he flunked the entrance exam, doing badly in everything but math. University officials suggested he attend a less confining high school where he could brush up on other subjects. Upon graduation from this school, Einstein was automatically admitted to the university.



A Late Bloomer

Some great thinkers get off to an early start. Others, such as business philosopher Peter Drucker, are more subtle about revealing their mental talents.

Drucker was a painfully slow learner in primary school. His third grade teacher found him especially frustrating and announced to the class one day: "Peter Drucker is both stupid and lazy."

Today, Drucker is a popular lecturer and consultant, as well as the author of 10 highly respected books on business, management and economics.

He once said he is glad his frustrated third grade teacher had to keep him in class. "Today the same teacher could move the child to a slow track," he said. "Once you are in that slow track you don't get out."

Lisa Greenberg hasn't failed anything yet except her first driving test.