**Why Jeremy Did Not Graduate From High School**

The year was 2005. Jeremy Newman was in the 12th Grade attending Calabasas High School. The one graduation requirement that was left was the one semester of science. He thought all science was useless, despite having two parents with Doctor of Philosophy degrees (Ph.D.) in Chemistry. Why it is called a philosophy degree seems to be ancient history. After some discussion, Jeremy decided that chemistry would be the least objectionable science; besides, his older brother had a good time in chemistry with Mr. Walker at Calabasas High, and had even received an award.

Unfortunately, he was assigned to the other chemistry teacher, a new, younger teacher at the school. She decided that the students should take notes in class and turn them in for a score that would be averaged into the grade. Jeremy said that he could not both take notes and pay attention what was being explained in class. He wanted to understand the material so he did not take notes. His midterm grade was an F (failing grade) despite acceptable scores on the tests. The problem was that with a zero on the note taking, even a good score on exams would still result in an F. Louis protested to the school and a hearing was held with both Louis and Jeremy present along with several school administrators.

During the meeting, Louis explained that he had had many chemistry classes; he had never taken any notes in any of them; and he also found note-taking to be detrimental to learning. Notes are perhaps reviewed before the final, but usually not looked at after the class is over. One member of the group explained that note-taking is a useful skill, and, they were taking notes at the meeting now. Louis wanted to know what note-taking had to do with chemistry. Another member stated that the teacher can establish any criteria that she wanted for grading the class. Another member stated that if Jeremy wanted a degree from the Las Virgenes School District, and therefore attend graduation, he would have to pass chemistry (and therefore take notes). I wonder if the notes from that meeting in 2005 are retrievable now, or whether they were just for the protection of the school district. I think it would be informative for the school district to review the notes. Louis does not believe that any student should have grade requirements placed on them that are not relevant to the learning the class material.

Afterwards, Jeremy and Louis had a discussion about the meeting. Jeremy really thought that taking notes is disruptive and stressful. Note-taking also prevented him from understanding the class. He did not really care about attending graduation anyway. Louis found that Jeremy could attend Pierce Junior College without a high school degree. That is the school that Jeremy wanted to attend anyway since it was closest to home. He later had an outstanding score on the GED exam that shows high school learning. His parents were surprised, since his grades at Calabasas High School were generally poor. However, we should not have been, as our other son, Andy, had average grades at Calabasas (mainly due to the practice of grading homework; undone homework gets the zero), but his college grades at Cal Poly Pomona were a whole grade point higher and he made the honor roll there several times. Andy stated that some of the academic requirements at Calabasas High had nothing to do with the learning the subject material. Jeremy went on to attend Pierce Junior College and then transferred to California State University Northridge where he majored in psychology. The lack of a high school degree did not affect his educational progress. Perhaps it did affect his life progress.

If Louis had to do it over again, he should have claimed that Jeremy was learning disabled and said that forced note-taking was a discrimination against his disability (true). Another parent that I know moved her child to the Los Angeles School District to get better service for learning issues. I do not know why I am writing this many years later, but maybe this article can help other students who are disabled (and their parents do not know it) from suffering from the tyranny and irrelevance of some aspects of the Las Virgenes educational system grading and disability adaptation process. Perhaps more students would benefit by leaving high school early and enrolling in a junior college or major university.