

## Example 1

### Two-Source essay

Currently our education system has been a mix of well-rounded focus and narrow education. Students are taught math and sciences, literature and speech, and different forms of art, all in an attempt to make students more well-versed in many different subjects and the skills that those subjects teach students; however, this current state of education has sparked a backlash. Many people are now saying our education system should move towards a more specific focus rather than a broad one. This argument entails that a more well-rounded subject matter distracts students from focusing on a practical career, and teaches students unnecessary skills. However, the issue ignored in this debate is that well-roundedness can provide necessary and practical skills. Skills that are more related to civic duties than the current curriculum we are teaching our children.

Diane Ravitch in “On No Child Left Behind,” argues against No Child Left Behind due to its “narrow” scope that it promotes in education by making schools focus primarily on just math and reading. Ravitch says “the current narrow, utilitarian focus of our national testing regime is not sufficient to reach any of [the goals of a true education].” In short, Ravitch is saying that education should have a broader focus, one that creates a population more enlightened in different subjects other than math and reading (which are the only two subjects that No Child Left Behind encourages). A love for learning, a sense of morality, and an enjoyment of arts and culture that encourages well-roundedness are the goals that education should be reaching for.

In juxtaposition to Ravitch, Charles Murray in “Should the Obama Generation Drop Out,” argues that the well-roundedness that colleges provide is “unnecessary” for most students, and so some students shouldn’t be wasting their time with college. By placing kids in colleges, they are expected to take many courses that don’t apply to their desired skill just to fulfill the requirement of achieving a bachelor’s degree which has now become a minimum requirement for many jobs. Murray says that “what’s not appropriate is keeping the bachelor’s as the measure of job preparedness, as the minimal requirement to get your foot in the door for vast number of jobs that don’t really require a B.A.” Murray is saying it’s pointless for students to be going to college to fulfill the requirement of a bachelor’s degree for a career because they will end up taking other classes in an effort to make them more well-rounded when in reality they have the skills for their desired career. Therefore, the requirement for a job should be supplemented with a certification test that will evaluate the skills of a worker for their job. With this, there would be no need for a college education for many Americans that would only serve to make them well-rounded in subjects that don’t apply to their desired career.

Both Ravitch and Murray stand in strong opposition to one another with their ideas about the well-roundedness of children in our education system. Ravitch believes that well-roundedness is essential to education, and that kids will benefit from a variety of different subjects. Meanwhile, Murray argues this kind of well-roundedness puts less of a focus on a practical use for a child’s education, and that we should focus on promoting a narrower educational pallet that prepares kids for a practical career.

The problem with Ravitch's argument is that the well-roundedness that she advocates for is not entirely important to every student in the educational system. Many kids go through school learning about art, culture, and literature and yet they end up finding no use for the material in their later lives. By placing kids in this system, it fulfills Murray's idea of higher education, which ends up focusing on well-roundedness, being a waste of time. However, this is not to say Murray's answer beliefs are the right direction for education. Murray believes that we need to stop pushing well-roundedness and instead advocate for a narrow focus that promotes a skill applicable to adulthood. The problem is Murray only sees well-roundedness as trait related to other subjects that don't promote any specific skills suitable for adulthood when in fact there is something with a large practical we could be teaching our students that have gone largely ignored.

Currently our education system has not been teaching kids how to be an informed citizen when it comes to politics and voting. Students are instead forced to learn how to analyze and make decisions about politics on their own, but in a country with slanderous political advertisements, political lies, and corruption we need to make sure our future voters understand how to reasonably pick candidates and form their own political views. With no guidance, future citizens can be led to vote for candidates based on illogical reasons. Single issues such as abortion and gay marriage can sway votes despite other issues being just as important. The demographic of a candidate whether it be their religious affiliation or their gender can be the primary focus of a voter because they don't know what else to look for in a candidate. People will even judge their vote based on a candidate's political party without actually looking at their beliefs and voting record. And voting takes more effort than simply watching a debate and speech. Voting requires staying up on national issues, comparing a candidate's record with their beliefs, and research on different views for different issues. The surface level of political can be deceitful, and so it takes work and research to be informed; however, this principle is not encouraged in our system. Voting in our political system is just as important as requiring a job, and it promotes a more educated and critical populous; therefore, this kind of education promotes well-roundedness with a larger purpose in adulthood. By not educating the populous on how to vote efficiently were creating another generation of uneducated voters; voters who are more likely to vote for worse candidates and hurt the political system.

While the idea that we should stress smarter and more responsible voting may seem like it doesn't encourage well-roundedness, it ends up having many indirect benefits. To encourage better voting, critical thinking and the development of opinions would be the main areas to improve upon. With these skills sharpened for voting, students will be able to apply them to other subjects such as speech, rhetoric, etcetera, if they so choose. This means that students will be taught skills for a practical purpose and still be able to become well-rounded in other areas.

Advocates for a narrower political focus may argue that it's not possible for teachers to teach students how to make good political decisions without the teacher inflicting their own political bias onto students. However, it is entirely possible for students to be taught how to make logical political decisions without inflicting bias. Students should be taught to look past the surface level of politics. This means looking past political ads and speeches (things that many current voters only look at which ultimately sways their vote towards slanderous information), and being taught to look more at facts such as voting records and statistics. Next this evidence would need to be interpreted. This means that students need to be taught more about different

political ideologies, their places in history, and how their values fit into them. This will guide students to their own political beliefs which will be more developed and rational than they otherwise would be if they had no guidance before while leaving a teacher's views out of the picture. Students are also faced with different teachers and classmates as they move forward in education. This means that students will be exposed to a variety of different opinions that will challenge their own, and if they are taught how to think critically, they will be able to comprehend and learn from these different opinions.

As of right now, many of our students and future adults are wasting their time with classes that they will end having no use for. While this makes people better-rounded, it does so without any use for their acquired knowledge. If we want to make students well-rounded yet give them a purpose, we need to focus on the largely ignored subject of voting.