

School Reports Get Outdated

“Don’t read the score at half time!”

This can be a healthy view of school reports or exam results when disappointment sets in. Would you have chosen any of the students below for an important job based on these school reports? Many people go on to do far better than their schools would have expected for many reasons. Here are just a few. Who do you think they could be?

Student A

He was a problem pupil, repeatedly coming bottom of his class and with an appalling record for timekeeping and discipline. ‘He has no ambition,’ his headmaster commented in an end of term report. The boy was destined for life’s bottom drawer.

For much of his life, everything he touched seemed to turn to disaster. He acquired a reputation for being unreliable, disloyal and a drunk, although he was none of these things.

When he became Prime Minister, many didn’t want him and expected him to be in office only a few weeks before a more sensible man took over. Seldom had a prime minister taken office with so many expecting him to fail.

In 2002, the BBC conducted a vote to determine whom the general public considers the 100 greatest Britons of all time, as did The Daily Mail Weekend magazine. He came top in both. Who is he?

Report adapted from the Daily Mail Weekend magazine 26 October 2002

Student B

Comments on a school report for a 13 year old boy from different teachers:

“I find his attitude in class rather immature.”

“His homework is rushed and of poor quality.”

“He has found it easy to be distracted from his work.”

“He has a tendency to giggle which sometimes affects his performance.”

“He hasn’t produced the level of work I had expected of him, there appears to be a lack of fitness. He is often clumsy.”

Student C

A games teacher told him that he had ‘no athletic potential’.

Student D

“I wasn’t very good at school. I still have the school report I took home at the end of the Easter term when I was 14. In it my form master had written: ‘He is making no use of what little ability he has.’ My friend Steve was no better at passing exams than I was. A language teacher yelled at him, ‘You’re going to be a failure.’¹

Student A: Winston Churchill: British Prime Minister during the Second World War.

Student B: Ian Mullens, a youth pastor. He left school at 18 and could not find his niche in life for a while. When he was 23, it became apparent that he was born to be a youth worker. He started by working part-time for a year and then enrolled at Oasis to do a youth work degree. He used this old school report of his as a starter to his first-ever youth session which was about how King Hezekiah responded to some really bad news. He has now been a full-time youth worker for a number of years.

Student C: Kriss Akabusi was a bit of a late starter with athletics. It was army training runs which showed that he had potential. When he won the 400 metre race in the Army Junior championships, he joined a running club and started to really work at it. A few years later he was selected to run with Britain's relay team in the World Championships.

The following season, Kriss qualified for the Olympic Games in Los Angeles. He achieved a personal best in his individual heats and came 7th in the semi-final. He was also once again in the relay team. Although none of the four had won a medal in their individual performances, they pulled together as a team and excelled themselves in the 4 x 400 metre final, winning the silver medal and setting a new British record. Being in a team had lifted the performance of every one of them.

When Kriss reached his peak at the 400 metre event, he realised there was no one who stood out to represent Britain at the 400 metre hurdles event. He decided to give it a try. A year later he was up to World Championship level.

His coach said of him, "Kriss has lifted himself by sheer effort from being a good club athlete to being an international runner." Between 1989 – 1992 Kriss won 4 gold medals in the 400 metre hurdles and broke the British record 3 times.

Kriss Akabusi's British record in 1992 for the 400 metre hurdles still stands over 25 years later. His favourite quote is "Success comes in cans... not in cannots"

Student D: Rob Parsons: teacher; lawyer; founder of Care for the Family: He is an international speaker on family issues and the author of many best-selling books.

Born in 1948, Rob Parsons was brought up in 'quite a poor home' in Cardiff with no hot water or inside toilet. His father was a postman, his mother an office cleaner. His parents were not church-goers but sent the four-year-old Rob to Sunday school, a lasting influence on his life.

Rob started a successful teaching career but decided to retrain as a lawyer. In 1980 he co-founded Lawyers Planning Services, a consultancy to the legal profession on practice management. His seminars have been attended by tens of thousands of lawyers.

Rob and Dianne Parsons began doing counselling work in the mid-Seventies, and they were also part of a Christian leadership team on a housing estate of 20,000 people in Cardiff. In 1988 Rob came out of legal practice to start Care for the Family as a department of Christian Action, Research and Education (CARE) Trust, a charity of which he was a board member.

Rob's friend Steve became a professor.

"Don't read the score at half time!" is Rob's comment on school reports.

¹Teenagers: Rob Parsons, chapter 4