

Public Broadcasting Service (PBS): In the Mix
What Makes a School Worth Going To? (Excerpt)

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- Thomas Vigil: I've been doing art my whole life. I love doing art since I got into kindergarten, as soon as somebody handed me a box of crayons. Not really anybody in my family is artistic. I just, I don't know, for some reason I am. I see a lot of kids that have, that are very gifted especially in our community in Española. We have a lot of kids that are real good at working on their cars, on doing artwork, but they'll just throw it all away. They won't go to school. They'll drop out. Yeah, school can be rough on a lot of kids especially if you don't want to be here. It's rough on me. I've constantly thought of dropping out. Out of the freshman class of 400, only about 120 graduate. We have a lot of kids that come from broken homes and kids with bad backgrounds.
- Monica Smith: How do you cope with mom and dad being divorced? How do you cope with mom drinking alcohol and doing drugs and you have to take care of three siblings and do homework and work. It's a lot to deal with and many of these kids are facing these challenges alone.
- Thomas Vigil: As you can see there's not too many kids here, but that's just because it's 7 o'clock in the morning. Most kids don't come to school till 8. I only come to school at 7 because I have early bird class—algebra II.
- [Unidentified math teacher]: Anything to the zero power is one. If we put zero in for x, two to the zero power is one.
- Thomas Vigil: Basically what I think about when I'm in algebra II class is that I don't really want to be there and it blocks me from wanting to learn if I'm getting all kinds of equations and different things shoved in my head, I just get all confused and I'd rather be doing something else so I tend to get bored and distracted really easily.
- [Unidentified English teacher]: This is "The Rubia" by Omar Khayyam. You only have two pages of it.

Thomas Vigil: When it comes to English, I get frustrated very easily. When I look at words on a page, it's like more confusing than math. Some people think all these equations make a different language. That's how I feel with English. It's just a different language for me. I see one word and I see the last word. I get them mixed up and I get confused real easily and I can't comprehend things right. Sometimes I don't know what the teacher's saying. My mom thought I had ADD, but I've never been tested for it and I don't want to get tested because I don't want to take all those drugs that just make you a boring kid and are supposed to cure you. I think they just make you dull and make you tune into stupid things that nobody wants to hear about.

Monica Smith: Thomas is a target also because he's noisy. He's daring. I think Thomas is one of those kids who has had it rough at home and he's learning to work through those problems.

Thomas Vigil: This is in-school suspension. I got in-school suspension for going off of campus. I'm still not admitting to it, but it's alright. What sucks about being here? The fact that I have to be everything that I'm not. I can't draw. I can't stand up. I can't talk and that's everything that I'm not. Ok, here's the best part about school—seeing my friends and, most importantly, my girlfriend. Here's my favorite class in school: art. I love art. I just love seeing other people do it.

Robbie Garcia: Thomas is doing pretty good in my class. He's a really talented artist. His strengths are mostly in drawing. Anything hands-on for him that keeps him in school, that's the best thing for him.

Wayne Sanchez: He really does love art. He's fierce at it and he doesn't do it just to do it cause he's bored. He does it all the time. He's always drawing on people's arm, on his arm, on a piece of paper and everybody always wants something of his cause he's so fierce at it.

Thomas Vigil: TV production's a real fun class. I get to get up and get out of class and spend time doing what I want to do and I get to learn new things about camera equipment and editing systems.

Ellen Kaiper: Thomas has gone and learned all the computer editing system and his fellow students call him a genius because he knows a lot more than a lot of the other students. Certainly a lot more than I do. My strength, I can write grants. I can bring the equipment in and luckily I have these wonderful students who can deal with all the equipment.

Thomas Vigil:

What makes this school worth going to? If I didn't have a school that allowed me to express myself through TV, and through media, and art, I probably would go crazy cause that's the only thing that keeps me sane at school besides my friends. Being able to express myself through art, that's what I do.

- End of video -

Video participants:

Robbie Garcia – Art Teacher, Española Valley High School

Ellen Kaiper – Video Teacher, Española Valley High School

Wayne Sanchez – Youth Producer

Monica Smith – School Nurse, Española Valley High School

Thomas Vigil – Student, Española Valley High School