

# Neuroscientist: U.S. High Schools Are Too Boring for Students

Temple University neuroscientist Laurence Steinberg's research has shown him that adolescent brains are primed for learning.

The problem is, he claims, that most U.S. high schools are not challenging students enough during their adolescent years.

As WQED in Pittsburgh [reports](#), Steinberg has spent his career studying the adolescent brain's development, and has discovered that it has an "incredible plasticity" and "is exquisitely sensitive to experience." We tend to think of small children's brains as sponges for information, but Steinberg basically says the same thing is true of adolescents.

However, Steinberg feels that "American high schools are by and large not taking advantage of this opportunity":

*"Our high school students are among the worst in the developed world... It's because our high schools are so boring... When we are not challenging our kids in high school, not only are we hindering their academic development, but we also aren't taking advantage of the plastic prefrontal cortex."*

The article also points out that, unfortunately, American high schools tend to confuse "challenging work" with "amount of work":

*"Students are stressed out by the volume of tasks they must compete each night or week, but that isn't the same thing as being challenged by the work. Steinberg points out that hours of repetitious work that is not challenging does nothing but make kids hate school."*

In the [not-too-distant past](#), adolescent students were offered a much more rigorous curriculum. According to Steinberg's research, it appears that rigor is what the adolescent brain craves.