



*"Accept a small loss to gain a larger victory. When faced with two difficult choices, sacrifice the lesser to preserve the greater."*

— 36 Stratagems, Stratagem 11

STRATAGEM

Sacrifice the Plum for the Peach

Accept small losses in credential metrics to gain large wins in compound capability. The grade is the plum. The skill is the peach. Most parents pick the wrong fruit.

REMEMBER

64% of college graduates feel unprepared for work despite good grades

The transcript is not predictive anymore. By 2030, employers will care more about your portfolio than your GPA.[1] The child who spent discretionary hours building something real will out-compete the child who spent them perfecting decorative achievements.

THIS WEEK

Three moves to run now

- Audit one activity your child currently does. Ask: does this produce a legible output or just a grade? If the only proof is a score, it is decorative. Find one place to reallocate those hours toward something that compounds.
- Introduce the framework at dinner. Draw two columns: compound skills and decorative achievements. Let your child categorize their current commitments. Do not argue. Just make the categories visible. Awareness precedes adjustment.
- Identify one upcoming decision where the short-term and long-term paths diverge. A weekend commitment, a summer plan, an elective choice. Apply the three-question framework from this piece and make the trade explicit. Model the decision out loud so your child sees the process, not just the outcome.

CORE INSIGHT

*The credential economy is collapsing while parents still optimize for it. By 2030, employers will care less about your transcript and more about what you built, solved, or created.[1] Meanwhile, the average high schooler spends 14 hours per week on test prep that produces zero transferable capability.[2] The strategic parent recognizes which sacrifices compound and which ones just look good on paper.*