

School'd: A game about keeping and losing hope

First Alpha Edition for RPG Geek 24-hour RPG Contest 2015

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About the Game: School'd is a game about trying to thrive when it feels like the world conspires against them. It is a game about depression, uncertainty, fear, destitution, and isolation, but it is also a game about learning, love, friendship, growth, and hope. School'd is a game to tell the story of students, but not the way you see them on TV. The players will not take on the role of the rich kids misbehaving, zany antics, or supernatural students trying to fit in while balancing the hidden world. School'd is a game about real students with stressful home lives attending an inner city school. If you are looking for a game where your character is like the protagonist of a movie or TV show you love, than this is not the game for you. If you are want to play a game just to have a good time, this probably isn't for you either. But if you would like to play a game where you explore human problems, even when it hurts a bit, then I encourage you to give this game a try.

Inspirations: I spent three years working as a high school teacher in inner city schools. It was brutally hard work, and it was always difficult to help students succeed. The problem was that there were often problems outside of my classroom that interfered with my students' ability to thrive. It is next to impossible to know what to do in these situations, especially when in general I was completely unaware of what the actual problem. Much of what prevents a student from succeeding is hidden. I hope this game will help players recognize and explore what these issues are and how they can effect a growing mind.

For the actual mechanics of the game, I'm using quite a lot that I have learned from Vincent Baker's game *Apocalypse World*. This game should probably be considered a hack of *Apocalypse World*, but it is not a direct copy. While much of the structure and terminology are similar, many of Baker's mechanics have been significantly rewritten. I did not do this because those mechanics were bad (in fact, his rules are amazing), but because I wished for a different tone, a different success distribution, and to try something new for this game.

A Further Note From The Author: While this game is designed to be emotionally heavy, it should not all be doom and gloom, just like it shouldn't be all rainbows and happiness. Kids, even those in horrible situations, do have moments of joy and relief. Many of the problems that the characters will be faced with in the game will likely never be resolved, but make sure some of them are. In other words, let the good times be happy, but remember that there will also be bad times.

Playing the Game:

To play this game, you will need this document, a copy of the character sheets for each player other than the MC, pencils, spare paper, a pad of sticky notes, two to five friends (in addition to yourself), and two six sided dice. Optionally, the MC may want to provide images of real life teenagers for the players to choose from. These pictures should represent a wide variety of cultures, races, and genders.

Alternatively, the MC could provide a series of pictures that don't depict people to help represent the pc's.

First, choose one player to take the role of the Master of Ceremonies (or MC for short). This individual will be responsible for all of the non-player characters (or npc's for short) and settings in the game. While the players will have a lot of influence as to who these people are and what these places look like, it will be the MC who will be in charge of playing these roles and creating reactions to the player characters (or pc's for short) actions.

Next, the players and the MC should create some details of the world the pc's live in. This should include both the school the students attend and the neighborhoods they come from. Remember that this game takes place in the real world, so there should not be anything unusual about the school. If the players choose to the game can take place at a specialty school if everybody agrees to it. During this time the players should answer the following questions:

- Which teacher or staff member cares the most?
- Which teacher or staff member cares the least?
- Who is officially in charge of the school?
- Who is actually in charge?
- What are the different groups that define the school?
- Where do those groups live? (Are their neighborhoods segregated or integrated?)
- What are the greatest dangers of the school?
- What are the greatest dangers of the neighborhoods that students live in?

Finally the players and MC should contribute to drawing two maps, one of the school and one of the cities. Start by drawing a large shape on the school map to represent the shape of the building. Repeat the shape smaller in the center of the city map to represent where the school is in the city. Players and the MC will take turns adding elements to either map. Continue until both maps feel complete enough to play in these two places. At any time the MC or the players may add to either map.

Next the players will make their characters. This should be done together with discussion between players. Pass each player a character sheet and a pencil and fill it out using the instructions below. If players need an idea of who they want to play, the MC can provide a selection of images to draw inspiration from. These should be pictures of real world students, and the players can use any element of the picture to draw inspiration. The picture could represent the student, a friend or family member of the student, how the student wishes they looked, or any other way that makes sense to the player.

Creating characters:

You will find that on the character sheets, there is a quick overview of the character creation process. A player can make their entire characters with only what is on their character and advancement sheet (for ease of use, print these two on a single sheet). This section will go into further detail so that players will understand what their choices mean. Players are welcomed to read this section (and any section of this game) and I encourage any new player to do so.

The first step is to choose your stats for your character. The four stats are Study, Social, Talent, and Regard. You will choose one of these stats to be a +1, one to be a -1, and the rest the other two to be 0. These stats will never be greater than +1 and never be less than -1. When you are told to roll a stat, roll two six sided dice and take the average of the two (rounding down). Then add your stat value for the result. Here is a brief description of what each stat represents.

Study: The ability to succeed academically. This is not a measurement of a character's intelligence, just their ability to work within the academic system to learn and produce results. Though it is difficult for a person with lower intelligence to succeed academically, it is certainly possible with dedication, practice, and guidance. Likewise, many highly intelligent people do poorly in school because they do not know or are unwilling to use tricks to study more effectively.

Social: The ability to get along with your peers. This is not a measure of how nice a character is, or how well liked they are, but a measurement of their ability to affect other students' behavior.

Talent: The ability to use your talent effectively. This does not allow you to do well with unrelated talents; after all, painting a harrowing picture is not the same as breaking the high school's most rushing yards in a season.

Regard: The ability to work within the system and to act professionally. This does not make you more capable, just better able to interact with teachers and staff at the school.

After choosing your stats, you should fill in five Hope boxes. This marks how confident you are of your success in the future. If you ever reach ten hope (filling in all the boxes) the next step of your character's life has been secured and you can continue through your education with confidence. If you ever erase your hope, than your character has given up on their life and will cease to care about their long term well being. This game is about a time of uncertainty in the characters' lives, so if either of these happen for any character, they should be retired, and you should consider this a good time to end the game (but that is really up to the players to see if the game feels over).

Next you should think of a talent that your character cares about most. This could be any real world skill, but experts in this field should be respected, even if they are rare. Examples could be a sport, an art, an ability to perform, or an occupation. Having this talent does not make the character good at it (that's what the Talent stat is for), just to describe what your Talent stat is used for.

You start with no stress marked, but you will accumulate them through play. Stress marks the effect that accumulated failures, obstacles, and disappointments have on your character. If you even mark a fifth stress box, erase all of them and erase one hope mark.

Next you will start creating your home situation. Just a warning, in this game it isn't a good situation. Many students in the United States go home to a relatively happy house, with parents that care and can provide amply, and live a healthy supportive life style. This is not a game about those students. Instead, players will be taking the role of the rest of the students, the ones who never know how painful going home will be.

The first part of creating your home life is to set your stability to zero. This number represents how certain you will be of what you come home to. A +1 means that it is not likely that things will be too bad, while a -1 will make it very likely that there will be problems. At the beginning of each session (or school day) roll two six sided dice and take the average (rounding down) before adding your stability. The MC will act out a short scene with that player to show what happened to the character between school days.

On a 2 or less choose two (they can be the same):

- All of your minor wants happen before the next school day.
- One of your major wants will happen before the next school day.
- Mark 2 stress.

On a 3 or 4 choose two (they can be the same):

- Chose one of your wants to happen before your next school day
- Mark 1 stress

On a 5 or more choose one:

- Nothing ordinary happens
- Choose one of your wants and one of your supports. They both happen.

To start, you will start with one major wants from the following list. This want represents what happens when things are really bad at home. Included on this list, but not on the character sheet, is a more thorough description of what this want means and the mechanical effect it will have on your character for the next school day. Record these effects with a sticky note.

Abuse: Someone in your household is abusive, either physically or emotionally. This family member is powerful enough in the minds of the family that nobody will stop them. When this want happens, that family hurts somebody you care about (maybe even you). After this happens, the character will take a -1 to any Earn a Grade, Use What You Know, Be Liked, Or Get Along rolls, but a +1 to Bully Another for the next school day.

Addiction: You or someone in your household is addicted to some substance. This could be alcohol or some other drug, but this person is dependent on this substance and will use it daily. When this want occurs, it's a bad night. Maybe the person overindulged and acted destructively. Maybe they

overdosed. Or maybe they couldn't get their hands on their substance and the whole household had to deal with the effects of their withdrawal. In any case, this will make for a bad night and a tough morning. After this happens the character will take a -1 to any Earn a Grade, Get a Favor, Be Liked, or Get Along, but a +1 to Succeed rolls.

Despondency: The livelihood of your household is in desperate danger. You do not know what will happen to your home or your family, and that's scary. This is likely a long term problem, but when this want happens it represents a new development or new information becoming available to the character. After this happens, the character will take -1 to Earn a Grade, Bully Another, or Get Help rolls for the next school day.

Disease: You or a family member have a serious, potentially life threatening illness. While this is a long term problem, this want represents a turn for the worse, such as troubling lab results, the occurrence of new symptoms, or a trip to the emergency room. After this happens, the character will take -1 to Earn a Grade, Succeed, or Show Off rolls for the next school day.

Hunger: Your family is unable to provide regular food. When this want happens, you will not eat outside of the school, and you will arrive at school with all of the negative effects of hunger. After this happens, the character will take -1 to Earn a Grade, Show Off, and Get Along rolls for the next school day.

Homeless: You do not have a regular home, and every night you sleep somewhere differently. When this want occurs, you cannot find a decent place to spend the night. This might mean sleeping outside, in an unsafe shelter, or not at all. After this happens, the character will take -1 to Get a Grade, Use What You know, Be Liked, and Get Along, but a +1 to Get a Favor rolls for the next school day.

Next you will choose two minor wants from the following list. These wants represents what happens common things that your character's home lacks. Included on this list, but not on the character sheet, is a more thorough description of what this want means and the mechanical effect it will have on your character for the next school day. Record these effects with a sticky note.

Attention: The members of your household are too busy or too uncaring to take much notice of your life. When this want happens, you spent the evening desperately trying and failing to get a family member's attention. After this happens, take -1 to Get Along rolls for the next school day.

Encouragement: You rarely receive the praise you need from home, and that wreaks havoc on your confidence. When this occurs, you make an attempt to impress someone in your household but fail. After this happens, take -1 to Earn a Grade and Succeed, but a +1 to Ask for help rolls for the next school days.

Freedom: You are not allowed to make decisions within your household even when they concern your own life. When this want occurs, you try to do something for yourself but are denied. After this happens, take -1 to Use What You Know rolls for the next school day.

Health: You are not a healthy person, either because of your environment, a lack of proper health care, poor health habits, or a persistent condition. When this want occurs, a condition flares up and takes up all of your attention for an evening. After this occurs, take -1 to Bully Another for the next school day.

Privacy: Your home does not provide you with the ability to be alone, either through the actions of your family, or the limitations of the space itself. When this want occurs, you try to get some time to yourself but are constantly interrupted. After this occurs, take -1 to Be Liked.

Quality Food: While you are normally fed, it is rarely healthy or filling food. When this want occurs, you do not have a proper meal in the time before the next school day. Anything you eat will likely be unhealthy snacks or other junk food that will leave you unsatisfied. After this occurs, take a -1 to Earn a Grade rolls for the next school day.

Safety: You do not feel safe in your own home. This might be because of a dangerous neighborhood, a previous bad experience, or a scary influence nearby. When this want occurs, something triggers this fear, or reminds you of the lack of protection your home provides. After this occurs, take a -1 to Earn a Grade and Bully Another, but a +1 to Get Along rolls for the next school day.

Space: Your home is overcrowded, leaving little room for you to take care of your own needs. When this occurs, you try to get something done at home, but just can't find the space. After this happens, take a -1 to Earn a Grade and Succeed but a +1 to Get Help rolls for the next school day.

Structure: Your household will not or cannot create order in your life. You have trouble with routines and schedules as a result. When this want occurs, you act without restriction for the evening with great complications for the next day. After this happens, take -1 to Earn a Grade and Get Along but a +1 to Show Off rolls for the next school day.

Substance Abuse: You or somebody in your home uses alcohol or drugs in an extremely unhealthy way. When this want occurs, the person spends the evening so drunk or high that they are left in a stupor. After this happens, take -1 to Earn a Grade rolls for the next school day.

Time: Your responsibilities at home keep you incredibly busy. When this want occurs, you have to stay up late trying to accomplish everything you need to. After this happens, take -1 to succeed rolls for the next school day.

Truth: Someone in your home keeps secrets in the most harmful ways possible. You desperately want them to be honest with you, but they will not end their lies. When the want occurs, there is a failed

attempt to confront this person about their dishonesty. After this occurs, take -1 to Be Liked and Get a Favor, but a +1 to Get Along rolls for the next school day.

Understanding: You are not the person that your family wishes that you were. Their expectations of you just don't match with you want to be. When this want occurs, you try to communicate your needs to your family but fail to get through. After this occurs, take a -1 to Be Liked and Get Along but a +1 to Succeed rolls for the next school days.

Of course not everything about a character's home life is bad. Sometimes there will be good times. Choose one support from the following list. This support represents what happens when your family follows through in ways to help you. Included on this list, but not on the character sheet, is a more thorough description of what this support means and the mechanical effect it will have on your character for the next school day. Record this effect with a sticky note.

Academic Help: Someone in your family understands what your learning in school and is occasionally able to help. When this support happens, they spend extended time to help you through concepts your struggling with. After this happens, take a +1 on your next two Earn a Grade Rolls.

Advice: Someone in your family has a good head on their shoulders and can give you good advice when you need it. When this support occurs, they spend some time helping you think about your problems. After this happens, take +1 on your next roll.

Earnest Conversation: You can talk to a member of your family about anything. When this support occurs, they have the time to listen to your concerns and worries. After this happens, mark two relief.

Connections: Somebody in your family knows some people in high places who can tell you what you need to do to achieve your goals, and pull some strings to help things happen. When this support occurs, the connections help you figure out what you need to do next. After this happens, mark one xp of your choice of stats.

Mentorship: Somebody in your family shares your passion and wants to see you succeed with it. When this support happens, they spend the time to show you something new about your talent. After this happens, take +1 to your next two Succeed rolls.

Practical Experience: Your family is trying to instill a strong work ethic in you. They make sure that you acquire work skills that you can use when you're an adult. When this support occurs, you can use this experience to help your family. After this happens, erase two hardship marks.

Specialized Tool: Your family has owns or has access to a piece of equipment that most other students don't. This might be a very nice computer with lots of software, a specialized tool or shop, a very high quality instrument, or just about anything that can be used to enhance your talent. When this support happens, you get unfettered access to this tool for a while. After this happens, take +1 to your next two Show Off rolls.

Special Outing: Someone in your family has a knack for creating special memories. When this support happens, they do something special for you to enjoy. After this happens, erase all stress marks.

Trust: You've earned the trust of your family, and that occasionally earns you the chance to make decisions without their input. When this support occurs, you get to use this trust to do what peers can't. After this happens, take a +1 to your next two Be Liked rolls.

After completing the Home Life section of your character, you should choose one non-advanced move from any category on the advancement sheet. These moves augment your character in the way described. These moves might alter stats, basic moves, or other tracks of your character. As characters earn xp for their stats, they will have more opportunities to gain more moves. No move can be taken more than once, but duplicate moves exist allowing you to gain an identical effect multiple times.

Finally when all players have gotten to this point, they should all introduce their characters. After everyone knows each other's characters, it is time to establish the relationship between the pcs. Take turns asking each other questions from the list below. Each question can only be asked once (cross it out on each character sheet once any player has asked it). The answer will become the truth. Each player must ask at least two questions, but may ask additional questions if they wish. Each player should answer at least two questions.

- Why can't I trust you?
- How did I help you out of a bad situation?
- What did we agree to never speak of?
- Why did I need to stay at your place last weekend?
- When did I abandon you when you needed my help?
- What did I do when you asked you out?
- Why wouldn't I kiss you?
- Why did I stop talking to you in middle school?
- What am I hiding for you?
- What do I have of yours that I'm not giving back?
- Why did I give you a black eye?
- Why am I scared of you?
- Who do we agree deserves bad things to happen to?
- What have I done that you think is wrong?

After all the characters are made, and their relationships are established, the MC should take some time to ask the players some follow up questions about their characters and their home lives to better define their lives. When everyone feels comfortable with the character, it's time to begin play.

A Word of Advice From the Author: Don't rush world and character creation. The more time you spend, the deeper the initial engagement into the game will be. I recommend spending a minimum of an hour to an hour and a half on this process. It is not a bad idea to devote an entire play session to world and character building if you have the time.

Creating a Student

Stats: Choose stats one stat to +1 and one to be -1. The other two stats are 0.

Hope: Mark five hope. This will change throughout game play.

Talent: Choose a talent that your character cares about. The talent can be anything in the real world, but should be a respected skill. This has no mechanical effect on the game, but helps describe your use of the Talent Moves. Your character is not automatically skilled at this talent, just interested.

Stress: You start with no stress marked.

Home Life: Write down that your stability is 0.

Then chose one major want

-Abuse	-Addiction	-Despondency
-Disease	-Hunger	-Homeless

Then choose two minor wants

-Attention	-Encouragement	-Freedom
-Health	-Privacy	-Quality Food
-Safety	-Space	-Structure
-Substance Abuse	-Truth	-Time
-Understanding		

Then choose one Support

-Academic Help	-Advice	-Earnest Conversation
-Connections	-Mentorship	-Practical Experience
-Specialized Tool	-Special Outing	-Trust

Moves: Choose one move from the advancement sheet and mark it. You have that move.

Choose a name and looks: Come up with a name for your character and a two to three sentence description of what they look like.

Ask and Answer Questions: When all players are at this point, they should introduce their characters. Then take turns asking each other the following questions. Each question can only be asked once (cross it out once any player has asked it). The answer will become the truth. Each player must ask at least two questions, but may ask additional questions if they wish. Each player should answer at least two questions.

- Why can't I trust you?
- How did I help you out of a bad situation?
- What did we agree to never speak of?
- Why did I need to stay at your place last weekend?
- When did I abandon you when you needed my help?
- What did I do when you asked you out?
- Why wouldn't I kiss you?
- Why did I stop talking to you in middle school?
- What am I hiding for you?
- What do I have of yours that I'm not giving back?
- Why did I give you a black eye?
- Why am I scared of you?
- Who do we agree deserves bad things to happen to?
- What have I done that you think is wrong?

Name:

Looks:

Stats

Basic Moves

Hope

Study:

Earn the Grade
Use What You Know

XP: 0 0 0 0 0

Social:

Be Liked
Get a favor
Bully Another

XP: 0 0 0 0 0

Talent:

Succeed
Show Off

XP: 0 0 0 0 0

Regard:

Get Help
Get Along

XP: 0 0 0 0 0

0
0
0
0
0
0
0
0
0
0

Talent:

Stress: When you mark the fifth stress, erase them all and erase one hope mark

0 0 0 0 0

Home Life

Major Wants:

Stability:

Minor Wants:

Hardship:
0 0 0

Support:

Relief:
0 0 0 0 0

Advancement Sheet:

When you mark the fifth xp box in any stat, erase them all and choose a move for that stat

Study Moves:

- O Success: mark one hope
- O Success: mark one hope
- O Success: mark one hope
- O Access: you are allowed unsupervised access of a classroom
- O Phone Call Home: Mark two relief
- O Study Habits: When you Earn the Grade, you may ignore a -1 penalty if it does not bring your total about +1

Advanced Study Moves:

(You may only take one of these moves if you have marked two other Study Moves)

- O Proud to Be Geek: +1 social
- O Applied Knowledge: +1 talent
- O Teacher's Pet: +1 regard

Social Moves:

- O Success: mark one hope
- O Success: mark one hope
- O Success: mark one hope
- O Family Friend: Name a character (pc or npc). You are always welcome in their home, unless you break their trust.
- O Stress Relief: Every weekend erase two stress and still make a weekend move.
- O Backup: When you Bully Another, you may ignore a -1 penalty if it does not bring your total about +1

Advanced Social Moves:

(You may only take one of these moves if you have marked two other Social Moves)

- O Tutor: +1 study
- O Hobby Buddy: +1 talent
- O Play the Game: +1 regard

Talent Moves:

- O Success: mark one hope
- O Success: mark one hope
- O Success: mark one hope
- O Apprenticeship: Name an adult npc (or create one). They are showing you the ropes of your talent.
- O Dreams: Create a sixth stress box. It now takes six stress to erase a hope mark.
- O Practiced: When you Show Off, you may ignore a -1 penalty if it does not bring your total about +1

Advanced Talent Moves:

(You may only take one of these moves if you have marked two other Talent Moves)

- O Practical Examples: +1 study
- O Showcase: +1 social
- O Great Potential: +1 regard

Regard Moves:

- O Success: mark one hope
- O Success: mark one hope
- O Success: mark one hope
- O Face in the crowd: You are never called on in class.
- O Confidant: Name a teacher or staff member of the school. If you tell them about one minor want they will help to counteract it for the day.
- O Quiet: When you Get Along, you may ignore a -1 penalty if it does not bring your total about +1

Advanced Regard Moves:

(You may only take one of these moves if you have marked two other Regard Moves)

- O Practical Examples: +1 study
- O Showcase: +1 social
- O Great Potential: +1 regard

Hardship Move:

When you mark the third Hardship box, erase them all and choose one of the following:

- If your stability is more than -1 take -1 stability (otherwise don't take this option)
- Take a new minor want
- Erase a Hope Mark
- Erase a minor want and take a new major want

Relief Move:

When you mark the third Hardship box, erase them all and choose one of the following:

- If your stability is less than +1 take +1 stability (otherwise don't take this option)
- Erase a new minor
- Mark a Hope
- Erase a major want and take a new minor want

Running the Game:

MC Agenda: As the MC, you should have specific goals for this game to be run in impactful ways. This agenda does not have to do with specific plot lines (those are created based on PC retractions). Instead this agenda is to provide a meaningful and fulfilling play experience. This agenda should include:

- Making the student's world feel real.
- Making the player's struggles not boring.
- Play to find out what happens.

Every choice you make as the MC should be in support of these concepts. Vincent Baker has said quite a lot about the principles for Apocalypse World, so if you're interested in why agendas like this are important, I would recommend picking up a copy and giving what he said a good read (you can find it on page 108). For the purpose of this competition I won't say much more other than that this game is not about the MC's control over the story, it's about the characters. To help make sure this agenda is followed, I recommend that the MC and the players follow the following principles.

MC Principles:

Talk to the characters, not the players: It helps everyone think in terms of the characters and to make compelling choices if all players (including the MC) use the character's names instead of the player's names. If it helps, make a note card tent for each character with their name and look on them.

Don't push things: The players should not need much motivation to make things happen, but they might not be the things you expect to. Don't resist this, it's a good thing. Instead when a character is stagnating or you see an opportunity, dangle a new hook in front of the character and see what happens. If they don't react that means that the player didn't think your twist was interesting. Instead, find something else that will get them engaged.

Be a fan of the characters: In many ways the MC is like the audience of the game. They sit back, and watch the drama unfurl. Sure, they are responsible for stirring up some shit for the pc's to keep things interesting, but the MC and their npc's should never be the focus of the game. Find what interests you about each character and help those aspects get showcased in the game.

Deal intermittent setbacks and opportunities: The pc's should live hard lives, but not impossible lives. Make sure that there are obstacles to hinder the pc's lives, but also opportunities to make their lives better. Don't hide these opportunities. While telling a player that they could take advantage of a situation is a bit blunt and deprotagonizing, you can drop plenty of hints about a chance you've laid out. If the player isn't interested, look for an opportunity that will catch their attention.

Everyone has a name and a story: Every character, pc and npc, should be a complete and whole person with their own worries and dream. If a pc interacts appears in the game, give them a name and think of

whom they are as a person. Don't feel like you need to know every detail (after all you are playing to find out). For pc's, encourage them to have depth and play to their confusion. No character should be caricature.

Player Principles:

Talk to the characters, not the players: It helps everyone think in terms of the characters and to make compelling choices if all players (including the MC) use the character's names instead of the player's names. If it helps, make a note card tent for each character with their name and look on them.

Care about your character's life: The character you play should be an important person to you. You should care about their goals as well as their frustration. If something or someone will have an effect on your character's life, then make sure the character has an opinion on the matter.

Worry about the future: During this game, your character's future success has yet to be decided, and this is terrifying to a person this age. Make this fear real but not overwhelming.

Be stuck in the moment: While students recognize the need to plan for the future, most kids at this age have trouble taking actions that will only have benefits in the future. Be impulsive. Be emotional. Make decisions that will cause complication in the future, but will feel right in the moment.

Have work to do: As a student there should always be a grade or a project that you need to complete. Assume once a day that you will need to engage with school work in such a way. You can handle this with the basic moves Earn a Grade, Give Up, and Cheat.

The Session:

Every session should begin with a Home Life roll for all characters. This sets the condition that the pc's are in when they arrive at school, both physically and emotionally. This will affect their ability to perform in all aspects of their school life. Each player will roll two six sided dice and take the average (rounding down) before adding their stability. The MC will act out a short scene with that player to show what happened to the character between school days.

On a 2 or less, the player chooses two (they can be the same):

- All of your minor wants happen before the next school day.
- One of your major wants will happen before the next school day.
- Mark 2 stress.
- Mark two Hardship

On a 3 or 4, the player chooses two (they can be the same):

- Chose one of your wants to happen before the next school day
- Mark 1 stress

-Mark 1 Hardship

On a 5 or more, the player chooses one:

-Mark one Relief

-Choose one of your wants and one of your supports. They both happen.

Now that the players are ready for the school day the game is ready to start. Players will have a chance to earn their grades and otherwise pursue what they want. The MC should try to find reasons for the pc's to be close to each other early in the morning, such as homeroom or school breakfast, but otherwise the MC should just follow their principles. The MC has the power to introduce new elements and potential hooks, but not to dictate the plot of the scenes or to force moves. Instead the MC waits for the players to act and then responds.

When a pc acts, they do what they say until they arrive at the trigger phrase for one a move. When this happens you follow the instructions for that move. When you are told to roll a stat, roll two six sided dice and take the average of the two (rounding down). Then add your stat value for the result. The highest total bonus this bonus can be is +1 and the highest a penalty can be is -1. If a player rolls a stat with a bonus greater than +1, instead use a bonus of +1 and they mark an extra xp for that stat regardless of the result. If a player rolls a stat with a penalty greater than -1, instead they use a penalty of -1 and they mark a stress xp for that stat regardless of the result. After the roll, follow the instructions of the move based on results of the roll. When given a choice, the player makes the choice for their character.

The MC never rolls dice and only has a mechanical effect when one of three things happen:

-A move tells the MC to make a move

-A pc is not acting on their own

-A pc leave you an opportunity

By limiting the MC's ability to act to these three times, it pushes the focus onto the characters and puts the plot in the player's hands. When a move tells the MC to make a move of their own, it reflects the risks associated with the player's move and the potential consequences of that roll. When the MC makes a move because the pc's are not acting, it is to unstick the game but also shows that a person's life cannot exist in stasis, things happen in their lives even if they are participating in them. Moves like this should be like a quick kick in the butt to get the players moving. Finally, sometimes a pc's actions are reckless or otherwise just open up a great opportunity for the MC to add complications to the pc's lives. When the MC makes a move, it does not have to have a direct effect the pc who triggered the move, but can apply it to any character they wish. The MC should not announce what move they are

making, instead they should look at the following list of moves, choose one that will add interest to the game, and make it happen.

MC Moves:

- Force the pc's together
- Forcibly separate two characters who want to stay together
- Put a student on the spot
- Create a stressful situation, pc's involved mark two stress
- Reveal an off screen problem
- Foreshadow a future problem
- Make a student's wants painful (even if it's not active)
- Offer an opportunity with or without a cost
- Bully a character
- Ask a character a hard question, their answer is true

The MC may interpret these moves however they wish so long as they carry the spirit of the move.

Advice From the Author: Do not be afraid to use the 'ask a character a hard question' move. It might seem harder for some players to navigate, but it adds information into the game and allows the players to take more control over the world.

Advancement: As pc's continue through play, they will acquire xp for their stats. When a player marks their fifth xp box for a stat, they erase all those boxes and mark advancement for that stat, and they gain the benefits of that move. If they already have two advancements for that stat, they may choose an advanced advancement instead. Each advancement may only be taken once per player. It is allowed to take an advancement if it has the same name and/or effect as an advancement they have already taken. If an advancement tells a player +1 stat, then they increase that stat's value by one unless it is already a +1. If the increased stat was already a +1, they mark one hope instead.

Hope: Hope is a measurement for how secure your character feels about their future. As a character gains and loses hope, it represents a change in belief your character has in their position. This game takes place in the time where the pc's are unsure of their future. If a pc ever knows with certainty what will happen after they finish school, they should be retired from play. This can happen one of two ways.

When a player marks their 10th hope, they've secured the next step of their life for their character. Perhaps they have been accepted to college with the loans and scholarships they need to afford it. Perhaps their talents get noticed and they are recruited for them. Perhaps they line up a steady job for after graduation. You decide and describe how they've secured a place for themselves after they finish school. Retire this character from play and the other players decide if the game is complete. If they choose to continue playing, that player may create a new character. This can be an existing npc student or a new transfer student.

When a player erases their last hope, their character's position is so hopeless that they give up on life. That player chooses how they respond to the realization that they have no future of consequence, and narrate how they act now that they have no hope. Retire this character from play and the other players decide if the game is complete. If they choose to continue playing, that player may create a new character. This can be an existing npc student or a new transfer student.

The X Card:

The X Card is not a move, it is a safety tool for the MC and players. This game deals with many difficult issues and may resonate with a player's past experiences. This is often a good thing, but sometimes it will exacerbate a traumatic experience. While playing, keep a note card or piece of paper with a big X on it in the middle of the play space. When the game gets too emotionally charged, a situation is too uncomfortable, or the game unpleasant to continue playing, any player may grab the X card. When this happens, **PLAY ENDS IMMEDIATELY**. Once everyone is calm, the players can discuss why the X card was used and what it would take for players to feel comfortable playing. If revisions are needed, make them. If the game can't continue then end the game. **DO NOT BLAME THE PERSON WHO USED THE X CARD.**

The Weekend:

Every five school days (whether this is five sessions or one), pc's will have a few days away from school. They can choose how they wish to spend their time, and will get a short scene that helps summarize this time. This scene is separate from their Home Life scene, but it may have an effect on it. During the weekend, each player chooses one of the following:

- The pc relaxes and erases two stress
- The pc help their family and mark one relief
- The pc works on a project and marks one xp of your choice
- The pc deals with their situation and choses a -1 penalty from a want and ignore it for the next school day.
- The pc causes trouble and erases all stress but mark one hardship

About Sex:

Sex is an important issue for students. When I originally conceived of this game for the 24-hour game competition, I was planning writing sex moves. The initial move was going to represent the fear and anxiety involved with a maturing person having sex for the first time, but advancements would allow for this move to change based on different attitudes about sex. I don't think this concept is wrong, but it describes a situation that I do not feel like I can give adequate justice two within the space of this competition. For the time being, I am going to leave this aspect of the game untouched, and would welcome feedback from those with more experience with working with sexually active teens (a specific shout out to Vincent and Meguey Baker who I know work in this field).

A final note for this competition:

This game was written in under 24 hours and was completed without a full night's sleep. The game is long enough that I do not have enough time to do editing passes. Any spelling or grammatical mistakes

are not indicative of my writing, but are a result of the constraints of this particular competition. For this competition, I intended to close all mechanical elements (other than the sex moves that I have already talked about), but in this time without the ability to do quality edit passes it is possible that I missed a thread or accidentally wrote a contradiction. I am also unsure if my choice of formatting and ordering are best for showcasing this game. This game is missing some elements that I tend to prefer to include in a final submission for a competition, such as play or mechanic examples, flavor text, and art. As such, please treat this document as what it is, a first draft produced with a very tight deadline.

Basic Moves

Earn a Grade: When you work for your grades, roll study:

On a 2 or less you fail to achieve the grade you were after. Choose two:

- Take a stress
- Take a stress
- Take a -1 to your next Earn a Grade roll
- The MC makes a move

On a 3 or 4 you achieve but with complications mark. Mark a study xp and choose 1:

- Take a stress
- The MC makes a move

On a 5 or greater you achieve high an impressive grade. Mark a study xp and choose 1:

- Erase a stress
- Gain +1 on your next Earn a Grade rolls

Use What You Know: When you try to solve a problem by using something you learned in class roll study:

On a 2 or less it's a total failure you fail to achieve the grade you were after. Choose two:

- Take a stress
- Take a stress
- Take a -1 to your next Earn a Grade roll
- The MC makes a move

On a 3 or 4 you realize that what you learned didn't completely apply. Mark a study xp and choose 1:

- Take a stress
- Take -1 to your next Earn a Grade roll
- The MC makes a move

On a 5 or greater it absolutely works. Mark a study xp and choose 1:

- Erase a stress
- Gain +1 on your next two Earn a Grade rolls

Be Liked: When you try to fit in with your peers roll social:

On a 2 or less you embarrass or alienate yourself. Choose two:

- Take a stress
- Take a stress
- Take a -1 to your next Get a Favor roll
- The MC makes a move

On a 3 or 4 you awkwardly fit in. Mark a social xp and choose 1:

- Take a stress
- The MC makes a move

On a 5 or greater you fit in naturally. Mark a social xp and choose 1:

- Erase two stress
- Gain +1 on your next two Get a Favor roll

Get a Favor: When you need something from a peer roll social:

On a 2 or less nobody will help you Take 3 stress.

On a 3 or 4 you get something that works but with a complication. Choose 1:

- They want something in exchange you can't easily give
- It's not quite right. Mark one stress trying to make it work

On a 5 or greater you get what you need and mark a social xp.

Bully Another: When you take out your problems on another roll Social:

On a 2 you cross a line and everyone hates you for it. Take 2 stress and choose one:

- Take a -1 to your next Be Liked and -1 to your next Get Along roll
- Mark one Hardship

On a 3 or 4 you make them feel bad but it doesn't make you feel any better. Mark a social xp and two stress.

On a 5 or greater you brutalize your victim worse than you have been. Mark a social xp two stress and ignore the effects of one want for the rest of the day.

Succeed: When you work hard to produce results for your Talent roll talent:

On a 2 or less your result is a complete disappointment. Choose three:

- Take a stress
- Take a stress
- Take a -1 to your next Succeed roll
- The MC makes a move

On a 3 or 4 you give a lack luster performance. Choose 1:

- Take a stress and a talent xp
- Nothing happens

On a 5 or greater you push your limits. Mark a talent xp and choose 1:

- Mark another talent xp
- Mark a relief

Show Off: When you use your talent to impress others, roll talent:

On a 2 or less you embarrass yourself. Choose two:

- Take a stress
- Take a stress
- Take a -1 to your next Succeed roll
- The MC makes a move

On a 3 or 4 you impress some but not everyone. Take a +1 on your next Get a Favor or Be Liked roll and choose 1:

- Take a stress
- The MC makes a move

On a 5 or greater you impress everyone. Mark a social xp and gain +1 to your next Get a Favor and Be Liked rolls.

Get Help: When you seek help from a teacher or staff member roll regard:

On a 2 or less the adult tries to help but it doesn't make a difference. On a 3 or 4 the staff member provides some fleeting help. Mark a regard xp and either a study or a talent xp. On a 5 or greater the adult helps you come up with a plan, but it will take a lot of work. Mark a regard xp and a hope. **Then for any of the results choose 1:**

- Mark 2 stress
- Have the want Time happen in addition to other Home Life effects.

Get Along: When you try to avoid conflict with teachers or staff roll regard:

On a 2 or less you escalate the situation. Gain a stress and choose one:

- Mark a Hardship
- Take stress and a -1 to your next Get Help roll

On a 3 or 4 there is some friction but you resolve the situation without incident. Mark a regard xp and choose 1:

- Take a stress
- Give up something that matters to you

On a 5 or greater there is no issue. Mark two regard xp.

Rolling beyond +1 and -1: When you roll a stat with a bonus greater than +1, instead use a bonus of +1 and mark an extra xp for that stat regardless of the result. When you roll a stat with a penalty greater than -1, instead use a penalty of -1 and mark a stress xp for that stat regardless of the result.

Home Life: At the beginning of each school day, roll stability:

On a 2 or less, the player chooses two (they can be the same):

- All of your minor wants happen before the next school day.
- One of your major wants will happen before the next school day.
- Mark 2 stress.
- Mark two Hardship

On a 3 or 4, the player chooses two (they can be the same):

- Chose one of your wants to happen before the next school day
- Mark 1 stress
- Mark 1 Hardship

On a 5 or more, the player chooses one:

- Mark one Relief
- Choose one of your wants and one of your supports. They both happen.

Basic Moves

Giving Up: When you decide that it is too hard to Earn a Grade, you can instead give up and get a bad grade. Take 2 stress.

Cheat a Grade: If you have the means, you can cheat instead of trying to Earn a Grade. If you do, choose 1:
-Mark 4 stress and you don't get caught
-You get caught and Mark a Hardship

The Weekend: After five school days, choose one:
-You relax, erase two stress
-You help your family, mark one relief
-You work on a project, mark one xp of your choice
-You deal with your situation, chose a -1 penalty from a want and ignore it for the next school day.
-You cause trouble, erase all stress but mark one hardship

Help the Family: When you do something productive to help your family's situation, mark one relief.

Hurt the Family: When you do something destructive that adds risk to your family's situation, mark one hardship.

Advancement: When you mark the fifth xp box for a stat, erase all those boxes and mark advancement for that stat. If you already have two advancements for that stat, you may choose an advanced advancement instead. Each advancement may only be taken once. It is allowed to take an advancement if it has the same name and/or effect as an advancement you have already taken.

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