

# The gymnast or the circus performer

Business



Imagine watching the wire walker high above the circus floor. His feet curl around the steel cable. The small tremors through his legs show his tenuous grip on balance and makes the audience fear that one false step will plummet him to his death. The high wire walker is not able to focus on anything other than walking the fine wire to the other side. Now let's compare that to the balance beam gymnast.

She is asked to do more than just walk across the beam. We may see her perform outstanding stunts such as forward or backward flip as well as exciting dismounts. The balance beam gymnast finds the width of the beam to be more forgiving than the narrow wire. Let's make these characters an analogy of the education system. We are prone to perform the high wire routine that only allows us to focus on one idea at a time.

We are not able to perform on all areas well because we are so worried about one goal and that one misstep that sends us plummeting downward instead of maintaining our balance. On December 7 of 2010 the Guardian reported that The US is currently 14th in reading, 25th in math, and 17th in Science in the world. South Korea is the top country in the world in reading and math and Finland is the top in science. So what does the US do when it has a problem, such as being behind these fellow industrialized countries in terms of education? It moves the pendulum extremely to the other side. A move so extreme that we only focus on that one problem and forget about everything else.

For example when we want to raise our math score, all the focus moves to math and so the other subjects aren't getting focus and lower, creating a

never ending cycle of focus on the extreme. The increased requirements for the extremities also leave little room for electives, and our children suffer. To understand what the best solution is to our woes in education and ultimately our country, we need to first, look at the history of the United States' approach to education, then see problems that arise from that method, and finally look to how we can create a more balanced approach. (speech walk)

Let's be honest. America has never been number one, but it has been acceptable in education before.

According to the National center for education statistics, in 1970 there were 11, 150 public high school graduates in North Dakota. On 2005 the number of high school graduates was 7, 600 students. These numbers are decreasing as our population is increasing. Decreasing graduation rates is a national phenomena. This happened in part due to the self-esteem movement.

In 1969, a psychologist named Nathaniel Brandon wrote a book called " The psychology of self-esteem." In his book he explains that feelings of self-esteem was the key to success in life. Under his influence, some states put forth a self-esteem task force for their schools, forcing to give silly compliments like, " Good job on that C paper" or the always appreciated, " you're so smart." These compliments are not only useless but they could be harmful too. Writing recently in the Wall Street Journal about the 15, 000 studies the movement generated, reviewer Kay Hymowitz concludes: " high self-esteem doesn't do much of anything for kids.

" The schools are also so focused on self esteem they forget about the main reason the kids are in school and that is to learn. This is one reason our

scores are falling. (speech walk) Another problem we had was the high wire focus on one thing at a time whether it be self esteem or education. So next we need to look at the problems with focusing on one area at the expense of another. In the case of focusing on science and math, artistic endeavours are lost. It has become a mantra in education that No Child Left Behind, with its pressure to raise test scores, has reduced classroom time devoted to the arts.

Arts education has been slipping for more than three decades, the result of tight budgets, an ever-growing list of state mandates that have crammed the classroom curriculum, and a public sense that the arts are lovely but not essential. What the US doesn't seem to get is that, art and music are key to student development. According to Fran Smith in the article " Why arts education is crucial" in the online education resource Edutopia. "

Involvement in the arts is associated with gains in math, reading, cognitive ability, critical thinking, and verbal skill. Arts learning can also improve motivation, concentration, confidence, and teamwork.

" The article continues on as Tom Horne, Arizona's state superintendent of public instruction says, " If they're worried about their test scores and want a way to get them higher, they need to give kids more arts, not less," " There's lots of evidence that kids immersed in the arts do better on their academic tests." Also students that participate in the arts 4 times the more likely to be recognized for their other academic achievements. (speech walk)So the question is what is the US doing wrong? What can we do to improve. As a nation we can learn from other countries. Finland's high-achieving public school system is now part of the conversation about U. S.

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education reform these days. What, it is often asked, can we learn from Finland? According to Valerie Strauss in the Washington Post on April 17, 2012 in the article “ What the U. S. can’t learn from Finland about education”. Finland can shows what equal opportunity looks like, Americans cannot achieve equity without first implementing fundamental changes in their school system.

America could be improved in education. As a nation we could have equality in the courses and have a mix of core and elective classes. We shouldn’t be the circus performer and focus on only one thing. We should be flexible and think of everything like the gymnast. As a person, you try to be a rounded student.

And try to encourage kids to try every kind to education and arts. Balance in the key to success. You should all think of the arts as another kind of math or science, that’s just as important. We need to make the education system be more like the gymnast Gabby Douglas, to be balanced so when students are on the balance beam of study they will be able to succeed walking across the beam while also doing stunts. What we want is balance where children are getting and can get a good education and explore all their options.

, so the students will be able to appreciate everything and chose a future they’ll be happy in. We want rounded students with the full picture in their heads. If we don’t have all core and elective classes, students may not be able to discover their area of interest. It is critical for kids to do what they enjoy, if the US wants to go above and beyond other countries. If we truly enjoy our career we will naturally excel in it.

Tony Schwartz , author of " Be excellent at anything" and the president and CEO of The energy project says, Pursue what you love. Passion is an incredible motivator. It fuels focus, resilience, and perseverance...

The US is so much focusing in statistics, testings and world rankings, they have forgotten the most important thing. That is to educate everyone, even the kids with artistic interests. Our first priority is to help every single child in the US, and then worry about the worlds view.