

Education system needs to be reformed

[Education](#), [Learning](#)



Choose an issue of importance to you. The issue could be personal, school related, local, political, or international in scope and write an essay in which you explain the significance of that issue to yourself, your family, your community, or your generation. key points: Talk of " education reform" is viral all over the internet. Despite multiple failed attempts at " reform" over the past decades, society refuses to think outside the " box" of schooling and consider a radical return to how children learned for millennia- By playing, living and doing! Teachers and others in the field of education continue to propose that the oppressive, prisonlike institution where children are forced to stay seated in a building all day pumping out paperwork can and should be reformed! When democratic schooling, homeschooling and unschooling advocates attempt to join the conversation and offer models that are successful and truly radical, they are often met by educators and their supporters who dismiss these models as idealistic and not " realistic" for " everyone". Additionally, people seem not to be aware of the fact that despite talks of reform, the needs, voices and leadership of the people who are the most adversely affected by public schoolingyouth- are left out of the conversation. Sadly, when the voices of public school youth do reach the movement, they often represent the most compliant and academically engaged students. Their requests tend to be benign, suggesting that minds and bodies trained by the system for so long are unable to fathom what they have lost of their childhoods and what they truly need in order to thrive. The cries of " end school! " from the voices of the artists, rebels, misfits and other children failed most severely by schooling rarely make it to the table. In this post I answer questions about how " education reform" can be truly

child-centered, radical and real. How can we save our public schools and reform them? How can we reform a system that was historically founded (in 1852) for the purpose of oppressing children, preventing critical thinking and engineering a more obedient citizenry? How can we reform a system where, in 2011, children need a doctor's note to go to the bathroom when needed, a federal " 504 Plan" to eat when hungry, a diagnosis of being brain disordered with a subsequent federally mandated special education " IEP" in order to be taught in a hands on manner and where a teenager has to be diagnosed as " severely disabled" or unteachable and sent to a " therapeutic school" in order to have physical activity between classes? Do we truly believe that a place that runs this contrary to the needs and humanity in children can be " reformed"? " Adults would not get the severity of the human rights violations in the public school system even if they were put back in it (this is not referring to all you epic radicals out there- you know who you are). The reason? The boiling frog syndrome. The adults who don't get it are already broken and they would be mentally blind to all of the wrongs that go on, including to themselves. " -My son, Brycen R. R. Couture How can we teach so that children care about their education? The belief that children need to be " taught" is based on the arrogant, adult-centered belief that children are unmotivated, blank slates who will not learn unless adults force it upon them, usually in unpleasant ways. Nature endows ALL children with the passion and ability to learn what they need and want to learn on their own. Adults should not " teach" anything unless it is requested by the child- Teaching interferes with the child's natural process of learning, inventing and creating. Unsolicited teaching interferes with children following their own

innate ideas, hunches, interests and modes of expressing their conclusions, brilliance and creativity. Youth care about learning when they are the driving force behind their learning process and when they are doing what they love. Adults can be the guides and facilitators if children desire their help. In public school, education is about force-feeding children, then expecting them to swallow what is irrelevant without gagging, regurgitate it for a grade- and act like they care! Will allowing children to use technology such as iPads, iPods and smart phones in the classroom transform public education? I don't see how adding devices could "transform" anything; lap tops have already been added to some schools; adding hand-held devices simply adds technology to the building, like adding paper and pencils and other inventory. Adding technology doesn't change the power structure. Teachers dictate the use of every single object in a school, so how could adding devices "transform" anything? We had a Commodore and an IBM PC computer in my elementary school, supposedly revolutionary. Nothing changed- School was still just as oppressive and abusive, we simply had a distraction from the tedium. I'm sure when toilets and ovens were added to schools, people thought that would revolutionize schooling too, but children soon found out that no one could use those appliances without permission. Teachers use technology to control children, and hand-held devices would be no different Teachers control the activity and purpose of the device and how and when it will be used. No doubt any use outside of the teacher's prescription would be cause for punishment. Technology can also be used to abuse and violate children as well. For example, one high school issued bugged laptops to children. The web cams in the laptops were randomly

activated by school authorities to spy on youth in their own homes, often in their bedrooms, with some allegations that youth were being photographed undressing or in other situations intending to be private. The issue came to light only after a youth was punished at school for allegedly being caught "taking drugs"; the boy had actually been eating Mike and Ike candy! Rather than a gesture of bringing technology into the classroom, technology should be used to eradicate the classroom and the prison model of "going to school". Will changing middle school and high school scheduling to allow for longer classes, labs and more time for research and inquiry lead to radical change in public education? Proposing a mainstream solution like tooling with already oppressive systems such as scheduling, is not a radical solution. Block scheduling, six-day scheduling, 90 minute classes and any other type of scheduling at the middle and high school level creates an environment that fails to respect the basic physiological needs of older children. As children are shuffled further up in the 12 school "grades", it becomes increasingly difficult, if not nearly impossible in some schools, to meet their basic health and biological needs. Most teachers at the higher grade levels refuse to allow children to use the toilet in class, and the three to five minutes between classes makes it nearly impossible for children to use the toilet between classes. The youth that I have worked with over the years report that ninety minute classes only increase this distress. Likewise, scheduling at the higher grades leaves some youth with lunch times that are well past noon time. Some youth report eating as late as 1:30 with, of course, no snack time in the morning! Finally, "block scheduling" or 90 minute classes mean more time that children are sitting sedentary and

immobile. Truly, "block scheduling" is a health risk to youth! A true radical solution is to abandon the current institution entirely. If we tore down the current public educational system, what would replace it and how would it work? John Taylor Gatto proposed a radical solution that would be in alignment with nature, humane treatment of children and a democratic society: Abolish forced public schooling as it is now and establish the entire community as a community learning experience for people of all ages. Children would lead their own learning in a non-compulsory manner. Everyone, from the youngest child to the seniors in nursing homes would be welcomed to facilitate classes, and children and adults can attend — or opt out- at their choosing. Public dollars would be used to fund the necessary supplies and assist mentors of any age or specialty. If the entire city or town were set up as a learning community for children to explore, apprentice, find resources, collect mentors and to be free to teach, attend or not attend classes, this would be the "educational reform" that would truly heal children and our culture. In open learning communities, children would have all of their bodily, developmental, emotional, social, intellectual and creative needs met. Art galleries, libraries, historical centers, community centers and cafes would all be hubs. Hopefully, diverse businesses would open their doors to be part of the process as well. The now abandoned school buildings would be used as resources and spaces, not as prisons. Anyone would be free to facilitate or attend classes, play in the gym, use the equipment, cook meals, hold meetings, clubs, groups, shows, etc. What about children who are abused and neglected at home or who are living in poverty? In the case of children who are abused and neglected at home, or who are living in

poverty, these learning communities would be able to embrace and care for these children and identify their families for help much more genuinely than the current public school system. The current system abuses and neglects children in so many ways, causing double the distress and trauma to children already suffering at home. In 19 states, it is actually legal for children to be beaten by school staff with a wooden board. Boys and African American children are the primary targets of all forms of school corporal punishment. Even in the case of a special teacher who provides comfort, the distressed child is still expected to focus on and keep up with irrelevant school work to maintain "grades". When learning communities encompass use of all of the public spaces in towns and cities (including hopefully businesses as well), there are more places of refuge and resource for impoverished families and children suffering abuse and neglect. How will learning disabled children get services? Children are born to be natural learners. It is forced education that destroys this and creates the idea of "learning disabilities" and "underachievement". It is the public school system's unnatural method of forcing all children to perform certain mental functions all at the same ages in the exact same developmentally inappropriate manner that produces the illusion of "learning disabilities". There are no learning disabled people. Every human child is born with the capability to learn, regardless of their organic intellectual endowment. If allowed to learn through play and by following their interests, children of any ability will naturally learn in the ways that best suit their unique learning style and sensory modality. Loved ones and community members can support, mentor, scaffold and celebrate children's developmentally appropriate learning processes in manners more diverse

and helpful than the current system offers. Children will not be forced to endure rigorous testing that leads to labels (such as "ADHD") and drugs, nor will their parents be forced to fight Goliath special education teams to win a few token "services". It is a democratic society's duty to educate its children- How will children learn if they aren't taught? Point blank, children have a birth right to live their lives in freedom and with joy, through play. That is true democracy! Children should not be forced to go to any building, or be forced to "learn" anything any adult believes they should "learn". The element of force immediately negates democracy and becomes the antithesis to freedom. That homogenized education for the masses is possible is a myth; forced "education" is inhumane and immoral on so many levels. It instantly indicts and imprisons all children for the implied "crime" of being under the age of 18 and dictates them under the control of adults who should have no natural power over their lives. There should be no "debate" about human rights issues. Forced education causes apathy, docility, obedience and lack of questioning and critical thinking. It destroys passion, natural learning ability and interferes with the individual "callings" of each human being. Children learn what they need to learn by being loved and cared for by their parents and loved ones. Children learn by living, playing, exploring, creating and being a part of their families, circles of friends and communities. This delicate process must be restored, because this is how true learning occurs. That all sounds idealistic. In the meantime, don't we need to start slow, educate people and reform what we have to work with now? I will say it again and again, we have to stop talking about reforming the current system- You can't reform a system that was BUILT with

the INTENT to oppress children! "Reform" has been attempted over and over since forced schooling was instituted in 1852. The pendulum has swung in all directions, but most aggressively since the 1980's towards increased drudgery and developmentally inappropriate practice for children. The only function of "reforms" is to lightly shuffle a few cards to quiet dissent, prime children to take their place in the "global marketplace" and to make matters easier for the adults. The end result is always the same: Children are oppressed, stuck in buildings, sitting in chairs, with teachers forcing upon them something irrelevant to their lives. School continues to steal their free time, commit human rights violations against their bodies and minds and confine them. School continues to prevent children from doing what nature intended- Playing, running, jumping, climbing, exploring, creating, socializing and inventing... We can't reform a paradigm that runs as deep and as thick as this one. The "free school" movement of the late 60's and early 70's showed that public schools want no part of democratic learning environments; the federal government uses public education as a tool for their much larger agenda of globalization. As long as we look to the problem as a solution, we will never get out of the boxed idea that children must have something done TO them by "expert" adults. The belief that adults must educate, confine, deprive, "discipline" and force is the paradigm that needs to change. How can children playing all day, doing whatever they are interested in doing, be realistic for society? The question is, how have we allowed our society to get to a place where what is natural is not realistic for society? All mammal children learn by playing. Human children learned through play, exploration and interest-led pursuits since the dawn of

humanity because this is nature's intent for children. Should we be questioning why our society thinks it is unrealistic for children to learn the way they are wired to learn? This idea of democratic learning sounds too radical and experimental- Can it be done in modern times? Unschoolers, relaxed homeschoolers and children in democratic schools demonstrate everyday, year after year, as they have for decades that interest-led, play-based, democratic learning grows joyful, intelligent, creative, brilliant, confident, successful and passionate children! Summerhill, The Sudbury Valley School, The Albany Free School and many other democratic schools highlighted in books by A. S. Neill, Jerry Mintz, Ivan Illich, Matt Hern and others have been running democratically, with children learning freely for years. If these schools can pull it off with such success, why not public schools? Some of the most innovative minds in history and in the world today never attended school. In fact, many unschooled and homeschooled children run businesses, are public speakers, authors, performing musicians, artists, artisans or inventors and some even attend college early. Homeschoolers and unschoolers are diverse and come from every political orientation and walk of life, including single, low-income parents.