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Profession, Teacher



Taylor Larza Professor Theis English 104 5th March 2013 Larza v. Board of Education "Against School" is an essay that argues the true effectiveness of the current public school system, and how it affects children later in the real world. John Gatto, a teacher of 30 years in the Manhattan school system and winner of many prestigious teaching awards, discusses how high school was just a breeding ground for boredom. The boredom not only affects the children, but also the teachers. Gatto believes that the children in the school should be able to manage themselves, and not be put under any restrictions by teachers. I believe that many students in the public school systems are deprived. Standardized tests restrict teachers from teaching in depth because they have to teach for success on a test, rather than teaching kids how to comprehend and apply to the real world. Gatto at the beginning of his essay describes the boredom that children experience in the current public schooling system. When he asked children why they were so bored most responded with "the work was stupid, or it made no sense" (Gatto 148). The Author also brings up a story that his grandfather told him in his younger years; he says "The obligation to amuse and instruct myself was entirely my own, and people who didn't know that were childish people" (Gatto 149). His point that he is trying to prove is one that if students are feeling bored in the classroom they should pursue learning on their own outside of school. Although Gatto only speaks about homeschooled children or even kids who didn't attend school very often, he stresses the facts of uneducated persons can rise with the proper work ethic and motivation. He lists multiple founding fathers of our nation including George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and many others (Gatto 150). He mentions how throughout history kids didn't

generally go to school, yet “ the unschooled rose to be admirals” (Gatto 150). Gatto singles out some major entrepreneurs like Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, and even writers like Twain and Melville (150). The author explains that “ in this country to think of success as synonymous with, or at least dependent upon schooling”, yet historically this isn’t true Gatto says in an intellectual or financial sense (Gatto 150). Gatto believes that the school systems play a vital role in the under achievement among children, because of their mentality toward the development of these students. Their three fold plan, “ to make good people, make good citizens, and make each person achieve their personal best” (Gatto 150), is believed by Gatto to be out dated and too simplistic. Alexander Inglis, a writer in the early twentieth century wrote a book named Principles of Secondary Education. Gatto thinks poorly of Ingles’ six basic functions, adjustive or adaptive, integrating, diagnostic, differentiating, selective, and propaedeutic. These six functions described by Inglis break down the “ Actual Purpose” of Modern schooling (Gatto 152). The author believes these six functions are the reason our school system is bound to fail (Gatto 153). Now having spent all 12 years of school in the Texas public school system, I must say I completely agree with Gatto. Boredom was extremely common among my classmates and me. I felt like I was never challenged in my base classes. In order to be challenged I had to take it upon myself to take upper level courses, like Advanced Placement or even college classes. Although these classes were tough, they still seemed to lack in teaching me how to think outside the box. What I wanted out of my high school experience was to learn how to be self-efficient, and to be able to create my own ideas. Gatto

brought up that Benjamin Franklin apprenticed himself in printing at the age of 12 (155). Why would we hold our kids back with standards? I believe if kids are bored in class then we are not pushing them to be their best.

Boredom in school was always a problem for me growing up. Now it wasn't necessarily because of the work being too easy, but the way it was taught by my teachers. What I believe the school system wanted to do was to help the "drop out", and this caused the simplification of schooling material. The schooling system has begun to rely on standardized test scores as a gauge of students' knowledge. This allows a student to memorize facts and regurgitate these facts, and call it success. Where is the problem solving, or even the creativity our nation needs to continue to be a dominant world power? This begs the question, are kids bored because they choose to be, or because they are pushed toward it? If allowed to, I wouldn't have gone to school. Allowing others to be challenged with far greater problems than what I could have comprehended. Thus allowing them to be interested in higher learning, and I would no longer be bored of truthfully things I didn't care to learn. Gatto brought up Principles of Secondary Education by Alexander Inglis. The way he breaks down the "Actual Purpose" of modern schooling, to me is spot on. For example the Integrating function, the conformity function, is intended to make children as alike as possible (Gatto 153). I believe today's integrating function would be schools that only allow base level classes. This causes all students to learn the same facts, and causing them to become predictable or "easily manipulated" (Gatto 153). Gatto's theory on the uneducated people in the world is almost spot on. When he states how many of our founding fathers, and most famous writers were

never formally educated. I immediately started to think, what would happen if we were allowed to choose if we wanted to go to school. Allow kids to think for themselves, and give them a chance from a young age to have a little control on their own lives. I believe this would create competition in our public school system, thus leading to children expanding their learning potential and possibly creating people that can solve the world's problems. Gatto's essay describes his views on our current schooling system in America. Sadly I must agree with him because of unfortunate past experiences with this system. The system isn't allowing students to find their true potential. The author covered almost every aspect of the public schooling, and even the home schooling system. Gatto's Solution " let them manage themselves" (Gatto 155), I think is just what this system needs to succeed. Works Cited Gatto, John Taylor. " Against School. " Rereading America. Eds. Gary Colombo, Robert Cullen, and Bonnie Lisle. Boston: St. Martin's, 2010. 148-156. Print.