

# Teaching our younger generation to succeed essay

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G.

K. Chesterton once said, " Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another. " A countries education system is one of the core bases it needs to grow, develop and function as a society. Without a strong education system a country will lack what it needs to become a more powerful and stronger country. Our adolescents are the countries future and if they are inadequately educated, the room for growth to become a successful and intellectual adult will diminish within time.

The way and what material is being taught to our children and young adults in America today is supported and accepted by most of society and is being funded by billions of dollars from our tax payers. Although some highly educated individuals that have gone through the education system seem to think that there are many problems with the way our children our being taught and the demeanor they are getting out of it. From the essay " A Nation Worth Defending," William Bennett believes that our school system lacks educating our children about the important facts of American history, and in therefore is ruining patriotism and our knowledge of the real values of America. On the other hand, John Taylor Gatto expressed his views on education in his essay " Against School: How Public Education Cripples Our Kids, and Why," he believes that our education system is a farce and that it is turning our children into mindless conformists that cannot think for themselves and in return turning our country into immature self-centered consumers. I believe the purpose of education should be to instill our children and young adults with the knowledge they need to succeed in life

and the intelligence to strengthen and carry on the core values and ambition of our country.

In John Taylor Gatto's "Against School: How Public Education Cripples Our Kids, and Why," he believes the education system is brain washing our children into mindless consumers being trapped in the cell-block style of education turning them into servants of the free market system for mass production and mass consumption. The system teaches children to accept their class affiliation and to conform to what they are being taught, (Gatto, 29) acting as an independent and expressing your own thoughts are not accepted if it does not harmonize with society. Gatto wants the system to let the children mature and not stay "children" as they get older, "we have become a nation of children, happy to surrender our judgments and our wills to political exhortations and commercial blandishments that would insult actual adults" (29).

He states that children are not encouraged to think for themselves and are being instilled with ideas of greed, envy, jealousy, and fear. Gatto doesn't give much of a solution to this problem but one is to have the children's parents push the "grown up" material like the history, literature, philosophy, music, art, economics, and theology which Gatto proclaims that the schoolteachers know how to avoid. He believes it is important for children to learn to think for themselves and have their parents be more involved in their life to protect them from being dragged in the black hole of "mindless children" because according to Gatto our children's genius is being thrown under the ground and not being used. If our children learn how to think for

themselves they will develop intellectually, emotionally and spiritually thus conforming into a well-educated insightful adult that can in turn teach their children the same values they learned. Gatto believes that our children are not getting the tools and resources to become independent and insightful adults.

He feels our education system is a conspiracy and the whole purpose is to teach our “mindless” children to be “mindless consumers” and “that left them sitting ducks for another great invention of the modern era- marketing” (29). This may be a very blunt and absurd thing to say, that our whole education system is corrupting our children and molding them into their own “robots” to have control over society and consumers, but Gatto does have a good point. The education system does not teach our children and young adults the real things they need to be learning to become independent and well established adults, as Bennett also states that the education system’s curriculum isn’t teaching our children the right values to become successful.

Gatto believes that the parents are the cure to this problem and that parents should homeschool their children, he feels that schooling is too tedious and repetitive, “do we really need school? I don’t mean education, just forced schooling, six classes a day, five days a week, nine months a year for twelve years. Is this deadly routine really necessary?” (24) A deadly routine? Gatto feels that students need to be more educated but he is contradicting himself by saying students go to school too often. In a recent article posted by Nicholas Kristoff with the National Times, he is reporting that China and Asian countries come on top for students testing in math, science, and

reading while the US fell short (15th in reading, 23rd in science and 31st in math) . Education thrives in China and the rest of Asia because it is top priority,” (nytimes. com) meaning that education is taken very seriously in these countries and students are pushed and required to do more scholastically than American students.

Interestingly enough, “ Many Chinese complain scathingly that their system kills independent thought and creativity, and they envy the American system for nurturing self-reliance – and for trying to make learning exciting and not just a chore” (nytimes. com). The schools that are marginally succeeding the American schools are looking up to our schooling system because in their eyes it is better and more productive than theirs. Although Gatto does have good points about changing the education system to teach our children to be more independent and intelligent, he fails to see that our education system has produced many intelligent and insightful citizens that have improved our country for the better and built upon its core to be a more powerful and strong country like Bennett believes the education system should do.

Relating to Gatto and his view that the schooling system is a production factory for students, “ I had more than enough reason to think of our schools- with their long-term, cellblock-style, forced confinement of both students and teachers- as virtual factories of childishness,” (24) my senior year of high school was a fun experience for me and by far my favorite year out of the four, like it should be. We had a principle that was not very much liked by the students and faculty and she made rules that were thought to be elementary especially for high school.

As the year progressed, the rules kept getting harsher and more unreasonable, like giving out a detention for being late for each class you were, or giving out a certain number of bathroom breaks. Students felt like they were in a preschool with all the crazy rules they gave us. It was making the students think that the teachers and security guards didn't respect them at all. Some got so mad they set up a meeting with the board to discuss the unreasonable rules. William Bennett in "A Nation Worth Defending," believes that children and young adults should be educated about the history of America because it is very important to learn all of the achievements of our founding fathers and the achievements our ancestors have done for our country. Children and young adults today are deprived from learning all the positive and great things America has done for itself and other countries. Surprising statistics say that, "...of the 55 highest-ranked colleges and universities in the nation, not a single one requires students to take a course in American history in order to graduate...57% of high school students are "below basic" in their knowledge...one-third [of college students] say that they would evade military draft in the war on terror and another one-third would refuse to fight over seas" (Bennett, 32). With these statistics it is hard to believe that our younger generation does not have patriotism for the country they live in and are unclear on the knowledge of their country.

Bennett is expressing that this is a problem that needs to be fixed soon because our younger generation is the future of our country, and if the future leaders of our country don't believe in their nation the United States will soon diminish the original values it was built on. To fix this issue the

education system should start teaching children, teens, and young adults more about our nation's history. High schools, universities, and colleges need to start offering more classes and make some mandatory to take. According to Bennett, by teaching the younger generation about the history of the country they live in they will learn to appreciate and fight for the right things for their nation. Bennett is very dedicated to his belief that young Americans should be educated about the history of America in order to succeed in their adult years.

He states that, " If they [children] do not learn about the great and noble things our country has done, they will not learn to be patriotic. If they do not learn to be brave and patriotic, our nation is in grave danger" (Bennett, 35). I agree that young Americans need to be taught about the history of America in order to appreciate and promote the fight our founding fathers and ancestors have gone through. Although learning about the wonderful things our country has gone through does not just contribute to our willingness to be patriotic; there are other factors that can make a person patriotic like having someone close to you fighting in the war. Bennett believes that the " reluctance to defend America" arises from " a lack of education about America or, in some cases, a historically incorrect education about America, which is even worse.

Education ought not to be defined narrowly as the accumulation of knowledge; it also entails preparing a future generation of citizens" (33). Young Americans today are deprived from a lot of the historical information about America because they are just taught a general lesson about the

history and are not taught in depth about the real struggles and accomplishments that our founding fathers really went through. Bennett is pushing that the most prominent thing the education system needs to be teaching is the American history. I feel that this is important too, because young Americans need to be educated about the real facts to learn more about their country so they can be patriotic, proud, and interested in America today and have its core values it was founded on carried on to the next generations to come. I feel that Gatto and Bennett both have good ideas for improving the education system in America. Putting in more lessons and classes about the American history in the school systems would greatly improve our children's understanding of the basis of America and therefore the original values America was founded on, and new ideas to improve America as a functioning country would be steadfast in the American culture. Implementing more insightful knowledge in our children to teach them how to be independent, and "urge them to take on serious material...history, literature, philosophy, music, art, economics, theology..."(Gatto 30), will turn our already strong education system into making our children and young adults more successful in life and therefore making our country more strong as a whole.

Bennett wants young Americans to be willing to go fight over seas because that to him is being a true patriotic American, I feel that you don't need to be willing to fight over seas or in the Army to show your true patriotism. Bennett being affected by 9/11 has very strong and biased views in his essay, he makes a lot of valuable points but pointing out the opposing side and their views would have made his argument more concrete. Gatto has painted a



pretty picture of what he wants to see America do with its education system, but fails to give a solution to the problem. Also being victimized by the system, it is very prominent in his writing that he is very upset with the education system and brings in examples of how our early ancestors were “unschooled but not uneducated” (25). Using famous inventors like Edison and famous entrepreneur Rockefeller as young adolescents that didn’t need schooling in order to succeed, does not help support his point of adolescents today not needing the public schooling.

The school system in those times was very different than today. The schooling system was not developed in any comparison like it is today. Children had the option to go to school back in the earlier times, but now the schooling system is very much developed and is mandatory for those under the age of sixteen. Education should be available to challenge our students with insightful teachings and in return have them grow up to be a well-endowed individual who can now better our country with the wisdom they gathered through their early and later years as an educated student. Using Bennett and Graff as a platform for improving our education system could be a start of a more stable education system.

America could potentially be on top of the world’s education, instead of Confucianism countries. Bennett, William J. “ A Nation Worth Defending .” Readings For OSU Writers. Fourth.

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