

# The true purpose of education

[Education](#)



The purpose of a universal public education system can be debated, but originally, in the 1830's, Horace Mann reformed the American school system in order to give all children the basis on which to learn and become judicious citizens. As public schooling has evolved throughout the years, the purpose of education has been slowly vanishing, being replaced by monotonous routines and pointless activities done by students that no longer are interested in learning, but getting good grades instead.

The true purpose of learning isn't being addressed properly in schools, and it isn't being recognized by those who attend school in order to learn. In 'An Education', by Ralph Waldo Emerson, Emerson paints a picture of what an education is supposed to provide for a pupil. He writes, "The function of opening and feeding the human mind is not to be filled by any mechanical or military method...you must not neglect the form, but secure the essentials" (para. 9).

In a sense, Emerson argues that the purpose of education is, not to mold a judicious citizen that has basic understanding of certain topics, but to guide and ultimately unleash the genius and determination in every man by giving them the essentials to learning. On the other hand, Mann in 'Report of the Massachusetts Board of Education' uses the analogy of Feudalism to show that when education is not made a mandatory opportunity for all, society gets broken into classes, like Feudalism, in which the rich and powerful abuse the poor and uneducated.

Here we see a specific clash of opinions on what education is supposed to provide for an individual person, and a society. Although Emerson's essay may seem less subjective than Mann's, I believe Emerson holds a more broad

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understanding of what an education can give to a person. There are many cases in which twelve years of public school do not provide a student with the passion or direction in order to live a life full of learning and accomplishment, when twelve years of public education doesn't provide an exceptional education.

The solution might not be to end public schooling, but to begin public acceptance of young students becoming avid learners instead of teacher's pets, self advocates instead of disabled pupils. Leon Botstein in ' Let Teenagers Try Adulthood' proposes that the answer to such an out of date and flawed institution is a world where sixteen year olds are " prepared to be taken seriously and to develop the motivations and interests that will serve them well in adult life" (para. 11). Being a 16 year old myself, I often wonder what that would be like; if other adults didn't know I attend high school or if that was completely irrelevant to begin with. As this is a nice thought, it is also a minor detail in the larger scheme of things. I find the solution of empowering students to be curious and to seek out what they want from schools to be far more superior. The public school system can indeed live up to the standard Emerson set for a great education; it just has to be changed. An excellent teacher has the power to provide students with the essentials to learning, good listening skills for example.

However, public schools don't often produce excellent students or teachers, and this is exactly what starts the banal cycle again. To what extent do our schools serve the goal of a true education? Our schools, being the student body, the leaders, and everything in between are too caught up in the everyday cycle of busy work and assessments, to realize that these methods

need to be replaced with new ones that open the minds of students to what they can fulfill with the right passion for their education and the true purpose of being educated.