

A Hopeful Vision

Reflections and Ideas for a Future Forward

Fall 2022: Original Chapter 1 Draft

“The Misdirection of Educational Crises”

Education sits at the crossroads of Personal and Societal Development. Itemizing all of its flaws, particularly amidst pivotal years of Middle and High School, has been a long-echoed tradition among Students, Parents, Teachers, and Administration. From any of these aforementioned perspectives, there exist layers of discontent and disagreement. Generational, Cultural, and Political backgrounds of all kinds also restrict the acceptance of Universal Foundations of Education.

Such little common ground has continually spoiled otherwise well-minded efforts to achieve success. Far too frequently, restless minds raise the same timeless questions... *“What is the Point of School?”*, *“How does School help Adolescents prepare for Life?”*, and *“Why is School such a Waste of Time, Energy, and Resources?”* These worthy inquiries are symptoms of many overlapping voids, each of which highlights unfulfilled potential, aimless direction, and diminished confidence.

Learning is inherently Empowering, regardless of the setting in which it is achieved. Middle and High School Teachers commonly maintain classroom procedures to Instruct and Evaluate Students. Though both provide a taxing grind that commands praise for the profession, the true impact of any education process is marked by the quality of Students' Learning. To LEARN, one must Listen, Engage, Apply, Review, and Navigate. Instruction and Evaluation alone offer no reassurance of Active Learning, as neither prioritizes Natural Motivation or Enhanced Thought Process.

As a proud Minneapolis resident and business owner for 13 years, I've devoted my Independent Tutoring (primarily Math) career to building and sustaining a system of authentic student advocacy. While the framework of this system has been applied uniquely to each student I've taught, the needs it addresses have presented with remarkable consistency. Minneapolis has had its excessive share of Educational Spotlight in recent years, yet the actual students representing its alleged goals have been continually overshadowed. Though optimistic in my personal teaching endeavors, my outlook for most system-based learning remains bleak.

From one systemic crisis to the next, none more so than the Teachers' Strike of March 2022, an ongoing rise of Misdirection has limited Educational narratives that are decades overdue. Stimulating such narratives and planting seeds of enlightened perspective will expand opportunity and validate hope. That said, one must first breathe freely from the flood of sound bites and statistics swarming recently presented mischaracterizations of such systemic crises.

There isn't enough funding for public schools. Teachers are asked to fulfill too many roles. Safety provisions are questionable at best. Social Media brings too many distractions and promotes aggressive chaos. Students are given too much homework. Students aren't given enough homework. Schools don't have enough STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math) opportunities. Select curriculum clashes with assorted political ideologies. And of course, schools lack sufficient racial and ethnic diversity.

While all of these apparent crises turn heads and spark endless debate, they often lead to a narrow scope of express solution mapping. Nearly every supposed crisis warrants priority status on behalf of the respective parties concerned. Since support for crisis A will inevitably further the neglect of crisis B, there are simply too many perspectives in most modern school systems to ever justify a claim of "mission accomplished". Thus, in Today's Middle and High Schools, a transformative shake-up to the Fundamental Idea of Education Success must be embraced and applied.

REAL School (***Relentless Efforts for Active Learning***) represents a Philosophy of Education designed to optimize personal connection, develop authentic purpose, and evolve applied thought processes. The core of this philosophy emphasizes Student Value as much as Teacher Value, both of which are wholly acknowledged irrespective of district budgets. Its methodology isn't aimed to be a system-wide solution map for the aforementioned crises in Today's schools. Those maps generally offer up ideas designed for outside-inward change, most of which fail to improve personal student experience. System-wide ideas create headlines and activate surges of motivation, but they rarely draw prevailing consensus. REAL School, in stark contrast, is designed for inside-outward change.

21st century youths hold the highest ever potential for intellectual capacity. Such potential has been aided by transformative breakthroughs and advancements of past generations, yet these same generations have limited access to its full pursuit in Today's Schools. While Aristotle's timeless words, "The Whole is Greater than the Sum of its Parts" extend to a broad range of communal and team endeavors, they precisely oppose values of intellectual achievement. Every student is undeniably as capable as they are complex, and the freedom to embrace personal accountability with Active Learning is destined to maximize success. The Sum of All Parts far exceeds the Whole of a Student Body in a system with such opportunity.

Conventional mindsets for Middle and High School Education are prominently framed by the WHATs. What is being taught or covered? What notes need to be taken? What study resources (books, online tools, journals) are used? What assignments need to be done? What is on the tests? What type(s) of tests are given? What are the grading standards? What is the teacher like? What can be done for extra credit? And of course... *What is the point of each class?* That's exactly right... This final question is too easily dwarfed by a collective burden of those preceding it. Students are so consumed with to-do lists and "staying on track" that they are severely limited in finding real purpose on behalf of their future selves.

Best understanding the point of a class isn't a matter of What... It's a matter of How and Why. A majority of the WHATs listed above are prime examples of the misdirection that has confronted and suppressed student (Human) development for decades. REAL School is fully intent to validate students as humans trying to navigate an especially sensitive period in their lives. Rather than prioritizing What they should know, it's far more effective to guide How Students Learn to Think. Active Learning provides a gateway to Purpose, which in turn gives life Meaning and Direction.

Most current teachers are able to structure courses that embrace these sentiments, but doing so requires an evolved perspective of student development... How do students formulate questions? How do they organize their research? How do they filter competing sources of information? How do they apply their understanding of topics? Addressing these HOWs will promote capable minds that are ready for higher learning. It will also prepare students with transferable skills that can accelerate their potential career trajectories. Mentality training within relevant, open-ended academic challenges can also promote resilient and resourceful work ethic.

Societal youth movements that have called for fundamental change to the perception of personal identity are often criticized for their lack of life experience. Such criticism is likely justified, as adolescent perspectives are inherently incomplete, yet the underlying sentiments of these movements indicate a desire to expand capacity for personal purpose. Mass strands of modern unfulfilled intellect have activated unparalleled restlessness. Much of this has been furthered by the allure of alternate realities (social media, gaming, and modern pop culture). Though potentially harmless, these often pose a severe threat to a competent mind geared for independent success.

CLIFFHANGER ENDING