

Ten Questions to Ask Your Child's Teachers

*Procedures from a
Small School*



West Hollywood
Private School
Hollywood, Florida

www.WHPSUS.org

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These procedures come from Edutopia.com, Eric Mazur's PeerInstruction.net, HighTechHigh.org, MetCenter.org and dozens of other websites and innovative schools in the USA.

These procedures are part of the school work at West Hollywood Private School.

TinyURL.com/AskTeachers10

Images from the Internet appear in this book.

Some of the posters by Krissy come from VenSpired.com.

They are free for you to use in classrooms.

This book is a big classroom.

The authors do not profit from this book. The authors donate the net proceeds from the sale of this book to pay for scholarships so that students can attend small schools.

Ten percent of the net proceeds will be donated to the charities selected by VenSpired.com.

We authors particularly like the quotes that VenSpired.com produced from quotes by Seth Godin.

Go for it! You have my full permission. The book looks like a fabulous way to spread good edu word!

-- VenSpired.com

This book is dedicated to Gustavo Fraga.

The logo for the book comes from an incident in a school...

Fraga walked into the classroom, put books on his desk, pulled a sheet from a folder and asked, “Is there anything that you want to learn today?”

“Sir, I’m not sure about the way to balance an equation. You showed us last week but I’d like a review.”



Fraga looked at the sheet in his hand, grasped the top edge of the sheet in both hands and ripped it into two pieces. He walked to a wastebasket and threw away his lesson plan. He proceeded to answer the student’s question.

This book celebrates teachers who focus on what the students want to learn.

Contents

- 1. **Ask teachers to stop lecturing.**
- 2. **Ask teachers to create a Personal Learning Plan** for your child.
- 3. **Collect your child's school work** in a website.
- 4. **Ask teachers to let students discuss the new information** instead of listening to a lecture.
- 5. **Ask teachers to guide students in creating projects** that include several subjects.
- 6. **Ask teachers to find apps** for the student to use on their mobile phones.
- 7. **Ask teachers for their mobile phone numbers.**
- 8. **Ask teachers to look at your child as an individual.** Ask your teacher to teach your child all four years of high school. This is the procedure at Big Picture Schools.
- 9. **Ask teachers to put the Five Guiding Questions** on the classroom walls. *(From the Big Picture Schools)*
- 10. **Show the 10 Expectations** from LeavingToLearn.org to every teacher in your child's school.

Here are ten ways to improve your child's education.



The principal at High Tech High gives advice about good procedures.

1

Ask teachers to stop

lecturing.

Short lectures are put on video for the student to view BEFORE the class. Students should arrive in class ready to discuss the topic for the day. The class time is for one-on-one tutoring and small group discussions.

tinyurl.com/LecturesAreDead

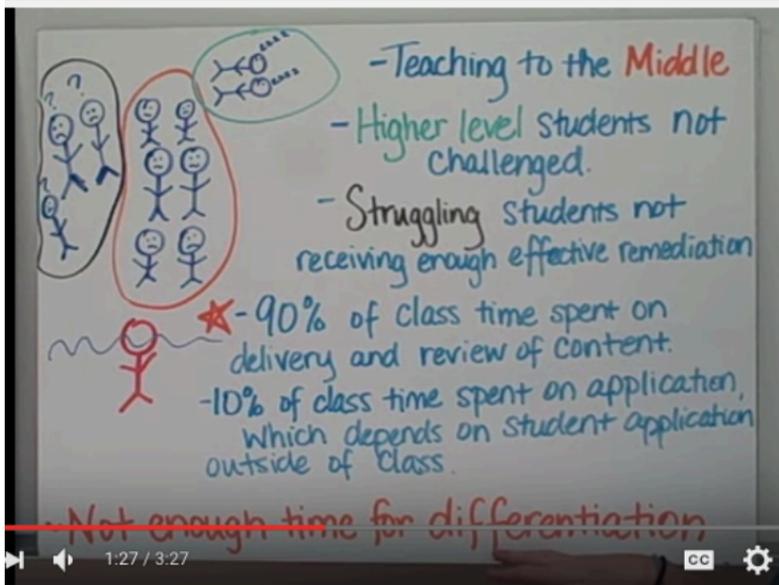
“Research shows it's impossible for students to take in and remember all the information presented during a typical lecture.” *American RadioWorks*



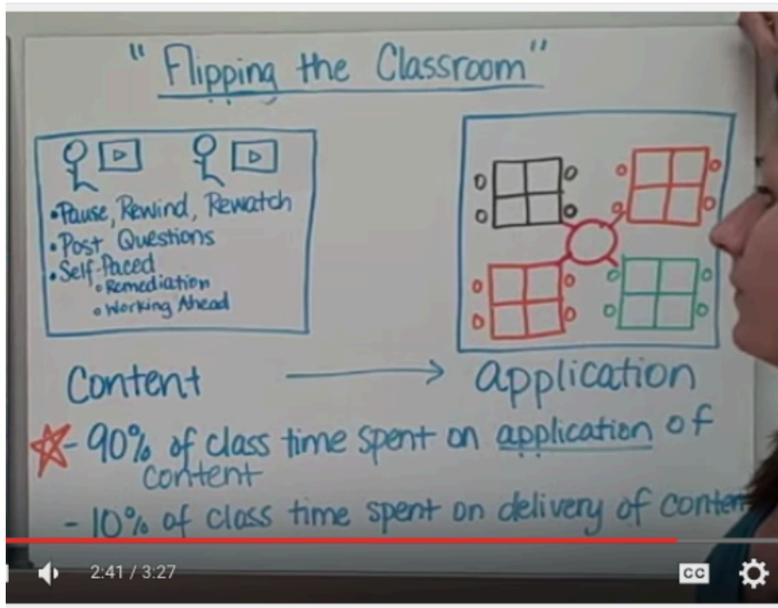
How to make class work more interesting.

TinyURL.com/LecturesAreDead1
PeerInstruction.net

TinyURL.com/LecturesAreDead2
The video (60 seconds)



Katie Gimbar, a teacher in North Carolina, shows the problems with lectures in a typical classroom.



Katie Gimbar explains how she makes videos for students to watch before they come to class.

2

Ask for a Personal Learning

Plan. Ask teachers to start with your child. Connect the homework and school work to the child's interests. This procedure is used at Big Picture Schools (MetCenter.org). This is not an Individual Education Plan (IEP), which helps the student adapt to the textbook and the system (putting a square peg in a round hole). The Personal Learning Plan is unique to each student.

Big Picture South Burlington
Learning Plan Worksheet

Advisor:
Term/Year:
Student(s):

Essential Question or Desired Result: What do you want to know, understand or be able to do? This could be written as a goal or a question.

--

Rationale: Why do you want to understand or be able to do this? How does it connect to your interest, passion or future goals?

--

Assessment: How will you know and show that you have met your goal?

Evidence/Artifacts: What will you produce to demonstrate what you have learned? (What will you show at your exhibition?)	Evaluation of Quality How will you know the level of quality of your work?

An example of a Personal Learning Plan

Often the plans are completed with the help of the parents.

Personal Learning Plans

- Extensive Staff Development
- Building Relationships with students
- 1 to 2 staff for small group of students
- Goal setting and how your going to get there
- Develop a student portfolio

Teachers need training to prepare to work together to make projects and personal learning plans.

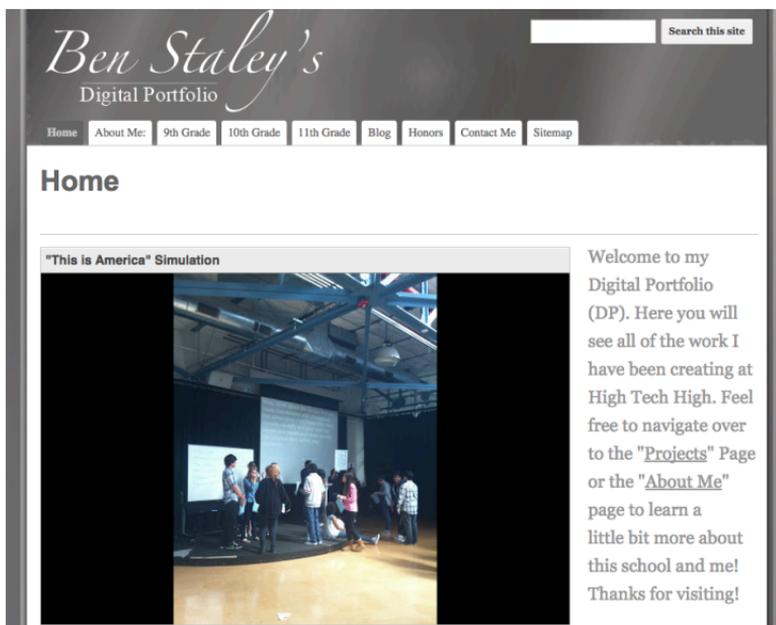
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Collect your child's school

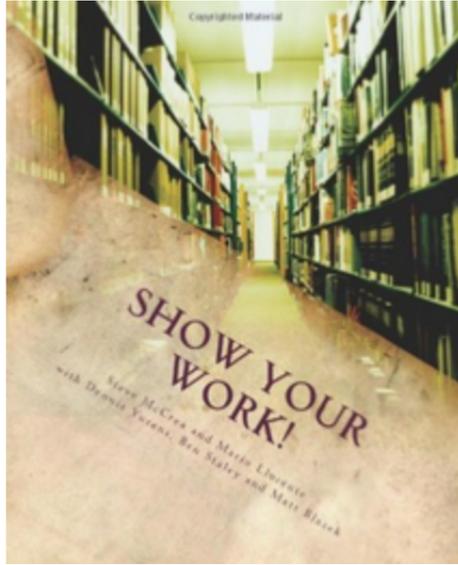
work in a website. Students at High

Tech High School in San Diego, California use free Google Sites web space for showing their projects and school work.

TinyURL.com/ExampleDP.



Ben Staley's website showing his school work and projects (High Tech High School)



This book shows you how to organize school work on the website. The book was written by Dennis Yuzenas, Steve McCrea, Omar Vasile, Ben Staley, Matt Blazek and Mario Llorente.

4

Ask teachers to let students discuss the new information

instead of listening to a lecture.

Ask teachers to use the method called “Turn to Your Neighbor” that Harvard University developed. TinyURL.com/EricMazur
TinyURL.com/TurnToYourNeighbor



Julie Schell explains the method of “turn to your neighbor” and “peer instruction.” Students discuss a question in class.

5

Ask teachers to guide students in creating projects

that include several subjects. For example, the math, science and history teachers can create one project together with the student.



Project Based Learning
Making Education Personal

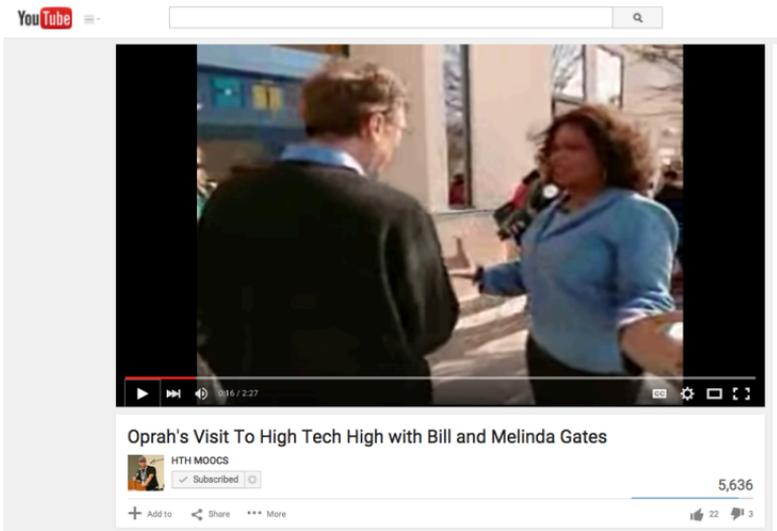
Matthew Blazek

This procedure is easier when one teacher teaches several subjects (perhaps English Grammar, a foreign language and history).

WHPSUS.org uses a project book by Matt Blazek.
TinyURL.com/BlazekProjects

Projects that help students improve their tech skills

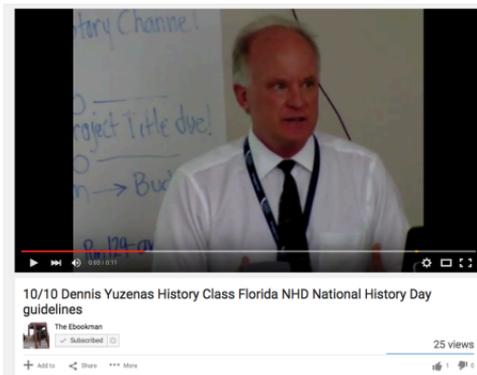
This video explains how to use the Project Book.
www.TinyURL.com/MattBlazek



“Projects are the way to go.” Bill Gates during a visit to High Tech High School, San Diego, Calif.



Omar Vasile gives advice about how to organize projects.



Dennis Yuzenas describes a project with National History Day.

6

Ask teachers to find apps for the student to use.

Many hours of classroom practice are spent reviewing ... and some of that reviewing can be done outside the classroom on apps.

A teacher who can be replaced by a computer should be replaced by a computer.

Arthur C. Clarke, author of 2001: A Space Odyssey.

The teacher becomes a facilitator. The teacher is not the source of information. The teacher helps students manage their time.

Spread the Words! SAT
 Vocappulary - September 9, 2013
 Education

Install **Add to Wishlist**

⚠ You don't have any devices

★★★★☆ (265)

Projects at SunEd High School, Books and Recommended Smartphone Apps

SunEd High Video Channel
 ✓ Subscribed 23 views

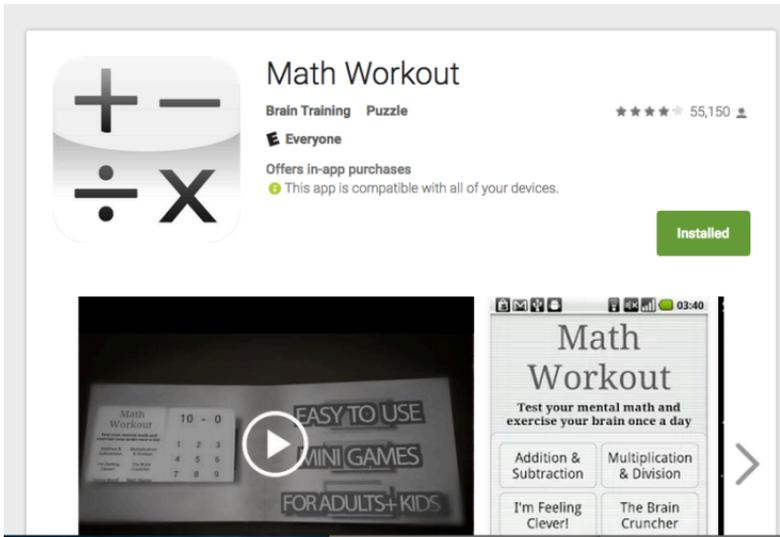
+ Add to < Share *** More

CAUTION
 THIS IS SPARTA
caveat
 Warning, cautionary note

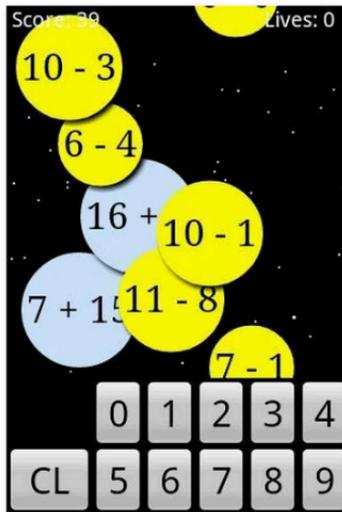
CAUTION
 THIS IS SPARTA
 The Spartan king issued a caveat to the messenger: "Choose your words carefully!"
 My father loaned me a car with this caveat: "If you break it, you buy it!"
 At the cave was a caveat: "Watch out for bats!"

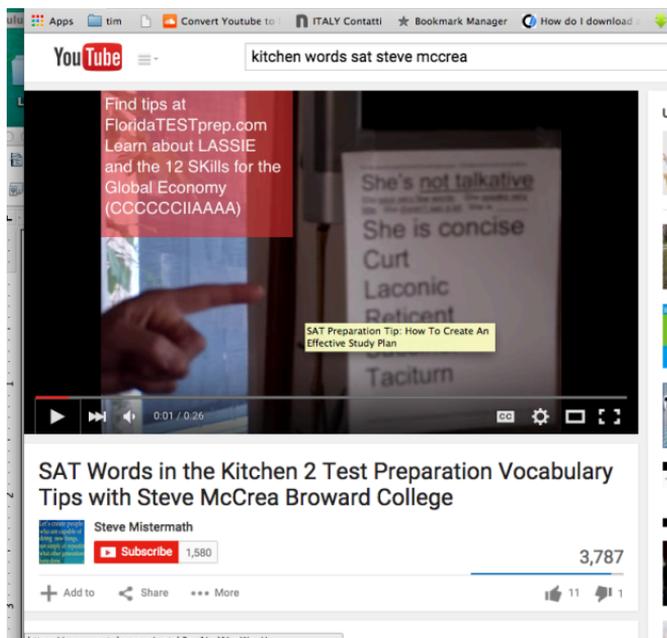
CAUTION
 a. circumscribe
 b. verdant
 c. affectation

A vocabulary app.



A math app.





This video shows students how to review new words.

7

Ask teachers for their mobile phone numbers.

“Can my child send you questions at night and on weekends?” The questions can often be put in a photo and sent to the teacher’s mobile phone. When a student has a question, the student can take a photo and send the question to the teacher. The teacher can make a short video and reply to that student. The student can view the answer and learn outside the classroom.

The “Just In Time” Learning Method

- **The student finds a difficult problem.**
- **The student takes a photo and sends the photo to the teacher’s mobile phone.**
- **The teacher looks at the problem, writes an explanation, makes a movie and sends the movie to the student.**
- **The student explains the solution the next day in class to other students.**

8

Ask teachers to look at your child as an individual.

Ask the teachers to teach your child all four years of high school. This is the procedure at Big Picture Schools.

The same teacher stays with the same students for four years. This often happens in a small school.

Each student has his own lesson plan for each day. Ask teachers to ask “What do you want to learn today?” Teachers have been told to teach students the **Seven Survival Skills** that Tony Wagner has identified. Search “Seven Survival Skills Tony Wagner.” Initiative and Entrepreneurship can be developed if the teacher allows students time to make the first move. Neil Postman gave this advice: Ask the students, “What do you want to learn today?”

The only way to know where a kid is 'at' is to listen to what he is saying. -- Neil Postman



TONY WAGNER'S SEVEN SURVIVAL SKILLS

as defined by business leaders in their own words

Tony Wagner interviewed over 200 managers to find out “what do students need to know.”



Dr. Tony Wagner's Keynote Speech at Deeper Learning 2013

OnePotatoExtras 1 video
Subscribed

377 views

**The world no longer
cares about how
much you know.
The world cares
about what you can
do with what you
know.**

Tony Wagner asks students to show their skills.

9

Ask teachers to put the Five Guiding Questions on the classroom walls. *(From the Big Picture Schools)*

You can get the exact wording of the questions by going to TinyURL.com/metquestions

HOW DO I DESCRIBE THIS SITUATION?

(How do I talk about the problem?)

WHAT NUMBERS DO I NEED TO USE?

(What kind of math do I need for this topic?)

HOW DO I COMMUNICATE THIS

INFORMATION? (Should I use a poster or a video? Where can I get more information? How do I get more information?)

WHAT DID OTHER PEOPLE WRITE

ABOUT THIS TOPIC? (What is the history of this topic?)

WHAT CAN I ADD TO THIS TOPIC? (How can I make this topic personal to me?)

metcenter.org/about-us/one-student-at-a-time/goals

10

Show the 10 Expectations from **LeavingToLearn.org** to every teacher in your child's school.

These ten "Questions that Parents Can Ask" come from a video that supports [Leaving to Learn](#), a book by [Elliot Washor](#) and Charles Wojkowski.



[LeavingToLearn.org](#)

Relationships

Am I just another face in the classroom? or do my teachers know about me and my interests and talents? Do the teachers help me form relationships with peers and adults who might serve as models and coaches?

**Can I learn at my own pace?
Is there time for learning to be deep as well as broad?**



Do I have choices about how and when I will show what I have learned?

These questions come from LeavingToLearn.org

Relevance

Is the work just a series of hoops to jump? Or is the work relevant to my interests? Do my teachers help me understand how my learning contributes to my community?

Time

Am I expected to learn at a pace decided by my teacher or can I learn at my own pace? Is there time for learning to be deep as well as broad?

Timing

Do all students have to learn things in the same

sequence or can I learn in an order that fits my learning style or interests?

Play

Is there always pressure to perform? Or do I have opportunities to explore? Make mistakes and learn from them? Do I have opportunities to tinker and make guesses?

Practice

Do we learn something and then immediately move on to the next skill?

Or can we engage in deep and sustained practice of the skills that we need to learn?

Choice

Am I following the same path as every student? Or do I have real choices about what, how and when I will learn and demonstrate my abilities?

Do my teachers help me form relationships with peers and adults who might serve as models and coaches?



Does the classwork relate to my interests?

These questions come from LeavingToLearn.org

Authenticity

Is my work just a series of worksheets? Or is the learning and work I do considered significant outside of school, by experts, family and employers?
Does the community recognize the value of my work?

Challenge

is the school work just about completing assignments?
Or do I feel challenged? Am I addressing high and meaningful standards?

Application

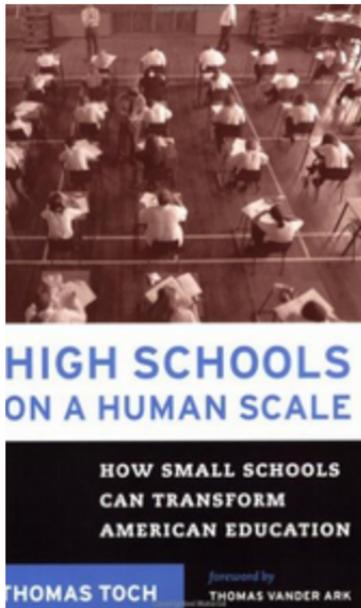
Is my learning all theoretical? Or do I have opportunities to apply what I'm learning in real world settings?



TinyURL.com/MattBlazek

Ask the history teacher to **“teach history backwards.”** If we start with the years that the child knows, then we can connect to the history of his grandfather. **historyinreverse.blogspot.com**

These ten procedures will help teachers be more effective. The teachers will prepare your child for the Global Market. We use these methods at our school in West Hollywood, Florida.



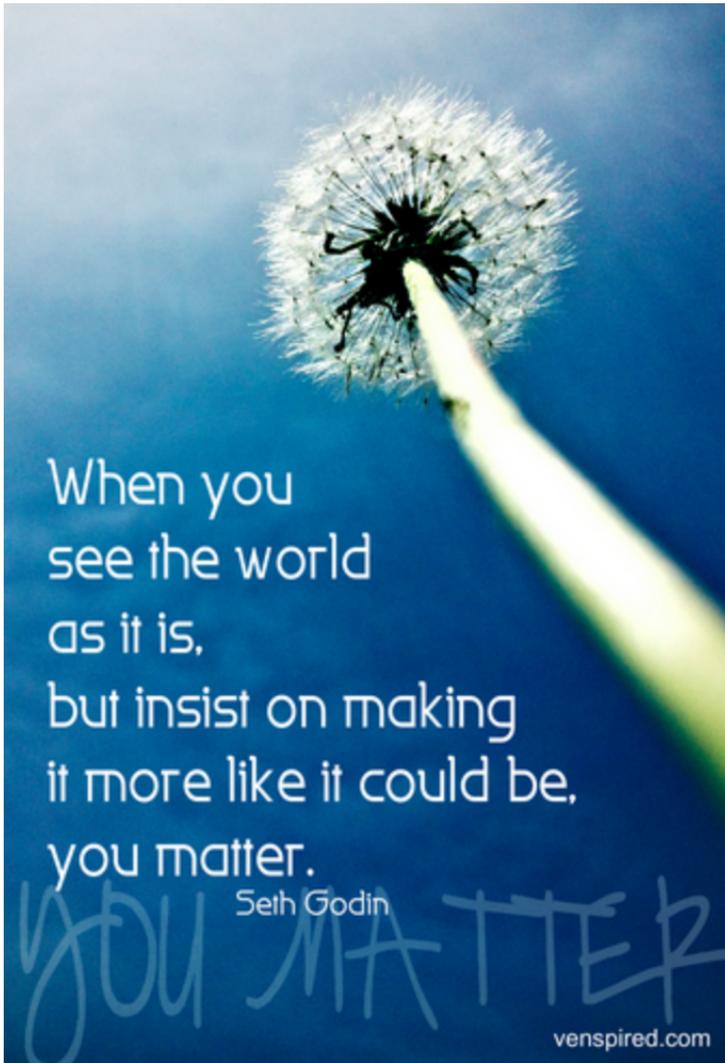
This book describes the benefits of small schools.

Small Schools help students

**Students in smaller schools
are more motivated,
have higher attendance rates,
feel safer, and
graduate and attend college
in higher numbers.**

Bill Gates (2005)

Bill Gates believes that students receive more attention in a small school.



When you insist on making the world better, then you matter. -- *Seth Godin*
Poster by VenSpired.com

Thank you for reading this book.
Please send your suggestions to
SteveEnglishTeacher@gmail.com.



If it scares you, it might be a good thing to try
-- Seth Godin Poster by VenSpired.com

This book is dedicated to Gustavo Fraga, an advisor to hundreds of young people.

The principal reason for your learning how to listen to students is that you may increase your understanding of what the students perceive as relevant. The only way to know where a kid is 'at' is to listen to what he is saying. You can't do this if you are talking.

Teaching as a Subversive Activity

page 164

Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner

TinyURL.com/PostmanPDF

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page 164 TinyURL.com/PostmanListenPoster

**Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner
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