

Every Child Is Brilliant, The System is Not

By Ryan Malinowski

Throughout my life, I have yet to come across any two children who were the same.

Being a twin myself, people always assumed my twin and I were more alike than others growing up. If you really knew us, this couldn't be further from the truth. Even though we may share similar smiles, laughs, and mannerisms, we are still unique and differ greatly.

The same holds true for every other child around the world.

Do you have brothers or sisters? or have children of your own?

Each one is DIFFERENT.

Yes, they may show resemblances of one another, but they differ greatly as well.

Some children are introverts.....while others are extroverts.

Some children love sports.....while other love books (others love both).

Some children are funny.....while others are serious

The list goes on and on.....

My *great aunt* use to have this saying that I really enjoyed.

It's short and simple.

"We're all so different. That is why we all have so much to share"

Regardless of our upbringing, age, race, gender, socio-economic status, physical and mental limitations, we all personally have something unique to offer to the world.

SINCE WE CAN ALL AGREE THAT NO TWO CHILDREN ARE THE SAME, THEN WHY DO SCHOOLS CONTINUE TEACHING US LIKE THEY ARE???

Before we answer this question, we need to take a trip back **150 years** in time!

The modern day school that we are familiar with today, was invented by a scholar named **Horace Mann**. Mann felt that the best way to turn the nation's poorly behaved children into disciplined citizens in society, was through universal public education.

During this period of time in the 1800's, this approach made sense. Factory owners needed people to work in the factories, and school was the method used to train individuals to eventually work inside of them.

The concept of school was for you to **behave, comply, and fit in**.

From an economic standpoint, it's clear to see that we need education to keep the economy running strong. We need individuals both producing and consuming.

Here is the problem though:

The manner in which our educational system was built is no longer aligned with the modern day world in which we live.

- Our educational system is build on conformity (it's no wonder why so many people don't do well in it).
- As a whole, children are led to believe that if they don't do well in school, they won't do well in life (yet we all know people who did poorly in school, but are successful in life regardless of how well they did in school).
- A fair amount of children go through the educational system without discovering what they are good at (some kids are led to believe they aren't good at anything).

Why do you think so many kids drop out of school?

The answer isn't "because they don't like learning." The answer is **they are not engaged**. Sitting at a desk for 6-8 hours a day in school is not natural for anyone (especially for a child).

Why do students still walk in single file? Why are most classroom desks arranged in straight rows?

That's a good question!!!

It all has to do with compliance. Honestly, most teachers today don't even understand why they comply with these unwritten rules. They simply accepted them because that is what they were taught, whether it is right or wrong.

Years ago, you were also taught this compliance because it was essential to your livelihood.

Real life example- 100 years ago:

If you worked on the biggest piece of machinery at Ford Motor Company on the assembly line in Detroit, you might've lost an arm if you messed up (compliance was important on the assembly line).

Unlike the assembly line, most small businesses and companies today are no longer looking for people who simply comply/follow the rules (with the exception of pilots, surgeons, and a few other occupations).

What the world **wants**.....and **needs** today....are **creative** individuals. We don't need more people who can follow instructions and memorize answers that are already given to them.

We need people who are passionate, solve new problems that don't already have answers, and push the boundaries of what's expected of them.

The most important parts of education to me lie in the 3 T's (Teachers, Testing, Transition)

Teachers

I **strongly** believe that one great teacher can change a student's life forever.

Not all teachers teach though. Some unfortunately "teach" students based solely on test scores, curriculum, and by fear (don't ever make mistakes). This is not teaching.

Fortunately, we have many great "teachers" who look at each student as an individual human being, understanding that learning is a different journey for everyone.

Most people think of teachers in terms of school, but I speak of teachers in a much broader sense. **A teacher can be anyone in your life who challenges, encourages, and gives you stepping stones on which you can improve.** This could be a school teacher, family member, role model, mentor, co-worker, teammate, or anyone else who falls under the definition.

Testing

When we think about “testing” in terms of education, most of us picture memorizing hard facts, multiple choice questions, the SAT, and cramming in study sessions the night before the big test.

The educational system places too much emphasis on “standardized testing”

Yes, tests are very important, but they need to be structured in a different manner.

Who invented the multiple choice question?

In 1914, Frederick Kelly invented the multiple choice question. With WWI taking place, there was a shortage of teachers. Men were at war while women worked in factories. The educational system needed a way to process students quickly and efficiently.

Years later, even Kelly urged against the continuation of multiple choice questions, but the system ignored him.

100 years later, the testing curriculum in classrooms and the SAT are still based heavily on multiple choice questions.

They might be easy to score, but they don't provide much value.

Multiple choice tests were not designed to improve pedagogy.

TESTING IN OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM **SHOULD NOT**

- Encourage cramming
- Revolve around constant memorization
- Instill fear in you with the single thought of it

TESTING IN OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM *SHOULD*

- Challenge you with real world problems (that may not already have answers)
- Be open book
- Not include multiple choice, EVER (they don't help you develop beneficial skills)

Transition

At the end of the day, our educational upbringing's main goal is to get us ready for the working world. To make the "transition" from school to work.

There is such a strong emphasis on: **Testing and Compliance**, when there should be a stronger emphasis on: **Imagination and Creativity**

Human beings are naturally **creative**.

Why do you think kids enjoy selling lemonade and flowers outside in the summer?

Their parents didn't make them do it. They simply enjoyed what they were doing!

"Each one of us has unique imaginations, and creative abilities within us."

You might have lost it over the years through school or work, but it's still there.

If the educational system is going to improve (and it needs to), it must do a better job **transitioning** students for success in the working world.

I want to end with a brilliant quote that strongly relates to this piece.

"Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid." -Albert Einstein

****If you were able to take something new away from reading this piece, I'd kindly ask for you to share this piece with others so they can have the pleasure of reading it as well.****

My thoughts are free.....but free thoughts can hold great value