

School Shootings; Standards Kill Students and Society

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Abstract . . .

School shootings have been in the news of late. People ponder what occurs in classrooms today. Why would a young person wish to take a life? Within educational institutions, the killings are a concern. In our dire attempt to teach the children and ensure student success, it seems many of our offspring are lost. Some students feel separate from society; others are taken from us, not by choice. As much as we stress standards, accountability, and achievement, recent events remind us, there are gaps. Policies, such as 'teaching to the test' have proven unsatisfactory. Punishment for poor performance has not helped advance students or schools. Teachers with guns will not protect us from children who are in distress. The problems faced in classrooms are as complex as our progeny. Perchance, it is time to assess more than a curriculum. Let us look at the whole of our situation, and the Whole Child.

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*Each moment we live never was before and will never be again.
And yet what we teach children in school is $2 + 2 = 4$ and Paris is the capital of France.*

What we should be teaching them is what they are.

We should be saying: "Do you know what you are?"

You are a marvel.

You are unique.

In all the world, there is no other child exactly like you.

In the millions of years that have passed, there has never been another child exactly like you.

You may become a Shakespeare, a Michelangelo, a Beethoven.

You have the capacity for anything.

Yes, you are a marvel."

~ Pablo Casals [Cello player, Conductor 1876 - 1973]

School shootings are in the news. Throughout America, adults express concern. Are the children safe when in a classroom. Repeated rounds of ammunition affirm, they are not. Some say times have changed. There seems to be a consensus; we must secure our campuses, Solutions are standard. Society must protect the young. Few think it possible to prevent another occurrence or attack. Let us examine the whole situation, the whole of our children. Perchance, the problem is not as it appears.

People presumed all was well or hoped it was. Individuals were reassured. It was quiet. However, the silence was broken thrice in recent days. Correction; a forth shooter sprang out before people could take a breath. Three dead [1] in Louisiana campus shooting. Student Shot During Gym at Tennessee School. [2] Student Wounded in Southern California Junior High. [3] Northern Illinois University [NIU] Shootings Stir Sense of Helplessness.[4] Theories abound. Why are school shooting so prevalent?

Some say class size is the cause. As a society, we see the effect of too many students served by too few teachers. No single educator can connect well with each of the tens or hundreds of student they are expected to serve. Experts argue, children are healthier when placed in smaller classes.[5] Judith Kafka, an Assistant Professor of Educational Policy, History, and Leadership at Baruch College, in New York City, writes It's Guns, Not School Size. Perchance it is neither, either, each, and much more.

Americans recognize there is much to consider. Legislators propose, school employees carry concealed weapons.[7] Some instructors already do.

High school English teacher Shirley Katz insists she needs to take her pistol with her to work because she fears her ex-husband could show up and try to harm her. She's also worried about a Columbine-style attack.[8]

Katz is not alone. Another instructor chose to protect herself regardless of District policies.[9] In a *Washington Post* editorial the statement is made . . . "There are no reliable figures, but it's a safe guess that in many or most of these instances, the guns were owned by the students' parents." [10] This may not always be so. Other pupils' Mom's or Dads may own an arsenal, or a young person may have discovered other connections. Cyberspace can be good source for guns. We cannot be certain. What we do know is, guns kill, and weaponry is easily and infinitely available.

Homicide is the second leading cause of death on the job for workers in the United States after motor vehicle crashes (1). Every week, on average, 20 workers are killed, and 18,000 are assaulted (2). It is only in the last decade, however, that violence against workers has become widely recognized as an occupational health problem. [11]

In a discussion on the topic, of guns in the workplace, Researcher and Co-author of the University of North Carolina Study, Homicide on the Job: Workplace and Community Determinants, Doctor Dana Loomis offered . . .

"[T]here was a nearly seven-fold increase in the risk of a worker being killed in workplaces that allowed guns and other weapons." . . .

"We don't know employers' reasons for allowing workers to have guns on the job, but the belief that firearms offer protection against crime is obviously a possible motive." . . .

"However, our data suggest that, like residents of households with guns, who are more likely to be victims of homicide, workers in places where the employer allows guns have a greater chance of being killed at work." [12]

As a nation, it is important to realize we are part of a global community. Worldwide guns kill one-thousand people each day. An International Action Network on Small Arms report states, "640 million guns are in circulation across the world, and there are enough weapons to equip one in every 10 people." [13] So, while we can argue whether students have access or not, perhaps the more important question is why a child might pick up a revolver. What motivates or frustrates a little one or a young adult to take aim and shoot.

While conjecture continues, authentic answers have been few. Solutions were tried; none were true. In classrooms throughout America, teachers remain on guard. Educators await the moment when a crash will be heard within the classroom. Instructors trust the sound would be more than a book slammed on a desk. Instructors know that a bang in the hallways or a blast from the science lab may not be an innocent incident. Pupils understand this as well. While all may appear playful, pupils seem to be joyful and learning, the troubled few may actually be the majority of the student population. It is difficult to discern who might break first, last, or not at all.

Throughout the nation, educators engage each scholar, or attempt to, within the constraints of the curriculum. Tim, an awkward adolescent, quivered, quaked, grunted, groaned when in the classroom. This active lad moaned, lashed out, and laughed when he worked with his teachers. Tim shook with joy, stumbled clumsily, stood straight, and then flopped to the floor. The strange boy could focus; however, rarely on a prescribed lesson. Educators labeled Tim a failure. Even in "special" sessions, this energetic, enthusiastic young man seemed unable to learn. There was a time when Tim was occupied and eager; however, that passed to quickly. [14]

Elsewhere, an instructor is aware of the student in the front row. This little lass is painfully shy. Emma rarely participates in class. She is plainly submissive. On reflection, the instructor, friends, and family realized they never considered how distressed the girl was. No one thought she would cut herself. Now, they wonder why.

Asa was sometimes rowdy, understandably so. He was starved for love and attention. No matter how or what he tried, he did not receive kindness, only admonishments. Soon Asa settled for scorn. If people showed contempt for him, well, at least they knew he was alive. The fourteen-year old just wanted to be acknowledged. Asa hurt inside. The pain poured out. "He did seem angry. He was

always angry in the face but he had no reason." Finally, the teen could hold his hurt no longer. He cried out, "I cannot stand to live this way." Then, he ended it all.

"I thought they were joking. I never took it seriously," she said. The young lads were fascinated by the infamous. A massacre might appeal to those that crave retribution, reprisal, punishment, or some sort of popularity. This form of expression might only be as a shout. We cannot be certain. Perchance, we could inquire. The boys, Bradley, William, and Shawn, might tell us what they feel and why. However, would busy parents, policy wonks, educators and Administrators all of whom are impressed by numbers, choose to listen if they ever dared to ask?

There are times when the opportunity to speak is gone forever. A young boy or girl is taken from us too soon. Countless roam the streets for without a quality education there is little left to do. A few are institutionalized; others are medicated, imprisoned by the despair that overwhelms their minds. Some rather die than endure the pain they feel here on Earth. Sadly, we can no longer invite the girls over for tea. The time to engage with a lovely lad or two will not come again. Heads hang low as neighbors contemplate the loss of another young life to drugs, prescribed [15] and preferred [16], drink [17], or death.

Words of woe pass between the people that knew him or her. "She was barely a woman." "He had not yet reached the age of consent. "They took their last breath not long after being born." "One more suicide in a statistical log." "We do not even know her name or his. All we have is the evidence." There are scant clues to inform us; why might a child take their own life?

Suicide affects all youth, but some groups are at higher risk than others. Boys are more likely than girls to die from suicide. Of the reported suicides in the 10 to 24 age group, 82% of the deaths were males and 18% were females. [18]

While the discrepancy seems vast, there is still great cause for alarm. At one time, girls were more likely to attempt the act. Now, they frequently succeed. In September 2007, we learned young women can conceive of, and achieve, what will end a life.

The suicide rate among preteen and young teen girls spiked 76 percent, a disturbing sign that federal health officials say they can't fully explain . . . The biggest increase - about 76 percent - was in the suicide rate for 10- to 14-year-old girls. There were 94 suicides in that age group in 2004, compared to 56 in 2003. The rate is still low, fewer than one per 100,000 population.

Suicide rates among older teen girls, those aged 15-19 shot up 32 percent; rates for males in that age group rose 9 percent. [19]

Our children are in pain and Americans ponder how can we protect the young [from themselves or from us.] Each day, parents, and educators look into the face of the future and see what they or we refuse to recognize: anxiety, apprehension, depression, and even a twisted delight for what might be bothersome. Some teens, and yes, even elementary age children have tendencies that, if consciously noticed, would be reason for concern. Yet, there was and is no time for such "petty" pondering.

Moms and Dads are occupied at work. Instructors prepare to teach to the many tests. Administrators assess an agenda that will bring more funds to their schools. Districts implement programs that politicians think wise. Pedagogy is not the principle concern in America; nor are the pupils.

Grades dominate in the grind known as school. Class rankings are recorded for posterity. Test tallies tell the tale of success. Permanent files are kept. A little person will be evaluated on their performance in the classroom, in the community. The good child receives a gold star; the best school is granted gold as well. Cash fills the coffers of an institution that appears accountable. The construct that states, as a society, adults must teach to the Whole Child [20] is but a blip in a vast universe of significant interests. Only a few in the field of education follow theories laid out in The Learning

Compact Redefined: A Call to Action.

*To the doctor, the child is a typhoid patient;
to the playground supervisor, a first baseman;*

*to the teacher, a learner of arithmetic.
At times, he may be different things to each of these specialists,
but too rarely is he a whole child to any of them.*

~ From the 1930 report of the White House Conference on Children and Youth [21]

In our culture, people have priorities. For each of us our main concern is personal. Too often, we forget, our children determine the quality of our future. Parents, Principals, and policy-makers invest in the immediate much to the dismay and degradation of the Seventh Generation and their progeny.

For countless careered Moms, Dads, prominence is far more important than personal passion. Parents do what they can to ensure their child is enrolled in the best schools. They drive hither and yon. After-school lessons are scheduled for every hour of the day. Families grab some food, fast, then they ready for bed. Moms and Dads ask, "Is your homework complete?" Parents do not inquire; "How are you?" "What do you feel?" "May I help?" Mothers and fathers do not ask for the answer does not matter to those who expect children will do as they have always done, grin and bear it. "Don't you dare cry or sigh" is the common contention.

Teachers and Playground Supervisors may not wish to surrender a perceived dominance. Classroom control and an organized playing field are essential if children are to learn or throw a good pitch. For a Doctor, diagnosis is the challenge. Few think of the emotional fractures in a child's life. The visible is far more viable to those with a job to do.

Besides, it seems that the young are resilient. Elders believe that tots do not experience lasting pain, and if they do the offspring will not remember, or be harmed, nor act on the duress they encounter. Children go through phases; nothing is permanent, or so the adults wish to believe.

The smallest persons in society smile. They endure; however, many hurt deeply. Each face tells a unique story. Rarely do we consider the distinctive existence of individual beings. We do not ask of an individual child's experiences, the effects of these, or the emotions each event in a young life evokes. The current curriculum requires accountability; it demands instructors avoid the nuances. What makes a child tick is of little consequence. As long as he or she can perform on a test, that is all that counts.

At times, the system will make allowances for those in need of remedial classes. A child may be defined as "special." Sadly, this determination further separates a student from classmates and often from his or her self. Tim was one of these.

Any individual singled out, accepted as standard, or told he or she is superior will react to the identification. Each label has its own externally imposed expectation. Children try to aspire to what they are told they must achieve. They go along to get along, or they resign themselves to defeat. Even those thought to be successful by all in their community frequently feel they fail miserably.

It is no wonder our young people seek solace in drugs, drink, sex, or death. Our offspring, fighting to survive, to soar, to score on a test, or place well on a High School exit or college entrance exam, frequently feel dead inside. Occasionally a child will kill others, or them selves. Most, merely maintain a presence, as did Seung Hui Cho for a time.

Cho graduated from Westfield High School in 2003. But there is no mention of him in that yearbook, not so much as a senior picture. The high school, which opened in 2000, is stocked with high achievers. Newsweek magazine once ranked it among the 50 best public high schools in America.

Its football team won the state championship the year Cho graduated. But with 1,600 students then, Cho was the odd boy who never spoke, former classmates recalled. He joined the science club but just sat there. He carried around an instrument that earned him the name "Trombone Boy."

School officials went to some lengths to encourage students to interact. They put round tables in the lunchroom so no one would feel left out. The "Westfield

Welcomers" club formed to help wallflowers and outcasts fit in. But none of it seemed to work for the lonely, acne-plagued boy in glasses who was so quiet that some wondered whether he could speak at all. [22]

Some sociologist would say Seung Hui Cho fits the profile of a mass murderer. Were we as a nation prepared to recognize and work with the hurt being in our midst the potential killer, we might have looked at Seung Hui Cho and seen the signs. However, indications implied after the fact, the act, are less obvious when encountered in a moment. Indeed, at times, if not always, the invisible inspires an individual to do as he or she does.

Pain is not painted on a face; nor does a person always scream out when they need help. Most of us are taught to take care ourselves. Yet, few of us know how to do this adequately. Perhaps, those that lash out believe they are doing what they need to do to release the pressure.

In America, little "big boys" learn not to cry. A sweet lass is told to look pretty. Tears are unattractive. In this country, independence is ideal. Adults teach the children not to be too needy. "No one wants to hear your troubles." When asked 'How are you,' answer, 'I am fine.' Then, move on, or pretend to. 'Do not expect too much.' 'Get good grades.' 'Make lots of money.' In a competitive society, that is all that counts.

Some students do as is standard quite well. Steven Kazmierczak did. [23] Steven was an outstanding student. He was engaging, polite, and industrious. The friendly fellow had a bright future in the field of criminal justice. Steve, as he preferred to be called, graduated from college in 2007. The scholar continued his studies in graduate school. Since early adolescence, the lad was intent on helping society. Hence, he majored in sociology as an undergraduate. After he completed his preliminary coursework, Steven went on to pursue a Masters degree in the School of Social Work. This gracious gent had a girlfriend. Steve was anything but a loner, haunted with obvious hurts.

On the Northern Illinois University campus, Steven P. Kazmierczak was considered a gentle, hard-working student, who was honored two years ago with a dean's award for his sociology work. Professors who taught him said it was hard to imagine he was the same person authorities identified as the gunman in Thursday's classroom shootings.

"I knew Steve both as an undergraduate and as a graduate student. I have had him in my home. I knew him as a warm, sensitive, very bright student," said Professor Kristen Myers in an e-mail. "I never would believe that he could do this. I know that when these horrible things happen, everyone searches for roots to explain it. Here, I'm afraid I don't have any." [24]

Steven Kazmierczak was an excellent student. A former classmate called Kazmierczak "probably the best student in the class." Another student spoke of how helpful Steven was. Stephanie Delhotal, 22, a former sociology undergraduate student said Kazmierczak worked as a teaching assistant in her statistics lab only a year prior. "I learned most of what I knew from him," said Delhotal. Stephanie Delhotal, who is now a professional Social Worker, offered, "He was very nice and very friendly . . . he was so into statistics. I just took him to be a computer nerd."

Delhotal did not know him before the course, but saw him in the lab as many as three times a week during the semester, she said. "I was completely shocked. I just keep thinking back about how easy he was to talk to," she said. "He had a dry sense of humor."

However, humor and academic achievement do not necessarily bring joy. Instruction that focuses on formulas, figures, facts, and scientific findings do little to give rise to a healthy human being, and perhaps that is the problem yet to be broached in the classroom, or even in our homes. In educational institutions, instructors are required to attend to the parts. Teachers and Administrators address perceive accountability. As a nation, we ignore the whole. Countrywide, we do not ask who a child might be.

Instruction begins when you, the teacher,

*learn from the learner; put yourself in his place so that you may understand
... what he learns and the way he understands it.*
~ Soren Kierkegaard [Danish Philosopher]

For the most part, curriculums are designed to pour information into a pupil, as though a human being were an empty vessel ready to fill. If we are to truly educate our progeny, we must redefine instruction. We need to create a culture that helps children to authentically acquire knowledge, not grades.

Learning is something students do, NOT something done to students.
~ Alfie Kohn [American Lecturer, Author, Educator]

The Learning Compact Redefined: A Call to Action attempts to do this.

- Each student enters school healthy and learns about and practices a healthy lifestyle.
- Each student learns in an intellectually challenging environment that is physically and emotionally safe for students and adults.
- Each student is actively engaged in learning and is connected to the school and broader community.
- Each student has access to personalized learning and is supported by qualified, caring adults.
- Each graduate is challenged by a well-balanced curriculum and is prepared for success in college or further study and for employment in a global environment. [26, 27]

This promise is contrary to the current standard initiated with the advent and implementation of No Child Left Behind. On paper, at first blush, the newer educational program appears sound. The policy advances practices and philosophies that have existed in society for centuries. The populace has long endorsed gentle interpretations of "Spare the rod; spoil the child." Hence, in schools strategies that are thought to serve accountability were easily adopted.

***Transforming the Federal Role in Education So That No Child is Left Behind
The Policy***

The Administration's education reform agenda is comprised of the following key components . . .

Closing the Achievement Gap:

• **Accountability and High Standards.**

States, school districts, and schools must be accountable for ensuring that all students, including disadvantaged students, meet high academic standards. [28]

'Good, good, that sounds good,' say parents, Principals, and policy makers. All are interested in education and each wants to make certain our children receive quality instruction. High expectations and verification are vital. Administrators must answer for the programs the public pays for. No one can blame the student if the school does not do as deemed necessary. Americans believe we must reward achievement and punish those who fail. As we age, most of us forget, in order to succeed, we must learn from our errors. Most adults avoid the subject of task analysis. In education, many accept the end justifies the means. Teachers are trained to teach to the test. Students are tutored in how to best pass an examination. If perchance, each or either fails, the government mandates, there will be repercussions. One consequence is so subtle it often goes unnoticed.

Dropout rates slowly increase. Low-achievers, in frustration, leave school behind. Thus, the appearance of rising test scores and of a narrowing of the achievement gap is achieved. School ratings increase, authentic education decreases.

A recent study of Texas public school accountability system, the model for the national No Child Left Behind Act, establishes that, the longer the high stakes testing program are in use, the worse the outcome. Children already made less important than the curriculum by this mandate are further reduced in significance. As could have been expected, instructional personnel begin to view students not as children to educate, but as potential liabilities. A pupil accomplished in test-taking is seen as

an asset; high scores raise a school's performance indicators, advance the careers of educators, and help to grow the funds a school receives.

The research also indicates that Principals frequently play with pupils' lives in order to further their professional prominence. A child will not be allowed to advance a grade if he or she is deemed at-risk. If a student's grade on the exam will potentially threaten the school's status, arrangements are made. Most students retained in this manner give up on themselves and on school. [29] Just as educators punish a less than perfect child, the system penalizes a struggling school.

- States must develop a system of sanctions and rewards to hold districts and schools accountable for improving academic achievement. . .
- Consequences for Schools that Fail to Educate Disadvantaged Students. Schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress for disadvantaged students will first receive assistance, and then come under corrective action if they still fail to make progress.

If schools fail to make adequate yearly progress for three consecutive years, disadvantaged students may use Title I funds to transfer to a higher-performing public or private school, or receive supplemental educational services from a provider of choice.

Therein lies the problem. When an educational institution or a child does not perform "properly," they are punished. Punitive actions do not help better a school or a student. Studies show punitive practices hurt a society or and the instructional staff.

Dear reader, you may recall in your own life the times when you acted in a manner that was considered disruptive, destructive, or without regard for others. If you were confined to your room, restricted from doing what brought you pleasure, ridiculed, or severely reprimanded you may have reacted poorly. Resentment readies an individual for further rebellion. Logic tell us, if a child or an adult is to learn or improve, they must be given an opportunity to reflect. Humans acquire wisdom when others trust the learner can grow. Reciprocal reverence, empathy is the best educator.

However, logic rarely rules when people are reactive. Parent, Principals, and educators are after all, only human. When frustrated with what they fear they cannot control, people of any age penalize those who do not perform as desired. Rebukes realize no rewards.

Why Punishment Does Not Work

The research literature gives clear guidelines about the ineffectiveness of punishment as the only correction procedure for children's misbehavior. Yelling, shaming, scolding, and corporal punishment backfire and create a mind set in the child where he misbehaves more. Some children do worse when words like "never," "don't," "should not," and "It's not okay" are used during correction. There are many negative side effects associated with being punished:

- Punishment for aggression may stop the behavior temporarily, but may further stimulate aggressive behavior.
- The child may stop the punished behavior but may increase another aggressive behavior.
- Punishment may serve as a model for aggression. Children imitate what they see adults do.
- The punished behavior may stop only in the presence of the adult and increase in other settings.
- The child may strike back at the punishing adult or displace his anger at someone else.
- Frequent punishment may cause some children to withdraw and regress.
- Angry children who do not fear authority may become more angry and focus on revenge.
- The child may feel shame and harbor thoughts of lowered self- esteem (I'm a bad person. I'm mean.)
- Punishment merely suppresses the response but does not teach the child what to do.

In the short term, punishment may be effective in suppressing negative behavior when the punisher is present, but it does not teach the child positive ways to act. Punishing techniques that make the child feel bad about himself may make him act out more!

Remember Asa. This child felt besieged, plagued, punished for being the person he was. This young man received ample ridicule. He was constantly punished; his presence alone was enough to bring an onslaught of attacks. Classmates called him Jack Black. The label referred to the vociferous, chubby, long-haired actor in the movie "School of Rock."

Asa could be shrill. His appearance alone might have been classified as a cry for attention. His hair was unkempt. Histrionic accoutrements graced his neck, his nails, and his abdomen. Asa adorned his fingernails with black polish. Around his neck, he wore a dog. A faded rock concert tee-shirt covered his chest. A trench coat completed the composition.

Asa often felt as though he was tormented, teased, taunted, and mocked. The troubled lad felt victim to frequent slights. He believed others belittled him, beguiled him. He was deceived and ill received. Asa Coon felt misunderstood, and he craved as all creatures do, love, not loathing. In frustration, Asa Coon characteristically lashed out. He was not merely a quirky lad; he was quick to anger.

This was the Asa who always seemed to be in fights at school. This was the Asa who slapped around his mother. This was the Asa who talked about suicide.

And it was this Asa, authorities say, who walked into SuccessTech Academy Wednesday with a satchel full of guns and ammunition and opened fire on teachers and students. . .

What apparently pushed Asa's troubled young mind over the edge was an argument with classmates about the existence of God. It happened a few days ago in reading class.

Asa said he didn't believe in God and didn't respect God.

Another kid disagreed. . . .

After school, the two kids fought. Asa took a beating. Both were suspended.

"I'm going to get you," he warned his tormentor. "I will get you."

Indeed, he did. Asa attempted to take revenge on those he believed wronged him. A professional, Professor Jack Levin, Northeastern University, Criminology, offered a worthy assessment of the situation. Perhaps, the lesson Americans need to learn is often lost. What truly occurs within our offspring is left behind as our children are today.

There are always missed signals. The problem is that they only become clear after the fact. Hindsight is 20/20, and after somebody shoots a number of people, everybody all of a sudden is a psychologist and recognizes all the warning signs. Now, the problem is that these warning signs beforehand apply to so many youngsters. Many of these shooters hate school or they like Marilyn Manson or they black -- they use Gothic clothing. They're rebellious. The best predictor we have is previous violence, and in this case Asa definitely had that in his background, but my point is this, we ought to be intervening early in the life of a child because he's troubled, not because he's troublesome. [30]

On rare occasions, a child has an opportunity to authentically connect to an adult, a curriculum, life, and lessons that are given and received with love. After Tim met Barbara M. Stock, he became one, among the exceptions. At the time, the two encountered each other, Barbara held a brand new doctorate degree in Psychology and education. The young scholar was proud the knowledge she accumulated. Upon reflection, she states, she was "full of" herself. Shortly after she received her Ph.D., Stock and her husband moved to a small quaint town. Jobs were few, opportunities fragile.

Advised by a receptionist in the Special Education Department of the local school district, Barbara Stock pursued a practical possibility. Perchance, she could find a job within the BRAT program. Curious and anxious to impress, Doctor Stock inquired.

I asked the mothers, "What does BRAT mean?" The mothers gave me how-stupid-are-you looks. "BRAT," one mother said. " 'Brat...' That's what the school people call our kids." It wasn't an acronym for Behavioral...Remediation ...Anything.

As Stock observed the students, she realized her mission. A lone lad came into view. Tim was awkward, assertive, and jubilant, all at once. He was energetic and alien in his approach to life. After a short time, Tim's mother noticed Doctor Stock and her stare. The parent introduced herself to the professional person in her presence. "Mom" whispered to Barbara Stock, Tim was eight years of age and had learned nothing in this half-day program. Tim's mother wanted an afternoon tutor for her son. She hoped that if someone special would invest in her child, one-on-one, the odd boy would excel. There might be hope. Stock pondered the possibility.

Confident I could perform brilliantly, I agreed to tutor Tim. I saw this as a great opportunity: I could use the newest techniques of behavioral reinforcement and multi-sensory stimulation to teach Tim. Then I would write an article or even a book on my achievement. I'd dreamt of one day having my own school; this would give me the credentials. I'd already accumulated all sorts of learning devices—sandpaper letters, Cuisenaire rods, a balance beam. I arranged a child-size table and two chairs in our finished basement and created an inviting "learning space." I was ready and willing to begin my major project: The Teaching of Tim.

Weeks went by; months moved quickly. Tortured tutor, who loved her young teacher, Tim, Barbara M. Stock, learned what most educators are reluctant to admit.

Tim surprised me. He excelled, though not from any lesson I planned.

Frustrated and bewildered with the accredited approaches that proved futile, Stock embraced what was more real. She engaged the child in a manner that allowed Tim to be Tim.

Gradually, I had to let go of my analytical, intellectual approach. I taught Tim best on his terms, seizing the opportunities he enjoyed and encouraging him to be practical, playful, and protective.

Although I'd wanted to give up on Tim many times out of personal frustration, I felt truly sad when I had to say goodbye to him. I had no data, no article, no book to publish. Tim could pay attention longer, express himself better, and manage his frustration more often. But his gains were infinitesimal, impossible to measure. I felt like a total failure.

Tim's mother and I became friends and to her I confessed my defeat. She saw the situation differently. "He looks forward to seeing you. He smiles," she said. "With you he's not a 'brat.' These are gifts beyond measure."

As we said goodbye, Tim hugged me. His mother laughed out loud. "That's a first, and probably not listed on any test." [14]

Tim's Mom was sensitive to the whole of her child. She observed his trials and tribulations with great care. The concerned parent [or teacher] can recognize triumphs. Tests do not.

Barbara M. Stock with all her prominence, prestige, and post-graduate expertise was helped to understand what typically remains undetected. Erudition is not necessarily visible to those who know not what they see.

Indeed, the manner in which each of us internalizes instruction differs. We need only consider Emma, Asa, Bradley, William, Shawn, Tim, or ourselves to realize one size, one test, cannot fit all. Standardize assessments do not allow for nuance. Pedagogical practices, no matter how philosophically profound, may not be as effective as "real" life lessons are. When individuals, teacher and student, parent and pupil, administrators and instructors, interact with authenticity, each senses they are accepted and admired. People learn when they treasure the tutorial.

Empathy is the best educator. Punishment or mechanical methodology, presumed to be a practical, do not reward a spirit starved for insights. Meaningful and appreciative acknowledgements nurture a

mind, heart, body, and soul. A healthy child is whole. His or her education is balanced. When a child is reactive, a distraction, or destructive, elders must acknowledge the little one is pleading for assistance. 'Teach me,' he or she shouts. If adults are to abet, they must realize penalties alienate. Praise produces desirable results.

What Does Work

The research shows that praise for appropriate behavior, reasoning, giving consequences, withholding privileges, time out and teaching the appropriate social skills do help a frustrated child make better behavioral choices.

The child who misbehaves constantly needs to hear correction statements phrased in positive language to implant alternative ways of thinking and acting in his developing value system. Telling the child with behavior problems what not to do often guarantees that he will go and do it! Instead, tell him what to do and help him to feel good just thinking about acting in positive ways. Give a choice between two alternatives.

Teaching social skills gives a process of correcting the inappropriate behavior instead of suppressing it through punishment. Social skills training offers a more humane way of giving children tools to deal with conflict so that they can take care of themselves. Learning social skills helps children reduce aggressive and violent behavior. Teaching the prosocial skills helps all of us. When children learn and use positive reciprocal ways of interacting with each other, this adds to peace in our world.

Processing Cues To Say After Conflict

What you say to an aggressive child will determine the likelihood of his decreasing the inappropriate behavior the next time. To break into the child's negative thinking patterns, process what happened and what could be different next time in a non-threatening way. The research shows that people are most ripe for change after a situation of high emotional arousal. Being corrected is generally a high arousal situation so the child should be ripe for new learning. You have a golden opportunity to help your child make the commitment to change by using this teaching approach.

If you can get to the child's vulnerability and sense of fair play after a situation of conflict, you can help him make changes. Show the child the consequences of his actions on others. Whenever possible, give him a choice. Ask him to make a value judgment on what he did. Give him solid information on how he could react in positive ways. Always leave him feeling good about himself with hope for the future. [31]

Few of the questions posed on examinations reward a learner. Results are not immediate. What a child is asked to assess is often not real or personally relevant to a young person. In America today, on tests, in the classroom, and even in some homes, children are not required to think critically. Nor are they given the opportunity to imagine, innovate, or invent. Conventional wisdom dominates the curriculum, and students fall further and further behind. Sadly, we often look at our best students and see automatons. However, they are more.

*Today we come across an individual who behaves like an automaton,
who does not know or understand himself,
and the only person that he knows is the person he is supposed to be,
whose meaningless chatter has replaced communicative speech,
whose synthetic smile has replaced genuine laughter,
and whose sense of dull despair has taken the place of genuine pain.
Two statements may be said concerning this individual.*

One is that he suffers from defects of spontaneity and individuality, which may seem to be incurable.

*At the same time it may be said of him,
he does not differ essentially from the millions of the rest of us who walk upon the earth.*

~ Erich Fromm [Observer of Humankind, Psychologist and Author]

Might we begin to embrace our children and their sweet souls. Let us no longer scold students when they struggle to grasp the essence of a standard test question. We need not drug those whose attention span is short. Let us, educators, and parents engage each child individually. If perchance, we listen

to what the children tell us about them selves, if we see each student as a whole child, we might learn how to best teach them.

The object of education is to prepare the young to educate themselves throughout their lives.
~ R. M. Hutchins [American Educator, Author, The University of Utopia and The Learning Society,
Board Editor for Encyclopedia Britannica]

Perhaps adults can take a lesson from life. Each of the school shooting show us, our offspring are in pain. Medications will not cure what ails the young. Restrictions placed on guns, or access to other objects, will not make our schools safer. More of the same and stricter standards will only serve to deaden minds that wish to soar. That is the paradox. Americans send their children to school to learn; then they squelch the possibility. May we teach the offspring well and allow them to tell us what they need as a whole child.

"To teach is to learn twice."
~ Joseph Joubert [French Critic]

In this country today, citizens are reminded that Math, Science, and Reading, the basics are essential. Students study so that they might pass tests in these subject areas. Teachers teach techniques that ensure success on examinations. Facts fill the air in American classrooms. Some scholars survive , others hope to die.

In this nation, we forget. There is so much more to life than Math, and more to Algebra than a correct answer. As Mister Kupfer, a High School mentor tells his students, a correct solution does not authenticate that a student understands the process. A problem requires more than a guesstimate, or memorization of a formula. Mathematician Kupfer states, if a pupil cannot work through a problem, twenty years after he or she saw it in class, then they never truly learned how to solve the equation.

Science is not as simple as a law declared absolute. Theories also abound. Curious souls search beyond what they know to be true and discover what is yet to be part of a standard curriculum. A student motivated to think, rather than realize a score on a test, might take a quantum leap. A student, trained to think as a scientist might, will not simply accept a static answer. Analysis is not wrong; it is just not encouraged when the course of study is guided by multiple choice tests.

Reading requires more than regurgitation of the words printed in a booklet. Bubbles darkened in on a page, and preparation for tests do not a satisfy a sincere student. Our children are asking to learn. They crave a caring connection. Let us bring education back into our homes and our schools. May we teach our offspring well and wholly. The youth are our future; may we give them a strong foundation. Research, Reflection, and reverence, these are the three R's, the basics.

Education is what remains after one has forgotten what one has learned in school.
~ Albert Einstein

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