

# Rethinking Our Schools

EDUCATING GLOBAL CITIZENS

As humanity becomes globalized in its economy and information sharing, and as the number of media messages bombarding our brains grows each year, it becomes ever more important for individual citizens to stay sharp and ask hard questions. In 1787, Thomas Jefferson wrote to James Madison, "Above all things I hope the education of the common people will be attended to; convinced that on their good sense we may rely with the most security for the preservation of a due degree of liberty."

The education of everyone is not a privilege bestowed upon the people by a democratic institution; rather, it is a necessity for a democratic institution.

We simply don't spend enough time in public dialogue about what education is, or what qualifies as a good education. Sure, we spend a great deal of time and money evaluating whether a student can solve basic algebra, or name the causes and consequences of World War I, and of course, this content is important. Certainly, we need basic standards by which we judge whether someone has actually been educated or not.

However, with the takeover by profit-driven standardized testing in recent years, two issues in education have become painfully clear: 1) no one method of assessing content knowledge is complete, and 2) we must be diverse in deciding what that content is, and who decides it.

Especially given the current mental health crisis in this country, as evidenced by the recent rise in mass shootings and other pervasive violence, basic coping skills and conflict resolution seem like a high priority, yet there are almost no content standards for the one subject that literally everyone deals with from cradle to grave: conflict.

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Real education is not something that can be measured like a long jump or scored like a soccer match. Real learning doesn't only happen in a classroom, but in the world, at home, with friends and in the community. A full education requires not just knowledge, but wisdom. We need to learn the critical tools for processing information relevant to the world, and an understanding of our power to influence it.

I work for an educational program combining conflict resolution and social-emotional skills with community project design, social justice education and a survey of the work of recent Nobel Peace Prize winners. PeaceJam was developed with the help of the Dalai Lama and 13 other Nobel Laureates to inspire young people to learn concrete skills through creating real projects in their communities that address global issues at a local level — issues like understanding racism and poverty and resource conflicts. I have seen firsthand the way that such an education engages students.

A class working on a water catchment project, for example, will incorporate geometry, chemistry, algebra, planning and budgeting, and, if the project is done well, the social and legal context of water rights and access to building materials. Students' progress can be assessed — by the actual teacher working with them — through measures of work ethic, project completion or even self-assessment.

Granted, this requires flexibility for teachers in conducting their own classrooms, and there is no profit in this model for Pearson, the global education testing conglomerate, but there is a great deal of profit for students and for the society they will certainly be shaping.

Even better, when students have input into creating a project that is meaningful to them and even fun, addressing a pressing issue, they become engaged citizens, invested in the workings of their communities. And if education is not about preparing and empowering young people to be informed and engaged citizens, what is it about at all? In the current flood of false information, polarizing political identities and thinning budgets, can even a fake democracy afford not to invest in such an insurance policy?

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The Shedd Institute  
www.theshedd.org - 541.434.7000

The Eye Center  
John H. Haines, MD  
Kent A. Karren, MD

Patrick & Melanie Witham gives a Paragon BioTech, Inc. initiative

Fri Jan 19

The Carl Woideck Jazz Heritage Project

The Latin Side of Trane, Miles & Monk

Billy Boy Arnold  
RJ Mischo  
Deitra Farr  
Oscar Wilso  
John Primer  
Billy Flynn  
& more!

ISLER Law Offices Of Lourdes Sanchez

Mark Hummel's Blues Harmonica Blowout  
Chicago Blues Celebration  
Mark Hummel Workshop 2-4 pm Saturday



LS Law Offices Of Lourdes Sanchez

Ladysmith Black Mambazo  
Jan 24

Jan 25  
David Grisman Quintet



Tue, Feb 6 (2 shows)  
Chick Corea Trio