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Education is an important part of the American framework, and without it our country would be in a sad, sad state. American education should seek to enrich students and allow them to see the world in their own ways by emphasizing the humanities, and encourage students to pursue the sciences. This can be done by capitalizing on teachers who know how to reach students using active learning and engagement.

American education has always sought to enrich young minds, this is the primary goal of education. However, there is a growing belief that schools should not only enrich students minds, but also help to shape their moral and physical growth as well. I personally feel that while students need to be well rounded, it is the job of the school to focus on the mental and physical health of the student, and leave the moral education to the parents. A proper education needs all three aspects, and teachers are only trained in how to handle the mental and physical aspects. This is because the idea of a good moral education can differ significantly from family to family, student to student, and in some cases between a brother and a sister. Teachers can not possibly be trained on how to properly assess and teach morality to students, and for this reason it must be a job that is left to the parents to do. A student with a good mental and physical education will have

an inside track to becoming a productive member of society, and that is what the end result of teaching should be.

The question of the curriculum and what it should contain is one that is very important and differs greatly from person to person. There are some who believe in stressing the humanities such as history and English, while others believe that the curriculum should focus more so on the sciences. My personal belief is that students should be encouraged to choose their own path towards becoming productive. Students need to be taught the basics in the core subjects, such as math, basic science, English, and social studies. This would be done in the 7th and 8th grades, before a student got to the high school level. At the high school level, students should have at least an idea of where they wanted to end up, and be allowed to take classes accordingly. Students who are bound for college would take college preparatory classes that focused on what their intended career was. Students not bound for a 4 yr school would begin technical training in a field that feel they could be productive in, such as machining or a computer related field such as networking. This would eliminate a lot of time wasted in the secondary curriculum with classes that are essentially worthless to many students. Students headed for a job as an auto mechanic do not need 4 years of English that emphasizes classical English literature. Instead, students like this need a year or two of English classes emphasizing communication, providing them skills they need to succeed as a mechanic. Furthermore, the time saved could allow students to gain valuable work experience via internships, allow them to graduate early, or take another class to enrich their interests. Speaking from a personal experience, I was able to take one or two classes in middle

school that allowed me the freedom to take one or two classes for enrichment or fun. Some students were not given this chance due to the demands that a college preparatory track took, demanding 8 semesters of English, 8 of Science, 6 of Math, 6 of Social Science, and in some cases 8 semesters of a Foreign Language.

The method in which students are taught can also have an adverse effect on their well being. Differing schools of thought exist, allowing students the ability to experiment for themselves using lots of hands on activities, vs. the traditional methods involving drill and practice of facts, coupled with tests over important information. While different subjects and different students require different learning styles, it is my feeling that education that emphasizes a hands on learning experience guided by the student's interests is the most effective. While drilling and endless memorization and practice work exceedingly well for some subjects such as math, hands on concepts work better for areas such as sciences.

In addition to the propensity for hands on and engaged learning, students should be free to choose their own course of learning. In history classes, once students know the basics of history, they should be free to choose their own more specific topics. Students studying U.S. history in the 1900s would be allowed to choose a specific topic for the second half of a course after a general overview of the century. In this situation, students would spend time working on a project, and would present this project to the class in order for the entire class to learn about that particular subject.

A learning style like this allows all students to learn about the subject, and allows students to choose a topic they are interest in. Students are more likely to excel in a

subject they have interest in versus on they are told to do. Combining hands on learning with the students ability to target a certain topic is an important teaching idea that would encourage students to challenge themselves.

This begs the question of what should be expected of the public school teacher. As for the teaching style of teachers, I feel that they need to be facilitators, who will help to direct the students towards their ultimate goal by encouraging students to choose their own path and choose their own interests. This is in contrast to the way that teachers perform currently. Teachers currently have a lot more direct input on the students education, and control a much larger portion of the curriculum than my vision intends. Rather, teachers would serve as a guide and a helper. Students would query teachers when they were having difficulties with their work and when they were having problems, as opposed to the current system where teachers control most of what goes on in the classroom. Teachers should be used as resources for students to enhance their learning, not used as the current fountains of information where they regurgitate facts. Teachers should also be accessible enough that students feel comfortable talking with them. If a student does not feel comfortable speaking with a teacher, the teacher is largely ineffective. Speaking from personal experiences again, I always did better in classes where I felt comfortable talking with the teacher than I did in classes where the teacher was viewed as nothing more than an authority figure.

Obviously my philosophy is overly idealized. There are a large number of problems. Many of my ideas on what education should be would require highly

motivated students willing to make decisions and do projects without a lot of teacher supervision and direction. This is just not the case in our society today. There are a large number of students who do not want to be in school, and are simply “going through the motions”. There is an even larger number of students who will go to college simply because their parents did and it what their parents want. Teachers would also need to be trained on how to handle these highly motivated students, and to give these students a wider berth and more freedom and flexibility in guiding their own lesson plan.

My personal ideas about education seem to place a larger amount of burden on the individual students. Students would be expected to take a much more active role in forming their own educational ideals and beliefs, and as such would be much more accountable. The role of the teacher would have to change accordingly, taking a more advisory role than they currently do. My ideas also would change the way that the curriculum is handled, allowing students more freedom in choosing their own unique curriculum. It would also distress some of the sciences and math that many students are forced to learn. Many of these students will need only a minimal and basic knowledge of advanced science and math, and cutting down on the time spent on higher concepts will allow students more flexibility. These philosophies towards how and why we teach are in my mind where I would like to see education headed.