

On Alternative Education with Tom Cowen

Key concepts

We have nature's agenda for **real learning** which happens spontaneously in the state of authentic **play**, what athletes call the zone and researchers call flow. And we have **conditioning**, which is what compulsory schooling, and culture in general is designed for. Two distinct states, Conditioning and Real Learning.

What institutionalized schooling was designed to do. John Taylor Gatto:

“From Calvin to Spinoza down to Darwin and the present; humanity is divided into two classes; managers and the managed, farmers and cows, what we call the Elites, and everyone else.

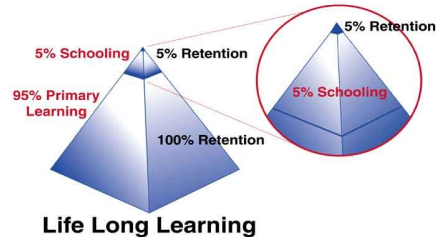
The general belief was; at least 80% of the human population are uneducable. So the goal of compulsory conditioning is to bind up the energies of these irrational 80% and destroy their imagination.

Destroy the imagination because it's only through the imagination that the maximum damage is unleashed. Otherwise people can struggle against the chains, maybe even cause local damage, but they can't do much harm to the fundamental structure, because they can't think outside of the box.

In 1820 we have Darwin saying that people are biologically fixed in classes and there's nothing you can do about it. Every one of these people, in a sense, is saying that what 'we call education' isn't even possible. What we call education is romantic nonsense.”

Lifelong Learning Carnegie Study in the 60's

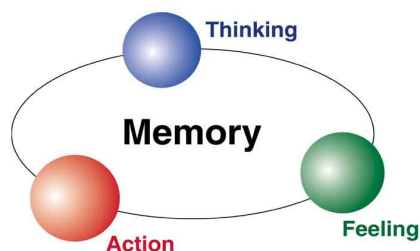
Only 5% of lifelong learning occurs through formal instruction, including schooling.
Of that 5% most retain only 3% to 5% for any length of time.



Nearly 100% of 95%, which is acquired through primary learning or play,
is retained lifelong.

State Specific Learning and Performance

The physical, emotional and mental “state” of any learning experience is woven into a single neural pattern. **This state specific pattern in the real learning, Form is Content**, while the abstractions we think is learning is simply a card file in the library of our experience.



Form is Content

Marshall McLuhan coined the phrase “the medium is the message.” Jerry Mander, the author of the most incisive book on media, “The Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television,” said the same. John Taylor Gotto says the same; the hidden agenda of compulsory schooling is its form, not curriculum. It is bells, rows of chairs, rules, constant comparison, grades, social hierarchy, uniforms, obedience to authority, now taken over by technology and digital AI algorithms. Form is Content.

Weapons of Mass Instruction

School is such a devaluation of human experience and human hopes that it took a long time to pull the trick off. Today the stability of the school institution seems permanent, but not because it serves people. It's the largest single part of the economy. It employs more people, gives more career ladders. It's one of the bedrocks of middle class America and preserves all the other institutions.

The development of the critical mind is strictly forbidden in school. You're not allowed to learn how to think critically, period.

“Craig Ventner, the beach bum surfer who shared the laurels for producing the map of the human genome... cut class often to hit the boogie board and only escaped junior high because a teacher changed his 'F' grades to a 'D' – so the school would be rid of him. George W. Bush had a 'C' average in high school and a 'C' average in college, but that was a higher 'C' average in high school and college than was earned by Massachusetts Senator John Kerry...

Al Gore flunked out of his first college and squeaked through his second with a 'C' average. Dick Cheney flunked out too. Legendary progressive Senator Paul Wellstone scored 800 on his combined SATs. Bill Gates and Paul Allen of Microsoft – no college degrees. Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak of Apple – no college degrees. Michael Dell is another un-degreed immortal of the computer game, as is Larry Ellison of Oracle. Ted Turner, founder of CNN, dropped out of college.

William Faulkner's high school grades were too horrible to get him into the University of Mississippi. Warren Avis, the man who pioneered auto rentals at airports, decided that college was a waste of time and didn't even apply. Edward Hamilton, the nation's largest independent mail order book dealer, wrote me that the advantage he had was that he hadn't wasted his capital or time on college.

Paul Orfalea, the highly intelligent founder of Kinko's was not regarded as very bright by his high school. Lew Wasserman created modern Hollywood with his colossal MCA; he had no college and virtually no seat time in high school. Warren Buffet started business at the age of 6, selling iced Coca-Cola. By 18 Buffet had the equivalent of \$100,000 in the bank. Then applied to Warton Business School and was turned down.

George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln – someone taught them, to be sure, but they were not products of a school system. Through most of American history kids generally did not go to high school – and yet the unschooled rose to be admirals like Farragut, inventors like Edison, captains of industry like Carnegie and Rockefeller, writers like Melville and Twain and Conrad and even scholars like Margaret Mead.

Consider what society would look like if 65 million trapped school children learning to be consumers were suddenly set to actively imagining themselves to be producers instead of bored consumers?... Isn't that exactly what America needs at this sorry, sterile juncture in our history – not more well-schooled zombies on whose backs the few can ride.

*John Taylor Gotto
Weapons of Mass Instruction*

Supporting John Taylor Gotto's position:



1920 Rockefellers' Goal to Mold You Hasn't Changed. This is the transcript of the 1920 newspaper clipping.

"Dream" of Montclair Man

Frederick T. Gate's Vision Cited in Report Advocating Elimination of Rockefeller Boards

Peter J. Brady is State Education Committee Chairman, says:

"We urge trade unionists and working people in general to be on the alert and extremely careful of the Rockefellers and other selfish money interests which seek to secure control of the education system and prevent their interference in the preparation of courses of study or the selection of members of educational bodies.

Frederick T. Gates, when president of the Rockefeller General Education Board, in their publication, known as 'Occasional Papers, No. 1,' on page 6 says:

'In our dreams we have limitless resources and the people yield themselves with perfect docility to our moulding hand. The present education conventions made from our minds and unhampered by tradition we work our own good will upon a grateful and responsive rural folk.

We shall not try to make these people or any of their children into philosophers or men of learning or of science. We have not to raise up from among them authors, editors, poets or men of letters. We shall not search for embryo great artists, painters, musicians, nor shall we cherish even the humbler ambition to raise up from among them lawyers, doctors, preachers, politicians, statesmen, of whom we now have ample supply.

The task which we set before ourselves is a very simple as well as a very beautiful one, to train these people as we find them to a perfectly ideal life just where they are."

[Frederick Taylor Gates](#) was John D. Rockefeller Sr.'s main business and philanthropic advisor from 1891 to 1923. Rockefeller regarded him as the greatest businessman he ever encountered.

My Homeschool Experience

Early 80's: Why send my son Eric to school? John Holt; "Learning all the time."

We homeschooled Eric until he was 8-9 then caved to the socialization myth.

"Being socialized by the school system is better than we could do as parents"

Read "Hold Onto Your Kids," Gabor Maté.

Eric graduated from high school and went on to the University of Irvine, in CA.

Nine years' latter Son #2, early 90s

The same question. why send my son John-Michael to school?

Read Joseph Chilton Pearce; "Magical Child." More Holt. "With Earth In Mind, On Education, Environment, and the Human Prospect," by David Orr, plus participated in Rethinking Education, a national conference on home and un-schooling, for many years.

We formed a private school with two students which serves us until John-Michael, age 14, joined a Waldorf inspired charter school that was just starting. He graduated, went to UC Santa Barbara. Graduated, moved to Germany with his Tango partner and became a goldsmith. He now owns the company and is generally very happy and content.

Total involvement in alternative education 40 years.

How to begin today 2022

The greatest obstacle in appreciating the difference between **conditioning** and **real learning**, is the conditioning most adults have from their own compulsory schooling experience.

The adult must be un-schooled or di-schooled, freed from the core assumptions upon which compulsory schooling are based. That is the greatest challenge.

Alternatives are constantly compared to the false standard compulsory systems impose. As opposed to "State Specific Learning and Performance, authentic Play, what athletes call The Zone.

If we have pleasurable sensory stimulation then that's the brain engrams, the templates that will be stored and they will be images of pleasure. If they are painful they're going to be images of pain and pain evokes violent responses. But there is something else that evokes violent responses and that's the absence of pleasure. And that's really different then the sensory experience of pain, and most people don't really yet appreciate that distinction. In fact, more damage occurs with the sensory deprivation of pleasure than the actual experiencing of physical painful trauma, which in fact could be handled quite well in individuals who were brought up with a great deal of physical affectional bonding and pleasure which carries with it emotional trust and security and so forth. So we really have to look at the trauma of sensory deprivation of physical pleasure and that translates into the separation experiences, the isolation experiences of the infant from the mother. That's the beginning.

James W. Prescott, PhD

For many, if not most, forced, compulsory, authority based schooling is institutionalized sensory deprivation of play and pleasure for over a decade.

Recall, Form is Content. The physical, emotional and mental "state" of any learning experience is woven into a single neural pattern. **This state specific pattern is the real learning.**

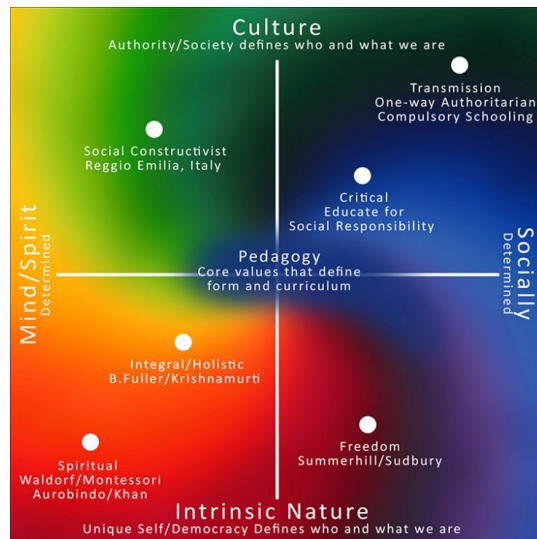
Private School or homeschool what is the difference?

The simple answer is reporting. Home school parents are required to assess and report on attendance. If you chose to organize as Private School, the school does the reporting.

Many home school families form pods where activities and resources are shared. Many also connect with a charter school that supports individual homeschool families, with curriculum choices, local tutors and other resources.

Compulsory-Authority vs Child Centered, Intrinsic Motivation and Freedom

Weather at home or at a Private School the key decision is between Authority Compulsory at the top vs., Intrinsic Free to Learn at the bottom. Mind/Spirit on the left vs., Socially Determined on the right. School and Home core values and pedagogy are defined by these forces.



To challenge the authority-forced model is dissent. This is a massive challenge. Nearly all social structures are based on the same false standards.

Each state has definitions and requirements for home and private schools.

Look into AERO's Online Start a New Alternative Course will start on September 19th, 2022. AERO has helped start at least 100 educational alternatives that we know of, but there are many more out there!

<https://www.educationrevolution.org/store/about/>

Homeschool and Un School is Easy and Fun

(but you have to be committed, have the time and take responsibility for your child's education. No more simply dropping them off and checking boxes.

Requirements:

- Understanding the difference between real learning, which is play, and conditioning.
- Di-school yourself. Read the books, go into therapy.
- Understand ages and stages of child development
- Understand your child's unique temperament, aptitudes, interests and limitations, at each age and stage of development.
- Take your cues from the child, not comparing them to standards set by the compulsory system.
- Don't compare at all.
- Appreciate that learning happens all the time, not just in school.
- Take your time. Appreciate that reading and abstract reasoning unfold mostly after age seven. When the student is ready, the teacher appears. When not, there is no teacher. The same holds for reading and math.
- Understand that the "state" of the experience being learned is woven into the content remembered.
The key is to optimize the "state," then learning is uplifted and optimized without effort. Translation, keep it fun, engaging, forget the score, the judgments, rewards, praise and punishments.
- Curriculum is embedded in lived experience. Math and fractions are implicit in making cookies. The same is true of every primary curriculum need.
- Don't be intimidated comparing yourself and your child to compulsory standards.
- While some basic structure is helpful, life is not a spreadsheet. Be present to the moment and respond proactively. Get used to "making it up as you go along."
- Assume competence. Invite but don't dictate and hover. Listen. Invite questions.

To step away from the compulsory model is to break with society in general. This involves a form of psychological therapy. Read, Read, Read....

Books to Read

John Taylor Gatto

- Dumbing Us Down - 25th Anniversary Edition: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling
- Weapons of Mass Instruction: A Schoolteacher's Journey Through the Dark World of Compulsory Schooling
- The Underground History of American Education, Volume I: An Intimate Investigation Into the Prison of Modern Schooling
- Homeschooling: A Hope for America

John Holt

- How Children Learn (50th anniversary edition)
- Teach Your Own: The John Holt Book Of Homeschooling
- The Philosophy of Unschooling

Chris Mercogliano

- In Defense of Childhood: Protecting Kids' Inner Wildness
- Making It Up as We Go Along: The Story of the Albany Free School

Alfie Kohn

- Schooling Beyond Measure
And other unorthodox essays about education
- Feel-Bad Education
And Other Contrarian Essays on Children and Schooling
- The Homework Myth
Why Our Kids Get Too Much of a Bad Thing
- The Case Against Standardized Testing
Raising the Scores, Ruining the Schools
- Punished by Rewards
The Trouble with Gold Stars, Incentive Plans, A's, Praise and Other Bribes
- The Brighter Side of Human Nature
Altruism and Empathy in Everyday Life
- No Contest
The Case Against Competition

Peter Grey

- Free to Learn

Ivan Illich

- Deschooling Society

David Elkind

- The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon, Third Edition

David Orr

- Earth in Mind: On Education, Environment, and the Human Prospect

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