

# The Underground History of American Education

2000/2001

by John Taylor Gatto

Summarized by cleangov, Comments in [ ]

Compulsory Education is the norm now. Everybody goes to school for a long time, even the kids who don't want to go to school.

Kids can't work. Child labor laws make it difficult for a kid to begin to make his or her own way in the world, and begin to be self-sufficient.

People should be kids as long as possible. No purpose. No responsibilities.

Religion in school is not just illegal; it's invalidated.

The sabotage of our schools was financed by Carnegie, Rockefeller, and Ford.

Scientific-sounding racism depends on Darwin and Galton for the holy grail to capture the imagination.

Wives have to work today. Purchasing power of a working couple in 1995 was only 8% greater than for a working man in 1905. Wealth is 250% more concentrated at century's end than at its beginning.

## **Military-tested literacy rates:**

1932	98%
1942	96% for whites, 80% for blacks
1951	81%
1973	73% (many not that literate)

Earlier:

1840	93%-100% (at a higher difficulty level of reading skill)
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## **Closer to Present Time:**

2000	Approx. 50% (40% of blacks and 17% of whites can't read at all.)
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Jamaica	98.5% (!)
jailed violent criminals	20%
all jailed criminals	33%

Reading failure correlates with aggression in delinquent boys.

We spend 3 to 4 times as much money on schooling as we did 60 years ago.

From 1911 to 1981, 124 studies failed to demonstrate any effectiveness in teaching reading by the whole-word method. (as compared to teaching kids phonics, the sounds that letters make, so they can figure out the sound of a word from looking at the written word.)

Skill in manipulating an alphabet, and reading, are what gave the Greeks a huge advantage over other cultures of the time. Reading skill is actively discouraged by psychologists. [Result: We have people behaving more like brutes than men, more primitively.] cleangov

History has been purposely omitted.

Universities are organized around 'research,' to benefit business and government, not organized around teaching.

Only 32% of American kids went past elementary school as late as 1920. Yet they somehow learned to read very well, and knew how to use arithmetic in their daily lives and knew some of the lessons of history, etc.

In Switzerland today, only 23% go to high school, although Switzerland has the highest per capita income in the world. [need to verify that]

No mention of education or schooling in the Declaration of Independence or Bill of Rights. [And I see none in the rest of the Constitution.] cleangov

No more Ben Franklins or Tom Edisons could be allowed; they set a bad example. One way to manage this transformation was to see to it that individuals were prevented from taking up their working lives until an advanced age when the ardor of youth and its insufferable self-confidence had cooled.

The chief end [of schooling] was to impose on the young the ideal of subordination.

The ability of Americans to think as independent producers had to be curtailed ... the tendency of little people to compete with big companies.

School is the first impression children get of organized society. Like most first impressions it is the lasting one.

Ref: Rockefeller's General Education Board, "Occasional Letter Number One" (1906):

"We shall not try to make these people or any of their children into philosophers or men of learning or men of science. We have not to raise up from among them authors, educators, poets, or men of letters. We shall not search for embryo great artists, painters, musicians, nor lawyers, doctors, preachers, politicians, statesmen, of whom we have ample supply. The task we set before ourselves is very simple ... We will organize children ... and teach them to do in a perfect way the things their fathers and mothers are doing in an imperfect way..."

I don't mean to be inflammatory, but it's as if government schooling made people dumber, not brighter; made families weaker, not stronger; ruined formal religion with its hard-sell exclusion of God, set the class structure in stone by dividing children into classes and setting them against one another, and has been midwife to an alarming concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a fraction of the national community.

#### **Comparing 1991 to 1955:**

US pupil/teacher ratio dropped 40%  
Avg. teacher salary rose 50%  
Money spent per pupil rose 350%

#### **Per the National Adult Literacy Survey of 1993:**

26,000-person sample  
Avg. 12.4 years of school attendance

Only 3.5% of the 26,000-person sample demonstrated literacy skills adequate to do traditional college study. 30% of all U.S. high school students reached that level in 1940 and 30% of secondary students in other developed countries reach that level today.

One-room school houses were successful having a wide range of mixed-age students in the classroom.

What should make you suspicious about School is its relentless compulsion. Why should this rich, brawling, utterly successful nation ever have needed to resort to compulsion to order people into school classes—unless advocates of force-schooling were driven by peculiar philosophical beliefs not commonly shared?

The critic [Orestes] Brownson [1839] allowed that state regulation of teaching licenses was a necessary preliminary only if school were intended to serve as a psychological control mechanism for the state and as a screen for a controlled economy.

If that was the game truly afoot, said Brownson, it should be reckoned an act of treason. ‘Where the whole tendency of education is to create obedience,’ Brownson said, ‘all teachers must be pliant tools of government. Such a system of education is not inconsistent with the theory of Prussian society, but the think is wholly inadmissible here.’ He further argued that, ‘according to our theory the people are wiser than the government. Here the people do not look to the government for light, for instruction, but the government looks to the people. The people give law to the government.’ He concluded that, ‘to entrust government with the power of determining education which our children shall receive is entrusting our servant with the power of the master. The fundamental difference between the United States and Prussia has been overlooked by the board of education and its supporters.’

Per Dr. Carroll Quigley: ‘Germans wanted freedom from the need to make decisions, the negative freedom that comes from a universal totalitarian structure which gives security and meaning to life. The German is most at home in military, ecclesiastical, or educational organizations, ill at ease with equality, democracy, individualism or freedom. This was the spirit that gave the West forced schooling in the early nineteenth century.’

... from the end of the eighteenth century on into the nineteenth, Prussian citizens were deprived of all rights and privileges. Every existence was comprehensively subordinated to the purposes of the State, and in exchange the State agreed to act as a good father, giving food, work, and wages suited to the people’s capacity, welfare for the poor and elderly, and universal schooling for children.

[Germany’s] universal system of compulsion schooling was up and running by 1819. ... it aimed instead for frictionless efficiency. From its inception *volksschule*, the people’s place, heavily discounted reading; reading produced dissatisfaction it was thought. ... Reading offered too many windows onto better lives, too much familiarity with better ways of thinking. It was a gift unwise to share with those permanently consigned to low station.

... thousands of prominent young Americans got their Ph.D. in Germany and then became University Presidents and department heads, took over private industrial research bureaus, government offices, and the administrative professions. The men they subsequently hired for responsibility were those who found it morally agreeable to offer obeisance to the Prussian outlook, too; in this leveraged fashion the gradual takeover of American mental life managed itself.

[The fear of industrialists and capitalists, i.e. bankers, etc.: Too many independent, free-thinking entrepreneurs would result in too much competition, too much production and that would cause a collapse of prices and so] ‘capital could not be protected.’ [That is, bankers might not get paid back loans needed to tool up for production.]

[That makes sense to most people, I think, but who looks at another possibility, applying sound business practices, and not having much of a tax burden, and simply reinvesting profits and gradually building up an enterprise by its own bootstraps?] cleangov

See pages 40 & 41 re: our national success due to our third-rate schools, at a cost of ‘personal sovereignty, morality, and family life. It’s a trade-off.’ [Yet perhaps we could have achieved even more, at lesser financial cost, and kept the personal sovereignty, morals, and family lives, had we kept our previous simple system of schooling.] cleangov

Here is the crux of the difference between education and schooling—the former turns on independence, knowledge, ability, comprehension, and integrity, the latter upon obedience.

Positivism, as described by Francis Bacon, early 17<sup>th</sup> century: Holds that if proper procedures are honored, then scientific marvels and inventions follow automatically ... genius and talent are almost irrelevant—improvements will present themselves regularly in an endless progression despite any fall-off in creative power ... a function of money spent, amount of manpower, and correct methodology.

Society must forcibly be adapted to accept its own continuing disintegration as a natural and inevitable thing and taught to recognize its own resistance as a form of pathology to be expunged.

In simple terms, what ordinary people call religious truth, liberty, free will, family values, the idea that life is not centrally about consumption or good physical health or getting rich—all these have to be strangled in the chase of progress.

Capitalists would not/could not gamble on the huge and continuous investments which a positivistic science-based business system demands if profit could not be virtually guaranteed.

[The current system allows large companies with capital to purchase brains and facilities and methodologies that will ensure innovations continue flowing, in the absence of creative genius, all under the control of those at the top.] cleangov

The ultimate source of overproduction in products and services was the *overproduction of minds* by American libertarian schooling and the *overproduction of characters* capable of the feat of production in the first place. As long as such a pump existed to spew limitless numbers of independent, self-reliant, resourceful, and ambitious minds onto the scene, who could predict what risk to capital might strike next? To minds capable of thinking cosmically like Carnegie’s, Rockefeller’s, Rothschild’s, Morgan’s, or Cecil Rhodes’, real scientific control of overproduction must rest ultimately on the power to constrain the production of mentality. Here was a task worthy of immortals. Coal provided capital to finance it.

Creating value in children for a mass production workplace through schooling meant degrading their intellectual growth and discouraging any premature utility to the larger society. Elwood P. Cubberly inadvertently spilled the beans in his classic 'Public Education in the United States' when he admitted compulsion schooling would not work as long as children are allowed to be useful to the real world. To end that usefulness demanded legislation, inspectors, stiff penalties and managed public opinion.

By 1913, coal mining employed 10% of the American workers.

For over a century in America, the best profit came from using young children as coal miners. [ ! ]

50% of all coal miners were children. [ ! ]

As late as 1890, the duration of the average school year was 12 to 20 weeks. Even with that, school attendance hovered between 26% and 42% with the higher figure only in a few places, like Salem, Massachusetts.

[In America we have free choice about most parts of our lives. We can choose to buy something, or not, and if we do choose to buy we can choose when and where we buy. Not so with schooling. We have to take what's offered. Why not allow parents, and kids, to choose if they want to buy, or not, and if yes, to choose when and where?] cleangov

[If you could choose to have the annual public-school cost of educating your child invested for you for 12 or 13 years while you home-schooled your child, and then your child got the lump sum of that investment on his or her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday to do with as he or she wished, would you choose that, or would you choose instead to have your child educated in public schools for 12 or 13 years?] cleangov

[Ten things done over the last century to bring us down:]

- 1) Removing literacy in writing and speaking.
- 2) Destroying history that connects the arguments of the Founding Fathers to historical events, defining what makes Americans different from others besides wealth.
- 3) Replacing history with 'social-studies.'
- 4) Radically diluting the formal curriculum in areas of serious literature, philosophy, theology, etc. This curtails any serious enquiries into economics, politics or religion.
- 5) Replacing academics with a balanced-diet concept of 'humanities,' P.E., counseling, etc.
- 6) Obfuscation or outright denial of phonics.
- 7) Forcing willing and unwilling students together.
- 8) Enlarging the school day and year.

- 9) shifting oversight and control away from parents, community leaders and the students themselves to a super-complex hierarchy of distant bodies.
- 10) Relentless low-level hostility against religious interpretations of meaning.

[I would add: making it difficult, if not impossible, for a kid to find work and thereby begin to be productive and self-sufficient.] cleangov

Darwin's *Origin of Species* and *Descent of Man* made scientific racism defensible, in secret.

In 1930 there were still 149,400 one-room/one-teacher schools in America.

Most of the rest of the schools were small and administrator-free, too. Cheap to operate.

Standardized tests set aside the judgement of the teacher, re: how is the student doing at understanding and applying the material? pg 48

As far as I can figure, any success I had as a schoolteacher came from what my mother, my father, my family, friends and town taught, not from a single thing I remember about Cornell and Columbia, my two colleges, not from any findings of institutes of child study or directives from departments of education. If I'm correct, then this insight is more significant than it may appear. The immense edifice of teacher instruction and schooling in general rests on the shaky hypothesis that expert intervention in childhood produces better people than might otherwise occur. I've come to doubt that.

During the 1970s "situational ethics" was forced in on the schools. It taught that ethical principles were flexible and pragmatic and what was right or wrong was slippery, not easy to pin down. It made it possible to betray your friends, family, business associates, anybody, if one could justify it based on the current circumstances. It took some of the definite boundaries away from how one lived one's life. It made for more misery in modern life.

"The thesis I venture to submit to you is as follows: That during the past forty or fifty years those who are responsible for education have progressively removed from the curriculum of studies the Western culture which produced the modern democratic state; That the schools and colleges have, therefore, been sending out into the world men who no longer understand the creative principle of the society in which they must live; That deprived of their cultural tradition, the newly educated Western men no longer possess in the form and substance of their own minds and spirits and ideas, the premises, the rationale, the logic, the method, the values of the deposited wisdom which are the genius of the development of Western civilization; That the prevailing education is destined, if it continues, to destroy Western civilization and is in fact destroying it. I realize quite well

that this thesis constitutes a sweeping indictment of modern education. But I believe the indictment is justified and there is a prima facie case for entering this indictment.”

—Walter Lippman, speaking before the Association for the Advancement of Science, Dec. 29, 1940.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century you find:

- A) Many exclusive hereditary clubs formed.
- B) Jews suddenly ostracized out of America’s leading social clubs in the decade and a half following Herbert Spencer’s visit to America.
- C) A great explosion of elite private boarding schools with Episcopalians and Quakers controlling a disproportionate number of them.

With the publication of Darwin’s “Descent of Man” ‘the rationale for a caste system was born and accepted.’

Sir Henry Sumner Maine promoted idea that stranger-adoption was a big part of Anglo-Saxon greatness. So that laid foundation for every form of synthetic parenting, like mass forced schooling. [and, I think, social workers pulling kids away from parents and sending them to foster homes.]

In a psychologized classroom, teachers and common administrators are pedagogues, [i.e., slaves] kept unaware of the significance of the processes they superintend.

By stressing the importance of controlled experience and sensation as the building blocks of training, behaviorism reveals its inability to deal with the inconvenient truth that a huge fraction of experience is conceptualized in language. Without mastery of language and metaphor, we are condemned to mystification.

When Behaviorism pontificates that children should all ‘learn from experience,’ with the implication that books and intellectual concepts count for little, it exposes its own poverty. Behaviorism provides no way to quantify the overwhelming presence of language as *the* major experience of modern life for everyone, rich and poor. Behaviorism has to pretend words don’t really matter, only ‘behavior’ (as it defines the term.).

Why don’t children learn to read in schools? Because it doesn’t matter in a behavioral universe. This goes far beyond a contest of many methods; it’s a contest of perspectives. Why should they read? We have too many smart people as it is; only a few have any work worth doing.

The techniques of brainwashing developed in totalitarian countries are routinely used in psychological conditioning programs imposed on school children. These include



emotional shock and desensitization, psychological isolation from sources of support, stripping away defenses, ... These techniques are not confined to separate courses or programs. ... they are not isolated idiosyncrasies of particular teachers. They are products of numerous books and other educational materials in programs packaged by organizations that sell such curricula to administrators and teach the techniques to teachers.

G. Brock Chilshom [co-founder with J.R. Rees of the World Federation of Mental Health]: ‘The only lowest common denominator of all civilizations and the only psychological force capable of producing these perversions is morality, the concept of right and wrong. ... We have swallowed all manner of poisonous certainties fed us by our parents, our Sunday and day school teachers, our politicians, our priests, our newspapers. ... The results, the inevitable results, are frustration, inferiority, neurosis, and inability to enjoy living. ... If the race is to be freed from its crippling burden of good and evil it must be psychiatrists who take the original responsibility.’

The problem of God has always been a central question of Western intellectual life; the flight from this heritage is best evidence that school is a project having little to do with education as the West defined it for thousands of years. It’s difficult to imagine anyone who lacks an understanding of Western spirituality regarding themselves as educated. And yet, American schools have been forbidden to enter this arena even in a token way since 1947.

In spite of the irony that mainstream Protestant church support at the beginning is the only reason we have American compulsion schools at all, the rug was pulled out under the feet of the churches quite suddenly at the end of the nineteenth century. The pretext: that was the only way to keep Catholicism out of the schools. When the second shoe fell with the Everson decision by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1947, God was pitched out on His ear entirely.

To keep kids “locked up” for 12 years without giving any validity to the spirit demonstrates that the State considers religion dangerous, especially the Western religious practices of Judaism and Christianity.

People with an idea of themselves as spiritual beings are dangerous. They don’t jump at every command. They examine things and determine right and wrong as compared to a moral code. They won’t easily give up family relations. He says that “corporate and financial capitalism are hardly possible on any massive scale once a population finds its spiritual center.”

**There are four “pillars” which form the foundation of Western culture:  
Two come from the Nordic countries of Europe:**

- 1) A belief in the “sovereign rights of the individual.”
- 2) “Scientific vision.”

The desire to know everything comes from stories of the Old Norse god, Odin. It's OK to inquire into everything.

**The other two come from the south of Europe.**

3) One is a moral code that comes from the Decalogue of Judaism, through the Gospels of Christianity:

- “1. Love, care for, and help others.
2. Bear witness to the good.
3. Respect your parents and ancestors.
4. Respect the mysteries; know your place in them.
5. Don't envy.
6. Don't lie or bear false witness.
7. Don't steal.
8. Don't kill.
9. Don't betray your mate.”

4) The last and most difficult pillar comes from a Christian interpretation of Genesis. It boils down to a willing acceptance of certain penalties all people must endure as a result of eating from the Tree of Knowledge against God's command:

1. labor.
2. pain.
3. free will, including the right to choose Evil.
4. The length of human life is strictly limited to a relatively short span of years.

No other system anywhere, any time, down through the millennia, has shown a power and endurance like this system. It speaks to ordinary people without having to have priests or elites interpret it for us.

The story of hope thus communicated by this Western tradition is better than other messages from other competing systems of philosophy or thought:

The aristocratic code comes from pagan traditions and includes such ideas as: leadership, sportsmanship, courage, disdain for hardship, team play, self-sacrifice for the team, and devotion to duty. It's taught in upper-class boarding schools and is standard behavior in some global corporate executive offices and boardrooms.

The commercial code comes from organizations like the Hanseatic League or Holland in the 1600s, and emphasizes security, comfort, health and wealth as the things worth going for in life. The key idea is pragmatism, or determining what the practical consequences are of something.

A third way of establishing meaning for people, and one that has sabotaged religion in recent centuries, is Science. If science would keep to the physical world and revealing its laws, it would be very useful, and has been. But when it attempts to explain the purpose of life or explain the origin of the Universe, then it actually espouses a religious dogma that is beyond proof or disproof. And most people don't realize this.

Around the early 1900s, we first had the passage of compulsory school legislation. Then we got the factory school, which separated the kids from family and community. The one-room school house was eliminated. Then we got an expensive, complicated school management and government selected, trained, and certified and regulated teaching staffs. Then the emphasis was on separating the school into different classes and getting kids to look to school authorities for leadership instead of their parents. Then we get beginning in the 1960s, a big influx of psychological thinking and national standardized testing, outcome-based education, Title I legislation, and who knows where that is now going as we get into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

It took all of that to successfully indoctrinate children into civil (science based) religion.

**Details of the curriculum that was designed to replace Christian values include:**

A sharply critical attitude toward parental, community and traditional values.

Objectivity. Suppress human feelings in the quest for knowledge.

Everything is material and lifeless. Right and wrong do not enter into it.

Neutrality. No lasting commitments to anything. Keep all options available.

Visible things which can be counted and touched and numbered are the only reality. Since we can't see God, he must not exist.

This religion of science says there is no good or evil. Experts will tell you what to feel about something based on pragmatism. There is no free will or any divine morality. Hence there is no real personal responsibility, no sin, no redemption. Work is for fools. Machines can do it, and servants and wage slaves can do what machines can't. Good feelings and physical sensations are what life is all about.

Drugs are good, try as many as you can. [Medicines that don't cure but only "manage" your symptoms will take care of any health issues.] cleangov. Try everything. Cheap contraceptives and risk-free legal abortions (paid for by the State) encourage promiscuity and a lack of fidelity. Eventually Science will cure aging, sickness and even death.

The Supreme Court decision of *Everson v. Board of Education* in 1947 was an act of war aimed squarely at the Protestant-Christian traditions of America. It created a new doctrine, the “separation of church and state,” which is nowhere mentioned in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, or the Bill of Rights.

The decision led to a whole host of destructive decisions by other courts all across the land, including but not limited to the following:

We have freedom of speech in schools, unless the subject is religion, and then such speech is unconstitutional.

A student cannot pray over his lunch unless he does it silently.

Voluntary prayers in school are verboten.

A war memorial in the form of a cross is wrong.

Students can’t arrive early to school to hear a student volunteer say prayers.

A Board of Education cannot use the word “God” in any of its official writings.

The Ten Commandments cannot hang on a classroom wall.

A school graduation ceremony cannot have an opening or closing prayer.

The word “Christmas” is bad because it has the word “Christ” in it.

In Virginia in 1987 a federal court ruled that homosexual newspapers may be distributed on a high school campus, but religious newspapers may not be.

In 198 an elementary school principal in Denver removed the Bible from the school library.

A music teacher was prohibited from teaching Christmas carols.

A ten-year-old in Omaha was prohibited from reading his Bible silently during free time in the Omaha schools.

In 1996 an administrative judge in New Jersey ruled that juries could no longer be sworn in using the Bible.

By the above actions and many others Americans have been led astray from their own tradition of wisdom which it took many people to put together over thousands of years, and which addresses the important things of life, things which are independent of wealth, IQ, beauty, science, or knowing important people.

Christ didn't say following him was mandatory. Some did and some didn't.

Today's schools don't give students enough time alone to discover for themselves what their own goals and dreams are, let alone a chance to pursue them.

Another characteristic of Christ's teachings was that it took commitment. It wasn't easy.

Another trait inherent in Christ's approach was self-awareness and independence. People were expected to think for themselves and reach their own conclusions.

And one was expected to follow a master, someone who had agreed to the discipline and who was following it.

The Everson ruling of 1947 had no precedent in 150 years of earlier court decisions. One can look at the nearly 70 years since it burst forth upon the scene and decide that it is bogus and destructive, because it denies some basic truth concerning the makeup of people.

Free will allows anyone to create their own personal purpose in life. Science says purpose and free will are bogus. Given enough data, all is explained through matter and physical stuff that can be touched or measured or sensed somehow. It's all predetermined.

Children are trapped by ignoring the fact that there is something immaterial to man, something that goes beyond mere flesh and blood. So, they do some kind of a cost-benefit analysis for everything. Buying things and feeling good becomes the aim of their life.

The Soviet empire followed this approach for over 70 years. Total surveillance, dossiers on everybody, rankings of citizens based on statistics, and its schools were set up by the best psychologists around. Rewards and penalties were everywhere. And the Soviet Union came crashing down after one lifetime.

We are on a less extreme program, compared to the Soviets, but it has been in existence for two lifetimes, and one can see the results. We are headed in the same direction.

The real genius of the West is in its historical traditions regarding the spirit which grant dignity and personal responsibility to the average Joe, not only to elites.

The real problem government leaders face is the belief that there is not enough work to keep adults busy, let alone the many young people who would love to work, if we would let them. If we let young people work, they would either work too eagerly, or would create their own jobs, their own companies, aggravating the fear the elites have anyway of too much competition bringing down their towering corporate empires.

If we let children work, as Amish children do, they might discover that work isn't a curse, it's a salvation.

Marcus Aurelius discovered in his "Meditations" that none of the important things were for sale.

The most important things worth knowing are inside of us already, and have to be self-taught through work, sorting out right from wrong, having to put a rein on one's appetites, and having to age and die. They cannot be taught in schools.

"In 1909 a factory inspector did an informal survey of 500 working children in 20 factories. She found that 412 of them would rather work in the terrible conditions of the factories than return to school."

Helen Todd, "*Why Children Work*"  
McClure's Magazine (April, 1913)

"In Milwaukee 8000 young people were asked if they would return full-time to school if they were paid about the same wages as they earned at work. Only sixteen said they would."

David Tyack, "*Managers of Virtue*"

China has a massive dossier system kept on its citizens, called the Dangan, which individuals cannot escape from except by leaving the country. It starts early in life and includes school performance, instances of insubordination or disagreements, work history, work difficulties, wrong thinking politically, etc. The United States is moving in the same direction. [China as of 2019 has taken this to a whole new level, with technology and artificial intelligence.]

**Schools destroy the basics of being human in at least 8 ways:**

- 1) It forces children to forget how they taught themselves important things like walking and talking. It is done very pleasantly. Most people feel elementary school is relatively trouble-free, but that is where the huge damage to language-making ability happens.
- 2) Schools teach bewilderment and confusion. Important basic subjects are not taught at all and the curriculum is designed by behavioral psychologists, which is not rooted in reality and is not aimed at allowing students to discover the relationships between different facts and fields.

- 3) Students are assigned to a social class by experts, and that is where they must stay.
- 4) The schools teach indifference by bells and ending lessons at arbitrary times, and teach that nothing is ever worth finishing. That means that nothing is really worth starting. Love of learning doesn't stand a chance. School "learning" is dependent on outside approval and silly rewards.
- 5) Schools teach emotional dependence by handing out stars, checks, smiles, frowns, prizes, honors, and disgraces. It's like training a dog. Basic human rights like going to toilets, water, privacy and movement are reduced to privileges which can be taken away.
- 6) Schools teach intellectual dependency. Students wait for the teacher to tell them what to do, what to read, what to write. Teachers follow the curriculum and follow the dictates of the Principal. The Principal follows the dictates of the Superintendent. The dependency goes all the way up the line to state education departments, and that comes from foundations, universities and politicians who have to answer to powerful corporations and wealthy individuals.

Once it's set up, this complex bureaucratic chain of command is almost impossible to countermand. Part of this sixth lesson is that experts make all the important decisions, except the expert closest to you, who can do nothing to change the complex web of rules and procedures.

- 6) Schools teach provisional self-esteem by making it contingent on the certification of experts. One cannot find self-esteem by oneself, in the way that Benjamin Franklin, The Wright Brothers, Thomas Edison, or Henry Ford did.
- 8) The last lesson schools teach is that there is no place to hide. If you want to hide, that is a sign that you should be watched even more closely than the others.

Given these 8 lessons learned, below are some of the observable results:

Children who are indifferent to the adult world of values and accomplishment. Very few people, even adults, want to grow up. Toys for everybody.

Children who have almost no curiosity. Children who can't concentrate for very long at all, even on things they choose to do.

Children with a poor sense of the future, of consequences tomorrow for actions taken today. Also children who have no awareness of the past and how it has shaped our present, and our future.

Children with no compassion for misfortune, who laugh at weakness or failure, who betray their friends and families, who show contempt for people in need.

Children who cannot be intimate or engage in a real, personal communication. Children with a false personality, hiding behind a mask, going through life crippled.

Children who assign a price or a ranking to everything, and who avoid spending time with people who promise no immediate payback, often their own parents.

Children who are dependent, whining, treacherous, and terrified, victims of every minor setback, unable to overcome obstacles or difficulties in life.

There was a purpose to all the work described above that has resulted in our terribly damaging educational system in America. That was to place control of the new social engineering techniques and the (relatively) new economic machinery out of reach of the mob.

School was designed to minimize as much as possible the risk of some new idea, some new genius, arising due to the original democratic ideals and principles working their magic. Such new ideas, new products, new inventions, new genius might upset the apple cart of the Capitalist and his built up plant and machinery, his outstanding loans that needed to be paid back.

Schools were expressly created to serve a command economy and a command society. The transformation had been ordered by certain industrialists and some innovative people who were altering the nature of the industrial process.

James Bryant Conant, president of Harvard 1933-1953, poison gas specialist in WWI, worked on the Manhattan project in WWII, wrote a book called "The American High School Today," which was influential in causing secondary schools to become gigantic in size and in causing many small school districts to become large districts. One of the triumphs of the school system he envisaged was the sharp reduction in the American entrepreneurial spirit.

Conant says the plan was in the works as early as the 1890s.

Part of the process involves leading children away from ambitious exercises in reading, writing, self-discipline, and away from practical experience in making things work. Simple. Even a few early years of childhood spent in this fashion will often work to mold that entire lifetime along the desired crippled path.



The US defense budget in 1939 was \$11 billion, in year 2000 dollars. We were not at war. In 2000 the budget is 24 times higher, and we are not at war. The huge increase cannot be explained by saying that we live in dangerous times. When have we not had threats from outside our borders? The cause is that our leaders live in an internal Darwinian world, afraid of their own citizens, citizens who have been beaten down and crippled by their education. [Also, the folks who run the military, and the companies that manufacture all those war machines, depend upon outside threats and the appearance of a very dangerous world, to maintain the perceived need for such a huge standing army.]  
cleangov

The persistence of our industrial mass-schooling system is due to a brilliantly designed complication and distribution of the various decision making bodies that is so complex and so widely dispersed in the society, with so many competing interests pulling back and forth, that large scale change is impossible without a code book.

No part of the system, whether high or low, is permitted to make any important changes without getting permission from the many other layers that are involved. The result is that it is safe from attack, due to the time and energy needed to launch an assault.

**There are three categories of power holders:**

1) Government agencies

State Legislatures, ambitious politicians, Big-city School boards that control big publishing contracts, the courts, Big-city departments of education, State departments of education, Federal department of education, National Science Foundation, National Training Laboratories, Defense Department (!) Housing and Urban Development, Labor Department, Health and Human Services, (lots more) (!)

2) Active Special Interests

Key private foundations, especially those of Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller, Giant corporations, acting through a private association called the Business Roundtable, 18 CEOs who are members of the New American Schools Development Corporation, The United Nations through UNESCO, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, etc., National Association of Manufacturers, Council on Economic Development, The Advertising Council, Council of Foreign Relations, Foreign Policy Association, etc. Professional unions, National Education Association, (NEA) American Federation of Teachers, Council of Supervisory Associations, etc., Private educational interest groups, Council on Basic Education, Progressive Education Association, etc., , abortion activists, pro and con, more advocates (!)

### 3) The “Knowledge” Industry

Colleges and universities, Teacher training colleges, Researchers, Testing organizations, Book publishers, Other materials producers, “Knowledge” brokers, subsystem designers.

Control is dispersed among the above groups, **who have little accountability, individually, for the overall results.** [Emphasis added] cleangov

Supposedly children, teachers and parents are part of the third group above, but are actually looked upon as being the enemy, by all the other participants mentioned above. They are looked upon as nuisances, to be maneuvered around.

Public colleges provide a lifetime of comfort and security for those systems people who play ball skillfully or who belong to some political family with a record of playing ball.

Tuition at public colleges over the last 14 years has increased 3 times as fast as household income, more than three times faster than the rate of inflation. What pressure could cause families to incur such debt?

It wasn’t any free-market. The favored treatment accorded to college teachers and staff is a gift. A gift from whom? And why?

One eighth of the delegates to the 1996 Democratic National Convention who nominated Bill Clinton were members of the NEA. Their plank included such proposals as: mandatory kindergarten with compulsory attendance, no “competency testing” for teachers, direct and confidential child access to psychological, social, and health services without parental knowledge, programs in the public schools for children from birth, calling for licenses for home schoolers and a curriculum approved by the state department of education.

Teachers like Jaime Escalante and Marva Collins demonstrate that almost anyone can learn anything if a few rather fundamental preconditions are met, none of which costs money. **So much for the sanctity of the bell curve.** [Emphasis added] cleangov

Gives an example of four one-room schools in Vermont that were forced to be replaced by a new school. The four original teachers (no administrative staff at all in the one-room schoolhouses) were replaced by: a non-teaching superintendent, a non-teaching assistant superintendent, a non-teaching principal, a non-teaching assistant principal, a full-time nurse, a full-time guidance counselor, a full-time librarian, eleven full-time teachers, an unknown number of accessory personnel, along with space, desks, supplies, etc., for all of the above staff. Four teachers replaced with 18 staff. Additional cost over \$500,000 per year, cost borne by the local taxpayers of the small town. All for 137 students.

An Italian intellectual, Gaetano Mosca, wrote an essay called “The Ruling Class,” and in it he wrote that the elites must set things up to find the best potential leaders or intellectuals coming up from the lower classes and transplant their loyalties and feeling of belonging to the elites, who would then be continually replenished with brains and vigor from the lower classes.

There are four types of covert career preparation programs being put forth by public education:

- 1) Students are prepared for wage labor that is mechanical and routine. Neither students nor parents are told this, and even teachers are not routinely aware of it.
- 2) In a second type of classroom, students are prepared for low-level bureaucratic work, with little creativity involved.
- 3) The third type of classroom prepares students for work that requires them to produce artistic, intellectual, scientific and other kinds of productive enterprise.
- 4) The fourth type trains students for ownership, leadership and control.

Even type #4 above falls far short of the goals of the elite boarding schools, such as St. Paul’s or Groton. **According to Gatto, almost everyone could be educated the Groton way for less money than the average public school costs.**

Business/School partnerships and School-to-Work legislation aren’t positive developments but the end of any pretense that ordinary children should be educated.

The growth of the Internet offers some hope for the dissemination of accurate information to the masses. This is upending hierarchies based on a few at the top knowing the inside information of what’s going on, and lower classes knowing less and less, down to schoolchildren given propaganda and fairy tales in place of knowledge.

If individuals were not held down by ignorance and false data then the surge of inventiveness and creativity would turn the world upside down if set loose.

Adam Smith perceived that the vast majority of people are good and that intellectual education for all, education which would enlarge the imagination and increase native abilities to analyze, experiment and communicate would produce spectacular results of benefit to the whole world.

Smith wrote that people do best for themselves and for others when they are not controlled too much and not protected against the consequences of their own mistakes.

Look to Silicon Valley and see a model for what type of explosive growth could occur throughout America. Ask yourself where the Silicon Valley kids learned what they know. It wasn't in a script.

Limiting the power of government to liberate the individual was the great American revolutionary insight.

One in every fifteen millionaires was a dropout. Ditto for the creator of the Learjet, Pierre Cardin, Liz Claiborne, Ray Kroc (founder of McDonald's), Dave Thomas (founder of Wendy's) Ben Franklin, the list goes on.

A guy by the name of George Meegan was 25 years old and an elementary school dropout. He walked from the tip of South America to the Arctic in 7 years, acquiring a wife and two kids along the way. His book was published in 1892.

### **If you want to ruin kids. . .**

Gatto lists out 15 things you must do, which are being done to our kids everyday in our schools, including such things as:

Take them out of the real world.

Grade them according to age.

Remove religion from their lives.

Reduce home life to a dormitory.

Get the parents to participate with the State in monitoring kids and getting them to conform to the State agenda.

Keep them under surveillance all the time. No private time.

Addict them to electronic gizmos and elevate them over learning.

Keep both parents working.

Discourage starting one's own business with minimal start-up costs.

Grade and evaluate kids constantly.

Assign them ranks.

Honor academic achievement.

Marginalize independent thinkers. Brook no arguments.

Do not teach any useful practical skills.

Reward dependency, calling it “teamwork.”

Kids do not learn the way schools think they do. If kids learned to speak the way schools “teach” kids to read, no one would ever learn their native language.

Once kids have been ruined in public school, it is very difficult, if not impossible to bring them up out of it. They know they are damaged goods and “know” nothing can be done about it, so why try to go free?

Only one person in sixteen reads more than one book a year after graduation from high school.

Keep your kid out of school for at least through third grade, home schooling him or her instead. That’s where most of the damage is done.

There are at least 9 false ideas about government schooling that people need to realize:

Universal compulsory government school is vital to keep a society together.

Kids have to be age-graded in order to learn to get along with others. Actually, it cripples kids. Wait to be told what to do. Have contempt for kids younger than you and fear kids older than you.

Kids from different backgrounds and beliefs must be mixed together.

Certified school teachers and administrators produce results superior to that of parents and regular people. Actually, keeping kids from the working world and in the company of educators keeps them with the least fit group of adults, if one goes by college performance.

Coerced and forced education is a valid use of the State police power. Are you kidding? Nothing good comes from being forced into it.

It’s natural for children to become alienated from their parents, and this should be encouraged by the schools. Parents are not proper authority figures for their kids. Actually this alone has been a huge cause of the decline of the family in America.

State schools must “protect” kids from bad parents.

Parents should not be involved in the education of their kids, nor even care about it. Actually, this is standard fare for socialism and the selling of a false utopia.

The State has the lion's share of the responsibility for the training and ethical education and belief structure of children, as a sort of glorified father.

**Recommendations:**

Close all government schools.

Make all libraries free.

Foster public discussion groups.

Make apprenticeships available to any kids who wanted one.

Let anyone open a school without any government permission or regulations.

**If that isn't going to happen, then one can:**

Get rid of reading and arithmetic specialists. Let contracts with book publishers lapse.

Keep schools to no more than a few hundred in size.

Keep schools located in the neighborhoods where the kids are.

Get rid of the administrators. Teachers teach.

Judge kids by performance and ability to get a result, not by standardized tests.

Shut down the school district boards.

Make each school self-governing, with the parents managing things.

Make parents' involvement in the school and participation in their kids' education routine. Have the parents take the kids out of school and into the real world often.

Get kids involved in actually applying what they learn in the real world.

Give kids some private time and space, some choices in what they learn (not license to do anything at all.), freedom from constant surveillance.

Foster different methods of education. No one size fits all.

Get kids to challenge the hidden assumptions of the world around them.

Make it so one does not need a teacher's certificate in order to teach kids. Nothing is more important than this.

## **End of Book Summary.**

### **Summarizer's comments and opinions:**

A terrific book, deeply researched. Highly recommended to buy the full book. Lots more data and viewpoint than the little I put here.

I think his viewpoint is one of the sanest around with regards to kids and what to do with them.

We have been grossly, criminally misled and lied to about school for over a hundred years now.

The federal and state governments have spent zillions of dollars and the results speak for themselves.

The results alone are enough to warrant "firing" all of the people involved in this activity and starting over from scratch. Anything resulting from such wholesale firing could not possibly be worse than what we have now.

Psychologists and psychiatrists are unable to increase a person's IQ. They cannot make a person happier. They cannot make someone a better person. They cannot create the conditions in which genius might flower.

They can make people conform. They can make them duller, less aware, less alive, more like animals. They can keep people quiet, keep them in line.

What do you want for our schools?

What do you want for our kids?

What do you want for the future of America?

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The Underground History of American Education: A Schoolteacher's Intimate Investigation Into the Problem of Modern Schooling is a critique of the United States education system by John Taylor Gatto. For faster navigation, this IFrame is preloading the Wikiwand page for The Underground History of American Education. Home. News. System 14 The High Priest of Scientific Management 15 The Daughters of the Barons of Runnymede 16 The Empty Child 17 The Psychopathology of Everyday Schooling 18 The Politics of Schooling 19 The Wealth of Nations. The Underground History of American Education: An Intimate Investigation Into the Prison of Modern Schooling by John Taylor Gatto. JT Gatto: The Ultimate History Lesson. Post navigation. Previous PostObama Creating "Country Within a Country" with US-Created Refugees Next PostCIA Asset Joins Islamic State in Libya. 9 thoughts on "Underground History of American Education". Pingback: T Source The Underground History of American Education. Many people interested in the topic we can dub, "The Education Conspiracy," will know the name John Taylor Gatto. He's been a highly decorated teacher, who turned whistleblower and has been writing about the nefarious agenda behind compulsory schooling and the players that put it in place ever since. We are joined by David J. Rodriguez, the publisher of John's latest book: The Underground History of American Education. He is also the Founder of Education Options Expo, which is an event where parents are introduced to respectful schools and