



HOLLOW HEARTLAND  
.UNIT IV.



# RAISE FAILURES

NICHOLAS ANTHONY LINKE



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## •FOURTH•

Far past due is reading the realities beyond the *comfort of my cave*.

Rather, the comfort of my cave, my home, my family life under my roof remains tumultuous and volatile. My bedroom, redecorated as a temporary library was overexposed as the background during my virtual lectures.

Students walk across the threshold. Students enter my classroom that have seen the inside of my bedroom that doubled as a temporary library. The invasiveness of the pandemic lingers. The cyclic trauma of the line between school and home revealed the complexity of behavioral management to families, an exposed drama.

Isolated inside they learned antisocial avoidance in these Alternate Methods of Instruction. AMI redefined fAMILY. The pandemic invaded rather than invited the classroom into our home. The anger and tears behind closed doors endlessly echoes the loneliness of isolation. Teachers and students needed the traditional methods of instruction to communicate and collaborate effectively.

Fourth period is STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics.

Begin with Science: Acronyms

At the start of the year, we discuss the inclusion of Art in STEM to be rewritten as STEAM. Humanity's addiction to screens is the most obvious argument for the inclusion of Art, the design of appearance, to be included in the acronym. The same way *form follows function* freed Frank Lloyd Wright from *form follows precedent*, *form follows user* frees them to design their own *Fallingwater*.

Children are not naturally technologically literate. Research and engineering have made devices that are literally fool proof. *Form follows focus groups*. Colorful icons detached from initial meanings underlined with text everyone forgets are there. The screen is built to be inescapably intuitive, rather than accessible and empowering. The form follows the user to redesign a path of least resistance into an inability to resist the path.

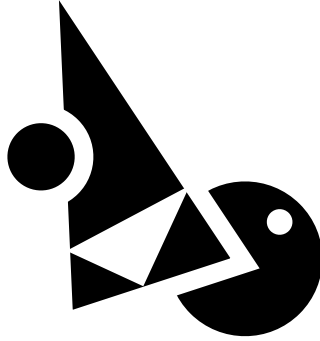
Virtual schools thrust the urgency of technology in our households. An emergency remedy without training, medicine without instructions on proper use and dosages. While schools scrambled to salvage digital citizenship and establish community guidelines, social media flooded them with viral trends and endless misinformation. Autoplay algorithms and binge-worthy streaming services distracted us from our loneliness.

Those that found socialization were online gamers. Friends in an ever increasing environment of toxic exclusion, exploitation, and graphic gloating. Sportsmanship was a weakness. Betrayal was expected. And elaborate trolling was comedic. With cameras off and microphones muted, they played or watched others play during every lecture and every lesson.

We must place the student before the assumed function of education. Without the icons, the code inside the screen is inaccessible rather than addictive. The graphic user interface of education needs a facelift: texture packs, skins, and customizations.

The school MMORPG needs GUIs and DLCs.

Begin with Education: Acronyms



.UNIT FOUR.  
**RAISE  
FAILURES**

The pandemic also offered another opportunity for reflection. Many were forced into quarantine where suddenly families were responsible for the education of their own children. Abuse in all forms resulted from emotional and physical to substance and mental. No parent or guardian escaped the harsh reckoning of their own faults and failures arising from the smaller versions of themselves.

Without the school system's imposed structure, not only did grades fall but robust relationships collapsed. Suddenly, families were made very aware of how difficult behavioral management is without having the training and time to facilitate this social growth and development. For those enrolled, the school system raises them for the majority of their childhood. The pandemic removed this luxury, exposing the consequences of how we have traditionally taught morality.

Raise Failures exposes a journey of feeling like a *bad parent* when public education remains embedded with religious foundations that define *good*. Ideal Conditions, considers the origin and effect of morality by punishments and rewards in educating children. Real Motivation, advocates for the movement of *inductive discipline that justifies* toward *inductive ethics that generates* by embracing gamification, game theory, and progress over perfection.

One fails at raising children when  
a child's failure is unacceptable.



## .CHAPTER SEVEN. IDEAL CONDITIONS

The Platonic dialogue: *Euthyphro* establishes a dilemma that predates the most prominent religions by almost half a century. This argument is often vilified by those that adhere to organized religions. Some may view simply questioning the modern gods as demonically inspired. Timelessly, this echoes the sentence of Socrates to death for not worshiping the gods and corrupting the youth.

However, the following is more a challenge to the dependency of morality on any authority. The following is a personal account of the trials of establishing morality without appeals to authority and the consequences of raising children without punitive threats and bribing tactics. This is a reflection on the reality of parenting imperfect children in less than ideal conditions.

### I. Dilemma

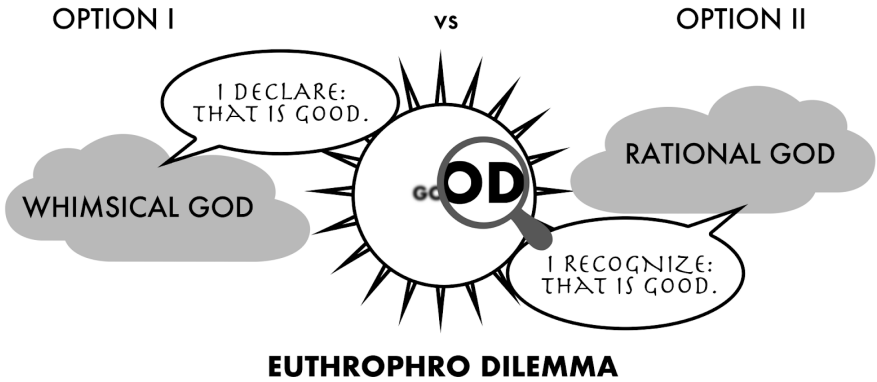
Refusing to establish morality with firm commands without a justification including: *Because I said so*, is a version of the Euthyphro Dilemma. This is divine command theory where the parent or guardian plays the role of a god that fails to justify or supply the reason for the rules. Our ambition is to provide explanations for our decisions and justify rationally our paternalistic approach.

Simply stated, relying on a deity for morality has two consequences that explain how those divine commands are established: I. whimsically: god declares the good, establishing the rules and commands arbitrarily, or II. rational: god recognizes the good in things with a logical reason allowing for us to discover the same.

The first option grants god absolute authority over morality, but has the consequence that morality can change without a cause or reason. The second option, applies reason to rationalize the good, but removes the requirement of god to be cited for morality and ethics. The conclusion is that if one can discover the reason a god recognizes something is good, one can simply cite

the reason without the: *Because I said so.*

Establishing ourselves as parents we accepted the second option removing the necessity of a god as the foundation for ethics. The rejection of the first option immediately removes the dependency on a faith-based system that requires absolute trust in the will and grander plan of a god beyond human understanding. We pursue reason over the arbitrary.



The decision to avoid appeals to authority has come with countless struggles and frustrations. Offering constant justifications while citing evidence to support our predictions about how a situation will resolve itself is beyond exhausting both emotionally and mentally. Our young children ask: why, so frequently that simple arguments over desert and sleepovers have resulted in philosophical discussions. Lasting well past bedtime, these intense negotiations and conversations often end with tears and yelling from both children and parents.

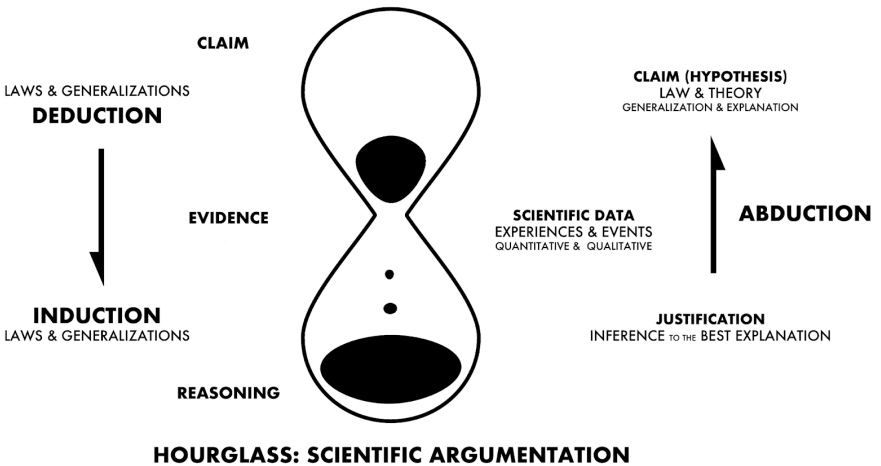
The temptation to simply say: *Because I said so*, is so strong we have tried repeatedly to embed the rationale within the system of rules. As parents and guardians, our children can accept our rules without question or reject our reasoning with criticism. It is in providing this robust reasoning and exhaustive justifications for our rules that reveals the true dilemma of raising children: dependence versus obsolescence.



Dependence is similar to Option I. where Adults declare: *that is good*. In an attempt to avoid an appeal to authority *because I said so* is replaced with an explanation, a *because*. In an attempt to not make arbitrary rules and be perceived as whimsical, adults explain their own rationale. Modern parents distance themselves from the traditional parenting that raised them by proving to their own children they have an acceptable reason. The modern parent is no longer a whimsical authority with arbitrary laws. The modern parent is a persuasive sales representative with a marketing strategy.

The result is the same. The reward for the adults is that the system, family, school, government runs more smoothly with less conflicts, and adults remain relevant, rational experts. The consequence of convincing children is that the child remains dependent on the adult for morality because they never have to rationally recognize the good independently.

Obsolescence is similar to Option II, children recognize: *that is good*. Instead of being convinced by adults that have done the thinking already, children critically are given the opportunity to recognize the good they discover. Independent of parental authority and reasoning, the child uses their growing understanding of the world to justify their own ethical arguments.



The goal of education, similar to parenting, is to make children and students autonomous. The consequence is that adults and teachers become obsolete, unnecessary, and sometimes lose purpose as the children and students outgrow the safety of the system. The reward is that the child and student have inside themselves the necessary critical thinking to rationally identify and resolve problems adults never even predicted.

Giving the children a *because* makes children dependent. Teaching children ways to find their own *because it makes* adults obsolete. As adults, our rules and our rationale, imposes a law upon them in both senses. The prescriptive legal law to obey is coupled with the descriptive scientific law. These laws are again justified by the authorities. So even with an explanation, applying a generalization to a specific event is still *deduction*.

## II. Ethics

Consider this real conversation with my own children. They wanted to have a sleepover on a school night. No neighborhood friends spending the night, just our own children staying in the same bedroom. The blankets already on the floor under makeshift pillow forts, the pretend hotel was already built. Wide-ruled paper advertisements for room service and complimentary items were already taped to the walls, before bedtime was announced.

As the parents, we declared that hotels are not for school nights. We then offered the rationale that excited giggles, restroom visits, and endless talking would keep each other awake resulting in a difficult morning before the school bus arrived. We declared deductively, prescribing what we wanted them to sleep in their own beds without a sleepover. We justified deductively predicting the possible chaos the next morning. We even suggested a compromise of allowing it on the weekend, just to demonstrate how flexible and kind we are in compromises. We were pleased with our ever-improving raising techniques, celebrating our growth in reading parenting advice books.

However, over the next hour, more examples of the previous attempt at sleepovers as evidence supporting our prediction the rational reasons were argued or debated. Our rational, generous justification slid quickly from compromises to negotiations. Exhausted mentally and physically, and well

past our own bedtime, the temptation to state: *because I said so*, was palpable.

The pretend hotel sleepover was fated to be another of our many Raising Failures. The parents' attempt to capitalize on a teaching moment opportunity to demonstrate to themselves they can raise good children that backfires, intensifies, exacerbates, and confuses everyone in an emotional end of tears and yelling .

The examples are so endless, our brains edit out our most traumatic conflicts so we forget and keep trying. Raising Failures are moments that keep you awake at night while they sleep. Staring at the clock ticking, replaying the regrettable evidence of you failing to be a perfect parent, and maybe even a good one.

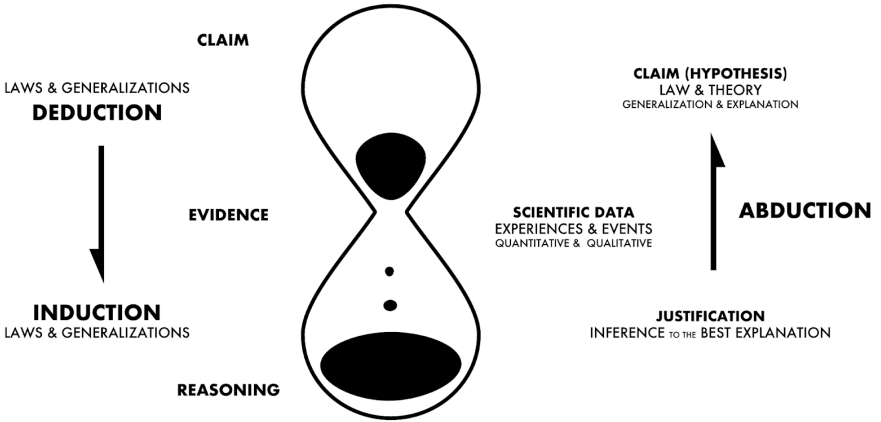
Instead, we pivoted before doors were slammed, before curses were uttered, and before the night ended in a fight. We opened the journal where we, as parents, reflect on our parenting. We revealed our parenting struggles: the errors, regrets, and uncertainties that result from our own search for our rational that we recognize: *that is good*. We admitted that our rules are imperfect, sometimes arbitrary and sometimes irrational even for us. We started a lecture that returned us to the hourglass.

In the hourglass, scientific laws are statements supported by evidence, the descriptive: *is*. "The sleepover hotel *is* already made with marker saturated vacancy signs, room service menus of sticky foods, and blankets likely pulled from the dirty laundry baskets."

Using deduction, we imposed a rule to guide behavior to an acceptable outcome, the prescriptive: *ought*. "*We ought* to go to bed in our own rooms tonight. And maybe have a hotel this weekend." Which alone is arbitrary and whimsical, and forces the acceptance of Option I. So in an attempt to choose Option II, we, the parents, supplied the: *why*.

Using deduction, we gave a reason, a hypothesis that started: *if... then...* This generalization is applied to a specific event as anticipated, the predictive: *will*. "If you have a sleepover hotel on a school night, then you will wake up early enough to get on the bus..." To finish the hypothesis we

at the explanation, the theory, the rationale: *because* “..because you will have kept each other up all night making potty humor jokes.”



**HOURLASS: SCIENTIFIC ARGUMENTATION**

On the surface, building an argument to manage and direct behavior, with the prescriptive *ought* supported by a predictive *will* explained with a perceptive *why*, appears different than a whimsical god. Instead, the adult is convincing the child to trust them because they, as the adult know more about it, thought it through more, and have a greater plan they may never understand. Rules and rationales coupled with the reprimands validate the importance of consequences warranted by taking responsibility for one's actions are sometimes.

Social and emotional education has named the process of justifying obedience as *induction discipline*. The term induction in this context means inducted into a social group. The children or students are inducted into the club like celebrity athletes and musicians are inducted into halls of fame.

Unfortunately, this miscommunicates and reinforces a persistent approach to all education: *Students learn through lecture*. Instead, the term induction logical reasoning is direct opposition to this approach. Adopting the rationale of another is effective in early youth. However, in the rebellious stages of middle school and beyond, the rationale supplied by authority, no matter how obvious, is ignored. Learning from lectures has minimal lasting power. Similar to seeing the nose between one's own eyes, the mind

dismisses the irrelevant and ignores the obnoxious. *Students recall the conclusions of another. Students retain constructions of their own.* These arguments to adopt authority are actually discipline through *deduction*.

Deductive Discipline is the process of giving a reason for obeying a directive or abiding by rules, while explaining the consequences of not doing so, even when accompanied by a compelling justification. Deductive Discipline results in dependence on authority, either arbitrary or rational.

Deeper and more difficult is the development of ethics inductively. The process of guiding children to empathize with our struggle to be rational and recognize the reasons: *that is good*, is extremely difficult and exhausting, especially after bedtime while you are already worried about making the bus in the morning. Yet, persisting and patiently permitting the child to question, challenge, and even critique removes the ruse of god-like authority and reveals a human uncertainty that results from the problem of induction.

Inductive Ethics is the continuous process of reasoning from events and evidence to generate generalizations anticipating the consequences of actions taken by humanity, while collectively constructing arguments justified by logical reasoning, to guide humanity toward sustainable practices and ambitions. Ethics pursues independence with autonomy, liberty, and responsibility.

This is our experiment with science as ethics under our roof. As parents, we find ourselves susceptible to new contrary evidence where the laws do not apply or have unintended consequences. Our pessimistic predictions about how the event will unfold are sometimes disproven. Similar to cognitive behaviors therapy, we anticipate the worst case scenario and then it is not nearly as bad as we feared.

This iterative process grows our understanding of morality as parents daily. Still, despite our best intentions, when we place all this into practice our ideal plan as parents still simply falls apart. No matter how well designed our collection of rules and rationales, laws and theories, reality is constantly changing.

Our house rules and norms are constantly under revision. Similar to data-

driven decision making in education, we must remain vigilant while trying to find the actual misconceptions and misinterpretations about the why behind our rules rather than our assumptions as to why they don't understand.

Beyond that, questions children ask sometimes innocently reveal an injustice so embedded in us that we realize we are simultaneously enlightened and offended. Parents become aware they are oppressors enforcing rules that oppressed them. Parents desire for their children to outgrow them, and then realize they are never their own parents. Our independence requires our obsolescence.

### III. Condition

These struggles of a parent are amplified in the classroom. Educators teach morals. From teachers and administrators to coaches and paraprofessionals, from custodians and coordinators to kitchen and transportation, and everything in between, schools deductively discipline directly and through demonstration. Students learn the rules, *how* the school system works as a template for government and corporations.

Operant conditioning is the traditional way schools run. Consider these examples to refresh the courses on behavioral physiology. Punishments attempt to discourage "bad" behavior either by: a. adding something that hurts: spanking, extra laps, additional work, or b. taking away something pleasant: snack, screen time, recess. Reinforcements tries to encourage "good" behavior by: a. adding something pleasant: candy, money, prizes, or b. removing something that hurts: chores, the odds on homework.

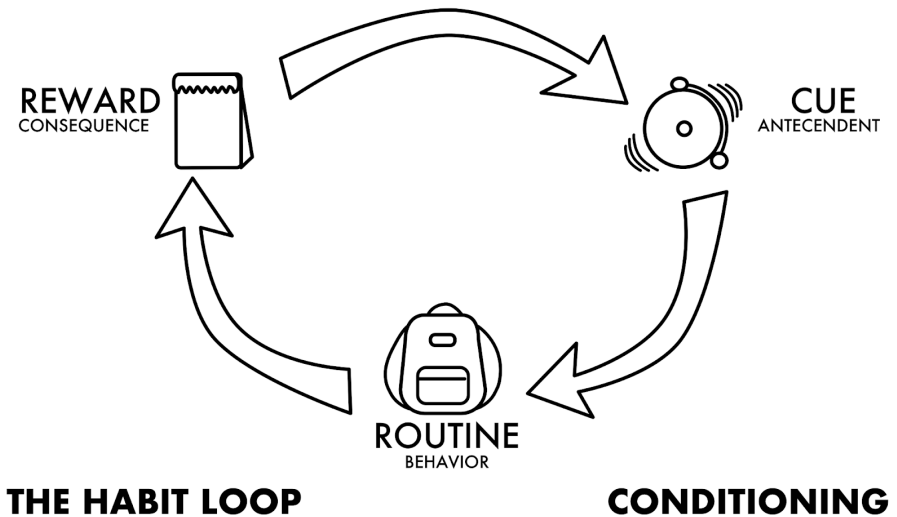
Some systems of conditioning extend physical punishment to make an example out of the offender to discourage others from the same behavior. Although this physical reprimand still exists, public humiliation was a modification. Humans have mirror neurons that are pathways that empathize with another individual that in the brain is indistinguishable from their first person experience. A single child in the corner threatens every child. Dehumanization of others as asinine is a defense mechanism to distance ourselves from the warning. Empathy makes all of us wear the dunce cap.

The system rewards the student that presents expected behavior instead of

punishing the unacceptable alternative. Schools sometimes use mascot themed play money for students to collect and then purchase decorative school supplies or a stuffed animal donated by another parent.

In many modern schools, desired behavior is rewarded more often than undesirable behavior punished. In an attempt to make school less oppressive and traumatizing, behavior management uses researched tips and tricks to modify behavior. Assuming positive intentions does not circumvent that establishing protocols and practicing routines are providing shortcuts for the efficiency of the system. A majority of schools still have bells that release students to lunch.

The parallel between Pavlov's dogs suggests these tactics are more manipulative than is comfortable for our society. Even the teachers who begin salivating often condition themselves within the same comforting systematic schedule. Lunch bells are perfect examples of operant conditioning in schools that builds and strengthens habit loops.



The figure of the habit loop popularized in *The Power of Habit* by Charles Duggin, illustrates the progression from cue to routine to reward aligns directly with the operant conditioning of antecedent to behavior to consequence pays off with retirement.

The cheese at the end of the maze is similar to the threat of poison. As represented by Alfie Kohn in *Punishment by Reward*, gold stars, ranking, and incentives, and other forms of bribery produce no intrinsic motivation. Instead, it reinforces the persistent endless pursuit of eternal rewards through sacrifice and suffering. Behaviorism is embedded in the work ethic of pursuing the American Dream. The notion that hard work eventually pays off. Suffering through is a rite of passage, an investment in one's pursuit of happiness, and the path toward upward mobility.

The required gauntlet of: *Well, I did it.*

It is conditioning that reduces freewill to habit and routine. The transparent push to train the workforce to chase pieces of paper. Reprimand, rewards, and ranking in education and parenting are the first step to prep mice for the rat race.

Bell schedules, lunch lines, seating charts, protocols and procedures celebrate assimilation. The justifications for simplifying habit loops reduces parenting and education to the ease of the adult rather than the betterment of the youth.

Physiologically, students start to not think in school as parts of higher level functioning turn off. The traditional educational system trains them for higher education by creating shortcuts in cognition. Many methods from many different systems: from school and government to churches and corporations, simply train students to fall in line to keep the machine's pistons firing.

Conditioning keeps the mind numb with boredom. Breaking the routine leads to critical thinking. Unfortunately, critical thinking disappears as the frontal lobe redirects the tasks to the autopilot regions in the midbrain. The brain is disconnected, unable to learn and be innovative, when constantly being reminded to switch off to run a program.

Any system that keeps students contained, conditioned, and comfortable prevents authentic education. The convenience for the adults confines the very future they are trying to help inspire. This default to habits of



embracing authority for convenience makes a hibernating populous.

Conditioning is a lullaby that keeps positions of power in place. Breaking the habit leads to critical theory. Criticism by students of the system may seem harsh but carries merit since their impression of education shapes their perception of their own abilities and ambition after graduation.

For many students, behavior dilemmas exist. Resistance and even mistakes mean office referrals and suspension balanced with a rebellious “too cool for school” representation. Compliance and silence mean prize carts and character-based scholarships but a “teachers pet” label. Questioning authority and challenging injustice, should never have had permission forms and safety seats. Like students, educators find themselves living in the same conditions. Invasive investigations, controversy and conflicts, threaten the employment of educators.

Laws targeted at restricting education reduce school to the safe regurgitation of trivial content without context, concepts, critical skills. The desire to inspire fades as the teacher priorities the requirement to remain employed and retire. Benign means boring.

Escapism provides release from tedium and prevalent injustices. Immediate gratification though the rewards of dopamine hijacks the pleasure centers of the brain. Beyond substance additions, technology exacerbates the dependency on entertainment to disconnect from reality. Even before screens were handheld and kept within pockets, theaters have rewarded humanity with butter drenched salted popcorn and sugary sodas we watched gore and guns, death and destruction.

Sugar, salt, and fat are rare in nature, whereas violence and exploitation are common. In modern society, french fries and ice cream are abundant. The free market, aware of these cravings, drives the food supply toward these convenience store calories. As a result vegetables cost more than the subsidized ingredients in chips and candy.

Billboard, magazine advertisements, and product placements prey on our evolutionary programming. The situation comedy show, the regular network programming, the social media clip, endless propaganda masquerading as

news, is just filler between appeals to consumerism. Commercials cue us to grab a snack before the additional reward of drama and violence returns after the break.

Humanity has been conditioned to keep the television on. Gawking at disasters online and playing violent video games are not shown to result in the audience or player performing violent acts in reality. Some research suggests it may provide an outlet and release for some. Supplied with a bombardment of tragic entertainment, it is boredom that puts our country in critical condition.

At the intersection of school and violence, intruder drills have become a required training of educators. Our country is conditioned for calamity. Teachers are tempered with screens, trained with active shooter simulations, and acclimated to be placed in critical condition attempting to keep their students, our children safe.

#### IV. Agency

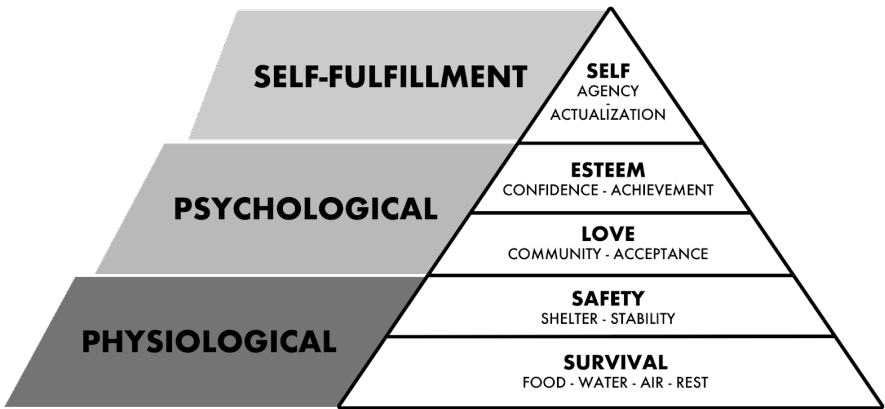
As a parent, the safety of our children takes precedent. This is not unique to our family. Rather it is a requirement for every human. In survival situations and simulations, the immediate priorities are food, water, and shelter. This translates to physiologically satisfying hunger, thirst, and a place to rest. However, shelter is used for more than just sleeping. Shelter provides safety and security from the unforgiving elements and threats seeking to fill their needs themselves.

Below is a simplification of the Abraham Maslow framework used to communicate a layered structure of needs. The pyramid presents a foundation of physiological needs proceeding through psychological needs to an apex of self-fulfillment.

To provide examples, the physiological needs include survival skills: food, water, and rest, as well as physical safety: security and stability. As a hierarchy, if these essential needs at the foundation are not met the person is hampered in even addressing the following layers. Applying this to school, if a student skipped breakfast or is denied a drink at the water fountain, conflict may result. As parents, the initial questions you ask an upset child include: *Are you hungry? Are you tired? Are you scared?*

If these physiological needs are met, the student or child may be struggling with psychological deficiencies. A student that feels unaccepted, unimportant, and unworthy of love may become hostile or defensive to combat the isolation. Attention and compassion start the process of belonging. Empathy and enduring kindness model understanding, assistance, and advocacy.

As parents, the expectation of unconditional love for children suppresses human emotions, reducing the enjoyment of parenting to obligation. This extends to students and teachers. As argued by Rita Pierson, a teacher may loathe a student but champion others. Real relationships are unique, rare, and often begin with an overlap of interest. If discovered as forced and fake, this disingenuous companionship compromise is a harmful betrayal of trust. The belief that real friendships exist disappears, replaced with amplified suspicion and distrust of others.



**HEIRARCHY OF NEEDS: MASLOW'S MODEL**

Once these psychological needs are met, the student or child is able to pursue self-fulfillment including self actualization through agency. Discovering their identity and sense of *I* develops. The ability to be vulnerable with one's own ideas as separate from their own foundational identity is a requirement for this ability. Without the requirements of safety, acceptance, and confidence, humans are unable to detach their personal definition from the criticism of peers. Compassion must be established

before criticism can be accepted without the threat of personal removal. It remains that the person must be not merely their job, career, religion, or political affiliation.

Instead, the person must be regarded as a library safe from the threat of closing. Burning libraries is akin to eliminating and silencing individuals or populations. Instead, the ideas must remain as books subjected to debate and scrutiny. Likewise books should remain available as reference to our history as both celebrations of success and opportunities to learn from mistakes. Banning and burning, elements of our culture out of shame or suppression subjects the future populations to action without contemplation.

Self-fulfillment requires access to the diversity of our entire country and beyond. Within the boundaries of preserving the physiological and psychological needs of the youth. Paternalism establishes the duty to the future generations that they are exposed to the elements of as survival guide

Translated to the needs defined by Maslow, a survival guide, by definition, requires that children and students are educated on the importance of and how to obtain, maintain, and sustain the features of *survival* including: food, water, air, and rest for themselves and the species. Further the guide must also establish, explain, and enforce the norms and rules to govern *safety* including: shelter and stability. This *stability* ensures community and civility within out specialized society. The safe environment both as a physical place of learning, brick and mortar school, as well as conceptual stewardship of the environment, economy, and education of the future generations, emphasizes the importance of a physical public system of education to achieve the compassion required before the psychological level can establish the necessary vulnerability.

The following physiological level including *love*: community and acceptance and *esteem*: confidence and achievement, are not supplied but established by the interactions of the individual within the community. A leader or learner within these layers must assess the norms and rules of the community to build these relationships. This is the responsibility of the individual to assume ownership of this section of needs. These are not given, but are also not earned. Instead, these needs are rather skills that are cultivated by mentors with guidance and maintenance of the physiological

needs supporting these sections. A society, group, civilization, or species that lacks the dedication to providing the physiological needs equitably neglects this foundation and therefore are entirely accountable to its failure and collapse.

Any government that removes these features creates an environment hostile to education, innovation, and our nation. The removal of local resources and defunding education is an attack on our children's ability to achieve self-actualization. Sabotaging the base of this pyramid removes the support for our students and children to achieve both agency, actualization, and autonomy. The function of school is to graduate individuals competent and capable of ensuring, extending, and expanding on the freedoms our nation holds in such esteem. The pursuit of happiness is not granted but rather ambitions to achieve, not individually but as a community, country, and species.

Ultimately, parents, guardians, and teachers simply want for their children and students to be happy, healthy, and safe. However, as argued many times by Jason Kander, in the heartland another essential focus is for family to be nearby. This does not imply that families on the coastal regions of the country desire to have their children within close proximity. Rather that the emphasis of nearby is a reflection of the movement of students and children from homes into the heartland to the areas with opportunities.

Again the heartland falls victim to the self-fulfilling prophecy and cyclic exacerbation of the issue of students and children moving toward resources and areas of assumed prestige and opportunity. The heartland hollows itself by advocating for students to pursue their dreams and leave their home towns in search of these chances for upward mobility.

As a result the desperation for nearby continues to create a paradox where the ambitions of the children and advice for adults conflicts with their own self-actualization and autonomy. Parents, guardians, and teachers that remained in the heartland for a multitude of reasons including financial and the desire to remain close to their own hometown becomes a significant conflict balancing the caretakers self-sacrifice and jealousy against aspirations and guilt.

To provide agency and actualization, self-fulfillment must return to the heartland. The students that often are encouraged to leave the hometowns must be inspired to stay and take advantage of the sustainable opportunities to innovate the solutions to the problems they face growing up rather than abandon and desert the growing desertification of the interior of their country.



## .CHAPTER EIGHT. REAL MOTIVATION

The pandemic provided a potential mitigation of this issue by encouraging the trend toward remote and virtual working conditions. Although not the best solution for all learners, technology was essential to supplying an emergency response to the isolation of quarantine that dominated the years of public education throughout the nation.

Previously unavailable technology was widely distributed to teachers and students seemingly overnight. Despite the strange sudden funding appearing in this emergency response from government and corporate origins, available technology is rarely infused technology. Unfortunately, training for students to learn with technology safely is minimal in most cases. More training to instructors to teach through technology was not available, feasible, or even considered.

Instead, students of all grades were exposed to a world that was traditionally dominated by the removal of problematic devices, teachers opted to replace traditional methods of teaching with new digitized versions of classroom activities. In the urgency, the void of education on digital citizenship, media literacy, and user advocacy was filled with social media saturation, normalized screen addiction, and the toxic video game culture. These and other desperately reconnect society and schools exacerbated a series of unaddressed and often avoided issues.

With cameras off and microphones muted, students were able to access the entirety of the internet at times while administration and technical support frantically attempted to manage abuses of this new power retroactively delayed without end. With school and the entire outside world unavailable for socialization so playing video games dominated the recreation of many students. Students joined online first-person shooters with classmates during the lectures of the same class period. Students watched endless live streaming and recorded playlists of professional players popularizing a vial toxic culture.

The pandemic presented an opportunity to establish happiness, health, and safety during a time that all students were contained physically nearby. The world was unprepared for this pandemic. However, the world has an opportunity to learn from our ill-prepared urgency by *redefining* these vilified video games instead of removing them. Students were discouraged and reprimanded for playing games. However, school as a toxic finite zero-sum game can be redefined by embedding the vilified video game to find their real motivations.

## I. Gamification

Schools could add levels, points, achievements, side missions, and sandboxes to the classroom. School is a creative environment where failure can occur without judgment. School could be a game that a student desires to learn from rather than an obligation of drudgery. School could be fun.

In Super Mario Bros, the players learn one should jump over the pit because they fell off the first time, and the second, and the third. Super Mario Bros levels mirror formative assessments, assessments for learning, in the classroom. The structure of the level provides resources slowly training the player to master an ability before continuing. Mario obtains a single mushroom before the fired flower and star. Slowly adding complexity from World 1-1. Educating you along the way. These deaths do not factor into the final battle with Bowser. Death is a step in the process of learning to survive.

At the core, these games demand lives and continue. Education should demand errors and mistakes. Games demand struggle and death. Education should demand confusion and failure. Games demand ingenuity and adaptation. Education should demand achievements and creativity.

Teachers must acknowledge their errors and mistakes, our confusion and failure. Being incorrect dethrones the teacher as the only expert. Co-creation of knowledge becomes possible because not knowing is not judged by omniscience. Ignorance is strength if repositioned as the teachers' ignorance is the students' strength. The fear of failing is overshadowed by the ambition to create and curiosity to understand.

In Zelda, Link slowly obtains new items to master. This is similar to the other Nintendo games. Using the items in combination to defeat dungeon



after dungeon until before reaching the final dungeon and boss, Ganon. However, socializing was the secret to the game. Designed as the antithesis to the linear Mario franchise, the first test players complained that they did not understand the objectives in a puzzling game with unclear objectives. An open world to discover did not provide the literal straight forward intuitiveness of a side-scroll. So creator Shigeru Miyamoto and Takashi Tezuka made players discover the sword in a cave. Removing this essential resource but providing it without any cost but only curiosity. The magical aid is presented by a nameless mentor offering only the wisdom of:

*It's dangerous to go alone. Take this.*

The purpose was to encourage players to work together and share secrets to solve the puzzles. Socialization was an objective of the creator to pull introverts into a broader experience by not only making another immersive world but emergent players seeking assistance. Entering the cave to find the sword forced players to emerge from their caves without socialization.

Some preschools are focusing on academics rather than social skills. The thought is we will be smarter if we start earlier, three-year-olds spelling and subtracting. Perhaps education should be focused on safe hands and polite words. The human brain is simply not evolutionarily wired for academics that early. Jean Piaget identified the stages of cognitive development in the 1920s. Cultivating social skills at the primary level should be the primary focus. Gaming is not a solitary affair, neither is saving our planet. Playing nice with others and being personable is one of the most desired attributes for most companies.

Still, the toxicity of the corporate world persists as some ambitious ladder-climbers relentlessly and ruthlessly seek promotions, power, and money. Discussing these examples of gamification with a student, they argued that dismissing competition removes a motivating factor for many that engage in online play and the entire eSports culture. Arguably eSports teams provide a sense of community, belonging, and emergence of the otherwise under-celebrated and excluded students. Celebrating the diversity of players that exhibit skills, interests, and passions that are outside traditional athletics is an addition to school involvement and even scholarly motivation.

However, this dependency on team membership falls victim to the same hometown pride that extends from the hidden curriculum of competition. These eSports systems and events become zero-sum finite games. No matter the level of diversity, inclusion, and equity that transcends physical appearance and abilities, especially with adaptive technology, each reduces eventually to rivalries and dichotomous thinking of *us* versus *them*.

Concluding the integration of video games with eSports eventually allows universities to offer scholarships to replicate other sports instead of fully realizing the potential of this redefinition of technology and school. Without the vigilant and intentional reinforcement of the aspects of positive socialization, these games will slip further into toxicity. The lessons of the commercialization of other sports and exploration of players must be learned to accomplish this goal.

In Pong, the first game Atari developed, epitomizes the simplicity of zero-sum finite games built only on winning. Scores are situated in the top corners of the screen displaying the number of times your opponent failed to return the white pixel. The successes of one player equal the failures of the other player. When added as a negative and positive integer the sum of the entire game is zero. Winning the match is the first to a finite score of 11, with the requirement to win by two if a 10-10 tie.

The simplicity of this game is replicated in the most toxic online games. These *twitch* games test response time of the player. From first person shooters and sports games to battle royal and fighting games, this style of play continues from the simplest black and white pixelation into the most rendered game with realistic graphics. These twitch games, in the absence and avoidance of addressing its responsibility as part of the educational system, have produced arguably the most vile, obscene, and toxic socializations. Without education on norms and community, the secret sharing exploration in Zelda to beat the game together has become exploitation and extortion built on pillaging and public humiliation. Cooperation in *twitch* games is driven by the elimination of others in your way.

Originally though, the student suggested the video game Pac-man, as an example of a game based on points. This game blurs the distinction between

competition versus completion dependent on personal achievement versus public arcades. The achievements obtained for self-fulfillment are in stark contrast to the leaderboards displayed in rainbow lists of top scores. In Super Mario Bros, the point at the top right functioned merely as bargaining rights but remained irrelevant as the series continued into future iterations. This feature faded for some games but remained relevant for some based on the personal motivations of the player.

In Pac-man, players navigate sequential levels of labyrinths while collecting dots and being pursued by ghosts. Ultimately, the leader displayed, proved the players skill, dedication, and dominance of the others, unable to complete the game. Setting world records, including the perfect score of 3,33,360 set by Billy Mitchell, set an unachievable max best performance celebrated for fame and fortune. Currently, some achievements are displayed as a wear by the avatar online to showcase the player's prestige in-game. Similar to badges on a boy scout sash or bars and stars on military officers, these indicate status and deserved respect within the community that recognizes their importance, which may not extend to other communities.

Badges, certificates, and recognitions signifying personal accomplishments can be motivating for completionism within the player. Achievements that are not displayed to not require acceptance or recognition by a community. These players are motivated even after finishing the main game and rest only after every side quest is marked as done. These achievements are similar to gold star stickers accumulated on the inside of a students binder rather than the front cover. Games without an obvious story, including Minecraft, released achievements before adding the Ender Dragon completion of the main storyline.

In Minecraft, Steve digs, cuts, and kills to horde resources. They take all blocks and items of all types: wood, sand, cobblestone, leather, meat, gold, diamonds, and whatever else to fill chests. They collect to build tools and weapons. Tools and weapons to mine the next resource, to craft the next tool or weapon in an endless cycle of hoarding. Players break the pixelated world into blocks.

However, after all the destruction and greed, they build. They build amazing structures, machines, and engineering marvels that push the unimaginable. Similar to the parent that gives their prized Legos to their offspring, the player breaks the world built for them into fragments to build something on their own. These possibilities for creativity are endless beyond the public or personal achievements and Ender Dragon.

Tapping into the gaming world not only to teach content, but to make students feel empowered to fix the world that prior generations have complicated and broken. Instead of saving digital planets, students can save the one they are actually living on. The future is not limited just because students do not know an answer the first time. In the end, the summative assessment, the assessment of learning, is a real application of critical thinking to address the endless problems facing the world beyond school.

Worksheets, end-of-section questions, and copying definitions. Although these do not grow dendrites from one neuron to another. School employs the banking model of education as articulated by Pablo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Students are treated as though vessels to be filled: piggy banks or sponges. Flooding their brains with content until they are sopping wet with ideas. Saturated until they cannot hold another drop.

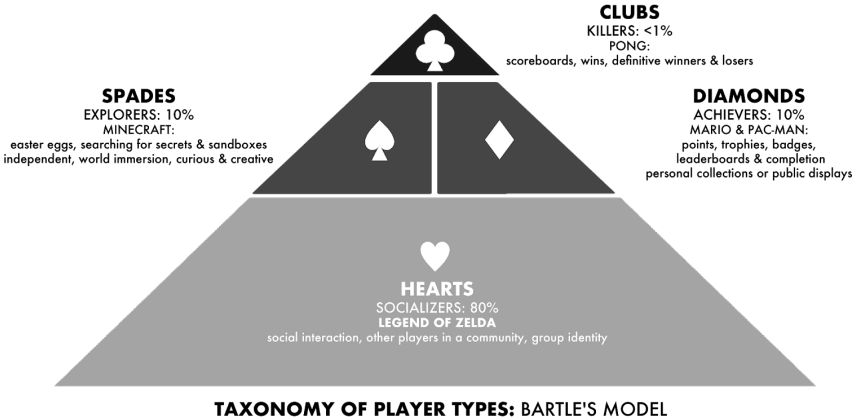
Gamification allows for students to not only play the game but help build it. They establish buy-in and autonomy setting up the rules together and ultimately selecting the problems themselves. Stand the dominoes on edge ready to fall. Nudge them. Step out of the way.

## II. Gamers

Although not all students are gamers, the numbers of those that define themselves as gamers is increasing quickly. As eSports gains popularity, this will only rise. However, not all gamers are determined to compete in eSports. Instead, the toxic competitions attributed to online games fails to match with the reasons the majority of people engage in games.

Richard Bartle identified four basic types of game players: Socializer. Achiever. Explorer. Killer. About 80% of gamers are primarily Socializers, with 20% split evenly between Achievers and Explorers. Killer's are below

even 1%. These four terms are also attributed to the suit found in playing cards. The pyramid below suggests a simplification of this breakdown.



Social interaction is the reason 80% of players play rather than win. These players play games to hang out with friends. This should not be understated. People primarily play games to be social. The majority of people play to find community, like-minded individuals, acceptance, and ultimately love. It is for this reason, social gamers are represented also as *hearts*. Zelda had it right all along: Fill hearts. Stay alive.

Games, online and in real life, should promote inclusion and acceptance above all other motivations. This is the reason, *the why*, people enjoy or join a game. Digital games specifically create a unique opportunity to remove barriers that prevent people from playing together based on physical limitations or exclusion. Investing in an educational foundation to promote equity is an opportunity humanity cannot afford to squander.

Explorers, 10% of gamers, are known also as *spades* to reference the digging through the entire map in search of secrets. A shovel to discover the buried treasure, unlocking every award, and hunting for easter eggs and glitches. Ten-percent of players identify with this profile more than the others. These players make the ideal game testers because they are motivated by discovering program errors and glitches rather than friendship. Individuals that pursue game testing as a profession that are social gamers are often dissatisfied with the career path.

These members should be inspired and discovered as they will suggest and find bugs within the system. These will be people that will desire to create content for Crucible Schools with ideas that stretch the model. These gamers will be less driven by social engagement but rather be more ambitious to discover the flaws to find a new way to attack that problem in order to fix it.

Achievers, as 10% of gamers, are known also as *diamonds* to suggest the collection of trophies and treasures as a personal horde. A collection of achievements and gold stars representing completion. Applications to academic courses are often best represented by a badge specific to the task that is completed. Level, cosmetic customization, and even altered borders around the avatar icon give the player a sense of personal accomplishment.

Again, many of these can be used to flaunt personal skill or dedication. However, for achievers, these are more a personal goal. Privately, progress bars show the personal journey without the purpose of showing it off to other players. This is a personal benefit and not advertised to the whole of the community but rather a personalized goal that does not rank any member against others.

The journey through is the most important rather than comparison to others. You are only comparing yourself to the version of you yesterday rather than others on their own version of the journey. Instead of only rewarding 100% completion, students as other players may be satisfied with a badge of lower status. However, Achievers would be motivated by the 100% completion and the three gold star rating. Instead of getting nothing because you have not fully completed the course. Still specific badges can represent the level to which a student has engaged in the content. This helps people to privilege progress over perfection.

Character customizations can serve additional purposes of motivating other players that are not achievers inherently. Achievers are often not primarily motivated by bragging about accomplishments. Again overlap of these gamer types exist, which make players a much more complicated profile than a pure singular motivation. For example, an avatar is able to showcase a special feature, from a unique border or event wearable icon. Games use this method often to inspire inquisitive players to ask players with the

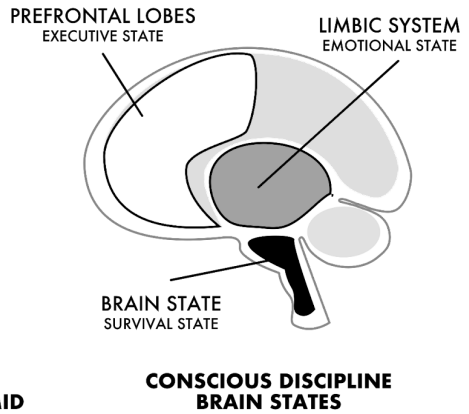
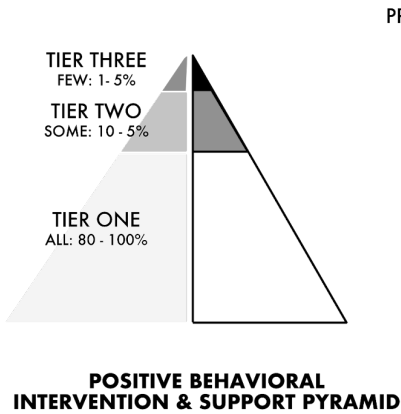
specific customization how they were able to get the wearable or charm or weapon.

Instead, more competitive students may be inspired by other students to also get optional customizations that are beyond a trophy case of personal medals and badges. As an optional wearable that gently inspires other students to desire more opportunities for customization as well as completion of specifically joining a collaborative or simply a community.

Killers may be referred to as clubs in school settings to avoid the stigma of real world violence. The enjoyment in this pain in others represents less than 1% of all people in that game. The primitive blunt weapon of a club shows how little skill is required to accomplish this motivation.

III. Positive

Unfortunately, some management of behaviors employ extrinsic motivations that appear to align with a gamification but actually default to a reward based system including monetary or point incentives. Often positive behavior programs are extended into unintended point-based payments. School wide implementation of a behavioral program, designed for a specific learners, is manipulation, not gamification. Two popular prevalent programs currently influencing the social and emotional development of students are the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Conscious Discipline.



First, PBIS divides social interactions into three tiers. The bottom largest group of students requiring only Tier One support is intended to be a school-wide foundation to assist all, 80 - 100% of students with proactive support to prevent undesirable behaviors. Tier Two focuses on a statistically smaller group of about 10 - 15% of students at risk of displaying more problematic behaviors and instead helps them benefit from the foundational support. Tier Three is the smallest group of about 1 - 5% of students require intense, individualized interventions to improve with data-driven decisions.

Second Conscious Discipline is a social-emotional learning curriculum that uses an oversimplification of brain anatomy and physiology. The diagram below shows Conscious Discipline's three part framework reducing the ever-expanding and evolving branch of neuroscience for teachers. This diagram-based framework uses physical parts of the brain that are connected to functional states of mind. The brainstem is the survival state, the limbic system is the emotional state, and prefrontal lobes are the executive state.

Despite these programs intentions to provide a positive environment and prosocial culture, without sustainable and continuous systemic support these devolve to mirror the most manipulative and oppressive methods of control embedded in our society. The rewards and punishments through classical conditioning methods often even lack justification from the authority and do not involve the students and stakeholders in the reasoning.

No single system is effective for all learners both to address innate academic skill and motivation, likewise no system of behavioral management or prosocial emotional support can provide a universal remedy. However, combining the paradigms walks the thin line between revelation and conflation. The convenience of statistical similarities, common citations in research, and the oversimplification of the research into frameworks invites the following parallels.

The hindbrain, including the brain stem, features no learning, in the academic sense. Instead the brainstem, composed of the pons, cerebellum and medulla oblongata, contains the physiological needs. If the learner is hungry, tired, scared, unable to breath or with irregular medical based needs, the psychological needs in the midbrain are unobtainable. Atop of this structure is the fight, flight, or freeze response. This is instigated by



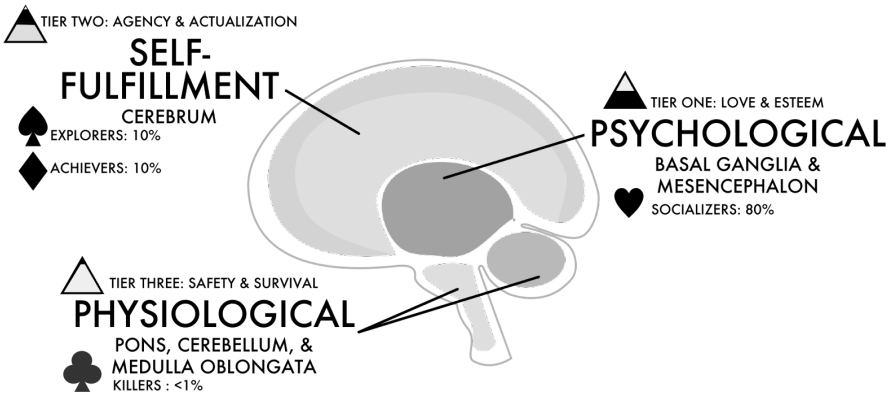
aggression and anger and provides the motivation of players/members to compete and become toxic leaders.

Club or killer gamer types prey on other players by removing the survival and safety of the other players. The tip of the pyramid, Tier Three behaviors, are apex predators. This focus not only addresses the small population of student gamer profiles but ultimately incentivizes other students with motivation and enjoyment derived from social, achievement, and exploration toward a killer definition of success.

The midbrain, including the limbic system, mesencephalon, basal ganglion, and amygdala, integrates and assists in applying emotions to the experiences and routines involved in education and development. Still this is a foundation to the overarching goal of most education programs. The learning of social skills and emotional awareness helps students grow empathy and confidence in the security of caring and compassionate relationships between mentors and learners. Cognitive reflection and the induction of morality helps students to co-create a system of ethics that is at the last stages of Kohlberg's Moral Development.

Establishing student generated norms or community guidelines creates a social contract upon which the majority or gamer profiles can derive enjoyment and motivation in the educational system without obligation, enforcement, or reward. Deliberate conditioning of students does not require adult supervision or justifications to be deductively adopted with standards of discipline.

Through setting norms and community guidelines as independent self-sufficient stewards, students transcend deductive discipline approaching self-actualization as a citizen using Inductive Ethics. Adoption of justifications through deductive discipline stagnates children as dependent students, whereas scientific argumentation through inductive discipline graduates them to democratic citizens with agency and autonomy.



Without empathy for the emotions and the effect of actions on others in the emotional realm, students develop habits through routine that results in boredom and the reduction of high level thinking. The organ of the brain redirects blood-flow to the midbrain since the frontal lobe is energetically expensive. Meaning that the amount of oxygen and ATP required to think critically is pushed to the midbrain. Since the occurrence is familiar the brain essentially shuts off higher level functions and makes predictions without the contemplation in the end brain.

This end brain, the outer cerebrum and prefrontal cortex, is the formation of identity in most individuals. The physical location of critical thinking, problem solving and ultimately the site of inductive reasoning. Generalizations formed with inductive reasoning are applied in specific situations through deductive reasoning. *I* is considered here as an illusion because science suggests that our explanations of events occur after the action occurs.

This creative process cannot exist without the lower brainstem and midbrain being satisfied and challenged respectively. Therefore programs that inspire and require the innovative minds of learners are last to be targeted. Practically this means that Crucible School problem-based learning must occur after building the foundations of Inductive Ethics.

The anatomy and physiology of the brain programs routines and protocols for the success of students in the classroom from bells to where to turn in

work while ultimately teaching conformity and compliance. Children that are pushed to be Achievers and Explores are Innovators which align with those that question and at times challenge authority.

Programs that push rewards and punishments prevent children from adopting this goal of critical thinking. Effectively satisfying the needs for psychological, social, and emotional development regarding love and esteem, is a prerequisite to pushing children higher into the gamer type profiles. Crucible Schools require engaging the 80% with enjoyment derived from solely socializing as hearts to consider elements of Achiever and Explorer motivations; while not promoting antisocial toxic gamification of school toward unemployable killer-instinct leaders.

Children and all students must feel safe to share ideas supported by an Inductive Ethics program to help the 80% of gamers that are in Tier One before adopting problem-based learning and scientific argumentation. Students that exhibit explorer curiosities and achievement determination may be placed in Tier Two or Three to resolve questions that challenge the integrity of a potentially arbitrary system. A Tier Three focused program, which rewards toxic competition is counter productive in gamification toward Inductive Ethics. Tier models that rely on extrinsic motivations promote identities that do not reflect the motivations of most players and fulfillment of the needs of students.

Systems that offer positive support still provide an individualistic approach to behavior management and approaches to problem solving. Optimism and positivity provide a sense of belonging. After the foundational needs of survival and safety are established, these positive behaviors support programs that address the psychological needs of love and esteem. However, this can not be the end goal. Without conflict and criticism, compassion turns into contentment.

Education requires more than designing socially positive classrooms for learning to occur within. Education requires more than inspiring positive attitudes of hope and opportunities to pursue one's dreams and aspirations. Education requires the cultivation of humble vulnerability so playful mistakes eventually change the game from a negative-sum to a positive-sum. In Game Theory, zero-sum games are when the total gains of the

players are added up and the total losses are subtracted, the sum will be zero. More pie for me means less pie for you. This is most of human history. Stealing, plundering, colonizing, enslaving, invading tactics applied to a zero-sum world.

However, new strategies are needed in the modern world, past the agricultural, industrial, and technological revolutions. Innovations bake a bigger pie. Inventions and improvements, alternative approaches and reimagined outcomes, make the stagnant zero-sum game quagmire into a productive positive-sum game. More pie for me doesn't have to mean less for you. Instead, together we can bake a bigger pie and have more pie for everyone. Although it is counterintuitive, it is in your selfish best interest to be altruistic.

Iterations are essential to this process and progress reflecting the formative assessments for learning featured in Super Mario Bros. The preservation and celebrations of failure as a pathway to learning. Adoption of applying scientific pragmatism to practical implementation through engineering practices innovates the future. Law-making, inspires compassionate criticism through the critical analysis of explorers and achievers outside the threat of opportunistic killers.

In public school, humanity can develop better solutions to existing problems. With public scholarship, humanity solves problems we didn't know we had. Through equitable funding, humanity can prevent dystopian warnings and pursue the happy, healthy, and safe world we want for our children.

Furthermore, fertilizers, factories, technology, engineering, art, mathematics, science increase the amount of pie we can bake. The pie is becoming larger because we are baking more pie. The effects of positive-sum games are compounding. This supply and demand market promotes participation. As more people have the freedom and education to become inventors, researchers, engineers, thinkers, the supply goes up. As more people get richer, the demand goes up because they can buy the new inventions these free and educated people make.

Fulfilling the needs of communities using the pyramid of needs provides a structured approach to providing resources to replenish and cultivate the heartland hollowed out by reckless and intentional dismantling of these rural and urban areas. Similar to the physiological needs of students, the members of the community must immediately address the same physiological needs of the citizens. If basic requirements for survival are absent, the community struggles to maximize the public school system available. Life sustaining resources of clean water, clean air, access to balanced nutrition, and wages to allow for rest from work allow parents and guardians to be involved in positive ways.

Constraints on time inevitably reduce parental and guardian involvement in the education of their children. Looming concerns of financial hardship for the family due to only low wages opportunities in the local area results in relentless restless nights. Ultimately, disregarding the physiological needs of one's neighbors either down the same street, in the same country, or on the same planet eventually prevents leisure time with one's family and one's ability to engage in the community productively, politically, and positively.

#### **IV. Level**

Extending this hierarchy of needs is psychological to have robust communities with the acceptance and celebration of diversity both as physical individuals and ambitious ideas. Progress is obtained by reinvesting in rural and urban public schools as a preventative before the next pandemic. Our nation's response does not need an urgent reactionary response of desperately dumping technology into classrooms without training. With video games, gamification and game theory embedded in public education we may emerge from our failures into a positive-sum infinite game world.

Imagine instead of a few research hotspots in wealthy countries, all public schools were think tanks, studios, labs, workshops, and colloquiums across the globe. Imagine the poorer, low altitude country was given technology to be less dependent on farming and less impacted by climate change because we just helped them. Imagine children would be able to attend schools and universities. Those children might graduate and innovate new ideas to problems like climate change. Help the poor get a better education. From underfunded inner city public schools to small rural farming towns, let the

students innovate. Imagine if instead of prisons of oppression, all public schools were endless arcades for innovation.

Innovation as: successfully implementing a creative unique idea to improve the value determined by stakeholders, soon shall lose this meaning. Since inception, grants, applications, and requests for funding require innovative approaches and methodologies to be awarded. Already political promises, platforms, and legal proposals have appropriated the term diminishing its potency. Soon jobs, careers, and professions may make the same requirements for every new hire and performance review.

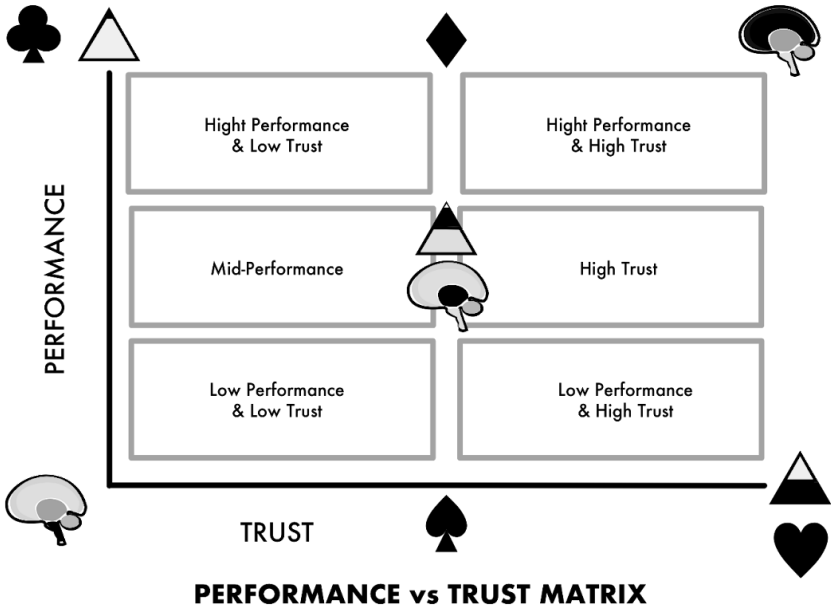
Currently, the system creates job security for agreeable conformity, supervised by superiors where cut-throat productivity is promoted to positions beyond their natural talents. However, this request for innovation from employees requires positive relationships embracing diversity and including contrasting ideas and approaches. Creativity requires collisions of conflicting ideas, this requires mutual trust between employees.

Surveys of major corporations showed the most desirable characteristic in an applying candidate was trustworthiness. Furthermore, productivity and performance of the candidate was less crucial to the hiring process. The Performance vs Trust Matrix below shows that the ideal candidate would be both very trustworthy as well as of high performance. These individuals are extremely rare if they exist at all. Instead, these characteristics may border on being mutually exclusive. Companies desire applicants that are less productive, with lower levels of performance, if instead they have a high level of trustworthiness. These once soft skills are now the hardest skills to obtain.

Layering the simplified frameworks of PBIS, Cognitive Discipline, and Gamer Types over this Performance vs Trust Matrix is a mere starting point to exploring potential overlaps that help students tap into motivations to not only succeed in school but increase employability as the preferred applicant.

While school grades and ranks students on unique creativity and requests idealistic team-player applicants, the corporations promote and the government elects opportunistic initiative. While workshops and retreats

fabricate collaboration with team building exercises within companies, these businesses condemn the competitors' products and provide services. While politicians praise themselves for reaching across the aisle, election seasons are vile even within parties during primaries.



The established work of Frans Johansson, as detailed in his book: *The Medici Effect*, argues effectively that innovation results from collaborative intersections of diverse disciplines, cultures, and industries. Schools could replicate the effect of the Italian banking family, the Medici, on the Renaissance. Indirectly, public education could provide an opportunity to witness innovation comparable to the Scientific Revolution ushering in a modern Enlightenment.

Although the variability diversity within the heartlands public education system in isolated communities remains limited, technological connections between schools allows interactions between communities previously without these instances of interceptions. Discovering overlapping interests, passions, and local problems could be initiated by involvement in digitally

based extracurricular activities including video games and especially eSports.

Capitalizing on the ability for students to engage with other students across the heartland and from coast to coast opens networking, communication, collaboration, and global community that transcends issues of prejudice and exclusion that limit other sports and activities. Limitations on distance and proximity for competition are irrelevant with online eSports. However, the increased exposure to the true variety helps students discover commonalities.

Realizing the overlapping struggles of urban and rural communities is essential. Often rural and urban communities are pitted against each other for the political gain of people in positions of power. The access to resources, continuously contaminated water, ever-worsening air pollution, growing food deserts, consolidation of hospitals and schools, is being neglected and intentionally removed by some determined to hollow out the heartland. To mitigate this divide, transparent equity requires a shift in the perception of cheating.

In *Explore like a Pirate*, Micheal Matera shares a story to explain how fairness rests in the system. To address criticisms that teachers are shown favoritism to certain students accountable for deadlines on assignments. Matera suggests addressing critiques of favoritism by directly explaining that equal treatment of students is justified by holding students to the same rules within the gamified classrooms both present and past. Therefore, leaderboards and accomplishments that feature students record setting scores are respected by holding the integrity of the gamification constant over the years.

This provides equality to all students by designing enforceable fairness in the system. To gamify the classroom, the instructors could independently set the rules of the game or adopt them from another external source. Regardless of their origin, this system distances the instructor from the rules because *the system* is the enforcement of fairness. Similar to *The Trial* by Franz Kafka, the teacher can advocate for the student while blaming *the man* as an invisible force beyond their control. Similar to a deity, the teacher is not required and not even capable of providing the rationale of the rules



because they too are trapped by the machine. The potentially arbitrary, and even absurd, fairness built into the system prevents both the students and teacher from cheating in the game, because the justification is to maintain equality rather than promote equity.

Although this *fairness in the system* approach is a version of deductive discipline Mantera retells a conversation that teachers could have with their own students. *The Mario Kart Effect*, he describes, is about the number one selling Nintendo game currently to date, that has item boxes that provides a resource to aid the racer during the game. The selection of the power-up is animated from a question mark akin to a slot machine. This gives a sense of equality and fairness because it mirrors a lottery system that *randomly* distributes prizes. However, through guidance students, admit items are not given randomly. Instead, the question mark surrounded by a rainbow box is an intentionally designed *equity in the system*. Players in first place are only given the least powerful resources, including banana peels, whereas, in contrast, the closer a player is to last place, the probability of getting an overpowered item drastically increases. This includes turning a racer into a large bullet with a straight path toward first place, knowing aside the racers ahead of you. Only at the rear of the race does the infamous blue shell, that targets the player in first solely no matter how far ahead they are, becomes available.

As Mantera explains, other racing games fail to sell as well as Mario Kart because the game is based entirely on skill honed from relentless devotion provided by leisure time or paid-to-win downloadable modifications that give the player an advantage by paying real-world money. Game designers that adopt a pay-to-win model are ridiculed and even abandoned by players. This initially starts due to the perceived inequality of the revised and manipulated system. However, the game fails because players stop playing creating a cascading exodus. Social players that dominate the gamer-type at 80% leave because there is no one to socialize with.

If gamification of the classroom does not include a way to help students *cheat* because it is fair with equality, students dropout, sports teams dwindle to player numbers that forfeit games, and eventually the public school closes followed by the town. Equality in education erodes our hometowns to dust, equity keeps our heartland from losing its heart.

Without players, games become passive entertainment, films for a sedentary audience at best and a mere simulation of non-playable at worst. For the future of our heartland to avoid becoming vast tracts of vacant dirt, it must be populated with players participating in the game. Educating students on ways to actively engage in the political process, as well as the reasons that progress toward equity keeps others playing the game, is the first step toward sustainability of our country.

Equity in education is initiated by the students to keep peers in the classroom and our heartland from becoming hollow. Likewise, voter-decided *cheating* for all people built into the system keeps the country from collapsing. Laws that promote equity provide sustainability and it's the youth that has to program them into the system.

The failure of our system is not obtaining equity, it is failing to raise our children for the pursuit of happiness for all. Equity is the blue shell that saves our blue planet. Ultimately, it is our duty to advocate for a level table even when it means the existence of such a thing as a free lunch.

## .LUNCH DUTY.

“Ya’ll heard even 5th grade is watching that *Lorax* movie for the rest of the day in the gym,” Coach begins complaining as we take our seats on the bench.

I stare at the sea of students waiting for the warning signs of potential disruption: wandering the lunchroom, lingering by the trash can, and excessive time in the restroom. I swallow a bite of my sandwich. Coach is upset that the basketball court is covered in elementary sneakers. He was interviewed for a history teacher position, but was hired to win state competitions.

“I told the janitor,” he pulls another smoked rib from the plastic sandwich bag, “but they waxed it early anyway.” He smacks while pointing at me with the bone. “Not really academic, if ya ask me.” He licks thick sauce from his fingers.

The tragedy of the commons is generational. The boomers generation clinging to power, money, jobs, houses, all of it. They were the first generation in our modern history who spent as much time existing after 45 as they did before. They cut down all the *Truffula* trees to make their thneeds, which everyone, everyone, everyone needs.

Now that there is no forest left, the *Loraxes* leave the hollowed heartland. And the *Oncers* that remain grant us but one seed while echoing words

carved in stone: *Unless...* maybe this message is a challenge, an epitaph, or an opportunity.

Messaging is in “*the vague*.” It is not always over-explaining that ruins the progressives. It is the specifics of drawing huge strategies out before winning. These become the barriers, the reluctance to join, the hesitation to align. The call to action with passion and ambition gets people fired up. Unfortunately, before the one to carry the torch is selected, someone asks: *how*.

As a consequence, progressives ask “*how*” too much during elections. *How are you going to do that exactly?* As an antithesis, regressives just tell voters *what* they want to hear or *what* to think. *I promise to return what you lost and more*. Suddenly those adhering to pragmatism become idealists, splintering into disagreements within the imperfection of the plan and strategy. The *how* snuffs out the fire in *why*.

Teachers attempt to challenge the students to think critically and ask the essential question: *why*. Instead, every year teachers are asked: *when*. *When are we ever going to use this?* Teacher can’t convince others to ask: *why*, you have to sell it as a solution rather than a question. It is knowing *who* you are selling the solution too. It is their problems defined by their voice, situated in their home, and framed by their culture.

Adults often already know their reasoning, immutable before the conversation begins. They may identify the same issues, concerns, and problems, but rarely do they agree on the methods to get there. Like adolescents convinced by peer pressure, consumers adopt trends to gain acceptance and status. Voters and advocates are the same.

Coach drops the last bare rib onto the pile of partially-used napkins. “Welp, in just three hours, we’ll both be one year closer to retirement.” I watch him wrap the bones inside the greasy and sauce smeared paper. I am reminded of Prometheus tricking Zeus with the glistening fat. While modern gods are choking on our bones, our children are being fed meat hidden in the hide.

With his trash pressed into a ball, Coach lofts a three-pointer at the trash can. He holds the pose for a moment as the lunch room cheers despite a

loose rib bouncing off the rim and sliding across the floor. He struts back swinging the whistle lanyard to repeatedly wrapping it around his hand. After summer vacation, the election season will be upon us. Similar to the school year, before the smear campaigns even hits full stride, exhausted voters will confess: *I need a vacation.*

Regressives and progressives sell very different post-election vacations from the demands of democracy. Regressives often sell like a travel agency: destination photos, excursions, food, views, and theme parks. Progressives often sell gas station road maps. The first sells overpriced plane tickets. The second rarely leaves the driveway. Electing a pilot, no matter how incompetent, is less responsibility than holding the wheel.


The bottom of Maslow's Hierarchy, survival and safety, does not even exist for our planet. Students being told to: be *...someone who cares a whole awful lot...* but until they find *why* they should care at all *...nothing is going to get better...*

So, each of these students have a duty to participate in democracy. Be vigilant even during vacation. Be aware of the dying coral reefs while enjoying the beach. Be on lunch duty. For teachers, often this time is just another hyper-alert anticipation of conflict erupting while pretending to enjoy square pizza, canned pears, and a short box of milk.

Eventually, all drains lead to the ocean. All milk cartons end up in the landfill. All the inheritance is spent on nursing homes, pacemakers, and pills. All the Truffula trees are replanted to just be mowed down by the next Oncer.

Our Manifest Destiny of the globe.  
 Our last hope, buried in history.  
 Our intentional end of times.

Is this the thneed we all needed?  
 Is this the fate we all wanted?  
 Is our hourglass empty or full?



**I believe that  
empowering students with the ambition  
to change the world they are inheriting  
as well as equipping them with  
academic and social tools  
to accomplish those changes,  
is the true purpose of education.**

**- Nicholas Anthony Linke**



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