



HOLLOW HEARTLAND  
UNIT II.

# DEFUND EDUCATION

NICHOLAS ANTHONY LINKE



# HOLLOW HEARTLAND



NICHOLAS ANTHONY LINKE

[www.NICHOLASANTHONYLINKE.com](http://www.NICHOLASANTHONYLINKE.com)

## .SECOND.

Students change the world.

Those last three words echo in my head as the bell for second period rings: *change the world*. I suddenly recognize the vanity of my first years of teaching. I finally answered the calling to teach while scrambling to find epic meaning. I wanted to change the world. I wanted to be the catalyst. I wanted to save us from ourselves.

I was wrong. It is these students entering my classroom, for the last time, that will. I am merely a mentor. Or I was.

Follow with Expertise: Assistance.

Down the hall some colleagues laugh in excitement and anticipation. Educators are looking forward to the same summer coveted by their students. Some join the profession for that built-in vacation. Some seek the position to primarily coach sports or share their passion for a subject. Some stay merely because the weekend now extends into the traditional work week.

Searching for employment in education for some is a backup plan or safety net. Society has established an inferiority in being a career educator. Even teachers encourage students to pursue their dreams while admitting that teaching was far from their original answer to: *What do you want to be when you grow up?*

My university education initially yielded no promised profession, no comfortable career, no security awarded from sacrifices. There were only burdens: student loans and fatalistic awareness. Higher education revealed the collapsing world and the insurmountable challenges to overcome while trying to repair it.

I returned to the familiar comfort of the public educational system. A system I personally rebelled against in my youth but now seek refuge within. Similar to some, I assumed teaching was merely replicating my own experience as a student. After university, the dream jobs weren't waiting for us. All available careers required the real world experience that course work kept us from. So some of us scrambled for a new epic meaning, purpose, and calling.

Follow with Expertise: Acceptance.

I re-enter the classroom. A traditional blackboard is still etched with learning targets from months before the standardized tests began. Measurable outcomes written as actionable *I can* statements:

*I can* compare and contrast mitosis and meiosis inclu...

*I can* argue with evidence that the theory of evolution by na...

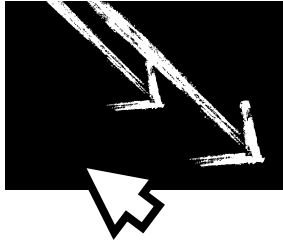
*I can* design strategies to reduce humanity's impact on the climate cri..

These learning targets attempt to straddle the gap between the standards of the standardized test and the haunting question: *When are we ever going to use any of this?* Simplifying standards to learning targets directs *what* the assessments assess. Focusing on what is assessed guides *how* teachers plan lessons. Teachers compose the curriculum. I grab the eraser saturated with chalk dust. Over the black surface streaked with thin white smears, I write a single objective:

*I can* change the world.

Before turning, I smile at the irony.

*Those that can not do, teach.*



.UNIT TWO.  
**DEFUND  
EDUCATION**

After teaching in rural districts in the heartland for years, I realized the desperate disrepair we faced was not unique but ubiquitous. My school was a microcosm of the state as the state was one of the entire country.

Defund Education is a critique of the most ingrained assumptions about the school system. Hidden Curriculum, reveals the intentional and unintentional values and lessons school teaches. Transparent Equity, reimagines ambitious approaches to creative and collaborative authentic learning.

Traditional education has failed our children and country. Still, the faults in the foundation are divergent and deeper than those proposed by the advocates of school choice. Defunding education exacerbates the exploitation, oppression, and indoctrination.

School choice is defunding education.



## .CHAPTER THREE. HIDDEN CURRICULUM

Failure barely described the defeat I felt over those days in isolation. Quarantine made me question the last few years of my ambition and determination to change the world, or even the education of the youth. In the time away from the classroom, my thoughts gravitated toward the lessons school actually teaches about society and culture: a hidden curriculum.

### I. Competition

School instills tribalism in the populace to create pride in small towns and schools, conditioning the youth to easily adopt a party, a country, a race, and ultimately an *us* to pit against a *them*. School promotes infighting within the populous and prevents unification against the oppressor.

Competition has become the product of education. This extends beyond grade point averages and class rank. Conflict entertainment, coupled with aggression in the movement of a ball to claim victory or awarding recall of trivial information as intelligence, reinforces the reduction of school to another sport, contest, and fight. Education has become a finite zero-sum game of winners and losers with a definitive beginning and end.

Those that watch the game, enjoy the fans and mascots, while they ignore the remedy: Progress must extend beyond the arbitrary final buzzer. Peace requires the abandonment of gladiator events. We celebrate the last second points instead of sustainability. We crave the violent last stand instead of pursuing compassion. No matter the excitement in the game, regardless of sportsmanship, the embedded nature of conflict is working against each other, instead of together toward a common goal of improvement. Competition in education is the normalization of wars to end all wars.

Political parties reflect this: a red team and a blue team competing over control. Capitalism embodies this: brand A over brand B. Religions reflect this: devils against angels, heaven and hell, good versus evil. Humanity is taught to favor conflict, not just through classroom instruction but through the extracurricular entertainment and escapism devoted to school spirit and

hometown pride.

Rival schools teach us to find the rift and apply that division to all social situations. We teach kids outside academics to break us into political parties and thirst for intense spikes of brutal fights for power and privilege. The *us and them* is deeply embedded in the hidden curriculum.

## II. Classes

Hierarchy in education starts with the official class system, not based on intelligence but instead on age. Entry into the education system is at six into kindergarten, preschool happens as early as four. From there each child is tracked to stay with a graduating class. The year of their walk across a stage to receive a diploma is embroidered on the sleeves of letterman jackets and etched into class rings. This is a system of power, based solely on birth.

Criticism of class systems that have untouchables working toward enlightenment is somehow not recognized as freshman to senior. Intellectual aptitude is not evaluated in this system, instead students are awarded gifted status, and pulled from traditional course work to enrich them with culture and more rigor, while still graduating with peers that merely entered the system at the same arbitrary date of enrollment.

This hierarchy of power suggests that age translates to intelligence which is often described as a version of wisdom. Instead, it simply places the old in power. The youth submit to the system, not from a principal or teachers, but through the indoctrination that they are not smart enough to understand how the real world works.

This explanation of the purpose of the education system to teach students how to be adults in the real world is incredibly revealing that culture and society is simply run by the past. The high school seniors have dominance over the school system, the same way senior citizens have dominance over the political system. This intentional hierarchy is to prevent power from being democratically distributed to the youth, but instead to respect the authority of elders.

This oppression of youth facilitates the disengagement of the younger classes, and overall creates a generational divide that favors the preservation



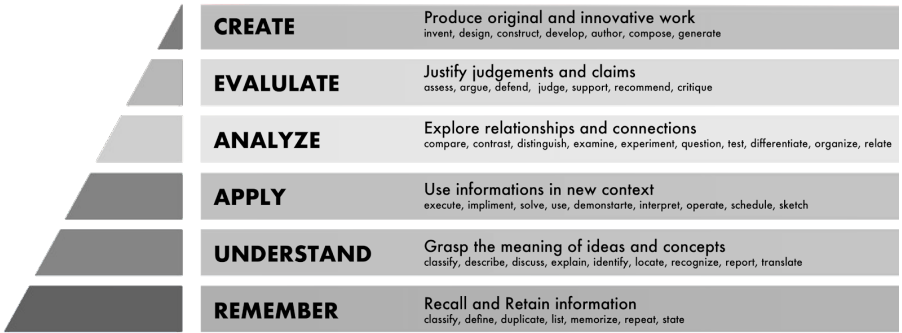
of archaic systems. The purpose of the current education system is to prove to students that it is not your level of intelligence or ability, but rather your pace among your peers. Graduating on time with your friends is encouraged and enforced, meaning the diploma represents a right of passage instead of an affirmation of academics and ability.

Ageism is part of the curriculum, not against the wrinkled but against the gifted. Your voice, your vote doesn't matter until 18, until after graduation for most. For some 13 years, it has taught students that they are lower class before they even graduate. Age determines their voice, intellect is insignificant. This is the purpose of classes from kindergarten to senior. This hidden curriculum is to make the young feel powerless to change the system they are entering.

### III. Grades

The failure of public education has been quantified by standardized testing. End of year examinations of students record summative assessments that fail to account for the baseline data of the students that entered the school system when compared to averages of the entire nation competing for the same funding. This money is attached to the performance of students on a marathon of multiple choice questions. Exhausted by the frequent encouragement to make their best effort as well as the importance of their serious attempts, the meaning and significance of the applicable and context-rich year is reduced to arbitrary and unclear levels of mastery.

The mastery assessed on these tests rarely extends beyond the lowest levels of the revisions made to Benjamin Bloom's Taxonomy. These seven levels establish a hierarchy of terms to guide teachers toward teaching and subsequently assessing higher order thinking. The lowest levels of Bloom's are remembering information, while the apex asks students to create original and innovative work. The lower levels are embedded in the students ability to accomplish the higher levels. While not all tasks require the highest level of Bloom's, the prized critical thinking does.



### BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

Although teaching to the assessment is discouraged, the actual assessment is already unavailable to the teachers. Instead, the standardized tests are expressed as general topics and a number referencing a level of Norman Webb's Depth of Knowledge rated from one to four. A *four* has the greatest depth of extended thinking in which synthesis and data driven problem solving exists. *One* has the shallowest depth being focused on recall and reproduction. Teachers are challenged to reduce an overwhelming and constantly revised series of numbered standards and short ranked descriptions to a prioritized list including those achievable within the year before the exam.

Persistent defunding of education has extended to even the grading and interpretation of the assessment used to defund education. Ironically, the cost to grade responses to the assessment's questions that evaluate and analyze data and arguments, is too expensive to pay graders to evaluate and analyze. To remove this cost, the evaluation is reduced to automation. As machines grade multiple choice answers the ability to assess the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy disappears. Instead, recall and remembering return as the primary focus due to easy, not importance. So with constraints on resources, particularly time, teachers enviably reorient the lessons onto the assessment, hopefully justifying funding to keep the school alive. Instructors teach an inch deep and a mile wide to ambitiously cover the content of a bias, ambiguous and ultimately unknown assessment that only evaluates the shallowest depth of knowledge due to the endless defunding of education.

The testing conditions set by those in power with exams designed from content and context favoring specific preferred populations, produces expected evidence not real data sets. Standardized testing systems extend beyond intentionally collecting grades from schools that fail to match the predetermined superior mold of an already privileged socio-economic class. Standardized testing systems and these competitive summative evaluations focus education on the lowest levels of Bloom's Taxonomy without even attempting to build to the apex of critical thinking and creativity.

Defunding education means defunding assessments. Defunding assessments means only machines grade them. Machine grading means assessing: recall, remember, recite, and retain. Defunding education means: creating, evaluating, analyzing, and applying are not priorities in the competition to not close the school. Standardized tests are not made for accountability. Standardized tests are made to sabotage.

Evaluations of students creates competition between them for valedictorian and scholarships. However, report cards and ranking systems serve a more significant purpose. Grading students based on assessments creates a finality to the work and a punitive system to punish supposed stupidity. Students perceive summative assessments of: homework, projects, papers, tests, and variations thereupon as a finality to the work completed.

Mastery is achieved when a student can complete enough work or score high enough marks to allow them to continue to the next grade level. Yet, this is far from mastery of any subject, it communicates that there is nothing more to learn in the area of interest. The student has learned what society has deemed important. This removal of curiosity keeps students from pursuing further knowledge. Instead, they feel that upon graduation, education is complete or for others real education can begin either in vocation or university.

This deliberate destruction of curiosity helps to lock the culture in place. Since there is nothing left to investigate upon mastery, A+, or passing to the next grade level students become adults with mere contentment with the knowledge and preconceptions that were confirmed in the school system. Those that go on to higher education sometimes experience an altered reality challenged by experiences instead of professors. This is due to those

educators being focused intently on research themselves instead of teaching.

The repercussions of this mastery through grades, is not just demoralizing, but reinforced the notion that our biases, if unchallenged by the education system, are valid. That we are complete, and no further investigation into our misconceptions and subjectivity need be done. Instead, we are reassured and over confident in our ignorance, stubborn in beliefs, and congratulate ourselves for staying true to ourselves and core family beliefs despite the attack of the indoctrination of school.

Grades notably determine a value of the student which can discourage and place students in a demoralized status in society. Graduating at the top of the class, matters little when the only requirement is the obtaining of a piece of paper that is the same as all other diplomas.

Grades do not reflect competence in the subject matter or uniqueness of the content studied, but instead can be purely determined by the responsibility of the student to turn in work or performance events ransacked by nervousness. Points do not matter in the reality of the world. Students are taught that letters and numbers determine worth. Yet, more troubling is that grades exaggerate competence into command over content or worse completion as a person.

The extinguished curiosity creates apathy in challenging oneself and instead focuses the student on just surviving school until they can become an adult and cast votes with belief structures that were instilled from birth toward preservation of a system that exploits and silences the youth.

#### **IV. Attendance**

Babysitting is often used to describe the role of teachers, in particular incompetent educators. Society obviously suggests that teaching through public education is not of importance. This is not just due to lack of funding but by the minor expression of gratitude that is shown toward devoted educators.

Since almost all of society at one time is enrolled in an education system, the public considers that their experience in school is uniform and their attachment to teachers is determined by subject and extra-curricular

involvement. Few celebrations are made for teachers that are devoted to academics, few romanticized stories in films and books congratulate the teacher on their efforts in the classroom. Often, most heartfelt dramas are made about sports, music, and art teachers. Simply due to their attendance in school, people assume their knowledge of what teachers do and how to teach is as simple as the observations made in their classroom.

With that established, the education system has been demoted to daycare. Attendance of students is merely concerned with funding and not for the betterment of society. So as parents pursue careers and income to support the children raised by the teachers, the education system becomes less concerned with teaching and instead with entertainment.

Keeping children occupied for the duration of their attendance becomes more essential than content. This is the origin of fruitless busywork. Instead of maintaining levels of interest toward instruction of value, students are in attendance from morning bells to afternoon bells, with the mere purpose to keep the students in attendance from rebellion and devolution into chaos.

## V. University

University epitomizes hidden curriculum. Lenders profiting from contracts of debt bondage and indentured servitude of the populace, the university and college systems serves the purpose of ensuring the immobility of those that graduate. Professors often graduate with debt themselves and work for universities which pay them at times sums of money to pay off their own loans.

Considering that the investment in their future results in debt, the way to dig out of this financial burden is to claim the future of their college students. Tracing back to the students borrowing reveals that: professors are using the students they teach to pay off universities that pay professors that are... this infinite regress of transferring debt to the youth through the high education system reveals the consequences of convincing students in the public education system to go to university or vocational schooling.

Academic research into the curiosities of the world sometimes reproduces the inquiries of students. However, this rekindling of the previously neglected and extinguished investigations into the mysteries of life, is

disappointingly late in the development of the student's mind. Unfortunately, those that play the game of school well are those that go on to higher education, which fails to reach those students that are most in need for the challenges of critical thinking. To change the system, students that are often deprived of the exposure to curriculum that would challenge and change the system are abandoned. Therefore, history repeats as students are raised to vote and advocate for a system that neglects, abandons, and exploits them.

This student loan debt cripples the economy and makes the graduates unable to have any leisure time. This intentional occupying of the mental energy and time of those newly graduated, turns the most educated and ambitious new entries into the system into servants chasing money to pay off debt.

This is the beginning of the never-ending attempt to obtain enough money to pay for youthful experiences in college for the rest of adult existence. Earning enough money to simply purchase items and entertainment to distract from the problems and unfulfilled life, keeps the nation so full of frustration and survival that engagement with politics is limited to the wealthy. These wealthy are those aforementioned *them* that intend to consolidate power, to ruin the public education system, to make ignorance so widespread that the public can be controlled.

If there is any *us versus them* that should be part of a curriculum, the war to fight for public education against the oppression from these school choice advocates in power should be the obvious purpose of the public school system, not a hidden curriculum.

## VI. Failure

For those that find this critique unrelenting and unfair, the reminder stands that they are most likely the products of such a school system. To defend the persistence of any educational structure that embodies the characteristics above, is in compliance with or endorsement of the eventual ruin of the public education and the consolidation of power to those in political prominence and cultural dominance.

Hidden curriculums that educate the future with: i. tribalism toward political, economic, and religious division through gladiatorial athletic and

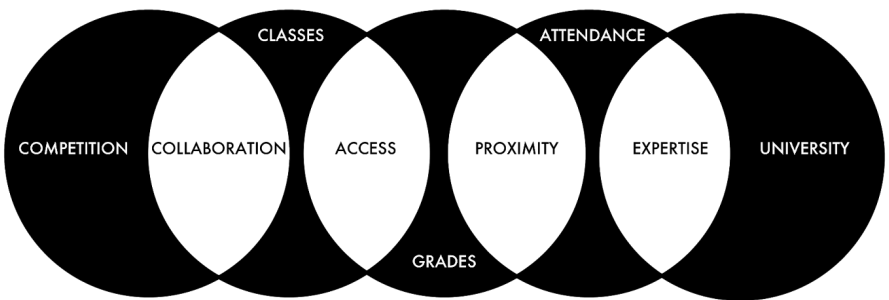
academic events, ii. ageism promoting a caste system to dishearten the youth from attempting to change culture and the world, iii. contentment in ignorance and apathy resulting from feelings of completion of content based on pass and fail grading, iv. attachment to attendance purely to keep students busy and their attention consumed, and v. enrollment in higher education that merely transfers debt bondage to the oppressed and silenced youth, have failed us.



## .CHAPTER FOUR. TRANSPARENT EQUITY

Simply exposing the failures and flaws of the educational system produces immobility instead of progress. To combat a conclusion that features only abandonment, one craves a solution or step-by-step, itemized action plan. Instead, here I present only a call to action, to move intentionally away from these unintended consequences that are weaponized against education by those that seek to dismantle and defund education.

A transparent equity featuring three essential elements should be applied without privilege to a single demographic, however, this is far from a complete list but arguably the most transformative: i. *cooperation*: de-emphasis of competition and focus on cooperation inside and outside the classroom, ii. *access*: distribute universal, equitable, and maintained funding to information through technology including access to independent sources of information, iii. *proximity*: provide authentic problem-based learning situated in the local community with guidance from school and community mentors, and v. *expertise*: establishment of the teaching profession as expertise in academics and education.



**TRANSPARENT EQUITY VENN DIAGRAM**  
OVERLAP OF HIDDEN CURRICULUM ISSUES  
REVEALS EXPLORABLE RESOLUTIONS



## I. Collaboration

Collaboration addresses the overlap of: competition and class. These initial two failures of the hidden curriculum are a transition to an idealized collective effort of humanity toward the benefit of the entire world. Considering competition is embedded not only in the entertainment of society but the evolutionary biology of the species, removal of competitive sports and activities is practically impossible. Entrenched in history and modern society, to believe that it is possible to create a utopian world without athletic and academic competitions is foolish. Pragmatically, transparency is the only solution to the problems of tribalism that result from games: physical sports and intellectual contests from football to science fairs.

To reveal this inherent nature, humanity's enjoyment through both participation and audience entertainment, would establish an honest cultural realization that we must keep these instinctual urges in check. Utilizing higher functions of the society toward common good must be constantly reminded, as to not gravitate toward this natural tendency. Kindness may begin with habituation providing reasons for students. Compassion may broaden with curiosity proposing critical questions to students. However, cooperation only endures with students constructing the justifications themselves.

Early education focused on instilling cooperative and collaborative habits of mind is shown to decrease selfish and egocentric behaviors. Pushing academics into more elementary grade levels pulls the focus of early childhood development away from modeling cooperation, encouraging collaboration, instilling curiosity, and inspiring creativity. Instead students are tested repeatedly to assess progress toward skills and content that are cognitively incompatible with development for most students.

This aspect of most students is the essential feature of creating cooperation between peers of similar interests and abilities instead of arbitrary cut-offs of age for enrollment, admission, and grade level. Cooperation with students of all grade levels as a culture of an education system, from elementary to high school, working together helps all students understand the ways that distributed power, instead of concentrated power, rewards all as a

community. The interaction of seniors with kindergarteners can produce modeling opportunities and empathy between grade levels that translates to generations also not being divided.

Advocating for students to transcend the caste system, not restricting them to entry grade level, is to break the illusion that age translates to intelligence and ability. Instead students perceive humanity as the group. Divisions of ageism between older and younger populations begin to break down. Consider the respect for imaginative ideas that are more fluid and imaginative of younger students, instead of simply respecting elders, coupled with the youth's interest in the refined crystallized plans of the older students. Collaboration between classes yields solutions to problems that were alone inaccessible. This culture, if translated to the society, creates a compassion and guardian mentality of the planet and system for future generations.

## II. Access

Access addresses the overlap of: class and grades. Since class and grades reinforces not only a system of inferiority, dissolving both dispels the justification of power being concentrated at the top and the illusion of completion of content. Concentration of power toward the upper classes in society is mirrored in the school system, this is repeated in allocation of resources. Ensuring resources available and accessible is necessary for the creation of a system and community that is empathetic and inclusive.

Considering that the cognitive abilities, learning styles, different intelligences, physical functionality, and intellectual interests vary widely, educational systems must provide access to ideally identical resources for success, not only of the student but humanity as a whole. The developmental, anatomical, and physiological differences are enough to produce variations in approaches to problems and ambitions to solve them without introducing the variable of available resources. Communication of the developmental foundations of the differences between levels of abilities, with the advocacy toward collaboration, supports the universal accessibility of resources.

This means that maturity in anatomy and physiology of the body, behavior, and cognitive ability based on the development of the body and brain,

should be transparently communicated to the students and guardians. Students' skills and struggles should be considered at each step of the development process, however, no degree of pacing should be enforced or incentivized. Students should be placed with individuals that have similar interests and ambitions rather than similar ability and maturity levels determined by age.

Of the greatest difficulties in this transition is to destigmatize the inability or increased abilities of those students that are not within the traditional pacing. Redefining the success of a student based on the ability of that person to achieve a potential that benefits all of humanity is supported by the transparency produced with de-emphasizing competition, and encouraging cooperation. Regardless, non-arbitrary lines between grade levels, but rather flexible research defined stages, that are communicated to the community and students' creates trust that the education system is addressing the needs and ambitions of all students, rather than compartmentalizing them into age appropriate daycare.

Ensuring that all students have this access to education that meets their needs and ambitions means equitable investments in technology. Increasing funding to schools and universal, resilient access to independently supported informational content and communication is essential to the success of schools with the continuous modernization of the crumbling infrastructure. The opportunity to justify the reinvestment in funding public education should not be ignored. The pandemic revealed the fragile nature of the school system when facing challenges that isolate students from each other and educators. The objective should be to repair the current system, to conserve the established resources, and to provide improvements to the system that has been neglected.

In contrast, some in positions of power are misrepresenting the struggles of the public education system to endure the pandemic, in an effort to dismantle and disregard the current system. A curriculum, accused of unsubstantiated allegations of indoctrination, and criticized for poor performance on biased standardized, competitive exams are the weapons of school choice. This is a strategic, long game to privatize education into indoctrination.

Removing funds from failing public schools is a naked attempt to use this pandemic, climate crisis, and fabricated division to dismiss the public school system. With an end to public education comes widespread ignorance, inability to recognize rhetoric, and indifference to advocate for oneself. As the funding is removed, the ability to control and consolidate power through misinformation and manipulation becomes increasingly easy. It is not the agenda of public schools to indoctrinate but expose. Defunding public education is attempting to isolate and divide the future generations. Defending public education is to reject the selfish shortsightedness of school choice.

To combat isolation and division, the nation must create a widespread, resilient, enduring infrastructure that embraces and encourages technological improvements and keeps communities, educators, and students connected. As a byproduct of this investment, access to information extends transparent equity, that only started with the educational system, to the entire nation. The primary focus of essential education should be on the habits and routines of the mind to keep learning. Emphasis on interpreting the past histories from different perspectives, interacting with the present world, and influencing the future by solving unforeseen problems using the access to current information and modern technology.

Instead of limiting and banning technology access, including artificial intelligence, public school must include curriculum infused with digital citizenship and media literacy. Avoiding the advancements creates a void that is filled with irresponsible and toxic interactions, while missing an opportunity to enrich all the lives on the planet.

The technological toolbox with a malleable manual includes: egoless advocacy with empathy to address pervasive problems facing diverse experiences, the identification of fallacies, creation of sound arguments, collection of reputable sources, composition of accurate representations, evaluation the adaptability of potential solutions to local issues and beyond. Embracing technology in this way in school is not a distraction from standards focused content. Honing these tools is necessary to navigate the constant bombardment of current content creation.

## II. Proximity

Proximity addresses the overlap of: grades and attendance. Like assignments, assessments can be both graded or not graded respectively as: summative assessments of learning, including finals versus formative assessments for learning, including feedback. Although some formal evaluation of effective instruction will never be abandoned, these formative assessments for learning can be extended into the local community.

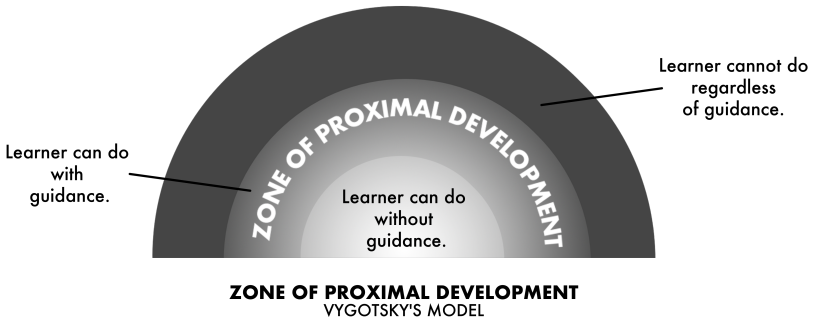
To avoid the bias of standardized exams, grades should be assigned primarily to assessments that are familiar to the learners based on the local community. Questions that include unique content, uncommon context, and specialized structures are where critical thinking is active. Familiar problems descend Bloom's Taxonomy toward recall. Applying in-classroom education to the local community beyond the school building is an opportunity to extend education with practical and authentic purpose. For education to be authentic it must be situated in the real world, from which the local community and school can simultaneously benefit.

The proximity of the students to the issues and information they are learning about is an essential feature of making learning meaningful for the community and learners. The curriculum must be relevant with priority placed on geographically relevant settings, environmental issues being directly experienced by the learner, local culture and values, and historical significance to the immediate area. Then connections to the world beyond the local at the district, state, nation, and planet not only increases critical thinking as concepts are applied to novel areas, but grows the students attachment to the global community. This helps students gain a world-view and skills transferable to other areas as students interact and geographically relocate, bringing local ideas with them to promote innovation in areas stagnated by their own patterns of thought.

The involvement of community with historical-cultural contextualization is directly influenced by the incomplete insights of Lev Vygotsky with Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and the constructs necessary for dynamic assessments that include assistance. The community provides a vital scaffold that supports students to maximize development into areas of expertise otherwise inaccessible to learners. While still emphasizing safety, students should pursue inner workings of local businesses and government

specific to their interests for future employment within the local area.

Knowledge construction can be further maximized with peers inside a public education system with reciprocal learning between teachers and students. Supported by the facilitation expertise of fully trained teachers, innovation can arise when multiple students overlap multiple ZPD obtained by these community experiences. If this successfully occurs in collaboration with peers that are differently skilled or motivated the overlaps of the ZPDs would provide additional equity to combat competition and classes.



To prevent this program from becoming child labor, the purpose of ZPD providing local stability and progress must be upheld within the community that intends to benefit from the educational component of these programs. Of course, no learner should be forced to engage in a career path or exposed to a situation that is not safe or without the consent of the guardian where appropriate. Still, the child must be continuously challenged, directly engaged, and measurably improving beyond what they can do without assistance into abilities that require advanced adult guidance. Students would benefit most by learning a trade, skill, or deeper understanding that is within close proximity to their home. Without being paid and with any profits obtained through the program reinvested into the development and maintenance of the authentic apprenticeships, the students that underwent the same education will inherit the methods and model to keep their community and local cultures alive.

In an effort to temporarily address the teacher shortage that is contributing to the loss of these communities and cultures, districts are reducing the school week below five days. The benefit for this is neither saving on the costs including salary and utilities, nor improved student attendance and achievement. Rather it is merely desperation for teacher recruitment and retention. Already as one of the most underpaid professions in the country, the interior historically has the lowest wages for teacher salary.

The solution to reduce the workload and grant educators additional days for the weekend is a finger in the leaking dam. Competition for teachers will force schools to consolidate, as schools hollow each other out by reducing education to a bare minimum to make the career appealing in the slightest. The levee will break when there is no longer a place for attendance to be counted and the failure of public education levied by hostile communities against educators will be irrelevant when the community disappears because the heart dies with the local public school.

These variants of this place-based culturally specific outreach programs run by locally owned businesses, local government, and community run social programs could offer relief to the stress imposed by the shortage of educators and shortened school week. This is an opportunity to repurpose a failing tactic to improve teacher recruitment and retention caused by defunding into a potentially positive educational experience. This attaches the community directly to the learning both for the school and the town, emphasizing the dependency of each on the other.

#### **IV. Expertise**

Expertise addresses the overlap of: attendance and university. Graduation from public education results primarily from attendance rather than accomplishments in academics or contributions to the community and humanity. Considering that often teaching is reduced to babysitting or daycare, the rebuttal is that parents and guardians request institutions to raise their children while pursuing careers and involvement in other time-consuming activities. Relinquishing the duty of providing emotional, behavioral, physical, and intellectual development to an education system communicates, at best, the trust of the educational community to produce more well-rounded graduates or, at worst, the unwillingness and avoidance

of the responsibility of raising their own children.

To assume the best, parents and guardians should expect the best community of experts to provide an education to their children to produce the most capable adults upon graduation. However, the expression of this expectation is far from reflected in the funding and focus on the educational system. Instead public education is used primarily as a place for students to be kept safe and observed while adults contribute to society through either fueling the economy or maintenance of the current system.

Emphasis is placed on attending university, the education that has become expected by society. Embellishing university degrees has degraded the public education system to a mere holding pattern. Teachers are not considered experts in a trained field, instead professors, without training in educational strategies but with importance placed on research, have created an impossibly difficult system of inattention to learning and often intentional weeding out of students labeled unfit for academic progress of further research.

As higher education becomes normalized, associate degrees will be meaningless, bachelor degrees will not distinguish a graduate, masters will be required for consideration, and only doctorates with years of research will set a candidate apart from the other applicants. Educational inflation erases the importance of public education.

Teachers are no longer considered experts without exuberant degrees that require academic research that has an insignificant impact on student success. Retention of experienced teachers and recruitment of new teachers require creating a financial incentive and advantage to become and stay an educator. The treatment of teachers as babysitters, and public schools as daycare services, instead of a financially advantageous career, reveals the worst assumption about parents and guardians when they relinquish the duty of raising their children.

All these further diminish public education, presenting them as inadequate and a disappointment. Considering the funding universities receive compared to the funding public education receives, it becomes obvious priorities are already oriented toward privatization and profit. Public schools

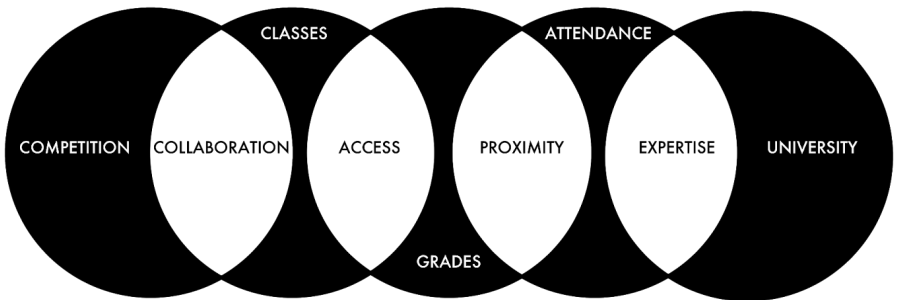


would be revered among the best institutions in the world with the same monetary resources. Overselling education beyond public schools as essential is the true failure and disappointment in the public education system.

**V. Passing**

The result is an obvious self-fulfilling prophecy. The expectation of the public school system is to graduate adults that are capable of maintaining and even improving the world, while the public school system remains unmaintained and without improvement. Defunding a department eventually results in intentional failure of that department.

The purpose of education becomes evident when one reflects on the failures of the hidden curriculum and a movement toward a transformative equitable public education system. The failure would be not to take the opportunity that this pandemic and these persistent threats provide to: i) *collaborate*: promote cooperation and collaborations over competition, ii) *access*: redesign our approach to robust and dependable technology to assist all classes, grades, and community needs, iii.) *proximity*: explore opportunities for community involvement through authentic apprenticeships, and iv.) *expertise*: recognize teaching as a profession of career importance to redefine the importance of public education with funding similar to universities.



**TRANSPARENT EQUITY VENN DIAGRAM**  
 OVERLAP OF HIDDEN CURRICULUM ISSUES  
 REVEALS EXPLORABLE RESOLUTIONS

Defending public schools against defunding education is the only choice we have. Education can be redesigned to reveal the true intention and ambition of adults in power to advocate towards a transparent, equitable, and transformative public education system for children. To not just pass students but to inspire and equip them to shape the world we are passing on to them.

## .PASSING PERIOD.

Students pass by me as they exit.

Mere minutes grant us all brain breaks.

Time intended to visit lockers and drinking fountains.

Misuse the restroom. Chat with friends. Change the environment.

Leave one classroom with questions that remain unanswered. Successful lessons, interesting lectures, engaging experiences invade the next period. Some teachers dismiss these distractions. Some capitalize on these cross-curricular interruptions. Opportunities of cohesion while students connect isolated content areas.

The evidence of my impact is erased like the blackboard. Some teachers force students to be blank slates. Some teachers enforce the falsehood of the mind being a *tabula rasa*. Some courses refocus students on their learning targets to eradicate the infiltration of other content to their discipline.

Still, ideas migrate with students from one location to another. Students ask other students the questions I asked them. The next period passes the most interesting ideas from my course to minds I will never teach.

Students grab more books from lockers. Brilliance bound between vibrant covers and passed between generations. I imagine the cover if these last lectures were merely text.

If I recreated my scribbles as diagrams, which image would capture their attention? If they passed the library display, would they still judge just the cover? If I erase my attempt to tempt them, would that finally state that the blank slate is theirs to fill?

Teaching them is more than passing on knowledge.  
Teaching them is passing the torch.  
Teaching them to pass us by.

Teaching them to surpass us.

**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**



[www.NICHOLASANTHONYLINKE.com](http://www.NICHOLASANTHONYLINKE.com)