



Early Childhood Standards and Creativity

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Abstract

Early childhood education is fundamental. It is the first encounter with society children discover that our planet has so many other people besides mom, dad, and nanny. Children at this stage are developing their personalities, social-emotional skills, and most of all, their creativity.

And so, the education system is meant to support children's development and embrace their creativity. But this cannot happen with standards-based education. How can a child be creative? How can we value children's creativity while parents, teachers, school principals, and students are obliged to follow a written document, a detailed description of what students should be informed about and to be able to do starting early education? Early childhood standards kill children's creativity and interests, implement unequal opportunities, and lead to school dropout. Statistics show that 40% of school dropouts are due to students' poor performance in tests. Moreover, by enforcing these standards, the focus on education became to improve student's performance on the test, the skill of elimination to answer multiple-choice questions, and the art of using a dark lead pencil to fill in bubbles rather than "to educate children to become responsible people with well-developed minds and good character." (Ravitch, 2010, p. 228)

Early Childhood Standards and Creativity.

When three- and four-year-old children are asked what they want to be when they grow up, some say, engineer, doctor, astronaut, or a teacher other say, inventor, dancer, artist, a singer, sculptor, or travel around the world. But as these same children grow older, the answer will be more like, I don't know, or I am not sure yet. The reason why is because the Early childhood settings have killed their dreams. Children find themselves in an organization that serves the interest of a capitalist society. A school is a place for competitiveness where grades scores and standardized tests are the only indicators of children's achievement. The New York City Department of Education website states "Students in elementary grades take various NY State and local tests to support their instruction. To determine eligibility for certain programs, and to provide information on their progress toward mastering grade-level learning standards." And lists the tests students take in grades pre-k to 5th.

NY State English Language Arts Test

NY State Math Test

NY State Science Test

NY State Alternate Assessment

Tests for English Language Learners

Gifted and Talented Testing

Periodic Assessments.

And so, the purpose of Early Childhood Standards as described by the DOE is to master grade-level learning standards. On the same website, we find the following expression: "Keep in mind that test results are just one measurement of student achievement." but at the same time, the results determine eligibility for certain programs, therefore more opportunities for those who

score high, and more inequality for those who score low. The perfect recipe for brainwashing and conformity.

We are all born with immense natural talents, but by the time we have been through education far too many of us have lost touch with them. Many highly talented, brilliant people think they are not because the thing they were good at in school, wasn't valued or was actually stigmatized. The consequences are disastrous for individuals and for the health of our communities. (Robinson, 2015, p. xviii)

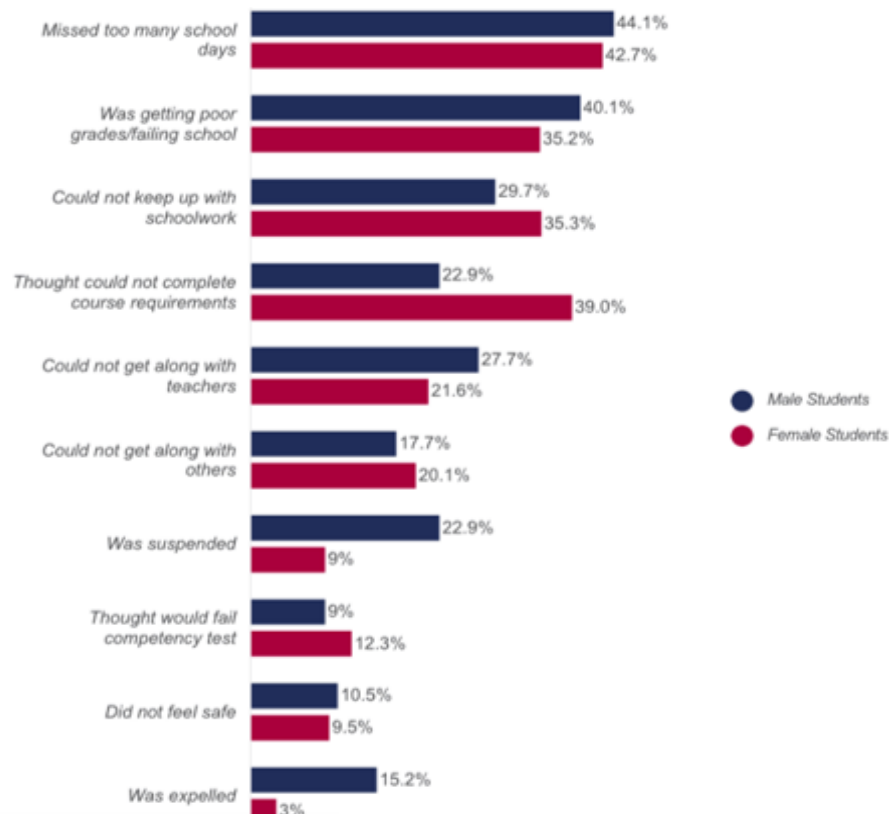
Educators are spending more time figuring out how to adapt the curriculum to the standards and prepare students for standardized tests. Usually, work on sample tests from previous years that consist of multiple choice and short answers. That leads to lower students' knowledge and achievement for the sake of meeting the standards and raising scores. And parents are investing money and time in test preparation.

Monty Neill, executive director of FairTest said, the tests do not measure very much of what's important, and they measure in a very narrow way. The testing requirements and the data derived from that are essentially colonizing the classroom and making it very hard for teachers to spend time on things that are important for students to know or to be able to do or to engage their interest and attention. How the subject is tested becomes a model for how to teach the subject. At the extreme, school becomes a test-prep program. (Robinson, 2015, p. 161)

Moreover, statistics have shown that one of the causes of school dropout at high school is getting poor grades, could not keep up with schoolwork, thought could not complete course requirements, or thought would failing the competency test (figure 1). "Schools today elicit passive learning boredom, and alienation, it makes kids hate learning." (Noguera, 2016).

Figure 1

Cause of Dropping Out of High School by Gender School Related Reason.



(EducationData.org)

In addition, children do not value knowledge, but they do value points and grades. Lauren B. Resnick wrote in her article, “The Mismeasure of Learning,” that standards “create conditions in which students view challenging problems or tough courses not as opportunities to learn but as risky endeavors that may harm their chances of graduating to the achievement ladder’s next rung.” And so, the pleasure of simply solving a problem and the sense of curiosity and knowledge fades. In some cases, students who didn’t do well in the tests may be dropped from the program to do not affect the overall results. Test results determine not only the student’s achievement but also determine the school funding and teacher evaluations.

I have often been told that some parents ask for their children to be diagnosed with attention problems and to be medicated because the diagnosis allows the children to be given more time to complete the tests. For some people at least, ADHD has become a strategic condition. (Robinson, 2015, p. 163)

Tomas Edison was a hyperactive child, being a difficult and distracted student, his mother pulled him from school and taught him at home. If Edison had to go through today's education system, he would have been diagnosed with all sorts of disabilities and deficiencies, put under medication, and perhaps the world would be way different and darker than it is today.

To solve this problem, families, communities, teachers, school principals, and the government must work holistically and figure out ways to make schools a place where all our children are welcome, treated fairly, and "No Child left behind." Standards have left so many children behind and created a competitive education system rather than a collaborative system.

We all know the rule of change "Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world, today I am wise, so I am changing my life." (Rumi). The change can start from the classroom; Early Childhood Educators have an impact on children's learning. Most of us remember our kindergarten teacher and the basic rules of living we learned at kindergarten. At the age of sixty-five, Robert L. Fulghum wrote his book "All I Really Need to Know I Learned in kindergarten." He said:

All I really need to know about how to live and what to do and how to be I learned in kindergarten. Wisdom was not at the top of the graduate school mountain, but there in the sandpile at Sunday school...Everything you need to know is there somewhere.

The golden rule and love and basic sanitation, ecology and politics and equality and sane living take any one of those items and extrapolate it into sophisticated adult terms and apply

it to your family life or your work or your government or your world and it holds true and clear and firm.

As educators, we need to be aware of the importance of early learning. We want to Implement pedagogies that embrace individuality, supports children's learning style, which many teachers and schools are already very good at, engage families and the community in the learning process, and create the bridge between school and home. Set up the classroom in a way that stimulates children's imagination and creativity. As early childhood teachers, if we can convince children and families that learning is an art, a skill that can be acquired, and use it as a tool to sharpen their talents and interest rather than an outcome, I think we will be halfway close to the change. Outside the classroom, teachers should consider joining an advocacy group such as the New York State Association of Early Childhood teachers (NSAECTE), the National Education Association (NEA), or the School Boards Association, participate in webinars and other events, stay informed on federal and state legislation, have conversations with friends and families and share their passion for better education.

Families as well can be part of the change. Getting involved in public schools is one way. Attend school board meetings or serve as a school board member, attend town hall meetings. Voting for the Education Council representative is another way families can have their voices heard. And families who have children in public school can attend PTO meetings and other events open to the public. This way, parents and teachers can work together and create a new vision and new culture for the education system and build a community that values education.

The federal government should not intrude into setting standards and school findings must be determined based on the school and the student's financial needs rather than achievements and scores. We all know the impact of poverty on children's learning. If we must deal with standards,

they have to be high-quality standards that go beyond basic skills and bubble sheets. Early childhood Standards should consider that human beings are not all alike it must Cover all areas of learning and give children a broader choice, equal opportunities, and fair access to higher education. These high-quality standards should be set as encouragement, without rewards or sanctions, not as an end in itself. The house of representatives or the senate floor is definitely, the wrong place to set these standards. High-Quality standards should be determined by professional educators and inside our public schools.

Conclusion

I choose Early Childhood Standards and Creativity as a topic for my advocacy project because I strongly believe that every child is unique. The goal of education is to guide children to find their talent and interest. Standards-based education kills children's creativity, curiosity, eagerness to learning, and creates unequal opportunities and misevaluation of children's achievement. The goal of standards is to produce a generation of people that will serve the capitalist society we live in, which Oppresses authenticity and humanity. Labeling our young learners with a learning disability or Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder ADHD and putting them under more rigid standards called IEP. These children are not sick they are unique.

My philosophy of education is a philosophy that embraces children's curiosity, individuality, and creativity. A learning pedagogy that facilitates learning and helps children find their talents. I believe children are natural learners, and each child has his own way of learning. I desire to provide a thoughtfully designed environment that excites the power of imagination. And a curriculum broad enough to celebrate their individuality, cognitive abilities, and learning styles. And I am aware that Early Childhood Standards are going to be a big challenge for me. That is why I decided to support Creativity. Maybe one day our young learners will be valued for who they are rather than their report cards.

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