

YOUR KINDLE NOTES FOR:

Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling, 10th Anniversary Edition

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15 Highlight(s) | 0 Note(s)

Yellow highlight | Location: 366

> But we've had a society essentially under central control in the United States since just after the Civil War, and such a society requires compulsory schooling government monopoly schooling to maintain itself. Before this development schooling wasn't very important anywhere. We had it, but not too much of it, and only as much as an individual wanted. People learned to read, write, and do arithmetic just fine anyway; there are some studies that suggest literacy at the time of the American Revolution, at least for non-slaves on the Eastern seaboard, was close to total. Thomas Paine's Common Sense sold 600,000 copies to a population of 3,000,000, of whom twenty percent were slaves and fifty percent indentured servants.

Note:

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> Were the Colonists geniuses? No, the truth is that reading, writing, and arithmetic only take about one hundred hours to transmit as long as the audience is eager and willing to learn. The trick is to wait until someone asks and then move fast while the mood is on. Millions of people teach themselves these things it really isn't very hard. Pick up a fifth-grade math or rhetoric textbook from 1850 and you'll see that the texts were pitched then on what would today be considered college level. The continuing cry for "basic skills" practice is a smoke screen behind which schools preempt the time of children for twelve years and teach them the seven lessons I've just described to you.

Note:

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> central control. Inevitably, large compulsory institutions want more and more, until there isn't any more to give. School takes our children away from any possibility of an active role in community life in fact, it destroys communities by relegating the training of children to the hands of certified experts
> and by doing so it ensures our children cannot grow up fully human. Aristotle taught that without a fully active role in community life one could not hope to become a healthy human being. Surely…

Note:

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> Schools teach exactly what they are intended to teach and they do it well: how to be a good Egyptian and remain…

Note:

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> How did these awful places, these "schools," come about? Well, casual schooling has always been with us in a variety of forms, a mildly useful adjunct to growing up. But "modern schooling" as we now know it is a byproduct
> of the two "Red Scares" of 1848 and 1919, when powerful interests feared a revolution among our own industrial poor. Partly, too, total schooling came about because old-line "American" families were appalled by the native cultures of Celtic, Slavic, and Latin immigrants of the 1840s and felt repugnance toward the Catholic religion they brought with them. Certainly a third contributing factor in creating a jail for children called "…

Note:

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> Some form of free-market system in public schooling is the likeliest place to look for answers, a free market where family schools and small entrepreneurial schools and religious schools and crafts schools and farm schools exist in profusion to compete with government education. I'm trying to describe a free market in schooling exactly like the one the country had until the Civil War, one in which students volunteer for the kind of education that suits them even if that means self-education. It didn't hurt Benjamin Franklin that I can see. These options exist now in miniature, wonderful survivals of a strong and vigorous past, but they are available only to the resourceful, the

courageous, the lucky, or the rich. The near impossibility of one of these better roads opening for the shattered families of the poor or for the bewildered host camped on the fringes of the urban middle class suggests that the disaster of seven-lesson schools is going to grow unless we do something bold and decisive with the mess ofgovernment monopoly schooling.

Note:

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Now here is a curious idea to ponder: Senator Ted Kennedy's office released a paper not too long ago claiming that prior to compulsory education the state literacy rate was ninety-eight percent and that after it the figure never exceeded ninety-one percent, where it stands in 1990.

Note:

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Here is another curiosity to think about: The homeschooling movement has quietly grown to a size where one and half million young people are being educated entirely by their own parents; last month the education press reported the amazing news that, in their ability to think, children schooled at home seem to be five or even ten years ahead of their formally trained peers.

Note:

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mass population. Schools are intended to produce, through the application of formulas, formulaic human beings whose behavior can be predicted and controlled.

Note:

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Independent study, community service, adventures and experience, large doses of privacy and solitude, a thousand different apprenticeships the one-day variety or longer these are all powerful, cheap, and effective ways to start a real reform of schooling. But no large-scale reform is ever going to work to repair our damaged children and our damaged society until we force open the idea of "school" to include family as the main engine of education. If we use

> schooling to break children away from parents and make no mistake, that has been the central function of schools since John Cotton announced it as the purpose of the Bay Colony schools in 1650 and Horace Mann announced it as the purpose of Massachusetts schools in 1850 we're going to continue to have the horror show we have right now.

Note:

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> Aristotle saw, a long time ago, that fully participating in a complex range of human affairs was the only way to be become fully human; in that he differed from Plato. What is gained from consulting a specialist and surrendering all judgment is often more than outweighed by a
> permanent loss of one's own volition. This discovery accounts for the curious texture of real communication, where people argue with their doctors, lawyers, and ministers, tell craftsmen what they want instead of accepting what they get, frequently make their own food from scratch instead of buying it in a restaurant or defrosting it, and perform many similar acts of participation. A real community is, of course, a collection of real families who themselves function in this participatory way.

Note:

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> Nearly a century ago a French sociologist wrote that every institution's unstated first goal is to survive and grow, not to undertake the mission it has nominally staked out for itself. Thus the first goal of a government
> postal service is not to deliver the mail; it is to provide protection for its employees and perhaps a modest status ladder for the more ambitious ones. The first goal of a permanent military organization is not to defend national security but to secure, in perpetuity, a fraction of the national wealth to distribute to its personnel.

Note:

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> One thing I do know, though: most of us who've had a taste of loving families, even a little taste, want our kids to be part of one. One other thing I know is that eventually you have to come to be part of a place

> - part
> of its hills and streets and waters and people or you will live a very, very sorry life as an exile forever. Discovering meaning for yourself as well as discovering satisfying purpose for yourself, is a big part of what education is. How this can be done by locking children away from the world is beyond me.

Note:

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> A Massachusetts Senator said a while ago that his state had a higher literacy rate before it adopted compulsory schooling than after. It's certainly an idea worth considering: schools reached their maximum efficiency long ago, meaning that "more" for schools will make things worse, instead of better.

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