

# The World Needs a New Curriculum

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“Decide in your heart of hearts what really excites and challenges you... Don't let life randomly kick you into the adult you don't want to become.”

— Chris Hadfield, astronaut

**WHAT** will it take for the world to stop offering our children an education that is only a slightly updated version of what was offered in the nineteenth century, and provide our children a third millennium education that truly meets their own individual needs — while meeting society's needs in the process?

**WHO** will be the first to break away from the useless chase of international rankings, and adopt and offer an education that will quickly improve the life of all children — while producing the motivated workers we need?

**WHEN** will politicians and countries understand that in our new world connections and work are global, and that, as a result, world education is not national, but a collective creation that must be at the same high standard for everyone, everywhere?

Today such a “third millennium education” doesn't exist —as it should — anywhere. Who will provide it for our students?

That is the mission of the not-for-profit  
**GLOBAL FUTURE EDUCATION FOUNDATION  
AND INSTITUTE**

We must teach the world's youth to become  
**GOOD, CAPABLE, AND WORLD-IMPROVING PEOPLE**  
by mastering  
**EFFECTIVE THINKING, EFFECTIVE ACTION, EFFECTIVE  
RELATIONSHIPS AND EFFECTIVE ACCOMPLISHMENT**  
while  
**FINDING AND FOLLOWING THEIR PASSION**  
in symbiosis with  
**EVOLVING TECHNOLOGY**

**M**ost agree that the world's education needs a serious rethinking for the new millennium we are entering. But the approach of almost all today's reforms and reformers is hardly to change education at all at a fundamental level — in fact it's the opposite.

The goals of education reformers today — (1) to get people into school who are not currently there (e.g. girls, rural poor, dropouts, etc.) (2) to teach our old “core” of math, language arts, science and history in a more engaging way through new technologies and methods, and (3) to add in some creativity, entrepreneurship, innovation and ICT skills that are missing — is hardly the fundamental fix world education needs. On the contrary, it is but a set of temporary and expensive bandages, that will soon have to be thrown away.

Why? Achieving some of these current goals will surely please some parents and politicians in the short term, but they will not, I submit, prepare our children for the world they will face in the third millennium. We need a different approach. And almost all our young people already feel this at some level.

### **But Right Now They Have No Alternative**

Right now, only a tiny few are ever given a choice of educations: although there exists some minor variation in what is offered by the private sector, *there is no generally accepted alternative anywhere to the current world curriculum of math, language, science and history.*

What would such an alternative education — a new world “core” curriculum, designed for the future, rather than for the past — look like? I believe we can now begin to answer that question.

### First, a New Common Goal: “Becoming”

It begins, I believe, with the world’s adopting a new common goal for education. The goal of education is NOT “learning” (although that is certainly what the world’s educational establishment is today concerned with producing and measuring.) The goal of education, rather, is “*becoming*.” The reason we educate our kids is so that each young person can become a good, capable and world-improving person, the best person he or she can be. Learning is only a *means* to becoming — and there are other, even better means (such as accomplishing). We have been, up until now, unhelpfully confusing our means with the goal.

### Second, Passion-Based — A Different Education For Each Student

We are now at a point where the huge diversity in the strengths and passions of our young people can finally be accommodated in education —through technology, we can deliver a different, customized education to each person *in function of their individualness*. This immediately removes today’s huge problem of motivation, since each person’s best motivation *is* their own passion. Today more and more young people are realizing that the education we offer them is often less for their benefit than for ours. Respecting our young people — something almost all students feel is sorely lacking in today’s education — starts with building our education around their individual preferences.

### Third, a “New Core,” Common To All

If all students are different, can *anything* be the same for all? I believe the answer is yes: For our kids — anywhere — to be successful, in education, in work and in life, there are fundamental skills — “roots” if you will — that we must teach and develop in EVERY student, during their primary and secondary (K-12) years. At the highest level, those skills are **Effective Thinking, Effective Action, Effective Relationships** and **Effective Accomplishment** (developed and practiced in whatever domain a student’s passion(s) lie.)

Today far too many of these essential roots are missing from our K-12. For example, in our rush to competitively fill our children with details of math, language arts, science and history, key things we DO NOT—systematically—teach our kids include the following:

- **Effective Thinking:** Although we do teach mathematical and scientific thinking systematically, and, lately, perhaps, critical thinking and collaborative problem-solving skills, we rarely teach the skills of creative thinking, design thinking, integrative thinking, systems thinking, financial thinking, judgment, transfer, inquiry, argument, aesthetics, positive mindset, self-knowledge of one’s passions, strengths and weaknesses, stress control, focus, contemplation or meditation.

- **Effective Action:** We rarely systematically teach all that is known about the Habits of Highly Effective People, leadership & followership, decision making under uncertainty, patience, resilience, grit, entrepreneurship, innovation, improvisation, ingenuity, breaking barriers, project management, coaching & being coached, programming machines, and making effective videos and interacting with future technologies
- **Effective Relationships:** We do not systematically teach communication & collaboration in teams, in families, in a community, at work, online, or in virtual worlds. We do not systematically teach our kids the skills of relationship-building, empathy, compassion, tolerance, ethics, politics, citizenship, conflict resolution, and negotiation.

Yet all of these things CAN be taught systematically, and at increasing levels of sophistication, to all students, during the primary and secondary (K-12) years. Many pieces of this curriculum already exist in various places. But to do so we must eliminate a lot of what we currently offer.

Today we have it backwards: most of what we teach today is NOT necessary for ALL students, and most of what ALL STUDENTS REALLY NEED TO KNOW — i.e. Effective Thinking, Effective Action, Effective Relationships and Effective Accomplishment — is not a part (at least systematically) of their K-12 education.

#### **Fourth: Technology**

All the skills mentioned above are *human* skills. As humans become more and more symbiotic with our technology (at different rates in different parts of the world), technology is becoming the new **underlying foundation and support** for all these human skills, just as reading was the main support in the past. Technology alone cannot provide the curriculum we need — humans must be part of it. Our students must learn to interact effectively with the technologies of the future, and our education must involve helping students combine what humans do best with what machines do even better — leading them to what I call “Digital Wisdom.”

#### **Fifth: Real-World, Accomplishment-Based Education**

The final element and key to implementing a new, alternative curriculum is **Real-World Accomplishment**. We can make ALL the problems our kids solve in school, and ALL the projects they do there *real, and—locally and globally—world-improving..* We must get the “Problem-Based Learning” of today out of the “made up” and into the actual, problem-filled world. A defining characteristic of our era of technology-extended brains and global connection to knowledge and to each other is that our school-age kids can now do this.

Our kids can, and should, leave their school years not just with a set of grades, but with a resume of real-world accomplishments. The students I talk to around the world feel almost unanimously that they are being held back by the current curriculum — it is a big part of why so many are alienated from education. Almost all would like to have real-world accomplishment be a big part of their preparation.

When kids' schoolwork is motivated by their own real-world interests and goals, some kids will choose STEM as their area of accomplishment; others will follow their passion in other directions. But ALL will be motivated. With a curriculum based on the “New Core” of Effective Thinking, Effective Action, Effective Relationships and Effective Accomplishment, our kids, unlike today, will all know from the names of their subjects, WHY they are in school, and WHAT they need in order to succeed in life. Moreover, they will be given—as their curriculum—*the means to get it*.

The not-for-profit Global Future Education Foundation and Institute has as its mission the creation and dissemination of just such an alternative curriculum in the world. Our first publication *The World Needs a New Curriculum*, is available on our website: [global-future-education.org](http://global-future-education.org). Should you want to learn more, we can be reached through the site or at [marcprensky@gmail.com](mailto:marcprensky@gmail.com).

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