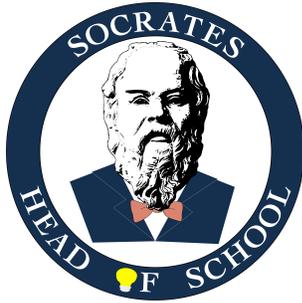


What School Could Be by Ted Dintersmith



Think you might want to read this book?

Wonder what's ailing American schools? Ted Dintersmith spent a year traveling America to find out and highlight solutions. *What Schools Could Be* is the report from his 50 states, 200 schools, over a hundred community forums, and a thousand meetings. Innovation from K-12, online, colleges and universities as well as more short-term immersive experiences are all highlighted. If you are interested in tuning in to the American education innovation landscape, this book will give you a smattering of just about

everything.

What would Socrates ask?

- What if we expected students to be able to say why they are learning/doing something and if they can't we stop to explain?
- What if projects for each unit ended with social impact (e.g., letter to congress people, entrance in film festivals, marching for social change, etc.)?
- What if all high schools had local partnerships for internships, mentoring, and experiential learning?
- What if coding, website design, and social media were consistently options for student projects?
- Is the purpose of school to develop human potential or to rank it?

Research

- Federal funds cover just 10% of national K-12 public school expenditures
- ...mentors, internships, clubs, and meaningful longer-term projects- far more than grades and test scores- were the pivotal preconditions for future success.
- Some 71% of 2015 college grads left with an average student loan debt of \$35,000.
- ...just 3% of the enrollment at our nation's most competitive colleges comes from families in the bottom income quartile.

Concepts

- PEAK principles: Students thrive in environments where they develop:
 - Purpose- Students attack challenges they know to be important, that make their world better.
 - Essentials- Students acquire the skill sets and mind-sets needed in an increasingly innovative world.
 - Agency- Students own their learning, becoming self-directed, intrinsically motivated adults.
 - Knowledge- What students learn is deep and retained enabling them to create, to make, to teach others.

Quotes from the author

- We can make education better and more equitable by challenging students with real-world problems.
- ...almost every important life decision hinges on understanding probability and statistics. Almost none depends on algebra, trigonometry, geometry, or calculus-the backbone of grade 7-12 math. Go figure.
- As I traveled, though, teacher after teacher expressed dissatisfaction with available professional development resources-whether in college or in the field. To a person, they called for better ways to teach our teachers-the most direct path to modernizing our classrooms.
- Our national K-12 education mantra is "College and Career Ready," but the phrase is misleading. In reality, schools prepare students for their college application, not college. Career is strictly an afterthought.
- High school could combine the academic and the applied. Chemistry and culinary: physics and wiring electrical systems: history and producing documentaries: civics and legal defense casework.
- Quadratic education. Iambic pentameter. The periodic table. The Progressive Era. Foreign vocabulary words. Newton's Laws. Diagramming sentences. Factoring polynomials. State capitals. Avagadro's number. Gerunds. Dissecting an earthworm. And on and on. These phrases take you right back to high school, the last time they were in your life.
- Should we require students to read classics and expect favor to erupt? Make teenagers read *King Lear* and expect them to love a piece that Shakespeare intended audiences to see, not read? Or, do we seek to foster a love for language through whatever hook works for a child- Harry Potter, slam poetry, Emily Bronte, or rap?
- Evaluating applicants on the basis of digital portfolios has the potential to create a different K-12 universe. Instead of being pushed to produce numbers, students would be encouraged to create bold initiatives-a science experiment, a novel, or a fund-raiser for a classmate's family devastated by a drive-by shooting. Kids can take intellectual risks and learn to handle setbacks and failures.
- If we represent the accomplishments of four years in high school with a one-page transcript, students will organize their time to produce the best possible transcript.
- Many families choose a school not because they think it's better but because it's far away. If their child spends more time on a bus each day, the parent can work longer hours without worrying about childcare.

Quotes from others

- "If we teach today's students as we taught yesterday's, we rob them of tomorrow. - John Dewey
- "Project-based learning is how people work in the real world. We need to let our kids create portfolios of joy." - Doug Lyons

Organizations/schools working on answers

- [Big Picture Learning](#)
- [Acton Academy](#)
- [Mastery Transcript Consortium](#)
- [New Tech Network](#)
- [OneStone](#)
- [U-32](#)
- [Atlanta K-12 Design Challenge](#)
- [Lab Atlanta](#)
- [Pittsburgh's Remake Learning Network](#)

Gateways to further learning

- [World Peace and Other Fourth Grade Achievements](#)
- [Iowa Big](#)

Referenced books with the potential to impact leading and learning in education

| Author(s) Last Name | Title |
|---------------------|---|
| Wagner | <i><u>Most Likely to Succeed: Preparing Our Kids for the Innovation Era</u></i> |
| Roksa | <i><u>Academically Adrift</u></i> |
| Crow | <i><u>Designing the New American University</u></i> |
| Bledsoe | <i><u>Parenting with Dignity</u></i> |
| Khan | <i><u>One World Schoolhouse</u></i> |
| Johnston | <i><u>In the Deep Heart's Core</u></i> |
| Sizer | <i><u>Horace's Compromise</u></i> |
| Russakoff | <i><u>The Prize: Who's in Charge of America's Schools?</u></i> |

The applicability of this book to education is



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