# **Modernizing America’s Education System**

**“A Proposal to Completely Alter The Way We Educate American Youth”**



Martin Dreyfuss

Chen Chen Sun

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The United States of America’s education system is archaic, and what once embodied the American Dream now symbolizes national failure. In the 20th century, people came from around the globe seeking American education (will be referred to as USA Edu.); however, in recent decades, USA Edu’s prestige has drastically declined. In fact, in 2022, USA Edu ranked outside the top 10 for literacy in mathematics, sciences and language, behind countries like Singapore, Japan, and Finland. (Jackson, 2016) Many people point to micro problems such as high education costs, education discrepancies, outdated textbooks, and a lack of teachers; each being right in their regard. However, since there is a laundry list of problems plaguing USA Edu. one must conclude that the system as a whole needs fixed, and further isolating any one of these problems will only mask the overall issue. In this proposal, I will first show the rise and fall of America’s Education System, then analyze top education systems in 2022 to determine USA Edu’s shortcomings, and finish by offering a proposal for The United States to regain its international standing amongst scholars.

In 1830 Horace Mann, who created the Massachusetts School Board, pushed for the enactment of universal public schools. This was a gradual process that struggled expanding due to slavery and the civil war, but by 1870, succeeded in enrolling seventy-eight percent of children ages five to fourteen. (Kober, 2020) In 1938 Franklin D Roosevelt banned child labor, and thus a large number of children left the mines and headed for school. Despite these major expansions, throughout the early and middle part of the 1900s, USA Edu’s biggest black spot was still literacy discrepancies based on race, gender and income. (Cengage, 2021)

Further investments happened after WWII when America rejected over 5 million soldiers for illiteracy. This crisis caused the birth of our modern education system. Math, Science, Reading and Writing dominated coursework and universities alike for the next few decades. Internationally USA Edu. gained prestige after the war, boasting the number one ranking for high school and third ranking for college education internationally. As USA Edu. entered the 1950s, America boosted attendance in secondary schools, and started encouraging adults to return to school. Boosting high school graduation from 14 percent in 1910 to 55 percent in 1970. (Kober, 2022) Then finally, in the 1960s, USA Edu. desegregated schools and attempted to lower education discrepancy in the country. These years were the peak decades of American Education, and since then results have only gone down. (Cengage, 2021)

The 1970s was the start of the collapse of USA Edu. Nationally declining test scores coupled with debates on how school ‘ought to be’ taught set a foundation for future setbacks in America. This house of cards toppled in the 1980s when states separated school requirements. Some states spent more time on driver and drug education and less time on math and science, SAT scores started plummeting, and in the1990s, USA Edu entered its darkest hour. Parents feared for children’s school safety throughout the 1990s as there were more than 100 shootings involving students. (Wiki, 2018) (\*fact checked) This culminated with Columbine in 1999, but by then both a lack of trust and lack of investment in the actual education of children caused extreme public disconnect. In fact, America has had the most school shootings in the world at 288, second is Mexico at 8. (WorldPop., 2022) (Encyclopedia, 2021)

Today, USA Edu. lacks concrete direction. Furthermore, since we have moved back to a Math, English and Science-based education system, we pushed arts and humanities to the wayside. Overall, America has been in a downward intelligence spiral for five decades, and with so many different problems, the system has proven irreparable. Unfortunately, this is highlighted by one of the most prominent debates in today’s education system. Whom is to blame for USA Edu’s failure? Teachers blame students’ attitude and technology misusage, while students blame poorly constructed curricula and claim to learn more outside the classroom. This blame game, which even extends to parents, which just further proves a broken system. So, from policy to action, lack of respect to lack of investments, and a country stuck blaming instead of solving, how can we fix this disaster?

The biggest obstacle to creating this direction is each individual state’s power to determine their own standards for education. Each state has a different way to teach, from the amount and length of school days, standards of required state testing, teacher certification requirements, and even graduation requirements. To highlight, 70 percent of state tests vary in requirements while around 60 percent of state test standards are below NAEP standards (National Assessment of Educational Progress). (Air, 2009) To correct these discrepancies, we must establish essential skills in our students, understand how to give students more access to a variety of skills, and learn how to peak student interest. In our proposal, we will do this by assuming the new education system is a federal mandate that creates a free education system and equal opportunity nationally.

Another major problem plaguing USA Edu. is the courses emphasized in the 21st century. In a time of Google and the internet, we must stop fighting the ability to access information but embrace it. On any given day, students can learn how to be content creators, lawyers, marketers, business owners, doctors, coders, and nearly every other career imaginable. Instead of fueling these creative flames USA Edu has gone in favor of purity in math, science, and English, the same system Horace Mann wanted in 1830. Instead, we should focus on developing a system that instructs the basics in the aforementioned areas whilst emphasizing and identifying student passion, allowing them to succeed in a 21st century education system. This will be done by creating a 9-year program to teach the basics of Math, Science, English and History before transitioning into 4-year school to identify, train, and assign students to a desired career. To effectively create this education system, we will first look at the top educated countries in the world and their methods to understand effective strategies.

Finland used to be similarly ranked to the United States, mediocre in education over the past few decades. Since the 1960s, Finland recognized their flaws, innovated, and now has been widely recognized as the top-rated education system globally. The Finnish do not start school till they are seven years old and are only required to go to school for nine years; their school weeks are 20 hours a week, compared to over 30 hours a week on average for an American student; and unlike American students who spend 13.5 hours a week on homework, Finnish students have no homework. These statistics couples with literacy rankings to prove that students are capable of learning more in less time. Finland also has laws in place so private schools cannot charge tuition, and by doing so, Finland also represents the country with the lowest education gap globally. According to Finnish teachers, allowing different classes to intermingle teaches all classes valuable lessons. (Moore, 2015) Michael Moore, an interviewer, and star of Who to Invade Next, interviewed Finnish teachers who also said their main priority was for students to play and live happy lives. (Moore, 2015)

Other countries can teach us a lot too! In America, school lunch is compared with prison food, which based on cost is fair. Many states spend less than a dollar per meal per prisoner, sometimes as low as 50 cents. (Santo, 2015) Our youth isn’t treated much better. For elementary students a (soy-based protein) chicken nugget meal cost the school 98 cents. This isn’t common in first world countries, as many places internationally treat lunch as an event. Although not rated top 10 for literacy, France has one of the best lunch systems in the world. French kids have an hour-long lunch etiquette class, and for a typical lunch they eat coursed meals. Scallops and cod filets, a choice of cheese, and Crème Brulé. (Moore, 2015) Overall, the time and money spent, and care delivered to American students doesn’t come close to the world’s top education systems. To solve our nutritional failures, we must nationalize and expand our education budget. This will allow us to invest not just in our kid’s education, but our children’s long-term health.

So how do we bring the American Way to the world’s education? Or better yet, how do we get the world’s education system to America? First, we have to be honest. Our schools are too expensive. According to NPR, a parent pays over **10,000 dollars a year** for a child to attend high school. (Vo, 2015) This amount is 1/8 of the average income for a house of 4 in America. (Census, 2021) Meaning ¼ of the median American income is going into high school after taxes. To create an internationally capable education system, we must make education free and equal for all citizens. This rids private schools and lowers Edu discrepancies as seen in Finland.

 The final issue with USA Edu. we must address is its stress on the students. According to Vistanow.org American students must complete 2,000 hours of ‘school time’ each year, including homework. In comparison, the Finnish go to school 950 hours a year with no homework. (Jenkins, 2021) Further proof that students are overworked, and receiving lackluster education. With these faults in mind and the understanding that fixing one problem alone will fix nothing at all. What is the solution I am offering?

**The School of The Future**

The School of The Future is an education system designed to identify a student’s passions, teach them soft and hard skills to be successful, and place them in a situation at 19-years-old in a company designed to turn students into successful community members. So, before we begin, take the old k-12 system, and put it somewhere far away in your brain. The school of the future will start a child at six years old and be a 9-year program working through Algebra I in math; Biology, Geology, and Psychology in science; an international view to world history; and a complete understanding of grammar, writing personality, and different writing formats in English. There will be no homework like in Finnish schools, allowing kids to be kids. We will create a macro budget proposal to ensure all states across America receive this school, and work under the assumption that *School of The Future* is a federal mandate. Furthermore, The *School of The Future,* will be results based, and place an emphasis on teaching and motivating students, not letting them get by regardless. No failing only learning. This free education system is designed to teach, lower education discrepancy, and place all students in the field best for their desires and abilities.

Ensuring American students have a proper understanding of basic Math, Science, English, and History, was important to Horace Mann, and is important today. The reasoning behind Algebra 1 as the math requirement was simple. Algebra 1 is “the gate-keeper of higher math.” (Gojack, 2013) By giving students a basic mathematic foundation, all students can perform basic financial and mathematic functions, and learn further mathematics as necessary. By choosing psychology, geology, and biology as the required science criteria, USA Edu. will give students an understanding of the earth, space, the human mind, and the human body, important knowledge regardless of a student’s profession. Like Germany, who teaches the damages and world view of the holocaust extensively, *The School of The Future,* will teach history from multiple perspectives. For example, we will teach American-pro and anti-Vietnam war perspectives, as well as add the Vietnam perspective. We will teach the American-pro and anti-Afghanistan war perspectives, as well as the Iraqi perspective. This will give our students an understanding of all cultures growing up, ancient and modern. Finally, we will strive to achieve top 5 international reading comprehension, while teaching our students grammar as well as how to write with voice and purpose. The first thing a college English professor told me was “forget how you were taught to write in high school.” That has to change.

After these nine years, the 15-year-old student will enter a four-year program, kind of like college but a bit different. Here, the child will create a top 5 interest list of careers. Choices range from broadcaster to CEO, sports star to a musician, surgeon to a lawyer, and many more. Once creating this list, they will spend 5 hours a week role-playing the day-to-day of that career. Meaning students go to school 5 hours a day, 5 days a week, and learn what 5 different careers are like. For example, a student on Monday who chose surgeon will spend time practicing dissecting to learn anatomy, learning diagnosis by reviewing AI patients, and understanding the stresses they will face through increasing difficulty of tasks. Tuesday, as a chef, that student will learn different cuisines, meats, and signature dishes, again increasing difficulty throughout the semester, and so on and so forth. They will do this for 40 weeks or 1000 hours a year. In the second year, the student will narrow down this list to 2.

They will spend the next two years doing the tedious work of the profession. Textbooks, essays, the history of the field, and other necessary information to succeed will all be accomplished in these years. For the first-time school days increase, they will be 7 hours, five days a week, for 35 weeks a year, or 1225 hours annually. By the end of this phase, the student will possess the knowledge to enter two different fields and already have a basic understanding of what is expected and what he or she should know. This knowledge includes terminology, past and future of the industry, lab work or equivalent, and more.

In the last year, the student will decide on one career path. The School of the Future will then match the student with a local leading company designed to apply studies to the first step of their careers. Like an internship, the student will develop a professional network, meet potential mentors, and gain relevant experience to grow in their field. These internships will last 1 to 3 years and be equal to entry level pay. Each company’s goal is to ensure student readiness by the end of their tenure. These companies will be judged exceptionally critically by USA Edu. and rewarded for their support of American youth. For example, A student who just accomplished all the requirements for sports broadcasting would go to CBS sports. There they would begin spending time understanding what is expected professionally and bridging the gap between school and work. Then the student would start writing articles for the website, help write for shows, and from time to time give an on-air take. By the end of the first year, both USA Edu and CBS sports will do a professional review to determine whether to A) recommend the student seek jobs freely B) recommend the student goes back to learn for another year, or C) after multiple failures to reach field proficiency, reconsider career choice. This will be a recommendation as the student may leave to seek employment despite certification or get more education despite proficiency. The companies who participate in these programs will also be given the first opportunity to offer the student a position within that first year.

The biggest change in our modern system is becoming a result based educational system. This means if you do not pass the mandated requirements for any level of school you will retake that course until you know it. This works both ways as if a student can successfully pass the broadcasting test a year early, they will start year four at 18 years old. For those who struggle in subjects there will be an extensive tutoring program. From at-home meetings to peer-to-peer help, resources will not only be readily available, but readily marketed to all of our students for free. This will ensure that even if a student struggles to get past certain levels of education they will have the help to learn and succeed in the future. Note, failing these courses does not prohibit the student’s ability to go to the 4-year program, nor receive the same jobs as students who did not fail. Students will also have the opportunity to take different paths to graduation. If geology is too difficult at that time, they can take the course any year before graduation. For example, if the initial student path is geology, biology, psychology, but the student isn’t ready for geology, they may take the other two courses first, however all three must be finished before entering the 4-year program.

For those who were unable to succeed in school initially and chose to do less educated work, or for those who want a career change, school is not out. The *School of The Future* will continue education into adulthood utilizing the same 4-year process for new students and removing the first year upon request of returning students. This will allow people of all ages to enter careers they enjoy seamlessly and allow companies to know that the old dog has already been taught the new tricks. These schools on paper are the exact same but will of course be separated from children schools. This will lower age discrimination, and the system as a whole lowers race and gender discrimination based on its new USA Edu Certifications.

The School of The Future will give children excitement when they come to school, still educate them on basic math, science, writing and world history, but most importantly, identify and start them in a career of their own by 19 years old. Taking notes out of the Finnish book, we have lowered the number of hours students spend in school and allowed them to enjoy time afterward with no homework stress. We have taken great systems and added innovations to make them best suited for our population. What will set USA Edu apart from the world is that we will design a system that won’t just educate our society but places them in a position to contribute and grow in their field. If we implement this education system and tie in a new way of ‘after graduation employment acquisition’ and universal promotions based on results, America could once again lead in Math, Science, Tech, Writing, The Arts, and most fields in the world.

To better educate our children, we must better feed our children. According to studies done by the CDC a healthy student has better academic habits and achievement. Yet, most schools have a similar food budget per student as prisons do per prisoner. To fix this shameful issue, the *School of The Future* will create professional 12 top dining halls. Designed to subconsciously build confidence, stimulate the brain, and relax the body. There will be bread, chips, or snacking food at the center of the table, and the students will have a 1 hour 3 course meal. Just like France. At lunch kids will place an emphasis on learning body language, confidence, and communication skills, along with etiquette. This hour will not be included in the school hours but will be free.

A large concern about this proposal is the cost of building large schools filled with: studios, labs, business offices, mechanic shops, tech labs, and dining halls. To solve this problem, we will have to create a budget and then remove parts of other American budgets to also ensure we don’t increase debt by the trillions. I am not a budget expert, but as a way to solve this dilemma I will turn you to the top spending areas by the United States Government. Then show how Colorado and other states have created a tax surplus towards education.

The United States Military budget is 778 billion dollars annually. Three times the second highest country in the world China. The largest area of the USA budget is welfare at 1.046 trillion dollars. This is 1.824 trillion dollars of our 2.739 trillion-dollar annual budget. The *School of The Future* will lower Edu. discrepancies, and nearly guarantee everyone a job, freeing up nearly 1 trillion dollars annually, instantly. However, assuming we can rid welfare is unrealistic, so let’s assume we can rid ¼ or 250 billion dollars of welfare. America is built as the strongest military in the world, and Americans wouldn’t realistically reverse that process. However, if we got rid of 100 billion dollars annually, we would more than double China’s military budget, whilst having decades of a head start. Finally, rather than just cutting the budget, we should expand it. To do so we must open a large market and tax it federally. In 2016, Colorado legalized recreational marijuana at a 25 percent tax. In 2020 Colorado had a 20 billion dollar tax surplus. Being that 18 states have legalized recreational marijuana, and the ‘more act’ passed federally decriminalizing pot, we can realistically legalize and tax marijuana, adding 100 billion dollars to America’s annual tax income. (20 billion times 50 states)

Now that we have established what the *School of The Future* is, and how we can afford it, the last step is for America is to admit its wrongs and implement the plan. I do not claim to have perfected every detail, in fact alone that would take a lifetime. However, I have provided an essential outline to both the flaws of our current system, why the current system cannot be fixed, and a 21st century option to educate our youth just as good if not better than the worlds best. We have better systems to place our students in the workforce, we ensure that students are in a desired field, and in doing so should create a better economy, lower unemployment, and less people below the poverty line. I believe changing other systems in our overall government structure would further benefit our community, but I fear those changes may be too much for our society to handle.

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