



## *A Drum Roll Please For NOT Continuing Every Child Left Behind!*

by  
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While the latest generation of reformers lobby to personalize and humanize public education the establishment rolls out its traditional fear-based talking points. “If our children are to compete in a global market we must have first class curriculum and strong standards.” Who can argue with that?

Real education is the development of human capacities, potential and new possibilities. Real education is not – and I repeat not the hand-madden of corporate cloning – that is to get a job. When getting a job becomes the goal, and it is for most, real development is shunted into predictable well controlled patterns, exactly what we don’t want in a fast changing dynamic world. Unfolding human capacity comes first. Applying those skills to contribute to the social web flows from that. Not the other way around.

The key issue being debated is the need for uniform standards and assessments. What we call standardized tests are tools to measure, to assess. Measurement tools are necessary. How do we know how far we jumped unless we measure, unless we have a standard of measurement, inches, feet and yards? Let’s be practical. Shared meaning would be impossible if one person used inches, another meters and another cubits. Standards are essential.

The issue isn’t measurement, feedback. The issue is the ‘high stakes’ value and consequences attached to one’s personal performance when compared to others. Comparison is the culprit, not the feedback obtained from measurement.

Optimum learning and performance unfolds naturally when thought, feeling and action are entrained – coherent. If we are being watched, judged, evaluated, compared - whether giving birth, passing a spelling test or lining up a three foot putt — coherence is lost. Part of our attention is invested in meeting the challenge and part is concerned about looking good, belonging, being accepted. The greater the pressure, higher the stakes, the greater percentage of energy and attention that goes into defense – looking good.

Feedback is one thing. Judging, comparing, categorizing – you are smart – you are not – competition based conformity, with its fear and anxiety, is quite another. With feedback there is no personal identification with the measurement. The milk spilled on the floor. With judgment and comparison we, our social image and status, become the object that is being judged and compared by the evaluation. You spilled the milk! With feedback milk is the object. With judgment, comparison and competition the spotlight is on us.

Feedback is essential. Judging, comparison and social categories, all implicit forms of punishment and reward, behavior modification and control, are crippling if true human development is the goal.

We must have high standards if we are to compete as individuals and as a nation in the international marketplace. This is and has been the rallying call. Indeed, but who's standards - some outside, often politicized authority or one's own intrinsic perception of truth, beauty and appropriateness?

The research on states of optimum learning and performance is convincing. Intrinsic motivation is the hallmark of optimum performance at any age, in any field. In optimum states feedback is constantly being used, like a scalpel, to carve away waste and imbalance, to increase precision and creativity.

The instant comparison, not as a scientist might compare one result with another, but myself-image compared to yours, enters - optimum states of learning and performance disappear. There is a shift of energy and attention away from the immediate challenge to 'what will they think of me if I win or not?' Motivation is transformed. Appropriate intelligent creativity is replaced with self-image and its defense.

Feedback is natural. You hit the ball and watch it fly. 'You are a champion or an idiot' is a form of social control – behavior modification. Learning and development is natural. Compulsory government controlled schooling – all twelve years plus several years of preschool and college - is mostly behavior modification and social conditioning – all carefully bound and powered by the same self-image based threat of approval or disapproval. And, as the ancient maximum describes, 'as above – so below,' parents, educators and politicians are all caught in the same net.

Feedback is one thing. The way feedback is used as a tool to twist the human psyche is quite another. Until we are absolutely clear about the distinction between these two – our good intentions will continue to pave the way to....

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