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An Education is More Than Academics

By T. Anon

The opinions expressed within this text are those of the author and not necessarily the views of the authors of this test.

I believe in the power of schools, for better or worse. Schools should encourage students to think outside of the box and embrace their individuality. Schools often promote conformity and conventionality. Most schools expect students to walk single-file in the hallways without talking. When was the last time you walked anywhere single-file and quietly? This is not the real world. Why can't kids be told to walk and talk quietly without disturbing their friends? That skill can actually help in the real world – during a business meeting, in the movies, at religious events, or watching the fourth grade spring concert.

When my son was in preschool, the class had just read the story “Humpty-Dumpty.” As I walked in the children were cutting out their Humpty Dumpty eggs. Well, my son was coloring his egg purple. One of the little girls came up to me and whined, “He’s coloring his Humpty-Dumpty purple; it’s supposed to be white!” So I replied to her in my most professional, motherly voice, “He can color his Humpty-Dumpty any color he wants.” (nah, nah!). Another day I walked in and the children were playing in their centers. Three children were in the music center, each playing an instrument. One cried out, “Hey, a parade!” Well another child ran over to grab the triangle to join the parade; when the teacher saw, she stopped the children. Kindly, she directed the children to the posted rule and questioned the children, “How many children

25 are allowed in this center at one time?” Clearly the number two was posted. Well, instead
26 of a parade, all the children left the music center. So much for spontaneity!

27 When the preschool teacher told me that my son didn’t know all his letters, she
28 stated as a matter of fact, “At this point, I don’t think he’ll ever catch up.” I just
29 responded, “I think he might.” I was fairly confident that not knowing all his letters in
30 preschool would not prevent him from learning how to read or write eventually.

31 The following year, I went to visit my son’s kindergarten class, and the students
32 were just running out of the school to the playground for recess. Since part of the ground
33 was extremely muddy, the teacher reminded the students, “Please watch the for mud and
34 go around it.” Well needless to say a number of students ran halfway across the mud and
35 then stopped. They looked at the teacher for direction. I asked the teacher why they
36 were just standing there. She told me that they had difficulty problem solving and being
37 resourceful. By the way, my guy, who still didn’t know all his letters, found a way
38 around the mud using the macadam* of the basketball court and part of the playground
39 decking.

40 Successful people are those who can think critically and adjust to new situations.
41 I believe schools have a vital role in that process. Thanks to creative, supportive
42 teachers, my son has caught up and can read and write on grade level; most importantly
43 though, he is creative and can think independently – just ask him.

• pavement

QUESTIONS:

Using the notes you made in the article you just read, write an essay responding to one of the questions below. Remember that you have two hours (120 minutes) to complete this test.

- A.** According to T. Anon, “schools should encourage students to think outside of the box and embrace their individuality” (7-8). What examples does the author use to support this view? What skills, according to Anon, do people need to acquire in school in order to become successful? Do you agree with her position? Use examples from the article and from your own experience to support your views.

- B.** Discuss the significance of the title, “An Education is More Than Academics.” What does T. Anon suggest is important in education? How does she use her son’s positive and negative experience in school to support her view? Do you agree with her position? Use examples from the article and from your own experience to support your argument.

- C.** T. Anon writes about the disconnect between school’s promotion of “conformity and conventionality” (9) and “the real world.” What are some of the concerns that she raises about this disconnect? Do you feel that there is a disconnect between the skills promoted in schools and those necessary for success in the real world? Use examples from the article and from your own experience to support your views.