

21st Century Direction for Education

“Are we fixing the wrong things?” *Educational Leadership*, May 2006 – Yong Zhao, Distinguished Professor of Education and Director of the U.S.- China Center for Research on Education Excellence,
(synopsis of article)

- Even though math and science performance is poorer and interest in math and science is less among U.S. students, the United States remains an economic leader and innovative powerhouse because of the creative, risk-taking, can-do spirit of its people.
- At the same time the U.S. schools are encouraged and now forced to chase after test scores, China, Singapore, South Korea, and Japan – all named as major competitors – have started education reforms aimed at fostering more creativity and innovative thinking among their citizens.
- As the United States moves toward a required curriculum of study for high schools, China works to implement a flexible system with more electives and choices for students.
- Creativity cannot be taught, but it can be killed. Involvement in the arts is a part of the multifaceted experience of growing up in the United States.

A Whole New Mind, Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future –Riverhead Trade, 2006, Daniel Pink, author and speaker (excerpts/synopsis)

- “The last few decades have belonged to a certain kind of person with a certain kind of mind – computer programmers who could crank code, lawyers who could craft contracts, MBAs who could crunch numbers. But the keys to the kingdom are changing hands. The future belongs to a very different kind of person with a very different kind of mind – creators and empathizers, pattern recognizers and meaning makers. These people – artists, inventors, designers, storytellers, caregivers, consolers, big-picture thinkers – will now reap society’s richest rewards share its greatest joys.”
- Prize aptitudes are defined as “high concept.” “High concept involves the ability to empathize with others, to understand the subtleties of human interaction, to find joy in one’s self and to elicit it in others, and to stretch beyond the quotidian in purpose and meaning.” All of these capacities are fostered and nurtured in the arts.

Phi Delta Kappan, 2006 – Paul D. Houston, Executive Director of the American Association of School Administrators (excerpts/synopsis)

- “It isn’t about how many engineers a nation has; it is about how many artists and poets it produces. These are the individuals who can create the new meaning necessary in a conceptual world.”
- The “test and tremble” model of school reform that is the current craze, which values a core over broader success, is unlikely to move us toward a more conceptual and creative society.
- “With the emphasis placed so solidly on basic reading and math, the creative activities that Pink [see above] espouses (art, music, and creative expression generally) are being squeezed out of the curriculum.”