

# Former Teacher: 7 Ways Schools are Creating 'Empty' Children

In the early 1990s, New York Teacher of the Year, [John Taylor Gatto](#), threw in the towel on teaching with his famous [I Quit, I Think](#) letter to the *Wall Street Journal*.

Gatto's reason for quitting was simple. He could no longer justify teaching "a curriculum of confusion, class position, arbitrary justice, vulgarity, rudeness, disrespect for privacy, indifference to quality, and utter dependency." Such a system, Gatto opined, was turning our children into mindless robots.

In his book, [The Underground History of American Education](#), Gatto lists fifteen ways the education system can create "empty children." Seven of them are below. Would you agree that schools and society in general have successfully implemented these steps? If so, how can we reverse the trend and raise vibrant, imaginative, and knowledgeable children?

1. "Keep children under surveillance every minute from dawn to dusk. Give no private space or time. Fill time with collective activities. Record behavior quantitatively."
2. "Addict the young to machinery and electronic displays. Teach that these are desirable to recreation and learning both."
3. "Remove as much private ritual as possible from young lives, such as the rituals of food preparation and family dining."
4. "Grade, evaluate, and assess children constantly and

publicly. Begin early. Make sure everyone knows his or her rank.”

5. “Honor the highly graded. Keep grading and real world accomplishment as strictly separate as possible so that a false meritocracy, dependent on the support of authority to continue, is created. Push the most independent kids to the margin; do not tolerate real argument.”
6. “Forbid the efficient transmission of useful knowledge, such as how to build a house, repair a car, make a dress.”
7. “Remove all significant functions from home and family life except its role as dormitory and casual companionship. Make parents unpaid agents of the State; recruit them into partnerships to monitor the conformity of children to an official agenda.”

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