

America's Kids Badly Need a 'Chore Culture'

The other day, NPR wrote a [feature article](#) about a unique program at John Bowne High School in New York City. Despite being in the heart of one of the biggest metropolises in the United States, John Bowne runs an agricultural program for upwards of 500 students.

Known as "Aggies," these students "grow crops, care for livestock and learn the rudiments of floriculture, viticulture, aquaculture, biotechnology and entrepreneurship."

According to NPR, such a program is an excellent addition to the high school curriculum because agriculture is a booming industry. The students who participate in the program will accumulate a wide variety of hands-on experience with which they can land a job in the agriculture sector, a job which may even pull their families out of poverty.

But while this is a great reason to encourage such a program, I think there's a deeper reason why more schools – both urban and rural – should consider a similar one. In a nutshell, such a program promotes what one might call a "chore culture," a culture which instills hard work, responsibility, and the knowledge of basic skills which today's society has lost. The article gives a glimpse of what this "chore culture" might look like:

"It's Monday, 8 a.m., and these teens have already mucked stalls in the barn and fed the goats, alpacas and miniature cows. They've rounded up eggs in the henhouse, harvested cabbages and a few green-tinged tomatoes, and arranged them in tidy tiers to sell in the Agriculture Store. Now they're ready to put in a full day of classes."

It's this type of chore culture that gives students an understanding of the world around them so they won't simply think that [milk comes from a grocery store](#).

It's this type of chore culture that teaches students to carry through with their responsibilities, instead of simply [ditching their new Christmas pets](#) because they didn't count the cost of time, energy, and money it would take to raise them.

And it's this type of chore culture which trains students in basic skills – such as knot tying or map reading – skills which [various surveys](#) have found are fast disappearing amongst today's young people.

Would we see a change of direction in society if more kids were raised in a “chore culture” of hard work and responsibility both at home and school?

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