3 Ways Bill Gates Can Actually Help Fix Education

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has [publicly admitted its mistakes](#) in trying to reform schools. The failure of a number of its education initiatives just underscores the fact that the foundation doesn't really have a clue as to what makes for good schools.

The lesson may just be that they should stay out of education policy altogether to avoid making things worse. But if they are going to do it (and with that much money, who's going to stop them?), the first thing they need to do is to ditch the loser ideas like Common Core in favor of some ideas that would really improve things in the nation's schools:

1. Subvert the teacher certification system.

One of the major problems with the Gates Foundation's attempts to improve education thus far is that they have ignored the chief impediment to educational progress in this country: colleges of education.

I have talked to countless teachers and, with only a handful of exceptions, they all say the same thing: in terms of academic rigor and practical usefulness, coursework in education programs sucks. And to make matters worse, education programs attract [among the lowest achieving students](#).

The problem isn't money; the problem is bad ideas. As E. D. Hirsch, Jr. pointed out in his book *[The Schools We Need and Why We Don't Have Them](#)*, education professionals are in the grip of a failed philosophy of education that rejects traditional content and traditional methods of classroom teaching.

We need more ways of getting teachers into the classroom without going through the progressivist brainwashing they receive in education programs.

2. Make schools get a curriculum.

Most teacher-training courses consist of warmed-over pop psychology. Very little of the course content has to do with what teachers are actually supposed to teach. Curriculum is the red-headed stepchild of the education world.

Try this experiment: Go to your local school and ask what the sixth graders will learn over the course of a year. Tell them to give you specifics. Then watch them dissemble. What most people don't realize is that most schools don't have a curriculum, i.e., a coherent course of studies that is consistent grade-by-grade and year-by-year.

And if you still have time, ask them to give you a list of the books they read at school. (Books… you know, the things that have learning in them.) Again, good luck getting a coherent answer.

3. Tell schools to ditch the idea that learning technology is the answer to education problems.

The research on what happens to kids who experience too much screen time [is not pretty](). In fact, the evidence seems to suggest that haphazardly distributing iPads not only does not help, but makes things worse. Maybe that's why so many tech leaders in Silicon Valley send their kids [to schools with little or no technology]().

But that might not be convincing coming from someone who made his fortune in the tech industry.