

Why Schools Need a 'Curriculum of Family'

Who should be a greater influence in a child's life: parents or teachers?

Many would say the latter. After all, teachers are the professional experts who know about childhood development and the elements of a good education. They are the ones who can get children through school, into a good college, and eventually into a high-paying job.

But do children miss out on a great deal of wisdom and insight when they are turned over to their school teachers for the bulk of their life training? Might children benefit from spending more time with their parents, working alongside them and observing their actions in daily life?

These questions came to mind after reading a *Wall Street Journal* [article](#) about Bob and Susan Burch and the entrepreneurship skills they are passing on to their five children.

Successful entrepreneurs in the clothing industry, the Burches have used their careers not only to travel around building their business, but also to train their children to follow in their footsteps. As the *WSJ* explains, the children have "debated design choices and project viability over the dinner table, and seen their father fail and succeed—while getting lessons on how."

To execute this training, however, the Burches had to think differently than most parents:

'The endgame was never getting into college or what are you going to be; our game went beyond that,' Bob says. 'It was, are we raising nice kids? Can you think independently and do

things on your own?'

To do this, the Burches took their children on work trips, were open about their failures, and immersed their children in the world of business while chatting around the dinner table.

And it looks like those life lessons have paid off. Today, the three oldest Burch children – all in their twenties –are operating their own businesses.

Could they have done this without the careful training and influence of their parents?

It's possible.

But let's be honest. Most children, removed from regular contact with their parents and left to the cookie cutter influences of the school system, will have a hard time breaking out of the mold of normalcy.

The late John Taylor Gatto understood this when he [encouraged](#) schools to give parents more access to their offspring, rather than relegating children to a constant stream of lectures and textbooks:

“Independent study, community service, adventures and experience, large doses of privacy and solitude, a thousand different apprenticeships – the one-day variety or longer – these are all powerful, cheap, and effective ways to start a real reform of schooling. But no large-scale reform is ever going to work to repair our damaged children and our damaged society until we force open the idea of ‘school’ to include family as the main engine of education. If we use schooling to break children away from parents ... we’re going to continue to have the horror show we have right now.

The ‘Curriculum of Family’ is at the heart of any good life. We’ve gotten away from that curriculum – it’s time to return to it. The way to sanity in education is for our schools to

take the lead in releasing the stranglehold of institutions on family life, to promote during schooltime confluences of parent and child that will strengthen family bonds.”

If we truly want our children to excel in the adult world, is it time we injected the “Curriculum of Family” into schools, giving parents more time to be an influence on their own children?

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