



LUMOSITY BRAIN GAMES

Train memory and attention with scientific brain games.



The Telegraph



Monday 28 July 2014

[Home](#) [News](#) [World](#) [Sport](#) [Finance](#) [Comment](#) [Culture](#) [Travel](#) [Life](#) [Women](#) [Fashion](#) [Luxury](#) [Tech](#) [Cars](#) [Video](#)[Blogs](#) | [Columnists](#) | [Personal View](#) | [Telegraph View](#) | [Letters](#) | [Cartoon Archive](#) | [My Telegraph](#) | [Politics](#)

[HOME](#) » [COMMENT](#)

School tests should be short and sharp

By Janet Daley

12:01AM GMT 19 Nov 2007

85 Comments

What a mess we are in over testing school children. How have we reached the point where a pretty straightforward matter - examining the levels of skill and knowledge among pupils - has become an imbroglio of such absurd complexity and high political risk?

We have grown so accustomed to the wild hyperbole that characterises this debate that we no longer seem surprised by the most fatuous statements. Last week, the Primary Review body of Cambridge academics published a report (based on a sample of 750 people - smaller than a viable opinion poll survey) which says that primary school children are sinking in a tide of anxiety in which "scary" SAT exams are put on a par with terrorism and climate change.

Do you laugh or cry? Then, the Secondary Schools and Academic Trust issued a rather confusing condemnation of both the SAT and GCSE systems, which states that exams at 16 are almost certainly being

Print this article

Share 0

Facebook 0

Twitter 0

Email

LinkedIn 0

0

Comment

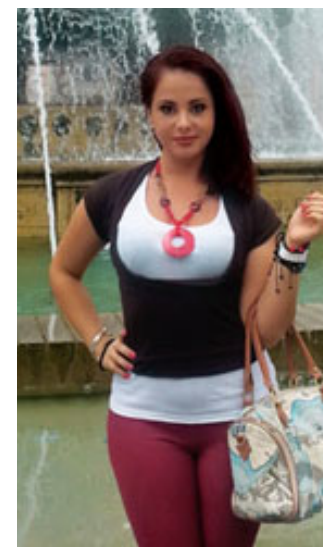
In Comment



Follow us on...

facebook

twitter



Shocking French Video

If you do not know French, you should really see this video.

You'll be absolutely shocked!

[Watch Video](#)



Telegraph Comment & Blogs



dumbed down, but also says that they are still separating academic sheep from "work-ready" goats and are actually encouraging pupils to leave education too early.

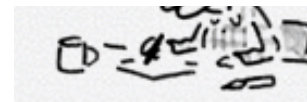
What do we conclude? That examinations are so dangerous that they had better be abandoned? Add to this stew the fact that any public utterance that seems to be critical of examinations in general and national testing in particular, however far-fetched or bizarre, is seized upon by teachers' spokesmen (not necessarily by teachers themselves) as proof that they have been right all along to oppose any programme that exposes what is going on - or not going on - in the classroom.

No public accountability please - we're experts. If we say that your six year old is not ready to read, then he is not ready to read. There is nothing wrong with our system of teaching reading: you are just a pushy parent who is probably adding to the "stress" of your child with your unrealistic expectations. And no, we do not want you to know what proportion of the six year olds in this school are also unable to read, compared with the national average or with other primary schools in this area - that is none of your concern.

The Tory education spokesman Michael Gove is preparing to go once more into the breach over this with a national test to ensure that all six-year-olds of normal intelligence have effectively absorbed the basic reading "code". He has been instantly attacked by the usual education establishment suspects for wanting to boil children in oil: as if all children who were not fluent readers by this age were going to be condemned to a lifelong sense of inferiority.

All that he is asking, perfectly reasonably, is that six-year-old children understand the phonic structure of words, not that they read Proust. Significantly, he is offering teachers a quid pro quo in the form of abolishing the Key Stage One primary SAT exam, which is hopelessly complex and time-wasting.

If you are of my generation, you can probably remember being tested at primary school every week. Where I come from, Friday was the day for



25 years of Matt

1,070 people like Telegraph Comment & Blogs.



Facebook social plugin

Sign up to
The Telegraph
Morning Briefing



Sign up to the Telegraph's Morning Briefing

Read our latest comment and analysis

Comment Cartoon

Latest cartoon



the spelling test on the list of words you had been given on Monday, followed by the arithmetic test to make sure you were grasping the principles of division and multiplication. The whole business took about half an hour. The tests were corrected by the teacher in time for you to take the little sheets of paper home on the day. I cannot remember teachers or pupils showing any signs of stress, or anyone disputing the value of the exercise - so effective was it at spotting any incipient problems with literacy and numeracy and so clear-cut was it as a comprehensible measure to parents of their children's progress.

And that, believe it or not, was what the Conservative government of the 1980s had in mind when it introduced national testing. Remember Margaret Thatcher talking about "simple pencil and paper tests" on a "core curriculum" that was meant to consist of reading, writing and arithmetic? Whatever happened to that?

I can tell you what happened. In those days, I was an academic working closely with colleges of education and learning a great deal about the ideological miasma that had enveloped teacher training. Not only were student teachers inculcated with the belief that it was wicked to examine children - and thereby compare their levels of achievement - but they were being taught to oppose the very notion of passing on knowledge.

The idea of a teacher as an "authority figure" who transmitted factual information or the accumulated understanding of the culture was politically unacceptable. Education was to be about self-discovery, exploration and "creativity": the most pejorative word in the teaching methodology lexicon was "instructional". Teachers, in other words, were to abandon what had always been seen as one of the chief responsibilities of adult life: the imparting of experience and wisdom from an older generation to a younger one. In order to achieve even basic skills, every child had to reinvent the wheel with only minimal guidance from a non-authoritative teacher.

So that troika of educational powers - the teaching unions, the colleges of education (and later, university departments) and the local education authorities, who had all bought heavily into this philosophy, were deeply


More From The Web»



- **Obama May Give Millions of Illegals Work Status**
- **9/11 Shocker: 2,500 Rescuers Have Cancer**
- **Congress: Tentative Deal Made on VA Reform**
- **Apple a Day Stops Cancer, Obesity, Diabetes**
- **Should Obama Deport Illegal Children? Vote Here Now**
- **Brand New Sleep-Aid Hits CVS**
- **Prescription Drugs May Put Seniors at Risk**
- **Prostate Mistake Millions of Men Make**

More From The Web»

Shop and Save on Millions of Products



Bowflex MAX Trainer M3
\$999.00 Bowflex Max Trainer



Bowflex SelectTech 552 Dumbbells
\$310.00 Sears.com



threatened by the idea of those simple little tests. Not only was their entire theory of education being subverted, but the depths of its failure were in danger of being exposed.

So they took matters into their own hands: with the help of their allies in the then Department of Education, they expanded the core curriculum into a National Curriculum, which incorporated all the politically fashionable attitudinising of the day - out went historical fact and in came "empathy"; out went geographical fact and in came environmentalism and exploitation of the developing world. (This politicised tendentiousness is a reason now being given by the independent schools for wanting to abandon the National Curriculum.)

The national testing programme went from pencil-and-paper simplicity to being a bureaucratic monster dominating school life. At primary level, tests had to be modelled on the favoured teaching methods of learning-through-experience which turned them into an enormously time-consuming class event and therefore, paradoxically, more stressful for teachers and pupils.

It is, when you think of it, quite ridiculous that one government after another - not to say the great mass of public opinion - has been repeatedly out-manoeuvred by a self-serving alliance of professional and political operators who do not even speak for the majority of practising teachers.



 Share

0

 Facebook

0

 Twitter

0

 LinkedIn


0

0

Promoted stories



6 mistakes young managers make




34-Year-Old Grandmother




The Final Insult: Julia Roberts' 'Harsh'




Girls Answer 5 Questions Guys Are



Eddie Bauer Rolling Commuter Duffel...
\$59.99 Eddie Bauer



i-CON by ASD ProForm...
\$1,349.00 ProForm.com

Powered By 

Comment Most Viewed

- TODAY

PAST WEEK

PAST MONTH
1.

What the length of your shorts says about you
2.

People aren't happy with housing developments, they've just given up
3.

The cost of bringing your best friend on holiday
4.

When a phrase book leaves you at a loss for words
5.

The pension advice scheme is a big gamble for the Government

MORE

Columnists

-  [Boris Johnson](#) | [Charles Moore](#)
-  [Benedict Brogan](#) | [Peter Osborne](#)
-  [Fraser Nelson](#) | [Allison Pearson](#)
-  [Mary Riddell](#) | [Matthew d'Ancona](#)
-  [Philip Johnston](#) | [Janet Daley](#)
-  [Geoffrey Lean](#) | [Christopher Booker](#)
-  [Con Coughlin](#) | [Sandi Toksvig](#)
-  [Graeme Archer](#) | [Judith Woods](#)

Accused of Leaving
Kids in Filth to Go...
Latest.com

Eulogy For Estranged
Sister... RadarOnline

Too Embarrassed To
Ask Dailymotion

More from The Telegraph



Ukip voters will make
Ed Miliband Prime
Minister, Labour
claims 27 Jul 2014



Why skinny is no
longer sexy 24 Jul
2014



Malibu beach wars:
app revealing public
access to beaches
infuriates... 27 Jul
2014



Parents should be
more aware of what
occurs in a dentist's
operating... 17 Jul
2014

Recommended by outbrain

Latest Telegraph Comment

Friends held together by a Queen's promise

Comment

The RSPCA's years of hounding the innocent

How to avoid rip-offs in restaurants

Christopher Howse | Jenny McCartney
 Terry Wogan | Bryony Gordon
 Alan Cochrane | Jim White
 Vicki Woods | Rowan Pelling
 Nigel Farndale | Alasdair Palmer
 Jemima Lewis | Sue Cameron
 Rose Prince | Matthew Norman

Blogs

Damian Thompson
 Benedict Brogan
 Norman Tebbit
 Toby Young
 James Delingpole

Cartoons

Blower, Bob and Adams
 Matt | Alex

Moderation FAQs

How we moderate reader comments

Charlotte Hawkins: I'm surprised people don't hate me

Let's change the rhetoric on 'three-parent' children

Fracking is vital, but a balance has to be struck

The PMQs question

Fruits of the sun

Politicians should be nicer to each other

Is the Left anti-Semitic?

Ads By Google

Brain Training Games

Challenge memory and attention with scientific brain games.

www.lumosity.com

\$399 Cancun All Inclusive

7 Nights In A Cancun All Inclusive Resort With Meals & Drinks For \$399

bookvip.com/Cancun-All-Inclusive

2014 Phlebotomy Schools

Start Your 2014 Phlebotomy Program Now - Get Course Information!

www.campusexplorer.com/Phlebotomy

How we moderate

Comments for this thread are now closed.

85 Comments

Telegraph

Sort by Newest ▾



Mark Yannone · 7 years ago


WENTWORTH
Institute of Technology

Hands-on
Learning

90% of
surveyed grads
report earning a
job or enrolling
in graduate
school within 6
months of
graduation.

Offering 19
majors and
14 minors!



LEARN MORE

More From The Web



There is a cure for this. It's called The Mayonnaise Cure: <http://yannone.blogspot.com/2>

^ | v • Share ›



Bob • 7 years ago

Thank goodness I trained as a teacher in the late 1950s before the introduction modern amalgamation of secondary and grammar schools into 'comprehensives' and the aban discipline drove me to emigrate. I believe that my children received a better education h

^ | v • Share ›



Daniel Cole • 7 years ago

The format of teaching is basically simple You teach and then test to see if your studen
The emphasis on National Testing seems to have lost the plot; becoming a school test
seen schools concentrate on the top set at the expense of the bottom set just to mainta
good schools being placed under more pressure in order to keep up he area's average.
standards and statistics based on simple tests teachers would normally carry out avera

^ | v • Share ›



Peter • 7 years ago

I think a fair assessment of the education system today is, 'The blind leading the blind'.
of useless kids.

^ | v • Share ›



John Bull • 7 years ago

I am grateful to Janet for this expose of the behind the scenes social engineering for wh
professional teachers are wholly to blame.

Having often marvelled at the almost uniform lack of ability in either communicative or n
people who, having left "education" with glowing certification, are exposed as being of lil
employer or society.

The sole exceptions to this seeming rule, are those whose parents placed them through
education, where an ethos of learning and teaching has yet to be completely abandoner

Like the NHS, Education has not gained one iota from the extra finances thrown at it by



\$635+: Air & 4-Nts All-Inclusive Mexico & Caribbean

Save up to 50%

[Click for More Offers](#)

Powered By: **DunhillTravelDeals**
TRAVEL. WINE. SPEND LESS

Promoted stories



15 Celebrities Who Attend Church

(Styleblazer)



Anna Faris: TV's Hottest Mom?

(Ma deMan)



Girls Answer 5 Questions Guys Are Too Embarrassed To Ask

(Daily motion)



6 Men Died That Day (They Didn't Trust Each Other)

(Forbes)

Recommended by **outbrain**

desperate succession of shoddy ministers for Education who would, it seems, have the mess which they perpetuate.

It is almost difficult to understand why this government insists on children attending school having a daily routine of even turning up at these "centers of excellence" must be compensated by "professionals" advising them.

Perhaps in their younger days they also read "Lord of the Rings" and recognise some of the

[see more](#)

^ | v • Share ›



David Welch • 7 years ago

For once Janet has written wisely, and I support her plea for regular simple short tests :

But Janet's grammar did bring a smirk: "what proportion of the six year olds in this school are not reading?" and I wonder why the right-wingers complaining here at low standards in schools aren't applying them to themselves.

For example Mike (12.09 pm) has so much bad English packed into his ten lines that the plotting to produce a moronic underclass, would be delighted.

And Mike, you should observe Janet's wrath at the Tory education authorities who happily abandoned progressive ideas in the 1980s.

^ | v • Share ›



Monty Slocombe • 7 years ago

Yes. Exams ought to be simple, and direct, and the pass mark should be high enough to test the ability and willingness to work would pass, as in past times. Failures either need help or family back up.

Also, why is school compulsory? Education should be a valued and sought after gift, available as a commodity which one is herded to, and forced to ingest. Let everyone enter into a 'social contract' whereby he/she ends their schooling with at least a certificate of educational competence after a number of years. Those who fail the competence and attendance test either need specific help or are sent to a place of detention.

of society and some of its benefits, for example unemployment

or society and some of its benefits, for example unemployment.

What is needed is a transfer of responsibility back onto the family and the individual, and the more it meddles, the more incompetent it becomes.

Education is a gift that cannot be transferred from the fount of all knowledge, i.e. the state, obtained by the individual because that person is impelled to learn him/herself. One might learn in today's politically correct climate is that failure happens, and that in real life, the soldier on after failure is part of education for life as it is.

^ | v • Share ›



Martin • 7 years ago

Bill Irvin, 10.21: "When I did my A-levels in 1985, those who failed (ie didn't get the grade) to teacher training college!!

What's that all about then?"

That's an easy one. Would you go to teacher training college if you could go to university?

It's not of course quite that simple. Many people who go to university become teachers graduate course in education (How demeaning of the profession is that?).

Teachers who have trained in a college of education, a three year course, can do an exchange with the university with which the college is associated.

In general teachers with a Teaching Certificate teach in 'secondary moderns' and would not be considered for a post in a grammar school or in further education.

I was training to become a surveyor when I changed my mind and 'fell' for the recruitment late 1960's. The reason for the shortage was not only the appalling level of teachers' population 'bulge' - which seemed to have been a total surprise to education administrators - taken timely note of demographic trends

[see more](#)

^ | v • Share ›



Anialalee • 7 years ago



As a pupil who is in her 5th year of high school in Scotland can i just say that we used to have maths tests during a friday and the last time i checked it wasnt that stressful.

things may have changed in the five years since i left school though! i know that standard tests are a bit of a stress as do the highers that i am sitting this year.

i think that maybe national tests arent the best idea simply bcos not everyone performs well they may have the knowledge and the common sense just that they cant reproduce it all under a bit of pressure!

^ | v • Share ›



j.b.windmill • 7 years ago

In the late 1930's, when I was at Junior School, our first lesson of the day was arithmetic. On Friday morning of each week, we had a short test of ten 'sums' covering the work done during the week. If we did wrong we had a stroke of the cane.

It was amazing how good my class was at arithmetic.

^ | v • Share ›



maggie snook • 7 years ago

I have read all of the other comments with great interest, and a common sense thread. How is it though, that from a very well tried old fashioned British method, children living in the countryside succeed so well, and with the minimum of facilities and fuss, learning by rote and repetition. English!! Plus learning to read the way we all did nearly 60 years ago.

Is it because their minds are not cluttered with trivia and other distractions. How are they so successful, especially when most of them have to walk miles to school probably after other tasks have been completed. What is the answer, besides true drive and sheer determination???

^ | v • Share ›



terry • 7 years ago

Quietzapple below, don't you remember what happened the last time the Tories gave their thresholds a ring? Surely after 10 years of mayhem and incompetence you're not so disingenuous dreamers anymore are you?

It is difficult to believe that those (intelligent?) trainee teachers were so sucked in with the

Perhaps that was the problem then and so it remains now. The children of today need a commanding authority to throw out the 'disruption' with the business of learning and actually get a life. The Blair - Brown conspiracy has left school uneducated and join the rest of the dwindling indigenous population at the Benefit. Allow another 250,000 foreigners into the country because the local population is not quite

"Just what is their game here?", I ask.

Reducing the size of the true Brits in the country in favour of foreigners seems to be the Labour Government in power in perpetuity it seems. After all, if you were a foreigner in the country, you would be rent free and claim umpteen benefits, jump housing queues, all without paying anything and be allowed to vote. Just who would you vote for?

^ | v • Share ›



jack daniels • 7 years ago

Another storm in a teacup. Americans know that half their population is virtually illiterate and can't drive a truck. We can't all be brain surgeons...Most people in Britain read the SUN so we can't all read VICTOR HUGO or Goethe in their youth. Only certain social groups in England would confirm that students are playing their Sony Playstations every night or getting loaded on

^ | v • Share ›



Dave • 7 years ago

Government should get out of telling teachers how to teach kids. All it should do is set the standards and arrange for their marking. The schools should be free to prepare their pupils for the standards the teachers feel fit.

The schools should be run by a "partnership" of senior teachers but the "sovereign body" would be the parents of the pupils who would have the power to sack teachers and insist upon performance. If a school and its teachers were not found to be meeting the standards expected either on a national or professional level.

If every child received state-funded educational vouchers (a little I suppose how the old system worked; locally funded but applicable to any university in the country), parents would be able to choose the school they wanted and, as I believe the Tories have suggested, even get together to set up their own schools. Good schools would flourish, underperforming ones would die and bad teachers would be forced out.

yes all funded by the state. Therefore if any lefty was to complain it would show clearly that giving all children equal funding by the state that matters to them, but rather that the all should be able to continue to brain-wash our children whilst instilling in them the virtues

^ | v • Share ›



Quietzapple • 7 years ago

The school leaving age is not being increased to 18.

Tory teaching is so fact free that is not really worth the trouble contradicting it.

^ | v • Share ›



Scott, East Anglia • 7 years ago

The British nations have their share of losers, along with plenty of winners, but during the bottlers achieved undue prominence because of a collective national psychosis after the

We are slowly recovering from the immense psychological damage caused by the Great Hitler's sequel (thanks France). We know that Britain, along with the other major European personality change after 1918, which, among other things, rendered us unwilling to continue. Losing a generation of the establishment, who actually led the way to the trenches and part. The loss of the empire caused further depression of the British psyche. All sorts of ideologies were able to flourish like weeds after a forest fire, but they were rather taken power.

It was different after the Second World War, when the forces of socialism (Stalin's useful opportunity - Great Britain had created a command economy that today's more fanatical dream of. It was a gift to the peacetime control freak.

Patriotic Britons were busy with the war, but anti-British Labour planned ahead and were propaganda operation via the military education establishment, etc, (sorry, election campaign 1945.

[see more](#)

^ | v • Share ›



M. J. Jones • 7 years ago

Matthew Robinson 9.25am. Read William S. Lind on cultural Marxism and all will becon but it applies here too.

^ | v • Share ›



Conkeyron • 7 years ago

Time was when we had to learn maths using the Imperial System of Weights and Meas LSD. The preliminary learning of tables was an essential skill.

Many youngsters were proficient in the the use of basic arithmetic calculations and co throwing a wobbly.

My eldest could read by the age of four and could be sent to do simple shopping across shopkeepers tried to short change him and never got away with it.

These days withe the decimal systems many have no idea where the decimal point lies need to check the number obtained on a calculator or in a spreadsheet. Some progress Modern politicians want an unthinking and innumerate populace, they are amply suppor profession.

^ | v • Share ›



Nick Mayo • 7 years ago

Very good article by Janet Daley this morning.

We have two teenage daughters (13 & 15) who have both commented that the governn school leaving age to 18 is ridiculous as this would mean that people who do not want t longer disrupting the opportunities for those who do want to work. As ones who want to that the leaving age should be lowered to allow those who want to be there their rights t

^ | v • Share ›



Igm • 7 years ago

More nonsense from our politicians. They should read the sensible comments above.

Any class teacher worth their salt can go down their class list at the end of the year and seconds flat. (can not read, poor, maybe, reasonable and good would be quite sufficien point in bumping up the grades because the teachers in the following year's classes we the truth of the grades. Putting the grades into descriptive words also means that politic

the truth of the grades. Putting the grades into descriptive words also means that points as percentages to make whatever case they need. 'Can not read' means exactly that, 'that as well.

It would be sensible to apply these grades to suitable text books for that year but an exam waste of time.

Exams are a wonderful way to focus children's attention towards learning, I know how I without them. I sometimes train adults, you have to test them as you go through the task sure that your own efforts are getting through. Tests often need only be questions or a diagram from memory. The basics have to be in place before the more advanced levels.

Here I go again reciting much of what worked well for my education fifty plus years ago,

^ | v • Share ›



maggie snook • 7 years ago

Motivation seems to be key word this month. Children have far too much to distract them. I think the Tories sat on their hands for years and years when they were in power, and we wall. Sport virtually vanished and there was some ghastly new type of maths and reading. In the early eighties I had no support for my dyslexia, and we had to buy in help at great expense at prep school, but when fees became unrealistic for public school we took the risk and went to a comprehensive, wrong wrong and wrong again. My peer group were the children of the mucked around and he followed- this was in the mid eighties, the school he was in was a comprehensive in this area, but it was only the cream of the bunch who were nurtured on their own devices. Huge classes, young graduate teachers, mostly hairy young men and a dirr weak ethos on the art of learning. Again we bought in extra tuition, but we were running a full empty tank, the majority of bright sparky youngsters (boys) were virtually neglected, girls. I believe single sex schools are pretty essential, so the boys have role models and perhaps more motivation to work more single mindedly!!

^ | v • Share ›



Karen • 7 years ago

Scary when you see teachers who can't write a sentence correctly, and are teaching E

^ | v • Share ›



Hamish, Glasgow · 7 years ago

"All credit to any teacher who tries to get pupils thinking about something challenging"

That is not how the teacher's actions were presented. Rather than trying to make the cl was presented as fact, which is a gross misrepresentation.

^ | v · Share ›



Quietzapple · 7 years ago

No doubt trade can be more destructive for a poor country than economic isolation. Note I said can.

All credit to any teacher who tries to get pupils thinking about something challenging, rather than regurgitating endless fgactoids and opinions which are sometimes later shown to have been false.

Pretty clear that about half of the DT's posters would rather students spend at least 10 minutes each day learning the unimaginative insults they so belove - Biar, Marxist Broon etc.

The liturgy of Third World Communism and DT posters has more than a passing resemblance - Discuss.

^ | v · Share ›



Graham King · 7 years ago

I believe that Helen and Quietzapple are actually Mr & Mrs Balls; the arch apparatchiks of the DT. Fortunately for their public persona, their official utterances are edited by post-graduate what they are.

I imagine, after today's battering, that 'Helen' is currently in the toilet, quietly weeping. As

clearly went over his head.

Buck up guys! - you're going to need a new job soon.

^ | v • Share ›



Ted • 7 years ago

This is a good article but there's a lots of past tense in it: the ideology "was", the socialis would dispute that. A few of my friends, fellow recent graduates, have gone into teachin about their training it is clear that learning to be a teacher is principally an exercise in m favourites is "differentiation exercise", which apparently refers to giving the little darlings might be better than the others...but naturally these must be kept below a certain numb circumstances are the "differentiations" to be known by the children themselves. Other mentioned here: "empathy", "self-discovery", "learning to learn". Orwell's Newspeak has

But I wonder if Janet has pondered the demographic implications? I am soon to be mar believe that putting children through this alleged education system is bordering on child priced out of private education for the foreseeable future by the global rich who rightly re excellence of our independent schools (not to mention the hike in school fees when the the charitable status), the inevitable decision is: no sprogs. Or at least not until much la into our careers, which will leave time for maybe one or two MPS-educated Little Teds. thinking this way, and I strongly fear a Japanese-style future: a geriatric, childless socie until its collapse and replacement by demographically stronger groups - and perhaps n globally mobile immigrant, faced with the choice of going to a country in which taxes are stratospherically high to support all the crumbliies or with going to a hea choose the high-tax crumbly-asylum?

^ | v • Share ›



D • 7 years ago

Bill Irvin, 10.21: when I did my A-levels in 1985, those who failed (ie didn't get the grade: to teacher training college!!

What's that all about then?

^ | v • Share ›



Phil • 7 years ago



"Politicians always look for a quick fix but when will they finally realise that the problem is not teaching but everything to do with many other factors, including social deprivation and unemployment for many children." - Lachie Todd

If it has "nothing to do with teaching but everything to do with factors including social deprivation then how, by your own admission, did this method of teaching bring remarkable results in a country which has exceptional problems with social deprivation and high levels of unemployment?

Or if your argument was that it only brought remarkable results because literacy levels were high, then isn't that all the more reason for using it to help such children acquire the skills to change their fate?

^ | v • Share ›



Richie • 7 years ago

As a small example of politicised Geography, my daughter's class are currently discussing (via the teacher directly) 'Trade with poor countries is unfair'.

Not only does it fly in the face of economics common sense, but the whole way the debate is handled. I complained, and the next lesson the teacher went out of her way to insist she is right -

^ | v • Share ›



Phil • 7 years ago

"The purpose of school examinations in theory is unchanged. They are to test what has been taught against a standard yardstick." - Simon Coulter

Yes and no. The great problem with exams in this country is that they have *two* purposes: the successful attainment of a desired target standard; the other is as a comparison measure against that of their peers.

That's common sense I hope, and this is precisely why exams have a range of 'pass' grades. It is that this distinction has been forgotten, and the objective has slipped from using (e.g.) A* to ability to seeing how many children one can get into the A grade.

Having (say) 90% of passes being an A grade would sound really impressive as a sound measure, but it would represent a monumental unfitness for (this) purpose on the part of the exam.

^ | v • Share ›



Mossy Toddler · 7 years ago

V important throw away line there from R Mason - give the kids from dysfunctional families a chance. Indeed, this is what it would take to give the wee souls a chance. Is this why Harry Potter is the national psyche?

^ | v · Share ›



John · 7 years ago

Another brilliant article. But what's happened in education is a microcosm of what's happening on for years and when the Tories were in power they looked the other way.

Everything in the public sector, the Quangos, the BBC, the Health and Safety executive are all the natural home of lefties who naturally shy away from the cut and thrust of the market, a few zealots have wormed their way to positions of influence and changed our society stealthily and, over time, massively. It seemed that suddenly everything was different. You wonder what the hell happened to your country. Nobody voted for political correctness, but political correctness is what we have got.

Judging by the Tories' current timidity and anxiety to please, they aren't going to be much better ideas, but at least, if they ever get into office, they can start creating the conditions where this disaster themselves. The trouble is, it's a race against time. More people get brain-dead every day and soon the majority won't be so sensible anymore. The left know

- 1) Privatised everything possible. The disciplines of the marketplace are an astringent reality
- 2) Democratise anything that can't be privatised. People power is greater than PC power
- 3) Delegate powers. Local people are a bulwark against PC and the left can't be seen to do anything although they are. Delegate to local hospitals, schools and universities as well but mainly

[see more](#)

^ | v · Share ›



Christina Gore · 7 years ago

I was an Infants' teacher of children ages 4-6 in the 60s and 70s for 9 years. I heard ever since I ever had 1 child leave me unable to read. Subsequently as a supply teacher for 14 years I have now. My own children were at Junior School in the 1980s. They did NEER/National Education

now. My own children were at Junior School in the 1960s. They did NFER (National Reading Research) to estimate ages in reading, spelling and maths. They were not traumatised to they had FUN at school too and results were useful to parents. What happened to them?

^ | v • Share ›



Eric Worrall • 7 years ago

Socialism applied to one's own life is simply an expression of wasted personal potential who are too young to know better is a monstrosity.

^ | v • Share ›



Patrick • 7 years ago

Only the wilfully blind would deny that what Janet Daley writes is true.

Why else are desperate parents voting with their feet, and making enormous sacrifices education, denied them in most of the state sector?

C'mon Quietzapple, tell us the truth, you're really Ed Miliband aren't you, scrawling unde

^ | v • Share ›



Mike • 7 years ago

I could'nt agree more Ms. Daley. Our, so called, education system is still run by the same have been infecting it for the last 50 or 60 years. Their philosophy has nothing to do with indoctrination. The last thing they want to do is teach people to think for themselves, but the uneducated, ineducable, moronic automitons that they can manipulate and programme the devices, to produce exactly the disasterous and chaotic morass we have right now. How can be judged by just taking a look around.

These things do not happen by chance, but are all part of the overall master-plan, more & ever, leading, inevitably, to the subjugation of the masses, ultimately of the entire planet. Except of the mechanism, but every other part of our society is recieving similar attention with the ultimate Socialist machine. Just imagine what that will mean.

^ | v • Share ›



Christine from England • 7 years ago

I think most people would think that when you are talking about a pupil's literacy and numeracy



I think most people would think that when you are talking about a pupils literacy and not referring to their ability to read, spell and perform basic mathematical calculations, prefe tests include many more complicated items and, on the basis of a low mark for all thes being declared innumerate or illiterate, which is misleading those who assume only the l need more? If they knew that pupils could all read write and calculate to a reasonable le satisfied. Teachers could concentrate on the basics. Check these first, announce the res forward with those who are able, with the more difficult bits.

^ | v • Share ›



Joseph Walker • 7 years ago

If people were educated .we would realise we have a class structured society.its never ruling class to educated the peasants.education can only be obtained if you have the at when my children were in school ,i went to one of these parent teacher meetings .i ask were been taught .he looked at me if i came from a different planet ,if the teachers has i what chance for the children.say no more .i was fotunete i was educated in india and re education at the time .ie during the english rule of india.

^ | v • Share ›



Dave Cartright • 7 years ago

"To Igonikon Jack, might I suggest that you try to express yourself more concisely.
Posted by Pav on November 19, 2007 9:09 AM"

I also find it difficult to read your pieces and often give up after the first line! When I have you have interesting things to say. For me it is all to do with the blocks.

Is there a way you can avoid the uneven ending of sentences eg do you use 'enter' whe you move to the next line?

I would love to read your views from the US perspective!

^ | v • Share ›



CP • 7 years ago

To Matthew Robinson: You may wish to read "All Must Have Prizes" by Melanie Phillips
Are In" by James Bartholomew. They will quite clearly show you the roots of the current
openers. As for those who say that the roots lie in deprivation etc. what a laugh! The de

root cause, not pseudo-marxist excuses for the failure of marxist dogma. Abolish the D universities, global warming and societal change, the Local Authorities, and the teacher the birch - for everyone employed by those bodies.

^ | v • Share ›



Eurymachus Jones • 7 years ago

I've been a teacher for 18 years and I'm telling you that every word of this article is true. term in the present climate, but it should be required reading.

^ | v • Share ›



simon coulter • 7 years ago

The purpose of school examinations in theory is unchanged. They are to test what has point against a standard yardstick.

They identify the pupils at the required standard to move on, the exceptional performers what is done to stretch them) and in particular they reveal those short of the required st help, once the reasons for their shortfall have been understood in every individual case.

Examination results, if the same test is used at different sites, also reveal failing teache hearing very little about action re the former - presumably allowed to moulder on in the s recruitment issues.

Are these same teachers in the system also responsible for not addressing the needs c down to lack of separate remedial resources which can be used with them?

Testing, testing, testing has been the real product of the pretentious mantra education, how empty it has all been.

There is plainly no point in round after round of tests if they are neither to identify extrem to direct children into streams of education geared to their ability range or even used to

[see more](#)

^ | v • Share ›



B. Mason • 7 years ago



R Mason • 7 years ago

Fu-time teacher training should be abolished. Teaching schools should be established with the role of mentor. The student teachers themselves could teach half the time and the other half at the department of education at the local university or by a sort of open university.

^ | v • Share ›



Stuart • 7 years ago

I am a teacher. I would love to be like the french, apparently they ignore the ridiculous in-school management. However, this is not possible in England. If you don't do as instructed along the Government chain (bloody hell it's called now)-LEA-Headmaster- Line Manager-Head of Department chain it isn't worth living. The problem is that the professional autonomy of teachers is now not management. Free schools from political meddling. Parents - ignore what those is char politicians say. A politician that says they will SERIOUSLY reform the system so that the state has less influence on how quickly children improve.

^ | v • Share ›



R Mason • 7 years ago

The government should get out of the education business. With millions of obsessively parents wanting to get their kids a good education and 100s of thousands of schools desperate to give it out for an internal market. Parental demand - indeed obsession - is such that no school can survive. We should copy the independent system that performs far better than the state sector, a free market system with no government initiatives, LEAs, DofE, ministers, etc. with the exception of uncaring parents are a minority and would have schools made good by caring parents. Free schools would initially be swamped by applications but others would take the overflow and rapidly be justified. Free schools should be encouraged to foster cross fertilisation and subsidisation. Entry to be free. Fees from wealthy individuals would be pointless, but they could certainly give money to the school or group. Enhanced vouchers should be available to those schools catering for children from any other school, and super enhanced vouchers for children who would benefit from being in a free school [e.g. dysfunctional families, etc]. Schools should set their own hours, and days of operation; e.g. that sport, homework or music clubs, etc. after the school day and on Saturdays would be demanded by parents. This would give boisterous kids something to do early in the morning. We would require us to stop paying teenagers to have babies or to stay in bed, and to stop the teachers getting the same pay for good teachers as for bad teachers, or restricting the length of the school day.

^ | v • Share ›



Janet · 7 years ago

I don't know any children who are stressed or depressed about testing. However, I know or stressed by being ferried around from one pre and post school activity to the next, with homework, not enough sleep and being sent out to do "activities" both days at the week relax. The notion that children have to be kept busy doing organised activities appears to have to spend any time with them or they feel incapable of just spending quality time with a very small number of children who are genuinely nervous about taking exams but this and can be picked up by a disparity in marks obtained during class compared to marks is no cure for this and they will probably suffer from it all their lives. If there was a cure it test anyone at all!

Also when I was at school in the 1960s my teachers would have none of this namby pamby were tested every day on the 3 Rs. Those in need of remedial help got it immediately.

^ | v · Share ›



joseph walker · 7 years ago

Education .yet to hear any intelligence from most of the media especially the broadcast pinnacle of ignorance ,it just reflects the intellectual level of the country ,the conclusion : halfwits with deluded personalities .

^ | v · Share ›



Roger B. · 7 years ago

Surely testing is an essential element of any training schedule? In my limited experience as an (adult) instructor, I have used the well-established system of "demonstrate, coach, supervise whilst trainees practise, test, review" - the same system my teachers used on us. The testing enables the trainee to know what level is required at any stage and whether or not they are coping. The test levels are deliberately set at a slightly higher level than that required at the final exam. (remember all those time-limited

past papers?) Without it they are unsure of their own progress. It is a means of instilling confidence and should, in my opinion, be done weekly before the trainee has a break to consolidate. It was done in my school days (60s); and prepared us well for the School Certificate. The analogy is the high jump: if the jumper knows he has regularly cleared the bar at 5 feet, he will have no fear of the test jump at 4 feet six. I went into my "O" levels with confidence. The system worked.

^ | v • Share ›



CP • 7 years ago

Graham King 5:38am hits the nail squarely on the head. the idiots who run education do of education as we non-specialists do. to them it is not about giving the kids the basic skills of society, it is all about social change. When Hitler was told that many adults found his views laughable, he said "I already own their children". He used education as a means of producing leaders as did Stalin for communism and as do the socialists in the government, DfES (or what was then called the Department of Education) especially in the teacher training colleges. Marxism may have failed in the real world but it has succeeded in the above institutions. They don't care that kids can't read and write because that is their goal etc etc. They don't even have the same definition of literacy as do the rest of us. Local schools, run by charities with local people on the board are what work. All of the answers to our current problems can already be found in the explosion of charity-based education that occurred between about 1830 and 1890 in England. The attendance rate of pupils (approx. 94% of eligible children - including paupers and the destitute) and the rate of functional literacy and numeracy. These schools taught Euclid to miners' kids at primary schools. These schools cannot teach them Postman Pat; even when Postman Pat (Alan Johnston) was a primary school teacher.

^ | v • Share ›



Bill Irvine • 7 years ago

2 points

When I was a student (a long time ago) I had many friends who went to teacher training that no one ever failed these courses.

The teachers themselves know what good schools to send their own children to. To the it is perfectly obvious from the standard of attainment of pupils entering the secondary s and which are the bad primary school. A conspiracy of silence kept this knowledge amc The same situation exists / existed in hospitals where staff know / knew where not to be illness.

^ | v • Share ›

Load more comments



Subscribe



Add Disqus to your site

MORE FROM TELEGRAPH.CO.UK

AMAZON



Infographic: Who is today's entrepreneur?

[View](#)

INSPIRATIONAL SPORT STORIES



Who drove footballer Alan Smith to sporting success?

[View](#)

LYONSDOWN MEDIA



Newspapers: add to the discussion or perish

[View](#)

BARNEBYS



Avoiding fakes and forgeries: how to find the real deal

[View](#)

[Back to top](#)

HOME

News

World News

Obituaries

Travel

Health

Jobs

Sport

Football

Cricket

Fantasy Football

Culture

Motoring

Dating

Finance

Personal Finance

Economics

Markets

Fashion

Property

Puzzles

Comment

Blogs

My Telegraph

Letters

Technology

Gardening

Telegraph Journalists

Contact Us

Privacy and Cookies

Advertising

Telegraph Shop

Tickets

Announcements

Reader Prints

Follow Us

Apps

Epaper

Expat

Promotions

Subscriber

Syndication

© Copyright of Telegraph Media Group Limited 2014

Terms and Conditions

Today's News

Archive

Style Book

Weather Forecast