

A young child with their hand pressed against a glass window, looking out with a sad expression. The child's face is partially obscured by the glass and their hand. The background is blurred, showing other people and a natural setting.

One Small Change That Could Fix the World

THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING CHILDREN ABOUT
THEIR RIGHTS

Our world today has no shortage of serious social and political issues, the effects of which can be seen across the disparate economic situations throughout our global civilization. There are so many that it begs the question: What are the underlying problems that we as a culture need to address to begin to fix these many issues?

I would assert that no problem is a more fundamental root cause of turmoil in many different manifestations than a lack of proper knowledge provided to the global youth about their role in society. Basically, we seem to be providing our kids with the methodological tools to have dominion over the planet, but we don't put an emphasis on the moral and social parameters within which they should learn and grow.





What Are We Teaching Kids?



This iconic photograph captures Elizabeth Eckford, age 15, walking past a jeering crowd as she enters Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas on Sept. 23, 1957. As a result of *Brown v. Board of Education*, schools nationally were ordered to integrate white and colored students. This did not sit well with many people. Directly behind Elizabeth, a woman's furious expression depicts the anger and intolerance felt and displayed by so many people.

What seems now like such an obvious inclusion was once so unacceptable that the US armed forces stood in the streets of Little Rock and enforced this new law while angry protesters screamed hateful rhetoric at

these young people, simply for wanting to go to school. How do these examples of intolerance affect the children who witness them? We strive to give our children a well rounded education and prepare them to run the world, but what lessons are we teaching them about how to treat each other?



There is no definitive global standard of education and even in the United States, each state is responsible for managing their school standards and curriculum. There are, however, certain guidelines that states must meet in order to receive federal funding. Unfortunately, establishing a standard of social education within their curricula isn't one of them.



In fact, the majority of schools in the USA don't even begin to teach kids about the social sciences until they are entering high school, when most freshman are taught about the bill of rights.

Until that point, there is little formal instruction or dialogue regarding people's individual rights and social obligations.



Because there has never been a standard of social education for elementary-aged students, it can be inferred that there has never been an entire generation of Americans whose world view was based on a cohesive and defined set of social standards. Every

person is a product of the environment they were raised in and
the social opinions held therein.



When society puts emphasis on setting institutional standards for math, engineering, and communication, but fails to set standards for learning social skills, the effects are devastating. We have created a highly productive civilization in which the individuals have little understanding of how people should interact, what their social responsibilities are, and even what their basic rights are. It seems that the success of humanity is measured by productivity rather than happiness.



With so much disparity and conflict, could a solution be a simple matter of promoting empathy and understanding from a young age on an institutional level?

Knowledge Breeds Opportunity,
Ignorance Breeds Hate



Poet-laureate Maya Angelou once said, "When you know better you do better." That simple statement speaks profoundly to the fundamental nature of providing our youth with the proper knowledge. If they have a better understanding of who they are and how people work, they will make better decisions regarding their interactions within society.

Maybe the reason problems aren't getting any better from generation to generation is because people aren't actually changing. The same biases and prejudices that have shaped the global landscape are present today because we haven't done anything to address them at their root: In the minds of the

children. We teach children to achieve academic and physical greatness, but teach them virtually nothing about caring for others. The future leaders start life with biases and opinions that drastically shape how they will live their lives and interact with others. Shouldn't those opinions be fair and well-informed?



In the seemingly unending effort to fix the world's problems, perhaps the simplest way is just to change what we teach the kids. That's it. If we, as a people, decide to produce more educational material about human rights and responsibilities for school-aged kids and create curricula which incorporate elements of sociology, our adult population would be more reasonable and better informed.

Maybe it's that simple. No debate, no war, no confusion. If we institutionally teach young children about their rights and responsibilities to society, they can reshape that society in a way that's fair for all. If there could be one basic fix to substantially change the world, this is it. Children who are taught independence, tolerance, and empathy grow up to be open-minded and creative leaders. If they, too, teach their children social standards, the following generations may come together to bring mankind to shared achievements we can't even yet dream of.

Perhaps we as a people need to be giving them that opportunity. After all: The better they know, the better they'll do.

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