

CT Opinions

Quote of the week

"I believe the children are our future."
— WHITNEY HOUSTON



THE CHILDREN ARE, IN FACT, BEING LEFT BEHIND

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My mother never read to me as a kid. She didn't have time to. After her 12-hour nursing shifts, she would come home tired to the bone. By the time she made us dinner and situated my brother and me, barely managing to steal some minutes for herself, the day had seemed to run out of hours.

Though she may not have been able to devote as much time to our learning as she would have liked to, her belief in education echoed through the halls of the tiny two bedroom apartment we lived in. As a result, my brother and I excelled in school despite our lack of resources.

Recently, videos of educators lamenting their students' educational shortcomings have been all over my social media. TikTok user @qbthedon seems to have catalyzed this conversation. In his initial video, he claims that his 7th grade students are still performing at a 4th grade level.

He also states that it is incredibly difficult to make a student repeat a grade if they aren't meeting the proper learning benchmarks.

His situation is no anomaly. Many other educators used his video to express their own concerns with their students' academic progress.

There's plenty of evidence to prove their claims.

At the beginning of both the 2021–22 and 2022–23 school years, public schools reported on average half of their students were behind grade level, according to a survey by The School Pulse Panel.

It's easy to blame this issue on the COVID-19 pandemic but public schools reported that 36% of their students on average were behind grade level prior to the pandemic, per the same report.

En-large, those who saw that initial TikTok video and took part in the dialogue placed blame on parents for not being involved enough in their child's education. Unlike the parents they criticize, my mother was always cognizant of how we were performing in school. She knew the report card schedule like the back of her hand — asking us what needed to be done to correct a bad grade and congratulating us when we did well.

But being an involved parent is no easy feat. As the country continues to plummet into economic disarray, parent involvement becomes even harder.

Inflation and cost of living have increased so much that parents are working more and more to keep up, according to Bankrate and The Wall Street Journal.

Every hour spent at work, scraping up just enough dollars to barely get by, is an hour taken away from investing in your child's education by simply being there to offer guidance.

It's easier to place an iPad in your children's hands after a long day at work than to devote emotional energy into raising them.

Moreover, the fundamental miseducation of our youths is sewn deeply in the fabric of our society — and the way we've formulated education.

No Child Left Behind, an educational program brought forth by former President George W. Bush in 2002, made schools more data-driven and learning more testing-focused, according to Business Insider. Though it may no longer be in practice, its impacts still remain.

Many people agree that our current education system is incredibly data-driven with 64% of students in a Washington Post survey saying too much emphasis is placed on testing. A majority also said the best way to measure the success of a school is not through tests but by whether students are engaged and feel hopeful about the future.

Additionally, student experiences have been dampened by overcrowded classrooms and antiquated teaching methodologies that don't prepare them for the modern world. Teachers are leaving academia due to low pay and poor treatment. Schools are underfunded and many of the funds they do receive are egregiously mismanaged.

Education can only be truly reformed when society stops denying children the autonomy they deserve. Instead of building spaces where children can learn and be challenged in an empathetic and fruitful way, they are unfairly punished, pathologized, medicated and dehumanized.

My mother sacrificed so much to invest in our education. However, if she was unable to, that shouldn't have impacted the quality of our learning.

The systems in place are incredibly unempathetic to parents and children alike. The repercussions of this societal cruelty will reveal themselves when we pass along our world to a generation failed by modern education.

