



## Education on the Edge -- 2025

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American education is in crisis; fractured, and plagued with multiple dysfunctions. As educators, we need to come to grips with the problems and strike a bold new future to reclaim education's role to guide America forward and avoid a regression into a dark age of desolation. This call to action is in response to Harvard President Garber's challenge to Alumni to reexamine education at our alma mater.

### Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Overview .....   | 2  |
| Dark Reality – Youth in Peril.....   | 3  |
| The State of Education Today.....  | 6  |
| Purpose of Education .....   | 7  |
| Wisdom is the Pinnacle of Human Development.....                                   | 8  |
| Hero or Victim? .....  | 9  |
| Degradation of Community, Character and Friendships .....                          | 10 |
| Confronting our STEM Challenge .....   | 11 |
| Failure of Moral and Character Development in our Schools.....                     | 12 |
| Our Moral Compass is Spinning.....   | 13 |
| Four Guidelines for a Steady Moral Compass.....                                    | 13 |
| Spirit and Soul – the Vital Energy of Humanity .....                               | 14 |
| Trust and Ethics .....   | 15 |
| Why History Matters.....   | 15 |
| Educating Americans for Democracy.....   | 16 |
| Discipline is Required by Citizens in a Democracy .....                            | 18 |
| Reframing Polarity.....  | 19 |
| Finding Personal Mission & Purpose in Life .....                                   | 20 |
| Education Molds Belief Systems .....   | 20 |
| "Learning Loops"-How Beliefs Design & Mold the way People Engage their World ..... | 21 |
| Using Artificial Intelligence.....   | 22 |
| A New, Expanded Role for Education .....   | 22 |
| Designing a Rebirth.....   | 23 |
| Conclusion & Call to Action.....   | 24 |

## Overview

Education in America is in crisis and is quickly nearing its critical tipping point as we begin a decent back into a dark age. Education has lost its soul – the spiritual energy that gives humans our unique individual vitality coupled with our innate capacity to work together for the common good. We are not teaching the qualities that make both humanity and democracy sustainable.



The evidence is everywhere. Unless we take a careful assessment of where we are, how we got there, and map an ascendent strategy, the downward spiral will continue, making it ever-more difficult to claw our way out of a deep dungeon.

We must not falter, for the stakes have never been higher: our democracy, our civilization itself is headed into perilous times. Those of us with the advantage of age bring perspective and the insights of wisdom to see what has been happening and the malevolent consequences ahead.

Education, which has been highly esteemed since ancient times, is now scorned and distrusted by the majority of Americans today. Too many students don't find the curriculum relevant to their lives, and harbor deep fears about their future.

Americans spend forty percent of their local taxes on education, making it the single largest budget outlay, but don't sense they receive appropriate value in return.

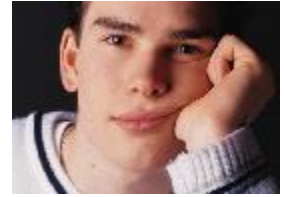
Tragically, too many educators are either in denial about the condition of our profession, or misguided about what to do about it.

This Strategic Alert first examines the dark realities of education today, then proposes strategies to buoy the sinking ship and set it on a new course, building a stronger bond between education and the future. It searches not just for what is *wrong*, but more importantly, what is *missing*.

(Author's note: While some of what follows may sound "conservative," I am a "classical futurist" who cherishes the "power of progression" to make the world a better place than I found it. I am a graduate of Brown University with a BA in International Relations, and Harvard University with an EdM in Leadership and Organization Development. I've taught thousands of senior executives in collaborative leadership, innovation and trust building, and advised senior leaders in business, government, and not-for-profit organizations. I've championed collaboration and trust-building. I love learning – it has been the center of my life. The current crisis in education is both a threat and an opportunity. Education can crumble in the face of attacks or transcend into a new era of enlightened learning. Any critical comments are intended to stimulate thought, and inspiration to build a bold new future.)

### Dark Reality – Youth in Peril

Despite the billions of dollars invested in local and higher education across America, education is failing our youth. The problem is epidemic and unprecedented in our history. Let's look at the harsh facts:



## Teenage Drug Overdose, Homicide & Suicide in United States

Leading causes of death for those aged 15 to 34

Among youth & young adults in the United States during 2023-4, the leading causes of death were from drug overdoses, homicide, and suicide:

- 32% of all deaths were caused by drug overdoses – an indication of both recklessness and a desire for disengagement from the real world.
- In age category of 15-24, over 20% of the deaths came from homicide, & nearly 20% from suicide.
- Drug overdoses have surged to become the single largest component of early mortality in young adults, accounting for nearly a third of all deaths in the 25–34 age group in 2023.
- 20.4% of students seriously considered attempting suicide in the previous 12 months (27.1% of females and 14.1% of males).
- 16% of high school students (grades 9–12) made a plan about how they would attempt suicide in the previous 12 months.
- 10% of high school students (grades 9–12) attempted suicide one or more times in the previous 12 months.

## Today's Students lack Reading & Writing Proficiency to succeed in a complex world

- Only 38% of 4th, 8th, and 12th graders in public & private schools read at or above the "proficient" level – barely changed in 20+ years.
- Achievement gaps have widened: Black, Hispanic, & low-income students experiencing largest setbacks.
- Fewer than one in four high school seniors are considered proficient writers.
- Writing skills have declined, with college students today writing at a level similar to high school seniors from previous generations.
- These proficiencies are life skills of educational achievement, career success, effective personal potential, well being, & communication, enabling understanding & participation in community.

## Drug Abuse is a Sign of Despair. Students with Meaning & Purpose are seldom suicidal.

- Drug deaths have surpassed car accidents as the leading causes of death since the government first began tracking drug-related deaths in 1979.
- 15% of high school students have used illicit or injection drugs.
- Approximately 75% of suicides involve one or more substances (including alcohol, prescription, and illegal drugs).
- Research consistently demonstrates that teenagers who have a strong sense of meaning and purpose in their lives are significantly less likely to commit suicide, reporting lower rates of depression, hopelessness, and suicidal thoughts.
- A clear sense of purpose acts as a protective factor against suicidal ideation and behavior, fostering psychological resilience and promoting positive coping strategies -- a crucial element in youth mental health and suicide prevention.

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## The American Dream & Hope for the Future is Dying

- American's youth are down on the future, with nearly half of those ages 18 through 29 believing the "American Dream" is more dead than alive, according to Harvard's Institute of Politics. Reflecting the sour mood of the overall electorate, 48 percent of those asked "For you personally, is the idea of the American Dream alive or dead?" responded "dead."
- Fifty-eight percent of college graduates said the dream was alive for them personally, compared to 42 percent of those not in college or who had never enrolled in college.
- The Youth Poll showed the lowest levels of confidence in most public institutions since the survey began. "That frustration ... is tied into a government they don't trust and they don't think is working for them," said John Della Volpe, the institute's polling director.

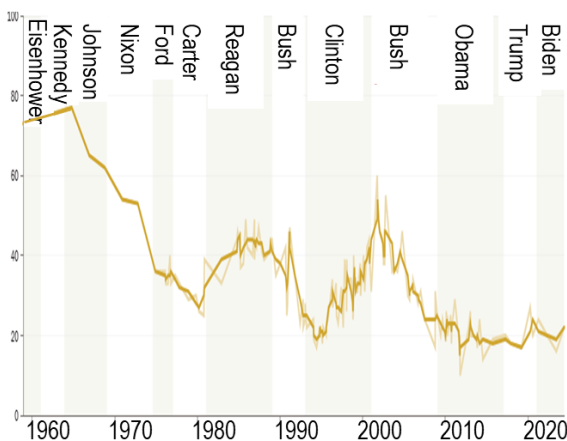
# DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion) has been a dismal failure as Friendships Falter

- DEI programs have failed, producing little concrete value, while provoking resistance.
  - Sadly, the idea of "inclusion" never embraced the hallmarks of more wholesome ideals of "community" and "friendship," now marked by declining in-person interactions, rising loneliness, and fragmented social networks.
  - High school seniors who gather with friends in person "almost every day" dropped from 44% in 2010 to 32% in 2022. Teens now spend 5-9 hours daily on screens, with social media displacing physical hangouts. The excitement of going to school to build lasting friendships has passed.
  - 73% of 16- to 24-year-olds report frequent loneliness, surpassing rates among older adults. Loneliness is linked to doubled rates of depression and anxiety among teens since 2012, coinciding with smartphone ubiquity.
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# Trust in our Institutions has Crashed

## Public Trust in Government 1960-2024

*Trust Government just about always or most of the time*



- Institutions are the foundation of civilization. When institutions are no longer trusted, insecurity reigns; people look for security in strong-arm leaders.
- Public trust in the federal government in Washington has been plummeting since 1963, reaching unsustainable levels.
- Just 19% of Americans say they trust the government to do what is right "just about always" (2%) or "most of the time" (17%). Only 30% trust the Supreme Court. 73% of youth are chronic distrusters.
- Confidence in Public Schools has fallen precipitously to only 29%, and trust in churches is a lowly 32%. Only 9% trust Congress, and only 12% trust TV news.
- Distrust is a symptom of bad leadership.
- No educational, governmental, or religious institutions have attempted to cure this illness.

The evidence underscores not a loss of desire for community, but a structural erosion of its traditional foundations. Friendships, that give balance, joy, perspective, teamwork, and the opportunity to express love are no longer a fundamental part of teenage life.

When friendships evaporate and family bonds fracture, people lose the connectedness that makes them part of a community greater than themselves. Without our common unity – society's glue is missing, setting youth adrift in the winds of strife.

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**These are the facts. The Crisis is Real. Youth is in Peril.**

What has caused this alarming decline? It didn't happen overnight – creeping incrementalism – like a termite invasion -- is hardly perceptible until suddenly: a cataclysmic collapse.

### **The State of Education Today**

As these trends continue their downward slide, we erode the core qualities that have made our nation the strongest and most productive civilization the world has ever produced. An entire generation is becoming despondent and a drag on our economic and social well-being.

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*Education has lost its soul.*

*How will education rediscover it?*

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The problem is not just with our youth. The American's are registering a precipitous decline in virtually all our social institutions – the foundational cornerstones of civilization.

- Public Schools – only 29% trust (down from 58% in 1973)
- Higher Education – just 36% trust (down from 57% in 2015)

### Other venerated institutions are showing similar implosions:

- Churches – 32% (down from 67% in 1973)
- Congress – 9% (down from 77-73% in the early 1960s)

When citizens stop trusting their institutions, societies begin to crumble.

That is what we are experiencing now.



### *DISTRUST SPAWNS POLARIZATION & DIVISIVENESS*

*the breeding ground for dictators bent on destroying democracies.*

*Only in a democracy can a liberative education thrive.*

*History shows that societies failing to build trusted institutions,  
forsaking wholesome interpersonal and community relationships,  
broil with insecurities, making them ripe for overthrown by authoritarians.*

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### **Purpose of Education**

Education that produces the above cited results is clearly in dire need of reform. This calls to question the very nature of education itself. The *purpose of education* has been debated beginning with the Greeks before Socrates and Aristotle. During this long 2,500 year long journey, several requisite themes continue to reoccur, with strong advocates proposing often fundamentally different feats that can be difficult to fully reconcile:

- Pass central cultural values & wisdom (more than knowledge) to the next generation
- Provide a sense of meaning and purpose in each student's life
- Instill the capacity of life-long learning to enable the creation of a better world
- Enable youth to *lead* their lives, attaining their highest level of personal development
- Be better parents and citizens to fulfill the social contract of democracy
- Provide practical application of learning to enable successful real-world engagement

Educators and parents will endlessly debate these goals. Intense conflicts about the primacy of each of these objectives will continue to rage, as education has frequently been the battleground of larger cultural and social tensions, such as race, immigration, class disparities, political turmoil, and religious beliefs.<sup>1</sup>

Achieving any of these diverse goals does not require a unified common vision – each local community can establish its own perspective.

However, achieving such diverse goals requires a resolute culture of democratic ideals coupled with the development of strong character.\*

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\* We must be cautious not to imbue education with the expectation it will independently be the panacea for solving our deep-rooted social malaises such as poverty, racism, and lack of opportunity. While our schools can set a standard of excellence, an expansive level of economic and social support -- bolstered by enlightened leadership -- is needed to reinforce education's impact. Nevertheless, we must refrain from a disengaged expectation that education has little to do with the *power of progression* to lead America to a better future.

### **Wisdom is the Pinnacle of Human Development**

No discussion of what is missing in modern-day education should overlook the revered value of wisdom. Its worth is far greater now in a world of rapid change and uncertainty.

Wisdom has traditionally been admired as the pinnacle of human development and an essential ingredient in the formation of leadership excellence. It is fundamental to enhance creativity, innovative thinking, and the ability to handle complex social situations.

Wisdom is not just about knowledge or intelligence, but also about how one applies knowledge and understanding into action to navigate complexities, solve problems, and lead a meaningful life. It is often associated with maturity and the ability to offer valuable advice or guidance to others. Wisdom is tragically missing in action in education.

Wisdom emerges from the integration of thought, heart, soul and action in personal development, inherently balancing one's own self-interest with maintaining and enhancing the mutual greater good. Wise leaders are revered for their disciplined emotions, realizing that emotions are our personal reactions to reality, not reality itself.

It involves reflecting on situations, evaluating options, and making trustworthy, principle-based choices within the context of specific situations – each which is somewhat unique. In this way, wisdom respects “laws” but recognizes that each contextual relationships needs to be understood through weighing different insights and principles.

Wisdom means integrating knowledge with an understanding of human behavior – how people will respond or react to a situation, to a breakdown, to a relationship, to a crisis, to uncertainty, to new technologies, to a new environment, to an opportunity. Wisdom respects consequences of one's actions.

Wisdom enables a deep grasp of fundamental insights into diverse aspects of life, gained through experience, reflection, and learning. It involves the ability to make sound judgments and decisions based on knowledge, experience, understanding, a sense of justice, and empathetic compassion. It's the ability to synthesize ideas, knowledge, heart and soul, with experience, producing actions which create the best possible results, bringing out the best in people, and producing serendipitous, attractive, virtuous energies from others.

Life without wisdom is like trying to steer a rudderless boat in a violent storm – doomed to be shipwrecked on the rocky reefs of life. Without a yearning to refine and guide their thoughts, emotions, and actions by a perennial quest for wisdom, youth who graduate from our schools will be deprived of a life's most fulfilling treasures. While wisdom takes time to mature, its speed of maturation can be accelerated, as Aesop illuminated with his memorable fables

Wisdom is not an abstract ideal, it can be learned and applied to most every condition in life, and woven into the fabric of most every course curriculum. While Artificial Intelligence will probably never excel at true spiritual wisdom, it can play a helpful catalytic role.



### Hero or Victim?

Every individual has a choice in how to approach challenges and setbacks. Our society admires those of the “Greatest Generation:” men and women who survived the Great Depression and the Second World War. Their story highlights one of life’s core issues (often overlooked, in human development): basically, each individual has two choices: you must be either the *hero* or the *victim* of your life. No, it’s not primarily fate; it’s more determined by our choices, conscious or unconscious, in addressing the [formation of personal identity](#).

The *Victim Mentality* is a mindset characterized by a sense of helplessness, powerlessness, and an alien locus of control. Individuals who subscribe to this mentality blame external factors, or history, or parents, or adverse circumstances for their misfortunes. They perceive themselves as perpetual victims, constantly seeking validation and rescue from a subversive society. They connect with other victims to wallow in self-indulgent helplessness.<sup>†</sup> Adopting the *Victim Mentality* ultimately hinders personal growth and fulfillment. When it occurs at a societal level, the results are poverty, degradation, and the lack of role models.

Today’s educational system is threaded with an appalling level of *victimhood mentality*.<sup>‡</sup>

In contrast, the *Hero Mentality* is characterized by a sense of personal responsibility, potency, empowerment, and internal locus of control. Individuals who embody this mindset take responsibility for their actions and choices, understanding that they have the power to influence their own outcomes. They approach challenges as exercises in determination, and a belief in their ability to overcome obstacles. And they inspire others to do the same. It requires letting go of the “blame game” and focusing on the present moment, where the power to change lies. Instead of viewing challenges as insurmountable obstacles, the *Hero Mentality* courageously perceives life itself as an opportunity for growth and self-discovery.

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*Any education system that does not embrace a Heroic Mentality will spawn a citizenry of pawns vulnerable to authoritarian control and abuse – the antithesis of democracy.*

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<sup>†</sup> I know this may seem harsh, lacking in empathy. And certainly, there are people, like Holocaust victims, who deserve our greatest respect. But the finest examples of Holocaust survivors demonstrate the value of building strong character, resilience, and a rejection of victimhood – something students should emulate.

<sup>‡</sup> Harvard issued a report of how it had supported racism throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, victimizing blacks. I read the report and was deeply disturbed with the historic bias. The Harvard faculty that authored the report failed to mention the heroic stand Harvard played in the abolition of slavery. It overlooked the hundreds of faculty, students, and alumni who fought and were killed in the battles of the Civil War (honored on campus in Memorial Hall). The report was deplorable in its one-sided portrayal of the University as perpetrator of racism. It gave credence to those who would claim their personal inadequacies were the result of institutional racism, and past history was a grand impediment to their own achievement and ability to overcome adversity. Calls for reparations preyed upon a collective guilt-consciousness, overlooking the sacrifice of the lives of the 136 men from Harvard, who gave their lives for the freedoms of all our people in the Civil War.

### Degradation of Community, Character and Friendships

A deluge of evidence from multiple research studies provides compelling evidence that young Americans are experiencing an unprecedented decline in community connections, insufficient capabilities to work together, to think and act civilly, to coalesce and build meaningful friendships. These all contribute significantly to our youth's struggles with mental health and social development.

The most striking evidence comes from the Harvard Youth Poll (Spring 2025), which reveals a generation socially adrift, with less than one in five (17%) of Americans under 30 feeling "deeply connected to at least one community." Nearly one-third are still searching for belonging or feel entirely disconnected from their communities. Fewer than half of young respondents reported any sense of community connection at all. This represents a dramatic shift in social belonging, and causes serious reasons for alarm.

One of the most disturbing trends is the precipitous drop in direct social contact among teenagers due to increased reliance on digital platforms that often amplify feelings of inadequacy and exclusion, rather than fostering genuine interpersonal connection. Depending on the survey, between 2003 and 2022 in-person social interaction among teens dropped dramatically by between 45%-70%. Whereas previous generations built relationships through friendships and shared physical spaces and activities, digital interaction has actually been like a termite invasion eroding the foundations of healthy human connection. The psychological toll is severe, with depression and anxiety rates among teenagers skyrocketing, as studies link excessive social media use to increased feelings of isolation. Brain imaging research reveals that social rejection activates the same neural pathways as physical pain, making the experience of being "left out" literally painful for adolescents.

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*Precipitous trends represent a fundamentally implosive shift  
in how young people experience friendship and community.*

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Young Americans face an unprecedented crisis of human connection. Studies demonstrate that social isolation leads to increased risks of depression, anxiety, hypertension, and cognitive decline. The erosion of community has far-reaching implications beyond individual wellbeing -- the decline of strong neighborhood ties contributes to increased distrust among people, decreased civic engagement, and weakened social safety nets. Young Americans who feel no fellowship to a community (common unity) are disconnected from being able to treat others with dignity, treating people transactionally as non-entities. They see politics as a struggle of domination, and are fearful of anyone whose life choices differ from theirs. Consequently, they are trapped in a vicious cycle where social isolation leads to civic disengagement, further weakening the community structures that could provide support.<sup>2</sup>

### Confronting our STEM Challenge

Everywhere we turn, we hear the call for making students “future ready,” which has led education down the pathways of common core curriculum of more *Science, Technology, Engineering* and *Math* (commonly referred to as STEM). Things are now out of balance – our “left brains” that are designed to handle concepts and analytics are being developed at the sacrifice of our “right brains” which excel in character, wisdom, creativity and relationships.

In his later years, America’s greatest inventor, Thomas Edison, understood the value of building a society that balanced technical competency with the dignity of human character:

Somehow, I have not yet achieved the success I want [despite all my technological achievements]. We live in a troubled world full of doubt and uncertainty.

Are our children and their children going to approve of what we've done? Or are they going to discover too late that science was trusted too much, so that it has turned into a monster whose final triumph is man's own destruction?

Some of us are beginning to feel that danger. But it can be avoided.

I once had two dynamos, [running in tandem that] need regulating. It was a problem of balance and adjustment [alignment]. The confusion in the world today presents much the same problem. The dynamo of man's God-given ingenuity is running away with his equally God-given humanity.

We must put those two dynamos in balance; make them work in harmony as the Great Designer intended they should. It can be done. What man's mind can conceive, man's mind can control. Man must learn that; and then we must not be afraid of tomorrow; then man will go forward toward more light.<sup>3</sup>

School curricula must have a focus on the core qualities of building trust, good character, and their role in strong friendships -- foundations of community attachment. If family bonds have failed, community and friendships must fill the gap. These functions are largely right-brained, focusing on *character* and *relationships*. By adding the *Arts* and *Relationships* to our education we create a more holistic *STREAM* to supersede *STEM*.

The aim is not to refute the value of left-brain education,  
only create a better-balanced human.

Unless our educational system addresses the right-left brain imbalance, we inadvertently default to producing highly competent Machiavellians applying game theory to life or becoming self-idolizing narcissists interested only in themselves.

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*Education’s highest aim should embrace a meta-quest to reveal,  
understand, advance, reconcile and evolve the dignity of the human spirit.*

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### Failure of Moral and Character Development in our Schools

The history of education shows that successful civilizations have always imbedded moral character into the development of their youth for a good reason – to ensure the advancement of civilized behavior into the next generations.

Today we are failing that lesson to the point we are now sowing the seeds of our own self-destruction. Our distrust of institutions, our lack of belief in the future of our democracy, and our severe polarization are evidence of this failure to address our moral fragilities.

In our modern school systems, the development of character has fallen flat on its face, eroding student's morale and the basic foundations of trust, friendships, and community.

The last fifty years have seen a serious decline in the fundamental principles that had once been engrained in the core of education. Consider this excerpt from John Dewey, one of the leading education authorities from the 20<sup>th</sup> century:

[It is essential to] bring intellectual results into vital union with character so that they become working forces in behavior. .... shift[ing] the centre of ethical gravity from an absorption which is selfish to a service which is social.

The child is an organic whole, intellectually, socially, and morally, as well as physically ... [who] must either live his social life as an integral unified being, or suffer loss and create friction...

The child is to be a member of a family, himself in turn responsible, in all probability, for rearing and training of future children, thereby maintaining the continuity of society. He is to be a worker, engaged in some occupation which will be of use to society, and which will maintain his own independence and self-respect. He is to be a member of some particular neighborhood and community, and must contribute to the values of life, add to the decencies and graces of civilization wherever he is....

The child must be educated for leadership as well as for obedience. He must have power of self-direction and power of directing others, power of administration, ability to assume positions of responsibility. This necessity of educating for leadership is as great on the [business] as on the political side... <sup>4</sup>

If you are surprised that this passage was written in 1909, you probably went to grade school when character still counted in education. Dewey was emphatic that there are many opportunities to weave and embrace the lessons of character into a curriculum.

Development of character is tied closely to human qualities that have been held in the highest esteem for over two thousand years of human evolution: courage, integrity, honesty, the capacity to determine right from wrong, the embrace of wisdom, and trust-building. When these qualities are in place, other great things happen in a person's life: the formation of deep and lasting friendships, expression of sincere love, exploration of new ventures, collaborative problem-solving, expansion of learning, and connection to community.

### Our Moral Compass is Spinning

With the demise of our morale center of gravity, our leadership skills have deteriorated to name calling, divisiveness, deceit, distortion, fear-mongering, and bullying – all signs of moral depravity. As esteemed educator Henry Merritt Wriston proclaimed in the 1950's:

Education ... is wasted if you do not develop morally; if you do not acquire morale courage ... to call what is right and wrong and take the consequences.

Most of the voices we hear are the voices of arrogance by bullies. The world is filled with enthusiasm and brains. The problem is that all the brains have no enthusiasm, and all the enthusiasts have no brains. The world is dying of hot heads and cold feet.<sup>5</sup>

It is no wonder, since the beginning of the twentieth century, humanity has fish-tailed back and forth between triumph and tragedy. Two world wars, the false god of communism, the



### **Four Guidelines for a Steady Moral Compass** ***A Higher Standard for Rebuilding Trust in America***

#### **1. Follow the Golden Rule:**

- a. Be Golden: Do Unto Others as you would have them do unto you.
- b. Be Respectful: Respect everyone, even those you don't like.
- c. Be Gracious: Show your gratefulness to others for little things.
- d. Be Righteous: Protect the rights and freedoms of others when violated.

#### **2. Fulfill Your Responsibilities:**

- a. Be Dutiful: Fulfill responsibilities to your conscience, your family & America.
- b. Be Benevolent: Give aid to others in need or in danger.
- c. Be a Role Model: Demonstrate the highest standards of excellence
- d. Be Disciplined: Obey righteous laws.

#### **3. Be Trustworthy:**

- a. Be Truthful: Tell the truth. Keep your word and promises.
- b. Be Fair: Listen to all sides before making judgements.
- c. Be Honorable: Do not lie, deceive, cheat or steal.
- d. Be Courageous: Stand for what's right and against what's wrong.

#### **4. Be Friendly:**

- a. Be Co-Creative: Turn differences into opportunities to learn and innovate.
- b. Be a Guardian: Do not deprive others of safety, security, or family.
- c. Be Humane: Do not intentionally cause pain, harm, or murder.
- d. Be a Partner: Work with others as a teammate

instability of capitalism, and the decline in character in our leaders has led to a tipping point that seriously needs counter-balancing lest our malaise turns malignant.

The core values of morality and character must be revitalized if education is to perform its fundamental role in our society.

This is not at all to imply we must replicate the educational system of the past. Rather, we must rebalance the core of education to have an emphasis on *both character and competence*.

One key element of this rebalancing on the side of character is to reinforce the essence of [\*collaborative leadership\*](#), the capacity of each person to build trust and work in teams.

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*Leadership stands at the pinnacle of all the arts, for it is the art of mobilizing & multiplying talent.*

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### Spirit and Soul – the Vital Energy of Humanity

With the purge of anything seemingly religious from our educational experience, we have simultaneously squashed the energy and dignity of the human soul in intellectual life.

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*“The essence of leadership ... is offering one’s spirit.”<sup>6</sup>*

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Spirit is the “Vital Energy” of Humanity (from Latin: *Vitae* – meaning “life”). The four core energies of life – joy, love, creation, wisdom – are the cornerstones of spiritual intellect, well founded from ancient times and across every culture. They are grounded in our literature, our religions, our philosophies, and our highest character. Without the development of these energies, our sense of self is lost, our qualities of friendship are dismal, and our connection to community is filled with strife and despair.

Plato described these *vital energies* as the “upper soul” (as opposed to the “lower soul” that grappled with more debased emotions like anger, revenge, and narcissism). In the Greek framework, the upper soul was developed by balancing, aligning, and integrating *logos* (divine truth), *pathos* (emotions), and *ethos* (character). These became the foundation stones of civility. Harnessing emotional passion requires the discipline of the mind and soul to act with grace, fully embracing the dynamic balance of self-interest and the greater good. Spiritual intellect is the beautiful energy of the conscience to *Turn Tragedy into Triumph, Adversity into Advantage, Anxiety into Action, Chaos into Clarity, Breakdowns into Breakthroughs, Fear into Fortitude, Pain into Possibility, Calamity into Courage, & Vision into Value*.

*The development of good character activates spiritual energy.*

If a student does not learn how to energize their spiritual intellect, their lives will feel like the sound of one hand clapping – certainly indicative of our current cultural angst. Spiritual intellect is not a religious experience, it is a journey that elevates the soul, which is one of the most effective ways to conquer tyranny and polarization. Courage – elevating one’s vision and values to be greater than one’s fears – has been acclaimed by virtually every culture since ancient times as the highest of human spiritual qualities.



### Trust and Ethics

The capacity to create trustworthy communities is far more than an abstract ideal, it's an essential objective of every civilized society. [Numerous studies](#) demonstrate how [communities thrive](#) where trust -- honor, ethics, justice and truthfulness -- flourish. These communities and organizations keep their eye on learning, progress and fair play.

DEI programs rarely address moral development (e.g., fostering humility, resilience, or integrity) because these outcomes are harder to monetize or track. Yet, moral traits are critical for navigating tense discussions about privilege, bias, ethical leadership, or long-term social structures designed to create community, focus joint achievement or maximizes innovation.

*Trust is the great unifying "force field" that binds collaboration's architecture.*

On the converse side, distrust and its devilish disciples -- fear, doubt, dishonor and divisiveness -- destroy humanity's ability to engage in any semblance of collaborative decision-making. Distrust spawns the muck and mire of chaos, conflict, and confusion -- the gladiatorial arena for malevolent [authoritarians](#) intent on destroying democracies.

An educational system overlooking trust and ethics opens the door to dictatorial diseases.

### Why History Matters

Democracy requires its citizens to understand interactive human energy force-fields.

Our modern view of history too often dumbs-down reality, focuses on a shallow grasp of events and chronology, and seeks to elevate the banal and salacious above the profound and courageous. One never understands the trials of democracy until one can understand its travails, its commitment to an ideal, its strife, moral and ethical dilemmas and transgressions of its leaders, and the intent and interaction of those who made the personal sacrifices to uphold and defend our democracy when it was threatened.

When history was first created by the Greeks, the essence of history (from the word *historia*) meaning *an inquiry into meaning, a learning or knowing by inquiry*) is to *seek first causes*, thus recognizing leader's inner motives, exploring the nature of human behavior. History was meant to give meaning to the past, challenging superficial interpretations. History also aimed to enlighten the nobility of both the mind and the soul. Greatness in leaders, the Greeks believed, comes from our ability to create a better world than we found it; to radiate virtue (arete) in the darkest hours, where hope is the only sustenance to keep going.

To understand the nature of democracy, we can view history as a matter of choices -- conscious or sublime or reactionary or evil -- carefully discerning what should be cherished or vilified or built upon. History, when properly taught, gives us deep wisdom into the behavior of individuals and groups, grasping how forces influence and shape perspectives.

## Report to Harvard University - Education on the Edge

History is the navigational landmark from which to plot the course of the future. The past holds the possibility from which we can propel and spark our imagination and inspiration. Or we can look with disdain upon its transgressions and wallow in remorse.

We can choose the path to recognize the mortal [Thomas Jefferson](#) struggling with the dichotomies of his elevated vision contrasted against the realities of slavery, or simply debase him as a pathetic hypocrite. We can learn something heroic and human following the first path, but leave ourselves crushed and disillusioned on the rocks and shoals of dismissing his heroic vision as simply delusional and fraudulent. In Henry Merritt Wriston's words:

The accent [today] is on the triumph of ugliness ... We have passed through an era of hero smashing. Biographers have tapped youth's idols to show their feet of clay. The descent has been from the loftiest ideal to the level of a sordid transaction. The emphasis has been shifted from the triumphs in American life to its shortcomings and its failures. We hear little now of the rise from the cabin to the presidency; we hear instead of the "lost generation" and the "tragedy of youth" ... until fear rather than courage is the emotion which we inspire.<sup>7</sup>

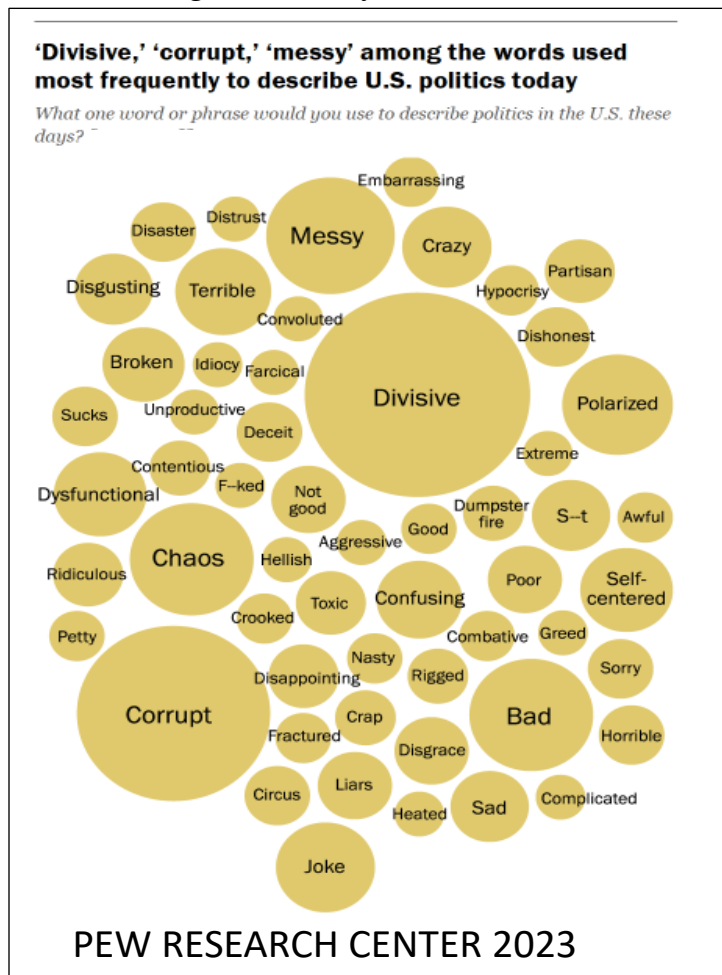
To neglect and distort the past is to turn our backs on its rhythmic patterns; then, in our most vulnerable times, be unprepared for intense onslaught of history's deadliest arrows.

## Educating Americans for Democracy

Democracy's essence--the dynamic energy that inspires debate, mutual problem solving, and innovation, is in under the most egregious attacks by both Right-and Left-Wing Radicals.

The inherent value about holding one's responsibilities as a citizen as dearly as one's rights as an individual was implied in prior generations. That has been thrown out of balance. In the last half century, each has done considerable damage by undermining faith in democracy.

Each side has trampled on what *unites* us all as humans – our spiritual dignity of *unity in the diversity*. Now every splinter group demands its rights, but is silent on its responsibilities to build unified vision upon collaborative common ground.



## Report to Harvard University – Education on the Edge

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Cherishing our responsibilities to community has become a lost commitment that must be restored; education must champion that restoration.

As educators we must come to grips with the fact that the election of Right-Wing Radicals, determined to destroy education, is largely because we have failed to educate for sustaining a democracy. We have failed to give our citizens an inspiring appreciation for the great vision of our historic leaders and the human sacrifices of our warriors to protect democracy.

Today's electorate is largely incapable of distinguishing good leaders from bad ones, cannot recognize that criminals have no place in leading the public, and fail to discern ugly [propaganda](#) when it blasts lies, venom, and deceit. We, as a nation, have reaped what we have sown; we, as educators, must take action to correct this error.

Democracy is both an ideal and a process; neither a status nor a right. As an ideal, it is not perfect in its every-day denouement. As a form of governance, it can look angry and even ugly, difficult, even problematic. Progress comes the hard way, governed by elevated Constitutional ideals that are often entangled in convoluted processes, which may be more important than the results. But as an ideal, it is a quest that must never be forsaken.

Nevertheless, education must declare its unwavering support for the defense of democracy, exhorting students to champion democracy against [totalitarian dictatorship](#). Anything less welcomes a dark age of despair and destruction --the end of enlightened education.

Because democracy is both an ideal and a process, the means of educating our citizenry must fall into the realm of teaching the value of commitment, discernment and devotion to one's basic [duties as a citizen](#), as clearly articulated by President Teddy Roosevelt.

Educator Henry Merrit Wriston remarked about Educating for a Democracy:

Democracy seeks to fulfill that ancient ideal: "The multitude of the wise is the welfare [commonwealth] of the world."... [wisdom requires] perspective attained by broadening and lengthening experience far beyond the boundaries, either in time or space, of the life span of a single individual.

It is perfectly clear, however, that perspective has not been the objective of schools ... The emphasis has been put upon knowledge of today, upon knowledge immediately useful. The social studies have been crowded with data of the current scene and successive editions of textbooks have tumbled from the presses in order to keep courses up to date. Ancient history [which] has fallen from favor, [demonstrates] ... the history of tyranny is even longer than the history of democracy. Its transient character, the manner in which it has always nurtured the seeds of its own destruction make it desirable to follow its record wherever and whenever it has appeared in human history.<sup>8</sup>

### Discipline is Required by Citizens in a Democracy

Both democracy and education requires discipline – the qualities of character that will not succumb to undue emotional passion. Discipline enables the commitment to our highest core values and operating principles, denying the flagrances of revenge, retribution and polarization. It means grappling with the dichotomies of human reality, in particular self interest versus mutual interest.

The great error of communism is to believe that most humans had no self-interest to be satisfied. And the converse error of capitalism is the fallacy that most humans want strictly to satisfy their self-interest. Both neglect the dignity of the soul.

A civilized society requires the self-discipline to dynamically balance self-interest with the greater good – the ability to deny self-gratification in the moment in favor of long-range edification; the consistency of a powerful work ethic to build for the future, rather than trying to reap a harvest prematurely. Growth and the power of progression requires its citizenry to realize hard lessons:

“the world is going to demand of us a great deal more than we are entitled to demand of it... a struggle that will never be won by the self-indulgent...

We [must] end up serving something bigger than ourselves.” – Bruce Catton<sup>9</sup>

This is how even ordinary people attain a certain greatness. Courage results from the discipline to make a commitment to a cause greater than our self interest, larger than our fears, stronger than our personal needs. Discipline enables us to make tough choices, and see the big picture, especially in times of adversity. As Henry Merritt Wriston observed:

“An important constituent of wisdom as a basis for education for democracy is *disciplined emotion*... Disciplined emotion is a response to values ... [which] has as a goal to awaken courage and a judgment of values... The process in America has been the precise reverse. We have become afraid of [the beautiful] emotions, which we regard as "sentimental."... Because of our alleged fear of a "sentimental" view of the past, we have interpreted spiritual achievements in materialistic terms.”<sup>10</sup>

A disciplined mind and soul have integrity: the gift of freedom to act in ways that benefit not just the actor, but those influenced by his or her actions.

The uncertainty, conflict, and chaos that haunts our troubled world is largely the result of unprincipled leaders and followers who reject the beauty and spirit of a disciplined heart and mind.

This discipline of democratic engagement must start early,  
certainly no later than the seventh grade.

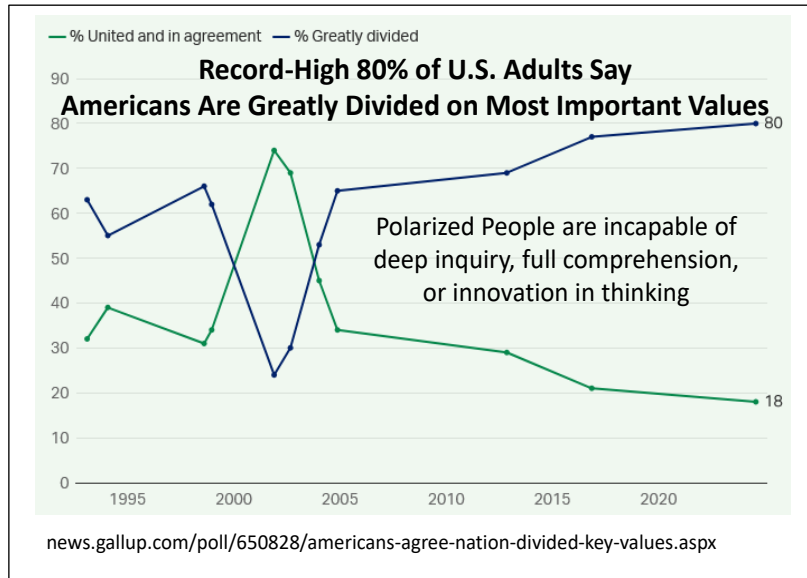
### Reframing Polarity

Today polarity is more pronounced than any time since the Civil War. The Pew Research Foundation observes (2024):

When asked to describe politics in the United States these days in a single word or phrase, an overwhelming majority of Americans (79%) express a negative sentiment. Just 2% offer a positive word or phrase, while 10% say something neutral.

This is confirmed by a similar Gallup Poll. The problem of polarization must not be ignored:

- People who are polar in their thinking are violating the core premise of a liberated mind to hold diverse thinking as a foundation for learning.
- Polarization erodes community bonds and trust, destroying any semblance of unity of purpose.
- Polarization generates stresses that can turn into violence & destruction.



Polarization and democracy do not mix – polarization is a main ingredient in the dictator's recipe book.

Dictatorships base their authority on [lies, deceit, and psychological manipulation](#) – never the search for truth.

Education must identify this evil for what it is and enlighten our electorate on methods of collaborative problem solving. Education must play a role in teaching people how to avoid polarization and use differentials in thinking as an engine of innovation and paradigm shifting. The consequences of failing to wrest polarization from the hands of extremists carry enormous risks to our future.

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*When there are no shared goals or vision of the public good,  
is the social contract any longer possible?<sup>11</sup>*

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### Finding Personal Mission & Purpose in Life

In his landmark book, “*Crisis and Hope in American Education*,”<sup>12</sup> Robert Ulich, James Bryant Conant professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education in the 1950s said:

*If our schools fail to help a person discover his or her purpose [in life],  
they fail in almost everything that really matters.*

This statement strikes at the core at one of the fundamental aims of education -- a factor we are all-too-often failing to accomplish. Without a strong sense of personal mission and purpose, life is like being adrift alone in a small, rudderless open boat, without food and water, ready to capsize when struck by heavy winds and seas.

People want their lives to be *meaningful, filled with growth, exploration, and fulfillment*. These are part of one’s *soul*. Three things tend to contribute to these qualities more than anything:

- *Personal Mission & Purpose*: Our ability to articulate our personal vision, our unique purpose, and a value proposition that gives guidance, direction, meaning, and selection criteria to choices in life.
- *Trust & Teamwork*: Our capability to build a trustworthy, respectful environment where collaboration with others continually improves and supports the way we relate to our world, our friends & family, our community, and the organizations for whom we work and volunteer.
- *Quest for Learning*: Our dedication and determination to make life-long learning integral to our life’s journey, making the world a better place than we found it.

### Education Molds Belief Systems

The course of human events is determined, in great measure, by belief systems that catalyze actions of leaders, which, in turn, mold the cultures of societies. Education has traditionally been designed to preserve, reinforce, and project those beliefs back into the culture. In the best of cultures, the educational system evolves new ideas, positive innovations, and stimulates the power of progression – the desire improve the human condition. The best leaders and educators reconceive those beliefs, moving the culture onward in a higher direction. When these new directions are guided by a moral compass, civilization moves forward; and conversely, when the moral compass goes adrift, history records declines and collapses, such as we are experiencing in America today.

Throughout history, belief systems have driven cultures to great heights or abysmal depths.

Ancient Greece created a phenomenal explosion of social, artistic and technological innovations that became a hallmark of human evolution. It was a complete breakthrough from the past. Today high school students are familiar with the names of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, Pythagoras, and Aesop. These breakthrough thinkers were known as “philosophers” (which literally means “lovers of wisdom”).



The Greek culture (assessed on a *per capita* basis) created more innovation than any culture in the history of the world.<sup>13</sup> How? It was in their culture!

By understanding the [fundamentals of Greek Belief Systems](#), we can actually recreate this explosion of social and scientific innovation. Any civilization's vitality is beheld in the quality of its vision, its ideals, its art, its deeds, its quest for learning, and its ability to progress on an upward trajectory based on its trust in its leaders and institutions.

And conversely, the [great regressions in civilization](#), such as that of the fall of Rome, the Dark Ages, or Dictatorial Fascism are all reflective of human nature's belief systems gone awry.

These regressions did not happen by accident. They all started when an enlightened belief system was overturned by a fundamentally flawed set of beliefs which destroyed the trust of people in themselves. (see side bar about Learning Loops)

This typically began with the introduction of beliefs in spectral forces within, invisible deep-state antagonists, friends that were falsely accused as enemies, and a need for security to protect ourselves against anyone whose opinion is different from our own. Societies became the victims of group think<sup>14</sup> as they began withering away, torpedoed by a lack of trust and a rejection of the dynamic differential energy that hones debate, innovation, and progress.

### "Learning Loops" –How Beliefs Design & Mold the way People Engage their World



#### A "Learning Loop" is a 5-Step Cycle:

- Step 1. What you **BELIEVE** to be true & real, which determines how you will ...
- Step 2. **PERCEIVE** and interpret reality, which frames what you will ...
- Step 3. **CONCEIVE** for a response or reaction, which then enables you to set the goals for what you will ...
- Step 4. **ACHIEVE**, which, in turn, triggers actions that manifest in what you will ...
- Step 5. **RECEIVE** for results, which then either affirms & confirms (or restructures if the results are the antithesis of) your Step 1 Beliefs, recommencing the Learning Loop.

The Learning Loop captures the cyclical nature of how each aspect feeds into the next, constantly shaping our understanding of the world and our place within it.

Learning Loops explain how people learn and how the most powerful leaders design cultures. [Evil leaders](#) become masters of [manipulating learning loops](#) to aggrandize their own power.

Educators are highly influential in setting the core beliefs that drive the Learning Loop function in humans. Having a coherent, enlightened belief system is essential to life-long achievement, both for individuals and organizations, large, small, & informal.

Civilizations in decline are known by their reversion to humanity's deepest, most primal animal instincts. The Dark Ages, the Era of Dictatorial Fascism and Communism epitomize civilizations in retrograde. What we see in Washington today is a reflection three generations of cultural dissolution and decay.

Leadership and education play a pivotal role in moving a civilization's culture in one direction or another. Without a careful attention to how belief systems determine individual and cultural learning loops, civilizations become victims to propaganda and divisiveness.<sup>15</sup>

### Using Artificial Intelligence

No approach to modern education can overlook the impact and use of Artificial Intelligence on students and the learning process.

As an extensive AI user, I can say with certainty that Artificial Intelligence is a double-edged sword. From an academic perspective it is a marvelous tool for doing research and testing hypotheses. As a learning tool, it can help challenge, thinking if used appropriately. It can help create digital networks for learning.

However, many times, AI presents only what it can find in a split second on the internet. Books and ideas that are not digitized are forsaken. Superficial knowledge proliferates from prolific search-engine-optimized bloggers who seek fame but have no real, in-depth understanding of their fields they profess to know.

AI can be a learner's partner, but it must never substitute for an individual's concrete thinking, wisdom, innovation, and insightful questioning. Personally, I question everything AI creates; much of its value lies in personal interdiction to refine it.

### A New, Expanded Role for Education

Today, people feel like things are spinning out of control -- the "centre" is not holding; our anchor to windward is losing its grasp in the storm; people feel rudderless; our dynamos spin faster and faster toward a seeming oblivion.

It's a worthless exercise to place blame on those who contributed to education's decomposition -- that would drag us into the wallows of futility and despair. Every crisis creates an opportunity. Let's focus on how education in America can bring humanity to a higher plane.

Most children, today, are coming to school from either a broken home (nearly 40% of all children in America are born out of wedlock<sup>16</sup>) or from a family of working parents.

Whether educators like it or not, we are faced with having to act in some capacity as surrogate parents – to train values, teaching how to get along with others, learning how to live a life of integrity, forming trustworthy friendships, becoming good parents, and building citizens who cherish our democracy. Education must play a much stronger role in addressing these fundamental issues -- more now than in generations past.

### Designing a Rebirth

History has shown civilizations run in cycles of decline and rebirth. We are at one of the critical junctures where we must design our rebirth, rather than succumb to civil decline while wrestling with uncivilized divisiveness amidst a sea of bewildering technologies.

All revitalizations of human societies -- such as the Greek Golden Age or the Renaissance followed by the Enlightenment -- are marked by a sense of energy, a belief in the perfectibility of humanity, a faith in the value of human existence, a confidence in the evolution of a better future, a trust in one's own character, and a faith in the institutions and leaders who guide them. As my mentor, Paul Lawrence (Harvard Business School) observed,

*"Trust determines the course of history, the destiny of nations, and the fate of people."*

Our obligation as educators and leaders is to lift our ill-fated course, providing guidance and direction for future generations to attain a noble quest to orchestrate an [Age of ReEnlightenment](#) dedicated to elevating the [dignity of the human spirit](#).

The framework of the modern college education was birthed during the Renaissance. The idea of a liberal arts (*liber*: Latin – to be free) model of learning for youth moving into adulthood was intended to free the mind from mundane, provincial constraints, to think at a more ideal, truth-seeking level, as opposed to the craft-guild approach to master a trade. The idea of "liberal" once meant "selfless, magnanimous, admirable, generous, or befitting a free person," giving individuals capacity to [engage synergistically](#), creating community.

The last century has been one where institutions have disintegrated, education has lost its gravitas, leadership has degenerated, and people's faith in democracy itself has eroded. We need to empower both educators and leaders and their stakeholder teams to embrace a [concordance of new mind-sets](#), skill-sets, tool-sets, and solution-sets to produce a "next generation quantum shift" in human interaction.

Harvard is not just the oldest educational institution in world, it has traditionally aimed at producing enlightened leaders – realists who conjoin the values of [collaborative excellence](#) with the value of practical implementation. It is from this synergistic union of values and value-creation that the learner(s) receive a "quantum kick" in real-life performance, upon which professions and vocations can actually perform better.

For a fire to ignite, it needs three essential "ingredients:" fuel, heat, and oxygen. So too with transformational change; it is most likely to occur when three essentials are in place:

- Critical Mass of Dissatisfaction with the current condition,
- Strategic Program of Implementation to produce better results,
- Strong, Measurable Value Proposition making the transformation worthwhile.

Now is the time for a paradigm shift. As Einstein observed,

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*We cannot solve today's problems with the same level of thinking that created the problem.*

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*The most important factor shaping human existence is the goal of building a community of free and happy human beings who, by constant endeavor, strive to liberate themselves from the inheritance of anti-social and destructive instincts. – Albert Einstein*

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### Conclusion & Call to Action

Clearly, education needs reform, as evidenced by the deplorable condition of our youth, the degradation of our democracy, and the erosion of trust. If results and public confidence are any measure of effectiveness, modern education has failed to pass the test.

**Educators must not hide in denial about the severity and magnitude of these problems.**

It would be naïve to think there will ever be a common vision across the land about the purpose and processes of education – this has never happened and never will. While each community of educators, parents, students, policy makers and politicians will have to work out their own local consensus, paradigm shifting solutions must enacted.

When President Trump dissolved the U.S. Department of Education there was hardly a whimper of objection, and many cheered its demise. He sent the signal across America that education was not important. His attack on Ivy League schools was not just a usurpation of political power, it was a challenge to the efficacy of our educational system. It was an intrusion by a leader whose disrespect of both education and the democratic rule of law is unethical at best and malevolent at worst. Not responding to such an attack would be an admission of education's lack of courage, vision, and commitment to America's future.

As Harvard President Garber challenged the University's alumni, we must reassess education's role in society, and challenge our own conceptions about why and how we exist.

We must not overlook the vital connection between democracy and a liberating education.

We need new strategies to build communities of character, trust, and friendships.

While it may be argued that education is no more than a reflection of the deeper difficulties in our social culture, such a position places education in the role of powerless victim, not heroic leader. Harvard, as a preeminent force in education should play a prominent role.

This is our challenge, our opportunity, and our social responsibility – to balance and align competence with character in our education. We must not let the cynics prevail.

*We can destroy ourselves with cynicism and disillusion, just as effectively as bombs.<sup>17</sup>*

The future of civilization is at stake.

A rebirth at a higher level – a *Regnaissance* – is the [breakthrough](#) we need.

Yes, Education Can Redeem Its Soul! The Dignity of the Human Spirit will Triumph!

# Report to Harvard University – Education on the Edge

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Author's Note: The purpose of this Strategic Alert is not to expect unanimous accord – certainly not every person, educator, parent, student, or policy maker will agree with what I have advocated. Never in the long history of education has there been a common vision for education, and I certainly don't expect one in the near future.

The purpose of this paper is to stimulate thought, to challenge conventional thinking. I wish to catalyze deeper questioning of where we are, why there is so much opposition, the roots of our malaise, spur education's stakeholders into enlightened action, and to provide a foundation for building a bold new future for education in the face of enormous cultural and political challenges.

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AI was used only in the research for this article, not in the development of the concepts nor writing.

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About the author: Robert Porter Lynch is a thought leader and practitioner in the field of collaborative leadership. He holds a B.A. from Brown University in International Relations, and an Ed.M. from Harvard University in Leadership & Organization Development. Robert has authored three books on Strategic Alliances, and founded the [Strategic Alliance profession](#). Over 40,000 senior executives have attended his programs. For many years he was an adjunct professor of Executive Education in several major universities. He is a decorated combat veteran and a champion of the dignity of the human spirit.

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## Report to Harvard University – Education on the Edge

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## Report to Harvard University – Education on the Edge

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# Report to Harvard University – Education on the Edge

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## Footnotes

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- <sup>2</sup> Redefining Community in the Digital Age: While digital communities can provide support and shared purpose, they often lack the depth and resilience of in-person relationships that have historically sustained human wellbeing. It's important to note that younger generations aren't entirely abandoning community—they're redefining what community looks like in ways that older generations may not recognize. Young people rally around social justice causes, form online support groups, and engage in digital activism—new forms of collective action that didn't exist in previous decades. However, the challenge lies in bridging the gap between these modern forms of connection and traditional values of face-to-face engagement.
- <sup>3</sup> From speech cited in *Thomas Edison, The Man*, starring Spencer Tracey, MGM 1940, available on You Tube (excerpt from the last scene in the movie)
- <sup>4</sup> From Dewey, John; *Moral Principles In Education*; Houghton Mifflin Company, 1909
- <sup>5</sup> Wriston, Henry Merritt, from a recording produced by Brown University, circa 1955
- <sup>6</sup> Bolman, Lee & Deal, Terrence; *Leading with Soul*; Josey-Bass, p 122
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- <sup>9</sup> Catton, Bruce; *Words to Live By, Discipline*, Simon & Schuster, 1959
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- <sup>11</sup> Bloom, Alan; *The Closing of the American Mind*, Simon & Schuster, 1987, p27
- <sup>12</sup> Ulich, Robert; *Crisis and Hope in American Education*, Beacon Press, 1952
- <sup>13</sup> The Greeks “created science;” its culture produced scientists and the scientific method and logic that, in turn, spawned mathematics, geometry, trigonometry, optics, geodesics, mechanics, hydrostatics, pneumatics, astronomy, military technology, and urban planning. These scientific insights then laid the foundation for pioneering work in engineering to implement the scientific revelations. In the epoch of Roman hegemony, science literally dried up as philosophers were demeaned as trivial and irrelevant. During the seven hundred years of Roman dominance, there were virtually no scientific discoveries. While engineering continued to make Greek architecture bigger, grander, and stronger, there were absolutely no scientific breakthroughs. Why was there a depletion of science in the Roman era? Because leaders and educators demeaned science as unnecessary to maintain power and gain wealth. Furthermore, the strong morality developed by the Greeks was forsaken by the Romans as well. It was certainly more the decline in moral character than the decline in science that led to the fall of Rome.
- <sup>14</sup> Janis, Irving; *Victims of Groupthink: A Psychological Study of Foreign-Policy Decisions and Fiascoes*, Houghton Mifflin, 1972, Symptoms of groupthink include: 1) illusion of invulnerability to be wrong, 2) the collective rationalization of the group's decisions without dissent, 3) unquestioned belief in the morality of the group and its choices, 4) stereotyping opponents, 5) presence of “mind-guards” acting as barriers to alternative/ negative information, 6) illusion of unanimity, 7) neglect of possible alternatives, 8) focus on a narrow number of goals, 9) ignoring the risks involved, 10) little attention paid to contingency plans in case the preferred solution fails.
- <sup>15</sup> Liberals constantly demean Donald Trump as stupid and untethered. This belief system is blind to the fact that Trump has actually mastered a manipulative Learning Loop, aided and abetted by politicians and right-wing media. He is actually far more intelligent – in a perverse Machiavellian way – than his detractors can see.
- <sup>16</sup> Unwed mother Births according to the Center for Disease Control:
  - Black Americans: 69.3% of births are to unmarried mothers
  - Hispanic Americans: 54.2% of births are to unmarried mothers
  - Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander: 52.75% of births are to unmarried mothers
  - American Indian/Alaska Native: 68.7% of births are to unmarried mothers
  - White Americans: 26.8% of births are to unmarried mothers
  - Asian Americans: 12.0% of births are to unmarried mothers
- <sup>17</sup> Clark, Kenneth; *Civilization*, Harper Row, 1974, p347