



PERSONALISED EDUCATION: Responding to children's interests, play and curiosities feeds their appetites, aptitudes and attitudes for learning.

PHOTO: THINKSTOCK

Put kids back in the picture

It is time to review the purpose of schooling and how we measure success



SCHOOL OF THOUGHT
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I AM a big fan of Sir Ken Robinson. His TED Talk *How Schools Kill Creativity* is one of the most-watched TED Talks in history.

In this talk, and across his wide body of work, Robinson makes a strong case for the importance of creativity for education. He also makes a strong case that education is not about data, rather, it is about living human beings with feelings, aspirations, hopes and dreams.

He says, "As soon as you recognise that education is not a processing plant, it's about people, then the whole equation starts to shift around. My argument, really, is that we should

be personalising education, not standardising it".

As an early childhood educator, I have lived and breathed a teaching philosophy focused on individualising and personalising learning experiences for children.

I have seen first-hand how responding to children's interests, play and curiosities feeds their appetites, aptitudes and attitudes for learning.

Children and young people have a huge capacity to learn and engage, and when parents and educators respond to their individual talents, fascinations, and ideas, amazing things happen. A love of learning is ignited and fuelled.

Yet, this kind of teaching philosophy is being squashed by a focus on performance. And everywhere I look I see children and young people being gripped by an epidemic of anxiety and the pressure to achieve. Is this what we want

our education system to do? To debilitate?

Robinson cautions there is a tendency to confuse standardising and testing with raising standards. And unfortunately, this confusion often translates into giving more attention to rating scales, standardised cur-

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riculum, accountability systems, and data analysis than to children and young people themselves.

Unfortunately, even in early childhood education, tests are taking over. Somehow a numerical evaluation of our children and young people has be-

come the focus, the measure of success. Test scores have become the hallowed communicator of achievement and standards.

It is time to rethink the pressure that the education system is putting on kids and how narrowly it is defining success. It is time to review the purpose of schooling and how we measure success.

Lucy Clark, in her informed and compelling book, *Beautiful Failures*, shares the story of her daughter – her beautiful failure – whose experience of school was one of perpetual struggle. Clark's book, like Robinson's TED Talk, challenges us to examine our expectations, question the purpose of education, and remember the importance of childhood.

Like, Robinson, and Clark, I believe we need to return to the living, breathing, feeling human being.

We need to make "who chil-

dren are" the focus of education – not what we want them to be, not a score, or a task, or a number. We need to reimagine how curriculum might be shaped around children's perspectives, their meaning-making and lived experience, and focused on instilling a love of learning – rather than instilling fear, failure and anxiety.

What would happen if we replaced the relentless regime of testing with a commitment to observe and really see what has meaning and relevancy and interest for our children? To observe what they actually know, beyond what a narrow test can capture?

What would happen if the child/young person, and his/her learning, became more important to us than a number? We are at a fork in the road, and it is time to rethink what success in education means for you, for me, and our children. Are you willing?

How do you know if someone's having a stroke? Think...

F.A.S.T.



Check their **FACE**. Has their mouth drooped?

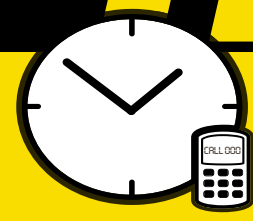


Can they lift both **ARMS**?



What? I don't know what you mean. Could you dsjkgh? Ewngl argn kd dkhg

Is their **SPEECH** slurred? Do they understand you?



TIME is critical. If you see any of these signs, call 000.

Think F.A.S.T. Act FAST! CALL 000

For more info call 1800 787 653 or visit strokefoundation.com.au. Thanks to all our valued partners, including DRAFTFCB, Starcom MediaVest and News Limited.

