

Mikey Duro

Professor Natalie Meir

Essay 4

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### Mining For Potential

In an unfortunate reality, the world is filled with people that will never realize their true potential and what they have to offer to society. The sad fact is that our society is missing out on getting the ultimate impact from many individuals because we don't invest in people who do not fit the image of a productive member of society. Throughout the educational system we have built a rigid path to being successful, often leaving behind vast potential in students that are not traditionally considered smart. Instead of putting such an emphasis on making every student masters of English, History, Math, and Science, there needs to be a change in how students are developed, so the students are set up for success when they are finished with their education. Teaching to and embracing students' untapped potential needs to be the highest priority in our educational system, so that these students can enter the professional world with tools that fit their talents and enable them to offer the best of themselves to society.

To break out of this rigid education system there should be focus on involving students in discussions within their interests, which will give them more freedom in thought. When students get challenged in areas that they feel interested in, they will gain confidence in themselves and be able to build their intellectual minds. The essay "Hidden Intellectualism" by Gerald Graff says, "Inside every street-smart student (which is to say, every student) there is a latent intellectual trying to break out" (Graff 23). These street-smart students need their brains to be

stimulated and be taught how to learn something that interests them. The goal from there is to take that excitement of learning and gaining knowledge to other fields of study, so they can become well rounded students and set up for success.

Once a student's unique potential is found and the hidden intellectual inside them is awakened, they must be challenged to take those newly developed talents to more traditional scopes. Some students will want to learn about sports or how to design clothes, and as they start learning about these subjects, they can be introduced to new ideas and concepts of how to think about such things as statistics and geometry. Graff notes that, "Until street-smarts can articulate themselves as intellectual argumentation, they will have limited influence on the public space" (Graff 23). As students start developing their minds and expanding their intelligence, it is important to find parallels between their interests and how they can connect to the real world. This will inevitably lead students to bring their own ideas to the world, so that they can impact society in a positive way and be seen for the smarts they possess.

With the confidence a student gains by being embraced for their individual intelligence and empowered with the knowledge of how to use it, they will become resilient to adversity and excited to use what they learn to further their goals. Students that are not given the opportunity to tap into their potential will struggle to overcome challenges and are likely to fall between the cracks of an unforgiving society that expects them to go to college and make something of themselves. Carol S. Dweck's essay "Brainology" says studies have shown that, "Those with the growth mindsets reported that, after a setback in school, they would simply study more or study differently next time. But those with the fixed mindsets were more likely to say they would feel dumb, study less the next time, and seriously consider cheating" (Dweck). If a student never realizes that they have the potential to make something of their life, their intellectual spirit will

be easily compromised and lead to negative mindsets that could lead them to giving up on themselves. From my own personal experience, this negative mindset can make one feel lost and ill suited to contribute to society.

Every student has potential inside them that needs to be unlocked and refined, or they will not shine for others to see. Teachers need to find ways to connect to their students that are not traditionally intellectual, help them develop their brains with things that they are interested in, and find compelling ways to make intellectual thought easier to digest. Getting students involved in discussions gives them the opportunity to be challenged by new ideas, instead of telling them what to think. This factor will nurture students' unique talents throughout their schooling and send more kids to college that are set up for success. When you inspire people and have them dive deep inside that special place that makes them unique, you will find a potential that can breed a successful and accomplished life.

### Works Cited

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