

Traditional Education: Another Approach?

By Carlynn McCormick



The greatest education in the world is one that allows the individual to make life more worthwhile. What if education were all about students pursuing what is of most interest to them personally? About studying and becoming competent in areas they are passionate about? After all, the world spins on the shoulders of individuals who pursue their heartfelt desires.

Does such an idea fit in the framework of our present educational system? What about necessary subjects: ones that help students communicate, count their money, read a paper, find their way to new locations or understand the world around them. Those of course must be mastered.

But by the time a child reaches junior high or high school, those basics should be in. What comes after that? More study of the same subjects? For some, that may be fine. But what about the heartfelt desires that go beyond those confines?

A different approach is in order — one that steps outside the box.

For want of a better word and mimicking an approach proposed a hundred years ago, Applied Scholastics *Online* Academy offers an “integrated” curriculum. One definition of integrated is ***formed into a whole or introduced into another entity***. And so it becomes another option entered into traditional education.

It works like this: Jenna is passionate about the United Nation’s *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Her father tells her about Bertil Persson’s book, “The Fight against Sects” and says it embraces the ideal “*peace, harmony and happiness for all.*” Jenna wants to study the book and earn high school credit. With an integrated curriculum Jenna can do it. The book integrates, for example, the subjects of history, human relations, social awareness, English, vocabulary and religion. Partial credits can be earned in these subjects and matched up to traditional high school credits in core(1) or elective subjects. The same strategy applies to aligned activities Jenna participates in such as “*Youth for Human Rights(2)*” programs.

From this one scenario it can be deduced that students are invited to earn credits in areas of extreme interest. Instead of a dry textbook, imagine learning political, survival or espionage tactics from such *on-the-edge-of-your-seat* novels as “Manchurian Candidate,” “Lucifer’s Hammer” or “Eye of the Needle.”

Integrated curriculum gives students the freedom to choose materials or activities that are exciting and meaningful to them personally. It is ideal for students who need more of a challenge than what is usually presented by traditional schools. It can create materials or activities so interesting that they catch those students who would otherwise fall through the cracks. The approach also may appeal to children who have already chosen their profession; to artists, dreamers or independent thinkers; or to those who subscribe to the “unschooling(3)” movement.

Integrated curriculum embraces the idea that when you study something your heart desires, you enjoy it. You are happy with it. You become competent in it. And education — in the fullest sense of the word — has been accomplished!

- (1) Core subjects: subjects deemed as basic or necessary to operate well in life.
- (2) Youth for Human Rights: international group with headquarters in Los Angeles that has the purpose of educating people in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights so they become advocates for tolerance and peace.
- (3) Unschooling: follows the philosophy that children pursue knowledge therefore no set curriculum is required; “unschooled” children learn what they want, when they want. The term “unschooling” was coined in the late 1970’s and is attributed to John Caldwell Holt, an education reformer and home school advocate.

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