

# Matt Walsh: We can't save the public school system. We can only save our children from it.

[Matt Walsh](#) Jul 20, 2017 3:03 pm

I have recently been slightly critical of the public school system. And by “recently” I mean relentlessly for the last decade. And by “slightly” I mean that I consider the public school system to be a cannibalistic mutation that brainwashes our children, devours their individuality and their creativity, and annihilates the moral values their parents instilled in them (if any were instilled at all).

After my latest string of harsh and warranted critiques of public school, I received, as I always do, many responses from extremely angry teachers. I thought I'd share one with you:

*“Dear Matt, f\*\*\* you from the bottom of my heart. You are a terrible person. I work in the “evil” public school system and almost EVERYONE I work with is wonderful, hard working, and they love their students. Most teachers do an amazing job and are amazing people. The way you demonize teachers is despicable and hateful. You should be ashamed of yourself. You are the worst person I’ve ever come across on the internet.”*

First let me say, in this upside down culture, I never shudder at being called “the worst.” Second, as I have clarified many times, I have nothing but respect and admiration for the good teachers who choose to wade into this jungle and salvage whatever can be salvaged from it. I do think good teachers exist. I doubt that the person who sent this email is in that category, seeing as she is incapable of handling criticism or articulating a logical counter argument, but, sure, there are good teachers. Of course there are.

Are “most” good? I doubt it. I certainly don't think most are “amazing” and “wonderful.” There aren't many professions where most of its professionals are amazing and wonderful, or even good. Why would teaching be any different? It would be wrong to demonize teachers, but it's just as wrong to canonize them. The very act of getting a teaching job isn't in itself heroic. Some teachers have selfless motivations in pursuing a career in education, but some are more motivated by the discount on their college loans, and the exorbitant number of vacation days, and perhaps by the fact that they can't think of anything else to do. Every job has perks, and in every job you have people who are more interested in the perks than the job.

I suspect that there are as many bad teachers in our schools, percentage-wise, as there are bad people in our culture. Which is to say a lot. I can't tell you how many, exactly, but a lot. Our culture is not interested in crafting amazing and wonderful people, and most of the time it doesn't. To suggest that most of the people who become teachers are wonderful just because they are teachers is childish, and I have little patience for it. It also succeeds in detracting from the teachers who actually are wonderful, because the accomplishment of being a truly wonderful teacher means nothing if even my high school Spanish teacher who couldn't speak Spanish and spent half of the semester playing Jennifer Lopez movies gets to be wonderful.

The problem is that there isn't any filtration process to weed out the bad from the wonderful. The system is designed not to remove the toxic elements, but to prevent their removal. The result is not only an incredible number of sexual predators teaching our kids, but, more commonly, people who do not have a firm grasp of the subjects they're teaching. I went to one of the best high schools in the country, yet a sizable number of my teachers “taught” their subjects by handing out dittos. Many of them offered no real instruction and did not appear to have any insight into the topics they were paid to teach. This is not an isolated problem. In some states, teachers need not have any formal training at all, whatsoever, to get a teaching job.

One of the primary arguments I hear against home schooling is that parents don't know the subjects well enough to teach them. Well, I see no evidence that this is any less of a problem in the public school system. But at least a parent who doesn't know the subject needs only teach it to her own children. A teacher who doesn't know the subject will be

tasked with teaching it to hundreds of different kids. The system is OK with this because the system is not really concerned with education at all.

The One and Only Objective of the public school system is to create the kinds of kids who will cooperate with the public school system. I didn't say this is the objective of every teacher. I said this is the objective of the system itself, even if some of the teachers have loftier goals. As professor Anthony Esolen explains in his brilliant book, *Out of the Ashes*, the system exists only for itself, not for any higher purpose. Its objective certainly is not to impart the truth, or to prepare students for life, or to bring them closer to God or their families, or to help them understand their purpose in the world, or to do anything that used to be defined as "education." Indeed, it's necessary to do the opposite on every count in order to fully achieve the One and Only Objective.

The Objective is not served by teaching kids about literature, so they don't teach literature anymore. It isn't served by teaching kids how to write well, so they don't teach them how to write well anymore. It isn't served by teaching grammar or geography or history or civics, so they don't really teach any of that anymore. You can forget about art or philosophy, of course. Those aren't "useful" at all. And you can forget about tech ed. That's *too* useful, I guess. And so we end up, unsurprisingly, in a country where 60 percent of American adults can't name the three branches of government. 49 percent can't point to New York on a map. A third of adults 18-29 can't tell you which country we fought during the Revolutionary War. Thirty-seven percent can't name the first book in the Bible and 47% can't say if Judaism predates Christianity. Seventy-three percent can't tell you why our country fought the Civil War.

It goes without saying that most of us don't read adult books. This is to be expected, considering that half of us *can't* read above an 8th grade level. And, consequently, most can't write like grown ups. Writing has declined to such an extent that now the average American communicates in abbreviations and pictures. Incapable of expressing his emotions through the written word, he is reduced to conveying his happiness with smiley faces, like a primitive tribesman attempting to communicate with an explorer from the first world. Tweets and text messages look like slightly advanced hieroglyphics. It seems we have come full circle, from the cave wall to the Facebook wall.

So, when I see all of those man-on-the-street videos of college kids struggling to name the vice president or decide if the United States declared its independence in 1776 or 1976, I am not shocked. This is what our country is now, and has been for a while, and it is sheer insanity to exonerate the education system from all guilt. It's like trying to determine who to sue for a botched surgery, but declaring ahead of time that it mustn't be the surgeon.

You can't tell me that I must send my kid to public school because I am ill equipped to teach him myself, and then, when he emerges on the other end a moron who can't spell the word Constitution much less tell you what it is, promptly inform me that it's still my fault.

**School system: "You can't educate your kid. Give him to us."**

**Parents: "OK."**

**[13 years later]**

**Parents: "Hey, my kid is still dumb."**

**School system: "Well why didn't you educate him?!"**

This seems like a catch-22 (note to the public schooled: that's a literary reference).

So, the sad fact remains, like it or not: kids are going to school, but they aren't learning. Well, that's not entirely fair. They do learn how to masturbate. And they learn about sodomy. And they learn about transvestites. And they learn a bunch of other things that may or may not have been included in an actual curriculum. The curriculum is, after all, only a part of the problem. Not even the biggest part.

The biggest problem is the culture in which a kid is immersed for his entire young life. It is a culture that values conformity above all else. It is a culture of moral confusion. It is a culture that viciously opposes every value and priority good Christian parents want to instill in their children. But the parents are working at an insurmountable disadvantage. They may say to their child, "I want you to be like this and do this and believe this," but the child will spend 7 hours of

his day, 5 days a week, 9 months a year, for 12 years in an environment where nearly everyone he meets urges him to be and do and believe the opposite. Only a small minority can manage to endure through all of that and come out as something resembling the young adult his parents wanted him to become.

The proof is in the pudding. The typical young adult in today's society — aside from being barely sentient, as we've already covered — has given up on marriage and religion, has no discernible skills, has been an avid porn user since middle school, and spends ten hours of his day playing video games, watching Netflix, and scrolling through Snapchat and Tinder. This is not only the fault of public school, but it is not a coincidence that the public school system seems dedicated to producing exactly the sort of people it does in fact produce. And, anyway, if we're trying to figure out why young adults in America are a certain way, it makes sense to look closely at the system they've spent all of their time in to this point.

It's a mess, in other words.

But can it be fixed? Can the system be "saved"? Well, no.

The first and most crucial thing preventing it from being saved is that it has molded a nation of people who do not think it needs saving. Saving the system would mean a complete restructuring from the ground up, and such an effort would require the cooperation of a great many people. But only a small number of people see any real problem with any of the things I've outlined. It is difficult to confront the errors in the system that made you, and most people are not interested in trying.

This is why I don't place the blame on the teachers. I don't merely fault the curricula, either. I can't point the finger at this factor or that. We are all to blame, and none of us are. Public school is just one part of the toxic stew known as modern culture. The system is a reflection of the culture, and the culture of the system. And that is the whole problem with it.

But what would a real education system in a healthy culture look like? Well, this sort of system would be one where children are given a deep appreciation and understanding of truth. One that facilitates their growth into moral, well rounded adults with a passion for life and learning. One where creative young children become creative and competent young adults. One where students develop a real comprehension of history, literature, art, and science. One where they learn how to write and read. One where their heads aren't stuffed full of leftist superstitions about "transgenderism" and other such nonsense. One where religion is not left on the sidelines, because you cannot understand anything about art, or history, or humanity itself if you do not study religion.

In other words, a real education system would not resemble the current one. Not even a little.

Until such a system is in place, all we can do is make other arrangements for our children. We cannot save the system by ourselves. I'm not convinced that the system can or will be saved at all. At this point, all we can do is save our children.