

The Downfall of the American education system

It's been almost 10 years since my first high school band concert, although I remember it well. I was very nervous. I was a band kid through and through. I was hooked since my first day of band camp my freshman year.

Band was something special. Not every kid participated, and not every kid felt about it the way I did, but the ones who understood, were some of my best friends.

Band was not just an extra curricular activity that we did reluctantly because our parents asked us to, or something that appealed to the college board. Band was a way of life. I didn't participate in a ton of extracurriculars outside of band, but having gotten older I can guess that this is not a unique feeling to band kids. Every student who was actively a part of something, not just coasting by, probably felt the experience that I did, and learned the lessons that I learned.

Band taught us how to conduct and present ourselves as a group. We learned how to organize ourselves accordingly before walking on stage, sit down seamlessly at the same time, make sure each instrument was facing the same way and resting in the same position, pick up the instrument at the same time and make music together. Tune to the ear of those around you for a harmonious sound, and act as one.

We learned how to take pride in our appearance, a well kept uniform, black shoes, simple elegant jewelry, no nails, nothing flashy, nothing that set one apart from the crowd that might detract from the audience experience. It was about discipline, and respect for your peers in the band. We took pride and comfort in knowing that each person there was

putting in the same kind of effort you were. We strived to motivate each other, hold practice sessions as a group, and encourage one another to do better.

I spent hours upon hours with these people throughout my high school experience. They made me a better person, and they taught me so much. I don't believe that I am alone in this experience. I am sure that most others who participated diligently in team activities feel this way about their team sport, and have experiences exclusive to the culture of their respective activity.

In my opinion, and experience, these are the only things that make high school worth it. It's these activities, not the education, that play such important roles in shaping the young minds of students into who they are going to become.

Tonight, however, after attending a high school band concert almost 10 years after my first high school band concert, things were different.

At times I feel like I live in an echo chamber. My two younger brothers are homeschooled and I spend so much time with others who feel the way I do about the public education system I almost forget that there are those out there who still believe in it. Not only do they believe in it, they trust it enough to turn their kids over to it. The thought horrifies me. And it should horrify you too.

Tonight I witnessed a group of students so incapable of conducting themselves properly I couldn't believe it. All sense of decorum and dignity seemed to fly out the window. Kids clambered on stage noisily in between bands, playing their instruments haphazardly while awaiting their band director, who could not have been much older than me, to give them further instruction. I watched a child walk on to the stage, pull his phone out of his pocket to check it, and then sit down in his chair before playing. I watched girls giggle

and chatter in between songs on stage, I heard children laugh and chat endlessly in the audience while their fellow peers performed. A student in a reindeer onesie lept out on stage in front of everyone to solo on the slapstick during Sleigh ride, while another student put on a horse mask to then mimic the "neigh" sound featured on the trumpet at the end of the song.

This had nothing to do with the music. Rather the music was good or bad, the attitude and general demeanor of the group should stay the same. Integrity should be present everywhere you try your best, and I did not see these kids try their best.

I began to ponder, if you asked any of these kids what they cared about most in the world I wonder what it would be. What do their dreams and fantasies look like, what motivates them to work hard, what encourages them to do better and keep growing?

I bet many of them wouldn't have answers.

While it may not seem obvious on the surface, this feels intrinsically connected to the health of our young people. It's my belief that the over medicated and overly processed world we live in is creating kids who are not going to be able to function in society in a healthy way. Of course, this isn't a new thing, and it's not just the medications and the foods we consume, it's the parenting and the way they're raised. It seems clear to me that we have a grown generation of children who are already so damaged from the processed foods and the medications, and the environmental toxins, that they, in turn, are unable to raise a generation of healthy kids. Kids today are sicker than ever, with higher rates of depression, autism, obesity, and chronic illness many are beginning to wonder where we went wrong.

They've never known anything but the mediation for every problem, but corn flakes and fruit loops for breakfasts,

dozens of vaccines since birth, and they're turning around and producing children even more damaged than themselves.

I'm not the only one who feels this way. Teachers have reported an increase in uncontrollable children who are simply unable to control themselves. Students who can't handle the word "no", Students who can't self-regulate when they don't get their way, students who will not be able to emerge into society as functioning adults at the rate that they are going.

Many don't seem to know the solution to this, however the solution is simple. Simple, but not easy. Fix the food. Get rid of the medications, and learn to use the word "No".

The behavior I saw exhibited over two hours at a high school band concert instilled a new confidence in me at my choice to homeschool my kids. While I don't have children yet, I can say with certainty, one thing I will never do is subject them to the kind of horrors that seem to go on in public school in this day and age.

We don't want normal kids any more. That seems to be the argument for public schooling. "I want normal kids". What does that even mean anymore? Normal has skewed so far beyond what we once thought that you are sure to find more traditional normalcy in a kid who grew up barefoot on a farm than a kid who made it through all 12 years of public school. I know I'm not alone in this and I am hopeful for a future generation that experiences more home schooling, and less public schooling.