



How Do You Define Success In School?

By Andrew Logan, MACP-MFT

It is odd that pressure around school performance continues to increase, given all we read in the news about the rise of depression in students. There are concerned parents throughout the Bay Area that attend numerous talks about the high levels of stress facing our children, and yet nothing seems to improve. Many researchers state that homework, of any amount, offers questionable benefit. Adults are not expected to work close to a ten hour day and then come home and work three to four more hours, so why do we require it of our children?

When parents consider their own educations, even in high school, they can rarely recall a single grade they received on an exam. However, students act as if the smallest poor grade on a quiz will destroy their future. The purpose of grades and standardized tests has been lost in our highly competitive culture. We use the scores to measure children, which is not their original intention. Initially, these tests were offered to ensure children simply were tracking the material. Because we have twisted these metrics to compare students, we have lost sight of the purpose of learning.

If you ask children or adults about learning a skill, they rarely speak of memorization and maintaining perfection. Learning is a process. It is not a product. It is the long process of mastery, which involves trial and error, and the positive feeling of accomplishing a new skill outweighs any final product or grade.

When students are asked to consider school experiences, they will

often begin recounting the day's academic courses. They will rarely speak about PE, art, music or the social dynamics of the playground. However, adults, even the most "successful" ones, rarely recall anything purely academic from their formative schooling. Most often, adults will



often begin recounting the day's academic courses. They will rarely speak about PE, art, music or the social dynamics of the playground. However, adults, even the most "successful" ones, rarely recall anything purely academic from their formative schooling. Most often, adults will speak about being teased or playing sports or having fun with a special best friend. In hindsight, if these are the most memorable experiences, should we not reconsider our obsession with our children's academic excellence?

When recently reviewing a list of the colleges and universities attended by our country's most successful leaders, it struck me that very few went to what most agree are the "top" schools. Pat Bassett, the President of the National Association of Independent Schools, states that there are well over 250 top colleges and universities in the United States, yet most Bay Area parents act as if there are only a handful of choices in the world. The pressure that this creates is taking a huge toll on our children, not to mention the added stress on our parents.

Our children are being trained to think more about metrics for success than to understand what success really means. A psychotherapist could argue

that the most successful adults know themselves well and then choose to work in fields that are rewarding. These adults know that through the process of doing what they love, they will gain mastery and reach their full potential. Until we challenge the current trend to obsess over metrics and overload our students with busy work, we will continue to see rising rates of depression in our students, and we will risk creating adults that feel lost, unsatisfied and dispassionate about their vocations.

Andrew Logan counsels families, couples, and individuals- including adults, adolescents and children- from his private practice, Andrew Logan Psychotherapy, in downtown Palo Alto. Andrew focuses on the client's ability to reach his or her full potential and to achieve balance. Andrew is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, a Board Certified Professional Counselor and a member of the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists. See Pg. 23 for his Ad.

**India Parent Magazine's
5th Open House for
Schools
and Summer Camps
on April 9th 2011.
Please call
408-964-8708
to book your spot!**