



## i.b.mee's Purpose – WHY i.b.mee?

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In today's U.S. society, we are having major challenges in our education and health systems. The foundational philosophies of these systems are creating a backlash of negative statistics for our youth. This does not mean that the people involved in these systems are not caring and hard-working, but that the systems around them do not give them the ability to make the kind of changes that need to take place so that our youth can thrive. The challenges that are occurring are not because our politicians, bankers, educators, administrators, or healthcare professionals do not want the best for our children, it is that the information and processes that they are using to create the systems are outdated and out of touch with societal changes and our new world. We all know that we cannot change the problems of today using the same paradigm that created them. It is time to move into a new paradigm and philosophy about what it takes for our next generation to be a well generation. Before we discuss this new, positive paradigm and philosophy is, let's look at what is keeping our next generation from thriving.

### Educational Challenges

Our educational paradigm has created a lack of teacher and student empowerment, unbalanced daily routines, unhealthy students, and massive high-school drop-out rates. Our students' hopelessness about their worthiness and contribution to a failing world, and their inability to be resilient to life challenges are silently becoming the norm. For most students, schooling is a vale of shame, stress, and disconnection that promotes the fear of failure.

We still teach our students in an assembly-line system that was developed at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In this model, large groups of students mostly listen,

regurgitate facts, are not allowed to fail, and are categorized into obvious groups of “smart” or “not-so-smart”. It is normal for students to stand in lines for many minutes not being allowed to talk or rarely have a say in what they want they learn. It is now more common for students to sit in desks, in front of TVs, video games and computers for hours at a time over going outside to play, volunteer or work. We “herd” our students into “troughs” of learning by age groups and test scores, ciphering the “brightest” students into the most promising direction, the middle-of-the-road in whatever direction they can fit, and the lowest rated drop-out or barely get by. This type of education comes from an old religious/educational philosophy of wanting to control students so they would be good citizens and obey the leaders of society. It comes from a place of distrust and fear. It breeds lack of confidence, ideas, innovation and creativity. As a result, students lose motivation to learn and grow in school.

As a result, the top educators and leaders of our schools needed to find a way to motivate its’ students and teachers to keep them moving forward in this old philosophy. “Students must obey the adults,” was the mantra (and still is). So using psychology research, such as studies like Pavlov’s dog and reinforcement theory, the school system used extrinsic rewards, primarily testing and grading, as the main methodology to motivate students to learn, hold our teachers accountable for teaching, and to “prove” how students compare to other students. In addition, educational leaders really milked the “survival of the fittest” theory as being one of their biggest “finds”, and so they used competition as another means of motivation. Today, even though the U.S. spends more on educating their students than just about any country in the world, according to educational sources, our schools have some of the poorest standardized test scores in the world. <http://mat.usc.edu/u-s-education-versus-the-world-infographic/> It is unfortunate that we evaluate the efficacy of our school systems and how smart a student is based on test scores and then we don’t even get that correct. It also seems naïve to base success in school on something extrinsic like scores, when we know that using extrinsic rewards undermines intrinsic motivation and learning is totally intrinsic in nature. If learning doesn’t come from within, then it is not learning. Think about how many tests you studied for and then didn’t remember the information the next day. Evaluating student, teacher, and school success based on extrinsic outcomes such as standardized testing, grades, and rewards, does not work and will never work.

This, along with having an educational system based in an extrinsic and “survival of the fittest” framework is doing more damage to our children’s future than any one thing ever in the history of our existence.

To make matters even worse, the very people that spend the most time with our students, our teachers, are one of the most abused groups of employees ever. The average first year public school teacher makes about \$35,000. They are usually responsible for 20-60 children every day. After school, a few hours of grading and preparing for the next day’s lesson must occur making the average day for an effective teacher about 10-11 hours/day. Many children who attend schools, are not willing or made to sit in “strait jackets” all day long and listen to someone else tell them things that they may or may not want to learn. Therefore they are not obedient and “perfect” little children. Teachers are not taught how to deal with “real” children. They are taught how to deal with 26 “obedient” children. Our children are beginning to rebel to this system and our teachers are left helpless, skill-less, and stunned to how frequent children are not “obedient”. Teachers are saying, “What happened to my vision of being a person that will help a young mind thrive?” In addition, there is little time for the teacher to express personal creativity and innovation in their classroom. Teachers are held accountable for having their students ready for standardized testing, and they must teach someone else’s’ curriculum (“what is it this year?”) so their students will “make the grade”. Many teachers fear they will be fired if they don’t get their students to do well on standardized testing. At the same time, there are so many ineffective or burned-out teachers in our system already from the system itself, that thousands of students have less than acceptable support in becoming an academic success in the current system. And there is not much we can do about ineffective teachers that are in a teacher’s union. They are here to stay until retirement.

How can we sustain healthy, happy and confident students if their mentors don’t have trainings and creative environments to feel healthy, supported and successful in their endeavors? We know today that the productivity, health and retention of employees increase when they feel like they have some control and contribution to their job, AND when they work in well cultures.

Some administrators are realizing that our schools must increase resiliency and stress tolerance while at the same time create a culture that promotes wellness.

One principal in a private Dallas Elementary states her observations in a letter she sent out to the parents before school began in 2012.

*“We are in a struggle with our children to let them be kids and play during the summer or to keep them studying to give them a “leg up” in academics so they don’t fall behind. However, the research provides little evidence that young children who spend time being tutored beyond their developmental level or attend programs designed to accelerate achievement demonstrate any lasting academic improvement. What has been proven, through years of research, is that schools and parents should strive for meaningful and authentic experiences. When students are focused on academic experiences that are of interest, they are willing to give a higher level of effort. Classes and experiences that are designed for high enjoyment and low stress do have a measureable long-term impact on academic success. As David Elkind, author of *The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast, Too Soon* (1981), writes, “childhood today is seen more often as a time to amass as many skills as quickly as possible. As a result, many children suffer from fear of failure and from fatigue.” In *Reclaiming Childhood: Letting Children Be Children in Our Achievement-Oriented Society* (2003), William Crain amplifies similar themes: that children are being pushed harder and harder; that they need, instead, more unpressured time to develop; and that childhood cannot be seen as merely a race toward a successful adulthood. Children learn by doing. Children should be engaged in authentic challenges. More than merely asking children to provide the right answer to an adult’s question, igniting and sustaining one’s passion for learning necessitates students asking their own questions and grappling with issues that may not have one correct answer. It is through the complexity of learning, challenging oneself, and risk taking that students develop confidence. Your children are central as we plan curriculum. Our approach to teaching mirrors what we value in the real world of work – where success often depends upon creativity, perseverance, and collaboration. School is a fun place to learn and to grow.”*

Overall, our current educational paradigm is inherently designed to shut down creativity and innovation, stifle intrinsic motivation and perceived control, and cause a back-lash of discipline, classroom management and teacher/student stress and burnout issues. Only those students who learn to “play” the system move forward, but at what cost? **Are they truly innovators, self-thinkers, healthy, balanced, and confident decision-makers ready for the new and changing world?**

## Health Challenges

Equally disturbing, is that the U.S. is one of the richest countries in the world, yet we rank 29th for life expectancy. We spend more than twice what other countries spend per capita on health care yet America's healthcare system ranks 37<sup>th</sup> in the world.

“Chronic diseases affect 133 million Americans. That means in the average family of three, at least one person has a chronic disease. We are seeing an epidemic of autoimmune (24 million Americans), allergic (50 million Americans), and asthmatic (30 million Americans) diseases in this country. In addition, 20 percent of Americans (about 60 million people) have irritable bowel syndrome. In fact, the rates of nearly every modern disease—autoimmune diseases, allergic diseases, digestive problems, heart disease, cancer, obesity, diabetes, and dementia—are increasing. One in three children born today will have type 2 diabetes. One in two people over age 85 will develop dementia. These problems are increasing in the population at a dramatic rate. And they affect everyone, either personally or through the suffering of someone close to them.”  
[www.drmarkhyman.com](http://www.drmarkhyman.com)

Unfortunately, not much has changed with our children's health statistics in the last ten years either. Chronic diseases are on the rise for just about all ages, gender and races. A vast majority of children are so unhealthy physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually that their poor health is standing in the way of their confidence, worthiness and feelings of success and they don't even know it. Our children eat foods mostly made of simple sugars and carbohydrates...processed food. This occurs because of the foods inexpensive cost, lack of education about healthy eating, lack of the availability of healthier foods, increased media exposure, food addictions to the unhealthy food, and a lack of integrity in our food system.

In addition, our students find themselves on a daily basis living sedentary lifestyles, lacking control in their life, having poor connections with care-givers, and being subjected to unhealthy cultural and societal norms (smoking, drinking, drugs, etc). Specifically, our “normal” ways of being during the day have created no time for living a life that promotes good health. It has created a system of “high standards” and “too much to do” which have been shown to decrease perceived control, increase shame, disconnection, and stress, and as a result, deteriorates health.

Some startling health statistics for our children include:

- In 2009, more than 3.6 million children were the subject of at least one report of child abuse from a care-giver at home. <http://www.acf.hhs.gov>
- only 50% of U.S. young people 12-21 year regularly participate in rigorous physical activity; 25% report no activity at all. (Nesmith, J.D.; Pediatrics in Review 2001; 22; 147-52)
- 21% of 2-5 year olds, 36% of 6-11 year olds, and 34% of 12-19 year olds are overweight. (NHANES, Ogden CL, et al. JAMA 2010; 303: 242-249).
- 19% of 6-19 year olds are obese (2010, CDC)
- One-third of teenage boys consume at least three 12-ounce servings of soft drinks daily (2010, USDA)
- 1 out of every 400 children have type 1 diabetes and among new cases of childhood diabetes, the proportion of those with type 2 diabetes ranges between 8 percent and 43 percent (2010, CDC)
- 7.1 million (9.6%) have asthma (2010, CDC)
- 5.3 million (8.6%) have ADHD (2010, CDC)
- Highest cancer (leukemia) incidence rate (8.7) is found among children aged 1-4 years (2010, CDC)
- Of the 15 leading causes of death in adults in 2007, the first three were chronic disease which can all be prevented with practicing a healthy life. A healthy life must first be experienced by children in order to increase their chance of making it a habit and taking part in a healthy life later on.
  - 1.1) Diseases of heart (heart disease)
  - 1.2) Malignant neoplasm (cancer)
  - 1.3) Cerebro-vascular diseases (stroke)

There is also evidence that the unhealthy ways in which we are living as a society are not only breaking down the child's body, but their mind and spirit also. Every 29 seconds another U.S. high school drop-out occurs. There were 100,000 at the end of the 2011 and 40% of the typical freshman class will leave by their senior year. Drop-outs are eight-times more likely to go to prison. There are 2,300,000

inmates in the U.S. and 40% are high-school drop-outs. In 2007, suicide was the third leading cause of death for young people ages 15 to 24.

Of every 100,000 young people in each age group, the following number died by suicide:

- Children ages 10 to 14 — 0.9
- Adolescents ages 15 to 19 — 6.9
- Young adults ages 20 to 24 — 12.7 (National Institute of Mental Health, 2010)

What is going on? Is there something really wrong with our children? ...Or have we set up a system that decreases perceived control and increases stress to the point of these incredible statistics? The children are telling us something without saying anything at all.

### **Success Challenges**

Another major issue that is affecting our society is the uprising of the American value of consumerism which creates a system where “success” is to have more and the best of everything. Our society has created a mindset of doing “whatever it takes to GET the best outcome”, ...the best grades, clothes, job, house, kitchen, body, dog, team, and the list goes on and on. Most of our youth have grown up seeing our world as a place to collect material items, and their worth reflects these things. Success, to our youth is what they have in their pockets, on their bodies, in their possession, and on their shelves, and it doesn’t really matter “at what cost” to them and the environment. The young individuals who fall behind on these outcomes feel less-than others who seem to possess more than them.

In school, when the goal for success is the outcome, such as to earn a grade, a student loses sight of the process of learning, - why he really needs to learn something, how he knows that he has learned “it”, and how he can apply “it” to his life and the world. When this occurs, the student begins to move through life defining her existence on how “smart” or “good” she is based on that grade. Her identity becomes the grade. “If I get an A, I feel good; if I don’t get an A, I feel bad or shameful.” Then with the bad outcome, the student will either quit, or become disillusioned and stressed to keep up the game they may not ever be able to win.

Even more disheartening is the fact that earning an “A” is different for every class, teacher and test. Most tests made by teachers are not valid or reliable (they make them up without any training). Students can learn how their teachers test in order to make better grades, and teachers can grade subjective exams (short answer and essay) differently for different students depending on how they feel about the student. Furthermore, quantitative testing is only given for their efficiency and to ensure students have read and studied the assignments. In most cases, these exams are not relevant to anything of importance to the students and their lives. This is not totally the fault of the teacher, for this is how teachers are trained to evaluate.

Overall, when we define success as our level or degree of reaching an extrinsic outcome, it actually undermines our feelings of success. Our feelings of success become dependent on something outside of us. They are not internal; they are not about who we are as individuals. In addition, we actually have little control over extrinsic outcomes. There are many variables that must coincide at the right time in order for an outcome to occur. Because of this, when we focus on external goals, our perceived control (inner feelings of influence/empowerment) decreases, and stress, poor performance, burn-out, frustration and quitting increases. As a result, *flow* is nearly impossible to experience. *Flow* is a state of pure connectedness, joy and passion to what one is doing in the moment. It is what we all inherently strive for no matter what our societal systems try to convince us otherwise. Without *flow*, it is difficult to experience the feelings of success.

With this “unconscious” extrinsic, outcome mindset, our youth are not only losing their passions, creativity and health, but the world is losing its sustainability.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, our societal systems have not supported the process of being healthy or truly experiencing the power of learning. The respect for the process of developing students who truly feel confident about their minds, bodies and spirits has been disregarded. When we leave this process out, students lose their connection to themselves and others and become less resilient in handling life’s challenges. Their stress increases to a level where their physiological, emotional,

and psychological systems begin to break down creating an onslaught of early prevalence of chronic diseases, depression, and hopelessness.

There is a missing link in our educational system, -teaching children about the body-mind connection. Students should be taught the power of the capabilities of the body and how the body-mind connection can lead to a life of positive health and success. It is imperative that body-mind connection curriculum is taught to increase stress tolerance and resiliency and decrease the occurrence of chronic diseases and ultimately, overall healthcare costs. Research supports the major positive effects body-mind activities have on a student's health. In addition, these high-level wellness skills and attitudes developed early will help students understand the messages their bodies are telling them (intuition), and be able to make clear decisions in all areas of life.

We cannot ignore these challenges anymore. Our health and educational statistics and behaviors in our society today are screaming at us to make monumental changes within a different paradigm. The current educational system is stressing out our students, teachers and parents. Our industrialized nations cannot solve the poor health and educational epidemic with the same footprint and paradigm that brought us into it.

i.b.mee. believes that it will take a new healthy, empowered, educational paradigm to transform these challenges. It will entail a shift in focus in how students and their mentors work together to learn, a shift in how they connect to their own thinking, feelings, and actions, and a shift in how they define and feel successful in school, work, home, and in the world.

i.b.mee. answers the questions: What is the process of a truly intrinsically-motivating educational system; one that students can't wait to wake up and go to? What is the process of having good health? What is the process of feeling successful and happy in our new world?

i.b.mee. is leading an *Empowerment Education Revolution*. We are setting a new standard of what it means for students to feel the freedom, confidence and skills to live their highest and healthiest vision for themselves, their community and their world. When individuals are a part of *Empowerment Education*, feelings of

true success no matter their life circumstances, occur. Life becomes a process of living what is really important with ease and joy, and not a process of “proving”, “getting” and “being stressed”.

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