

School ISN'T Working for Neurodiverse Kids with Executive Fu...

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SPEAKERS

Seth Perler

 Seth Perler 00:00

Nope, no, no, no, no, no. This is not working. This is not working for kids who struggle with executive functions. So for a lot of our kids, a lot of our neurodiverse kids, this is not working, school is not working, it's not working. And people who're suffering and getting punished the most are the kids. Let me explain. Hey, what's up, my name is Seth Perler. What's up parents and teachers? I am an executive function coach and my life's work is to help struggling students navigate this thing called education so that they can have a great life,. But not at the expense of not having good life now not having good childhood so that and hope someday they jump through the right hoops that the system deems the best hoops to jump through that they're going to be happy someday, When they can have a good quality of life now and a good quality of life as an adult. So in this video, here, I'm going to talk to you about this problem. You parents and teachers, I want you to walk away from this video having some clarity. I don't know everything, but I want to give you a very clear picture of some of the concerns that I'm having so that you might have a more clear picture, and might feel validated in how you are feeling about things right now. And thus, so that you can take action that feels right for you. So I'm going to talk about two things. One is the problem, the other is the solution. Get ready to take notes on this video, because you might want to be writing your schools, your school districts, or your superintendents, or people so that you can make the ruckus that needs to be made for our kids.

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Seth Perler 01:37

There's a saying by Steve Jobs. It's a quote, he says, "I've looked in the mirror every morning and asked myself, if today were the last day of my life, what I want to do what I'm about to do today? And whenever the answer has been 'No' for too many days in a row, I know I need to change something." For too many days in a row, you and me, parents, teachers, we are looking in the mirror asking ourselves, you know if today was the last day, would we want to do what we're doing? And what we're doing to help kids is not working. And we all feel it. And we all know it. And that is because we are trying to help them to navigate an already outdated system, but with a new complex problem so that helping them navigate now is even working less. But it's tremendous. What I'm hearing from families and from teachers all over the place is so much frustration and I will explain it very clearly. So you have a clear understanding and you can communicate to the people who are in charge, who make the decisions.

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Seth Perler 02:52

So what's not working for kids, parents and teachers? Well, one thing that's not working is particularly kids who struggle with executive function, neurodiverse kids. They are the ones paying the price right now for our outdated, archaic, ineffective system. Now, are there good things about school? Absolutely. And there are amazing teachers. There are lots of people doing amazing work. But our kids are paying the price right now with how it's working now. So basically, the purpose of school, the purpose of school, educa, education, is to raise people is to lift people to bring people up. The Latin mean, the educade, it means to raise, to lift, to bring forth, to bring up, we bring up our kids, we raise our kids, are they being raised right now? Or they being pushed down? The purpose of school is to serve them, not to punish them. And a lot of these kids are feeling punished right now because they cannot do what they are being asked to do. The system is failing to be engaging enough to capture their minds and their hearts, to inspire them to teach them. The structure of the way that school is working right now is failing kids. Kids are not failing, the way we are trying to educate kids right now is failing. For us adults to watch a screen for hours and hours and hours and pay attention and be able to do with some little talking head on the other side of the screen is asking us to do that, it's hard for us to do as adults. It is really hard. And then we also all feel unsafe.

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Seth Perler 04:39

We know people are getting sick. Pretty much everybody in the US right now knows somebody who's been sick, or is sick, or unfortunately who may have passed away. Our nervous systems are interfering with executive function because we all feel unsafe and like there might be threats, so. But we still have the structure that says, you show up, you go to

these classes, you do these things, we will evaluate you based on these arbitrary things and you will jump through these hoops and if you do that, then you will pass. So the structure isn't working. And one of the biggest things that I want to tell you right now is that grades are not working. I am somebody who believes that grades are morally wrong, I think it's morally wrong to have a metric called F for fail. That if we fail to meet the needs of a neurodiverse kid, but the kid doesn't jump through the hoops, the kid is the one who gets the thing called the F, the fail. That is not right, grades are not right. Yes, we need assessments. We need authentic assessments, we need meaningful assessments. But grades are done. They should have been done away with a long time ago, decades ago. But we don't even question it. But now what's happening is these kids who aren't able to do these things are going to fail their classes, a lot of them. And they're the problems with that. These kids, particularly these ones with executive function struggles for not being supported are going to be even less motivated. They already struggle with motivation. Why if they're just going to fail everything should they even try? And then we continue to push them because we want them to do well, we're well intended, but in their mind, we can understand why would they even want to try? So the grades are not working. It's not the right thing. They're getting less motivated, they're losing their love of learning. What a poisonous thing for people to experience! Losing their love of learning. That's one of the worst things we can ever do. That is not education and raising someone and lifting them for them to be losing their love of learning. Their self esteem, their self esteems are being impacted. They're feeling bad about themselves, like they can't do things like why try? Like their failure, all these things. They're less hopeful, they're having more mental health problems, they're getting more anxious and anxiety with school, they're getting depressed, things are already hard enough with everything that's going on, that these grades in particular are something that is really making things even harder, because we have this story that we need them and it drives so many things. Test scores and grades drives so many decisions that we make. And it forces us to do things like cover curriculum, which means that for teachers there's pressure on teachers to cover all of this curriculum and these standards. And it can't be covered like that now. Yes, kids are going to fall behind. Yes, it's going to happen. The objective isn't to push harder. The objective is to meet the kids where they're at, so that they're not falling behind and having a bad grade or a bad test score on these things. We need to recalibrate. Leadership needs to step up and make some decisions that say "We are putting kids first, not our outdated methodologies and belief systems, we're going to challenge those, and we're going to make things right and finally change things." It's time everybody, it's time. The kids are learning their level of learning, as the objective is taskmasters. Do the things, do the worksheets, jump through the things, if you jump through the things, we're going to give you a good grade, it's not working. The way the system is going right now, with all the online stuff and all the stress everybody's under and everything, it's less engaging. It's failing to engage these kids. And we're saying that the kids are failing to be engaged. No,

it's not engaging. If they have exceptional executive function, they will be able to force themselves to motivate themselves to be engaged enough to jump through the hoops. That's not what education is about. There's too much busy work, that's another problem that people are having right now. Another problem with this is that there's not enough flexibility. So there's this busy work, but there's not flexibility to really empower teachers to say, "Hey, this family's, you know, struggling this way, this way, this way." Now, you teachers are amazing. And most of the teachers out there are being flexible and adaptable and are understanding, but you still are expected to cover your curriculum, to jump through the hoops that they want you to jump through, to give the grades, to worry about your data and the things that they have chosen to measure. Not everything that's measured matters. And are the things that we are measuring, do those things matter? How can we change that in the system right now? We need to empower teachers to be flexible to take the reins and meet the needs of their students and let up on the pressure from them. There are technology issues, that's part of the problem. I don't need to go there with you, you know that some people don't have technology, sometimes things crash, sometimes the internet's not working right, sometimes there are lags. There are lots of technology issues that people are finding.

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Seth Perler 10:21

Parents are struggling with trying to be their kids teacher. They have their responsibilities and work to do, they really need time to do those things. But then they're also expected to play teacher as well. And then parents are expected to be their executive function. Just finding the assignments online with the portals and the way we do things nowadays is so confusing. Parents and students are both struggling to get clarity about what even needs to be done. And then there are arguments where parents are pushing their kids away because they're having these arguments and these homework battles, and they're trying to figure out what needs to be done when, and help their kids get it done. It's causing conflict in family systems.

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Seth Perler 11:01

Teachers, and they need support. The grades are a big problem for them. They have this arbitrary way that they're supposed to evaluate and turn these things into these things called A B C D F. And they don't want to fail their kids. They don't want to give their kids a failing grade. But they also don't want to pass their kids if there's not the right mastery of the subject matter that they're learning. So because we do grades in the first place, they're in this bizarre place where they say, well, what's in the best interest of the kid? And some teachers don't even ask the question, but most do, but what's in the best interest of the kid? What grade do I give them? You know, if I have a junior in high school, and they're

doing the best they can, but they're really not learning a lot of content, do I fail them and they have to retake the class this coming winter semester or next spring semester or next fall semester or whatever? Like, is that morally right for them to have to go through this now and then go through it again? How are they going to feel about it again? They're gonna be like, I hate this. I'm not good at it, blah, blah, you know. Or do they pass them when they know that they don't have the knowledge? And what do you do in those types of situations? So and then teachers are struggling, how are teachers engaging if they're doing online stuff, and there's no human contact, or they're doing the hybrid, and they're only seeing them a few days a week? Building relationships is really hard. It's just, it's so hard on the teachers. How can we support them better? What do they need? And, I mean, how's the teacher pay for what they're doing and what they're expected to do? Are they compensated appropriately to be able to live a good life? Were they able to get their needs met? And in terms of that, what about the health risks to teachers? And is there a guarantee for teachers? If God forbid, they get sick that they are taken care of, and they don't have to worry about ridiculous crazy crap from insurance companies denying payments for things and having to be on the phone trying to figure stuff out and, and getting the, you know, the right doctor where it's covered and all of these ridiculous health care things. Where in 2020, teachers shouldn't even have to worry about that. So teachers do they feel like they have a guarantee that their health care is covered, and that the risks that they're being compensated for the risk that they're taking?

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Seth Perler 13:31

I know just scratching the surface, you all go ahead in the comments. What else did I leave out? What are some of the problems that people are experiencing right now? What are you experiencing? Leave it in the comments and let us know so that we can all connect on this stuff and figure out answers. And what ideas do you have about these things? So let me ask you this, what do we need, or want? What do parents teachers and students need or want? Well we need no grades, we need better forms of assessments, we need to not be failing these kids and not be in a position where we have to choose to give them an A or an F or whatever. We need to help teachers do inspiring lessons based on what would work right now, not based on just covering the curriculum and following the standards and doing everything in a very in the box Cookie Cutter way. We need to empower teachers to create the best that they can do for inspiring lessons and just do their best with what they got. We need to empower teachers and give them permission to do smaller lessons and not worry about covering everything. We need to think about homework and the value of homework and allowing kids to do no homework, or to choose their own homework, or to somehow have some choice where they can do it at different levels. Because they're not all the same, not all will be evaluated the same and be given the flexibility. We need understanding from the schools the principles, the superintendents.

We need to support teachers and empower them to be flexible. We need to empower them, say, teachers, you're the expert, which we don't do in America. But we need to do this. Teachers, you're the expert. You choose what flexibility you need, we trust you. But we don't like to do that in America, we like to micromanage teachers. We need to pay them more. And we need to give flexibility so that the kids can feel success. We need to change things so that kids walk out of whatever school experiences they're in and they feel successful.

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Seth Perler 15:33

I'm going to say that again. We need to change things so that the objective is, is that our kids feel like they've had successful learning experiences, not like they have insurmountable mountains and mountains of makeup work that they can never finish, they're not motivated to finish, and they just don't have the bandwidth for. We need to empower them to have success experiences. So what do we do? Well, we need to first remember that the kids are not the problem. Punishing them and failing them, therefore, is not the answer. Two: we need to speak up, and we need to speak up loud. And you need to tell people because the leaders are not leading, you need to tell the leaders, the people in power, what you need. Speak your voice, make the ruckus you need to make, that your heart tells you you need to make for your child's well being. We need to understand that teachers and students are the people who are in the system. The teachers are there and the students are there. Those are the people who should be making the decisions based on what's best democratically. They're the decision makers, teachers and students.

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Seth Perler 16:51

We need to make our demands heard by using our voice and tell the system, "Don't tell us you can't change. Don't tell us this can't be done. Don't push us off and make us wait. We don't want to just return to the status quo." People made this system, so we can remake it. Now systems don't like to be changed. Textbook companies are massive big business companies that profit, they want the story to say the same. Same with curriculum manufacturers. Same with testing manufacturers. These are big, multi billion dollar businesses that do not want things to change or the story to change. But it doesn't matter. The story needs to change because it's not working. We don't just try what's not working harder to make it work. That is not sane. So don't tell us you can't change, tell the system. You can't tell us it's broken at the expense of our kids. You better empower us to fix it or fix it or whatever.

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Seth Perler 17:45

What else do we do? We end grades. We replace them with meaningful forms of assessment that do not create shame, hopelessness, lack of motivation, things like that. What else do we do? Well, I want to tell you, your kids gonna be okay. Might they get behind in a few content areas? Yeah, it's okay. Your kids gonna be okay. The most important thing is that we continue to develop strong, healthy, secure relationships with our kids. This is a great time for relationship building, and learning, and problem solving, and everybody working on themselves. We continue to give our kids enriching experiences, even if it doesn't look like school. The things that they're interested in, we really creatively see, how can we look at the everyday learning our kids are experiencing and enhance it creatively as parents and teachers? How can we really make these experiences just more enriching and more learning experiences? There's so much to learn. I mean, I you know, I'm obsessed with guitars if you've been following me for any amount of time. There is everything, math, science, social studies, reading, writing, music, art, there's so much creativity, there's so much that can be done within an interest area. It's amazing.

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Seth Perler 19:08

And then what else do we do? We have to discuss with each other, with parents, teachers, with the system, with the leaders, how it's setting our kids up for failure right now, and how it's not acceptable, and to have these discussions openly and keep using our voice.

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Seth Perler 19:28

My name is Seth Perler. I'm an executive function coach and I help struggling students navigate this thing called education. I'm very good at taking complicated struggling students and helping them turn the corner so that they can be more successful in school and of course, life. And I have never seen a situation like what's going on right now. It is so much harder than it even normally would be. The worst thing about my job as an executive function coach, the thing I hate most about my job, is that I am trying to help students navigate a system that is not constructed for neurodiverse minds. But I love helping kids and this is the system that we have. So this is what I do. But that's the worst part of my job. If I had a magic wand, I would change the system so that my job wasn't even necessary, so that we were meeting these needs and these kids weren't failing. And we could support kids in more personalized and customized and tailored ways using what teachers called differentiation, but real authentic differentiation. So I am here with you. You can let me know in the comments below what your thoughts are, what solutions, what are the problems, what are the solutions you can think of? You can vent in the comments below, whatever you want. But we need to come together and raise our voices and speak our truth for the sake of our kids. You can check out my site at SethPerler.com, there's a

bunch of supportive stuff there. Follow me, give a thumbs up if you want to support me and help my YouTube channel grow, share my stuff, subscribe, whatever the things are. Be well. Put the relationship first. Go laugh with your child today and connect with them in a meaningful way. Have some fun with them and be well.