

Will My Kid Fail This Crazy School Year?

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SPEAKERS

Seth Perler

S Seth Perler 00:01

The number one worst thing for me about being an executive function coach is that I am trying to help neurodiverse kids fit into a system that does not recognize their needs. So I'm trying to help these kids navigate something that should be navigating itself for them. I'm angry today. And this video is inspired by the recent attacks on Asian Americans, the attacks on Asian Americans and all sorts of communities who have been not treated with dignity, and respect, and honor, and empathy, and kindness, and compassion. And how this country continues, and has since the beginning of this country, continued to treat people wrong. And as an educator, I want to see all of my students, I want to see all students, all kids, all kids in this country, America, all kids worldwide, get what they need. Is that so hard? Is it so hard for us to treat each other with kindness and to think? Apparently, it is. I just want to say that I stand with everybody who's experiencing any form of discrimination, prejudice, and unfairness.

S Seth Perler 01:57

The reason I'm making this video today, hello parents, hello teachers. My name is Seth Perler. I'm an executive function coach and I help struggling students navigate this thing called education so that they can have good life. And I'm making this for two reasons. One, because I'm pissed off. Things don't have to be the way they are. I'm speaking also about the education system, which we're going to talk a lot about today, I'm going to also tell you what you can do. So I'm going to give you about 15 things that you can do to help

yourself help, your child, help your community. But I'm making this because I'm angry, and I'm making this to affirm you, parents and teachers. And what I mean by that is that I'm going to put some ideas together for you in a context that I hope affirms some things that you think, or that you've thought through and maybe haven't pieced together all of the pieces, I want to give you a bunch of these pieces today so that you have a better understanding, and you can feel like "Okay, yes, the things I've been sensing, now this stuff makes more sense to me." That's why I'm making this for those two reasons. One, I'm angry, and I want things to change. And two to affirm you, so that you can feel more confident when you're taking steps to support your child.

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Seth Perler 03:15

The system is not working. A lot of parents right now are asking, as we end this crazy school year, with all the hybrid and all of this, that and the other, a lot of parents are asking, "Is my kid gonna fail?" Let me be very clear. If your kid gets F's, that's really what you're asking, "Is my kid gonna get F's?" Is your kid going to fail? No. What I mean by that is, the system or systems are failing to engage your child in a meaningful education that they are engaged in and motivated to do. The system, the way it is set up, has not changed during this pandemic to adapt to the needs that have very much changed, and the expectations for kids to jump through the same hoops. While there are many amazing and brilliant teachers, and thank you, for those of you out there, those teachers of you that are empathetic, and compassionate, and think for yourself, and make your adaptations in your classroom and still love those kids. Really think through, "Whoa, I want my kids to have successful experiences, and really have made the changes that need to happen." There are teachers out there that do that. But there's a lot of pressure from the system on these teachers to continue doing things to meet the standards, to prep for the tests, and I don't know what's going on with testing right now. There's no reason to have standardized tests this year. Absolutely insane. I hate them anyway. There's a lot of pressure from the system on teachers to continue doing the things the same way we've been doing them. They're not saying "How do we adapt this for the kids?" It's not okay.

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Seth Perler 05:19

So what is education? Educare, educare, it's Latin. The etymology means 'to lift.' What do we do with our kids? We lift them, we raise our kids. Think about that word. We're raising kids, raise. We're bringing up kids. Why do we say we bring up? Bring up, bring up, up, up, raise. We're raising. Educare means to raise, or to bring up. So education should raise people. Is it raising them? Is it really raising them? For some kids, sure. Some kids fit right into the school box, some kids get so much out of it. Some kids it is really made for their brains. Their brains are made for the way the system is. What we don't do is create a

system that adapts to all sorts of brains. What we've done is we've said, "These are the brains we're going to address, and we're going to make it for them and everybody else conforms to this." So in raising someone, what the hell does that mean? Ask yourself this question, will this education and this raising, that whatever this for education is, will this education ensure that your child can have the income, or income equality because it's not equal, Will it ensure that they have the income they need to live a good life? To have the health care they need? The housing they need to be generally happy people? Parents all want their kids to be happy and successful. What does that mean? Will education help them to be happy? Whatever that means, but generally happy, healthy, physically healthy, mentally healthy, we're seeing so much anxiety and depression and problems right now and addiction and everything. Is this ensuring that they're going to be happy, healthy mentally and physically healthy, and successful in things that matter to them? Is this education going to raise them to ensure these things? Or whatever your definition of 'raising' means.

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Seth Perler 07:28

So let me take you on this little journey at this point in this video. So here's here's this little journey I want to sort of back up. So imagine that there's no such thing as compulsory education. In around the 1930s, all states, in the United States at least, let's just focus on this country, had compulsory education. Not necessarily High School, it may have been compulsory to go to elementary school, but they had some sort of required education. And remember, at this time, things were very different, things were segregated. There's mass, open racism. And racism is so deeply rooted in our history, and we don't teach about that. So basically, now it's compulsory, and now there's this segregation and racism. Then in around 1940s, we start with these things called textbooks. Why is that important? Because they were history books, and whose history is being told in these textbooks? Is their history of Native Americans and their experience here? Is there history of Asian Americans and their experience here? Is there history of African Americans? Whose history starts being taught in these things called textbooks? Now, why am I mentioning textbooks? Because what they found out with textbooks is A) we can write in history the way that we want to write it, and tell the story, his-story. We can tell history the way we want to frame it. Well, who do you think was writing the history books? White men. Who writes them now? Has it changed much? Where are they written? You might want to look into that. I'm not being conspiracy theorist, I'm telling you, there's some bullshit going on, though. Sorry, excuse my language. Why am I talking about textbooks? Because what they found out with textbooks is, "Whoa, this is a great industry." We can produce books, starting with history, but then we have all sorts of textbooks. These industries begin to realize that this is a fantastic profit model. We can sell these textbooks, and look at textbooks today, costing \$200 to \$300 a piece in college, that the bookstores resell for ridiculous prices

semester after semester. And when there is a second and third version, is it any different from the first version? And how different and edited is it? And there's a 20th version of this textbook, how different is it? Is it really edited by the people on that board that claim to have edited it in the front of these books? Like, there's all kinds of things to think about. But the point is, excuse me for ranting so much. The point is, this as an industry, we can make math textbooks, science textbooks, we can make all these textbooks. Phenomenal industry. What's the bottom line for industry? Money. Not kids, not education, not engagement. How do we have a system that we can convince, tell a story, tell a narrative, and convince school districts, teachers, parents, convince people that we need these textbooks in this way? How do we tell that story? Hmm.

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Seth Perler 10:58

Interestingly, in the 1960s, we start with the standardized testing stuff. And wow, isn't that interesting? If you use a textbook, and then you take a standardized test, or use a thing called a curriculum, and you take a standardized test, and it shows that you learn something, then you can have this thing called data that means that these metrics that we choose, these things that we choose to value to measure, not everything that's measured matters. Not everything that matters is measured. But we have this story where we can measure things with tests, with essays, we can measure things in some ways, and show with something that seems like concrete, valuable evidence, that we can show how successful is a school, or a student, or district, or a textbook, or blah, blah, blah. So now we have textbook industries, standardized testing industries, curriculum manufacturers, even the food industry involved with schools. These industries that nobody's really thinking of, we're not really thinking about, you know, who's profiting off of schools. Well, guess what? People are profiting off schools, and that they are interested in profit. They're not interested in kids, no. Are there people that work there that are awesome people that work like crazy to make awesome textbooks and lessons? Of course, of course. But let's think about this in terms of the big picture.

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Seth Perler 12:34

So we have this compulsory ed, we have the segregation and this racism that is rampant, we have these history textbooks that start in the 40s, then we have this testing that starts in the 60s. Then these profit models for these industries are massive. Imagine just in LAUSD, Los Angeles School District, there's 600,000 kids in that school. Imagine if you get a contract and you are a curriculum manufacturer and you get a contract with Los Angeles Unified School District. Imagine how much profit potential there is for a curriculum for 600,000 kids. Now imagine that multiplied over the entire United States. Do you know how many kids are in the US? 50 million, over 50 million kids are in school, in

public schools in the US. Can you imagine how important it is for these companies to continue to increase profits? What is their focus? How do we increase as much profit as possible with as little effort as possible? Does that sound like what your child needs? Think about the energy behind this stuff.

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Seth Perler 13:40

Now, I was a teacher for 12 years, you know, I've seen people come and present curriculum, I've looked at all these beautiful boxes that they deliver with these beautiful displays in schools to show teachers. But you know, and there's some good people, and I'll tell you those sales people too, that come and show this stuff, I mean, what do you think they're motivated by? Are they bad people? No. Well, maybe there's some, but no, generally, these are good people. But we need to understand, "I don't care if they're good people or not." What is the outcome? What is the outcome? Will this empower, enable, help your child to have the income they need, the health care, they need, the housing they need, the mental health they need? Are these things delivering that? That's the test. Are they delivering that when your child has 20, 25, 30, do they have those things? Did the education provide those things? So neurodiverse kids with executive function challenges often fail in this sort of a system, or struggle. And they're not being raised. And they might muddle through it and get through it. But is it really getting them? Is it really helping them? No, it's failing to engage them. It's failing to motivate them. They might do it because there's pressure and then you have people like me, who I'm trying to help these kids navigate something, help motivate them, help them. I mean, I don't really care what the systems like, I'm looking at the kid like, "How do I help them get through this and believe in themselves and be able to create a great life?" Whether they go to college or not, whatever the story ends up looking like. What does this individual need? It's compulsory education that isn't working for them. And a lot of these kids sadly lose their love for learning. And they end up saying things like, "I hate school," what the hell is going on that a human being would say, "I hate school"? And then they feel like they're the failure, like something's wrong with them. And they can end up feeling bad about themselves and waste decades of their lives spinning their wheels in the wrong direction. It really angers me and saddens me. It doesn't have to be like this. So what can you do about it? Well, I have 15 things for you and then I'm going to shut up. And I know that there's so much to say about these topics and I'm barely scratching the surface. Add in the comments anything you want to, any thoughts you're having, enlighten us, tell us what you think, ask your questions, whatever. But first thing I want to say of what you can do, what I can do. Forget everything you think you know about education, and how you were raised, and what you were taught, forget it all. And start with a clean slate and ask questions and really question these things. Yes, there are great teachers, amazing life changing teachers, some good things about the system. I'm not saying everything's broken, everything's dysfunctional. It's not. There is a lot of good in

it. But forget everything you know, pretend there was never any such thing as school, and you wanted to create something to educate kids. What would it look like? Would you have 50 minute classes, seven a day that you give people letter grades on, use tests, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah? Would you really put a kid in the class for 45 minutes, ring a bell, give them four minutes to go to another class? They're totally getting into what they're learning and you're going to shift them to something else? Would you really have A days and B days and 18 week semesters and blah, blah, blah? Forget everything, you know, number one. Number two, imagine the sky's the limit. If we reform education, I don't like the word reform because that says you know that we take this sort of base and we change it from what it is. Imagine it didn't exist. Number two, imagine. How can we rebuild this? Tear down, pretend it didn't exist? How can we use our imagination, to create education in completely different ways? Imagine is number two, imagine. Number three, listen to your kid. Teachers, parents, listen to your kid. When they're telling you something and we get very focused on, "You got to get this done. You got to get this done. You got to jump through this hoop, you got to do this red tape, you got to do what you're being asked." Because we have the story that means that you're going to get your education and you're going to be happy and successful. But listen to them, they're telling you something. Listen beyond the words. And then number four, listen to your gut when something feels wrong. And parents are often, and teachers too, are often told don't listen to your gut. Don't think. Don't challenge. We will shame you if you challenge. We will pressure you if you challenge. Just do what you're told just be status quo, it's all good trust us. Listen, your gut. When your gut is telling you something's wrong, listen to it. And number five, advocate and be the squeaky wheel. Speak your mind, speak your truth. Do what you got to do. A lot of people, a part of their advocacy right now as they're leaving school systems, private schools, public schools, all sorts of schools. They're starting to homeschool or unschool. They're trying all sorts of different things. Not everybody has that luxury, but people are doing all sorts of different things to quote, 'advocate,' you might not think of that as advocacy, but that's advocacy too. But either way, advocacy to me means listening to your kid, listening to your gut, and then do what your gut tells you. You know. Now I will give a little caveat here. If your gut is telling you everything's bad and this whole conspiracy is going on, but like tame it down. Really question the big picture, question everything. I'm not saying that what you think is wrong, but you've got to question yourself too. So whatever you do, just be clear. Don't just listen to just emotion and stuff, like really, really investigate. And be aware of what you investigate obviously, you know, really think through where the source is getting their information. They're very convincing things out there that I really want you to question. I don't even want you to listen to me. If you don't like what I say, question it. You know, do your own research, do your own finding, like question everything. Number six, connect with like-minded people. Connect with families at your school that are saying, "These grades are archaic." We don't want grades in our school anymore. Are there any parents that feel this way? Any teachers

that feel this way? Let's connect. Let's change this thing. How do we change from grades to some sort of assessments that are meaningful, that help? That give us real information to help our kid and that don't fail them. How can we even have the word 'fail'? How is that possible that in this time in history, we even have a word, a metric called F, a thing that fails? That saying, "You're failing, you're a failure." How do we do that? It just doesn't make sense to me that that's even a thing. Connect with like-minded people. Number six, get rid of grades, please.

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Seth Perler 20:27

Number seven, get rid of grades, please. Let's get some real authentic assessments going on here. We like grades because they seem concrete, we can talk about them. It seems like what is measured matters, like I said earlier. Can we please get rid of grades and do something creative that gives us real information? Homework. I'm not going to talk much about homework. But can we please stop this bullshit. There is definitely times when homework is valuable, and meaningful, and engaging, and helpful. But so much of the homework my kids who struggle with executive function are doing is not meaningful. It's not engaging, it's not helping them, it's busy work, it's interfering with their family time, it's interfering with their friend time, their free time, their alone time. What are we doing? How can somebody spend this much time on that? Number nine, creatively differentiated curriculum. How can we change curriculum to make it fun, and interesting, and project based, and whatever you think good curriculum is. Don't listen me, but I think it should be fun, and interesting, and engaging, and passion based, and interest based, and project based, and experiential and engaging, and motivating. How can we have creatively differentiated curriculum that does that, that meets the needs of a bunch of different kids? We sure as hell are not going to do that with 30 kids in a classroom and a bunch of textbooks, and teachers got a lot of pressure on them to do things a certain way. Number 10, train teachers to be artists, not to be compliant worker bees. Over 50% of teachers leave by year five. These people invested four years in college at least, and then up to five years in the classroom investing in your kids. They invested all of this time and then they quit. Why? They're burnt out, it's not working for them. They're not doing what they went there to be doing. It's not fulfilling them. Really, how's that possible? We need to teach teachers to be artists, and respect them, and honor them, and support them. Make it very hard for them. Why do we do that?

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Seth Perler 23:06

Number 11, educare. Let's teach our kids to think, to think critically, to connect with people, to understand things like dignity, and compassion and empathy and community, and service and giving to others and thinking about others, and kindness and cooperation,

and how to be self-learners, and how to listen to people. Like, what do we really want education to do? Those are the things I wanted to do. I want education to teach kids how to think and how to learn. Not how to check boxes, jump through hoops and comply. How to shine, how to give their gifts. Number 12, what can we do? Get our kids outside, in nature away from screens. I'm sorry that you're watching this right now, or you're on a device right now honestly. I hope this is helpful, but go get outside and go connect with you. I want our kids to connect with the world, with people and with nature. Number 12 is connect with people and with nature and with the outdoors and with the environment. We are a part of this earth, this planet isn't our property. We are interconnected with everything on this earth. I want our kids to be involved in that and not be stuck inside behind screens all day long withering away, losing their passions, not engaging with human beings. Number 13, focus on what we want as metrics. So we have these metrics of grades, test scores, letters, things like that. But maybe the metric should change and our metrics should be all adults want our kids to be happy, healthy and successful. That's what I hear over and over and over. Maybe that should be our metric. How happy, healthy and successful does our child feel? What if that was our metric? And we looked at that, and then we could determine, well how successful is this education, or this school year, or this class, or this teacher, or this curriculum? Not everything that's measured matters. Not everything that matters is measured. Those are what matter to us. Yeah, it's hard to measure that with the letter grade, right? So why do we keep trying to do it that way? Next, number 14 is invest money. We invest over \$700 billion in military, that must be very important to us. Guess how much we spend on education? \$70 billion, 1/10. Is education for kids 1/10 as important to us? What do we value? Well, we put our money where our mouth is, we show what we value by our actions, we need to really invest a lot. Again, you know, 30, kids with the teacher and a bunch of textbooks, is that really going to give your kid what they need? And then once they start to get that know that teacher, after a year, or semester, or quarter, they go on to another one, the relationship dissolves. I want people investing in kids for a long time, really knowing kids, really being able to help them. Anyhow, there's a lot of nuance here. Number 15, the very last thing and what I think is the most important thing, what can we do? You watching, I hope that every time I do a presentation to school district or parent group or whatever, my last thing I ever say is this number 15. To me, the most important thing number one thing above everything is the relationship. What is your relationship like, parents, that you have with your child? And teachers, that you have that these kids? A relationship, creating a safe, healthy, securely attached relationship with the kids that you're working with or that you're parenting is the most important thing. That they feel connected, that they feel heard and seen and understood. Not that they just know you understand them or that you care about them, but that they feel, "Wow, they've got my back. Yeah, we have difficulties, but they've got my back, they will listen to me, they will take time to hear me even if we have difficulties. They are not just going to use logic and reason and nagging and bugging and lectures

and things. They will hear me, they will hear me. They may not agree with me, but they will hear me." So often we try to change them and change the way they think and tell them to think differently.

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Seth Perler 28:00

Anyhow, I'm gonna shut up. My name is Seth Perler, I'm an executive function coach. I try to help struggling students navigate this thing called education so that they can have great life now, during their childhood, and for their future. I love what I do. I'm glad you're here. If you like what I'm doing, give it a thumbs up, you can leave a comment below you can go to my blog, support me, share my stuff with other people and help get the word out about this stuff. And for those of you who have been following me for a long time, I know this has been a long one. I never do things this long, but it's just on my mind today. I'm so sick seeing people not treated with dignity and being harmed and I'm so sick of prejudice and hatred and anger and I really want to see things change. And we can change things so don't give up. Go love your kids today. Connect. I hope this was helpful to you and I'll see you soon. Take care.