

Unschooling Undefined

Editor's Pick. Written by Eric Anderson.

Unschooling is a word coined by negating the idea of schooling; it starts off with a negative definition. What, specifically, is it about schools that unschoolers want to do without?

The School Organization

- Breaking up the day into learning time and play time.
- Starting and stopping learning (or shifting topics) according to an externally-imposed schedule.
- Telling students what they should care about.
- Telling students when they should care about it.
- Telling students what is good enough.
- The complex hierarchy with the student at the bottom.

The De-humanizing Aspects of Schools

- Having to ask permission for basic human needs.
- Having to supply “acceptable” excuses for absence or lateness.
- Routine abridgment of human (constitutional) rights.
- Standing in lines, waiting for everything: food, water, attention of the teacher, time on the computer, etc.
- Group rewards and punishments.
- Neglect of individual gifts and problems.
- Moving at the sound of a bell.
- Students coming to view themselves as products, moving down a 12-year assembly line, with bits of knowledge poured in or bolted on by others as the belt moves along. Seeing the primary responsibility for their education as being in the hands of others.

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