To be liberating, education should be concerned with individuals rather than requirements and with richness rather than minimums.

Education must be liberating. This is a tough, demanding principle. It is deceptively appealing, but it requires much more than ritual head-nodding and yea-saying. It is not a call for a return to the basics. It is not a call for education to embrace only the liberal arts, either in its medieval trivium and quadrivium or in its contemporary popular forms. It is not a call to exclude from the school program concerns for making a living or concerns for living life at the moment. It is not an advocacy of any particular vision of society, nor is it a plea that the schools blaze the path for a new social order. It is a call to breathe life into curriculum and instruction.

Preparation for Continued Learning
Education that is liberating demonstrates continuance rather than finality. The education itself may or may not continue; most formal schooling arrangements will not persist for the individual. But a liberating education enables individuals continually to liberate themselves.

That individuals know how to read but dislike and avoid reading seems patently the result of education that is not liberating. The possibility existed but it was shattered: reading as process or skill is not itself liberating. Used to open new worlds of knowledge—about developments in a career or curiosities about an interest—the reading process is an instrument of personal freedom. It is in the reading itself, in the doing of reading, that liberation is truly evident. Here, reading is used to continue to learn, to continue to engage ideas, to continue to think.

Individuals who learn enough about chemistry to pass a course—even with high marks—but who honestly remark, "I had it" acknowledge that their education in chemistry is not liberating. The key to this awareness is the decisive finality of the assertion, "I had it." Not verbalized in such a context is the additional remark, "And I never want to think about chemistry again." The student has encountered chemistry and despaired of its possibilities for extending meaning throughout his or her life. Such education in chemistry is not at all liberating, no matter what we claim it should be.

Knowledge for Individuals
Education that is liberating is concerned about individuals and knowledge, not about categories of content. Computations or geographical time zones or Shakespeare's Hamlet are sometimes touted as essential to education. We are told that education should emphasize computation without an electronic calculator or composition without a typewriter or word processor. The larger argument, although seldom based on real curriculum circumstances, pits the virtues of the several liberal arts and sciences—or the standard college preparatory program of courses—against the claims of explicitly vocational studies.

The quarrel about the value of one knowledge over another is empty precisely because it ignores the individual who engages the knowledge. Content by itself does not liberate individuals. Individuals employ knowledge in their own liberation.

Thus, Herbert Spencer's question, "What knowledge is of most worth?" is a
Responsible curriculum choice must always attend to what knowledge for whom and for what possible uses.

Students in Brooklyn's District 17 Fine Arts Program tour the Brooklyn Bridge.

Photo by Gerald Goldsmith, 2nd Prize Winner, 1983 Photo Contest.

October 1983
所有人都不学会编程一台计算机或使用计算机的意识是错误的。学生和知识——不重图案和匆忙以自我为中心的美感——必须考虑在使用计算机时发明新用途。我们甚至可能决定，仅仅让一些学生参与编程，而让所有人都学会使用计算机，以避免其使用。每个人都需要这方面的知识，但计算机将提供更多的知识，更多的知识。也许，我们理解了计算机提供知识的必要性，以及如何提供。学校应让学生在整个学习过程中使用计算机。

添加要求绝对不可以让教育变得更宽容。教育不能被给予。我们传统上使用的教育语言非常准确地反映了教育对学生的要求。如果我们这样理解，计算机被完全理解为提供的知识——不是给予的，而是学生要么自己选择，要么不选择。我们希望他们这样做，但我们必须接受他们自己选择，而不只是让他们选择。

知识的丰富
教育就是解放。学生需要知识，而不仅仅是教育。确实，计算机是完全理解为提供的知识——不是给定的，而是学生通过键盘，以及计算机随时可用的文件和数据。教育知识，即拥有计算机的能力，需要准备更多的知识。除非我们为所有学生提供机会，让他们参与计算机的发明。

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