



The 7 Keys Re-Boot

by Oliver & Rachel DeMille

SUGGESTIONS FOR USE:

Read the 7 Keys Re-Boot each time you or your student faces a learning challenge. Read with your student and her current learning challenge specifically in mind. Write your thoughts and ideas that come as you read, and then apply them.

The 7 Keys Re-Boot is one of the most powerful things a mentor can do to help his students. The 7 Keys are the basis of all leadership education and the core principles of any great education. This process is profound, yet simple.

As a mentor re-reads the basic concepts of The 7 Keys with a specific mentee and her current learning challenges in mind, the magic occurs. This is great student whispering. It is the crux of great mentoring.

Key # 1: Classics, not Textbooks

Virtually every subject is most effectively learned directly from the greatest thinkers, historians, artists, philosophers, scientists, prophets and their original works.

Great works inspire greatness. Mediocre or poor works inspire mediocre or poor learning. The great accomplishments of humanity are the key to quality education.



The twin conveyor belts (mass public education and the competitive conveyor belt of the professions) emphasize textbooks that are often just “dumbed down” summaries of long lists of rote knowledge.

A “classic” is a work worth studying over and over again, because the student learns more each time. There are classics in each and every field from history, science and literature to computer design, gene-mapping and the digital age, and even surfing, cycling, gardening and so forth. (LE)¹

Allan Bloom said in *The Closing of the American Mind*:

“When a youngster like Lincoln sought to educate himself, the immediately obvious things for him to learn were the Bible, Shakespeare and Euclid. Was he really worse off than those who try to find their way through the technical smorgasbord of the current school system, with its utter inability to distinguish between important and unimportant?”

“I do not believe that my generation, my cousins who have been educated in the American way, all of whom are M.D.s or Ph.D.s, have any comparable learning.”

As students become familiar with and eventually conversant with the great ideas of humanity, they learn how to think, how to lead, and how to become great. The classics, by introducing the young mind to the greatest achievements of mankind and the spiritual teachings of inspired individuals, prepare children to become successful human beings, parents and leaders in their own time.

As Tiffany Earl wrote:

“I felt my nature change as I read Les Miserables. So many unfair circumstances and events happened to Jean Valjean, and he made bad choices. But then he was set free, he had a choice to make, just like all of us do.

“I found myself hoping that he would finally relinquish his hatred, his hardened heart, and become who he was meant to be. And all

¹ “LE” selections are taken from *Leadership Education* by Oliver and Rachel DeMille.

of a sudden I found myself yearning to relinquish my hatred, my hardened heart, to become who I was meant to be. When the bishop gave him the silver, I found myself somehow changed—forever.

“This is what a classic does. It changes us. It changed me.”

Classics also ensure the future of freedom, as Lord Brougham said:

“Education makes a people easy to lead, but difficult to drive; easy to govern, but impossible to enslave.”

He was clearly talking about true liberal arts education, not conveyor belt job training. (TJ)²

Key # 2: Mentors, not Professors



The professor or expert tells the students what they need to know, invites or compels them to conform to certain ideas and standards, and grades or otherwise rewards or punishes them for their various levels of conformity.

In contrast, the *mentor* finds out the student’s goals, interests, talents, weaknesses, strengths and purpose, and then helps him develop and carry out a plan designed to effectively develop his genius and prepare him for his unique mission.

Let us here clarify that there are many who bear the professional title of “Professor” who are truly quality mentors. (LE)

Mentors help each student build a personalized study program designed to fit his individual goals. Someone who approaches twenty students with identical curriculum, methodology, goals and plans is not acting as a mentor.

² “TJ” selections are taken from *A Thomas Jefferson Education* by Oliver DeMille.

The mentor helps each student identify where he or she is, and then says, “Okay, let’s develop a program for you. What do you want to become? What do you want to create? What do you want to learn?”

Once the mentor gets the answer from the student, he helps the student develop a personal plan to achieve it. You can’t train leaders on a conveyor belt; if you want to teach students *how* to think, their studies must be personalized.

Consider the American Founding generation. From ages 5-12, they were typically taught at home or in local community schools directed by the parents. Some started earlier, others later, according to their interests and talents and direction from their parents.

Of course, parents really started teaching them from birth, but somewhere in their early years they began reading classics and discussing them with their mentors.

Their curriculum was the Three R’s—reading, writing and ’rithmetic—all based upon morality and the classics. They also studied languages. They even got their arithmetic from the classics, and the Bible was the core of their learning.

Around ages 13-17, most of the Founding generation went to boarding school and/or college where they took on the classics and went further in depth.

Then from 18-21, students went to work or on to professional training. The key point here is that in all these studies, learning was individualized: first by parents at home, then by other mentors at school and college.

If they went into law or medicine or a trade, they worked with yet another set of mentors who assessed their strengths and weaknesses and set out to help them achieve success.

The system was successful enough that the typical 1789 New York

farmer could read and understand the *Federalist Papers*, something many Ph.D. and J.D. students would struggle with today.

The conveyor belt education system has made us more highly trained as a generation, but less educated. Leadership, therefore, is lacking.

Our schools—public, private and home—can do better by simply taking each student as an individual. The classics make individualizing the content simple because the same book can be different for each reading. (TJ)

Key # 3: Inspire, not Require

This is perhaps the least understood and most neglected of the Seven Keys—yet it is vital to all great teaching. There are really only two ways to teach.

You can inspire the student to voluntarily and enthusiastically choose to do the hard work necessary to get a great education (the love affair with learning), or you can attempt to require it of him (the carrot or the stick).



Mediocre teachers and schools use the “require method”; great teachers and schools pay the price to inspire. Instead of asking, “what can I do to make these students perform?” the great teacher says, “Something’s not working! I must not be truly inspirational. What do I need to do to spark their passion to do the hard work to get a superb education?”

If this one change were duplicated in schools everywhere, education would be dramatically improved! (LE)

If the purpose is to train leaders, it’s important not to force the young person through their learning experiences. Force in learning kills the spirit, dampens the passion and destroys the zest and life of learning.

Force trains followers, not leaders.

Unfortunately, most of us were conditioned to believe that if we aren't forced to learn, especially something like math or advanced science or a skill like playing a musical instrument, we won't do it. In truth, force does teach lessons, but they are the wrong lessons.

The negative lessons of force include:

- Do the bare minimum.
- Learning means pleasing the authority figure.
- Learning, schooling and studying are no fun.
- Playing is when you don't have to learn.
- To be a good student I have to study somebody else's interests.
- My own interests must be pursued on my own time, and they aren't as valuable as the "accepted" topics of study.
- If nobody is making me study, I'd rather be entertained than learn.

The list could go on, but the point is that force is a bad method of incentivizing or encouraging learning.

The carrot is better than the stick, but even the carrot isn't truly inspiring.

Wise parents and teachers learn to inspire their students to intensive self-study, instead of requiring them to follow a pre-formulated curriculum.

Just as the Core (lessons of right and wrong, good and bad, true and false, etc.) must be maintained throughout a lifetime, so must the Love of Learning be cultivated through persistent exposure to inspirational and transformational mentors and classics.

Frankly, this is the most challenging part of the Thomas Jefferson Education system—at least for anybody who spent most of his or her education on the conveyor belt.

The truth is that most parents and teachers really prefer force, really like the ability to just assign and demand and mete out consequences. We have been conditioned to believe that this is what education is, that anything else must be less valuable or less effective.

But compare the list of lessons above to the following list of lessons learned by the person who is inspired to get a great education:

- There is so much to learn and it is so exciting.
- Learning is more fun than almost anything.
- I can learn on my own, in a group, or with help from a teacher or parent.
- All I need is a book and I can learn.
- In fact, I can learn even without a book.
- I love learning!
- I am passionately interested in (fill in the blank here, from horses to surfing to dolls to Nancy Drew mysteries, etc.).
- If I do more than is assigned, I'll learn more and have more fun. The assignments are just minimums.
- My thoughts and ideas are as valuable as anybody else's.

Again, the list could go on, but clearly the natural lessons of freely choosing your own education are very valuable. Indeed, freedom is the natural teacher of leadership, just as leadership is the perpetuator of freedom.

The challenge is that most people (with our conveyor belt past) hear the phrase "inspire, not require," and actually translate it more as "*ignore, not require.*" Nothing could be further from the truth.

Ignoring a child's education won't help him at all, but requiring most of his education is just as damaging. And of the three (ignoring, requiring, and inspiring), the one that demands the most of the teacher, mentor or parent is to inspire.

Inspiring, in contrast to ignoring and forcing, means finding out what the students need and then creatively encouraging them to engage it on their own—with excitement and interest. At least three things are

needed to effectively inspire a student to study.

First, the student needs to see someone setting the example. Sometimes, this is almost all that is needed. Wherever you find a great teacher who is passionately pursuing a great education and positively inviting the students to participate, you'll find a high percentage of inspired students who study hard and learn.

Second, the student needs to understand her options. As a mentor, sit down with the student and tell her the various paths available to her in life. Discuss the consequences of not getting a quality education and the possible results of really applying herself to her studies.

Such discussions should not be limited to material results, but also include the joy and excitement of learning. A passion for education is contagious and a teacher who shares will naturally interest those around him.

Third, give the student the choice. Students who are forced to do something will usually resent it, and they won't ever work as hard or supply the same quality of effort as when they freely choose to engage it on their own.

If they choose not to study hard, even after you've set a great example and also talked to them about how important and how fun it is, then chances are your forced requirements would have fallen on deaf ears anyway.

The level of work and excellence they'll achieve when they do freely pursue something is worth not always feeling the need to push, push, push.

As we've taught seminars on Thomas Jefferson Education across North America, we've run into quite a few teachers who consider themselves "very strict," and also many mothers who admit that they are "Sergeant Mom" and dads who are always giving orders and using force to "lead." In nearly all such cases, their students identify more with the first list above than the second.

Why not give freedom a try? It actually works. I knew this from my instincts and my research when I wrote the first edition of this book, but we now have literally thousands of parents and students who have personified this principle and achieved incredible results.

In the force model of “Require,” it is typical to find 14-year-olds who resist more than minimal study each day; but in Thomas Jefferson Education classrooms and homes, it is the norm to have 14-year-olds who study 10-hour days and beg for more.

When combined with the other Keys of Great Teaching, this means they get a truly superb education. (TJ)

Key # 4: Structure Time, not Content



Great mentors help their students establish and follow a consistent schedule, but they do not micro-manage the content. Indeed, micro-management has become one of the real poisons of modern Dewey-Vygotsky education.

In contrast, great teachers and schools allow young students to follow their passions and interests during their study time and inspire them as needed to take on areas they may not initially recognize as interesting and desirable. Interviews and mentor meetings can be invaluable tools to facilitate and inspire effective study, but a certain level of detachment is necessary to accomplish this effectively.

Tiffany Earl applies Adam Smith’s maxim here: students must have the freedom to fail in order to truly take responsibility for their own progress. They must *know* that their education, their life, their mission, will hinge upon *their own* choices.

When they truly own this responsibility (and some do not until the reality of negative natural consequences begins to threaten) they begin to make the hard choices.

Of course, no one really wants to fail. We may trust that in a supportive, healthy, inspiring environment students will set worthy goals, will have successes and set-backs and will, on the whole and over time, learn to make and keep commitments and progress in character and competence.

Parents and teachers who trust this see the successful results in their students, while educators who do not trust this see very few successes. When the students do take responsibility for their lives and education with the inspired guidance of a mentor, they will accomplish incredible things and exhibit their own true and unique genius. (LE)

No method of learning is effective without adequate time. Time takes structure. “Structure” is a dangerous word in modern education because most parents and teachers were themselves public schooled.

So when, say, a homeschooling parent decides to home school, she sets it up the only way she knows how—like a public school. The parents leave the public system for some reason—academic, social, religious, whatever—and try to set up a little public school at home, a little conveyor belt. They decide, “At 8:00 o’clock we’re going to do math, and at 8:50 we’ll do English, and at 9:40 history,” etc. But they can never hope to teach students “what to think” as well as the public conveyor belt with its hallways, lockers, credits, grade levels and bells.

If their goal is teaching them how to think, they need to do it the leadership way.

We need structure in order to give adequate time and attention to learning, but the key is to structure the time, not the content.

Let me repeat: Structure time, not content.

For example, if you set aside five hours a day, five days a week most of the year, with occasional interruptions for activities or trips, and consistently do school during this period, most students will have time to obtain a quality education.

For younger children it will be less, and for advanced students it will likely be more. The structure and intensity of the academic schedule progresses from relatively non-existent at the very earliest ages to the almost constant rigors of adolescent and adult scholarship.

More detailed structure may be helpful for a few Scholars (usually ages 15-17) who choose to organize *themselves*—as long as you keep it simple, such as: math for at least one hour first thing, essay writing and discussion with the mentor the last hour, and free study in between.

Different things work for different students. Remember that the purpose of the structure is simply to ensure that the students have sufficient time to study. The mentor doesn't have to be there the whole time, but should interact often, and the students should be given great freedom to read and study and experiment according to their own interests.

Note that this type of structure is usually detrimental before the young student is truly ready for intense study. (TJ)

Structuring time for study allows great freedom to the student about what to study. This helps them maintain a feeling of being inspired about their studies. This system gives the student great freedom within an ordered system.

The model we've seen bear the best results is to give the student the following structured time: study 5 hours each day on a set schedule, spend the first hour of the day studying math, study whatever the student wants the rest of the day, and meet with the mentor for 15-30 minutes at the end of the study day to report what was studied and what was learned.

If you want to document what is being studied, the student or mentor can write a summary of each day's studies. If the mentor can't meet

some days, a written summary can be kept and discussed later when the mentor can meet.

Structuring time allows the student to study a great deal in an inspired environment where freedom is the focus, with follow up mentoring nearly every day.

Mentors should also be sure that they give the student a lot of options to study. When the student sits down to study each day, he should have many books and materials and potential projects to work on. This works best when the mentors and students select such books and projects together.

Key # 5: Quality, not Conformity



In the early phases, this key refers to personalizing experiences to address the needs and accomplish the fundamental objectives of the student's particular phase of learning.

Parents who did not receive a classical education in their youth often feel a pull as relentless as gravity to duplicate their own experience, and that of the societal norm, for their own children.

Having a vision of the lessons of each phase (found in *Leadership Education*) helps one to make considered, deliberate choices about how to lead in a self-educating home, and how to inspire the individuals to accomplish their purpose for their time of life.

This is “quality, not conformity” for young ones.

Once the more mature student (in Scholar Phase) is inspired and working hard to get a great education, the mentor should give appropriate feedback and help. But the feedback should not take the

form of rewarding conformity.

Great teachers and schools expect and nurture quality work and quality performance. Great teachers inspire and demand quality, ever urging their students to higher levels of excellence. They shun mere conformity and expect their students to think and perform to their ever-increasing potential. (LE)

When Scholars (usually ages 14-17) do an assignment, either say “great work” or “do it again.” You can help them, but have them do most of the work and never accept a low quality submission or performance.

Note that we’re talking here about more mature students, usually at least 14 and older, not of toddlers and children.

Parents often worry that they aren’t really experts, so they hesitate to enforce high standards. And teachers sometimes feel too busy to give assignments *repeat* personal attention.

For young children, the Core lessons and gaining a Love of Learning are more important than the conformity or quality of work.

But at some point in their development you will do them a huge favor if you set up a system of standards *together* and then abide by it. The key is coaching.

Think about it. The places where the conveyor belt system gets professional level quality are where they have coaching—athletics, drama, debate, music, etc. This is mentoring, and it is personalized. Students, like the quarterback or the trombone player, are expected to work on it over and over until they get it right.

Do the same in academics, and you will eventually get world-class learning.

Older student papers, reports and assignments must be high quality. For homeschoolers, don’t give them grades. Just “great work” or “do it again.”

For teachers in a public or private school, the “do it again” grade should be used a lot more throughout each term. If they don’t like the book or the thing they are studying, discuss it anyway. If their report is vague and they seem bored, ask why. Talk it out, even if their response is negative. For example: “Well, I just didn’t like it because . . .”

Whatever their reasons, they are thinking now. Keep questioning them.

What if they say, “I don’t want to discuss this book. I hated this book...”?

“Why did you hate it? What was wrong with it? What was the problem?” Some of the most powerful discussions I’ve had with college students are about the book *The Lord of the Flies*, because everyone hates it. I hate it myself.

My junior English teacher in high school, Mrs. Herrick, asked me about it and my response was, “I hate it.” I’ve never changed my mind about it, though I’ve reread it a number of times. But she knew to keep talking about it. It’s a really good book to hate. But there are some powerful discussions that take place when you say, “Why do you hate it?”

One answer might be, “Because it leaves God out of everything.”

“Okay, that’s a good reason. Does society ever make that same mistake?”

“That’s why I hated it, because our society is getting to be just like that.”

“Well, if you were on that island in *The Lord of the Flies*, how would you change things? What would *you* do?”

“I would . . .”

Whatever their answer, you can respond: “Okay, then how are you going to do those same things in our society?”

This is powerful. Take the greatest ideas of humanity and apply them to self and society. Question, probe, ponder, think, discuss, write, apply.

Push yourself as a mentor, so that you can push your older students. This is the great key to mentoring—lead out by pushing yourself even harder than you push them. And push them by requiring quality work. (TJ)

Educating Leaders

This is how the great leaders of history learned. They read classics and had these sorts of discussions and were really pushed (by inspiration and internal drive, not forced requirements) by mentors; and then when they were in situations where they had to make difficult decisions, the future Lincolns of the world were able to say things like: “No! This is unacceptable. Jane Eyre would have done this, Cicero would have done this, and this is what I’m going to do.”

If leaders have pondered the great ideas, the great stories, under the guidance of a good mentor, they know what is, and how to choose, the right. The classics become part of their makeup, part of who they are.

If they know the classics, like Dickens’ *Great Expectations*, for example, their friends and close associates are able to say, “Here’s what you should do. Think of Pip. You’re making a decision out of pride; it’s not going to turn out well.” They can back up and say, “You know, you’re right.”

There’s a powerful scene in the Star Trek movie *First Contact* where Captain Picard is about to make a fatal mistake, and another character says something like, “Okay, Ahab, you go right ahead.” That changes the whole paradigm for him. *Ahab*. He realizes, *I am Ahab*; and he starts quoting Melville, and changes his mind.

The stories we associate ourselves with, whether of Moses or Hamlet or *Anne of Green Gables*, become powerful in our lives; and when the time comes to make tough decisions, we can ideally fall back on them

in order to decide.

When a person has come face-to-face with George Washington as a central part of her education, or with Esther or Ruth, she stands up in a crisis situation and says, “I will not; neither will you.” The classics are a part of her. That’s greatness and leadership, and all it takes are classics, mentors and hard work. (TJ)

Too much education is based on conformity, which is based on learning what to think. But learning *how* to think is the real key to education. Teaching students how to think by emphasizing quality rather than conformity is central to excellent education.

Key # 6: Simplicity, not Complexity

The more complex the curriculum, the more reliant the student becomes on experts—and the more likely the student is to get caught up in the requirement/conformity trap.



This is to say nothing of the “dumbing down” and overstressing of the parent or educator who attempts to facilitate a rigorous and uninspiring curriculum. This leads to effective *follower* training, but is more a socialization technique than an educational method.

Education means the ability to think independently and creatively, and development of the skill of applying one’s knowledge in dealing with people and situations in the real world.

Great teachers train great thinkers and leaders by keeping it simple: students study the greatest minds and characters in history in every field, write about and respond to what is learned in numerous settings, and apply it in various ways under the tutelage of a mentor.

Find a great thinker and leader in history and you will nearly always find this method in their educational background. (LE)

To achieve truly excellent education, keep it simple: Read, Write, do Projects and Discuss. The more complex our national curriculum has become, the less educated our society.

And it's not just in the United States. You find it in ancient Rome, Greece, Chinese history, Japanese history, many modern nations, and elsewhere.

Jefferson didn't have access to our modern "advanced" textbooks and yearly updated curriculum modules or standardized tests. He read the classics, wrote about them, and discussed what he learned with his mentors. George Wythe structured Jefferson's curriculum around these simple items: classics, discussion, projects, writing.

Nearly the whole Founding generation did the same, and the further we have moved from this simple formula, the worse our education has become. [Note that professional training can be very effective without these things, but not quality education.]

What we need to improve education is not more curriculum, but better *education*, and that comes from classics and mentors.

With young children you do two things: read them the classics— things at their level like *Black Beauty*, *Charlotte's Web*, the *Little House on the Prairie* series, fables and rhymes—then talk about it with them, teach them lessons.

You may want to preview the books beforehand, read them yourself and decide if they are classics.

- Do they teach the great moral lessons that you want to discuss with your children?
- Are they worth reading over and over because you learn more each time? If so, read them to the children.
- Read poems, stories, and brief biographical accounts of great

scientists, doctors, mathematicians, artists, statesmen, etc.

- Most importantly, read them your family history and central religious texts—whatever your faith.

As the children get older, whether they go to school or learn at home, expose them to other things. Increase the depth and the difficulty level, but focus on reading classics and discussing.

Of course, you can only mentor them well if *you* read the books too. Read the classic they're reading. If you've read it before, then you have a chance of learning a lot more from it each time through.

The more you read it, the more you'll learn. If you read it with your first three children, read it again with the fourth. Or if you teach in a public or private school, read it with each new class.

If you ever had a public school teacher who read a classic to the group over the course of a term or school year, you know how powerfully inspiring this is to students, how much this can result in increased love of learning and more reading.

If it isn't worth reading four times, it shouldn't be on your classic list. The fourth child or eighth class will get the better education because you're a better mentor, and each time you read it you'll get something new that you never thought of before.

Those new "aha's" are what keep you animated and interesting as a mentor.

After you share this new discovery with your fourth child, call the other three and tell them about it. You'll create a lifelong tradition of mentoring and learning that will be passed on to future generations. (TJ)

Effective Discussions

The key to quality discussion is to have lots of discussions, both planned and spontaneous, about classic and other quality readings.

For example, say you and your students are reading Dickens' *Great Expectations*. Pip is the main character. He's a young child, he's poor, and nobody thinks he'll amount to much in life.

Then all of a sudden he gets an anonymous donation of money, so they say, "Pip, you have great expectations, you'll be wonderful." He matures and grows up and has to make some decisions about what's right and wrong and good and bad.

He ends up making decisions that lead him in the wrong direction, decisions based on pride. He feels that what is socially acceptable is more important than what he knows is right. He alienates his old friends and the people who supported him because he wants to look right in high society. He makes mistakes and has to deal with the consequences.

These are powerful themes for discussion with your students: how they choose their friends and how they act around them, what is really important in life, what integrity and loyalty are and how they are manifest in our actions, etc. Such subjects can also be powerful catalysts for classroom discussion.

You can do this spontaneously as you are reading and think of something. Or you can set a time for all the students to be finished reading and have a discussion.

Better still, have several students and parents read it and come together for a group discussion. You can refer back to the book later on in life when your child is dumping old friends to look good to a more popular crowd. "You have great expectations. Are you sure about this?"

In your discussions, let the students think. Don't just tell them what the book said. Ask questions. Suppose one of your students says, "I don't think Pip made a wrong decision, I think he was right." Don't tell him he's wrong. Instead try: "That's really interesting. Would you tell us why?"

With Dad and Mom there, and perhaps other children, or in a classroom, this can be a powerful teaching moment. (TJ)

Writing as Learning

In addition to discussion, encourage them to write about what they are learning as frequently as possible. Then evaluate their writing and give them feedback, which leads to more discussion. They can also give reports to a bigger group or send their papers to others for feedback. Letters to another student about books they both read can be very valuable.

George Wythe had Thomas Jefferson, and his other students, keep what they called a Commonplace Book, which was a journal of what they studied and learned each day.

Students could write at least one essay each day, summarizing the main ideas or some new concept they have learned. Mentors look over the essays, and this can lead to more discussion and ideas. In fact, I highly recommend that mentors write a daily essay also, even if it is just a few paragraphs.

This is a great way to document your process and progress. It increases daily retention, interest and discussion. It is also very helpful to come back to your notes later and compare them with new facts and ideas you are learning.

This paragraph or essay a day is key to the learning process, and can be used with students at any age and in any topic. With younger children, you may need to write it for them. Ask, "Would you like me to record something for you today?" Then write down the answer.

Soon they will be asking you to help them make out the letters and write it down. This will create a habit of recording what is learned and storing it for future use. It will also teach them to write.

At the appropriate time their essays get more advanced; almost without fail they will approach *you* for help in learning the common standards

for grammar, spelling and other details, and have them rewrite and polish. Be positive and use restraint. Do not allow yourself to be overanxious to point out the errors of the younger student. You are simply a resource at their disposal, not a critic.

Be sure that they are progressing in content and expression first of all. Then, when they are older and you have a formal understanding of your mentorship relationship and of standards of excellence, you can be as demanding as need be to really help them achieve their objectives.

The time to really push them and demand excellence, to use the “A” or “Do it Again” process, is when they ask for it. As they study TEd and The 7 Keys, they’ll learn the need for great mentors and they’ll request that kind of help from you.

Again, the focus should be on content rather than technique; help them become good and later excellent writers by challenging assumptions, helping them phrase things more accurately and eloquently, and finding ways to use what they have written in real life projects.

Writing is powerful communication, and can be mastered when combined with the classics and a daily routine of paragraphs, essays and later more advanced work.

This is how real education takes place. You study and read and write; so does the student. Then you discuss and talk about it and see how it applies to real life and important questions and ideas; you read classics, books worth rereading, from all topics of study.

If you can’t understand a particular math or science classic, get someone in the community to read it with you and help. Many individuals with such expertise are delighted to be asked to share and help train hungry young minds.

You are the mentor, helping where you can and getting others to help where you are limited.

Keep it simple: you don’t need a fancy curriculum, just the greatest

works of all time, some hard work by you and your student, and lots of discussion and feedback on their work. (TJ)

Key # 7: YOU, not Them

If you think these principles are primarily about improving your child's or student's education, you will never have the power to inspire them to do the hard work of self-education.



Focus on *your* education, and invite them along for the ride. Read the classics in all fields, engage mentors who inspire and demand quality, structure your days, weeks and months to include study time for yourself, and become a person who inspires great education.

A parent or teacher does not have to be an expert to inspire great education (the classics provide the expertise), but he *does* have to be setting the example.

In fact, if in the selection of a mentor one had to choose between someone very knowledgeable but low in vision or passion, and one who is just getting started on an aggressive learning curve with a mentor of his own, we would personally prefer the individual who is exemplifying self-education over the one who seems dormant, if accomplished.

Time and time again we have seen that relatively inexperienced parents with a personal commitment to study and individual transformation are extremely effective at communicating passion and commitment to their students.

Of course the effect is so much the better when a mentor is not only passionate but prepared, and constantly expanding his ability and repertoire. Such a mentor is worth more than words can say. (LE)

Set the Example. The best mentors are continually learning and pushing themselves. Read the classics. Study hard. This allows you to take the “agency” approach to teaching, to let your students have a say in what they study next. “What are we going to do today, son? What is our next classic?”

“Well, I’ve been thinking about . . .”

“Okay, I will commit to study it, ponder and think about it, and we’ll discuss it.”

Note that this is the student picking a classic and the mentor accepting the assignment to study it and discuss it with the student when both have completed it.

After such a discussion, study hard, pay the price in your own study, and require quality work (meaning writings or discussions) from the student.

A great mentor is not only one who gives assignments, but also one who accepts them and thereby allows the student to begin practicing leadership. A key part of setting the example is letting the students take the lead as often as possible; free choice is an essential part of learning to think.

In our modern society, whenever education is the subject, we always want to talk about the kids. We care about them, and we know their education is important, but we also find that it’s easier to talk about their education than to improve our own.

In reality, you are unlikely to pass on to your children a better education than you have earned yourself, no matter how much you push them or how good the teachers are in their private school.

Children tend to rise to the educational level of their parents, and maybe a little above if their parents have shown them that this is important.

The exceptions, those students who get an education much superior to their parents, nearly always do so on their own initiative—not by parental force. The most effective way to ensure the quality of their education is to consistently improve your own.

The beauty of this self-evident truth is that you don't have to be all that far ahead of them to effectively lead out; they can even pass you up once you are firmly on a committed path of self-education.

Your trajectory will propel them, even as the advantages of their youth and the time available to them allow them to achieve amazing amounts in a short period of time.

Don't forget that you also have the advantage of maturity and life experience that enrich your learning in ways that they can't approximate. Just make the commitment and lead out. You be the lever that moves their world.

When you are setting the example, learning lessons and sharing them, you will be doing the most important thing you can to improve your children's education. This is equally true of parents and teachers. (TJ)

Apply Lessons to Life

The most powerful lessons occur where studies intersect with real life. Mentors must constantly have students involved in applying the things they are learning.

Mentors can help students get involved in the community in many ways, but most of this application comes during discussions of how the readings apply to real life. For example, consider how you could apply the lessons learned in *Jane Eyre*.

Jane Eyre is a story of a disadvantaged girl whose dreams finally come

true, when all of a sudden at the very last minute before she is to be married, she finds out the man is already married. He tries to convince her it is appropriate due to the circumstances. But she knows it is wrong, absolutely wrong, and she leaves. She ends up begging for food on the street, going door-to-door asking for help, her clothes are worn out, and she is totally exhausted.

All she has to do is go back and accept this man's offer, and she'll be rich and have the man she loves. But she knows there is a clear right and wrong, and she chooses the right regardless of the consequences.

There is a lot of discussion that can take place in a family or classroom about this. Mom or Dad can say: "Let me tell you about our courtship and talk about some related ideas. While we're on the subject, let's talk about courtship as opposed to dating and look at the differences, and let's consider how it differs between those days and today." Teachers can deal with similar themes— right and wrong, and so on.

This works very well for current events. When you're watching World News Tonight, you might say, "That's an interesting take on it. We just got done reading Marx's *Communist Manifesto* and Madison in the *Federalist Papers*. Which of those viewpoints is this anchorman closest to in his thinking?"

If your student says, "He's clearly Madison." You respond, "Why? Explain it to me." Then you talk it through. If you or your student are still unclear, go back to the books and make a list of, say, seven main ideas from both.

Then you watch the news together for the next two weeks and take notes, and discuss it again. Then the student writes about it and you discuss what he or she has written. The whole time you're inspiring thought and leadership because the student learns how to think and how to apply what he is learning.

In addition, there are many ways to get out of the classroom and apply what students are learning—a family or class service project, family business, political campaigns, community or church service, travel,

field trips, etc.

Almost any important subject you can think of is brought up in the classics; all you do is read them along with the student, discuss them together, and point out how they apply to the student personally and to current events—just like Wythe taught Jefferson: classics, discussion, writing, application. (TJ)

Applying the Seven Keys

We recommend that the reader apply the principles of The 7 Keys to whatever educational works he studies, since many education systems (for example, intensive trivium-type memorization) work wonderfully in Scholar Phase but compete with the key lessons of Core and Love of Learning, or things that would be great in Core Phase (like Montessori or Unschooling) can be inferior choices for Scholar Phase.

Parents often find it easier to apply the content portions of The 7 Keys of Great Teaching (classics, mentors, structure time) but ignore the leadership methods (simplicity, quality, inspire, YOU). This keeps parents and children stuck on the conveyor belt. Upon objective consideration, we assert that “Sergeant Mom” or “Dictator Dad” can be as bad as Gatto’s public school “Seven Lesson School Teacher”!

We have found that in order to internalize, comprehend and successfully apply the Phases of Learning (see *Leadership Education*), a family must have been working on the process of getting off the conveyor belt for about a year or more.

It has not been very successful for us to teach this advanced material to an educator or family before this elapsed time. The “detoxification” period is too critical, and some questions can only be answered after individuals—and this is important—*have formed the questions themselves*.

This applies not only as we set about to facilitate the education of the children under our stewardship, but also as we seek to progress personally from phase to phase. Note that teachers in a classroom

setting can usually make the transition more quickly, if she has been a reader of the classics.

Nearly all development occurs in stages or phases. This is also true of education. We believe it is important to take advantage of each phase of development to its fullest.

Some things are best taught during a particular phase; it not only goes against nature to work on a different schedule, but very important opportunities might be missed, and this can impact the development of the individual. It is difficult to learn something before its time, perhaps *more* difficult to gain things missed that should have been mastered previously and worst of all is trying to *unlearn* what should not have been learned.

Having said all this, note that children are resilient and all of us benefit from positive changes in our lives no matter what stage we are in. There is no need for someone just now learning of these ideas to feel like a failure, or worry that it is too late to make a difference.

One of the major points of emphasis in Leadership Education is that parents must lead out and change their own approach to education. Certainly if we “old dogs” can learn “new tricks,” it is not too late for our children! (LE)

Let me recap. The greatest leaders in history used a very simple curriculum. They read the classics, they discussed them with a mentor who accepted only quality work, and they applied what they learned to real life.

The more we move away from this time-proven curriculum, the less successful we’ll be in educating people and training leaders. Note that this is the best preparation for later career schooling, as the wealthy have proven for generations. Greatness is fostered by coming face-to-face with greatness, both in mentors and classics.

If you want to be successful in creating leadership education, in preparing students to lead their families, communities and careers,

teach them how to think.

How?

Get them into the age-appropriate classics, do it with them, accept only quality, and apply it to real life—over and over and over again until they leave your home or classroom.

When they leave and go away to college or career, they'll be leaders.

And so will you. (TJ)

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