

# What is TJEEd?



For more information visit [www.tjed.org](http://www.tjed.org). Purchase TJEEd books and other products [here](#).



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# Contents

<b>What is TJEd?</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Sticks, Carrots and Love Affairs</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Three Types of Education</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Conveyor Belt Education</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Professional Education</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Leadership Education</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>The Phases of Learning</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>The Foundational Phases: Core and Love of Learning</b>	<b>18</b>
Core Phase (approximately ages 0-8)	18
Love of Learning (approximately ages 8-12)	20
<b>Educational Phases: Scholar and Depth</b>	<b>22</b>
Scholar Phase (often ages 12-16 ish)	22
Depth Phase	26
<b>Applicational Phases: Mission and Impact</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>The Seven Keys of Great Teaching</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>1. Classics, not Textbooks</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>2. Mentors, not Professors</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>3. Inspire, not Require</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>4. Structure Time, not Content</b>	<b>33</b>

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<b>5. Quality, not Conformity</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>6. Simplicity, not Complexity</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>7. YOU, not Them</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>The New 8th Key: Secure, Not Stressed</b>	<b>37</b>

*Special thanks to Rachel and Russell Keppner of [OffTheConveyorBelt.com](http://OffTheConveyorBelt.com) for their outstanding work in correlating the TJEd quotes and principles for this article.*



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**D**iscovered and organized by [Oliver and Rachel DeMille](#), [Thomas Jefferson Education](#), or “TJEd,” is an educational philosophy and a methodology by which great individuals throughout history were educated.

Thousands of families and professional educators are applying those same principles today, with [proven success](#).

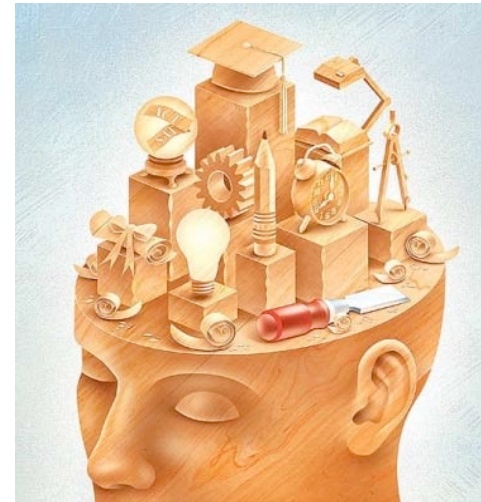
## What is TJEd?

*“All men who turned out worth anything have had the chief hand in their own education.”*

—Sir Walter Scott

### ***What is a great education?***

- Is it good grades and high test scores?
- Is it memorization/regurgitation of facts and dates?
- Is it measured by how much income one can earn, by how much political power one can amass, or by popularity?





*From the  
TJEd Library...*

***“Education can’t be fixed as long as we believe this basic myth. The myth is that it is possible for one human being to educate another. The fact is that the only person who can fix education is the student.”***

***“...Great teaching will solve our educational problems... Teachers teach and students educate... There are two types of great teachers which consistently motivate student-driven education: Mentors and Classics.”***

Oliver DeMille, [\*A Thomas Jefferson Education, 2nd Edition\*](#), pages 12-13

Every person has inner genius. Thomas Jefferson Education consists of helping each student discover, develop and polish her genius. This is the essence and very definition of great education.

There are really only three kinds of education, and they are best understood from the student’s perspective. Students get a good education for one of three reasons:

- they are forced to study long and hard and effectively (the “Stick”)
- they are convinced or manipulated to study long and hard and effectively (the “Carrot”)
- they love to study long and hard and effectively (the “Love Affair”)

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If the first two are “good,” the latter is truly “great.”

The Stick, the Carrot, or the Love Affair—these are the three types of education; and the love affair is by far the most effective.

## Sticks, Carrots and Love Affairs

The carrot and the stick are mediocre forms of education. Only a true love affair with learning helps students discover their great inner genius, effectively develop it and greatly refine it to become their best and to deeply benefit society.

Why would anyone not follow this path? *Because they were forced or convinced to do otherwise.*

The educational conveyor belt attempts to bring all students to literacy by compelling parents and children to meet certain standards. Everyone is herded in the same direction, required to conform by fear of not measuring up.

The professional conveyor belt promises special rewards to the few who rise above the masses and follow a different assembly line (still conformist, but based on incentives rather than punishments) to gain higher compensation, status and perks. Too often the result of both belts is widespread mediocrity and many dysfunctional lives and societies.

For great education to occur, students must choose to study long, hard and effectively because they genuinely love it! It must be their passion and their delight. When students are deeply in love with studying, they learn in “the flow” and they absorb massive amounts of information, knowledge, understanding, connections and wisdom in a very short time.





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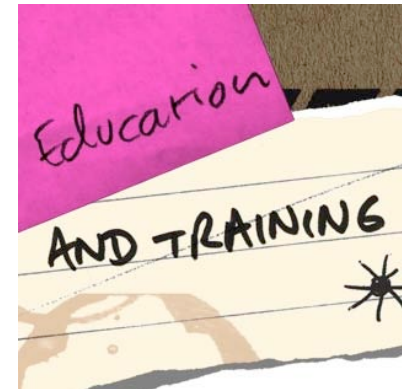
In this introduction to Thomas Jefferson Education, or “TJEd,” as it is commonly called, we will review the Three Systems of Education, the Phases of Learning and the 7 Keys of Great Teaching. Please note that you can access free download audios of convention talks on these subjects [here](#).

## Three Types of Education

There are three major types of education in America today. These same models can be found around the world and throughout history, with identifiable models and objectives. They are:

- Conveyor Belt
- Professional
- Leadership

Each has its own goals, curriculum and methods, with a particular career or life path as its objective. You can read a commentary on these in [A Thomas Jefferson Education](#); they are summarized here:



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## Conveyor Belt Education

The modern public school system was set up about the same time as the industrial revolution with the intent to educate the poor so that they could get a job, and thereby support their families.



Each person who travels through the conveyor belt receives a stamp of approval at the end (diploma), and comes out into the world as a “finished product,” ready to be marketed to the highest bidder for employment. And like a factory, conveyor belt institutions test and grade all students on the same scales regardless of individual needs or interests.

The Conveyor Belt does precisely what it was designed to do. It produces a relatively literate workforce for the general populace. It is not designed, however, to produce independently thinking leaders.

Conveyor Belt education can be found in public schools, private or charter schools, and even in home schools. It is sometimes referred to as the “soviet conveyor belt,” because standards and grade levels are set low enough to ensure that nearly everyone can make it through the educational assembly line.

Conveyor Belt Education has as its objective to prepare everyone for a job—any job—by teaching them *what* to think. This includes rudimentary skills to help them function in society. In general, compulsory schools are set up on the conveyor belt model, although most of us can cite wonderful examples of many excellent teachers in the public system who use leadership methods.



*From the  
TJEd Library...*

*...Conveyor Belts have an important place in society, but it is essential that they don't become a monopoly and that professional and leadership training schools are maintained.*

Oliver DeMille, [\*A Thomas Jefferson Education, 2nd Edition\*](#), pages 21-22

**Goals:**

- Educate the Masses and Lower Classes
- Teach *What* to Think
- Get a *Job*

**Curriculum:**

- 85% Social
- 15% Textbooks

**Method:**

- “Soviet” Conveyor Belt—Schools look and run like factories
- Individual initiative and innovation from students (non-conformity) is discouraged
- Individual initiative and innovation from educators is discouraged



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### Careers: (According to age)

- 0-12 Study
- 12-18 Play
- 18-24 College Major/Job
- 24-68 Work/Job
- 68+ Retire *or* Volunteer

Most of us can point to exceptions to the rule: teachers or students who stood out and excelled within the compulsory system; the fact remains that the system *per se* is not designed to produce such anomalies, and does not, in general, encourage or reward such outcomes.



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## Professional Education

Professional education systems create specialists by teaching their students *when* to think. This model has been used much longer than the soviet conveyor belt, since it arose from the tradition of apprenticeship, where the student was systematically taught what his master knew before venturing out on his own.

Each professional, whether a mechanic, a lawyer, a doctor, or a financial adviser, is trained to meet a certain set of standards and to think creatively within his field of expertise. However, outside of that narrow scope of knowledge, he tends to rely on the understanding of other experts. A complex society such as modern day America reinforces this.

Professional education is also known as the “competitive conveyor belt,” since the methods used are the same as the soviet conveyor belt, but the standards are set much higher—the top 10-15%.



*From the  
TJEd Library...*

***The professional system does what it's designed to do—create expertise. And if you need a doctor, a lawyer, or a manager for your business, you are glad they are well prepared. The professional system has been very effective in achieving its goals, but it is not a substitute for leadership training.***

Oliver DeMille, [\*A Thomas Jefferson Education, 2nd Edition\*](#), page 23

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**Goals:**

- Train Experts
- Teach *When* to Think

**Curriculum:**

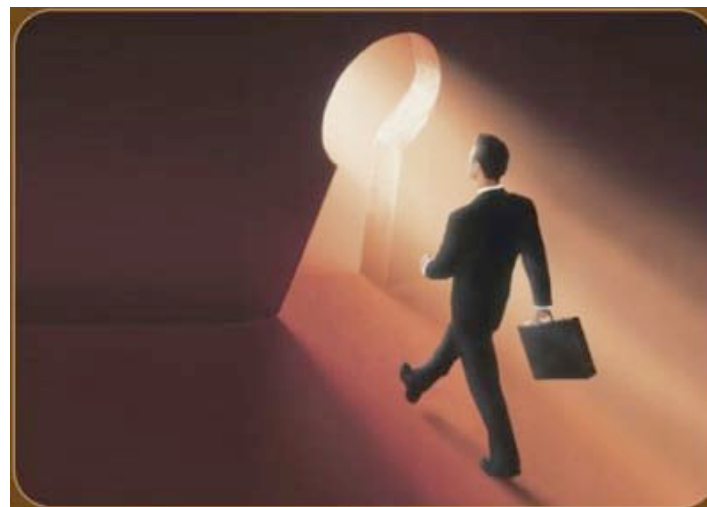
- 50% Case Studies
- 50% Ethics

**Method:**

- Competitive Conveyor Belt—Students Compete

**Careers: (According to age)**

- 0-18 Play
- 18-22 College Major
- 22-26 Professional Training
- 26-65 Career
- 65+ Retire *or* Volunteer



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## Leadership Education

Leadership Education has three primary goals.

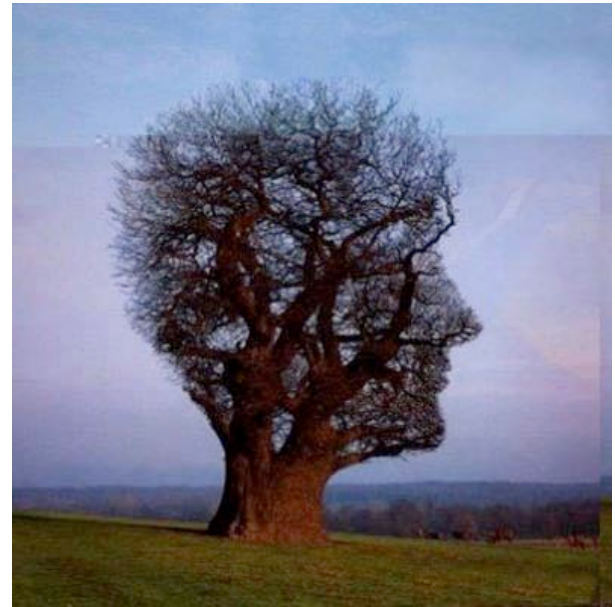
*First*, to train thinkers, leaders, entrepreneurs, and statesmen—those with understanding and competence to lead society (do things *right*) and the moral character to act with integrity in the areas they lead in (*do the right thing*).

*Second*, to perpetuate freedom by helping people understand what freedom is and what must be done to maintain it, and inspiring them to actually do the difficult things required to make it happen.

*Third*, teach students *how* to think, which is how the first two goals must be accomplished. Those who know how to think are able to lead effectively and help a society remain free and prosperous, while those who know only *when* or *what* to think will be unable to do so.

The method for training leaders is as old as humanity—[classics](#) and mentors. The student studies the greatest works ever created, and submits to the guidance of great mentors, who customize the education for the student’s mission in life.

This is the simplest, though arguably the most challenging of the educational paths.





*From the  
TJEd Library...*

*“Leadership Education, which I call ‘Thomas Jefferson Education,’ teaches students how to think and prepares them to be leaders in their homes and communities, entrepreneurs in business, and statesmen in government.*

*“...What happens when a society does not prepare leaders? We get managers and professionals leading in areas they have no training for, such as government, and we get a nation of followers who see no problem with that because they have no experience with anything else. ...This was the legacy of Germany in the 1930s—a highly trained but uneducated people easily swayed by Hitler.”*

Oliver DeMille, [A Thomas Jefferson Education, 2nd Edition](#), pages 21, 27

#### **Goals:**

- Raise Great Souls
- Cultivate Leaders
- Teach *How* to Think

#### **Curriculum:**

- [Classics](#) (any works that inspire greatness and are worth revisiting time and time again)

#### **Method:**

- Mentors that Design a Custom Education for Each Student



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### **Careers: (According to age)**

- 0-12 Play/Family Work
- 12-16 Scholar Phase
- 16-20 Superb Education
- 20-24 Depth Phase (Liberal Arts College)
- 24-50 Build Two Towers (a Family and an Organization)
- 50+ Impact the World (Statesmanship)

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# The Phases of Learning

[This is a brief overview. For more on the phases, click [here](#).]

One of the most significant differences between Thomas Jefferson Education and other classical styles of education has to do with the belief that people, especially children, learn differently at different ages. Thus, there are different phases for learning certain lessons.

Some of the greatest researchers in childhood behavior (Jean Piaget, Erik Erikson, and Dr. Raymond and Dorothy Moore) agree that children pushed academically at an early age tend to burn out early in adulthood, or long before. Young children do soak up learning like a sponge, but at what cost are children pushed into academic work too soon?



A hate of learning is developed when children are forced to perform at a young age and blooms precisely at the time when non-pressured young minds have the potential to be the most curious and inquisitive! And if children of a very young age soak up knowledge so easily, shouldn't they be learning the most important lessons of love, work, and faith during their most formative years, rather than filling their heads with random facts and figures their minds are unable to yet comprehend?



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*Children normally are not mature enough for formal school programs until their senses, coordination, neurological development, and cognition are ready. Piagetian experiments have shown repeatedly that cognitive maturity may not come until close to age twelve. Interestingly, the ancient Orthodox Jews, known over the world for their brilliance, provided little or no formal schooling until after age twelve for girls and thirteen for boys when children were considered able to accept full responsibility for their actions.*

Dr. Raymond and Dorothy Moore, *The Successful Homeschool Family Handbook*, page 44

## The Foundational Phases: Core and Love of Learning

### Core Phase (approximately ages 0-8)



The Core Phase is the first of the Foundational Phases, and serves as the foundation for all the rest of a child's life. This is when parents nurture their children in the safe, cozy atmosphere of home and family life. During this period, they get a spiritual education by learning about the difference between wrong and right in the secure care of their mother and father. They are exposed to inspiring music, good books, and an atmosphere of learning through the family culture. *Highly structured and strongly pushed academics are not yet a part of a Core Phase child's life.*

Play is a huge part of the Core Phase child's education. As Maria Montessori taught, a child "learns everything without knowing he is learning it, and in doing so passes little from the unconscious to the conscious, treading always in the paths of joy and love."

Work is another big part of the Core Phase. Children learn what work is, and are lovingly instructed by their parents as they help with the daily chores. The time children spend learning how to work and obey parents and rules provide valuable lessons they will use in many circumstances (including later academic work) and through the rest of their lives.

The key to a successful Core Phase is constant interaction with the parents. Too many activities outside of the home can be crippling to the Core Phase experience, resulting in frustration and confusion for the child. Work and play are done with Mom and/or Dad and siblings, and the parents' patience throughout the teaching of basic skills is needed.



*From the  
TJEd Library...*

*“The establishment of the Core occurs roughly between the years of 0-8; the maintenance and nourishment of the Core is a life-long process. ...This consists of the lessons of good/bad, right/wrong, true/false, and is accomplished through work/play.”*

Oliver DeMille, [\*A Thomas Jefferson Education, 2nd Edition\*](#), pages 31-32

**A child in Core Phase should:**

- Learn the difference between good and bad, and how to make good choices
- Learn how to work, and how to be responsible
- Learn about God and his or her relationship with Him
- **Play**—which is the best way for a child to learn about the world around him
- Spend most of his time at home with his family, being nurtured and loved





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## Love of Learning (approximately ages 8-12)



The Love of Learning Phase is the second of the two Foundational Phases, and it sets the stage for the child's later scholarly pursuits. This is when a child begins to play in new ways, and this sometimes begins to *look like study*, but maintains the spontaneity and curiosity of play.

If a child at this stage (or earlier) is forced into academics, what results is usually a "Hate of Learning." This is one of the earmarks of a conveyor belt education, and why most of us schooled that way can't fathom the idea that young adults will eventually *choose* to study 8-10 hours a day, if this phase is successfully nurtured.

This is a time when the student-in-embryo is encouraged to learn about anything that interests her. The parent's job is to help provide an environment rich in resources and exemplify curiosity and personal growth by choosing meaningful personal study; the child will follow suit.

If she chooses it, she'll be excited about it, and so her *play* will include things that sometimes do and sometimes don't look like *work*: reading, writing, discussing, drawing, sculpting, building, cooking, and cleaning. The parent's job during this phase is to keep the home stocked with "educational products," and model to the child that learning is one of the "funnest" things she can possibly do.



*From the  
TJEd Library...*

***"Following a successful Core Phase, a child will naturally transition to what we call 'Love of Learning.' During this period, a child will commonly play at projects and skills which builds his***



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*repertoire of understanding and prowess. During Love of learning, which typically runs more or less between the ages of 8-12 (often earlier for girls than for boys), the time in the day devoted to learning will gradually increase over time to a number of hours a day by the time a student transitions to Scholar Phase. ...The TJEd home will facilitate a successful Love of Learning Phase as parents and older siblings model the behaviors of study, self-discipline, passion for learning, a sense of personal mission and a habit of service in and out of the home.”*

Oliver DeMille, [A Thomas Jefferson Education, 2nd Edition](#), pages 32-34

**A child in the Love of Learning Phase (who has had a solid Core Phase) will:**

- Study what they are excited about, with minimum “requirements” or “assignments” and maximum inspiration
- Be fascinated by a variety of subjects, and will move from one subject to another at a random pace
- Grow to love learning, if they are free to follow their interests (and conversely, grow to hate learning, if forced and coerced in academics before they choose)
- Continue to learn and add upon the lessons of Core Phase

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## Educational Phases: Scholar and Depth

### Scholar Phase (often ages 12-16 ish)

As the student nears the culmination of a successful Love of Learning phase, he naturally begins to transition towards more scholarly pursuits, until he enters the Scholar Phase, the first of the Educational Phases. Within Scholar Phase, there are a number of different levels built one upon another. During the scholar phase years, the student develops and changes so quickly, that what works for a child in the beginning of Practice Scholar will not necessarily work for the serious Self-Directed Scholar.

In all of Scholar Phase, parents need to be careful not rob their scholars of study time. Chores and other duties in the home are needed, but these responsibilities should be lessened by degrees to give the scholar more time for his or her chosen studies. Parents also



need to realize that the amount of time a scholar spends alone in their room is an indication that the student is studying.

Pulling them out of that solitary time to play, socialize, or have fun sends mixed messages about the importance of study. Parents sometimes forget that our scholars are doing their best to begin the hard work needed in order to get a superb



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Thomas Jefferson Education. Because of a nurturing Core Phase and a carefree Love of Learning Phase, these scholars experienced a great childhood, and are now ready to dig in and do the adult work needed for Scholar Phase.



*From the  
TJEd Library...*

*“Scholar Phase (often, but not always, from ages 12-16) typically ensues with the onset of puberty and is marked by a change in the student’s physical, emotional and social expression. With these changes come a readiness to apply a new level of effort to personal and academic achievement through a process of commitments and accountability. ...[It] is a time to study “everything under the sun,” to read, study science and math, practice art and study the great artists, and cover every topic and subject in a spirit of passion and excitement for learning.”*

Oliver DeMille, [\*A Thomas Jefferson Education, 2nd Edition\*](#), page 34

## **Practice Scholar**

This is the time of life when children re-learn everything they’ve been taught, but now as their own person, rather than as an extension of their parents. They are coming to the realization that they have a unique mission for their life, even though they do not yet know what that mission is. They are beginning to spend real time studying, their attention span is increasing, and they are learning to be more responsible.

## **Apprentice Scholar**

Apprentice scholars are taking the next steps needed to move forward in their educations. They realize that they truly do have something unique to offer the world, and have a greater desire to find out what that entails. They are more



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committed to, and have more self-initiative in, their studies. They can more easily inspire themselves, and begin to lead out more among their peers and siblings.

### **Self-Directed Scholar**

These scholars have experienced personal change from exposure to many classics, and are ready to have real impact in the world. These students begin to feel a strong pull in one direction of study, and realize that they want to sink deeper in this chosen subject. They are creating their own plans for their studies, and have solid self-discipline to follow through and answer to their own plans. They begin seeking a mentor outside the home, and are ready to make the full commitment needed for a full mentorial experience.



*From the  
TJEd Library...*

*“He [the scholar] has watched you (and maybe older siblings and your spouse) study math, science, history, literature, government, writing or whatever else you think everyone should learn, and so he makes these part of his Love of Learning study. He anticipates that in Scholar Phase he will gain further knowledge in most, if not*

*all, of these areas.*

*“...And because of the way you have studied and shared and involved him, he is familiar with, or at least aware of, the subjects you are sure he will need...*

*“If this does not describe your child, more time in Core or Love of Learning is probably needed. Relax; it is still “You, not Them.” Or, more accurately, stop relaxing and get to work—on you, not them.”*

Oliver and Rachel DeMille, [\*Leadership Education: The Phases of Learning\*](#), page 198

**Young adults in Scholar Phase (who have had a solid Core Phase and Love of Learning Phase) will:**

- Study 8-12 hours a day in subjects that interest them
- Willingly submit to a demanding mentor to “fill in the gaps”
- Feel passionately driven by a sense of “mission,” even though they are might not yet be sure what that mission is
- Immerse themselves deeply in subjects *of their own choosing* that the they feel will help them in their life’s mission
- Need time to study and read on their own



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## Depth Phase



Depth Phase is the second of the two Educational Phases, and as the name suggests, it is where the student digs deeper into the great wealth of learning available. Where the presence of a mentor is required to enter Scholar Phase, submitting to a more demanding mentor is critical to an effective Depth Phase. It is this mentor who will personalize the course of study for the individual mission of the student, filling in gaps and exposing weaknesses that the student must address.

Depth Phase usually takes place in a college setting—ideally one which employs all five of the Pillars of Statesmanship (Classics, Mentors, Simulations, Field Experiences, and God). This environment is important for the student to learn the central lessons of Depth Phase:

1. *Initiative*—acquire the ability to create, to add value, to increase what was given
2. *Ingenuity*—develop the ability, skill, and habit of doing things well
3. *Integrity*—don't just do things right, do the right things
4. *Allegiance to God and/or Good*—build upon and expand this attachment, giving yourself to your allegiance
5. *Commitment to Mission*—clarify your purpose in life, and then passionately dedicate your time to that purpose
6. *Passion*—engage with energy in accomplishing great things, even if they seem small or simple at the time
7. *Impact*—make a real difference
8. *Breadth*—study widely in many fields
9. *Depth*—study a few topics in real depth, gaining mastery, expertise, and true understanding
10. *Nuance*—cultivate the ability to analyze, discern, see contrasts and simultaneously understand similarities, and think



*From the  
TJEd Library...*

***“Depth Phase (ideally between 16-22) is characterized by a profound hunger to prepare for on-coming responsibilities and future contributions in society. This hunger leads a Scholar to acknowledge his or her limitations, and the limitations of the current mentorial arrangement, and to submit to the grueling expectations of a mentor at a new and higher level. For most, this is best accomplished in a college setting.”***

Oliver DeMille, [\*A Thomas Jefferson Education\*](#), 2nd edition, page 35



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## Applicational Phases: Mission and Impact

The last set of phases, the Applicational Phases, are somewhat outside the scope of this introduction, and are in fact not included in the *Four Phases of Learning*. We include them here for completeness and to inspire you with a vision of what your future, and that of your children, could be like. This isn't what Thomas Jefferson Education is, but where it eventually leads.

**Mission Phase** is when an individual transitions to adulthood, and begins the all-important task of building two towers: a family and an organization. These towers will serve as the supporting foundation for what comes later.

**Impact Phase** occurs when the two towers are mostly completed, and the individual begins to have time for other endeavors. On the conveyor belt this is roughly analogous to retirement, but on the Leadership Education path this begins the new era in which a person passes on the wisdom and experience he or she has gained and seeks to make the world a better place.



*From the  
TJEd Library...*

*“A Leadership Education will naturally be followed by a life of service and leadership. Some of the most transformational events in a person’s life will occur during the Applicational Phases of Mission and Impact. ...There is a metamorphosis of becoming that marks ...a new clarity and consecration to mission, a more refined*

*ability to affect change in the world and a greater ability to impact the people within the sphere of influence. ...The drive to “prepare for greatness” shifts to a drive to deliver.”* -Oliver and Rachel DeMille, [\*Leadership Education: The Phases of Learning\*](#), page 251



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# The Seven Keys of Great Teaching



[For more on The Seven Keys of Great Teaching, click [here](#)]

*“A number of years ago I helped found George Wythe College, and one of my first responsibilities was researching just how Wythe mentored Jefferson. From that intensive research, and years of additional reading and studying, I found Seven Keys of Great Teaching which form the core of great mentoring.”*

Oliver DeMille, [A Thomas Jefferson Education, 2nd Edition](#), page 39

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## 1. Classics, not Textbooks



No one can deny the value of a great idea well-communicated. The inspiration, innovation and ingenuity inherent in great ideas elevate those who study them.

Great ideas are most effectively learned directly from the greatest thinkers, historians, artists, philosophers and prophets, and their original works. Great works inspire greatness, just as mediocre or poor works usually inspire mediocre and poor achievement.

The great accomplishments of humanity are the key to quality education.

This first key means that in pursuit of a transformational education, in preference to second- or third-generation interpretations, we study [original sources](#) — the intellectual and creative works of the world’s great thinkers, artists, scientists, etc., in the form they were produced.

***“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.”***

Oliver DeMille, [A Thomas Jefferson Education, 2nd Edition](#), page 40



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## 2. Mentors, not Professors

The professor/expert tells the students, invites them to conform to certain ideas and standards, and grades or otherwise rewards/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 to prepare for his unique mission.

Various types of mentors are present at different levels of a person's progress and in different stages of life.



In education, the value of a liberal arts mentor cannot be overstated. Parents and teachers who apply the Seven Keys can be an effective part of the mentoring of a student in the early phases of learning, and help prepare the individual to fully take advantage of the influence of later mentors that will be formative for continued development and achievement.

***“A good mentor is someone of high moral character who is more advanced than the student and can guide his or her learning. Parents are the natural mentors of children. ...Teachers, professors, coaches, music instructors, employers, neighbors and community leaders can also be good mentors. [George Wythe, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and the first law professor in America, was the mentor of Thomas Jefferson.] ...None of George Wythe's students had quite the same curriculum; each student had a personalized program designed to fit his needs and interests.”***

Oliver DeMille, [A Thomas Jefferson Education, 2nd Edition](#), pages 39, 41-42



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### 3. Inspire, not Require

This is perhaps the least understood and least practiced of the Seven Keys. It is probably the single most important element of Leadership Education.

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, or you can attempt to require it of them. Most 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, “I haven’t yet become truly inspirational. What do I need to do so that these students will want to do the hard work to get a superb education?”

The book [A Thomas Jefferson Education Home Companion](#) has several chapters that provide stories and examples of how this works, as well as specific suggestions on how to apply the principles to your own situation.

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, “I haven’t yet become truly inspirational. What do I need to do so that these students will see my example and want to do the hard work to get a superb education?”

***“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. ...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.”***

Oliver DeMille, [A Thomas Jefferson Education, 2nd Edition](#), pages 41-43

## 4. Structure Time, not Content



Great mentors help their students establish and follow a consistent schedule, but they don't micromanage the content.

Indeed, micro-management has become one of the real poisons of modern education. Great teachers and schools encourage students to pursue their interests and passions during their study time.

Of course, this principle is applied differently at different levels of student development.

***“We need structure in order to give adequate time and attention to learning, but the key is to structure the time, not the content. ...Different things work for different students. Remember that the purpose of the structure is simply to ensure that 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. Always remember the Phases; this type of structure is usually detrimental before the young student is truly ready for intense study.”***

Oliver DeMille, [A Thomas Jefferson Education, 2nd Edition](#), pages 45-46



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## 5. Quality, not Conformity

With the student feeling inspired and working hard to get a great education, the mentor should give appropriate feedback and help.

But the feedback should ideally not take the form of common “grading”, but rather personalized feedback, commenting on the particular strengths of a work, including clarity of expression, original thought, technical precision, correlation of principles and ideas, effectiveness of argumentation or other reader appeal, etc.

These are clearly directed toward the evaluation of a written work, but similar concepts can be adapted for feedback on other products of a student’s scholarly efforts, be they organizational, artistic, personal, interpersonal, innovative, etc. Great teachers and schools reward quality—quality work and quality performance.

In the early phases emphasis is placed almost exclusively on positive feedback; as the student matures (usually after puberty), more technical critiques become valuable and usually preferred by students as they strive for excellence.

In late Scholar Phase and Depth Phase, anything less than high quality is not accepted by the mentor as a completed work; instead, the student is coached on how to improve it and sent back to work on it—over and over again until excellence is achieved.

***“When Scholars 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. Wythe was very demanding this way with Jefferson. Note that we’re talking here about more mature students, usually at least 12 and older, not of toddlers or children.”***

Oliver DeMille, [A Thomas Jefferson Education, 2nd Edition](#), page 46

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## 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 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 the skill of applying one's knowledge in dealing with people and situations in the real world.

Complex systems and/or curricula usually lead to student frustration and teacher burnout as personalization is at a minimum and performance requirements are pre-determined.

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

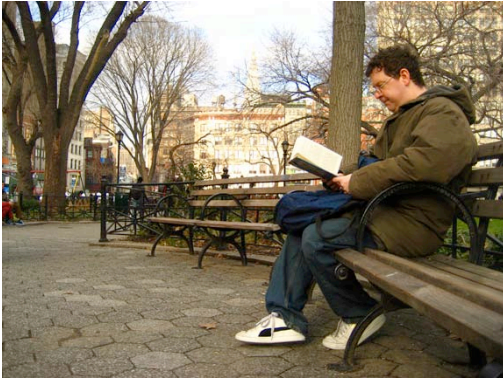


***“To achieve truly excellent education, keep it simple: Read, Write, do Projects and Discuss. The more complex our national curriculum has become, the less educated our society. ...George Wythe structured Jefferson’s curriculum around these simple items: classics, discussion, projects, writing. Nearly the whole Founding generation did the same, and the further we have moved from this simple formula, the worse our education has become. What we need to improve education is not more curriculum, but better education, and that comes from classics and mentors.”***

Oliver DeMille, [\*A Thomas Jefferson Education, 2nd Edition\*](#), pages 48-49

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## 7. YOU, not Them



If you think these principles are 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, find mentors who inspire and demand quality, structure your days to include study time for yourself, and become a person who inspires great education.

A parent or teacher doesn’t have to be an “expert” to inspire great education (the classics provide the expertise), but he does have to be setting the example.

***“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. ...George Wythe studied as hard as Jefferson, and Jefferson contacted him with questions and for help through his life until he passed away.***

***“The mentor must lead the way, by reading what the student reads, discussing it with him and requiring quality work.... 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 most effective way to ensure the quality of their education is to consistently improve your own.”***

Oliver DeMille, [A Thomas Jefferson Education, 2nd Edition](#), pages 52-53



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## The New 8th Key: Secure, Not Stressed

The pull of the conveyor belt is very strong for parents who were schooled in that system—which is most parents today. When the temptation to return to requiring, textbooks, canned curriculum, and even public school arises, we as parents must go back to those feelings present when we first felt that TJEd was right for our family. We *can* trust that desire to give our children a chance to become truly educated, great men and women of character who will someday change the world. Our children have important missions to fulfill, and parents *are* equipped to help them live up to those missions. But we have to trust our hearts, our feelings, those whisperings from God.

Trusting the process yields the best results for a true Leadership Education. Just keep moving forward on the path you have chosen.

