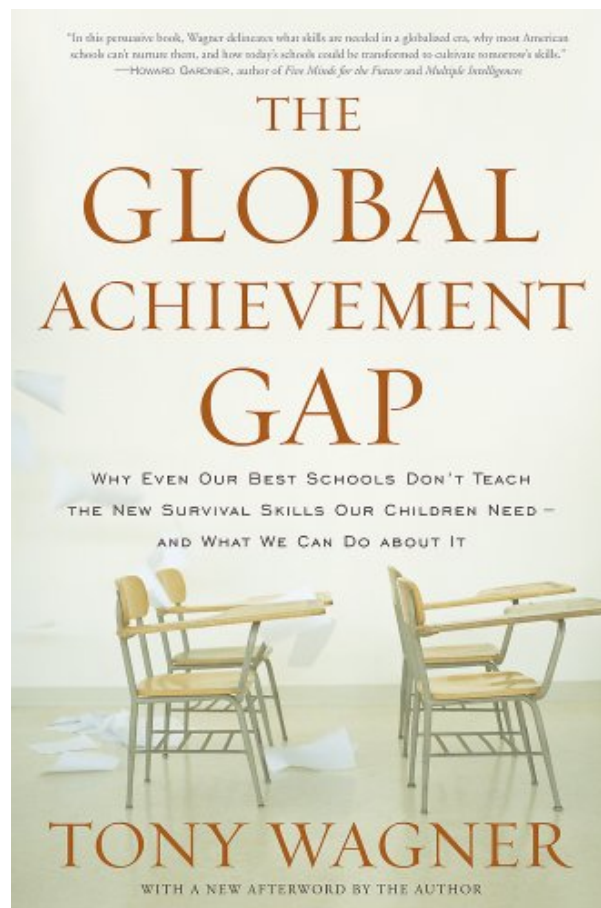


**THE GLOBAL ACHIEVEMENT GAP: WHY
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THE NEW SURVIVAL SKILLS OUR
CHILDREN NEED--AND WHAT WE CAN DO
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"In this persuasive book, Wagner delineates what skills are needed in a globalized era, why most American schools can't nurture them, and how today's schools could be transformed to cultivate tomorrow's skills."
—HOWARD GARDNER, author of *Five Minds for the Future* and *Multiple Intelligences*

THE GLOBAL ACHIEVEMENT GAP

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TONY WAGNER

WITH A NEW AFTERWORD BY THE AUTHOR

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THE GLOBAL ACHIEVEMENT GAP: WHY EVEN OUR BEST SCHOOLS DON'T TEACH THE NEW SURVIVAL SKILLS OUR CHILDREN NEED--AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT PDF

In *The Global Achievement Gap*, education expert Tony Wagner situates our school problems in the larger context of the demands of the global knowledge economy. With insights gained from visits to classrooms in leading suburban schools, he analyzes performance by considering the skills needed to get a good job and become a productive citizen. Highlighting discussions with young people and the adults who work with them, Wagner also explains the ways in which today's generation is differently motivated to excel.

A manifesto for the twenty-first century, *The Global Achievement Gap* is a must-read for anyone interested in seeing our young people achieve their full potential.

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From Booklist

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Excellent Overview of How Schools are Stuck in the Past

By Bryan Long

Wagner argues that the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act, which attempts to close the achievement gap between our best and worst schools, has instead left us with schools that are less effective than ever in preparing our children for college, work and life. Our schools are still mired in educational content and methods from the industrial age; our children get more of the skills they really need outside of school, from extracurricular activities, personal exploration and social networking, if they are fortunate enough to have those opportunities.

Today's corporate work environment consists of clusters of business expertise distributed globally and connected via high-speed communications links. Workers collaborate in their local team and with other teams around the world to define and solve open-ended problems. In today's fast-changing, complex environment, teams are given broad objectives and asked to find the best way to achieve them. There are no pre-defined "right answers" in the business world, only profitable and unprofitable strategies. Similarly, there are seldom any "right answers" in politics, or healthcare, or any other aspect of society - including education. As adults, we have learned that history is always a selective interpretation of past events, and that the most effective communicators often break the established conventions. Yet in our schools we drill on facts and basic skills, and seldom encourage or even tolerate questioning, innovation, exploration, or collaboration.

Wagner presents seven "survival skills" that students should be learning in school in order to prepare for college and adult life:

- * Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- * Collaboration Across Networks and Leading by Influence
- * Agility and Adaptability
- * Initiative and Entrepreneurialism
- * Effective Oral and Written Communication.
- * Accessing and Analyzing Information

* Curiosity and Imagination

Yet, according to a NIH study published in *Science* (2007), 5th-graders in middle-class public schools across the United States spent 90% of their time in their seats listening to the teacher or working alone, and only 7% of their time working in groups. Further, the average 5th grader received 5 times as much instruction in rote learning than they received instruction focused on problem solving or reasoning.

The US high school graduation rate is only 70%, and 40% of all students who enter college must take remedial courses. It is estimated that 50% of students starting college never complete a college degree. Wagner's interviews with students and professors suggest that what is missing is not content knowledge, but competencies. In core classes and even in AP courses, students are drilled in specific content and vocabulary necessary to pass standardized tests, rather than trained in open-ended inquiry, assessment, reasoning, collaboration and presentation.

Wagner takes us beyond the usual complaints about tenure and unions to examine disfunctional structural components of the educational system. In general, degree programs for teaching and school administration suffer the same flaw of content over competencies. Once they graduate, teachers are seldom given more than checklist evaluations, and rarely sit in on one another's classrooms or collaborate for instructional improvement. Instead, Wagner suggests, most teachers have little recourse other than to re-discover effective teaching on their own, in a hit-or-miss manner. As a consequence, not only are best practices not promulgated, but there is little consensus among teachers about what constitutes good teaching.

Wagner also looks at the problem of how our current teaching practices fail to engage and motivate students. Outside of school, our children have team sports and group activities, and are immersed in the Internet world of interactivity, social networking, and visual information access. Despite legitimate concerns about addictive behavior, violent content and cyber-bullying, Wagner points out that our kids online experience, including even gaming, is much more relevant to the kind of activity found in most information-intensive careers. Our children want group connections, open-ended exploration, immediate feedback response, and relevance. Multi-tasking, search, and filtering are natural tasks to them, while they have little patience for long, linear, non-visual texts.

Our schools offer students little of what engages them. Instead of group activity, they get one-way lectures and individual worksheets. Instead of open-ended exploration, they get drills and tests. Instead of rich interactive, multimedia information, they get dry textbooks. Wagner argues that most high-school school drop-outs occur not because the student lacks ability, but because they lack motivation. School does not engage them, and they correctly perceive a lack of relevancy to their current and future lives.

Finally, Wagner offers us some profiles of a few schools that are "doing it right". While it is wonderful to see such examples, they are all small schools. It is probably not feasible nor desirable to open hundreds of thousands of new schools in every neighborhood, and Wagner doesn't offer much perspective on how we can translate these examples to the large schools that make up most of our national school system. But perhaps it is better if we all collaborate on solving that problem! I highly recommend this book by Tony Wagner as a starting point.

40 of 40 people found the following review helpful.

Skills for everyone to learn and ways to teach them

By Amazon Customer

I graduated as a valedictorian from a high school that is not known for its academic excellence. I did not feel much pride in my achievement - though I know I should have because it indicates I worked hard in school. I

was lucky and had quite a few great teachers that did try to teach me to think -- not just memorize stuff. However, I had many more teachers that I could describe much less enthusiastically. I was valedictorian though and took and passed several AP classes too. But I did horribly when I got to college because of the poor preparation I was given in high school. The skills I needed to get that valedictorian status was not enough for even a 3.0 average my first semester of college.

The Global Achievement Gap does a great job of discussing how we need to change schools today so that the students are better prepared for college and work - not just to pass tests. He discusses how teachers should use content to teach kids to think - and not making the content the goal. He discusses different ways students can be taught to speak and think for themselves, to be able to question things around them and be able to solve problems on their own. While reading this book, I kept thinking about how *I* could have benefited from these had I had an education like he described. However, as an adult looking at the big picture, I have a hard time believing that such a big change to cover *everything* he describes is realistically feasible in our world. Maybe we can take small steps toward that goal but the changes he described for the schools and the teaching education and profession are huge and require significantly more money. It will also require changes to current political system in place for schools.

The most useful purpose of this book is for parents and teachers to think about how they might start making changes in the way they are educating the students today so that students today can start reaping the benefits of an education that will prepare them properly for their future. The survival skills Mr. Wagner describes are definitely important and can be taught in every home and every classroom.

38 of 44 people found the following review helpful.

Beyond "test-prep" and towards "life-prep"

By Tan Huynh

Finally a text that outlines school reform without the need of an masters degree to access it. Wanger recommends that schools focus on teaching mental processes by teaching content rather than making content the end goal. The need to develop competencies will prepare our students for a global economy where they will compete with students in and outside the US.

All teachers, administrators, school boards, universities with teacher certification programs, parents, business owners, community leaders, and policy makers who are frustrated but optimistic about school reform should invest time to read this book because it lays out causes of the global achievement gap, identifies core competencies, and highlight schools that serve as models for an achievable school reform.

In addition to the large implications this book might have for the education world, it is valuable for helping me transform my approach to teaching.

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