

Wasted Genius - Introduction

AS PRESIDENT OF LAISSEZ FAIRE BOOKS from 2004 to 2007, I received a lot of manuscripts from hopeful authors. Ninety-nine percent of these were rejected, so I was excited to read one from Bill Greene that was truly insightful and offered unique conclusions about how the “common man” has created prosperous societies and how the “intellectual class” has so often caused them to crumble. I was pleased to have the opportunity to publish that book, *Common Genius*, in 2007.

But I was even more excited when he sent me an early draft of *Wasted Genius*. Here, Bill has taken the important ideas presented in *Common Genius* and applied them to the subjects of education and childrearing, two subjects of particular interest to me. As a parent and long-time homeschooler, I have put a lot of thought and personal research into how children learn, what keeps them from achieving their potential, and what leads them to success. And Bill Greene has hit the nail on the head in this impressive book.

Wasted Genius is one of the first serious attempts to define all the various capabilities that define a mature adult. It establishes that characteristics such as persistence, imagination, and emotional restraint are no less important than IQ (and probably more important). Placing IQ and EQ alongside the other equally important personal characteristics that make an adult successful, contented, and complete, Bill Greene has come up with a much more meaningful scale for intelligence, which he calls Total Competency Quotient (TCQ).

Bill Greene shows that most of the great inventors and most successful entrepreneurs were empowered more by these kinds of practical and personal abilities than by mere memorization and arithmetic skills. And these conclusions force us to recognize the possibilities of every child and to better understand the value of concrete pragmatic thinking over the abstract thinking found in the academic elites.

For ten years, I ran a children’s theatre for the homeschooling community, first in Northern Virginia and later in Arkansas. I can’t tell you the number of parents that have told me they were totally shocked at what their children were able to do on the stage. And it wasn’t because I was able to identify the most talented young actors around. We normally found a part for every child who auditioned. What I did do was let them know that I expected them to work hard, attend every rehearsal, and give it their all. I had high expectations for them, and they nearly always came through to exceed them.

My experience with my theatre students confirmed the idea presented in this book that it is more important to motivate and inspire children than to teach them a canned curriculum, that their success will depend upon, first, their learning to work hard at some task; secondly, finding an area where their capabilities can flourish; and, finally, applying themselves to that field of work. And less-than superb grades and test scores don't have to hold them back. Parents and school can provide guidance, encouragement, and a foundation for successful effort, but children must understand early that the rest is up to them and the sky is the limit—if they are willing to work for it.

Parents needn't buy into the current emphasis on mere academic skills—what Bill Greene calls “A Conspiracy of the Egg Heads,” because it seeks to fill all leadership positions in America with abstract thinkers who will parrot the grand schemes of those who seek to rule, while ignoring the significant contributions of the less intellectual and more practical among us. Rather than worry if their children will get into the best colleges, parents can once again focus on encouraging their children to be the best they can be in whatever field they choose.

Wasted Genius gives parents and teachers a wonderful guide for helping children reach their potential and to put them on the road to happiness and success as an adult. If you're concerned about building your child's self-esteem in a meaningful way, imagine the effect when children are taught to understand that they truly can do just about anything they put their minds to (and effort behind). And no IQ or SAT test can tell them they can't!

You will probably learn a bit about how human beings are wired while reading this book. The new knowledge will be valuable in understanding just how much potential exists—and how you and your children can reach it. To me, the most exciting research shared in Wasted Genius concerns the unique human ability to choose what one wants to be best at by simply working at the “talent” that one wishes to develop (see the section in Chapter 5 subtitled “How Malleable Is Intelligence? Developing Talents”). The implications open an incredible number of possibilities and can't help but inspire young people to be the best they can be.

Our children and our society suffer from the failure to help all our kids reach their full potential, a totally avoidable gap that the author appropriately calls “Wasted Genius,” a loss primarily attributable to the current obsession with SAT scores and the overvaluation of abstract thinking.

I hope every parent and every teacher reads this book. The future of our children—and our society—may depend on it.

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