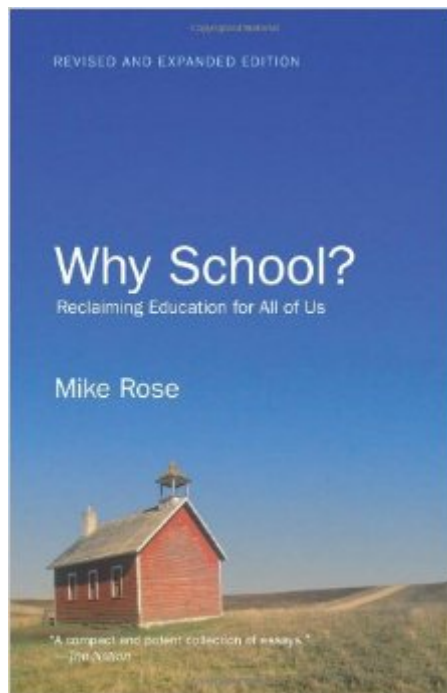


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# Why School?: Reclaiming Education For All Of Us



## Synopsis

Why School? is a little book driven by big questions. What does it mean to be educated? What is intelligence? How should we think about intelligence, education, and opportunity in an open society? Drawing on forty years of teaching and research and "a profound understanding of the opportunities, both intellectual and economic, that come from education" (Booklist), award-winning author Mike Rose reflects on these and other questions related to public schooling in America. He answers them in beautifully written chapters that are both rich in detail and informed by an extensive knowledge of history, the psychology of learning, and the politics of education. This paperback edition includes three new chapters showing how cognitive science actually narrows our understanding of learning, how to increase college graduation rates, and how to value the teaching of basic skills. An updated introduction by Rose, who has been hailed as "a superb writer and an even better storyteller" (TLN Teachers Network), reflects on recent developments in school reform. Lauded as "a beautifully written work of literary nonfiction" (The Christian Science Monitor) and called "stunning" by the New Educator Journal, Why School? offers an eloquent call for a bountiful democratic vision of the purpose of schooling.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

What is the purpose of schooling in a democracy? Through the masterful blending of public policy debates with personal and ethnographic narrative, "Why School?" refocuses our collective attention on this fundamental question. In this powerful collection of essays, Mike Rose carefully explicates the central issues that characterize educational discourse in the United States: standards,

accountability, remediation, intelligence, work and equity. But what makes this book special is the way he does it. Rose's treatment of each of these issues - his thoughtful disentangling of political rhetoric to articulate the essential questions we ought to be thinking about - reflects and offers the kind of "fresh language" he urges us to join him in creating. What does opportunity look and feel like? What is the value of a standard or assessment and how can we re-organize learning so that these become tools rather than rigid ends? How can we rethink oversimplified dichotomies (hand vs. mind, academic vs. everyday, policy vs. practice) in the service of a more "egalitarian philosophy of education?" While questioning narrow, purely economic discussions of schooling, Rose leaves no nuance or counterargument unexamined, building a compelling case for what we should be most concerned with: the social, cognitive, emotional and existential dimensions of human development, and the conditions that provide all students the opportunity to grow. In this sense, "Why School?" spills out beyond education, serving as a model for careful thinking and writing about a wide range of social issues. Though Rose's "Why School?"

The reduction of educational aims to the dictates of the national economy is a main theme in Mike Rose's new book *Why School? Reclaiming Education for All of Us*. Rose laments economic motives and the standardized testing has overwhelmed all the other aims of public education (p. 166). Rose fully accepts American schooling should prepare (young) people for making a living. But "our national discussion of education" and pedagogical practice "has been dominated by" the aims of economic competitiveness and test scores (p. 4). Besides, parents send their children to school for many other reasons than for merely making a living. There are intellectual, social, civic, ethical, and aesthetic educational aims which have been historically more important than economic outcomes. "Not today" (p. 4). Economic motives and standardized testing dominate the thinking of pedagogy and educational practices. Although the book is specific to the pedagogical and political battles in the U.S., the lessons go far beyond culturally specific circumstances. This rather short book is concerned with the process of learning, the activity of good teaching, and provocatively scrutinizes the social goals and pedagogical aims of education. Rose repeatedly emphasizes historically American children have been sent to school for a variety of reasons (pp. 4-5, 23-4, 34-7, 95, 110-5, 159). There is a long tradition in American public education to promote (Jeffersonian) good citizenship and facilitate the realization of civic duty (pp. 166-7). American public schools have historically supported a moral education (p. 4, p. 165) and a learning process to assist and support personal development (p. 115).

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