



Getting the most out of elementary school



Here's the bet we're making. We can produce better academic results than a standards-based education using our approach which emphasizes creativity and character development in elementary school.

We're very aware that the current trend in education is to drill math and reading as early as possible with the idea that pushing kids early will give them a head start on their college career, but we don't buy that rationale. First of all, if every kid gets the same head start, where's the advantage later when they are competing against their peers for college placements? More importantly, the best readers and mathematicians are those that read and practice math.

So, we need to find the motivations for students to take it upon themselves to do just that.

Math and reading are a means to an end, not the end itself. People don't read because they like looking at words. They read because of the information they learn from their reading or the entertainment value of the literature. The same is true of math. It is the rare person that simply does math problems as a pastime. Math is a useful tool to learn something about the world. The thing that will motivate a student to read and practice math is that thing they want to learn about the world. It is their interests.

We start from the premise that we must get to know our students on a personal level so that we can personalize their educational experience. We spend the time to learn what interests our students and what they already like to do. This allows us to teach academic subjects in ways that engage our students and encourages them to take the baton and run with it so to speak. We also sneak in opportunities to learn experience new things so that they might broaden their interests and, likewise, their reading repertoire.

While reading and math skills are important tools in a student toolbox, deepening curiosity and understanding of a subject requires employing various other modes of learning too. The real world is a world of action so kids need activities that show them how the world works and allow them to apply their lessons in real life. This gives them an opportunity to affect the world around them using the skills they learn in a classroom. This is an incredibly empowering feeling; just as magical as bending a spoon with your mind but way more useful.

Lastly, there's character development. This might be the most important. Strong character is not just compliant behavior. Rather, a person with character has control over their mind to limit distractions and keep themselves in a mental state that is conducive to learning. They have good study habits and take responsibility for their job as student. Character and integrity are what you choose to do when no one is looking but they also show themselves in your work product when everyone is looking. Good character makes a person valuable to their community, every team or organization they are part of, and every employer they work for. In fact, there's no employer that would prefer the person who already knows everything but lacks character over the person who doesn't know everything but is interested, willing to learn, and has the drive to do it.

That's the BEAS Academy student.

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Building BEAS Academy

This month we have been polishing up the the non-academic portions of our curriculum. It is important to us that elementary students receive a well-rounded experience in their most formative years of education so that they have those experiences to draw upon as they become increasingly more responsible later in their schooling. So here are some of what we have been up to this month:

- We have developed an arts program that we are really excited about. We have partnered with artists, musicians, dance instructors, theatre directors, and a magician to create a program that will give students a solid foundation in the performing arts while also building students social emotional well-being.
- Our outdoor classroom and educational garden is also moving forward nicely. Our work plans are taking shape and we will have our first plants in the ground this month as a start of our first fall/winter garden.
- Of course we are continuing to produce a weekly podcast where our head teacher and Educational Director and I chat about educational issues, our vision for a better education in the 21st century, and give updates on BEAS Academy. Do give us a listen on your favorite podcast platform.



Remember:

"Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all".

-Aristotle

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