



INNOVATION IN EDUCATION!

Education in America – A 21st Century Solution

INTRODUCING...

STRAIGHT "A" MICRO-SCHOOLS

LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY FOR
INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION



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As the heading implies, education in America is not what it can be or should be. Most will recognize the opening remark as an obvious observation and a severe understatement. In an attempt to avoid merely bashing the existing system and denouncing misguided attempts to reform it, the sole focus here is an education concept that has the potential to revolutionize how we educate our children. We understand that there are political realities and other real-world considerations that can potentially impact the implementation, but before we can discuss such pragmatic concerns, let us first explore what education in America has been as well as what it can and should be.

What education in America is...

Mass Education

- Standardized Curriculum
- Teach to the top or bottom percentile
- Produces non-thinking drones
- Encourages task completion
- Stifles creativity
- Political Correctness
- Parochial and provincial
- Industrial Revolution Model

What education in America should be...

Individualized Training and Instruction

- Individualized Curriculum
- Individualized Pace
- Independent Thinkers
- Intellectual Curiosity
- Innovation
- Individuality and true diversity
- Interconnectivity
- Information Technology Revolution

INTRODUCING: Straight “A” Micro-Schools – Real Education in Real Time

Individualized curriculum and training does NOT imply a lack of standards. Quite to the contrary, through individualized instruction, the individual’s standards, as well as those of the entire school, are raised. Straight “A” Micro-Schools will provide the direction, the resources, the varied methodologies and the environment that allow each student to flourish at his/her own pace while working together toward a greater overall outcome.



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General Philosophy

At its core, the Straight “A” Micro-Schools concept is a perfect blend of methodologies which are founded on a student-centered approach. For too long, a creativity-stifling, archaic system has asked teachers to make up for its own inadequacies. Instead of teachers having to attempt “differentiated instruction” in a classroom setting, Straight “A” Micro-Schools will provide individualized curriculum, pace and instruction to each and every student. The school will not be curriculum-centered or teacher-centered, but rather student-centered with a focus on intellectual curiosity and creativity, not curriculum completion which compromises depth of learning. Paradoxically, this focus will help with curriculum completion. The school’s supreme directive will be to foster creativity, intellectual curiosity and independent thinking. Many educators have long struggled to move from product-driven to process-driven instruction. The Straight “A” Micro-Schools model agrees and will apply this thinking at the foundational school level, not just an individual course or honors level courses. By doing so, the end-product necessarily will be superior. In order to accomplish such lofty goals, Straight “A” Micro-Schools must, by definition, remain small, with a maximum student-to-teacher ratio of eight to one (8:1). However, by networking many micro-schools internationally, Straight “A” will be able to offer world-class instruction, training and opportunities. Straight “A” Micro Schools believes that the whole child should be developed and trained: mind, spirit, body. To that end, Straight “A” Micro-Schools endeavors to customize each student’s curriculum so that it challenges the student’s intellect, encourages the student to serve others, and promotes the student’s physical health and connection to nature. While independent cells (to be defined later) may offer religious instruction with the consent of the participating students and their parents, Straight “A” Micro-Schools is NOT a religious school. Nevertheless, certain religious texts will be included as standard curriculum in order to make clear the roots and foundations of Western Civilization and other civilizations and religions.



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Mission Statement

Straight “A” Micro-Schools will provide individualized instruction and training of true academic rigor, high moral and ethical standards, and physical health and conditioning for the edification of the whole individual (mind, spirit, body). Straight “A” Micro-Schools will promote a worldview that is clearly and unapologetically founded on the same Judeo-Christian values upon which the United States of America is founded. However, Straight “A” Micro-Schools will serve students of any worldview and any or no faith. (Each Autonomous Cell within the Straight “A” Micro-Schools network may create an Addendum to the Mission Statement, with the approval of the Director, but may not remove any part it.)

Vision

Straight “A” Micro-Schools seeks to serve not only our student population but also society at large by promoting virtuous and ethical conduct. All Straight “A” students will be encouraged through positive reinforcement to pursue Righteousness, Grace, Love and Compassion as concepts of ACTION, not merely nice ideas. Straight “A” Micro-Schools will inculcate a strong sense of civic responsibility both locally and globally.

Curriculum – Real Education in Real Time

The curriculum will reflect our vision and mission statements as expressions of our dedication to excellence. Although every student’s curriculum will be customized, certain foundational texts, such as The Holy Bible – both Old and New Testament (NOT for religious dogma) – and great works of philosophy and literature will be a part of every student’s personalized curriculum. From K to 12, all Straight “A” students will receive classical, STEM, and computer sciences instruction. Languages offered will include French, Spanish, and German along with classical languages such as Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. Other languages will be offered as we build our network of Straight “A” Teachers. Younger students will focus their training on Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. Geography, age-appropriate History and Social Studies will be included.

Each course of study will consist of an objective, unbiased approach through the careful analysis of primary sources and proven educational methodologies pertinent to any given subject which will allow students to study critically and evaluate variegated materials from a contextual point of reference that is free of indoctrination and ideologically or politically motivated practices.



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Teachers

Such a fundamental change will also necessitate a paradigm shift in our thinking of what it means to be a teacher. For decades, professional educators have been attempting to redefine what it means to “teach.” There has been a move away from simply giving information to concepts such as “modeling”, “facilitating”, “supporting”, allowing for autodidactic “discovery”, and more. Straight “A” Micro-School Teachers will be trained and adept in all of the above as needed. A good teacher knows a broad variety of methodologies and teaching techniques. A great teacher knows which methodology or technique to apply for each student in each situation, especially if that teacher focuses his/her expertise on only eight (8) students. Furthermore, a Straight “A” Micro-Schools Teacher is well-versed in all subject areas and is able to help his students make connections across the disciplines. A Straight “A” Micro-Schools Teacher is not a narrow “specialist.” If we presume to ask our students to learn the core subjects, but our teachers are not held to the same standard, what message are we sending to our students? For far too long English have teachers been incompetent at Math and Math and Science teachers incapable of putting together a simple essay with proper syntax. Straight “A” Micro-Schools Teachers know a lot about a lot, but they never pretend to know everything. In fact, it is precisely at a moment when it becomes clear that a teacher does not know the answer to a student’s question that the most important learning takes place. The most important lesson students can learn is the process of how to go about finding answers to their questions and satisfying their intellectual curiosity. Furthermore, students need to see their teachers as resources who help them learn, not as authoritarians who tell them what to do and what to think. Finally, Straight “A” Micro-School Teachers love and nurture their students. Sharing their passion for learning and modeling how to “Ask Intelligent Questions” (a Straight “A” hallmark), Straight “A” Teachers inculcate that love of learning in their students.



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Administrators

Whereas the current system is based on a corporate, top-down authoritarian organization, the Straight “A” Micro-Schools model is based on individual autonomous cells which receive support from administrative **teachers**. Learning takes place first and foremost at the individual level which makes the student-teacher relationship paramount. Therefore, Straight “A” Micro-Schools are student-teacher focused. Teachers are gifted with the ability to direct and facilitate that learning, so Straight “A” Micro-Schools Teachers must be supported, NOT told what to do. Therefore, we are left with the most basic unit within the Straight “A” Micro-Schools, the autonomous “cell”, consisting of a maximum of eight (8) students and their lead teacher. For every eight (8) lead teachers, an administrative teacher will be assigned to support those lead teachers, help provide resources, cover for absences and otherwise help make sure that the cells are running smoothly. Straight “A” Micro-Schools Administrators are Teachers who serve as substitutes, secretaries, community liaisons, and anything else that lead teachers require in order to be more effective teachers. A great teacher once said that the greatest among you will be a servant to all. Therefore, Straight “A” Micro-Schools Administrators are servants, not authoritarians. All Administrator Teachers answer directly to the Straight “A” Micro-Schools Director (also a teacher!)



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The Autonomous Cell

A physical Cell will use a proprietary, technology-rich, octagonal table/workstation (in the development stage). The octagonal table has removable partitions for privacy or group work. Each of the eight stations comes equipped with a dock for a portable WiFi-ready tablet/iPad, headphones w/mic, receiver with various channels to hear different teachers or broadcasts at different times, a pre-approved list of instrumental music, and electronic writing pad with stylus. The table can open into a straight line or semicircle of eight stations. Each of the eight stations is the personal workspace of a student. The cyber classroom will offer all the same options, virtually. Cyber classroom teachers will have access to the latest technology in smartboards or multiple monitors as technology advances. The students are not necessarily of the same age or grade, but they are within a similar phase or grouping. Each cell is assigned a lead teacher/tutor who is responsible for the academic progress of all eight students.

Every Cell will be organized thematically according to student interests: general studies, STEM, computer sciences, health professions, athletics, gardening/agriculture, art, music, zoology, business, and you name it! Seriously, you name it and as soon as we can have at least 3 other students who have the same passion, Straight "A" Micro-Schools will find a teacher who is passionate about the same thing, and we will launch a new Cell that is built around that interest.

Phased Age-Integration

Everywhere in society within the real world, people are age-integrated... that is everywhere except for in a traditional school. Straight "A" Micro-Schools is phase age-integrated: K-3, 4-7, 8-12. In other words, all of a cell's students are in the same learning room (physical location or cyber-classroom), but the cells are age and developmentally separated within ranges of age. We do not expect a 5th grader to engage in intellectual discourse with an eighteen-year-old. However, there may be, from time to time, an exception. Older students will be assigned to work with younger students on a regular basis. Every student will be assigned a "big brother or sister." Older students have cell teachers and admin teachers for mentors. A culture of magnanimity, respect and mutual support and encouragement will be fostered among students of all age groups. Where appropriate or needed, Straight "A" Micro-Schools can serve exclusively high school, middle school or elementary school students. Thus, the big brother/sister concept is not a pre-requisite of this model.



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Separate and Special Cells

With the Straight “A” Micro-Schools model, it is possible for individual cells or groups of cells, or specialized cells to grow in remote and unique sites. For example, a few cells might grow around a concept of a business specialization, health professions, trades, or athletic disciplines. (Naturally, this scenario is more likely to develop with high school students.) A business cell or group of cells might be housed in an office/business complex; health professions cells can be housed within a hospital or medical complex; trades cells can be housed in a variety of related safe locations (Home Depot, for example); athletic focused cells can be housed in existing schools or sports facilities. These cells remain a vital part of a greater network of Straight “A” Micro-Schools. Students in these cells may take real time courses taught by Straight “A” Teachers from anywhere in the world. Naturally, there will be time zone issues that can be easily overcome. The cell teachers will be supported by and accountable to an administrative support teacher who might be thousands of miles away. Straight “A” Micro-Schools cells can spring up anywhere, allowing for unlimited creativity, specialization, and unique opportunities!

Testing and Grades

Testing will be done specifically to determine student progress and preparedness. Students CANNOT fail. If students do not demonstrate proficiency of the desired skill or knowledge base, they will have opportunity to improve for a follow-up assessment. Straight “A” Teachers know not to “test” their individual students until the teacher KNOWS the individual student is ready. Straight “A” Micro-Schools will use standardized tests for internal use, but Straight “A” will also make sure that students are well-trained and well-prepared for standardized tests (PSAT, SAT, SAT II Subject Tests, ACT) that will be useful to the students for college applications. Grades will be given (A through C), but students will NOT be penalized for having to take an assessment multiple times. (Consider the model used by certain LMS’s such as Khan Academy.)

The Unit

Eight (8) cells comprise a unit. There is a maximum of sixty-four (64) students in a unit. Each unit has eight (8) lead/cell teachers and one (1) administrative teacher. The administrative teacher is responsible for the efficiency and well-being of the eight lead/cell teachers.



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Methodologies and Daily Process – Every Cell will be UNIQUE, but here is a framework:

Real Education in Real Time. All of the following methodologies will be employed on a daily basis: Socratic Dialogue, Harkness Discussion, tutelage, traditional classroom, autodidactic study. The school day can be adapted per individual micro-school needs, but the standard daily schedule should be 8am to 2pm, Monday through Friday. Students will have no more than 90 minutes of homework per night: 30-45 minutes of reading, 15-30 minutes of active reading log and daily goals preparation, and 30-45 minutes of math and science exercises. Straight "A" Micro-Schools STRONGLY encourages students to pursue athletic endeavors and musical instrument training. Each morning begins with turning in the daily goals to the admin teacher. Each cell will then engage in a Socratic Dialogue regarding the previous night's reading. Afterwards, the lead/cell teacher gives a common reading expected to take from 15 to 30 minutes, followed by a 30+ minute Harkness Discussion. Next, students work at their stations while the lead/cell teachers spend one-on-one time with each student, helping the student achieve high proficiency in the curriculum (math, science, etc.). Meantime, lead/cell teachers and admin teachers will offer various courses to be taught in the physical or cyber classrooms, or students may engage in autodidactic activities such as music practice. Students from throughout the entire network may choose from the classes being taught. These classes will be webcast live to allow students to sit in the classroom (where appropriate) or remain at their stations to join the cyber-classroom. Students from other cells or units within the network may tune in to any of the class offerings. A Straight "A" Micro-Schools Intranet will be created to make available recordings and other recorded audio and video content which can be accessed from the student station or from home. The entire Straight "A" community (according to time zone) will take lunch together. Afternoons will conclude with more course offerings, autodidactic opportunities, and/or special activities. Before the final daily activity, each student must complete the Daily Goals Self-Evaluation and submit it to the lead/cell teacher. The final activity of the day is Tai Chi (or similar self-control physical movement exercise) for the entire Straight "A" Community.

The school-year calendar can be adapted per the micro-school cell as well. A general school calendar is: 1st day of school = The Tuesday after Labor Day; last day of school = the Friday before Memorial Day. Observed Holidays are: Wednesday, Thursday, Friday of American Thanksgiving, Two weeks for Christmas/New Year's Day, and Good Friday. As for minor holidays and school vacations, each cell may make decisions that best suit the 8 students and their families. Summer learning opportunities, international travel/service opportunities, and other special programs will be designed by students with lead and administrative teacher supervision.



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How do Straight “A” Micro Schools compare with Elite Prep Schools (Boarding Schools)?

A Straight “A” Education

- As low as 4:1 student-teacher ratio (8:1 max)
- Top-flight, Straight “A” Teachers
- Customized Curriculum
- Individually Paced
- Unique experiences, sought after by elite universities
- Void of any Political Correctness and Marxist Indoctrination
- Global Service/Education Opportunities
- Tutelage Model
- Real Education in Real Time
- Socratic & Harkness Methods Applied
- Very affordable tuition (with scholarships)
- Tuition Assistance Guaranteed
- PSAT/SAT/ACT Test Prep Included
- College Admissions Coaching/Planning Included
- Summer learning opportunities INCLUDED in standard tuition

Elite Prep Schools

- As low as 5:1 student-teacher ratio (varies)
- Top-Flight Teachers
- Standard Curriculum
- Group Paced
- Unique experiences sought after by elite universities
- Depending on the school, often havens for anti-American, globalist ideologies
- Global Service/Education Opportunities
- Classroom Model
- Real Education in Real Time
- Socratic & Harkness Methods applied to varying degrees in various classrooms at various schools
- Very expensive tuition
- Tuition Assistance Available
- Standardized Test Prep NOT Included
- College Admissions Coaching/Planning only partly Included
- Summer learning opportunities NOT INCLUDED in standard tuition

Straight “A” Micro Schools, bringing back the tutelage model for an affordable education that is in some ways superior even to the elite prep schools.