The School in the Air

How to Provide an Alternative and Relevant Education to the Digital Generation

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The School in the Air: How to Provide an Alternative and Relevant Education to the Digital Generation

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For Nick and Daniel, who inspired me to try a different education.

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A Castle in the Air

Note from the Author

This book was originally written in Spanish with a Latin American audience in mind. I've made the effort in the English translation to use examples relevant to English-speaking readers. Still, you may find that some references to the way students are taught in schools and to some parenting styles, are different from what you may be familiar with in North America or Europe. Nonetheless, the need to transform education is relevant worldwide. I hope this book inspires you to be part of that transformation.

Introduction

"This educational proposal will never be approved," the government official told me. "Your school is a castle in the air."

"Perfect," I replied. "We just need to build a staircase to get there."

It was 2019, and the head of the Guarne educational district in Antioquia, Colombia, was tearing apart the Institutional Educational Project I had worked on for three years. That document revealed my vision and dream of a different education for my son and many other children.

I wanted to transform education and make it relevant for today's world. But the official in front of me did not think the same. He had spent decades in his position, clinging to traditional education and defending the archaic laws of Colombia's Ministry of Education.

If it were up to him, alternative education would not exist.

My battle against the traditional system began when my oldest son, Nicolás, had been a victim of bullying at his school. We tried other schools and I even homeschooled him for a while. By the time he was 15, it was evident that his personality and talents did not fit the educational model he was in, and he got himself expelled from school.

Nicolás was not interested in social sciences or literature. His passion was music. He had been playing the drums since he was eleven, and he composed music, too. He also had a knack for business—especially sales.

From the age of 15, Nicolás never set foot inside a school again. In the following years, he dedicated himself to learning to play guitar and piano. He learned to write songs and

rap, which is currently his primary style. At the same time, he started several businesses and learned about entrepreneurship.

When he was 19, he obtained his high school diploma and graduation certificate by taking the ICFES (the state exams in Colombia). To prepare for that exam, he took a three-month course and took the tests.

Today, at 26, Nicolás works remotely as a salesman for a Canadian company, has his own music band (called 1170. music), and he records videos, and performs at concerts. He also has a tourism business.

Nicolás's gifts and talents were not being seen and developed in school. The traditional system, where everyone learns the same thing regardless of their tastes or abilities, failed him. That's why as parents, we supported him in everything—although it was a shock at first—and gave him the tools we could for him to be successful in the life he wanted to design for himself.

That experience served me, too, when I decided to homeschool Daniel, my younger son. The years of home education with Daniel were about discovering his tastes and what he was good at. That involved exposing him to different disciplines, not just those he would see in a traditional school.

We discovered that Daniel was good at computer programming and liked horses, chess, and table tennis. However, he didn't like soccer or any team sports. Eventually, he found his greatest passion: dance.

It would have been almost impossible for him to discover all this while in a traditional school. Most young people leave school without any idea what they want to do with their lives. The reason is that they have not been exposed to a wide range of possibilities but instead have been limited by a curriculum focused on hard sciences.

I shared the curriculum I created for Daniel with other

homeschooling parents. I then began to study and research different educational methods and advise families about homeschooling.

The results with my children and with the families I helped convinced me that I had to do something so that many more children and young people could develop their gifts and talents and be happy learning. The school stage should be a time when children and young people enjoy themselves, but most are bored in their schools.

The idea of a different type of school emerged in my mind, and I began to write a project on alternative education. I specialized in pedagogy and didactics at the University of Medellin, and there, I developed my educational project even further. This was the project I presented to the head of the Guarne district, which he refused to accept. But I would not give up, so I had to find another way.

For months, I knocked on the doors of the government, from the local and regional levels to the Ministry of Education of Colombia. But fighting against the system appeared to be a losing battle.

So, I decided to create my own school of alternative education, Rhema E-School, even without government approval. Four years later, we are the first E-School serving Latin America with a different style education that focuses on life skills.

Transforming Education

"Education does not need to be reformed, it needs to be transformed." — Sir Ken Robinson

Transforming the education system is not easy. Not only because education (like health) is something that modern citizens consider a fundamental right (so much so that gov-

ernments feel obliged to regulate it), but because that system is itself a cycle that perpetuates from generation to generation.

What do I mean by that? Many parents expect their children to be educated as they were educated, and that is what they demand.

In recent years, I have spoken with hundreds of parents who are curious about alternative education. But when their children begin to receive this new type of education, they get nervous and ask why we don't teach traditional education subjects—or why we teach art, culinary arts, or entrepreneurship.

I remember one case where a mother asked me why we were teaching graphic design, which was never taught at her school. This mom wanted her daughter to memorize the rivers and capitals of the world, just the way she had been made to memorize them. In her way of thinking, European hydrography was more important than graphic design.

Why? Because that's how she was educated, in an educational system that values data memorization over creative disciplines.

Education must be transformed to be an education for life, not for academia.

Memorizing the rivers of Europe has no practical value for 99.99% of students. First, anyone can look up the names on the internet when needed. Second, it is very unlikely that this information is required to get a job or start a business.

In contrast, knowing graphic design opens doors to many jobs, is a useful skill for any entrepreneur, and develops creativity and critical thinking, among other things.

In one of the most viewed TED talks, Sir Ken Robinson rightly states that traditional education is only good for one thing: to create academics or teachers. Traditional education has very few practical elements for life, other than basic arithmetic and the ability to read and write.

Today's society needs more than those basic skills learned in elementary school. Society needs thinking beings, with emotional intelligence and soft skills; creative beings who use their imagination to solve problems using elements of science, technology, and the arts; beings who know what they want because they were given the opportunity to explore their passions and develop their gifts and talents while growing up.

So, how then do we transform education?

Some brave ones try to transform it from within. It is a slow and subtle process of teachers in traditional schools who go beyond the established curriculum and give their students new and different tools. Others are officials who try to implement gradual reforms in their schools or school districts.

Some have achieved great changes, like the educators in Finland, a small country that took on the task of experimenting with new educational models and has achieved great success.

Among the parents dissatisfied with traditional education, we find several efforts:

- Homeschooling, where parents educate their children.
- Unschooling, where children do not go to any school nor follow a program at home (learning is organic, in everyday life).
- Community projects of alternative education, where several families come together to teach their children what they know.

Finally, there are alternative pedagogies, adopted by existing schools or that emerge in new educational institutions based on these new pedagogies. Just like emerging companies, these alternative schools create a new category of

education and enter the market trying to capture the minds and hearts of more people at once.

In other words, education is transformed through education.

In my mission to transform education, I not only educate my students but also their parents and relatives. After developing the TEAM methodology and creating the category of the e-school, we wrote articles, made videos and infographics, and distributed them on social media, by email, on our website, and now in this book.

Educating the world about the e-school has required me to tell my story over and over again, explaining the advantages of alternative education and the disadvantages of traditional education. And above all, showing results. The students and families who have gone through Rhema E-School are a testament to the transformation that is possible when we focus on developing the gifts and talents of children instead of preparing them for 12 years to respond to a state exam and receive a diploma.

This book contains many of those stories, describes the TEAM methodology, and how we are transforming education to be relevant for today's generation, the native digitals.

Where possible, I have cited studies that have been done in different parts of the world, but the truth is that very few researchers have dared to question the traditional methods of education. That's why I include many stories and results from my own research—meaning, the observations of my students and their educational processes.

This is not an academic book meant to impress whoever reads it. It is rather a manifesto, a call to action for parents who want a different—not just better—education for their children.

My wish is that by reading the following pages, you can transform your way of thinking about education—or as the

parents of Rhema E-School often say, "change the chip." That is the first step toward a real transformation of education.

As the government official said a few years ago, this concept of alternative education is so novel and ambitious that it seems like a castle in the air. Well, we have already built a staircase, and I invite you to be part of this vision. Will you join us?

Traditional Education is Failing Students

Do you know what horses have in common with traditional education? To answer that question, we must recall the history of the automobile.

Humans rode horses and used horse-drawn carriages for tens of centuries. Although the first motorized car was created in Germany in 1886, it was not until 1908 that it began to be used massively when Henry Ford popularized the "horseless carriage."

The first cars were rudimentary, noisy, and only reached a speed of 30km per hour. As technology advanced, roads, gas stations, and an entire infrastructure were built to transition society from horses to automobiles as the main means of transportation.

Today, cars are faster, more efficient, and safer than ever. They are an essential part of our daily lives, and no one would argue that horses are better, except as a hobby or sport.

So, what do horses and cars have to do with education?

Traditional Education

Just as the automobile and transportation itself evolved, education is evolving, albeit at a snail's pace. The traditional model of education used in most K-12 schools worldwide was created about 200 years ago.

Like horses in the past, traditional education was sufficient for a society that needed factory workers and manual laborers.

What was the goal of education at that time? That children learned three things:

- Reading
- Writing
- Performing arithmetical operations

For a long time, only white men of high social class had access to tutors to learn. The rest of society had to learn en masse. It was a type of education barely adequate for the industrial era.

All children studied with 40 or more classmates of the same age, taking the same subjects (math, social studies, science, and language) for 12 consecutive years.

In those classrooms with so many students:

- Those who are shy are not able to express themselves or ask questions and end up not understanding what is taught.
- Those who already know the topic must listen to the classes because everyone is taught at the same pace.
- Those who think differently from what the teacher believes are limited by a system where the teacher is the authority, and the curriculum has the final word.

According to Sir Ken Robinson, this type of education was convenient for the 19th-century system because industries needed people who had the same knowledge and skills as everybody else.

It was in universities where different academic material was presented. There, people had the opportunity to learn other subject and topics, more specifically, with the goal of working at a job in some way that would utilize what they learned.

But once we entered the information age, everything changed. Today, new skills and knowledge are needed that respond to technological advances and the times we live in. Traditional schools are no longer shaping the citizens of the 21st century.

"I have taught the same thing for decades."

Orlando is a retired teacher, who taught with the same notes for the 35 years he had been a language arts teacher.

And he told me without reservation that he taught what had been taught to him. And, if it had been important for him, surely it would be for the children now.

He retired during the pandemic because he told me that computers were too complex for him. "I didn't want to deal with online classes or grading with games and that sort of thing," he said. "Let the young people deal with it."

If the trend among teachers is to teach the same way they were taught, what chances of change are there for the generation that is in schools now?

Traditional education is failing students (native digitals) because the analog natives, over 35 years old, are not interested in changing the educational legacy.

As long as the czars of education remain in power, the students—Generation Z, and soon, Generation Alpha—will not want anything to do with education.

Why? Because the type of education that students receive today was for a world that no longer exists, for an analog world, for a world that ceased to exist more than 20 years ago.

We cannot wait another 30 years for the digital educational system to begin. We need new curriculums now, for the world that is developing today, right under our noses.

It makes no sense to spend so much time in a classroom simply memorizing information. Information is just letters.

Or in the case of native digitals, ones and zeros.

We need students capable of taking that information, not memorized, but analyzed, to practice so that it becomes knowledge.

Unfortunately, many traditional teachers, scholars from prestigious universities, many with master's and doctoral degrees, use the same curriculum for decades without making the slightest change.

And it is precisely this traditional education that makes information remain information and not become something more productive (knowledge).

For example, in traditional education, they continue studying the same books that are always assigned: The Great Gatsby, To Kill a Mockingbird, Lord of the Flies, Bridge to Terabithia, and taking an exam about what was learned from them. (I have nothing against these particular books. They are named only to illustrate my point)

In contrast, in an English class, one of the things alternative education does is have the kids read their favorite authors and then, together, draft a document and develop it over several classes to learn from everyone and everything.

Traditional Evaluations

Standardized evaluation is one of the biggest problems of traditional education. The emphasis is on passing exams, regardless of whether students understand or know how to use the material upon which they are being evaluated.

Thus, students are not taught to understand the methods, techniques, and skills to find the answers. They do not learn how to learn, they simply memorize information to answer an exam.

My husband, for example, recalls that in school, the biology teacher made them memorize the answers to a ques-

tionnaire of 100 questions on different topics to then take a multiple-choice exam. The result is that he and many others ended up hating biology, and several of his classmates cheated on the exam because it was easy, since the answers were in the questionnaire.

Standardized evaluations do not evaluate critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, artistic skills, and other types of knowledge and cognition that cannot measured solely with a pencil. And, they also do not show whether the student is will suceed in life. The only thing they measure is how good students are at taking exams.

What About Universities?

Universities were the first to embrace modernity and, later, the digital revolution.

Law and medicine programs were expanded to other more general areas like business administration, social communication, economics, and engineering. However, the teaching method remains the same: face-to-face lectures.

In the early 1990s, the University of Phoenix in the United States was the first to offer completely online university programs. Other universities followed its example in the following years. But the pace of change was not enough for the demand. For example, companies needed thousands of software programmers each year, but the number of computer science graduates from universities was not enough to fill all those jobs.

The solution would come later.

And What About Educators?

In my experience, today, most teachers in Latin America are over 35 years old.

Alternative education is bringing in new blood and even allows students who are specialists in a topic to take the lead in the class to collaborate with the teacher.

When traditional educators retire in 25 years or more, they will not hand the baton to someone 20 or 30 years old. They will pass the baton to another native analog who has the same thoughts, who has paid their dues and understands "how education should be." Some educators in Colombia do not retire at 55 years of age (when they could) because they want to have a salary plus their pension.

Some educators are preparing children for a world that is no longer relevant, but students can do nothing about it because control is in the hands of an older generation.

Alternative education needs to arrive now. We cannot continue in the same path that short changes students.

Native digitals Can Take the Reins of Education

By the time native digitals (those under 35 years old) have to take the reins of education, it is possible they won't be interested in taking them. Because for traditional education to become alternative education, it is not enough to change people but to transform the curriculum, pedagogy, the medium, and the mindset of parents and teachers.

At this moment, native digitals are taking other educational paths. They no longer study for five years at university—which became almost impossible due to the costs—but take courses or diplomas for one year to go to work.

Others specialize in taking photos and creating their own market on Instagram.

Others learn stock trading and earn more than their parents.

Others create NFTs and sell them with cryptocurrencies.

Others become YouTubers and offer streaming videos that gain subscribers and thus develop their talents while earning advertising revenue.

These young people are solving problems that traditional education is not solving for them. Ask a taxi driver how he feels about the birth of Uber or the hotels with Airbnb, or, if you remember, Blockbuster with Netflix. That is the proof.

My interest as a leader in alternative education is to educate parents so that they see that traditional education was good for us but will not do well for our children—and even less for our grandchildren.

Because when they graduate from school they will have memorized information, which is already available for free 24 hours a day 7 days a week on the internet. They will have skills that make no sense today and will be very poorly prepared for life because in traditional school nothing is taught about self-knowledge.

Many would say that the purpose of the educational system is to produce successful, happy, functional citizens who contribute to society. That is what parents and educators try to do. And they are putting all our effort into doing it, yes, and only if, those citizens live happy and successful lives so that the world continues to advance and help the next generation.

The problem is that it is not happening because the current education is failing the students. Today we need native digitals to take the reins of education.

Not to continue with the same, but to provide a quality alternative education, relevant for this time and with the opportunity to learn skills superior to simple memorization of information.

What is Alternative Education?

For several years, I searched for a school that suited the needs of Jero," Marisela says. "We wanted something different. A school that had a schedule where my son wouldn't be exhausted both intellectually and physically, since studying from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., plus travel time, only left him time to eat and sleep.

"We wanted a school where he could learn English every day. Although Jero studies English with software, he had no one to practice with or who could correct him. We didn't want a school that was a mammoth institution, huge, where to speak with the principal you had to go through a bunch of instances and the principal didn't even know who my son was. We also wanted a school where Jero could explore what he likes, with electives like in university, but we knew that was impossible.

"We wanted many things, that he could develop as a leader, that he had peers who accepted him as he is, that he wouldn't face bullying, that his school day was short so he could do other things in the afternoon, that they didn't leave so much homework, which in the end, we parents end up doing.

"We found all this in Rhema E-School, which fortunately, after the pandemic, not only had service in Antioquia but throughout the country."

Alternative education steps outside the parameters or programs of traditional education and its systems. Its purpose is to offer different options to the student and the family in terms of:

- Learning
- Skills development
- Content
- Evaluation
- Methodology

In alternative education, the basic subjects: language, mathematics, social studies, and natural sciences, are taught through different disciplines, projects, themes, and practices to consolidate that learning. Rather than rigid textbooks, learning comes from ideas that arise from daily life or trends we see in the news.

Alternative education invites students to think critically, and to have their own point of view. It also teaches them to share what they think in written, oral, and artistic forms.

In alternative education, students learn to write blogs, research essays, stories, and scripts to create their own screenplay for animation or a short film.

How is Knowledge Obtained in Alternative Education?

Knowledge is not the same as information.

Information is data that multiplies at a great speed and nobody can stop it. Every second, more and more information is uploaded to the internet in different formats of text, video, and audio.

But knowledge is more than data. It is the sum of two things:

The set of all that scattered information + The interpretation and application we give to that information.

Therefore, it is impossible to have all the knowledge in a single head. We need collaboration.

Collaboration allows educators to interact with other students of different ages and even from different countries and ways of thinking. When students collaborate with others in building knowledge, they enrich themselves more than working alone. That's why alternative education promotes collaboration and collective construction of knowledge, with peers and even with generative AI.

This does not happen in traditional education, where the student memorizes information and is then graded on what he or she alone has accumulated.

Alternation of Subjects

In an alternative education school, subjects alternate all the time.

Unlike traditional education where basic subjects (English, natural and social sciences, and mathematics) are seen for more than 10 years, in alternative education, subjects evolve with the times we live in. If there are elections in the country, we learn about democracy and political systems. If there is a war in the world, we learn the history of that country. If the foreign exchange rises, we learn about the monetary system and currencies.

This way, kids won't feel the boredom of seeing the same thing all year long. And parents will feel satisfied with the decision to switch from traditional education.

Kids can learn to program their own website, record a podcast, or trade with cryptocurrencies. They can also learn to draw with an eraser (yes, it's possible), cook healthy food,

learn how the Webb telescope's photovoltaic panels were made, and create their own animation videos.

With so much variety, students stay abreast of what's happening in the world and participate in history along with their parents, not just as recipients and regurgitators of past concepts.

School should not prepare us to take exams but instead prepare us for life.

Talking about alternative education has been easier after the 2020 pandemic. Academically, what we experienced with the closure of schools and the start of virtual education in the world exposed many of the flaws of traditional education.

As parents and educators, we know that education needs a revolution. And more than a revolution, a re-invention or transformation. Governments must modify the Basic Learning Rights and knowledge books for each subject. We need to re-evaluate what is being taught in school and for what purpose. Knowing what we are learning and what that learning is useful for is essential.

Let's examine the most representative subjects of traditional education and how these are taught in alternative education.

Language in Alternative Education

"What use is it to know where to place an accent mark if I don't know where to place my sadness?" a student once asked me. Although it's valid to know when to accentuate Spanish words, it's equally valid—and very important—to define our emotions and understand what happens in the mind when these emotions are experienced.

Thinking and Speaking

In alternative education, language classes are richer and more dynamic. We learn to think with disciplines such as philosophy and critical thinking.

Older students have discussions about Bitcoin, small and medium-sized enterprises, art, or even in Sign Language.

And the younger ones are not left behind. They learn to think about their inner world. What they like and why. When they feel fear and why. Why they do what they do and want what they want. In short, children learn mindfulness.

Socrates said 2,400 years ago, "Know thyself." A suggestion that we still do not take into account in traditional schools, which, compared to the Greek agora, is the place where knowledge is imparted. We must learn to think critically to be able to speak boldly according to our values but including data that support our point of view.

Reading

Older kids learn to be critical readers with current or trendy topics, such as vaccines, LGBT+ rights, euthanasia, commercial space travel, and others.

Similarly, with the younger students, they no longer read the same old books their parents were assigned. The world has changed, and there are hundreds of good current authors we can read in Spanish and English. Although we also see the classics to provide examples.

At Rhema E-School, for those lacking confidence in reading, we have a reading club led by the students themselves who help their peers improve their fluent reading. And what do we read? The stories of our own students, with their illustrations and audio versions. Because alternative education is centered on the student, not the subject, the content, or the teacher.

Writing

How about teaching our students to write their own stories? And after that, teaching them to edit, layout, and publish them.

In the Creative Writing classes at Rhema E-School, we've seen different authors both classic and contemporary. To learn how to make impactful sentences that make you want to read the rest of the book.

An example of this is our student, Isabelita. After writing a book for the Creativity Fair, she decided to learn how to publish and sell books on Amazon. Today she has two books on the market and is teaching others to do the same.

Alternative education should teach how to write blogs, social media posts, short and persuasive essays, concise letters, and even resumes. Learning to have effective oral and written communication is more important than knowing the past perfect tense of "Anna had already dined when suddenly, John arrived."

Natural Sciences in Alternative Education

We no longer know if the planets in the solar system are 9 or 8. Depending on the article you read, that will be the answer. But now, more important than knowing the order of the planets, is knowing what Elon Musk is doing with SpaceX and his initiatives to live on Mars and be self-sustainable on another planet.

We must teach the natural sciences in a constructivist way, with laboratories in physics, chemistry, and biology. Studies have shown that students learn more when they do than when they only receive instruction.

Knowledge

Today, knowledge is a commodity. A commodity is a product or service that is produced en masse and that is raw material for others.

The work and the academic world no longer care that people memorize knowledge, but rather what are they going

to do with the knowledge they know. Because we have an entity that knows everything: Google.

How does your life change if you learn the periodic table? Or if you know what Meiosis and Mitosis are? That will give you points on an exam, but at a job, they won't ask you that. Not even my friend Silvia, who is a nurse, remembers that because she needs to focus on her patients and their immediate daily care.

I'm not saying some of these academic points are not important. Because in college, we will have to see many of these topics to be able to graduate as doctors or in another health degree.

What I'm saying is that in basic education, the concepts we learn should be different. More practical for those who are not going to study anything health-related and more dynamic for those who are.

Health

Now, how does your life change if you know how to eat properly, how to take care of your body, how to prevent diseases, how to exercise, and how to meditate?

What if you learn how to cook and combine foods so that your body receives them in the best way possible? More than knowledge about cells, we must learn how to nourish them so they last us 90 to 100 years.

Similarly, how about conducting research on how COVID has changed the perception of life, how to prevent something similar, what implications it has for science, how to develop a vaccine, among other things?

Diagnoses

With all the "medical conditions" that kids have today, it would be great to know about them in our students and discuss them in class. Hyperactivity, Asperger's, and autism are on the rise, among others.

Students could share how they feel, how they perceive the world, and what difference it makes compared to others.

The Future

We can also see how the world has changed with houses that internally recycle water, that have solar energy. Study what it means to have fewer emissions to reduce environmental impact.

What if we teach students to plant and grow their own food?

Research about sea desalination and its impact on oceans, learn about nanotechnology and biotechnology, in short, a myriad of cutting-edge topics, instead of insisting on learning only how to add moles of potassium.

Mathematics in Alternative Education

False for the example $x = 1$, $y = 2$.

$\sqrt{xy} \leq x + y \leftrightarrow 2\sqrt{xy} \leq x + y \leftrightarrow 4xy \leq x^2 + 2xy + y^2 \leftrightarrow 0 \leq x^2 - 2xy + y^2$ and this is always true because the second member is $(x - y)^2$.

When in our everyday life are we going to have to solve operations by hand like the example above?

Now we have cell phones with financial calculators that solve these problems in seconds! Or we have the program already written that solves these types of equations to do something more complex afterward.

Ideas

In alternative education, mathematics is fun. Students learn about fractions by preparing pizza, cutting it, and then distributing the pieces.

Also with the arts, making their own canvas, taking measurements and gluing, calculating how much paint they need for X or Y painting.

In sewing, they can make approximations and statistics of how much thread a 2-meter-long scarf would take if for each centimeter of the finished product they use 20 centimeters of thread.

In photography, they learn mathematics with the rule of fourths.

Mathematics can be fun, not just exercises *ad nauseam*.

I always say that kids carry knowledge in their buttocks. Yes, literally, because that's where the cell phone goes. Every mobile device today is much more powerful than the computer the United States Department of Defense had in 1980.

Financial Intelligence

In mathematics, students must learn financial intelligence, what to do with the money that comes in, where to invest it, and how to spend it.

We must teach students the difference between good debt and bad debt, how to make and interpret a budget or a financial statement. Similarly, how to create a product, price it, market it, and sell it.

While not all students will become entrepreneurs, an entrepreneurial mindset will help them be resilient, face obstacles, solve problems creatively, create new knowledge, and never give up. The traits of an entrepreneur will help them be better people.

Similarly, in mathematics, we must teach them to analyze information to make it numeric. Today it's not worth doing 50 algebra exercises and applying formulas if you don't know how to fix your financial problems because no one taught you to be smart with your money.

Code

Finally, computer programming is the best way to learn to solve mathematical problems with a practical and useful application for the lives of kids.

Learning to program is no longer a luxury, it has become a necessity.

On the Internet, there are hundreds of places to learn to program. Sites like Code.org, CodeCombat, EdX, Coursera, among many others, teach languages like Python, JavaScript, CSS, C++, among many others, can be accessed for free.

This skill is one of the most important of this century. Those who learn to program will have one more tool in their belt for the future. And this is one of the skills that alternative education focuses on.

Social Sciences in Alternative Education

I FONDLY remember Raulito, my geography and history teacher. With him, I learned all the capitals of the world, their currencies, and forms of government. But the person who really taught me about the world was my dad.

Every weekend we talked about a particular country.

It was often Australia, Canada, the United States, and England. Maybe because of the information available at the time (80s) and because those were the countries in his English book.

Those were very fun late nights. I learned about the culture, the food, the music, the different perceptions of the world, among other things.

Social sciences should be more than memorizing historical event dates and world capitals. It's understanding the reasons for wars and what to do to prevent them, understanding cultural differences and how we can enrich our lives through diversity and accepting others as they are.

Connectivism

TODAY, WITH alternative education, kids need to learn that we are in an interconnected world, that we can know his-

torical, geographical, and demographic data of any country in seconds.

In this interconnection, we need to learn to be better citizens, to be patient with others, to respect differences, to listen to others' opinions and points of view without arguing and contradicting just because.

We need to learn to be collaborative. Innovation is not an individual art but requires everyone's contribution. In this ever-changing society, we must learn to organize ourselves and promote effective and lasting changes.

We need to learn to manage intercultural and interdisciplinary projects. Social relations are part of social sciences.

In the new social sciences, we must learn to make decisions based on information. Now knowledge is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week and grows exponentially every minute. Learn to set goals, pursue dreams, and fulfill desires.

In short, alternative education should help students find their talents, their gifts, and their abilities on an internal journey.

Kids need to know themselves to know others in their environment because today's students are not the students of the 20th century, even though traditional schools still treat them the same.

The problem is that parents are worried that they won't do well in state exams or tests like SABER (In Colombia) or SAT (in the United States), as if that qualified them to be good university students, professionals, or people.

How is Evaluation Done in Alternative Education?

Traditional education rewards high grades, punishes mistakes, and creates competition among students.

Standardized grading creates insecure young people, who compare themselves with others and feel their value is

in a number and not in their multiple gifts and talents. But since information is now public and can be accessed from anywhere, it no longer makes sense to evaluate the accumulation of dates, places, and specific data.

While traditional education strongly punishes errors, alternative education allows learning by making many mistakes. In traditional education, students are graded with zeros and ones when they do not give the correct answers. But life is more than correct answers. Indeed, the answers now have them all Google and ChatGPT explains them to you. Education should not be about giving answers, but thinking, debating, and creating.

Alternative education does the opposite of traditional education. It helps the student make as many mistakes as possible, by meeting objectives within a project. Thus, boys and girls lose their fear of making mistakes and increase their tolerance range for frustration.

Making mistakes in a safe place gives the student confidence. It gives certainty that to err is human and that they will not be punished. Additionally, it helps them form a character of resilience, patience, and perseverance, so lost today.

It is not the mistakes we make that destroy us. It's not knowing what to do when we err. I know quite a few people who always tell me the same thing: I'm afraid of making mistakes. And this is not to encourage you to make rushed decisions, like marrying the first one who proposes.

We are talking about primary and secondary education here.

- In spelling or mathematical outcome
- Errors in programming a system
- In making a video
- In formulating a problem
- In communicating ideas
- In writing a story

When we see errors for what they are, the wrong way of doing something we want to achieve, we will be closer to the results we expect to see.

We must encourage students to make mistakes constantly and return to the creation table. Thus, making small adjustments, catastrophic errors are avoided. Through error, we learn what we did wrong, and at the creation table, we make adjustments to improve, we know that things do not come out excellent the first time, and that is why there is trial and error.

In this way, students begin to learn tolerance for frustration and how to deal with mistakes or even failure. So, when they become adults, they will no longer have a fear of failing.

Alternative education is designed for teamwork and personal development, while traditional schooling is designed for the excellence of academic achievements and the pursuit of perfection (high grades, good ICFES or state tests).

Alternative education is the one that is currently being developed in boutique schools, e-schools, and small face-to-face schools around the world with a new scheme.

This alternative scheme aligns with the requirements of national governments in terms of basic subjects, but they develop it through different knowledge disciplines and pedagogy.

There are parents who want an alternative education for their children, and that is fantastic. There is a real interest in an education that will be relevant for everyone. However, the fear of the unknown still exists. And it's normal because we don't know what will happen.

Don't worry if your children don't know the multiplication tables at age 8. Someday they will learn them. Those are things that sooner or later are learned.

In his book, Hidden Potential, Adam Grant mentions a study about great artists, scientists, and athletes. The major-

ity were not child prodigies, did not stand out as the best students, nor did they learn faster than others. According to Grant, the evidence shows that what makes a difference are the learning conditions and the motivation to learn.

"When we assess potential," Grant writes, "we make the cardinal error of focusing on the starting points—the skills that are immediately visible. In a world obsessed with innate talent, we assume that people with a better future are those who excelled earlier. But the initial skills of successful people vary dramatically. If we judge people by what they can do on the first day, their potential will remain hidden."

The most important thing is that your children learn good study habits, that they love to share and create knowledge with their peers, that they know how to think critically, and that they know how to express their ideas eloquently and creatively.

The decisions you make regarding the education of your children can always be made with appropriate information and not out of fear. Their future and well-being depends on it.

Learning Based on Your Gifts and Talents

Learning traditional subjects just to pass an exam at the end of the year is not preparing students for university or for life. And no matter where we are in the world, we always find the same hierarchy of subjects. First mathematics and language, then the humanities, and finally, the arts. As kids grow up, education becomes exclusively from the waist up, until it is only in the head and primarily the left side of the brain (the logical-mathematical side).

As mentioned previously, the goal of traditional education is to develop academic skills.

Unfortunately, it's not about forming happy citizens. For years, many parents have told their children, "don't become a musician, because you'll starve, or don't be a writer, because you'll be poor."

Intelligence is Interactive

Today, there are thousands of students in the world who believe they are not smart because they lack academic skills like math. However, they are brilliant in art, music, or even technology or culinary arts.

Traditional education has forgotten that we learn visually, auditorily, and kinesthetically. We think logically, but also abstractly and in motion. Intelligence is interactive.

That's why it's necessary for each of us to learn interactively. And hopefully, we each can learn various disciplines to discover where we excel and what we are each passionate

about. The truth is, we all have preferences and for some of them, we are very skilled. These "innate" skills are called talents: things we enjoy and that generate happy hormones when we practice them.

My proposal has always been to learn based on our gifts, talents, and abilities. In my experience, because there are not yet that many studies, this approach has several benefits.

There was a study published in the journal Nature in 2023, about the benefits of skill-based learning during primary education, particularly in the context of project-based learning (PBL). It shows that PBL can improve problem-solving skills, critical thinking, creativity, lifelong learning, communication, teamwork, flexibility, and self-assessment in primary school students.

In PBL, students work in groups to develop and present solutions to real-world problems, which helps them apply knowledge and skills in a practical way. This approach also fosters a change in the role of the teacher, from being a transmitter of knowledge to a facilitator or mentor of the learning process.

Now, let me show you five benefits of learning based on gifts and talents from my experience at Rhema E-School.

1. Students are happier learning.

In the 1930s, Gillian Lynne's mother was told by her teacher that she had a learning disability because she couldn't sit still and wasn't focused.

Today it would be called Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), but at that time the disorder hadn't been invented.

When they took her to the doctor, Gillian sat for 20 minutes on her hands, trying to hide the "nervousness" and moving her feet up and down. After her mother told everything to the doctor, he asked her to accompany him outside

the office while Gillian waited there seated. As they exited the office, the doctor turned on the radio.

From outside, the doctor and the mother watched the girl through a window. Gillian stood up and began to dance. The doctor told the mother: your daughter isn't sick, she's a dancer.

This story is told by Sir Ken Robinson in his book, *The Element*.

Gillian became a choreographer. She created two of the most famous works on Broadway in the world: Cats and the Phantom of the Opera. She worked for years at the Royal Ballet of England. She created programs for thousands of people and became a multimillionaire. She started to dance at 16, an age at which many could say she was already too late.

Today, in a traditional school, Gillian would have been given medicine to calm her down during school classes. The world would have missed out on a great artist.

What if different forms of art are presented at school: drawing, comics, theater, animation, origami, photography, culinary, stop motion, podcasting, videography, blogging, and storytelling?

When students discover their "element" they are happier. They develop as the creative beings they are and generate serotonin, endorphin, dopamine, and oxytocin in their brain, which are the happiness hormones.

Being in one's natural element, there is no hard work. There are no boring subjects and the disposition and attitude toward study changes. Boys and girls become proactive, inquisitive, and curious to learn more.

At Rhema E-School, for example, we teach entrepreneurship. And some of these native digitals tell us they never thought about having a business at 7, 9, or 15 years of age. But today they sell through Instagram, make themselves known through TikTok, and continue with their ventures

after launching their products at the school's Creativity Fair.

We also teach culinary arts, where children from the age of 6 are learning not only about the chemical processes that occur in the transformation of food, but they learn about calories, making balanced meals, combining colors, handling knives and fire, among many other things.

Likewise, they learn how to produce, make, and publish a video game, a podcast, blogs, or posts for social networks. We believe that students from an early age should be producers and not just consumers of the technology around them.

2. They improve and perfect a skill they already have.

There is a climate crisis today. Watch the news.

But, there is another crisis looming and just as Al Gore saw it before it was imminent, many educators are seeing it but are doing nothing about it. It is the human resource crisis.

The human resource, if I may call it that, is like natural resources: they are deep, deep within the earth. And just as we have to dig quite a bit to find them and there must be conditions to do so, the same is with the human resource.

The skills, gifts, and talents are deep inside children, they need to be discovered and require certain conditions. Education should provide those conditions.

"If you're not prepared to be wrong about something new, you're not ready to do anything original," Sir Ken Robinson said in one of his TED talks. However, making a mistake is the worst thing that can happen to a student in traditional school. They get a zero, their answers are crossed out, and it's done in red so they never forget.

Children bring skills to school. But they are suppressed in order to teach traditional subjects.

If we teach according to their gifts and talents, those skills that children bring are enhanced. How? By doing projects, with collaboration, innovation, and research.

After being immersed in a discipline for several months, that skill which was shallow is improved through practice, trial, and error.

I'll give you an example. Alicia is 9 years old and has always liked drawing. Two years ago she entered Rhema and began practicing her drawing skill in our "arts village." In that village, they not only learn drawing, but the teachers also teach them the basics of animation.

Last year, Alicia made an animation short with 127 drawings. She wrote it, recorded the narration, edited it, and published it.

It's not an evolution or change that education needs, it's a revolution or transformation. We need boys and girls to be able to learn what they like and practice it in a safe place, without fear of criticism or being told they are wasting time because their passion is not one of the traditional subjects.

3. They have more original and creative ideas.

Children are creative, but traditional schools kill creativity.

As all school subjects have unique answers, the creativity with which children are born gradually dies. By graduation:

- They no longer know how to think creatively.
- They don't like colors.
- They don't know how to make decisions or solve problems, because they got used to believing that everything has a single answer.

When I was 8 years old, my dad gave me a guitar and enrolled me in a course I attended every Saturday religiously for a month. Every Saturday, my fingers blistered and they took a week to heal. After four times, I quit. My passion was the piano. But, I never knew it as a child, because I never had the opportunity to sit in front of one.

I suppose something different happened when Eric Clapton had his first guitar lesson or Elton John with his first piano class. Or Gabriel García Márquez in his literature classes.

Creativity comes with passion.

When you do something you are passionate about, an hour feels like five minutes. But when you do something that does not feed your spirit, five minutes turn into an eternity. When we work with passion in some subject, ideas come easily.

We must give children the opportunity to try something new. Learning should be varied, organic, relevant, and fun.

Santiago had never made a video. In art and technology class with teacher Vanessa Forero, he learned the basics of making stop motion with clay. His mom tells me he disappears for hours and they don't know about him until he comes out with his video after having created the story, modeled his dolls, taken countless photos, edited, uploaded, and published.

Today Santiago has his own venture. He created his logo, his brand, his Instagram page, and his own products. He makes his own videos, publishes them, and sells the dolls he makes.

Being creative, having new ideas helps us in school, in university, in work, in entrepreneurship, and in everything in life—even in decision-making.

4. Students' personality and character are strengthened. Traditional education was conceived as linear. You enter kindergarten and proceed to first grade and so on. But it shouldn't be that way, there shouldn't be grades, because not everyone learns at the same speed.

At Rhema, we don't handle grades. In English, for example, we have kids of all ages depending on their language

production level. And in the rest of the classes, they are divided into Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric. In Grammar, they learn the basics of everything; in Logic they understand concept use through questions; and in Rhetoric, they learn to communicate their ideas.

Likewise, during the year, we change schedules three times. One trimester we focus on different subjects in the technology village, another in entrepreneurship, and another in arts.

That way, they will demonstrate their skills in one of the multiple subjects we have.

When they discover what they like, what they find easy, and what they are skilled at:

- Their self-esteem grows
- Their communication expands
- Their ability to understand concepts widens, strengthening their unique and irreplaceable personality

As their self-esteem grows, so does their self-motivation. And what we want is for our sons and daughters to be adults who believe in themselves, who are self-taught and responsible for their successes and mistakes.

Samuel was a boy who wanted to be an architect since he was little.

A little over two years ago, in a finance class, he called several universities to make a budget for how much it would cost him to pursue the career and live away from his parents' house. He already knew what he had to work on and how long it would take him to get the money.

But everything changed in a Programming class.

Personality is shaped by experience. Everything that happens around affects for better or worse that person who is developing in the suit called body.

Schooling should be that time when boys and girls discover their passions, strengthen their personality, and grow in character. It should be a safe place to grow and to experiment, but it is not currently being that in the traditional model.

5. Students discover their potential.

Let's go back to the story of Samuel, who wanted to be an architect.

At that time, I was teaching a Coding class. Samuel asked many questions. Whether it was always that easy, whether one could get a good job writing code, whether there were universities that would accept him so young.

One day, his mom called me and asked:

"What's happening with Samuel?"

"I don't know," I replied. "Why?"

"Because he wants to be a programmer and he's driving me crazy calling Salazar and Herrera University to see if they will accept him at 13 years old."

The university has an agreement with SENA (National Learning Service of Colombia) that offers courses for technologists and had never received an application from a minor under 13 years old. But they accepted him.

At 15, Samuel is a technologist in computer science and wants to work as a teacher while he graduates from school.

Being able to have an approach to something unknown like programming made Samuel an innovator. He is the youngest graduate in the history of the university.

Education through gifts and talents prepares students for an unknown and unpredictable future because it allows them to practice their skills. By being knowledgeable about a topic and becoming experts, they can take experiences from other disciplines and create innovation. And I'm not talking about being specialists, because your son or daughter can be a multipotentialite. I'm talking about becoming an expert.

An expert knows about their own and other disciplines, a specialist knows only about their own. In other words, to innovate you need to know about what you like, plus other things you're not so good at. That is the difference between an expert and a specialist.

The most recognized scientists are also musicians, sculptors, painters, draftsmen, work with wood, do mechanics, play with electronic devices, make things in glass, and are poets or writers.

And compared to other scientists, those who have won Nobel Prizes are twenty-two times more likely to be actors, dancers, or magicians.

We must cultivate both sides of the brain and the body that carries it if we want to be innovators.

Traditional education is like fast food: standardized, processed, and not nourishing.

Learning according to gifts and talents:

- Makes your children happier learning.
- Helps them improve and perfect a skill they already have.
- Improves the process of having original ideas of value or creativity.
- Strengthens the personality and character of the student.
- Makes them innovators.

Multipotentialites: Many Passions and Talents

When I was a teenager, I thought there was something wrong with me. If asked what I wanted to be when I grew up, I would answer: "I want to be an ambassador at the United Nations, change education with a super cool school, be a singer and pianist, a high-performance athlete, and an aerospace engineer."

To that answer, my dad would encourage me and tell me that I could do that and much more. My mom would always raise her left eyebrow, my siblings would laugh with those around, and the person who asked would reply, "You can't be everything, you have to choose just one thing."

And truly, I wanted to be everything, except for the aerospace engineer part, I just said that to impress them and to tell them that I was going to leave the country (because that career didn't exist in Colombia in the eighties).

"When I grow up, I want to do everything." Today, that is the most common answer from Generation Z—let's encourage them to achieve it!

At home, everyone was one thing: my dad was an accountant, my mother was a businesswoman, my uncles had a career, my aunts were housewives, my brother was dedicated to the arts, and my little sister liked sales.

I did not understand why, if in family matters my mom was everything: daughter, sister, mother, aunt, and cousin, I could not be everything professionally as well. I'll tell you what happened later.

This is the case for many young people today:

- They want to do everything because they have multiple gifts and talents.
- They want to solve problems from different disciplines, and sometimes parents do not see it as possible.
- They want to try various careers or jobs.
- These kids are called multipotentialites.

What is a Multipotentialite?

A MULTIPOTENTIALITE is someone who cannot choose just one thing and wants to be everything over the course of their life. A multipotentialite is someone with multiple interests, a person who knows a lot about many different and oppos-

ing things. They are like the famous Renaissance thinkers, who knew about art, astronomy, chemistry, philosophy; they were inventors and even politicians.

A multipotentialite is a curious person who is not afraid to explore and study various unrelated disciplines.

The Problem of Specialization

When a child wants to do everything and finds themselves in a specialized world, they get frustrated. They think there is no place for them and that they must conform to the world around them, to what their parents say (surely with all good intentions), to what they hear and learn in school.

But it shouldn't be like this.

I have nothing against specializing. If I am going to have open-heart surgery, I want a doctor who is 100% specialized in hearts and not a general practitioner.

But in broader terms, learning a little about a lot is the natural way children learn.

How to Help a Multipotentialite

Children are geniuses from a young age. They want to know everything, they ask about everything and therefore, they want to be everything. They play at being doctors, firefighters, and police officers. They play with dolls and cars. They enjoy video games with different characters, warriors in a strange world that must defeat aliens. They are architects on Roblox, engineers on Minecraft, and animators with their clay figures.

They record TikTok videos, animation videos, and YouTube videos.

They code in Scratch and CodeCombat.

They grow in different skills, without parents realizing it.

If your child is a multipotentialite, you can help by letting their creativity and imagination soar.

Support them if they want to take classes in X, Y, or Z. Let them explore, let them try many things, so that as they grow, they can find their passions.

Types of Multipotentialites

THERE ARE children who want to do everything at the same time. They start one project, then another, then another. And to parents' eyes, it may seem like they "leave things unfinished." But it's not necessarily like that.

These types of learners are capable of handling various topics and interests at the same time. This is how their critical thinking brain operates. They are simultaneous multipotentialites.

There are others who start a project, complete it, and then move on to another. They devour literature about a topic for weeks, months, or years. Then, one day they know everything they want to know about it and switch interests and focus. They are sequential multipotentialites. That's how I am.

And this type of person is seen not only in Generation Z but also in adults.

They start a career, dedicate a couple of years to it, and then change, sometimes without having finished studying. And in the second career, the same thing happens again.

Challenges of Multipotentialites

I WANT to tell you that if you are one of them, there is nothing wrong with you, your brain is not specialist, it is multipotentialite. You are normal, you just have many tastes.

However, in adults, these types of career changes, tastes, or professions are not usually considered good. For example:

- **Work:** In a resume, it does not look good to have been in five different jobs in the last 5 years, in completely

opposite sectors. Even the idea of being one thing forever, in the specialized world we live in, is something that multipotentialites must know how to structure.

- **Self-Esteem:** Emilie Wapnick, author of How to Be Everything, says that multipotentialites suffer from guilt and shame for not being able to maintain a single interest throughout their lives. In addition to being a beginner every so often and the external criticism from well-meaning friends, self-love is hit because there is something internal about pleasing the people who love them.

Powers of Multipotentialites

Doing many things at once does not mean being mediocre at everything, as I once heard. And I'm not talking about multitasking, but about having several interests, projects, studies, or jobs at once.

According to Wapnik, multipotentialites have several superpowers:

- **Ability to synthesize ideas:** When there is a problem that needs a solution, it is almost always outsiders who come up with an innovative idea. As non-specialists, multipotentialites approach problems with fres perspectives.
- **Fast learning:** As they know what it means to be a beginner, they learn more easily and execute quickly. Since when they start, they really aren't starting from zero because they have a foundation in other disciplines.
- **Adaptability:** As they start various things throughout life, multipotentialites are comfortable with changing tasks and places, new technologies, and economic changes.
- **Holistic thinking:** Given that they have various inter-

ests and knowledge about them, when presented with something, they can see it from afar, instead of feeling bogged down.

- **Good listeners:** Multipotentialites have a superior ability to relate to others compared to a specialist because they can take from different personal viewpoints and apply them creatively.

My Child is a Multipotentialite

If after reading this chapter you realize that you or one of your children is a multipotentialite, do not worry. It is true that we live in a specialized world, but it is also globalized. This gives us the opportunity to discover, learn, and enhance our gifts and talents anywhere in the world and with different communities.

At Rhema E-School, we know this and that is why we start every three months with a new village (Technology, Entrepreneurship, and Arts). We have subjects in each of them that are different but interrelated.

We believe that by developing the being through mindfulness, we will achieve that this little person, before being a box of knowledge, is a human being who knows themselves and knows what they want (one or many things).

Give your children the opportunity to explore it all.

Anyway, this is the age at which they can do it without major consequences. And when someone asks, "What are you going to be when you grow up," help them respond: "my child will be a great man (or woman) who will solve many problems for many people in the area that he (or she) likes."

Or simply respond: "I'm a multipotentialite, that means I have many tastes and passions and I'm going to do whatever I want."

And finally, you can say that you are following in the footsteps of multipotentialites like Leonardo DaVinci,

Benjamin Franklin, Steve Jobs, or Sir Richard Branson.

Today I am "grown up." But looking back, I've had many lives. I was a daughter, I am a wife and mother. I studied two careers in one: Finance and International Relations. I worked at the World Trade Center as an "ambassador" for Colombian merchants in their negotiations with Asia. I was a pastor of a Christian church. I was a stock market game professor at the university. I taught Spanish to bankers. I homeschooled my children. And now, I'm changing education with a super cool e-school. I sing and play the piano and I am a bodybuilder.

And what's left, because I'm only 50 years old! Long live the multipotentialites!

The important thing at the end of this tale called "life" is to be happy. So, specialist or multipotentialite, the goal of e-school is to help students learn to live each day as if it were their last and be happy.

The E-School: The Future of Education

In 2003, I took my first online course

I wanted to pursue a Master's in Biblical Studies but lived in Galveston, Texas, while the university was in Dallas. When I accessed the website, I found out I could take the courses online, which made me jump for joy. And so, I began my degree, which I ultimately didn't finish because my second child was born and my priorities shifted.

But I fell in love with the concept of virtuality and the ability to study something I liked without having to commute or move from my chair.

What Can We Study Online?

In 2008, Khan Academy was launched, a platform where anyone can study the entire school curriculum online for free, in 47 languages. It offers courses in mathematics, science, language, humanities, economics, programming, and life skills.

In 2012, the first MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) were launched, offering free or paid courses on platforms like Coursera or Duolingo, allowing students to take asynchronous classes at their own pace. Today, online education platforms like EDX, Udemy, Domestika, and others offer courses on just about anything. There are even courses on telepathy and talking with animals!

These platforms provide the training and credentials necessary for students to learn all this in a matter of months

without having to spend years at university or a fortune in the process.

The Virtual School

It's as if time had stopped in the classroom. The result is that millions of students feel bored at school.

And to top it off, in 2020 something happened that only public health scholars expected. A pandemic sent the whole world home. Total chaos reigned because nobody knew how to conduct education from home (only homeschoolers did) and few knew how to work remotely.

Work and Study Went Remote

My husband had been working from home since 2009 and we were homeschooling our kids, so we already had had that experience. But the families I worked with had not.

That year we all learned by force. Traditional schools turned to the internet with the same content and methodology they had been using, and virtual schools became famous. Asynchronous schools (with pre-recorded classes) were the only ones prepared. There, teachers are mentors or tutors who assist the student as needed. They connect to resolve questions and clarify doubts.

Schools that had classes every day of the week were forced to become virtual schools during the pandemic. But the teachers were not prepared for the change and began to improvise. These schools resorted to sending workshops to be completed at home, or tried to manage groups on Zoom with 40 or more students, without success.

During classes, most students did not turn on their cameras, did not know how to have a relationship with their teachers, and much less with their peers. These schools made

great efforts to train their staff, students, and families. But they fell short, as two years later we saw a massive dropout of boys and girls who issued an ultimatum to their parents regarding their education.

What is the Primary Role of a Traditional School?

The main role of a traditional in-person school is that of a daycare, where they learn a few things, get homework, and are looked after while parents work, do chores, or live their lives.

I remember Juan Pablo well, who told me that he no longer had a place to "deposit" his daughters, as he was a trader and needed to be focused and connected all the time.

What Should the Role of a School Be?

Neither traditional schools nor virtual schools are responding to the cultural, academic, and technological change of the 21st century.

Students no longer see the relevance of memorizing data that can easily be found on the internet or learning mathematical formulas that a computer or software can perform in less than a second.

They want to give their opinions on current issues. They want to make podcasts sharing their findings. Others want to start businesses or open YouTube channels to teach others what they are learning.

I know because that is precisely what is happening with my students.

Santiago, the 13-year-old boy who started a venture in Rhema called Eco-Bots, was not supported with seed capital by the Chamber of Commerce in his city because he neede to be over 18 years old.

Emily Gabriela, 6 years old, opened a YouTube channel

with her mom's help to teach other kids what she learns in culinary arts, sewing, and English.

Alicia, 9 years old, has already created and sold her NFTs (Non-fungible tokens).

An NFT is a record on a blockchain associated with a particular digital or physical asset. These NFTs are registered on the blockchain, and the owner can transfer and sell them.

Sammy Q presents a video of his movies or his travels for the Creativity Fair. One of his latest projects was an interview with Jorge Alfredo Vargas, a well-known news presenter, journalist, and director of radio and television in Colombia.

The role of a school is to be the space in which students can develop and enhance their gifts, talents, and abilities while being happy learning. That is the mission of Rhema E-School.

What Happened in the Transition?

During the pandemic, unable to send their children to physical schools, many parents decided to cancel enrollments and try virtual schools.

These virtual schools try to mimic the success of MOOCs with asynchronous (pre-recorded) courses so that the student could complete the modules at their own pace. If needed, some schools offer mentorships and teacher hours for an additional fee.

They do the same as traditional schools: teach subjects of mathematics, social studies, science, and language, but through the internet and with an aggravating factor: they are pre-recorded classes (or YouTube videos) where there is no interaction with other students or teachers.

Students continue to see the traditional pedagogical model focused on content and standardized evaluations that punish error.

That is why neither traditional schools nor virtual schools

are responding to the cultural, academic, and technological change of the 21st century.

A New Model of Education: The E-School

We need a new educational model relevant to today's world that prepares children for the world of tomorrow. Therefore, we have created a new category in education.

That model is the E-School: Online education by knowledge villages, focused on developing the students' gifts and talents with an emphasis on technology, entrepreneurship, arts, and mindset, so that students are happy learning.

And our commitment as the first E-School in Latin America is to transform education and positively impact our students and their families.

The E-school takes the good from existing models and develops it according to the changing needs of native digitals. Moreover, it continuously innovates as technology and the needs of the labor and professional markets advance.

The E-school is not a virtual school or a platform. It is a community of families who want their children to develop and enhance their skills according to the needs of the 21st century.

21st Century Skills

To be competitive and relevant in the era of information and digital collaboration, students must possess 21st-century skills:

- Creativity
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Critical thinking

- Digital literacy (information, media, and technology skills)
- Flexibility
- Leadership
- Initiative
- Productivity
- Social skills

The first four skills are known as learning skills and utilize the mental processes that people need to adapt and improve in a modern work environment.

Digital literacy is about how people discern facts, publications, and technology, distinguishing between misinformation and reliable sources on the internet.

And the last five skills are life skills, intangible elements that affect students' daily lives as individuals.

All these skills ensure that a young person has a bright future, whether as an employee or as an entrepreneur.

Notice that none of these skills are related to specific content like algebra, differential calculus, pre-Columbian history, literary figures, or European hydrography. In the 21st century, memorization of data and curricula focused on passing state tests (such as the ICFES in Colombia) are irrelevant.

Content vs. Skills

The content is on the internet, accessible to all with a Google search or an interaction with ChatGPT, so the most important thing is knowing what to do and how to apply that information.

That's why at Rhema E-School, we focus not so much on content but on the skills children need to succeed in the future. We also teach practical things for the modern labor market, such as computer programming, digital market-

ing, 2D and 3D graphic design, and biotechnology, among many others.

Characteristics of the E-School

These are some of the characteristics of an E-School:

- **Flexible pedagogical model**. This means that although we teach the basic subjects as required by education ministries, we do it through cross-disciplinary projects. Students also experience other subjects according to the specialty they are in that trimester (technology, entrepreneurship, or arts, as mindfulness is seen all year).
- **Alternative education.** Dynamic classes where students learn to think critically. Subjects are applied in nature. We learn to know ourselves, and errors are not punished; instead, we encourage students to fail as often as necessary to get things right.
- **Synchronous classes (live) with small groups (maximum 15 students).** We meet every day from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., and in the afternoons, we have clubs led by the students themselves, where they develop other types of activities such as cinema, Rhema-Craft, Roblox, trading, origami, clay, bartering, among others. Everything lives on our own Discord server.
- **Generates micro-credentials and badges for courses like MOOCs.** Every three years, students receive certifications for complete courses in Graphic Design, Entrepreneurship School, Photography, Marketing, Trading, and others.
- **The E-School is international, with a local flavor.** Students come from all over Latin America, promoting collaboration between students and knowledge of other cultures and customs.

- **The student is the center, not the content.** We stimulate the initiative of the kids. We give space for students to unleash their creativity and communicate their thoughts. We help kids learn to learn so that when they grow up, they can study whatever they want.
- **Evaluations that seek continuous improvement, not the memorization of data.** An evaluation that is not a control mechanism with winners and losers. A personalized evaluation, not standardized, agreed from the beginning with a rubric.
- **Teaches and applies 21st-century skills.** To be competitive and relevant in the era of information and digital collaboration, students must have many skills not taught in traditional education.
- **An education that teaches values and principles.** We foster excellence in everything they do, focus on the present, teach respect for themselves and others, model honesty in what students say and do, practice assertive communication, and support intellectual curiosity.

At Rhema E-School, we have been practicing these characteristics since before the pandemic started and we have seen the positive impact it has had on families in Colombia, Venezuela, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Panama.

What is the Philosophy of the E-School?

Our values are: Happiness, Innovation, and Purpose (HIP).

We want our students to be happy learning, and our teachers to be happy teaching, offering competitive prices and salaries. Because teaching is a serious profession not suited to be left to just anyone. Our philosophy is that each child is a world full of creativity and imagination, and the school should be a safe place where they can develop their gifts, talents, and abilities.

It is the place where mistakes are made and from which are learned. It is the place where they experience new disciplines to discover what they like and what is available.

Our methodology is online because we believe that's where the world is heading. We are interconnected. More and more families are becoming itinerant with the ability to live anywhere. Rhema E-School wants to give these families the ease of having relevant education for their native digitals.

We view the school subjects of the year in three terms: one in the technology village, another in entrepreneurship, and another in the arts. Thus, students live, try, and study everything during the year, without leaving behind traditional subjects.

Traditional education and E-School are as different as a horse-drawn carriage is to the 2024 motor vehicle.

While a traditional high school graduate completes their education with basic knowledge of mathematics, social sciences, natural sciences, and language, a graduate from Rhema learns that and much more. A graduate from an E-school:

Has an **entrepreneurial mindset** and can start a business if desired, as they have created business ideas, developed, and applied them from school. Moreover, they have learned about finance, digital marketing, advertising, and sales.

Is **prepared for the job market** because they know computer programming, speak and understand English, know graphic design, photography, and use the latest technological tools skillfully.

Is a **creative person**, as they have explored the world of arts, painting, drawing, theater, and caricature, animation, writing stories and novels, scripts for videos and podcasts, and much more.

Is **prepared for life**, as they have practiced mindfulness and emotional intelligence for years. They know how to think critically and make decisions wisely. They know how to cook, knit, and use sign language.

The E-School is the School of the Future

We can continue letting our children spend 12 years in traditional education only to take state exams at the end that tell them how good they are (when really, those exams say nothing about the person, only if they know how to answer exams or not). Or we can give children the opportunity to learn to sell themselves, to make cold calls, to make business proposals, to start a company, or create content.

I have not yet seen on LinkedIn or Indeed, a job posting that says I must know the perfect square binomial of something, but almost all job applications ask me to have marketing, sales, or business development skills.

But I must give you a warning: The E-school is not for everyone. Just as traditional education is not either.

E-School is not for students who like to memorize data and formulas, who prefer theory over practice, who want to take exams instead of creative projects. It is not for parents who want their children to have an education like they had.

E-school is for students who want to develop their gifts, talents, and abilities through the study and knowledge of different disciplines in technology, entrepreneurship, arts, and mindfulness.

E-School is for those who are dissatisfied with the present and want to build a better future.

Who are the native digitals?

Currently on the planet, two types of people are coexisting:

The native analogs. These are the Silent Generation (1925-1945), the Baby Boomers (1945-1965), and Generation X (1965-1980). In short, everyone over 40 years old.

The native digitals. native digitals are all those born after 1980 and include Millennials (1980-1995), Generation Z

(1995-2015), and Generation Alpha who were born after 2015.

And the difference is not only in age but in the perception of reality.

Native analogs grew up at a time when there were no screens or the Internet. It was a time when we went out to play with a ball, a bicycle, or a couple of soda caps. native analogs took pictures of us on special occasions, and we saw those pictures a week later when they were developed in a photographic darkroom.

Native digitals were born with the Internet, digital screens, and being photographed every day, at all times, and everywhere. They don't go out to play because it's too dangerous, but they watch YouTube programs on their cell phones, play video games, and talk through Snapchat or IG messages.

The reality of native digitals is online. Consoles and computers brought video games and social media like TikTok, Discord, Zoom, and Instagram, to name a few. They don't use Facebook anymore, because "that's for old people."

And this perception of reality makes them a different type of human. native digitals relate, learn, have fun, buy, sell, fall in love, and get employed differently.

Screens Are My Real Life

"How can you expect to see us someday in real life? This is real life," Isabella told me one day in a zoom class.

Those of us who are parents have surely once told our children: "no cell phones at the table" or "disconnect from that device or your eyes will become square." Right?

The computer, tablet, and cellphone are the life of native digitals. By telling them to disconnect from their devices, we are separating them from their reality.

But all the studies out there are about how bad digital devices are, the pathology, the addiction, the adverse effects,

etc. However, if we go to the source, we will find that these negative studies are written by us, the native analogs. And it's true that it's not so good to spend a long time in front of a screen—but not only for them, for us, too. We need to rest our eyes and take active breaks.

What I want us to understand is that taking away the cellphone from native digitals, is like when our freedom was cut off during the pandemic.

The digital world is the reality of native digitals; it's their way of studying and learning, their way of communicating with others, their way of having fun. In short, it's their life.

That is the first thing we must learn from native digitals. Virtuality is real life. Their reality is digital. Although for us, it may be a distraction.

To better understand this point, I recommend you read *Ready Player One* by Ernest Cline.

The internet changed everything—except education.

Before the Internet, the fundamental purpose of education was to memorize data. And it was expected that at the end of the school year, everyone knew the same information.

This was verified with exams where the best grade showed who knew the most, and at the end of high school, the national standardized exams revealed the "best graduate": the one who memorized and remembered more than everyone.

Students learned the presidents of your country and the capitals of the world. They learned to multiply fractions and reduce them to their simplest form. Let's not forget mitosis and meiosis and the chemical symbols and the sums of moles of potassium.

And it was done this way because we lived in an analog world, where it was a priority to know these things. Before, you didn't have access to all the information in the world 24 hours a day 7 days a week from anywhere. So, it was

important to memorize because that way you could access that information in your own head.

But then the Internet came along and everything changed.

Today, we have access to every data, date, city, person, animal, or thing we can think of in our pockets. We don't even have to know how to write because Siri or Alexa can help with that, too.

However, schools are still teaching the same content from the era before the Internet. And that needs to change. More than learning topics, because every day many more are being created, the kids of Generation Z need to learn skills.

The education of native analogs is failing native digitals. And for obvious reasons.

Most of the people creating curricula and textbooks (which in my opinion should not exist because when they are printed there is already new information) are native analogs. And it wouldn't be so bad if they did it thinking about the new generations. But they are not doing it. They continue writing and publishing content from the past. The same content that is on the Internet.

The school must teach them to create their own content in a fun and audiovisual way. That they are the ones who write their own curriculum.

Traditional schools continue to insist that data be memorized and exams be taken to verify that students do know this antiquated information. They continue to offer courses (and here we are only talking about schools, but universities are not far behind) for nnative analogs.

We need more alternative schools that teach reading, writing, adding, and multiplying in a fun way, with various disciplines and taking practices from the real world, not just from theory.

Information vs. Knowledge

Do native digitals need to know by memory what the last president of their country did or what is the capital of Mongolia?

Not really.

With a swipe of their smartphone, they have that information in less than it takes to write it. And not only that. The information arrives in text, images, audio, video, reels, and more.

On the other hand, what do you think is more important, theory or practice? That they read all the information there is about volcanoes or that they do an experiment on how they work, document it in a video, and post it on networks for others to also make their contributions.

Both things are important because to do the experiment you need some prior knowledge.

However, expecting native digitals to know all the theory (read everything there is about volcanoes) is like expecting my grandmother to start her Instagram account with selfies.

The school must be relevant for this new generation. It must use their language to reach them more easily. Education must show them pieces of what real life is, because they know more than us about many things.

We need schools and alternative educational programs that teach fractions with culinary arts, geometry with graphic design, Spanish with creative writing, and social studies with entrepreneurship.

The Future of native digitals

We are already seeing the future of native digitals.

These kids are entering a job market totally different from the one we native analogs entered. Now they must know

about data analysis, the metaverse, artificial intelligence, building programs in A+, Argus, BCPL, RPL, Python, Q, Java, C++ 14, 17, 20!

Not even higher education institutions can keep up with the pace of technology because even Google and Apple already have their own universities to create the professionals they need.

The world (read the job market) values progressive thinking, valuable knowledge, tools with which you can identify trends towards the future, not memorized information. It doesn't matter how much you know (unless you are doing a crossword puzzle without the internet), what matters is that you can extrapolate that information, collaborate with others, communicate, be creative when solving problems, take initiative, and have self-directed leadership.

We can no longer give so much value to exams that focus on the memorization of information. Education should be a mix of everything. Information, skills, knowledge, and practice. The education of native digitals should reward not only successes but also mistakes.

We need a new type of education for the digital age.

Alternative Pedagogies: Advantages and Disadvantages

In recent years, there has been much discussion about alternative pedagogies (or alternative education) as a response to the limitations of traditional education provided in most schools around the world.

Pedagogy is the science that studies the methodology and techniques applied to teaching. Simply put, pedagogy is a teaching method.

Obviously, depending on the teaching method used, certain outcomes will be achieved: if submissive and obedient children are desired, an authoritarian, knowledge-centered pedagogy is used; if creative and free children are desired, a flexible, student-centered pedagogy is used.

Although we must acknowledge the wonderful work that many teachers do in traditional schools to inspire their students and make them fall in love with knowledge, the system as such is not relevant to today's society and continues to serve the interests of the governments in power, especially in Latin America.

Some popular alternative pedagogies are:

- Montessori Method
- Waldorf Pedagogy
- Reggio Emilia Approach
- Homeschooling
- TEAM Pedagogy

Montessori Method

The Italian Maria Montessori developed this method more than 100 years ago, based on the premise that children should have the freedom to learn spontaneously, and the teacher is only present to remove any obstacles and facilitate a learning environment.

In this alternative pedagogy, teachers do not teach but instead prepare a proposal with materials on a tray or basket for children to choose one and play with the materials (whether tokens, toys, figures, etc.).

Classrooms are divided by three-year stages: ages 3-6, 6-9, 9-12. There are no grades.

Advantages of the Montessori Method

- The student is the center of the educational experience and each one progresses at their own pace.
- Children have autonomy to choose their activities based on their tastes and abilities.
- Without following rules or standards, students must use their imagination and be creative.

Disadvantages of the Montessori Method

- The freedom to choose can lead to children never being exposed to certain types of knowledge and learning.
- By emphasizing each child's own pace, there may not be challenges to overcome and reach other levels, which can lead to a lag in their development.
- The autonomy children get used to at Montessori school can create conflicts at home or in other societal environments where children have to follow rules and instructions.

Waldorf Pedagogy

The Waldorf pedagogy is based on the educational philosophy of the esoteric Swiss Rudolf Steiner, founder of anthroposophy. Although Steiner's spiritual and religious teachings were very prominent in his philosophy, it can be said that not all Waldorf schools emphasize these beliefs.

Waldorf divides students by septennials (seven-year periods) and each septennial has a focus.

Waldorf heavily uses free and symbolic play until the age of 7—in fact, they do not learn to read, write, or add until that age. There are no exams or textbooks.

Steiner was opposed to technology, which is why in this pedagogy computers, televisions, and tablets are not used, and it is recommended that they are not used at home either.

Advantages of Waldorf Pedagogy

- Emphasis on play, arts, and music develops creativity.
- Working on projects in teams aids collaboration.
- Respects each stage of children's development.

Disadvantages of Waldorf Pedagogy

- Limited access to technology puts children at a disadvantage compared to others in terms of professional skills and relevant abilities for the 21st century.
- Waldorf children always have to stay busy, which causes stress for some.
- Some parents have expressed that their children are indoctrinated into esotericism in Waldorf schools.

Many schools claim to be Montessori or Waldorf or another alternative pedagogy but do not fully apply the

methodology. For example, some schools use the Waldorf pedagogy in preschool and the first two years of primary school, but then switch to traditional education for the following grades.

This is because many teachers are not trained to teach with these methodologies or because it is easier to meet the requirements of the Ministry of National Education through traditional pedagogy.

Reggio Emilia Approach

Created by the pedagogue Loris Malaguzzi and some parents after World War II in a town called Reggio Emilia in Italy, it is an educational philosophy focused on preschool and primary school.

It focuses on learning through experiences and projects, and classes are on topics that interest and motivate the students.

Teachers are equals to the students and learn from them. The space is very important and is considered an educational element, so the classrooms are well decorated and organized in a way that promotes collaboration and communication.

Advantages of the Reggio Emilia Approach

- Emphasis on the importance of community for the education of children, uniting teachers and parents in the learning journey.
- Develops investigative spirit and curiosity in children.
- The collaborative environment allows children to learn from others.

Disadvantages of the Reggio Emilia Approach

- The main criticism of the approach is that it is not a formal model with a defined methodology, making it

difficult for teachers to know how to implement it and sometimes resulting in chaotic classrooms.
- The approach is for preschool and young children, not for older ones.

Homeschooling

Homeschooling or home education is the oldest model of education, before any school. It is not a pedagogy per se, but it is a good alternative to traditional education.

Advantages of Homeschooling

- Children spend more time with their parents and siblings, creating stronger family bonds.
- Learning is flexible and there are no costs for tuition, transportation, food, uniforms, and other expenses associated with going to a school.
- Knowledge is everywhere, not just in textbooks. There are opportunities for meaningful learning by going to the market, attending parents' friends' meetings, visiting museums, parks, and places of interest.
- Learning is continuous. It is not limited to class hours.
- There is academic flexibility, children learn at their own pace and schedule.
- Learning is more efficient because there are not 30 or 40 students at once.
- You teach fun and current things, not what a government says children should learn.

Disadvantages of Homeschooling

- Some families find it difficult to create spaces for socialization when children are not in school.

- Some parents are not prepared to homeschool, and children are left adrift when adults run out of ideas on what to do or teach.
- In some countries, there are challenges to certifying children in front of the State or it is prohibited.

3 Myths About Socialization in Schools

A VERY common concern among parents considering a virtual school or homeschooling is socialization.

There is a widespread belief that students in a face-to-face school develop their social skills better because they are surrounded by other children in their classroom, face-to-face, and participate in physical activities together.

At first glance, this seems a reasonable and commonsense argument, but a more critical analysis and a look at the numerous studies on the subject show that this is not the case.

Let's look at the three most common myths about socialization in schools and why you should not worry about socialization if your children study from home.

Myth 1: Children need to be surrounded by other children to be able to socialize.

DR. DAVID Elkind, says in his book, *The Hurried Child*: "The idea that children need to be around many other children to socialize is perhaps the most extravagant and dangerous myth in education and parenting we have today."

Many children do not fare well in large groups. They get nervous and overexcited by the noise and the number of people, which leads to behavioral problems. After analyzing more than 8,000 studies on early childhood, Dr. Elkind concluded that children socialize much better with their parents than with other children.

Both in homeschool and in a virtual school, children who learn from home have the opportunity to receive the care, support, and instruction from their parents.

As they are not only with children of their same age (their peers) most of the day, they can socialize with adults and children of other ages, which is the reality of life. In the workplace or office, you do not interact only with people of your age.

A child who interacts with their parents and siblings more than with their peers shows more self-confidence, self-respect, and values themselves more as a person. They know they are part of a family unit in which they have rights and responsibilities. The result is children with critical thinking who are not easily influenced by their peers in their thoughts and actions.

That is why at Rhema E-School we have groups of diverse ages, so that young and older children know how to relate to each other, while we unite them in clubs of interest so they can discover their passions together, because a 7-year-old girl and a 13-year-old boy can share their passion for cooking or video editing without any problem.

We believe that parents are the best suited to educate their children and we are supporting them 100%.

Myth 2: Interpersonal relationships in face-to-face schools are always positive.

THINK ABOUT the type of socialization that occurs in a classroom of 30 or 40 children of the same age locked in a classroom all day. Although there may be positive aspects, studies show that what happens most often is the following:

- **Social pressure:** Children feel they must look and talk like others to fit in. They lose their individuality and do not discover what they really like.

- **Bullying:** There is rivalry, competition, and bullying from one to another.
- **Little freedom:** Students are punished for "socializing" during class and in the few 20 or 30-minute breaks they have, they must eat, go to the bathroom, move around, and socialize at the same time.
- **Segregation:** Not all children manage to socialize in a school environment.

Introverted children or those with a particular diagnosis have difficulties fitting in with others and are rejected. This results in a segregation between the popular children and the rest.

Children and young people also need quiet times alone. Time to dream and grow, to think about what they like. Few children have this opportunity because they are always surrounded by noise and large groups of people.

In addition to the above, many parents have noticed that in face-to-face schools, the influence of peers has led their children to learn foul language, be exposed to drugs, pornography, and unhelpful conversations.

Although not everything is negative and real friendships can be formed in school. The myth that all interpersonal relationships in schools are positive is not true. That is why you should consider the pros and cons very carefully.

Myth 3: Traditional school is the best standard for forming citizens.

Since that is how we were educated for generations, the belief of parents is that it is "normal" for children to be grouped by ages, specific grades, and level of intelligence in a government-created educational system where the same content is taught to all students and they are prepared for 12 years to take a standardized test.

Therefore, it is normal for children to socialize in the context of traditional school, chatting in the school corridors, playing during recesses, with their close group at lunches, playing sports in the afternoons, and attending birthday parties.

Millions of children do this currently.

But it has not always been this way. Traditional school has been around for 200 years in the Western world, but for most of history, it was different. Children learned from their parents, their neighbors, adult mentors, and living life at home, the market, the street, and the city or the countryside.

Today, homeschoolers participate in clubs, in groups with other homeschoolers, do volunteer work, sports, and activities with their parents where they interact with adults and children of different ages.

So, a face-to-face school is not the only model for the socialization of children. There are many ways to interact with other people and learn to be a social being.

The advantage of an online school like Rhema E-School is the freedom that families have to travel at any time of the year, to move freely, and even to give their children the opportunity to interact with small groups (our groups are no more than 15) and children from other countries.

Our model is inspired by homeschooling, since before founding Rhema E-School, we educated our children at home. And our experience is that both are very good at socializing and relating to people of all ages, without shame.

Our experience is backed by studies. For example, in July 2000, the Discovery Institute in the United States published a report describing several studies comparing the social skills of homeschoolers with the skills of students from traditional schools.

Homeschoolers had very good social skills, according to the studies, and in fact showed fewer behavioral problems than school students.

What is the best alternative pedagogy for my children?

There are many other alternative pedagogies in Latin America, such as Free School, New School, and Democratic Schools, among others. There are also many others in North America and Europe.

Before choosing, you should consider the personality and interests of your little ones, as well as the long-term goals you have for them. All the alternative pedagogies described above have advantages and disadvantages that you should consider.

At Rhema E-School, we have taken the best elements of some of these pedagogies and, along with other new elements, we have created the TEAM Pedagogy, which is detailed in the next chapter.

TEAM Pedagogy

TEAM pedagogy incorporates elements from classical education.

Classical education is not the same as the traditional education found in today's schools. While today's traditional education is based on a model developed in Europe during the industrial revolution to meet the need for factory workers and government bureaucrats, classical education originates from ancient Greece and focuses on teaching how to think and how to learn.

Classical education involves a three-stage process for training the mind. The early years are for absorbing facts and systematically laying the foundations for more advanced studies. The middle years are for students to learn to think through arguments. In the advanced years, they learn to express themselves. This pattern is known as the trivium.

Let's look in more detail at each of these stages of the trivium.

1. Grammar (ages 6 to 9)

The early years of learning are called the grammar stage, not because students spend years studying Spanish but because these are the years when the foundations are laid for everything they will learn in life (just as grammar is the foundation of language).

These are the years commonly known as elementary school (first to fourth grade), where children's minds are very open to receiving information. In fact, at this age, they enjoy memorizing. Therefore, at this age, we focus on learning many new things.

They learn how to read and write well, vocabulary in other languages, anecdotes from history, and stories from literature. They discover the world of plants and animals, the human body, and the basic concepts of mathematics and science.

2. Logic (ages 10 to 13)

By the age of 10 (usually fifth grade), a child's mind begins to think analytically. It's no longer about gathering facts but about asking "Why?"

The Logic stage is when students start to pay attention to causes and effects, the relationships between different branches of knowledge, and how facts logically fit together.

A student is ready for the Logic stage when their capacity for abstract thinking begins to mature.

Logic in writing, for example, includes constructing paragraphs and how to argue.

Logic in reading involves criticizing and analyzing texts, not just absorbing the information.

Logic in history means that the student researches why nuclear bombs were dropped on Japan in 1945, not just reading about it.

Logic in science means learning the scientific method and the theory of knowledge.

3. Rhetoric (ages 14 to 18)

The Rhetoric stage builds on the previous ones. Here, students learn to write and speak with force and originality. The rhetoric student applies the rules of logic to knowledge and expresses their conclusions in clear, forceful, and elegant language.

They learn to speak in public and communicate effectively and specialize in what they are most passionate about and good at.

Classical education has many other elements and emphases during these school stages that we do not use at Rhema E-School, as we take the best of the classics and combine it with new technologies and the social and cultural context of the 21st century.

Knowledge Villages

Rhema E-School works on mandatory subjects through different disciplines within groups that we have called knowledge villages. These make up the TEAM pedagogy, which stands for Technology, Entrepreneurship, Arts, and Mindset.

Knowledge villages are practical divisions so that students can receive their education in a language different from the traditional one. Additionally, it allows them to strengthen their gifts, talents, and skills, or to try something totally new.

We don't work by isolated subjects but by deliverables and projects according to their capabilities. For example, the bee project is seen through various disciplines. In English, we learn the vocabulary about bees in that language. In arts, we paint or sculpt bees. In social sciences, we learn the importance of bees to society.

In entrepreneurship, we invite a beekeeping business to show us how honey is collected and marketed. In technology, we look at technological solutions applied to honey production, and in natural sciences, we study the biology and chemistry of the beehive and the venom of its stings.

In these villages, students group by interests, not by ages. We want to teach them that in real life we relate and work with our peers and others. We want to give them the opportunity to learn to listen, be patient, and respect others' words and turns. With these villages, we want to give them a meaningful education.

Technology Village

In the Technology Village, we teach students the importance of wisely handling tools. Here they explore advancements in science and how these have transformed society. In the various classes of this village, they learn skills relevant to the 21st century that prepare them for the job market and to think like innovators.

Through games like Minecraft, virtual reality tools, among others, young people learn to solve problems, to have resilience by trying the same thing over and over until they succeed, and it develops creativity by taking a vague idea and turning it into something effective and real.

Entrepreneurship Village

In the Entrepreneurship Village, we teach students to form their own company. From making a budget, designing packaging, creating the product or service, the logo, advertising material, digital marketing to sales and tax payments. Everything that has to do with financial intelligence.

In this village, we see subjects for today's child, without filler. Practical subjects that lead them to discover the wonderful world of entrepreneurship. Not all students at Rhema will be entrepreneurs, but this mindset will help them solve problems creatively and find solutions when obstacles or conflicts arise.

In the entrepreneurship village, we also teach them to create their personal brand.

Arts Village

In the Arts Village, we see all representations: drawing, sculpture, literature, architecture, music, and cinema. We see reading, social and natural sciences; and writing based on the arts. Likewise, we see graphic design to learn how to make logos and presentations. Sewing to strengthen movement and fine motor skills.

We learn to communicate orally with rhetoric and in writing with lettering, cursive, blogs, and scripts for videos and podcasts. We see photography and its history and have natural science practices in the Rhema Lab. Teaching arts in school is fundamental to encouraging children and youth to be creative and to unleash their imagination. And languages that cannot be missed that help us see the world from different perspectives.

Mindfulness Village

In this village, we go toward the inner being, getting to know ourselves and understanding the world around us. From emotional intelligence to respect for others, this is a village that is seen all year round for all students and prepares them for life.

In the following chapters, we will delve deeper into these four areas of alternative education and how we achieve building the ladder to reach the school in the air.

Do you want to try our TEAM pedagogy? Take a free trial day. Request it at rhemaschool.com/rhema-day

PART II:

Building the Staircase

Technology

Technology is the application of science to solve concrete problems.

In this village, we take basic sciences such as Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Geology, and Astronomy and, instead of just teaching theory and memorizing data, we experiment with them to apply the concepts to daily life and real-world problem-solving. Similarly, we cover subjects as fascinating as Biotechnology, Nanotechnology, and even Quantum Physics.

Additionally, we focus on the proper use of technologies so that students learn to use the internet and electronic devices to learn and create, not just to consume content.

In this way, we immerse them in the world of computer programming, so they learn the language of computers—Code—and create software and apps, learn about robotics, and Artificial Intelligence.

Programming is One of the Most Important Skills to Learn in School

When I attended computer classes in school, on those 286 computers (super Generation X), the teachers taught us how to use programs like Word, Excel, and, if it was Friday, maybe PowerPoint.

For me, it was fascinating.

There was no internet, no collaboration with others; it was just a fat gray screen, plus the keyboard on which we practiced the typing lessons from the previous year.

And that's how we learned computing more than three decades ago.

The sad thing is that today, in the 21st century, many schools are still doing the same thing. There needs to be a change so that our children, Generation Z, learn to program in school and gain a competitive edge over others.

What is programming?

Programming is speaking the language of machines.

"It is a series of algorithms and patterns that tell a program what tasks to perform and how it should behave. It is a logical sequence of mathematical commands," says Michael Aguas, a programming teacher at Rhema E-School.

In daily life, we encounter sequences that could become programs. For example, if we want to write a sequence on how to eat soup, it would be something like this:

First, we perform Decomposition and Abstraction, which are the steps that the application must follow to eat soup. You need to have a spoon, dip it into the soup, bring it to your mouth, swallow, take the spoon out of your mouth, bring it to the soup, and repeat, as long as there is soup left.

Second, we create the Algorithm, what comes first and what would be the order of that sequence.

Finally, we join the patterns, which would be, how many times does the cycle repeat? Until the soup is finished.

This is the example with which Michael begins his classes to explain to the kids the wonderful world of programming.

However, programming is more complex than eating soup.

There are a variety of languages and now, we are talking about Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, and Machine Learning. But there is always a first step.

Programming from School

With all the computers and tools left by the pandemic, education should have moved out of the old age where they only taught Word and Excel.

But, traditional school still teaches the same thing. Perhaps because it is simpler, since the teachers know it by heart, and it is easier to teach from the comfort zone.

It's also retained because it is more economical. Having teachers who teach math, social studies, language, and computing is better for school budgets than bringing in someone expert in programming or data science.

But today's boys and girls must learn to program from school. These approaches cannot start in university.

In 2013, then President of the United States, Barack Obama, endorsed Code.org's Hour of Code during Computer Science Education Week. Obama implored young people:

"If we want America to stay on the cutting edge, we need young Americans like you to master the tools and technology that will change the way we do just about everything."

And so it has been. We all know that Silicon Valley in the state of California is synonymous with technology and innovation. And many of the tools and applications we use today were born there.

The United Kingdom also realized the importance of teaching programming, and in 2014 included a coding curriculum for all schools in the country, starting from kindergarten.

"Mark Zuckerberg began in his dorm at Harvard to develop Facebook," says Michael Aguas. "Zuckerberg from an early age was curious about computers and their function. Something we must do as teachers is create that attraction and interest in what machines can do to improve our lives."

If from a young age we familiarize students with the development of applications, the creation of websites, and 3D developments among others, we will teach them computational thinking, so that by the time they are adults, they have the perspective to give companies a vision of trends, patterns, operations, and the development of new products.

Why is it Important to Program?

Today, much of our world is automated.

Google, Instagram, Tesla, AirBnB, and Rappi, operate thanks to software programs that someone programmed (in those cases, teams of engineers).

Computer programming helps us control the interaction between people and machines to make daily tasks super precise and efficient.

Let's look at five of the many reasons why it is important to learn to program.

1. Programming teaches problem-solving.

The problems of 30 years ago are not the same problems of native digitals.

In my youth, we made decisions because one thing was more "cool" than the other.

Today, Generation Z must learn to think logically to solve the same problems, as they are being bombarded by advertising, influencers, and social media.

If today's boys and girls do not know how to think logically, they will not even be able to decide what clothes to wear. We need to give them the tools to solve their relationship with the environment.

One way is to take a big problem and break it down into smaller components to be able to solve it effectively. This is known as decomposition and is a key concept in computer science.

If they learn to code from a young age, this development of their computational thinking will turn into a skill that will serve them all their life to solve any type of problem logically and creatively.

In a clinical neuroscience study titlled, Brain health consequences of digital technology use, researchers found evidence that understanding how technology works expands brain capacity and can improve memory, fluid intelligence, and other cognitive skills.

They also found that some digital tools and applications offer mental health interventions that provide self-management, monitoring, and other interventions that can improve mood and behavior.

That study shows that the proper use of technology is of great benefit. However, many parents fear that their children will be exposed to technology from a young age because they only see the dangers of social media or addiction to video games.

2. Programming develops resilience.

Learning to program requires developing soft skills such as critical thinking, creativity, persistence, and resilience, as students must apply much more than algorithms and computational thinking.

Resilience is the process of adapting well to change, adversity, trauma, tragedy, threat, or significant sources of stress. When children learn to program, they develop the ability to bounce back after a "failure."

The problem lies in traditional education that punishes error and demerits failure. While alternative education promotes error and encourages failing fast and often. This so that students know that success requires trying multiple times to achieve what we are looking for.

Learning to program not only develops resilience but also helps deal with stress by solving problems. It also teaches effective communication and logical thinking, apart from computational thinking, as they try to correct errors over and over again.

Michael says that when he taught the second and third graders, he presented an activity where they had to design a table using only code.

During the classes they talked about:

- Mathematical concepts
- Geometry and geometric properties of basic solids: edges, vertices, faces, radii, and diameters
- Symmetries
- Handling distances in a 3D coordinate system.

This activity showed the students how to devise an algorithm that derives the construction of a table using TinkerCad (a free online 3D modeling program that runs in a web browser).

They tried hundreds of times. And the students said: "Prof, it's just a table and I can't do it."

Michael encouraged them throughout the process until they succeeded. Stress management was crucial while they found the answer.

3. Programming develops creativity, creates fun experiences, and generates engagement in the classroom.

"During my first Code class with Beta Grammar (2nd grade) I proposed a challenge for them to have an idea of the nature of Code and its scope," Michael says.

It consisted of a small Escape Room-type game.

The students had to control an artificial intelligence, telling it how it could escape from a room, dodging obstacles and tracing the route it had to follow to the exit.

The rules were:

- Use tiles to tell the AI how to move around the room.
- Use arrows to give it orders and instructions to reach the exit.

The activity was a success and served to:

- Encourage the student to think logically about the sequence of instructions and their constraints, solving a concrete problem: getting the AI out of the room.
- Challenge the student to solve a problem using algorithms, making an analysis of the route the AI had to take.
- Find the right order of the tiles and arrange them to avoid obstacles and overcome the levels.
- Ensure a level of engagement in the classroom from the students, from the proposal of a coding activity thought out as a game that motivated them to use algorithms.

In this example, Michael made in a single class that his young students (7-9 years old) had a taste of the world of computing in a fun way (our next reason).

4. Programming teaches math in a fun way.

In computer science, which is another derivative of computing along with programming, students learn:

- Sorting algorithms
- Finite state machines
- Turing machines
- Parsers
- Lexers
- Tokenizers
- Lambda calculus
- Monads, monoids, functors, lists, maps, maybes, lenses, and futures

It is very common for computer science courses to have a prerequisite in mathematics. Algorithms and data structures rely heavily on training in mathematics.

Information science is mathematics. Organizing and analyzing data logically, calculating and solving problems through games is the ideal. Boys and girls learn math without realizing it.

Michael says that during his first weeks at Rhema he had technical difficulties staying in class sessions since his computer did not have the best hardware specifications.

From this, the students created a narrative around the "profe's gamer PC" (A gamer PC is a computer with powerful features that make it very efficient) and they joked about the profe's gamer PC, and in each class they asked him if he had already bought it.

This developed to the point where he had the opportunity to propose a coding activity: Develop in Python (a

programming language) a program that would help the profe determine if he could buy the PC or not, comparing the hypothetical budget of the teacher in relation to the real price of the parts and the total cost of the PC.

This activity provided an opportunity to talk about:

- Hardware, real-life computer component prices
- Applied arithmetic with code
- Use of variables and loops using Python

In addition, it allowed the development of an application of the contents seen so far in the code class, from the development of a technological alternative to answer a problem: helping the profe so that he could make the calculations of the price of the PC and thus know at what moment he could buy it.

5. Computer programming is the most important skill for the future.

The labor demand for programmers is immense and will continue to grow exponentially in the future.

71% of jobs in the sciences and engineering require programming skills, but only 8% of university graduates have those skills, according to Code.org.

This means that a student who learns code in school will have a very large advantage for employment or working independently not only in the technology sector but also in finance, sales, health, and more (since computing transcends all areas).

Teaching code in schools will make children make their ideas a reality. It also fosters autonomous work and teamwork.

Michael tells us that during a trimester, students autonomously proposed developing video games and animations.

They used block code to carry out the ideas raised.

Many of them, without the need to explain the necessary code concepts in class, but on their own, managed to bring their own ideas to fruition. They themselves were able to choose the necessary blocks and implement the relevant code for each case.

Also, on different occasions, among the students themselves, they provided support in class suggesting different alternatives to solve the problems that each student had with their own project.

Most of the students looked happy while creating their projects, as they had creative freedom to express their own ideas in a project in Scratch (the largest coding community for children in the world and a coding language with a simple visual interface that allows young people to create digital stories, games, and animations).

Programming opens up infinite possibilities.

Learning to program gives students a new appreciation of technology, how the things we use daily, such as cell phones and computers, work internally.

But not only that, they will be able to develop apps, websites, video games, and software programs with the potential to solve problems and transform their lives and those of others.

In addition, someone with programming skills earns on average 40% more than someone who does not know how to program. So, why not start from a young age?

From Consumers to Creators: The Best Use of Technology

I want to be a YouTuber."

"I want to be a Pixar animator."

"I want to do digital marketing."

"I want to be a trader."

These are some of the responses we get when we ask the question, "What problem do you want to solve in the future?"

And because kids are used to answering in terms of "being" because of the question "What do you want to be when you grow up?" that's how they respond.

The most interesting thing is that all these responses are related to technology and the internet. Tools that did not exist 20 years ago and that now, in very few schools, they teach how to use.

These boys and girls are experimenting with technology every day, but for the 5 or 7 hours they are in traditional schools they only have notebooks, pencils, and a compass with which to work.

There is a problem in the way children and young people use technology. Generation Z and Alpha are consumers. According to Hootsuite:

- 95% of teenagers between 13 and 17 years old use YouTube.
- 67% use TikTok.
- 62% use Instagram.

Meanwhile, for Generation Alpha (2-6 years old), 81% of parents have said their children watch YouTube videos to learn, play, or calm down.

The relationship today's youth have with technology is much greater than that of Generation X and even the Millennials.

Learning a new language with gamification like Duolingo, learning math, and even reading with an app is becoming a daily practice.

How can we make young people and children shift from being just users to becoming creators? By teaching them to handle technology. Giving them the tools to move from being merely consumers to content producers.

Why is it important to be producers and not just consumers from childhood? Because producers can:

- Create something valuable for society.
- Generate income from their intellectual property.
- Learn skills that can provide them with a job.
- Create a creative portfolio to advance their career.
- Develop good habits such as time management and project management.
- Develop a mindset different from consumers, with critical and independent thinking, an entrepreneurial mindset.

How to Change the Screen Habit

It's NOT about taking away the screens because they spend a lot of time glued to them. That is not the solution.

I understand the concern of many parents who tell me that now their children are using glasses for spending so much time in front of a computer or a cellphone.

That concern is real. It's a reality. And perhaps we could

avoid it if we had a different lifestyle. A life without the internet or technology. Living on a beach or in the mountains where we have a self-sustainable home and plenty of space for our children to develop, just as Generation X did. Running, skating, biking, and playing in the streets.

But I also believe it's possible if you live in the city. As parents, we can give our children more time to interact face-to-face with them. If we listen to them and play with them. If we go out biking or kicking a ball together. If we play chess or do a puzzle.

But the same families tell me there's no time for those things, because they're busy. There's also no time for the kids to have a sport or an artistic activity outside of academics.

Or perhaps, there are no resources. The easiest thing continues to be: "learn something useful on the cellphone." Well, children have their own cellphones from the age of 8.

Or they send them to a traditional physical school for socialization and not to be glued to the screens, thus depriving them of the multiple possibilities of an e-school where they can learn tools to become producers and creators of content.

All these habits of technology consumption were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Parents, having to juggle their jobs, school at home, and their household, left their children at the mercy of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) to do the babysitting job.

I know a mother who, while we were walking during the pandemic, had her one-and-a-half-year-old child with her cellphone, while the video read him a story (although the minimum age to use YouTube is 13).

However, this made the Alpha generation and many Zetas take the reins of how they have their educational process and how they learn. They now have decision-making power

regarding the school they want. Since now the kids can learn on YouTube how to make Slime or what quantum physics is.

Tools for Creating Content

Children are geniuses, all of them! But the traditional school classifies them and puts them in boxes to be able to grade them and that kills creativity.

Not everyone can fit into the mold. Those students who don't fit end up at the e-school.

At Rhema, for example, we teach them design, animation, programming, digital photography, how to make a video, how to edit it, and how to make the thumbnail or miniature image.

We teach them to make podcasts, edit them, and upload them to share. We also teach them to write. Not only academic texts and research, but also blogs, copy for Instagram, or scripts for shorts.

We also collaborate with ChatGPT and MidJourney (Artificial Intelligence Graphics).

The kids love it. And besides, they are good, very good. Because they are in the stage of absorbing knowledge and searching for their identity.

In digital marketing class, students learn several key concepts, such as:

- The importance of projecting an excellent image, whether of a product or a service or a personal brand.
- Offering a product with a text is not the same as captivating and catching future clients and followers with good copy and its respective call to action.
- Recognizing social networks to showcase their talents, skills, entrepreneurship, and ideas more than for spending hours and hours wasting time.

- Developing the different forms of expression of the students through videos for the less shy, audios for the more expressive, and writings for the most creative.
- Understanding the advantage of Digital Marketing as a means to exponentially make known an idea, an entrepreneurship, or a talent and thus eliminate the border barriers thanks to the good use of the internet.

In photography classes, the students have been able to experiment with the great tool they have in their hands: a cell phone with a camera. With their photographs, they can expose some social issue, make a great shot for a product of their entrepreneurship, or be the next family outing photographer.

The idea will always be to learn to take advantage of those things that seem everyday but that with a little technique and attitude can serve us for a future job or to create a company and thus learn to generate income from now on.

Also in photography classes, we encourage the critique of great works and images of renowned artists by reviewing history, facts, and allowing sensitization through them.

In Performing Arts, for example, the basis of learning is being, tells us teacher Juan Pablo Acevedo.

"Considering that art is made to transmit emotions, we carry out the design project compared with what an artificial intelligence application can do. We not only take art from drawing, but the student can choose to present their project through a musical letter, a sculpture, a poetry, a poem, a presentation, a story, an illustration, as all these are ways to transmit emotions through art."

And now that Artificial Intelligence is being used to create art, we must address this topic with the students instead of prohibiting its use.

Teacher Juan Pablo asks, "What does AI do to achieve

an artistic representation? And what is our job as human beings to achieve that artistic representation? Is there a difference between the two, how do we differ from AI?"

These questions lead us to analyze deep issues such as:

- What makes us develop art?
- Can AI achieve representing the same emotions as a human artistic representation?
- Can you transmit your emotions to AI so that the technology does the project for them?
- Can we give the same value to different communication channels?
- How far can technology help us facilitate the reproduction and management of emotions?

These classes are for the entire school. But the deepening and analysis are different depending on the group of students and their maturity.

Another way to be producers and not just consumers is through Graphic Design. In the classes, we focus on what we are going to sell and how we are going to sell it, as this subject is linked to entrepreneurship.

We start with the logo of the brand of their product or of themselves if they are going to be the product or service to market.

Then we look at how we are going to position that brand within the social network, a website, YouTube, or the medium they choose during the trimester.

Through the logo of their brand, we learn:

- Use of color.
- Typographic management.
- Simplicity of forms.
- Communication of concepts.

What excites me the most about giving them all these tools is that in the near future, they will be able to go out and create their own businesses, join other content developers, and have the bases to build something that can generate money.

We could say that alternative education has the potential to reduce unemployment and the cycle of poverty in Latin America.

21st Century Skills

Within the subjects we teach to use technology responsibly, there is one called: Digital Citizenship.

Knowing that technology makes kids feel connected, happy, excited, and inspired, we believe as an educational community that everything must have limits, that's why we decided to create this subject. During the year we see:

- How to make critical and proactive use of technological tools.
- That they know their digital learning environment.
- What makes up a digital footprint.
- What the ethical, legal, and pedagogical aspects of ICT are and what is the impact. (Remember that nothing is private.)
- Cybersecurity. Learning the risks we all have within the management of technology. With gamification tools, kids learn to differentiate the bad from the good.

This is called digital literacy and is one of the skills that all students must have in this century.

One of the activities we did was to take a photo of some part of the body. We uploaded the photos to a white wall and we all guessed to whom it belonged, tells us Cristian Izquierdo, teacher of the subject.

This intuitively helps young people to interpret messages they see on networks, even though faces do not always appear. In short, we teach them that they must be careful with the personal information they upload, not only because they are minors but because these public networks will be seen by potential bosses when they are adults.

Another activity was one of awareness. What is their real world and their digital world like.

On a sheet divided in two we asked several questions:

- How many people do we share intimate secrets with?
- Do we give personal data (phone, address, where I study...)? Yes/No
- Do we give personal information (where I am going, who I am with...)? Yes/No
- Do we share personal photos? Yes/No
- Do we share group photos? Yes/No
- Do we give information about third parties (photos, personal data...)? Yes/No
- Do we criticize someone within a group? Yes/No

The end of the Digital Citizenship subject revolves around three axes:

Reflective: Personal impact of the digital world on my life. Management of their own social networks.

Conceptual: What we do with the information we receive daily. What is a PLE (Personal Learning Environment), digital footprint, planned obsolescence (cell phones, appliances, programs that have a certain useful life that generates consumerism).

Procedural: Knowing the ethical, legal, and pedagogical aspects. Activities such as building our own PLE and reviewing each week the Tech Tracker.

PLE is the amount and quality of tools that students use or we use in pursuit of achieving the educational objectives of the institutions or autonomous.

With the students, we divide their graphing into categories:

- Reading: Input
- Writing: Production
- Reflecting: Critical capacity or collective construction

Cristian continues explaining: We must all be aware of what we do in the digital world. What we publish, what we upload, how we consume it, what we believe. We must always be very critical of everything we see and read, because we do not know the real purpose for which it was published.

This subject should be mandatory in all schools, as it is essential that our students know the good, but also the risks of having a life managed by the internet.

Not everyone lives the same realities, even though we are all immersed in the same technological world, however, we have found that our students' approach to the digital world makes them think that the rest of the children their age also behave in the same way.

Our students, says Cristian when they have to socialize about a specific problem we have raised in class about their digital context, one finds that while they are critical, they give solutions and hypothesize about the problem, sometimes they fall short in extrapolating that to reality, to a citizen on the street.

There are people who know how to manage many programs and have been in the digital world for many years, but how many really have been educated to know the implications of their digital footprint.

We also teach them to manage social networks for the construction and management of a business, more than the personal part.

We show them that not everything that networks show is what happens behind closed doors. Finally, we make them aware that everything they share on social networks, TikTok, or YouTube, later brands and many companies can use that information to target marketing.

We talk about the meaning of cookies and their implications. This subject shows the kids that everything they post will be forever on the internet, so we must take care of our identity.

The boys and girls of Generation Alpha are growing up with YouTube before they can even talk, phrases like "like and subscribe" are like the alphabet.

Also, with the rise of platforms like Roblox, Minecraft, and programming like Scratch, today's youth are creating their own worlds, characters, and stories.

To use these platforms, you not only need to be skilled, creative, and inventive. You need patience, resilience, and a definition of times and spaces.

By creating worlds like this, the kids are applying geometry, calculus, language, engineering, design, and many other subjects that are not seen in primary school.

The communication teacher Natalia Puerta tells us: "Through these activities, students explore their communication skills while experiencing different ways of expressing their opinions, taking advantage of their ideas, and defending their arguments outside the common parameters of a traditional school. For example, through the podcast, the students talked about the influence that the media and social networks can have on people's perspectives."

The experience of the students was positive as it included a series of steps that required reading, writing, oratory, and

audiovisual production, which encouraged them to participate.

Finally, the students had the opportunity to give feedback to their classmates and themselves through a self-evaluation that included criteria for creativity, organization, content, and oratory, allowing the students to account for their own formative process.

Applied knowledge is more useful than the repetition of the theory of mathematics as Richard Branson, creator of Virgin, says.

As a mother and educator, I am convinced that learning tools for proper use of technology is vital for our children.

Learning to animate, make videos, podcasts, 3D designs, and write for the web are skills that all schools should be teaching as a fundamental part of their curricula.

When will we change the chip to realize that we no longer live in the 20th century? When will we understand that our boys and girls have other academic needs? When will we focus our pedagogy on our students and their needs?

I hope that what we do at Rhema E-School will someday soon become common practice in all schools in Latin America.

Entrepreneurship

Great advances in humanity, from the printing press to the automobile and telecommunications, have come from he minds of entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurs are people who see needs and problems around them and invent a solution. They don't wait for others to do it; they achieve it themselves.

In the Entrepreneurship Village, we learn and work to bring practical solutions to our environment.

We learn about sustainability, environmental care, and how to start businesses, even from a young age. We also cover digital marketing, creative writing, graphic design, branding, among other things.

Additionally, students learn financial intelligence, so they can manage money, save to buy a car, a house, or a PC Gamer, invest wisely, and even pay taxes.

With just what they learn in this village, your children will have a successful professional future assured.

7 Tools for Learning Entrepreneurship from Childhood

Creating a mindset of resilience, patience, iteration, and creativity from a young age is one of the best legacies we can leave our children.

When they grow up, they will face a world unknown to us and to them.

Teach entrepreneurship in school?

Absolutely.

While society innovates, our schools remain stuck in the past. The result is that schools are not graduating the history makers, the thinkers of tomorrow, and the well-rounded men and women the world needs.

And many schools around the world are including classes in critical thinking and financial literacy, but we still have a long way to go.

Entrepreneurship classes for children and youth are vital for student development and for the transition from the analog to the digital world.

Today's students will enter an unstable and competitive job market where they need to be self-directed, original, and creative to succeed.

Thomas Friedman, author and Pulitzer Prize recipient, defends the premise that all students should graduate ready to innovate, with the ability to create work and employ others.

During the Obama era, Friedman wrote a phrase that became famous:

"You want more good jobs, spawn more Steve Jobs."

Traditional education is not preparing students for the jobs of the future, many of which do not yet exist. As Friedman says, we need to prepare our students to be the ones who create those jobs.

Not all students will be entrepreneurs, but one day all will need to think like entrepreneurs. They must put their gifts and talents into practice, not just the subjects they have learned.

Perhaps they won't start a company or invent a product, but they will need to reinvent themselves and their work to be relevant and advance in the businesses of the future.

Entrepreneur or Employee Mindset

The mindset of a typical employee and that of an entrepreneur are very different.

People who think like entrepreneurs (even if they are employed) excel. They think outside the box.

They do not wait to be called or given an opportunity. They create their own opportunities and propose solutions without waiting for others to do so.

They make their own rules. They take risks, follow their passions, and make a difference.

They set their own schedule. They know when they are most energetic and focused to tackle difficult tasks.

They are not afraid to fail over and over because they know that success involves multiple failures.

They build teams and recognize the talent of others. They acknowledge their weaknesses.

They know about many things and have diverse interests and experiences.

They manage their relationships through networks. This way, they nurture their knowledge.

They solve problems creatively, are persistent, and focused.

They easily spot opportunities.

They seek money but with meaning.

The problem with traditional education is that it fosters not the entrepreneurial mindset, but rather the conformist mindset of a submissive employee who must follow rules and think like everyone else, limiting themselves to standardized tests.

And this is how people with an employee mindset think:

- They wait for solutions to come from others.
- They avoid risk, preferring stability and security.
- They exchange time for money.
- They feel threatened by others more talented than themselves.
- They have a marked skill and are paid for it.
- They seek money through a position.

We must give students the tools to succeed in whatever they undertake in the future. In fact, entrepreneurship is part of a social rehabilitation program. In Texas, they created the Prison Entrepreneurship Program to train young inmates so they have business skills when they regain their freedom.

Some schools are already teaching entrepreneurship to students diagnosed with ADHD.

Julian Young, 36, rehabilitated in one of the aforementioned programs, says: "Entrepreneurs are anomalies, they don't fit into predetermined places, but they enjoy exercising their gifts if given the opportunity to take risks."

He now runs an entrepreneurship center where he helps others develop and expand a business.

Among the famous, there are several who remember being poor students, like Christopher Lochhead, who was

three times a marketing executive for major companies in Silicon Valley and has been Amazon's top-selling author ten times.

Others include Sir Richard Branson, creator of Virgin, or Bo Peabody, who was one of the early creators of an internet company Tripod.com.

Tools for Developing Entrepreneurship in Children

Leaders and entrepreneurs must learn many skills that are outside traditional academic subjects such as science and math.

We call them soft skills, and they are those abilities to communicate, socialize, work as a team, and manage emotions, which help them successfully navigate in society.

These skills are for life, not just for passing an exam.

While studying in school, students should work on these skills:

1. Decision Making

Let's teach decision-making based on information.

Difficult and also simple decisions. Let's give them options to choose from (even their class schedule and teachers). Provide criteria for evaluating different options.

Let's not criticize their decisions and respect their train of thought.

Let's make them think analytically, with reason.

Because decisions are not made based on fear or emotion, but on data.

There are games that can help us develop this skill. For example, pairing them up and playing tic-tac-toe.

2. Resilience

Entrepreneurship is a path of trial and error.

We must teach students to turn every failed attempt into a new opportunity.

Celebrate mistakes as part of the learning process.

Do not punish the error, as traditional education does, by putting bad grades, red X's on errors, and failed subjects.

In school, you don't lose, you learn.

3. Creative Problem Solving

Entrepreneurs are curious people.

Every day students have questions. Let's give them the opportunity to find creative answers to problems.

Ideally, in school, they can give their ideas without fear of being corrected because that was not the teacher's answer.

The National Association of Employment and Talent Acquisition in the United States conducted a survey among 905 employees, and more than 91% of them said that what they expect is for their candidates to have skills in creative problem-solving.

Cultivating this skill is crucial. Practicing it from school is ideal.

4. Critical Thinking

To undertake and innovate, one must think outside the boundaries and the way things have always been done.

Let's give them the tools to question and critically assess.

Let's teach them to see things from different points of view, to weigh the pros and cons of situations, and to listen to ideas with different arguments without being offended.

5. Effective Communication

Communication is one of the most important skills in life and especially for business.

Students must learn to have empathy, to listen actively, and to express themselves clearly and diplomatically.

Let's teach them to write blogs, articles, scripts for videos, emails, and even short presentation messages.

That's what they will have to do in the future with LinkedIn and other social networks.

Resumes are becoming a thing of the past. Recruiters are looking at what their candidates post, publish, upload, create.

A digital identity requires time and effort. Let's teach them to create one with the best tools and possibilities for the future.

6. Teamwork

This is one of the skills that few can deny are fundamental both in business and in any work environment.

Understanding others, relying on the strengths of others, knowing how to listen and communicate are qualities that will take anyone very far. Because even for sports, you need to know how to work as a team.

We no longer live in a village isolated from others.

We are interconnected and depend on each other. Traditional school invites students to work alone, take exams alone, and leads them to an attitude of "I can do everything alone because the grade is for me and no one else."

To work in a team, we need collaboration.

The American Education Association says that one of the biggest benefits of working in a team is that it teaches you about yourself. What you like, what you tolerate, what you can do, and what you are good at.

7. Emotional Management

Learning about entrepreneurship teaches all the soft skills we need to work, play, and learn.

But without knowing ourselves, we can't get anywhere.

Mindfulness or being present in the present helps us manage our emotions.

And many books have been written about this. The famous phrase from Socrates over two thousand years ago says: "Know thyself, that is the beginning of wisdom."

And if we know ourselves in our emotions, skills, desires, goals, and ambitions, we can really find the meaning of a life with purpose.

Let's create platforms and structures for their ventures.

We no longer have to learn anything by heart.

We are in the digital age, an evolution of the information era.

Everything is available at our fingertips. Any question can be answered in seconds. Even what is the distance from here to the sun.

Today, it is necessary to have content on different platforms to make oneself known and succeed in business.

We must teach students to take their knowledge to the digital world from the beginning.

Students should start creating digital content that will serve as a platform to make their products, services, or ideas known.

Entrepreneurs use these digital tools to promote their businesses. Our children and young people must learn to use social networks not only for entertainment but to create content that will bring them benefits in the future.

Thus, the audience for their schoolwork is not limited to teachers and classmates but the entire world.

Their feedback is not limited to a grade given by the teacher but generates views, comments, likes, and even sales from their entrepreneurship.

Structures for Their Ventures

With a structure, young people can learn to set up a business in a matter of weeks.

That's what we should teach them, entrepreneurship in 5 steps.

Not to make budgets with projections for 10 years. Those documents are not read, and no one has the ability to know how the market will behave in the future.

These are the five steps:

- Leadership: Everything to do with your mind and your beliefs. Mindfulness.
- Development: The difference between physical and digital products, services, benefits, innovation, and logo creation.
- Operations: Sales, marketing, social networks, processes, and tools.
- Finance: Cash flow, balance sheet, business plan (2 pages), pricing, credit, and value creation.
- Customers: Satisfaction, list, testimonials, objections, and best practices.

In 30 hours of instruction, students are ready to present their ventures at the Creativity Fair.

Developing a Personal Brand

Personal branding is a concept that involves considering oneself as one's own brand.

Whether we like it or not, we are in the process of selling ourselves. That brand must be elaborated, transmitted, protected, and maintained to differentiate oneself and achieve greater professional success.

Why is it important? Because today's children and young people are easily influenced by the media and their friends, without ever undertaking the task of defining their identity.

By teaching them personal branding, we help students:

Reflect on their personal values.

What kind of people they want to be.

The impact they want to have on the world, without having to follow trends just because everyone else does.

From that personal brand, they can create their entrepreneurship according to their personality, tastes, and skills.

An entrepreneur sees trends in the market and creates solutions, products, or services to meet people's needs.

Students must learn how to develop innovative products and services that people want to buy.

They must learn about costs and pricing, about developing prototypes, about marketing and sales, about finance, and about starting businesses.

Schools should teach entrepreneurship, like studying for an MBA, but in a fun way and at an early age.

The greatest entrepreneurs of the future are in elementary school today.

Teaching entrepreneurship to children and youth in school prepares them for the future.

It gives them the tools and mindset to beat life, no matter what happens.

A true entrepreneur comes out ahead in times of crisis and prosperity.

Don't you think your children should have these skills?

Look for a school that teaches entrepreneurship as part of its curriculum.

Why Learn to Invest from School Age (Trading)?

Investing in capital markets or trading, as it's called in English, is an activity that every child should practice after learning how to save.

The vast majority of the baby boomer generation (1945-1965) were dedicated to saving and were very good at it.

However, Generation X (1965-1981), in general, were not as wise in saving because they focused on buying homes, cars, pursuing expensive degrees and postgraduate studies, and filling their homes with things.

This generalization has its exceptions, of course.

Saving is one of the pillars of financial intelligence. The ability to delay gratification is a physical and mental skill, especially when it comes to money.

Millennials (1981-1996) are learning that it's not only good to save. It's essential to invest if they want to have more than just a retirement account when they turn 65.

And with the rise of online banking and cryptocurrencies, it's not just essential, it has become fashionable.

Tony Robbins, the personal development guru, says: "You're not going to earn your way to wealth unless you make money while you sleep."

Today, everywhere on TikTok and Instagram, we see people recommending investing in the stock market, trading currencies, and mining crypto, with incredible results.

I was once invited to invest $10,000 with the promise of earning between 6% and 8% monthly. I didn't have to do anything because I would have the help of a rig or machines

that do the work for me. And it could be real, but without information, decisions are not made, so I passed up the opportunity.

Knowing how to invest is a skill everyone should have if we want our money to multiply at a speed superior to that of saving.

But practice is showing us that Generation X is late to saving.

Millennials are on their way from a young age. It's time that Generation Z learns about saving at age 8 so that by 10 they can start investing.

What is trading?

Trading is the buying and selling of securities, such as stocks, bonds, futures, options, currencies, cryptocurrencies, and commodities.

This buying and selling still takes place in physical stock exchanges like New York. But the vast majority of these transactions are done virtually, like on the Nasdaq or with mobile apps.

The goal of trading is to buy low and sell high in the markets. Simple, right? Well, if it were that easy, we would all do it. It requires technical skills and a mindset with a high capacity for risk.

However, investing in the markets is the simplest way to multiply money if you have the discipline and training.

I was in a course with Jaiber Pérez, the best trader in the world in 2006.

And he taught us that two analyses must be managed:

- **Technical analysis:** there is always a reason for the price to rise or fall. You must learn to look at statistics and trends and interpret that reason.

- **Fundamental analysis:** it's about the real value of a stock or currency in the market.

Learning when to open, when to close, how to manage risk and preserve capital are the main topics of the technical part.

On the other hand, controlling nerves, staying calm in the face of immediate losses or gains, knowing how to interpret the news, trends, and cycles are topics of the mental skill required.

And finally, there is time. Trading takes time. And that asset is the main one for children when they are studying.

If children have time while studying, why not take advantage of it and teach them something with which they can multiply their money later in life?

Investing, ready, but there's a problem.

Trading has a bad reputation because:

- People have lost money.
- They have been victims of scams.
- Experts appear overnight.
- There is not enough knowledge.
- There are disempowering beliefs about money.
- There is fear.

But in all industries, businesses, and ventures that involve money, we can experience any of these reasons.

The real problem is ignorance of the subject and the lack of truthful information.

If trading is taught during the school years, when the kids are adults they will have not only a base of knowledge but years of experience with fictitious money on how to buy, how to sell, and when.

If we have knowledge from a young age, it expands with experience and more information. Beliefs about the benefits of

trading are strengthened, and the concept we have of money changes. Let's not be an empty, scrawny piggy bank.

What is your Relationship with Money?

The kids at Rhema E-School play the capital markets in Trading and Cryptocurrencies classes with their teacher, who begins by diagnosing what students think about money. What is their relationship with money, what do their parents think about money, as this is the foundation of financial intelligence. Questions like:

- Is it better to be rich or to be honest?
- Is it better to be rich or to have friends?
- Would you like to have a lot of money?
- What would you do with a million pesos?
- What is money for?

The answers to these questions show us the beliefs about money in the family.

The relationship you have with money consciously or unconsciously will control the decisions you make in your financial life.

Beliefs about money are like those of religion. They are based on concepts adopted familiarly and passed from one generation to another in knowledge and experiences.

Sometimes, these beliefs are good. Sometimes not.

I have seen people who have sabotaged their financial lives because from a young age they had wrong beliefs about money. And when they began to have financial freedom, they went back and got into a hole. This is called self-sabotage.

Depending on what you believe about money will be your behavior not only with investment but also with saving and spending.

While our children were growing up, we taught them T. Harv Eker's money management system. And sometimes we had to change the percentages, but our children learned that not everything that comes in should go out immediately.

How to Start Trading

Today, it is easier than ever to start trading.

There are free apps like MetaTrader or IQ Option where anyone can convert a demo account into an account that uses real money.

Or Robinhood and Greenlight, which are apps that have gamification and show Trading as something intuitive, similar to a game.

Opening demo accounts or accounts with fictitious money gives you the opportunity to learn the dynamics of the capital markets, forex or currencies, or crypto, without using real money.

It's like when a pilot learns in a flight simulator before flying a real plane. The difference is that although the money is fictitious, the market situations in which they trade are from the real world.

When you have the knowledge, training, and confidence, you can open accounts from only 100 dollars.

Jaiber Pérez says he does not recommend opening demo accounts, because it is never the same to lose fake money as it is to lose real money. Or to earn it. He recommends taking a course, having confidence, and studying our own mentality every day.

Because 20% is technical and 80% is us.

For this reason, robots and rigs already exist, machines that do the "thinking" for us. Since artificial intelligence does not have emotions, only technical analysis of trends, news, and cycles.

At Rhema, the kids learn with demo accounts because we want them to learn to manage their emotions. Even though it is not real money, they are competing to earn more and make better analyses that yield monetary results.

What benefits does learning to trade have?

Sir Richard Branson said: "You're already saving. Now put it to work for your future."

Learning to trade should be part of the financial education of our children.

In school or outside of it. But it is necessary for boys and girls to learn to:

- Have good beliefs about money.
- How to manage USD$100, because if you manage a little well, you will manage a lot well. It's all a matter of habits.
- Save, for the short term and for the long term.
- Invest, in a business, in real estate, or in the capital markets.

Arts

In TEAM pedagogy, we expose students to the different branches of knowledge, including the arts, such as painting, music, theater, sculpture, dance, literature, film, architecture, and much more. Similarly, the history of art, artistic techniques, handling of different tools like pencils, composition, and color management. Additionally, production and editing of audiovisuals and photography.

Like the great men of the Renaissance, who were not only knowledgeable about natural sciences, but also about the arts, each student at Rhema discovers their own artistic expression to develop their creative spirit.

Why Teach Art in Schools?

Not long ago, teaching art in schools was considered a luxury. A specific classroom had to be prepared with painting tables, easels, special chairs, materials, and aprons for the children, among other things.

Now that we can study art from home and find the best online teacher, there is no excuse for excluding art from our children's lives.

However, schools must provide students with that first approach.

Curriculums from 20 years ago did not include art. Only until 2010 in Colombia, for example, did the Ministry of Education publish the single document of Pedagogical Guidelines for Artistic Education in Basic and Middle Education.

But art has been relegated from schools because "there is no time." Time is for subjects like math, science, and language, which are the subjects included in standardized tests.

Art as a First Language

Art is the first experience of human communication. We have paintings and sculptures from thousands of years ago, even when there was no other form of human expression.

Experimenting with art is fundamental.

Children develop their fine and gross motor skills through art.

Art challenges us to communicate and admire viewpoints different from our own.

Art reflects the human condition in both good and bad.

"Art does not solve problems itself, but it shows us their existence," said Polish sculptor Magdalena Abakanowicz.

However, teaching art does solve problems. Years of studies are showing that to improve academic achievements, emotional development, and student opportunities, we must have more hours of art per week, not less.

There is increasingly more evidence available from these studies. For example, integrating some form of art in school is forming more holistic students and leaders who are better prepared. This trend is sending a message to schools that focus exclusively on math and science.

A 2016 report from *The Washington Post*, shows that in schools in the United States, math is being taught through theater and music.

Integration of Art in School

In 2020, there were 1.4 million job vacancies for programming. But only 400,000 professionals were ready to work. To apply for these jobs, you need not only a high degree of technical ability but also skills to solve problems creatively.

In an interview, UCLA economist William Yu said: "Robots and foreign labor will never be able to replace creative people in creating sectors that manufacture new and desirable products and services. Therefore, art education, which is an investment in our future creative workforce, will become a crucial element in our education system. Resilient economic growth and prosperity in the 21st century will depend on our art education."

Some schools have tried to integrate the arts into their curriculums but there is fear of failing standardized tests. The problem is that these tests do not measure students' creative abilities but the regurgitation of formulas, dates,

and content that will not contribute anything to the lives of our native digitals.

We are in a world different from 20 years ago.

The internet changed us, the pandemic did the same. Our students are not from the same generation as their parents or grandparents. They will face challenges that we cannot even imagine. Traditional education is failing our children, but we continue to trust governments and their curriculums by letting our children learn the same things we learned 40 years ago.

Providing children with an education in fine arts is essential to creating the type of skills needed for the modern and creative economy, according to the Anderson Forecast School of Management at UCLA.

What Type of Art to Teach?

Art comes in different forms:

- Painting
- Sculpture
- Literature
- Architecture
- Cinema
- Music
- Theater

And there are multiple creative derivatives of these types of art such as graphic design, photography, and animation within the visual arts.

Dance and makeup within theater and music. Poetry, creative writing, scripts, and composition in literature and music. Comics and manga in painting.

Moreover, some say we should include within the arts,

forms of language like sign language, decoration, culinary, lettering, and aesthetic training.

Among all these forms of art, which should we teach?

The evidence supports that any form of art taught to children will help them perform better as happy and complete citizens. And additionally, studies prove that kids immersed in the arts achieve better academic results.

The important thing is that education in general should focus less on preparing exams to compare one child against another and one school against another.

Education should be centered on the student, not on the curriculum or the tests, which ultimately say nothing because: "Tests compare boys and girls with the same measure, compare institutions and countries, but do not generate academic diagnostics or work plans," says Luis Sotelo, Director of Rhetoric at Rhema E-School.

Arts and culture are integral parts of human development. Traditional education has completely relegated them to emphasize hard subjects and exams. What can we do about it?

Here are some reasons for implementing art in your school or college. If you are a parent, show this evidence to your institution so that there is a space for your child to have this opportunity, which will serve them for life.

Research Studies

The National Art Education Association cites several studies about the impact of the arts in education.

Let's look at this large-scale, randomized controlled study of a city's collective efforts to restore arts education through community partnerships and investments. It included 42 primary and secondary schools with more than 10,000 students from third to eighth grade.

The findings were incredible. The increase in experiential

arts education had a significant impact on students' academic, social, and emotional outcomes. Disciplinary infractions decreased by 3.6% compared to the control group. Writing scores improved by 13%. Compassion and empathy for others' feelings increased by 8%. Students became more interested in how other people feel and wanted to help when they were mistreated. They significantly increased their desire to attend college. They began to see things in different ways.

Another study by Jal Mehta, a professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, discusses with his collaborator Sarah Fine that "the periphery is often more powerful than the core" in terms of the basic curriculum.

He writes: "When we began our study on learning in high schools five years ago, we didn't think about electives or extracurricular activities as places to look for insights. But as we started visiting schools, we noticed a pattern: often, in core subjects like history and science, instruction was teacher-centered, tasks were not challenging, and students were frequently passive and bored. When we asked students why they were learning what they were learning, their responses tended to be uninspiring: 'because we need it for college' or 'because the teacher said so.

"By contrast, when we stumbled upon spaces that were initially outside our study scope (art classes, debate club meetings, school newspapers, Model UN, sports practices), these same students appeared and sounded completely different. In these spaces, they were actively engaged and eagerly took on roles as leaders. Over time, we shifted part of our research to investigate what made these 'peripheral' spaces so powerful and to explore what this might tell us about the 'core' subjects."

And Mehta explains why extracurricular activities like art are so powerful in shaping students:

Purpose and audience. Neither the teacher nor the student is in charge. The project is in charge, and everything is done around it. The end is enjoyment, not a grade. And the audience is much broader than just the one grading.

Choice. When students only have four subjects throughout their entire school life (math, social studies, natural sciences, and language), they don't have the opportunity to choose what they like. There is no choice because that's all they see. When exposed to different disciplines, students can see themselves in some of them and recognize their gifts, talents, and abilities.

Community. When carrying out an artistic project, there is commitment. Those groups that form around a common interest develop friendship bonds that foster the emotional development of the kids. Also, recognizing their likes will help them maintain their thought positions in front of other larger groups, like at university.

Interdependent roles. In a musical or theater production, everyone has different roles that are indispensable for the success of the production. Unlike traditional education, which only has two roles: the student and the teacher. And where my success does not depend on anything the other does, creating individualism.

Learning arcs. The development of an art piece requires trial and error. Erase, rehearse, start again. This creates in the student a desire for learning and continuous improvement. Whereas in traditional education, the answers are given, are unique, or must be what the teacher decided.

Heads, hands, and heart. Sir Ken Robinson said that traditional school saw children as heads, which were carried by the bodies, because they lacked emotion. Art allows kids to experiment with their emotions, their nerves, the perception of themselves, and their desires. Art allows students to use their whole body, not just their brain.

These findings are the evidence we need to integrate the learning of the arts in both physical and virtual classrooms. If we truly want to produce positive impacts on students' emotional and academic development, we must teach arts.

I believe the purpose of education is to cultivate the next generation of citizens and leaders. Empowered with a holistic education in which they developed their gifts, talents, and abilities. Our mission is not for them to learn content to recite on exams but to recognize the potentials of each of our children and take them further than we could go, that is our mission as educators.

12 Reasons to Teach Art in Schools

We might say the most important reason for children to learn art in schools is simply that it makes them more creative.

But it's about much more than creativity, and here's why:

1. Arts increase student engagement.

In the arts, you have to use your hands, see immediate results, develop tangible products, and collaborate with others. This is very different from sitting in a chair listening to a teacher for hours.

Collaborating, kids must apply problem-solving techniques, learn to see the world through others' eyes, and discover how to communicate their ideas.

According to Americans for the Arts, a student engaged in arts learning:

- Is 4 times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement.
- Is 4 times more likely to participate in a math or science fair.

- Is 3 times more likely to win an award for school attendance.
- Is 3 times more likely to be elected to class office.

2. Art strengthens critical thinking.

Through the arts, students have a concrete way to express their emotions, skills, and challenge themselves to create something new, which increases their self-confidence and positive self-view about themselves and learning.

Visual learning through drawing, sculpture, and painting develops visual-spatial skills. Learning to interpret this information helps to develop more complex products like photography and animation.

Moreover, through the arts, they can present complex concepts visually, making them easier to understand.

Kids who develop an interest in the arts strengthen their critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving skills. Additionally, they establish their unique viewpoints within the community.

Music helps students develop better reasoning about time and space compared to students without musical education.

This reasoning about time and space is a precursor to logical, abstract thinking, and problem-solving skills necessary to excel in mathematics, engineering, and physics.

3. Children learn positive habits, behaviors, and attitudes.

The arts create a positive environment in schools. Experience has shown that when arts are integrated into the curriculum, indiscipline decreases and teachers are more effective at teaching.

Learning to play a musical instrument, creating a painting, learning to dance, or singing in a choir teaches students to take small steps, practice to improve, and to be persistent and patient.

Students gain confidence by achieving things that are not easy and develop character through discipline. The habits they acquire through the arts will serve them in all areas of life.

"When you think about the purposes of education, there are three," says Tom Horne, classical pianist and State Superintendent of Arizona, NV. "We're preparing kids for jobs. We're preparing them to be citizens. And we're teaching them to be human beings who can enjoy the deepest forms of beauty. The third is as important as the other two."

4. Students learn to pay attention to detail.

Some quick communication tools like WhatsApp and memes create laziness in reading and understanding. Art helps us recover the attention to detail we need for carrying out science projects or math applications.

When students draw, act, cook, sing, or write, they improve focus. Learning to pay attention from an early age to what we are doing is essential for a successful career in any discipline.

The arts create these small challenges to connect students with the present, the here and now.

This is key for kids to progress in their academic, personal, and ultimately professional achievements.

5. Through art students learn to take risks.

Art is not an exact science. Therefore, students feel more freedom to create. They will not feel judged if their product is not the same as their peers. They will not feel pressure or anxiety about fulfilling the proposed object.

In this way, kids will take more risks, will embrace mistakes as part of learning, and will work more flexibly.

All this helps students feel secure and confident in their productions and inventions.

These artistic activities boost self-confidence at all levels.

The fact of presenting their creations, singing, or representing a character in front of an audience will empower them to make presentations in the future of their work or businesses.

Receiving feedback on those productions will also increase their confidence and will decrease their fear of criticism. As long as it is done in terms of respect for the other and admiration for the work of others.

6. Children develop fine motor skills.

One of the obvious outcomes of art teaching is manual dexterity. Kids love to play with manipulatives, which is why they enjoy taking a brush or creating with crayons so much.

With prolonged use of cell phones, children are not developing those fine motor skills they need for coloring, cutting, outlining, writing, tracing, and erasing. Today more than ever, it is necessary for art to be included in the curriculum for all ages.

These skills will allow them to write confidently. Developing the small muscles of the hands, fingers, wrists also makes it easier for them to button up, tie their shoes, thread a needle, and hold a pencil correctly.

The more they practice, the more skilled they will be. Developing coordination will help them perform tasks that require precise movements like making an incision or decorating.

7. Art supports students to develop discipline and new learnings.

The commitment required for a work of art is long. A theatrical piece, a musical piece, or creating a world in Minecraft or Roblox takes time and effort.

The dedication they put into each production creates discipline. This skill is essential for improvement in any area of life.

Painting, sculpting, drawing, tracing are valid activities to discover the world around. Why can't the sun be blue? Why can't clouds be green? These free questions develop new learnings and possibilities in children. The world is not just text and numbers.

In fact, a study found that children who had four years of art scored 91 points higher on standardized tests than children who did not take art classes.

8. Art refines the capacity for intellectual abilities.

Art and music are basic aspects of our society and prevalent in our day-to-day life. Not teaching art in schools would leave them at a disadvantage compared to others.

Improvisation is a skill that few musicians know how to do with skill and beauty. Even when teaching music, we should let students experiment with sounds, timings, and silences. Let them create their own scores and details.

Improvisation is a skill that allows the adult to solve problems creatively because they are able to create different scenarios and possibilities.

George Bernard Shaw suggested that we use a mirror to see our face and art to see our soul. And just as math and language are important for brain development, the arts, according to studies, develop performance and aesthetics.

Performance because there must be special coordination between arms, hands, and fingers for the painter, sculptor, pianist, or violinist.

Coordination between what we think and decide to do with our legs, feet, fingers for the skater, dancer, or runner.

Coordination of the whole body for the speaker or basketball player.

And aesthetics because we all have a vision of what is beautiful. Both in color, strokes, perspective, and balance, as in music, books, or sports.

Both performance and aesthetics are fundamental for the biological development of the human being. And this will serve them both in school and in everyday life.

On the other hand, immersing children in music and the visual arts stimulates parts of the brain associated with academic achievements such as reading and math, as well as emotional development.

Likewise, the arts improve motivation, concentration, confidence, and teamwork. Additionally, visual arts generate pleasure hormones that simply by delighting in them, connect people to the deep world of seeing.

So, we should consider art as an imperative part of the education of our children.

9. The arts improve students' mental health.

When we have the opportunity to create something new, we give the brain a new pathway to develop.

That new path, if used frequently, will be more traveled than the old paths that led a person to be anxious or stressed.

This development of new neuronal pathways is called neuroplasticity and has a positive impact on our health.

Several studies from Frontiers in Psychology link aesthetic experiences with improvements in both physical and psychological health in their patients.

If we give students the time, space, and materials to make artistic productions to express themselves, this will help them manage stress situations, improve their memory, and feel more self-worth and self-love.

10. The arts develop creativity.

That the arts develop creativity sounds like an obvious

benefit, but the effects of creativity will extend throughout an individual's life.

The arts help children develop and express themselves better than other subjects like science or math.

Moreover, the arts develop personal identity. And clarity of identity creates motivation, which, in turn, leads to creative expression in something new. This reason alone would be enough for the arts to be part of the curriculum throughout the school stage, as it will lead to their improved cognitive, physical, mental, and personal development.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD, says that future employers are looking for creative people. 72% of respondents said it was the first quality they were looking for in an employee.

We should remove the word Arts from the academic curriculum and replace it with Creativity.

Art does not have academic connotations and is considered a waste of time. While creativity is a skill we all need for work and for life.

This study says: "If we teach children a lot of math and science but do not promote creativity, they will not grow up to be the engineers, scientists, inventors, or discoverers. Creativity is what helps the world solve many problems."

Creativity is one of the most important characteristics that companies are looking for in the 21st century.

In our classes, students create original works of art full of color that show creative use of space, create rhythms and songs of their own, write stories, and act in plays. Art classes at Rhema E-School provide a wonderful environment to develop creativity, which is so important in today's world.

11. The arts benefit memory retention and patience. Do you want your children to remember to do their homework, put dirty clothes in their place, or brush their teeth

before bed? Studies have shown that children who are exposed to the study of music from an early age develop better memory retention.

As students read notes, compose music, play an instrument, memorize dance steps, paint, and act in a drama, they are also learning to develop new concepts, grow their vocabulary, and understand language.

Pediatrician Dr. Perri Klass talked about the benefits of art education in schools in The New York Times. Klass says that art improves motivation, memorization, and academic achievement.

A curriculum that includes the study of the arts supports the learning process and increases the ability to retain academic material such as science and language. Creativity is effective in helping students who struggle with retaining information from lectures or assignments.

12. The arts help students learn math.

The arts require measurements, dealing with numbers, and proportional thinking, which fosters logical-mathematical thinking.

They also learn patterns (musical rhythms and dance patterns), spatial and geometric relationships (in the visual arts), and three-dimensional skills (in sculpture).

Students of the arts, especially music, usually perform better in math than their peers. When math and art are integrated, the ability to estimate, calculate, and work with fractions develops, according to research done by scholars at the Johns Hopkins University School of Education.

Similarly, this research report on child development says that the arts help discover new connections between ideas for solving problematic situations.

Artworks provide a visual context for learning about certain periods in history. Music, painting, and drama make literature come to life.

Graphic design and drawings like those made by inventors and engineers complement the learning about scientific and technological principles.

The arts create appreciation for aesthetics.

The arts teach young people about beauty and proportions.

Students can examine conflicts, power, emotions, and life itself through art.

Art has an incredible power to give us happiness, teach us to understand tragedies, promote empathy, and bring written words to life.

And much more.

And I could be here writing a book about all the other benefits of having art teaching as part of the curriculum.

Children learn to solve challenges and create strategies in the face of problems or situations.

It teaches them persistence, consistency, determination, indispensable qualities for achieving anything in life.

By developing a theatrical production, a concert, or an art show, students practice teamwork, learning the importance of collaborating with others for a common goal.

- They learn to express their intentions, receive and offer constructive criticism, and listen to the ideas of others.
- They develop leadership and self-learning.
- They learn to make their own decisions.
- They learn to correct their "mistakes."
- They develop their character and develop their personality and identity.
- They learn to plan and reflect.

Art makes children's brains work harder.

Finally, through the arts, children learn to observe, interpret, see different perspectives, analyze, and synthesize. In a world with so much confusing information and fake news, it is important that they have these critical thinking skills.

Let's give our boys and girls the opportunity to express themselves through the arts during their school time.

As educators, we can equip ourselves to offer creative practices in our classes and pedagogy.

So, where do we start?

Let's start by remembering that teaching art is not about recognizing which painting is expressionist and which is cubist. It's about preparing young minds for the invaluable experiences that art generates.

We can start with drawing. Drawing is not only the basis for other creative activities like painting, sculpture, or animation, but it is the basis for reading, writing, and mathematics.

The connection between drawing and geometric figures and their measurements cannot be denied. Additionally, drawing is the cheapest form of art; we only need a pencil and paper.

Here are some ideas:

- Tell your students to create stories with drawings. Even if they are stick figures and houses. When they're done, share the images so that another can "decode" the story. See how many versions of the story they can get.
- Little ones can dip their fingers in washable paint and create animals, people, and things.
- Encourage among your students or children that each one has their own sketchbook. There they can scribble,

draw, paint, stick pieces of grass or cotton, everything is valid. Once a month they can share their creations.

- Have your students draw a single geometric figure, the one they choose. And have them draw them big, small, and everywhere, even one on top of the other. Then, let them take colors and start painting them but without two figures touching each other. There's another original creation.
- They can also do this with potatoes and make figures in those potatoes, immersed in tempera to put them on paper.
- They can create a "hole in the wall" challenge. You can have everyone talk about it first and then draw what they "see through that hole."
- They can also take pieces of old magazines and make contemporary art just with pieces of paper, without using scissors.
- Kids can draw their names in 3D, then they can color their creations and make shadows that match from the light's point of view.

Mindfulness

In this village, we focus on *being*, as we are not human doers or knowers, but human beings.

We place strong emphasis on soft skills such as critical thinking, assertive communication, decision-making, conflict resolution, leadership, creativity, and teamwork.

We work on emotional intelligence, channeling emotions through mindfulness, meditation, and prayer.

This village provides the techniques and tools for the student to get to know themselves, their strengths and weaknesses, their talents and passions, and accordingly develop a life plan that prepares them to be the best version of themselves.

Additionally, we learn habits for maintaining excellent health through good nutrition and sports.

Mindfulness: What Is It and Why Teach It to Children?

Aristotle is credited with saying that the beginning of wisdom is to know oneself.

King David of Israel wrote in Psalm 77:6, "I will remember my song in the night; my heart shall meditate, and my spirit shall inquire."

Socrates said, "To find yourself, think for yourself."

William Shakespeare: "To thine own self be true."

And others have said:

"No man can, for any considerable period, show one face to himself and another to the multitude, without finally getting bewildered as to which may be true." (Nathaniel Hawthorne).

"The privilege of a lifetime is to become who you truly are." (Carl Jung)

"Be yourself, not your idea of what you think you ought to be, nor what someone else thinks you ought to be." (Henry David Thoreau).

Examining yourself requires constant self-awareness.

This, in turn, shapes how you interact with others and can lead to deeper and more fruitful relationships. It also frees you from the expectations of others, allowing you to be your authentic self.

Philosophers from antiquity have urged us to know ourselves, and rightly so.

With so much information bombarding them from all sides, many boys and girls no longer know who they are, what they like, or where to go.

People say one thing, family another, and the students themselves don't know who is right or how to find out.

Being sensitive is not a weakness.

That's why we teach Mindfulness from a young age. At least, an interpretation of what it can be.

In a nutshell, mindfulness is being present in the present.

It involves self-awareness and the study of oneself (knowledge, control, discipline, autonomy, esteem, dignity, acceptance, and appreciation).

It's not just meditation, as you might be thinking.

It's much more than that. It's the study of yourself, looking inward to see what's there and why.

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is an English word meaning to be conscious or aware.

In practice, it means being aware of:

- Our attention
- Our emotion
- Our thinking
- Our action

It's what psychologists now call emotional intelligence.

Cristian Izquierdo, one of our teachers of the subject says, "Essentially, mindfulness is about developing a deeper awareness of body, soul, and mind."

The first time I gave a class on mindfulness I told my students: it's hard to explain in words what it is, so we are going to practice it for a few classes and then we'll give it a definition.

After four classes everyone knew what it meant, and it became a compulsory subject for all courses, every term.

Mindfulness is something we all have, but not many practice.

Cristian says that we live in "auto-pilot" mode, going about our business with very little awareness of the details of our current experience. We don't even think about the intentions that motivate our actions. Mindfulness is not just about breathing, it's not just about developing calmness but about paying attention to oneself and observing thoughts, emotions, and feelings as they come and go without judging or devaluing oneself.

It's the ability to focus on a single task with all our focus and attention. The state of focusing on one thing is what the brain craves, because the brain:

- Doesn't like doing many things at once (multitasking).
- Isn't good at having many thoughts about what might happen (worry).
- Gets unbalanced by hearing the internal voices that tell us negative things (anxiety).

How to Practice Mindfulness

There are several practices that can help you reach states of being present in the present:

- Sitting and closing your eyes for 5 minutes feeling every part of your body, starting with your toes.
- Lying down, it doesn't matter if we fall asleep.
- Walking in nature and listening to the birds, smelling the flowers, feeling the trees, watching the shape of the clouds.
- Watching it rain.
- Talking about your feelings, fears, or attitudes. Drawing them.

- Doing yoga.
- Playing a sport.
- Meditating.

And the practices are so varied because no one in particular is perfect for everyone.

If there are people who have had traumatic experiences in the past and try meditation or attention to breathing, this can bring the memory more to the conscious and end up having a negative experience, instead of doing good.

Similarly, according to a study from Oxford University in 2022, if there are boys or girls who suffer from depression or anxiety symptoms, meditation can strengthen those negative voices in their internal conversation.

For this reason, it is recommended that they individually try different methods if they want to make mindfulness a daily practice.

In general, achieving states of Mindfulness helps us to:

- Reduce stress and anxiety.
- Be more aware of today and the people around us.
- Expand our focus and attention.
- Get to know ourselves, what we like, what we dislike.
- Be curious about others.
- Avoid premature judgment when thinking about things.
- Cultivate the beautiful things in each of us.
- Practice a calmer, more social, healthier, happier lifestyle.
- Improve our relationships with others.
- Rewire habits.
- Generate compassion for others and self-confidence.

Why Mindfulness?

The purpose of teaching mindfulness to children is to give them the skills to be aware of their internal and external experiences, to understand their emotions and how they manifest in their bodies so they can control them.

At Rhema E-School we have seen all these benefits and more in our mindfulness classes. Our students are:

More positive, focused on solutions rather than problems.

Capable of controlling negative emotions, like anger.

Able to put their feelings and emotions into words to better process the situations they experience at home.

Better peers by being aware of others around them.

Better students, by increasing their ability to focus and pay attention.

Although the practice of traditional mindfulness traditionally focuses on breathing exercises and meditation, we have taken it to a deeper level, addressing issues such as forgiveness, patience, decision-making, and other skills that make us better human beings. It's more about emotional intelligence and mindset.

We firmly believe that teaching children to know themselves will make them better children, siblings, and friends and in the future better adults and citizens.

Finally, Cristian Izquierdo says, "Thoughts can become facts and be part of our life as physical and emotional beings. If we want to have true peace, we must practice detachment.

How to Teach Your Children to Think Critically

How do you teach your children to think critically in a world that is moving at the speed of light and wants us to believe everything we see, learn, and hear?

The secret lies in the tense in which you think, and I'll explain why.

We are exposed to more than five thousand messages a day. Attention deficit is no longer just a children's issue; adults are experiencing it, too. We are increasingly bombarded with things to leave us no time to think for ourselves.

And as if that weren't enough, today's students continue to memorize dates, formulas, rivers, and seas from here and there. That isn't even thinking.

Critical Thinking is Not Popular

Let's do an exercise. I will write some words and you will read them carefully.

- Abortion
- Firearms
- Global warming
- Religion
- Politics

I assure you that in your mind, thought patterns are forming based on your values, beliefs, preconceived ideas,

and analyses that others and you have made in the past.

You have an opinion about each of these words and if you enter into a discussion with someone, you already know what you are going to say, because generally, people are not there to "listen and think" about what the other person is saying. They are there to say what they think.

Since "listening" nowadays has become "waiting for my turn to say what I want to say," without really listening and thinking about what the other person is sharing.

We could say that you are already thinking. Because you have an idea of the matter. But critical thinking is not just having an idea about a matter.

And yes, that is the act of thinking. Allowing the photons, the energy transmitted between brain neurons, to become thoughts. These are real, physical things that can be seen in brain scans.

Thoughts flow between neural highways or paths to become emotions and eventually behaviors.

That is reflective thinking.

Or put another way, it's not really critical thinking, it's reflecting on our previous beliefs and past experiences, ours or others'.

When we give students carte blanche to create something new, that's when true critical thinking is taking place.

What is Critical Thinking?

Reflecting is thinking with arguments, analysis, and evidence from the past.

Critical thinking involves thinking about what is possible, asking "what if?"

Critical thinking is about the future. About things that haven't happened yet but we believe there's a chance they could happen.

For example, 15 years ago nobody would have thought that two strangers could stay in the same house, sharing the bathroom and kitchen.

But today there is Airbnb with shares that went from USD$0.01 in 2009 to USD$108.82 today, becoming a $12 billion company.

Or Elon Musk who had a Plan A: to make cars run electrically and if that didn't work. And his Plan B is to go to Mars, to live, not to visit. That is critical thinking.

Yes, Diana, that's thinking for great thinkers, but how do I make my son and daughter really think, about the future?

Thank you for asking.

Critical Thinking is Not Memorizing

Some schools make students think by analyzing data and history, so as not to repeat it, right? That's reflecting on the past.

The act of thinking is when you have given the student a base of knowledge to start from. And then you let them build their own path on a specific project.

At Rhema E-School, Michael, our Code teacher, is teaching them the Python programming language. During the first month, he showed them through games how this programming language works.

In the second month, he gave them the basics of the language so they knew how it worked.

Now in the third month, time to prepare their project, they are divided into groups and are looking at the possibilities. What happens if they change the variables, move the algorithm, include something that wasn't there, remove what is there. That's thinking.

When we give the student free rein to the multiple solutions a problem can have, we give them permission to think.

We provide the information, a space for research, and then execution.

Another example is when we give our child a landscape to color. If we tell them the sky is blue, the trees are green, and the sun is yellow, we are not letting them go through the thinking process.

If, on the other hand, we give them the colors without saying anything. The child will have to think about the possibilities they have. What if the sky is pink? What if the clouds are blue? What if the trees are yellow?

That is the thought process we want in our children, free, without preconceived ideas, and with open possibilities of what can be.

Critical Thinking Has No Limits

When we give carte blanche for students to create something new, that's when true critical thinking is really taking place.

However, there are parents and teachers who want their children and students to be critical thinkers but they set limits. They tell them what is accepted and what is not. There is no chance to think critically there.

Thinking alone is fine. But thinking with others is collaboration and the results are exponential.

To think critically, more than one head is needed. You reach as far as your limits by beliefs, values, and principles. You will always need another person (usually) different from you in thought to be able to create something new.

Kelly Slater is a professional surfer. He holds the record for having won the world surfing championship eleven times. Kelly was in search of the perfect wave for decades like his fellow sportsmen.

Traveling around the world, he says he found it, in Oahu and Micronesia. But still, it wasn't the perfect wave. Because

he had to stay in the sea for hours before that wave that would lift him up and let him "ride" for less than a minute until he reached the shore.

It was only when he joined with engineer Brian Waxman to think about creating the perfect wave. Since he wasn't going to find it in the sea, the two of them decided to do something about it.

Critical Thinking is Crazy

And the result of this creative thinking process is Wave Pool.

A pool 700 meters long by 150 meters wide. A pool that operates with a specially designed submerged sheet that is dragged along a straight track, at high (or low) speed, displacing the water to create a wave that breaks along it creating a wave pool.

That is critical thinking in collaboration.

Only when a surfing fanatic teamed up with an engineer, could they achieve something fantastic.

A project that is overtaking all those who didn't believe that manually creating a perfect wave was possible.

We must help our children to think with their peers, with their friends, and with their "enemies." From there come the ideas that are becoming businesses in this digital age of millennials and centennials.

Let's set aside school individualism, the search for the best grade by themselves. Let's make collaboration the example to follow in schools. We no longer live in a secluded and lonely world, we are interconnected.

Long live collaboration so that processes of critical thinking that impact our and future generations can occur.

Let's recap:

- Critical thinking is thinking about the future, about what can be and is not yet.
- Critical thinking is not reflecting or having an opinion about something.
- To think critically, we must set aside preconceived ideas.
- Critical thinking involves thinking with another person (usually).

The secret is in the time you think. And that time is not yesterday, not today, it's tomorrow and what can be.

Conclusion: The Happiness Equation

Our purpose at Rhema E-School is to develop the gifts and talents of our students while they are happy learning. That's why we don't focus on content or memorization of information that's already accessible with a Google search, but rather on enhancing children's strengths and helping them find what they are passionate about. This is why, instead of teaching the perfect square trinomial, we teach the equation of happiness.

What does that mean? I'll explain it to you.

What is Happiness?

Happiness is not a goal, it's not something we seek or find at the end of the road to success. In fact, "success" is not a prerequisite for happiness. However, happiness does help us achieve success in life.

Happiness is our natural state. Look at a baby or a small child. As long as their basic needs for food, rest, and safety are met, they are happy. Even in refugee camps where there is extreme poverty, children laugh and play because that is their natural state, their "factory setting," so to speak.

It's like a cellphone that comes with certain settings when you buy it. But if you delete some apps or download others that are not compatible, the phone stops functioning optimally. It's the same with us, as somehow, as we grew up, we were trained not to be happy. Perhaps we should learn from children.

The Happiness Equation

Let's do an exercise, a happiness list. Complete this sentence with all the simple things that come to mind:

I feel happy when _____

Examples: I feel happy when I hug my children, when I'm walking in nature, when I learn something new, when I read a good book, when I see my children happy, etc.

Now choose from those things you wrote down the top three that would make you the happiest.

Just writing that list will make you happy, as it makes you think about something good and creates a feeling of gratitude.

Surely your list is made up of simple moments in life. If we look for a pattern, we'll realize that happiness occurs when life seems to work the way we want it to.

You feel happy when life behaves as you want it to.

And the opposite is true: we are unhappy when reality does not match our hopes or expectations.

What this means is that if you perceive events as equal to or greater than your expectations, you are happy, or at least not unhappy.

This gives us the following equation:

HAPPINESS ≥ the perception of events in your life - the expectations of how your life should be

But here's the trick: it's not the event that makes us unhappy, it's the way we think about the event that makes us unhappy.

When we change our way of thinking about the things that happen to us, we can change our feelings and, therefore,

we can be happy just by changing our thoughts.

Today, more than ever, we need to teach children to manage their expectations well and to think not in terms of immediate gratification, but in controlling their emotions.

In our Mindfulness Village, we give boys and girls the tools to apply this equation. For example, we teach them:

- Emotional Intelligence
- Critical Thinking
- Decision Making
- Patience and respect for others
- And much more!

Are your children happy in their school? Do they love learning and discovering the world?

If not, give them the chance to experience school in the open air. Visit rhemaschool.com to request a free trial day.

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About Diana Pineda

A passionate advocate for education and lover of children, her desire is to revolutionize education to develop happy citizens who transform their environments.

Diana graduated from the Universidad Externado de Colombia with a degree in Finance and International Relations and from the Universidad de Medellín in Pedagogy and Didactics.

As a quintessential multipotentialite, Diana has lived in four countries and had several professional careers, from sales director at a telecommunications company to a Zumba instructor. As an entrepreneur, she has founded several companies, but the most important of all is Rhema E-School.

Diana has two adult children and lives with her husband in London, UK.