

## Literacy with an Attitude: Educating the working class in their own self-interest

Indianapolis has 2 types of education, one for the working class and one for the powerful.

1. *Domesticating Education*: Leads to functional literacy, the kind that makes a person productive and dependable, but not troublesome. One learns to be a “good worker”: wear the company uniform properly, be to work on time, get along to get ahead, follow directions, and work hard to maintain their employer’s profits.
2. *Empowering Education*: Leads to powerful literacy, the kind leading to power/authority. This enables one to know how to think for oneself. It helps to understand how the system works, how to critique and change it, and how to acquire power and authority in it.

According to Finn in his 1999 book, *Literacy with an Attitude: Educating the working class in their own self-interest*, ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literacy\\_with\\_an\\_Attitude](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literacy_with_an_Attitude)) when the children of the wealthy get powerful literacy nothing changes; but, when the children of the poor get powerful literacy, you get literacy with an attitude—making students critical thinkers.

Powerful literacy when acquired by the blue-collar class uses reading and writing as a means to help them in their struggle to get a better deal. This implies that there may be those who would rather see the poor not have this powerful literacy because it would be troublesome.

Below is a comparison of domesticating education vs. empowering education:

<b><i>Domesticating Education: What We Have and Don't Want</i></b>	<b><i>Empowering Education: What We Need and Don't Have</i></b>
Knowledge is presented as facts isolated from wider bodies of knowledge.	Knowledge is rarely presented as facts isolated from wider bodies of knowledge.
Knowledge taught is not related to the lives and experiences of the students.	Knowledge taught is always related to the lives and experiences of the students.
Teachers do not make a practice of explaining how assignments are related to one another.	Teachers make a practice of explaining how assignments are related to one another.
Work is easy.	Work is challenging.
Textbook knowledge is valued more highly than knowledge gained from experience.	Textbook knowledge validated/challenged in terms of knowledge gained from experience.
Knowing the answers and knowing where to find the answers are valued over creativity, expression, and analysis.	Creativity, expression, and analysis are essential beyond knowing the answers or knowing where to find the answers.
Discussion of challenges to the status quo, past and present, rarely occurs.	Discussion of challenges to the status quo, past and present, frequently occurs.
History of labor unions, civil rights, women's suffrage, and other victories for justice and equity are taught as the accomplishments of "heroes" and "heroines" not as the result of grass roots struggles.	History of labor unions, civil rights, women's suffrage, and other victories for justice and equity are taught as collective action taken by common people.
Instruction is typically copying notes and writing answers to factual questions.	Instruction is rarely copying notes and writing answers to factual questions.
Work is evaluated in terms of following steps. A satisfactory answer does not suffice. "Do it my way or it's wrong."	"Work" is sometimes presented as following steps in procedures, but students are given choices and rewarded for original solutions.
"Writing" consists of filling in blanks or lines on teacher-made handouts/workbook pages.	"Writing" is taught in a workshop format.
Both teachers and students focus on good grades/diploma as the objective of schooling.	Neither teachers nor students focus on good grades/diploma as the objective of schooling.
Students' access to materials is tightly controlled.	Students have access to materials.

Movement of students is tightly controlled.	Students have ample freedom of movement.
Students rewarded for passivity/obedience, not for initiative and inquisitiveness.	Students are rewarded for initiative and inquisitiveness, not passivity and obedience.
Students are rarely given an opportunity to express their own ideas.	Students are frequently given an opportunity to express their own ideas.
Teachers are gatekeepers. They focus on correctness before expression.	Teachers focus on expression before correctness.
Teachers make derogatory remarks to and about students.	Teachers never make derogatory remarks to or about students.

For more see: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=laS1y4f\\_U2E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=laS1y4f_U2E) johnharrisloflin@yahoo.com