



A Prison Called School: Creating Effective Schools for All Learners

By Maure Ann Metzger

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Why are our educational institutions and practices such a poor fit for so many students? *A Prison Called School* addresses the complex issues that place many students at a disadvantage as they try to survive yet another hurdle in life—school. Although some students are able to navigate and succeed in the current system, other students struggle to survive a system that is unable to meet their needs. For those students, school can feel like a twelve-year prison sentence.

Students who cannot fit the outdated, one-size-fits-all model, are further penalized by a system that blames the struggling student rather than holding the institution accountable. For students to thrive in school, the system, not the students, must change in deep and substantial ways. *A Prison Called School* is a powerful catalyst for creating the empowering, engaging, and effective learning environments that all students need to succeed in school and life.

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Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

Metzger builds this study on multiple sources: interviews with high school students (from her doctoral research and earlier); observations of young adults struggling in schools; literature reviews; and personal experiences in education—as a teacher, psychologist, and youth advocate. Her aim is to raise the visibility of high school students by describing their experiences; pose questions about school effectiveness; suggest changes in schooling; and emphasize the need to value, empower, and engage young adults in educational settings. The four chapters in part 1 describe the struggles, challenges, and attributes of high school students; the six chapters in part 2 discuss the elements, features, and requirements for transforming (versus reforming) schools. Metzger chastises schools—specifically, staff and teachers—for creating and maintaining high school environments and curricula that are sterile, disengaging, marginalizing, outdated, oppressive, disconnected, standardized, impersonal, passive, and devaluing. Metzger suggests that though one can find research and literature that provide the bases to transform schools, the educational system continues to exist for itself and for the adults responsible for educating young adults. In fact, schools ought to exist for the students—for supporting, empowering, engaging, respecting, and trusting them and for fostering inquiry and partnerships using strategies leading to ‘succeeders,’ i.e., skilled graduates with dispositions to be active, participatory citizens. Summing Up: Highly recommended. All readers. (*CHOICE*)

Maure Ann Metzger presents a compelling narrative of the many difficulties encountered in schools by disadvantaged students. Especially effective is her analysis of how poverty affects a student's ability 'to navigate the system' and find success in school. The use of extensive student anecdotal data provides strong support for her characterization of schools as prisons.... [T]he book is a brilliant and valuable presentation of why disadvantaged students feel imprisoned in school. (*School Administrator*)

Despite 100 plus years of continuous "reform", teenagers still experience high school as something akin to "reform school". Especially the least advantaged. Metzger puts it all together with both eloquence and force. She has the anecdotal detail, empathy for all the actors, and ideas and examples for how it could be different. We'll repeat the same-old reform cycle again unless we pay attention to what's really happened in the past and happens daily in the schools we have at present. Thanks Maure Ann Metzger for this sympathetic, hard-hitting and well-documented account. (Deborah Meier, McArthur Fellowship recipient, Steinhardt School of Education, New York University, author "In Schools We Trust: Creating Communities of Learning in an Era of Testing and Standardization")

A Prison Called School provides a comprehensive roadmap for school transformation for all students including the complex and frequently unmet needs of the most disempowered, disadvantaged and at-risk learners. Dr. Metzger identifies a variety of critical and empirically supported components of effective educational reform that are currently missing in many of the current school reform movements. Specifically, *A Prison Called Schools* expertly and passionately articulates the vitally important but frequently overlooked need for student empowerment and engagement in creating effective schools for all. Dr. Metzger weaves the powerfully true stories of disempowered and underserved students with her extensive experience in schools and comprehensive research-based paradigm for school transformation that will profoundly impact schools, educators and students. (Doug Anderson, PhD, LP, consultant, keynote speaker, professional coach and founder of Solutions and Strengths, LLC)

I am impressed with *A Prison Called School* as the author identifies the key causes of problems with our

schools today. I know of no other book about schooling so readable, grounded in research and practice, and thoroughly documented. It also suggests directions for a better system. An absolute must read for educators and the public. (Wayne B. Jennings, PhD, director, International Association for Learning Alternatives)

A Prison Called School is a must read book for anyone interested in wanting to make school a safe non-corporate inclusive space for all students and end the school to prison pipeline. (Anthony J. Nocella II, Fort Lewis College)

A Prison Called School is a dynamic and vigorous examination of America's oppressive school system. Dr. Metzger, based on her extensive experience within the educational system in a variety of roles, her research examining student leadership, as well as her comprehensive examination of current research in the field of school reform, exhibits a courageous and comprehensive strategy in challenging the status quo of our country's educational system.

The strength in the book, however, rests not only with Dr. Metzger's expertise and writing skill, but with the voices of students; voices that are often either ignored or not solicited in mainstream education. These students' voices reflect their pain, confusion, and inherent recognition of the need for school change, not the least of which is for their humanity to be respected, and their need for learning, development, and engagement in becoming productive citizens of the world. Dr. Metzger outlines a holistic strategy to ensure that students are the hub and the catalyst to transform schools. (Susan Strauss, RN, EdD, harassment and bullying consultant, author "Sexual Harassment and Bullying: A Guide to Keeping Kids Safe and Holding Schools Accountable")

Many students struggle to survive a system that has become yet another obstacle in their life to overcome. The current, one-size-fits-all educational model requires students to adapt to the system, but in order for students to thrive, schools, not the students, must change in deep and substantial ways. *A Prison Called School* is a powerful catalyst for creating the kind of empowering, engaging, and effective learning environments that *all* students need to succeed in school and life.

About the Author

Maure Ann Metzger has an Ed.D. in Leadership, a M.S. in School Psychology, and a B.S. in Special Education. During her 27 years in education, Maure Ann worked as an educator, school psychologist, and leader of district professional development. She primarily worked with high school students in alternative and special education settings. Maure Ann is an expert in the field of youth leadership and has an extensive speaker and training portfolio that includes presentations at the national, state, and local level. She and her students won numerous awards for their leadership program and projects.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Derek Morton:

Nowadays reading books be a little more than want or need but also be a life style. This reading addiction give you lot of advantages. The advantages you got of course the knowledge the particular information inside the book this improve your knowledge and information. The info you get based on what kind of guide you read, if you want get more knowledge just go with training books but if you want really feel happy read one together with theme for entertaining such as comic or novel. The particular *A Prison Called School: Creating Effective Schools for All Learners* is kind of guide which is giving the reader capricious experience.

William Grant:

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