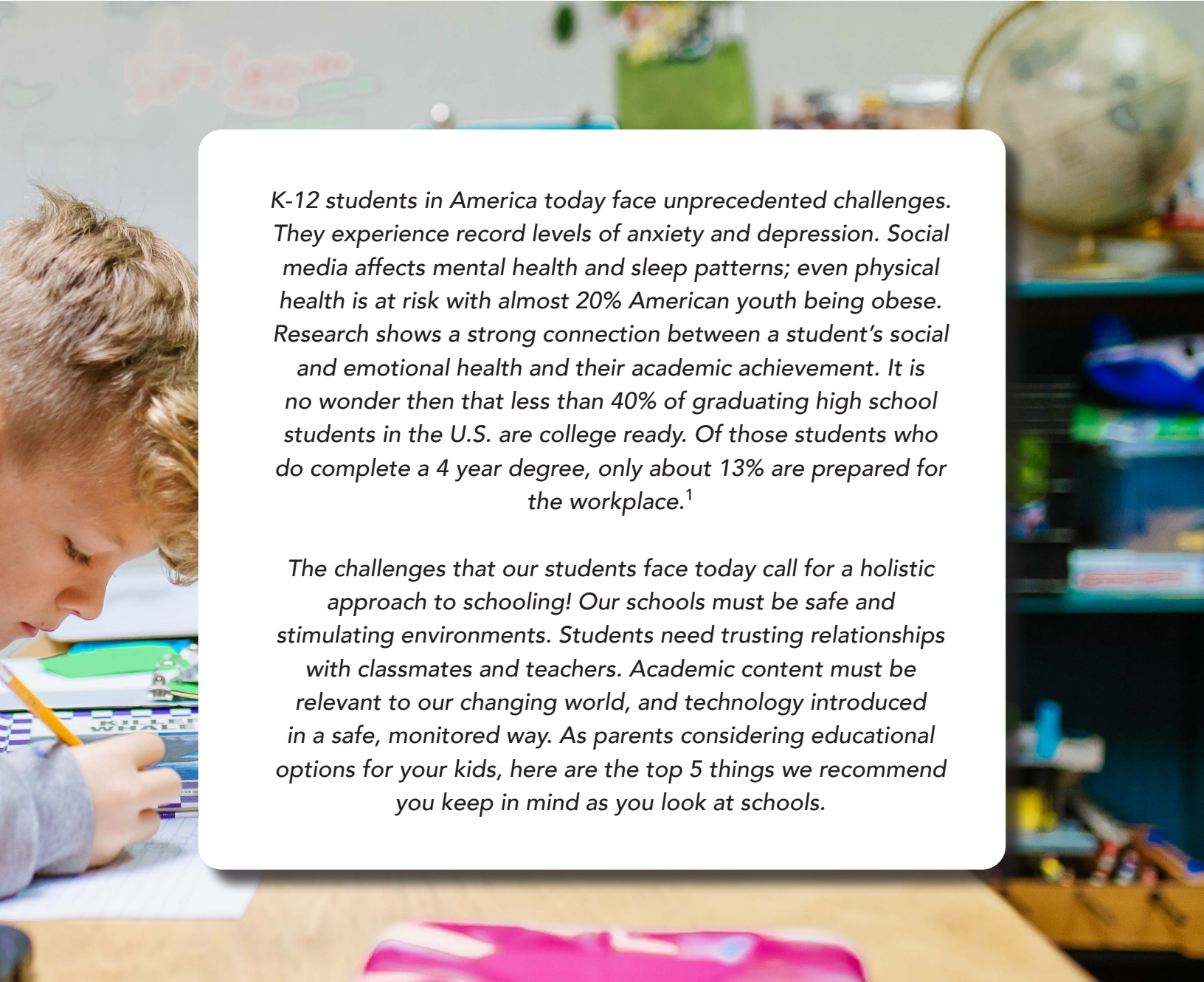




# **5 THINGS SCHOOLS MUST BE DOING**

**TO ADDRESS THE  
EDUCATION CRISIS**





*K-12 students in America today face unprecedented challenges. They experience record levels of anxiety and depression. Social media affects mental health and sleep patterns; even physical health is at risk with almost 20% American youth being obese. Research shows a strong connection between a student's social and emotional health and their academic achievement. It is no wonder then that less than 40% of graduating high school students in the U.S. are college ready. Of those students who do complete a 4 year degree, only about 13% are prepared for the workplace.<sup>1</sup>*

*The challenges that our students face today call for a holistic approach to schooling! Our schools must be safe and stimulating environments. Students need trusting relationships with classmates and teachers. Academic content must be relevant to our changing world, and technology introduced in a safe, monitored way. As parents considering educational options for your kids, here are the top 5 things we recommend you keep in mind as you look at schools.*

## **5 Things Schools Must Be Doing**

- 1** Offer Social and Emotional Education
- 2** Foster Creativity and Meaningful Use of the Arts
- 3** Teach the Tools and Ethics of Technology
- 4** Interdisciplinary Teaching
- 5** Teacher Autonomy and Trust



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# 1 OFFER SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL EDUCATION

Kids can have the best grades in the world, but it doesn't mean much if they don't have friends. Make sure your school offers social and emotional education. This means your kids learn to manage their own emotions, talk to peers and adults, and learn how to resolve a conflict. This may sound simple, but these are the kinds of skills that will set them up for a healthy adult life and it's what employers value in the workplace!

Proverbs 28:1b says "The righteous are bold as a lion." The Proverbs were written to teenagers. This verse highlights the kind of confidence that comes with righteousness. In the Bible, righteousness refers to right relationships - with God and with others. Teach young people how to maintain healthy relationships and you'll see confident, bold kids!

At The Academy we offer Social-Emotional classes at every grade level. Our teachers are trained to incorporate such lessons into all subjects. From our administration to our recess monitors, we prioritize the development of these skills and values among our students!<sup>2</sup>



1 <https://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2016-04-27/high-school-seniors-arent-college-ready-naep-data-show>

2 KnowledgeWorks. (2018, February 22). Social-Emotional Skills Are at the Core of Future Readiness. <https://knowledgeworks.org/resources/social-emotional-skills-readiness/>

# 2

# FOSTER CREATIVITY + MEANINGFUL USE OF THE ARTS



When it comes to how public schools are funded, creative arts often get the boot.<sup>3</sup> Painting, music, theater - these things are cut in favor of more 'academic' classes. But such changes are short-sighted.

Creativity is what civilizations were made of. Ingenuity, problem-solving, collaboration, persuasive speech - these are the real benefits of the creative arts. These are the things that promote healthy people which lead to healthy societies.

"In the beginning God created..." (Genesis 1:1). We are made in the image of a creative God, who left us His word in the form of songs (Psalms), poetry, and stories. It's our job to foster that same ability in young people. From the calming benefits of drawing or painting, to the high-pressure, collaborative environment of a theater production, students are learning. They are learning to analyze and imitate with precise fine motor skills. They are learning to articulate and express what is important to them.

At the Academy for G.O.D. we teach students that creativity is more than just splashing paint on a canvas. Creativity is an ability that is uniquely human, to make order out of chaos, to organize an environment so that it is hospitable for others. Building is a creative process, gardening is an act of creativity. These things plus photography, documentary-making, choir, band, and much more are all on the daily schedule at the Academy!

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3 Swapp, N. (2016, October 4). Creativity & Academics: The Power of an Arts Education. Edutopia. <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/creativity-academics-power-of-arts-education-neil-swapp>



# 3 TEACH THE TOOLS AND ETHICS OF TECHNOLOGY

In the book of Genesis human beings are charged to take dominion over their environments. Today, this includes environments like technology and the huge digital platform it opens up. Technology can be a wonderful tool; it gives us access to vast amounts of information and helpful programs. Yet like any tool it must be taught to be used in a safe, ethical way.

Students must learn the self-management skills to know when to access technology and how to sift through resources to identify credible sources. It is also crucial that they learn how to engage other people through technology, on group forums and even social media. At the Academy each student is required to have an iPad, and is taught how to use it as an educational device. We implement a rigorous security system on school iPads, and train teachers and parents how to use it. It is our job both to protect students from access to harmful inputs, and train them how to use technology for good.



# 4

# INTERDISCIPLINARY TEACHING



Has your student ever complained to you, “But how am I ever going to use this?” Students are not wrong for asking this question. It’s natural to want to know why we are learning something and how we’ll use it in the future. If we can’t give students a good answer to that question, we might be doing something wrong!

A weakness of our current education system is how subjects are isolated to particular blocks. First period Algebra. Second period English. Third period P.E. While this kind of schedule is certainly easier on teachers and administrators, it leads to disconnected learning - learning in a vacuum. Students are left wondering how they will ever use Algebra or why grammatical sentence structure matters.

A good school will prioritize interdisciplinary learning. Math for example, should be taught through projects that incorporate science, technology or engineering alongside it so that students are using and applying each skill. Once students see the benefit of a skill, enthusiasm increases. Learning should be exciting!

# 5 TEACHER AUTONOMY AND TRUST

When Jesus spoke about the student-teacher dynamic he said this: "A student is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher." (Luke 6:40) Jesus highlights how a teacher is a role model, an example, someone who has such an influential role in a student's life that the student would strive to be like that teacher.

Among industrialized countries today, every nation that boasts a successful education system has a key trait in common: the honor that teaching receives as a profession. Teachers are among the most educated and well-paid occupations, and they continually hone their craft. This is something that needs to change in American school systems; you can start by looking for a school where teachers are respected and trusted by administration and their students.

At The Academy we strive to model this value. Teachers are heavily involved in developing and refining curriculum. They also have the autonomy to teach it in a way that engages the interests and gifts of their students. More than facilities, equipment or curriculum, teachers will always be the most valuable resource!

