

Dr. Mishkat Al Moumin: What is Education for?



[On the Road Again](#) is an exclusive monthly feature on our Roadmap 2031 initiative, written by Dr. Mishkat Al Moumin, a leading voice in thought leadership on the future of public education. We house her collective work on our official [Roadmap 2031](#) page. Follow her there!

“Did the Student Pass the Test?”

That question comes up often. It sounds reasonable, responsible, even caring. But it reveals very little about what a student can actually do, who the student is becoming, or how that student will navigate the world beyond the classroom.

I have sat in rooms where decisions about students were reduced to numbers. Scores, averages, percentages. Clean data. Easy to report. Hard to defend when you look at the student sitting across from you.

A student can pass every test and still struggle to think independently. Another can fall short on an exam and lead a team, solve real problems, and carry others through difficult moments. Which one is prepared for life?

The focus on test scores needs to shift.

Before identifying new metrics, the role of education needs to be clear. Education should provide the tools to land a job, strengthen judgment beyond finding the correct answer, and help individuals find a way forward when facing life challenges without waiting for instructions. Education should also shape how people relate to others, engage in their communities, and carry responsibility.

These Outcomes are not Captured in a Test Score

Yet, much of what is measured still reflects a narrow definition of success. High test scores in environments where students compete for a higher grade or carry anxiety about how high the score needs to be. Attendance. Completion. Standardized performance. These indicators have a place, but they do not tell the full story.

At Advanced Technologies Academy in Las Vegas, students in the Web Design and Development program build websites for local nonprofits and small businesses. They meet with clients, define scope, design and develop the site, and revise based on feedback, with many partners continuing to use the final product. At [North Valleys High School](#) in Reno, students in the Engineering and Manufacturing pathway design and produce parts using computer-aided design (CAD) software and fabrication tools, present their work to industry partners, and graduate with certifications that support entry into technical fields. At [Elko High School](#), agriculture and welding students complete supervised projects tied to local ranching and fabrication needs, document their process, and present outcomes that often lead to employment or continued training. These are not simulations. Students work with real clients, real constraints, and real expectations. The outcome is a completed project, a usable product, and a portfolio that carries value beyond the classroom.

That is what Preparation looks Like

Students need to solve problems that do not have one answer. They need to work across differences, make decisions with incomplete information, and recover when things do not go as planned. They need to understand themselves, not just the material in front of them.

If this is what Education is Expected to Deliver, then the Metrics need to Follow

A metric should lead to a decision. If it does not change instruction, shift resources, or improve how students experience school, then that metric has little value.

Data should not sit in reports. It should move something.

A decline in engagement should lead to a change in instruction. A gap in access should lead to a shift in resources. A breakdown in belonging should lead to a different approach to school culture. Measurement should drive action.

Rethinking how success is measured is not about adding more metrics but about choosing the right ones.

The work ahead is not to abandon structure, but to redefine it. Metrics should reflect growth, not just status. Metrics should capture belonging, agency, and long-term impact, not just short-term performance. Metrics should help educators act, not just report.

Call to Action

If you are an educator, take one metric you use today and ask a simple question:

What decision does this trigger? If the answer is unclear, it may be time to rethink it.

If you are a leader, look at the data your team reviews. Does it change what happens for students, or does it only describe what already happened?

If you are part of a school community, ask what success should look like for your students five years after graduation, not just at the end of the semester.

What should education prepare students to do?

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