Room for Debate recently asked a panel to respond to a similar question, “Is Creativity Endangered?” Cecilia Conrad, the vice president for the MacArthur Fellows program at the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, offered this response:

Reports of the death of American creativity are an exaggeration. The hyperloop, Google Glass, nano-pharmaceuticals and mind-controlled robotic legs are all examples of its continued vitality.

That said, people with innovative and cutting-edge ideas have likely spent much of their lives swimming against the tide.

Creativity flourishes at the intersections of traditional disciplines, but traditional means of assessment often marginalize individuals working to define new and unique fields of endeavor. From the high-stakes tests in K-12, to the academic tenure clock, to the economy’s focus on short-term return on investments, American society’s reward structures tend to discourage unconventional thinking and limit risk-taking....

Students: Tell us ...

- How often does your school encourage you to do something creative? To design, invent and imagine new ideas? Tell us about a creative activity or project you have worked on.
- Do you think schools provide young people with enough opportunities to be creative? Why?
- Are you a creative person? In what ways?
- How important do you think creativity is for success? Why?
- The Room for Debate piece begins with the statement: “Critics have lamented the ‘creativity crisis’ in recent years ...” Do you agree with those critics? Do you think America is facing a “creativity crisis?” Explain.