

Solution to the Educational Crisis

More than 1.2 million students will not graduate from high school this year (2007) according to a recent report by Editorial Projects in Education. Editorial Projects in Education is a creditable non-profit organization that conducts extensive research to help raise the level of awareness about important issues in American education.

We have an educational crisis in the United States. Why aren't millions of parents outraged and taking a stand? Why aren't our leaders, including the President and Congress, making this issue a major priority?

This report by Editorial Projects in Education also provides startling statistics. Many major cities have schools in which less than half of the students graduate. One major city had schools in which almost 75% of the students failed to graduate. This is deplorable and tragic.

Many of our schools are failing to adequately educate our kids at a time when a good education has never been more important. What will the job prospects and quality of life be for students who do not even complete high school? How will employers in the U.S. remain competitive in the global marketplace if this trend continues? These are questions that need to be addressed.

Problems provide opportunities for solutions

In every crisis there are opportunities to make a positive difference. Every problem has a solution. What is a possible solution to the educational crisis? There are many schools and teachers doing a great job educating our students. We need to examine the schools, courses, and teachers that are producing successful results and create models of what is working.

For example, eighty percent of the economically disadvantaged students who graduate from KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program) charter schools go to college. These kids from the poorest neighborhoods, who on the average are two grades behind when they start at KIPP, are outscoring students from excellent public schools on national standardized tests.

Many community colleges offer courses in study skills and effective learning strategies. These courses teach students how to learn, identify their best learning styles and skills, set goals and manage their time. These courses are often available to high school students as part of early college start programs.

I came out of retirement a year ago to teach success and study skill strategy courses part-time for a community college. One of the courses I teach is for at-risk students who enter college with two or more deficiencies. Students who take this course graduate at significantly higher rates than those who are not enrolled.

Why are the Kipp schools and many college success strategy courses working? The answer is motivated students who work hard, dedicated teachers and courses which help students identify skills, talents, goals and how they learn best. Students are motivated to learn when they are focused on realistic goals and see the relevance of their education to these goals.

An education should bring out the best in our students, develop their potential and natural gifts and help them to become positive contributors to society. We need to create educational systems which model schools, courses and teachers which have proven track records of helping students to succeed. This is one solution to the education crisis and a way to provide our young people with the education they deserve.

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