

COVID19 – Wuhan Virus and One Lesson We Learned.

Education methods in middle and high schools needs to be reevaluated. The Order by State Government that shut down the schools for anywhere from 4 to 8 weeks and in some cases cancel the rest of the school year has exposed a big falsehood on what generates a good education. My intent is not to denigrate in anyway the steps some of the school systems have taken to ensure the students have an ongoing education.

I will reference some of the actions taken in New Jersey only to point out the flexibility they engendered to keep school in progress. Everyone was to use the internet to log into school to emulate a roll call. They would access their assignments and had to complete them by early evening. This was a great way of dealing with any subject that did not require a in-person or hands on assignment – think biology or chemistry lab projects.

This lends me to believe that this can be the ongoing process to learn a subject. The text book can be viewed online for reference and reading assignments. One copy of the book can be viewed by hundreds of students at one time. The students complete their assignment for the subject and either up load their report or log in and take a test. A test answer key can be prepared in advance and the scores automatically generated. One teacher can prepare a test for hundreds of students. Uploaded reports are another matter as a teacher has to review, comment and grade the material. But once again the uploaded report is a digital document and the marking process can be done online. (Think Track Changes in a Word Document.)

The above practice can be done by a teacher or teachers anywhere in the state, country or the world. The subject matter can be enhanced by video broadcast via YouTube or other venue. Now we can harness the best of the best of the teaching community for our children.

Those subjects requiring hands on or school activities where one needs to be physically present can be performed in a much smaller school facility and one designed to specifically handle the unique requirements, science lab, band practice, sports. Debate clubs, Chess Clubs can be done online, Skype, Hangout, GoTo Meeting, etc.

The cadre of teachers and administrators can be greatly reduced. The technology support personnel will increase to keep things operational.

Most schools could be reduced by half in size and support, thereby reducing taxes. It will be cheaper to pay for a laptop and printer for each student than paying current tuition.

These same principles can be carried to the college level. Many college courses are conducted by teacher aides and not the professor. Now a professor can conduct a class anywhere in the country and to a much larger audience. There are many online college courses in existence today. Just need to make the school's political and parochial processes secondary to the student's education.

What are the hurdles that face the family? Who oversees the home schooling? Parents have to work. This may open the doors for a different class or level of educators. Think midwife, teacher's aide, teaching apprentice or journeyman. Do the kids share a house or apartment for school?

Just think how many school buses can be sidelined. Ought to make the Green Deal folks take notice.

Now this is being penned, rather typed, by someone who took many courses at several colleges, but never stayed long enough to earn a degree. I went to colleges at night as I had to work and feed a family. But I went to school to learn about a subject. Everything was in book at the library. Even the late fee was less than buying the book. Did I miss out on some pearl of knowledge the professor could impart? Probably. Tech school was different as it required hands on to make something or wire a board.

It is said the doctor who graduates at the bottom of his class is still a doctor. I am probably that person in some ways; jack of all trades, master of none. Learning is the student's responsibility. Teachers provide the path and impart some knowledge on the subject matter. Of course, there is the adage, those than can, do; those that can't teach. Hard knocks is the real teacher, not necessarily the best teacher. I could have easily learned not to put my hand on the hot stove without burning myself to find out why.

Reorganizing or reinventing any process is difficult as it requires commitment from all parties. That commitment has to be in terms of capital, retraining, resetting of goals, and sometimes new personnel. Much like when we have to turnaround a troubled company. And our education system is a troubled company.

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