

21st Century Education Reform – A Three-Tiered Approach

Introduction

Let's face it, there's something wrong with education today. Not just today, but for a long time. Over three decades ago, *A Nation At Risk* made a stark declaration;

“...while we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the United States and the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people” (*A Nation At Risk*, 1983).

While this controversial Report has met with critics over the years, one thing that be ignored is the accuracy of the Report today. *Historically*, the United States maintained a high standard in the education of our students, from kindergarten through high school and into the college years. Yet, since the Report was released, and educational and curricula reform has swept the nation, we have seen very little progress, let alone improvement in our student's education.

In 1983, it was noted that American students performed poorly when compared to students of the same levels overseas; there was a high level of functional illiteracy (functional literacy being those skills needed to read, write, and “do” math for real-life purposes) among adults; and declining achievement-test scores (Adams and Ginsberg, n.d.).

And it didn't stop there. There was an increase in remedial college courses to get new college students “up to speed” on things that they should have known by that point in their education. There was also an increase in business and military remedial training and education as new graduates entering the workforce had little to no skills needed to be successful. Curriculum was “watered-down,” and there was an ever-growing increase in the lowering of expectations and standards in student performance (*A Nation At Risk*).

Furthermore, a narrowing of teaching on basic reading and computational skills de-emphasized education of other essential talents, such as comprehension, analysis, problem-solving, and the ability to draw conclusions. For the first time, the educational skills of one generation would not surpass, nor would they even equal, those of its predecessors (Adams and Ginsberg).

Today, it is apparent that the trillions of dollars (yes...trillions) has resulted in nothing more than various curricula changes, educational band-wagon methodologies and interventions, and even more watering-down of subject material. We spend more per student now, even in inflation-adjusted dollars, than ever before, and we see no noticeable increase in our student's abilities or skill levels.

What's worse is that, given the current data, we have actually seen a DECREASE in these skills and knowledge areas that are vital to the success of our economy and marketability (Pew Research Center, 2020). American students stand 38th out of 71 recorded countries in math, and 24th in science. In other studies (OECD), American students rank 30th out of 35 in math and 19th in science. And in yet another study (NAEP), there is actually a dip in scores starting in 1995.

Looked at another way, the 2015 NAEP report rated 40% 4th graders, 33% of 8th graders, and only 25% of 12th graders as “proficient” or “advanced” in math, with nearly equal statistics in science.

DATA TYPE	2000	2017
Reading Proficiency		
Grade 4	31%	37%
Grade 8	33%	36%
Grade 12	35%	37%
Math Proficiency		
Grade 4	24%	40%
Grade 8	26%	34%
Grade 12	23%	25%

Table 1 – Educational Proficiency Levels (2000-2017)

So what, then, is causing this and more importantly, how do we, as a nation, address this?

A Three-Tiered Approach

When we look at all of the data and the factors that are relevant to education, from K-12 to higher education and adult or continuing education, **three broad categories** play a significant role. I place these in the “rankings” I feel are relevant to the success of our children and, in turn, of our businesses and national well-being. These are:

1. Community and Family
2. Professional and Business
3. Educational and Administrative

It is no surprise how vital the community and family unit is to the education of our children. It is through community and parenting that our children are *supposed* to learn the *qualities* that will guarantee success in life; respect, proper behavior, the difference between right and wrong, good and bad. It was once said, “It takes a village to raise a child,” and that saying is still accurate and more important today than ever before. Look at these critical changes in households and families (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020) (pertinent/important factors in **bold**):

DATA TYPE	1940	2019
Married Households	78%	49%
Non-Family Households	11%	35%
Families with Children under 18 – Married	20,000,000	34,000,000
Percent of Married White Families with Children Under 18	(1980) 82%	70%
Percent of Married Black Families with Children Under 18	(1980) 50%	38%
Families with Children under 18 – Mother Only	<2,000,000	10,000,000
Families with Children under 18 – Father Only	<1,000,000	3,000,000
Men’s Marital Status (Married/Divorced)	(1950) 69%/4%	53%/9%
Women’s Marital Status (Married/Divorced)	(1950) 67%/2%	50%/11%
Labor Force – BOTH Husband and Wife	(1985) 50%	51%
Labor Force – Husband Only	(1985) 29%	20%
Labor Force – Wife Only	(1985) 4%	9%

Table 2 – Household and Marital Statistics (1940-2019)

DATA TYPE	1940	2000
Median Percentage of Diploma Holders (from 25-70)	24%	80%
Whites	26%	83%
Black	8%	72%
Hispanic	(ND)	52%
Median Percentage of Bachelor Degree Holders (From 25-70)	4%	24%
White	5%	26%
Black	1%	14%
Hispanic	(ND)	10%

Table 3 – Educational Statistics (1985-2019)

On top of the above data, we also see an increase in **adult children (25-34)** living at home. While not a clear indication of educational proficiency, the data can be correlated to the statistics provided. As the academic proficiencies of our students stagnate or drops, the number of adult children increases. **In 1960, less than 10% of young adults lived at home with their parents; in 2019, that number had jumped to nearly 17% (USAFacts, n.d.).** Factoring in the increase in population that increase is even more staggering.

Along with community and family involvement in education, **there needs to be investment by local professionals and businesses.** While some larger businesses in fact invest in outreach programs and internships for select candidates in select schools, I propose that even more needs to be done as far as business involvement in our public schools.

As mentioned previously, businesses have to rely on remedial training and education to get new hires up to speed on skills that should have already been obtained. Soft-skills, or those skills that cannot be readily measured and therefore trained, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration, are lacking in the younger workforce...and businesses then have to invest in training their new hires in these skills as well as job-specific knowledge. This costs businesses time and money...a lot of money. For example, a report by Inc.com released in 2016 estimates that, on average, remedial training for writing skills cost business roughly **\$3.1 BILLION...per year** (Moore, 2016). This is just for writing alone; it doesn't factor in training to get employees up to speed on time management, handling customers, or even how to effectively use email applications.

The third Tier is **education and administrators** themselves. This includes taking a hard look at the curriculum offered, teaching methodologies and interventions, and how education today, in the 21st century, needs to look forward in order to be effective. We graduate more under-educated and uneducated students than ever before. This is partly due to ineffective educational reform and scare tactics used by federal policies that concentrate on school report cards without addressing the root problems. We have ineffective leaders in education who make poor choices because they either know no better or, worse yet, have never even been in the classroom, or haven't been in the classroom recently.

Much has changed in how children learn. What worked in the 20th century will not work with the learners of the 21st. They are techno-absorbed. Some call the latest generations "digitally literate," but, when you look at their capabilities, they are more prone to denial ILLITERACY. They know social apps and how to Google answers, but when it comes to using technology for education and research, they are lost. A spoon-fed generation cannot problem-solve on their own, and, unfortunately, that is what has happened to our students over the past several decades.

Addressing these three tiers, in order of importance, is vital to the improvement and long-term success of our future. We need to invest NOW in the students of tomorrow.

Tier 1 – Community and Family

“Many studies found that students with involved parents, no matter what their income or background, were more likely to earn higher grades and test scores, and enroll in higher-level programs; be promoted, pass their classes, and earn credits; attend school regularly; have better social skills, show improved behavior, and adapt well to school; (and) graduate and go on to postsecondary education” (Henderson and Mapp, 2002, p. 7).

It goes without saying that community and family involvement leads to achievement in students. This goes beyond just academics, which is why “academic achievement” was not used; it is a *total* achievement that we need to aim for, and this includes those students who are not academically motivated but motivated by vocational involvement (these are covered in more detail under Tier 3). “Formal” educational (the time in which a student is involved in actively pursuing their education) is just part of the picture; a larger part happens outside of the classroom.

As seen in Tables 1-3, there is a noticeable difference in the family and home life of children today compared to that of children several decades ago. We have a decrease in “whole” family involvement, meaning there is a single-parent situation in many homes, usually with the mother being the primary care-giver. Coupled with this is the necessity of both parents, regardless of living arrangements, needing to work to provide for their families. Even with a married family available to children in the home, having both parents away at work means there is less engagement with children than those homes with a single-parent provider and a stay-at-home parent. Exacerbating that situation is when the single-parent home requires the primary care-giver to work.

Furthermore, the sense of community among neighbors and neighborhoods has broken down over the years as well. In the work *Democracies in Flux*, Putnam discusses a decline of social capital or those interactions:

“...membership in many conventional secondary associations, such as fraternal organizations and nationality groups, has declined by 25 to 50 percent over the last two or three decades, that socializing with friends and neighbors and spending time in organizations are down by at least as much, and that significant declines have also occurred in levels of public trust, in voting, in participation in political activities, and in church attendance” (Putnam, 2002, pp. 61-62).

While the new technology-age upon us, with social networking, internet messaging, and apps like Facetime should increase social engagement, the truth of the matter is, these apps, and technology in general, have made us *less* social creatures than ever before. This carries into how communities and family units approach education and educational institutions, including educators themselves. With less social interactions and engagement, less people are involved with one another, including their own children, until circumstances call for such face-to-face interactions.

Schools have often been prompted by school boards and educational leaders to educate students on the importance of community and the value of community service (Hampton-Thompson, et al., 2015, p. 68). However, with the lack of foundation to work with, educators spend more time (speaking of community-related issues, not content) dealing with disciplinary problems

as students have a minimalized margin of respect and discipline. Lacking a strong sense of community, students have no interest in being social outside of what they have learned from their peers who, themselves, have no strong foundations in or sense of community.

Generalizations, of course, should be avoided, and not all students or young adults display the behaviors mentioned here. But, overwhelmingly, the lack of a sense of community, of strong parental influences at home (and outside), and the understanding of proper behaviors have led to educators becoming more involved with problem children than educating the whole student. Understanding what motivates those students and young adults who volunteer for community service, are active in community involvement, and succeed in education despite the general observations needs to be intense so that the motivations of those who are not may be addressed. In other words, we need to find out why good kids are good and why bad ones are bad. What is going on within these individuals? When the external factors are identical, what internal factors are in play? And, most importantly, how do we reach and address those internal factors within students labeled “problem child” in social and educational eyes?

I believe the answer is apparent; more parental involvement and stressing on the importance of education to succeed. There are numerous successful examples of the typical single-parent home, usually a mother raising their child or children, in an impoverished environment, in a low socioeconomic neighborhood. While this situation may found anywhere, it is disproportionately more apparent in communities of minorities. These are also generally in two extremes; rural or inner-city. And parental involvement in these neighborhoods is stressed with the addition of external factors not found elsewhere. These are the neighborhoods and communities that need the most assistance and yet receive the least.

Parents in these situations are often undereducated themselves. Many are high school dropouts or GED holders. Many have no education beyond K-12. Many find themselves in low-paying jobs, often working more than one to meet the needs of the family. This stress, and absence, is felt not only in the household but in the community as well. As paying bills and the desire for material items is an intricate part of the human being, many students find themselves also working as soon as they reach legal age in order to buy the things that their parent(s) cannot. This, coupled with the lack of parenting and upbringing, and the community breakdown, and the economic hardships that young people see and witness everyday, leads to further breakdowns of community and a sense of the importance of education.

If this were an equation, it might look something like this:

$$X = Es + Ci + IM + EM$$

Whereby **X** = **Success**, **Es** = **Educational Status**, **Ci** = **Community Involvement**, **IM** = **Intrinsic Motivation**, and **EM** = **Extrinsic Motivation**, and:

$$Es = Opp + Wag + PG$$

Whereby **Opp** = **Opportunity**, **Wag** = **Wages**, and **PG** = **Personal Gain** (satisfaction).

Therefore, **success** is a combination of **education**, **community involvement** (both *by* the individual and *for* the individual), **intrinsic motivation**, and **extrinsic motivation**, all of which increase **opportunity**, which, in turn, leads to increases in wages and personal gains or satisfaction. From

this equation, we can see that the intricate or most involved, and therefore, the most important factor, is **education**.

Summary

In summary, Tier 1 is the first and most important step towards the success of our young population. Not only will a stronger sense of community and parenting lead to students with a better chance of success, it will also promote a sense of belonging that is lacking in today's youth. Preparing students with acceptable morals, behaviors, and a sense of self-worth will lead to less disciplinary actions in and out of school. It allows educators to truly focus on educating the students rather than be "glorified babysitters." It provides a solid foundation for the student to stand and grow from, reaching potentials that would otherwise be missed due to internal and external factors. Parents and communities need to come together and stress the importance of education and proper behaviors so that their children, our children, will grow to be successful and do better than we have.

Tier 2 – Professional and Business

The second step or Tier to look at and that needs to be addressed is the involvement of professionals and businesses – including local, state, and federal government – in education and educational institutions. In 1979, the federal government created the U.S. Department of Education after a major lobbying effort by the National Education Association, or NEA, and entity that has been met with mixed feelings over the decades.

In the 1950s, roughly 80% of all jobs were labeled "unskilled labor." By the year 2000, 85% of all jobs were classified as "skilled labor" (Business involvement in education, n.d.). This transition means that technology and education are interconnected in ways never imagined before.

After *A Nation at Risk* was released, the *Business Roundtable* – or BRT – was approached by the federal government. It was petitioned to assist in the education and training of students to prepare them for the workforce. Since then, and according to BRT's website, their mission has been:

"From AI and automation to international competition, innovation and rapid change are shaping the future of work in America and across the globe. These new realities present both great opportunities and challenges for the U.S. workforce. Now more than ever, investments in U.S. education and workforce development are critical to ensuring hardworking Americans succeed. Both the public and private sectors have a role to play, and Business Roundtable CEOs are committed to doing our part" (BRT, 2020).

Since then, businesses and business leaders, including governmental entities, have developed and implemented several reforms to address the gaps in the education of American students and those of other nations. These reforms include:

- The Educate America Act
- The School-to-Work Act
- No Child Left Behind Act
- Every Student Succeeds Act
- Common Core Standards

While all of these had the student's best interest in mind – on paper – what resulted was less than ideal. As the focus became more centered on school performance and standards, the teacher's focus was on meeting those demands at the cost of lowering expectations, following and promoting curricula that was considered “watered-down,” and passing the students at any costs...or risk losing their jobs. A standards-based mentality began to blossom, focusing on reading, math, and science, while other subjects, such as the arts, history, and advanced placement courses were shoved aside. While businesses, in the beginning, were instrumental in making changes and advancements in education for the future of the nation, they were now being regarded as greedy entities who wanted to promote their own agenda...privatizing education.

However, the benefits of an altruistic merging of business and educational institutions produces a wholly well-educated student, ready for furthering their education at the collegiate levels, moving into vocational training, or being placed directly in the workforce. It has been shown, in the past, that businesses and educational institutions can work effectively together. Not only in helping to educate the students, but to also provide opportunities for soft-skills training and on-the-job skills training that would otherwise be missed. While throwing money at education can only solve some of the most minor issues, a true investment by businesses, corporations, and even government, can truly make changes that are dynamic.

Summary

At this Tier, we can see the benefits of a merging of business and educational institutions. A true investment, with no ulterior motives, is needed, where businesses provide local schools and students opportunities and materials that will help the students succeed. This results in a workforce that is ready to enter the global market, with all of the knowledge and skills necessary to hit the ground running.

Government involvement needs to be reigned in. At all levels – local, state, and federal – the government involvement in education needs to address the gaps in performance that we see between American students and students elsewhere. Common standards are an ideal that can be met, as long as those standards meet the goals and priorities of the global market and economy. Methodologies and interventions need to be reevaluated for effectiveness. Educators themselves need to be educated properly before entering the school system. This means providing them with the education, tools, and training needed to be effective in the classroom.

Professionals within the business and educational realm need to step in and provide opportunities to learn from them. This especially includes those in the vocational world, where technology and hands-on training provides the students the necessary skills to move directly into the labor market. By working together, business leaders, vocational professionals, and educational institutes can begin to raise the standards of student performance and expectations, empowering the students to choose the path that best fits them and then supplying them with the tools and education to achieve those goals.

Tier 3 – Educational and Administrative

Finally, we can address the educational and administrative issues. Here, we discuss all aspects of educational involvement, from the schools themselves to the educators, personnel and infrastructure that support educating our students.

Curriculum

We cannot address educational changes without addressing the need for an effective and “living” curriculum for all topics relevant to the education of the whole student. And while courses and subjects have changed dramatically over the decades, those that are considered traditional have remained. These subjects are:

- English, including literature, reading, writing, and the fundamentals of grammar
- Science, including life science, physical science, and physics
- Math, including algebra

These are also the most widely tested topics of standardized testing seen in most schools today. As reported by STAR – Standardized Testing and Reporting – put out by the Department of Education, the subjects tested at the indicated age groups/grade levels are shown in Table 4:

GRADE	MATH	ENGLISH & LANGUAGE ARTS	SCIENCE	HISTORY & SOCIAL SCIENCE
2	X	X		
3	X	X		
4	X	X		
5	X	X	X	
6	X	X		
7	X	X		
8	X	X	X	X
9	X	X	X	X
10	X	X	X	X
11	X	X	X	X
12	X	X	X	X

Table 4 – STAR Test Subjects by Grade Level (STAR: What’s tested? – At a glance guide, n.d.)

It is worth noting at this point the correlation of national average scores of American students and the percentage of those making the level of “proficiency” and the grades at which they are tested. The Scores are from a 0-500 and the percentages shown are based on that scale and shown in Table 5.

SUBJECT/GRADE	SCORE (2019)
Reading Proficiency *	
Grade 4	35%
Grade 8	34%
Grade 12	37%
Writing Proficiency *	
Grade 4	28%
Grade 8	27%
Grade 12	27%
Math Proficiency *	
Grade 4	41%
Grade 8	34%
Grade 12	25%
Science Proficiency **	
Grade 4	38%
Grade 8	34%

Grade 12	22%
US History Proficiency	
Grade 4	20%
Grade 8	15%
Grade 12	12%
Geography Proficiency	
Grade 4	21%
Grade 8	25%
Grade 12	20%
Civics Proficiency	
Grade 4	27%
Grade 8	24%
Grade 12	24%
*Commonly tested subjects	
** Added in 1992	
Unmarked subjects are tested, but not regarded as highly as those marked	

Table 5 – Correlation of National Ratings at Grade Levels for Subjects Tested

American public schools have seen numerous curricula changes over the decades. When talking about curricula, we are talking about the content/subject areas and the instructional materials that support the teaching of that content. The Center for American Progress notes that,

“...research indicates that textbooks and other instructional materials can influence student achievement. And when districts ensure that teachers understand and are comfortable with new instructional materials during implementation, the materials also have the potential to improve teachers’ pedagogical skills. In one recent study, teachers who were given lessons designed to encourage problem-solving in real-world situations, as well as support in how to implement these lessons, increased their students’ math achievement. Notably, teachers whose ability to raise students’ test scores had been lower than that of their peers saw the greatest achievement gains in their students: Using high-quality lessons was associated with a bigger boost in outcomes for their students, likely due to improved teacher performance.¹⁰ High-quality instructional materials can also help boost teachers’ content knowledge. This allows teachers to more effectively convey understanding, knowledge, and skills to their students, boosting student achievement” (2018).

In other words, not only does a strong, high-quality curriculum benefit students, it also benefits educators. The costs associated with implementing a high-quality curriculum in the classrooms is also cost-neutral as the costs for lower-quality materials is roughly the same. Another benefit of adopting high-quality curricula is a lessening of personal time spent by educators developing their own supporting materials, often reaching more than 12 hours per week (Center for American Progress, 2018).

But at the federal level, curricula changes have been made and set into motion with little to no regard of the overall education of the whole student. Focus was placed on those national test scores and concentrated in three areas; English, math, and science. While these are, without question, important for the academic success of students, there is much more to educating the whole student than just those three subject areas. There has been a degradation, even removal,

of other subject areas such as the arts and humanities. And, while curricula is centered around the student's academic career, not all students are prepared for nor willing to pursue further academics.

Furthermore, educational reforms of the past, and curricula changes such as Common Core, while designed with the best of intentions, failed to include those who would be ultimately responsible in their implementation...the educators themselves. They are then left to scramble for training in how to integrate these new requirements into their lessons and courses, aligning their content with that being passed down from the federal level.

And, while curricula changes are indeed necessary, these changes are not organic. They are created and implemented, and then, several years later, a brand new "idea" of teaching and content comes along. There is a failure to allow curricula to evolve and change naturally. And, when curricula changes are being reviewed, there is little to no transparency for the public to provide input. At local levels, educators are allowed to revise and adjust their curricula to meet state and federal standards (to retain the government funding that is vital to schools), but there is little input from the community. While this is beneficial in some ways (or otherwise, we may very well have classes on the benefits of hot stone yoga that some parents would demand be offered by schools), this lack of transparency also creates an atmosphere of criticism, as parents and communities feel that they have no say in what goes on in their children's classrooms.

A curriculum revolution is needed. High-quality educators need to come together and propose a set of standards that should then be implemented immediately in the classrooms. Politicians need to remove themselves from the procedure. Educational professionals of all levels need to come to a consensus as to what needs to be taught at each grade level. This is the basis of Common Core Standards, but without the legal jargon and input. What one school teaches for 3rd grade math, for example, needs to be taught in ALL classrooms at 3rd grade, regardless of the location of the classroom. Coast to coast, each grade should have a set of expectations in place that is identical in every institution.

This coast-to-coast curricula change also needs to allow educators to truly teach. Governmental and school board hand-tying needs to be removed and there needs to be a freedom to allow teachers to do what they are trained to do...teach. Methods are different from class to class, even within the same grades in the same schools. Allowing the teachers to adopt to their classes needs, as dictated by the student makeup, provides an enhanced form of learning.

Educators

Educational reform couldn't be complete without addressing the educators themselves. Before proceeding, it is worthwhile to see how much has changed as far as numbers are concerned. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES):

CHARACTERISTIC	2017	2020
Number of enrolled students (Public schools)	50.62 million	50.69 million
Number of enrolled students (Public Charter schools)	3.0 million	3.1 million
Number of enrolled students (Private schools)	5.8 million	5.7 million
Racial Makeup of Students (Public schools)		
White	48.2%	47.6%

Black	15.3%	15.2%
Hispanic	26.3%	26.7%
Asian/Pacific Islander	5.4%	5.8%
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.01%	0.98%
English Language Learners (Public schools)	9.9%	10.1%
Number of Schools		
Traditional public schools	91,150	91,280
Public charter schools	7,010	7,190
Characteristics of Public School Teachers		
Number of public school teachers	3.0 million	3.5 million
Female	75%	76%
Male	25%	24%
Hold a postbaccalaureate degree	47%	58%
Hold a regular teaching certificate	87%	90%
Public Highschool Graduation Rates	84.6%	85.3%
Public School Revenue Sources		
Federal	\$59.5 billion	\$59.8 billion
State	\$337.7 billion	\$345.8 billion
Local	\$322.7 billion	\$330.5 billion
Total expenditures per student	\$14,136	\$14,439
Educational Attainment of Young Adults (25-29 year olds)		
High school completion (or higher)	93%	94%
Associate's degree (or higher)	47%	49%
Bachelor's degree (or higher)	37%	39%
Master's degree (or higher)	9%	9%

Table 6 – Education Characteristics (2020) (NCES, 2020)

The statistics presented are important for several reasons:

- We can see a Student/teacher ration of roughly 18:1 (public schools only)
- An increase in the educational backgrounds of our educators
- An increase in the graduation rates of high school seniors
- An increase in spending

So while the numbers above show an increase across the board, from student numbers to teacher numbers to educational backgrounds and even per pupil spending, why are our national test scores dropping? Why are we seeing an increase in adult illiteracy and numeracy rates, graduating more under- and uneducated people, and what can educators do to stop this?

This is why I placed this particular cluster in Tier 3. Without the first two Tiers stepping up, this Tier can never perform and achieve what is expected. There are great educators out there. There are educators who go above and beyond the call of duty to ensure that their students are provided the finest learning experience possible, given the circumstances and materials they have at hand. But what more could they achieve if they were provided with funding that actually addressed the needs of the classrooms and students? How much more successful could they be when a community and parents come together to support their children's education rather than ignore it until it becomes a problem? And when provided the latest in technology – and the training to work with it – from business leaders and professionals in the subject areas they teach, not only are the students benefitting from true working education, but the teachers learn new skills and

resources, and the businesses themselves are assisting in developing future employees who are prepared to enter the office with no downtime for remedial training.

Administrative

And, finally, the last part of Tier 3, Administration. This includes not only school staff (principals, assistant principals, and superintendents), but school boards as well. It is at this level where true leadership is needed, and at times, not found.

School administration is responsible for supporting their educators and their infrastructure. They are the ones leading the charge for a valuable educational experience for their students. They are the ones who are supposed to be providing the educators who they work with the means to do their jobs effectively and efficiently.

Unfortunately, we have seen, in the numbers provided, that this is not the case. What we have witnessed are people willing to jump on any band-wagon technique to get their scores up. We see that they are more focused on getting a good national report card at the cost of producing ill-prepared and undereducated students. We see principals and superintendents tying the hands of the educators and forcing them to work within their own vision of “success at any cost” so that they look good.

And we have seen the results of their failures. This is, of course, not all administrative personnel, but it does represent the worst-case scenarios. Superintendents who are also overcharging for items so that they can line their already heavily laden wallets. Administrators are making decisions without having the benefit of knowing what they are preaching. Forcing educators to sit through personal development training that simply spins on business as usual tactics without providing any modern real-world hands-on training on the technology and trends that they could truly benefit from.

And, we have school boards populated with yoga instructors, and business owners, and lawyers, and real estate agents, many with no children of their own, all telling the schools, and educators, what they can and cannot do. Again, non-professionals telling those in the trenches how to do their jobs without having a clue as to what that job calls for.

Until we understand that those making the decisions affecting our educators and, in turn, our children, often do not understand the intricacies of education, then no matter what happens with the other Tiers, things will be even more difficult to address and change. But address and change this mentality, we must.

We need administrators in charge who are true leaders and willing to fight for their good teachers and let the poor ones go; who are willing to go to bat for the students, knowing what’s best for them and their future; and who are willing to continue their own personal development while providing meaningful experiences for their educators to grow and do the same.

We need superintendents who are conscious of revenues and expenses and willing to appropriate money where needed, not where it is directed by closed-door meetings. People willing to do the right thing at any cost and turn the lawyers and politicians away. People in the positions they are in because they worked to get there, know how to do the job, and are not afraid of rolling

their sleeves up and getting into the classrooms to see what is truly going on...and providing the support our educators and students need.

And, we need school boards populated with people who know and understand education. This is not to say that parents and local business owners, who are paying for the education their children and community is receiving, are not valuable; they are. However, their input needs to be taken into consideration only when it affects the needed changes in education. There is no harm in telling people what needs to be taught and what can be left out; it's not personal; it's business. And the business of educating our children should be the number one priority of everyone.

Summary

In summary, Tier 3 addresses the needed changes in curricula, the educator's approach to educating our children, the administrative personnel's approach to leading by example, and addressing the needed changes in school boards and those responsible for ensuring our students, educators, and schools receive the assistance, guidance, and support they require to do what is expected of them.

A true curricula reform is needed. Researching what is trending currently globally as well as using modeling to see the trends of tomorrow will ensure a well-structured, living curricula is produced and delivered. National standards as to what is taught at each grade level for all subjects is needed, not a watered-down version of what worked 20 years ago. Best practices in content development and delivery need to be addressed. And involving educators of all levels is the only way to accomplish this.

Educators themselves need to continuously educate themselves in current trends, technologies, and methods. They need to look beyond the immediate need of their classrooms and see what they will need to be successful in the years to come. And they need professional development strategies that foster their growth in and out of the classroom.

Administrators and principals also need to look at the caliber of teachers they are hiring. High-quality educators are needed, not the ones that think it's a cushy job where they get their summers off. And, those educators need to be compensated for their worth. They need to step up and lead by example, promoting healthy learning and continuous improvements of both infrastructure and materials. They should be more concerned with the welfare of their charges than themselves.

And school boards need to be repopulated with those who intimately understand the needs of the schools, the personnel, and the educators, so that the students in those buildings are provided the best choices. A world-class education for the future global student. Introducing content and subjects that are not globally marketable and transferrable needs to be stopped. Personal agendas need to be removed. And only by introducing people with a passion for and knowledge of education can this be accomplished.

Conclusion

While this a very broad brush to address a very huge subject, I truly believe that this is route we need to take in order to see true educational progress and improvements in our students. All of the issues mentioned are verified and valid; there are no made-up statistics. We, as a nation, are

still at risk, and that risk is growing ever larger as other countries surpass us in educating the whole person.

Beginning with the family and community, we can start getting back to teaching our children strong ethics in both work and education. The spoon-feeding that has ravaged our younger generations has produced a population ill-equipped for the modern world. The lack of proper behavior and respect that begins at home at a young age is producing students who become disciplinary problems in the classroom. With a proper background in manners and ethics, starting at home and in the community, the student can enter the school knowing what is right and what is expected of them.

Having businesses and professionals involved in educating and training benefits not only the educators and students, but the businesses themselves. The billions of dollars spent on remedial education and training when graduating students enter the workforce or higher education can be greatly reduced by being there before they graduate. Work fairs, internships, and seminars in classrooms can assist the students and prepare them by providing an understanding of what those jobs are requiring and allowing them then to work towards those goals.

And finally, the educators and administration itself need to step up. With community and parental support guiding the child outside of the classroom, and business ventures assisting with training and providing assets, teachers can now teach...and they need to be able to teach to the standards expected of them by the community and business partners. Administrators and principals need to ensure that only the best and brightest are brought in, and then provided the support they need to do their jobs. And school boards need to be filled with people truly concerned and knowledgeable of educational needs in and out of the classroom. Public input should be invited, but it should not dictate what will be and will not be taught in the classrooms.

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