

How to Reinvent America's Public Education System

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Abstract

This article presents a framework for reinventing America's public education system based on an analysis of recent research findings, a discussion of why a new public education system is needed, and the author's personal insights into the functioning of America's public education system. Over the past 20 years there have been many attempts to reform public education; yet today, America is ranked number 15 among educated nations. Based on the analysis of various research findings, the reform efforts have not been effective in restoring the United States' preeminent ranking among these nations. At a Cambridge Forum, Massachusetts' State Representative Jay Kaufman presented a lecture examining the mission, structure, funding, and governance of a transformed school system. He suggests that a transformed public school system would look quite different from the one Americans know today. The United States Secretary of Education Arne Duncan remarked that the performance of American students relative to their peers in other countries should be a wake-up call for the nation. President Obama stated that America is at a pivotal moment in history once more; one which requires building new partnerships, adapting to new circumstances, and remaking itself to meet the demands of a new era. Today the competition for the best jobs and industries favors countries that have entrepreneurial citizens who are free-thinking, forward-looking, creative, and innovative. He asks, and if we fail...., who would take our place, and what kind of world would we pass on? Lastly, a synopsis of the discussion is presented.

How to Reinvent America's Public Education System

Introduction

Since philosophy is the art which teaches us how to live, and since children need to learn it as much as we do at other ages, why do we not instruct them in it? .. But in truth I know nothing about the philosophy of education except this: that the greatest and the most important difficulty known to human learning seems to lie in that area which treats how to bring up children and how to educate them.... (On Truth and Reality, 1997-2011).

In the 16th Century, Michael de Montaigne, a French Philosopher, expressed the above sentiments regarding educating children. In light of the abundance of literature recently written about this field, and the abundance of laws recently passed in an effort to reform public education in America, de Montaigne's sentiments are still applicable today. Over the past decade there have been many attempts to transform public education in America; yet today, America is ranked number 15 among educated nations. Based on the declining international ranking, and recent research findings, the author concludes that America's educational system should be reinvented rather than perpetually reformed. Today educators tinker, fixing problems at the edges, and adopt best practices that are already in the field. They rarely shed light and invent something that is not yet on the table or in the books (NPR, 2003). The purpose of this article is to discuss why America's Public Education System needs to be reinvented and to set forth a new framework for reinventing it. The discussion begins with answering the question, why does America need a new public educational system?

Why Reinvent America's Public Education System

The author's analysis of recent research findings indicates that America's standardized test scores are lagging behind those of many other educated nations. It is ranked 15 among these nations. The following is a discussion of the findings and a discussion of a transformed American public education system by State Representative Jay Kaufman.

Recent Research Findings

Why does America need a new public education system? At the release of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2009 results, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan remarked that "...A sobering report on the performance of American students relative to their peers in other countries should be a wake-up call for the nation" (ED.govBlog., 2010).

The latest scores of the world's 15-year-olds on an international test of reading, math and science show the United States is merely an average performer, whose growth during this time of rising demand for highly educated workers has been stagnant.... 'The mediocre performance of America's students is a problem we cannot afford to accept and yet cannot afford to ignore'.... (ED.govBlog., 2010).

The report measured how well students from more than 70 economies were prepared to meet the challenges they may encounter in the future. The following is Secretary Arne Duncan's summary of its findings:

- In reading literacy, 15-year-old American students were average performers. The U.S. effectively showed no improvement in reading since 2000. Overall, the OECD's rankings have U.S. students in 14th place in reading literacy among OECD nations.
- In mathematics, U.S. 15-year-olds are below-average performers among OECD nations—ranked 25th. After a dip in our 2006 math scores, U.S. students returned to the same level of performance in 2009 as six years earlier, in 2003. U.S. students outperformed their peers in math in only five OECD countries.
- The most encouraging finding from PISA is that our average science score is up. In 2006, American 15-year-olds had below-average skills in scientific literacy, compared to their OECD peers. Today, U.S. students have improved enough to become average performers in science among OECD nations, earning 17th place in the OECD rankings (ED.govBlog., 2010).

The Secretary further stated that

The hard truth...is that other high-performing nations have passed us by during the last two decades...In a highly competitive knowledge economy, maintaining the educational status quo means America's students are effectively losing ground (ED.govBlog., 2010).

Next is a summary of the Nation's Report Card for Reading 2009 issued by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. He stated, once again the results show that the achievement of American students' isn't growing fast enough.

The achievement gap didn't narrow by a statistically significant amount in either grade. Like the NAEP 2009 math scores released last fall, the reading scores demonstrate that

students aren't making the progress necessary to compete in the global economy....
(United States Department of Government, 2010).

The Wall Street Journal reported that

Only about a quarter of the 2009 high school graduates taking the ACT admissions test have the skills to succeed in college, according to a report on the exam that shows little improvement over results from the 2008 graduating class. The Iowa City, Iowa-based ACT said 23% of this year's high school graduates had scores that indicated they were ready for college in all four ACT subject areas, or had at least a 75% chance of earning a grade of C or better in entry-level courses. Last year, a similar ACT analysis found that 22% of the class of 2008 was college-ready (The Wall Street Journal, 2009).

The findings also revealed that the percentage of 2009 ACT-tested high school graduates meeting College Readiness Benchmarks were in English 67%, Reading 53%, Mathematics 42%, Science 28%, all four 23%. The level of preparedness was worst in science, where only 28% of students were ready for college-level biology. In Math only 42% were deemed prepared for college algebra (The Wall Street Journal, 2009).

The president of the Alliance for Excellent Education, Bob Wise, said the United States is not making the progress it needs to make in education. As a result, President Barack Obama is offering states, public schools, and colleges additional federal funds to launch new initiatives. (The Wall Street Journal, 2009). Secretary Duncan expressed that

We shouldn't be satisfied with these results. By this and many other measures, our students aren't on a path to graduate high school ready to succeed in college and the

workplace. President Obama's agenda for school reform is focused on improving student achievement.... People across the country need to work together to make these reforms happen. That includes elected officials, community leaders, educators, parents, and students themselves. We all need to build a better future for our children and our country (United States Department of Government, 2010).

Jay Kaufman's Discussion of a Transformed American Public Education System

At the final program on *School and Society* at Cambridge University (Cambridge Forum), Massachusetts' State Representative Jay Kaufman, Director of *The Project on a New Public Education* at Brandeis University, presented a lecture examining the mission, structure, funding, and governance of a transformed (new) school system. The discussions came about as a result of American teachers, taxpayers, policy makers, and parents looking for answers. Although school reform has been discussed and attempted many times over the last 20 years, they are still not certain that public schools are really preparing students for life as citizens, workers, and responsible adults. Therefore they set forth the proposal that society needs to renegotiate the social contract with public schools. Kaufman's basic premise was that much of the contemporary debate regarding reforming public education is about fine tuning and fixing a system that is largely out of date, and largely designed to address an age, an era, whose time is passed. He suggests that a transformed public school system would look quite different from the one Americans know today. He began with a discussion about the architecture of schools today (NPR, 2003).

The architecture of America's public education system dates back to the days of Horace Mann, who proposed the first public education system the world had ever seen. It was designed

to meet the needs of an agricultural system, not the society in which Americans live today. It was designed for a time passed, not a time to come. Clearly the mission of public education has changed since Mann's day. Kaufman suggests that changes in the mission should parallel fundamental changes in other aspects of the system. Such changes are not evident in the structure of public education today.

According to Kaufman, today's educational system is organized along very neat disciplinary lines, and designed for students to learn from 7am until 2 pm. Teachers operate for the most part in isolation and have very little opportunity for collegiality (NPR, 2003). Assessment and testing focuses on what students have learned, not how they've learned or that they can learn. School buildings look the same all over America. Furthermore, the method in which public education is financed is also outdated.

Schools are financed by property taxes, which causes inequity in public education. When America's first educational system was instituted, schools serviced only the children of white landowners. This is not congruent with contemporary society, nor would it be with a future one. Additionally, the governance of public education is antiquated.

School systems and buildings are organized and governed much like a traditional *top down model*. In the 21st Century, successful businesses and organizations do not operate in this fashion. If they do, they will not be successful for very long. Contemporary models of management styles are more preferable today than the top down model. Moreover, Kaufman sheds some light on what he imagined a new public education system should look like. The following are his insights on what one might take into account when reinventing the features, the dynamics, and the architecture of a new public education system.

According to Kaufman, society must embrace institutionally, as well as intellectually, that there is an explosion of knowledge in the world today, and what society learns today will pale in comparison to what it will have to learn tomorrow. At the rate that information is being introduced to society, people need not focus on specific details or facts, but be prepared to continue learning for an entire lifetime. Workers in the marketplace today will most likely change careers 7 times in their lifetime. Presently, America's public education system is developed around students from ages 3 to 18, and at 19 learning ends. The system is built upon a model that does not encompass perpetual learning or perpetual growth. Additionally, teaching, learning, and measuring success is focused on an individual not a collective body.

In public schools, individuals do not act independently, they work collectively in teams, yet they are measured individually. Moreover, people learn, collect information, and teach very differently. One size does not fit all, and there are variations on a theme. Consequently, he introduced the concept of *learning centers*.

Kaufman's design for a reinvented public education system would include learning commons, places in a community where everyone could come to learn and to teach. Such institutions would address the needs of the entire community, regardless of age. Regarding governance, he would do away with the present State Board of Education. It would be replaced with an "Accreditation Authority".

An Accreditation Authority would ask the following questions of any entity seeking accreditation: How will you serve the public interest? How would you guarantee that you are/would not discriminate? Can you guarantee that you are not affiliated with any denomination? How can you guarantee that you are a public institution serving a public end?

How can you prove that you are worthy of receiving public funds? What is your pedagogical approach to education? How are you going to manage yourselves? How are you going to finance yourself? What is your budget going to look like? What areas will you focus on in terms of budgetary priorities? How are you going to hold everyone in the system accountable? How are you going to measure failure and success and what are you going to do about it? What is the curriculum going to look like? How are you going to ensure that the people who come through your system are empowered for lifelong learning? How are you going to make sure that your students get the basics that we all agree they need, e.g., civic responsibility? By example, how will you teach learning commons?

Additionally, each entity would need a set of five year goals. At the end of a five year period, it would be evaluated. If it had not met the stated goals, it would lose its accreditation. The process of accreditation would be one of constantly renewing ones license, as opposed to one that exists without anyone taking stock in what it's doing. An Accreditation Authority would allow for the perpetual learning of a school system and the diversity of learning. It would empower the community and develop an informed citizenry. It would be the source of responsible information for parents, families, and taxpayers. Lastly, Kaufman discussed equity, the "balanced wheel of society".

Kaufman stressed concern that today there is inequity in public education, both economically and racially. The economically disadvantaged have fewer choices, and having fewer choices creates inequity in education, e.g., children with wealthy parents travel and study abroad. This inequity must be addressed and compensated for in public education.

Kaufman considers the most immediate challenges to be (1) finding all the various constituencies that need to be *at the table* and (2) finding those who are willing to engage in *the conversation*. He himself noticed that citizens in his district are not concerned about his job. He is aware that inequity still exists between the races and between the rich and the poor in America. He pointed out that schools are more segregated today than they were a decade ago. Furthermore, he stated that during the last great wave of reform effort in Massachusetts, *The 1993 Education Reform Act*, was instituted because *The Mass Business Alliance for Educators* concluded that most of their workers were untrained and un-trainable. Adding to the argument, the author suggests that the subsequent insights also be considered in the discussion.

The Author's Insights into America's Public Education System

The following are the author's insights on what one might take into account when reinventing America's public education system. The discussion begins with the United States' pivotal point in history.

The United States at a Pivotal Point in History

In his recent address to the British Parliament at Westminster Hall, President Obama expounded upon the threat that faces Western Civilization today. He proposed that

As new threats spread across borders and oceans, we must dismantle terrorist networks and stop the spread of nuclear weapons.... Our two nations know what it is to confront evil in the world....Today, we confront a different enemy. Our nations are not and will never be at war with Islam.... Our fight is focused on defeating al Qaeda and its extremist allies. In that effort, we will not relent.... And as we fight an enemy that respects no law

of war, we will continue to hold ourselves to a higher standard – by living up to the values, the rule of law and due process that we so ardently defend.... That is the beacon that guided us through our fight against fascism and our twilight struggle against communism.... History tells us that democracy is not easy.... We also know that populism can take dangerous turns – from the extremism of those who would use democracy to deny minority rights, to the nationalism that left so many scars on this continent in the 20th century.... Let there be no doubt: The United States and United Kingdom stand squarely on the side of those who long to be free (The White House, 2011).

Many postulate that the East and the West are heading towards a clash of civilizations.

Samuel Huntington, the late Harvard political scientist, prophesied a "clash of civilizations" nearly two decades ago. It was rejected then, but today it is being looked at more seriously than previously (Huff Post World, 2011). Although this clash is more visibly evident in the bombing of the Twin Towers, its more elusive impetus within American society will be a clash between Sharia Law and Democracy. Webster Dictionary defines Islamism as the faith, doctrine, or cause of Islam; a popular reform movement advocating the reordering of government and society in accordance with laws prescribed by Islam (Merriam Webster Online, 2011).

Even today, after Huntington's seminal work has been discarded once, revived after 9/11 and then discarded again, the clash-of-civilizations paradigm is creeping back into the headlines -- if only to be rejected somewhat less vigorously this time around. But in the context of the Arab Spring, Huntington's theoretical framework may be illuminating in a

way that his insistence on 'civilization identity' never allowed him to consider (Huff Post World, 2011).

The influence of Islamism is already entrenched into American society. United States Ambassador William B. Milam said in a speech to Pakistani officials, "The greatest challenges we will face in the years ahead will be of a social nature" (Islam For Today, October 9, 1998).

The Associated Press (2011) reported that a controversial Arabic-themed public school exists in Brooklyn, NY, the Khalil Gibran International Academy. Its founders were strongly criticized for opening a dual-language middle school that would teach a diverse student body about Arabic language and culture. But opponents charged it would promote Islamic extremism (Associated Press, 2011). There was no mention of teaching American patriotism in this school. Teaching Arabic language and culture without teaching students to be patriotic towards America could be viewed as a medium for propagating Islam and Sharia Law in America.

As a result of a lack of civic education being taught in America's public schools today, retired Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor developed the website, iCivics, in an effort to help alleviate this deficit. "iCivics is a web-based education project designed to teach students civics and inspire them to be active participants in our democracy" (Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, 2011). Justice O'Connor is concerned that students are not getting the information and tools they need for civic participation and that civics teachers need better materials and support.

Civics education is declining in our nation's schools. In nearly half the states, students can graduate from high school without being required to learn anything about civics or

American history. As a result, Americans today understand too little about our government. Only about one-third of Americans can even name the three branches of government, much less describe what they do. Young Americans cannot be expected to become effective citizens and political leaders unless they understand how our government works (Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, 2009, pg. 2).

America's present public education system is not designed to meet the challenges of today, nor the challenges it may encounter in the future. The author concurs with Justice O'Connor, in that, civic courses should be taught in every public school in America. The author suggests that there is also a lack of American patriotism taught in public schools. While addressing the British Parliament, President Obama stated that after a difficult decade that began with war and ended in recession, our nations have arrived at a pivotal moment once more.

Together, we have met great challenges. But as we enter this new chapter in our shared history, profound challenges stretch before us....These challenges come at a time when the international order has already been reshaped for a new century. Countries like China, India, and Brazil are growing by leaps and bounds.... And yet, as this rapid change has taken place, it's become fashionable in some quarters to question whether the rise of these nations will accompany the decline of American and European influence around the world. Perhaps, the argument goes, these nations represent the future, and the time for our leadership has passed (The White House, 2011).

Although the opposite is true, internationally and internally, certain factions are attempting to eradicate democracy and Western Civilization, e.g., al Qaeda seeks a religious war with the West. According to President Obama, al Qaeda smothers the rights of individuals, and thereby

subjects them to perpetual poverty and violence. There are grave consequences that accompany a religious war. This is one reason why it should be mandatory for civics and patriotism to be taught in public schools in the United States, particularly those of Islamic origin and persuasion.

Moreover, China is striving to become the number one nation in the world. America and Britain cannot afford to stand still, and the nature of their leadership will need to change with the times. This will require building new partnerships, adapting to new circumstances, and remaking themselves to meet the demands of a new era (The White House, 2011).

...today, the competition for the best jobs and industries favors countries that are free-thinking and forward-looking; countries with the most creative and innovative and entrepreneurial citizens (The White House, 2011).

If America and Britain are to maintain their advantage in a world that's more competitive than ever, they will have to redouble their investments in science and engineering, and renew their national commitments to educating their workforces (The White House, 2011). The author questions the feasibility of this without redesigning public education to meet the challenges of this new era. The President said that America and Britain must lead economically, but is this feasible without them leading educationally? Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said:

I really view education as the civil rights fight of our generation, that we have a moral obligation to do something dramatically better for children and to do it now. Our children have one chance at a quality education, and if we don't provide it, I think we perpetuate poverty and we perpetuate social failure. So this is an extraordinary opportunity, but this is a fight to me that is about a lot more than education, it's really a fight for social justice.

It's the right thing to do for our children; it's the right thing to do for our country. If we want to continue to grow as a country, we need an educated workforce (The U.S. Government Channel, 2009).

The following are insights the author gleaned as a result of personal experiences within America's public education system.

For a different perspective of America's public education system, the author refers the reader to the *Education Nation* series, a 2010-2011 NBC production, and *Waiting for "Superman"*, a 2010 film produced by Davis Guggenheim. These two productions shed light on the good, the bad, and the ugly of public education in America today. The subsequent are some of the author's personal insights into public education in America. The reader is to assume that the author has experienced these occurrences, seen them, and/or has firsthand knowledge of them. This is not an exhaustive account of the author's experiences within public education, and a presupposition to the discussion is that not all public schools have a discipline problem, but nationwide, discipline is paramount in a large number of American schools.

Discipline in America's Public Education System

Functionally, cognition is a fused, cyclical, interrelationship between the cognitive components which are the senses, intellect, emotion, will, behavior, and stored knowledge. Cognition is influenced by history and culture. Children bring their lives to school (Stanback, A.M., 1992).

Discipline is one of the root causes of America's failing public education system. In public schools, some students' actions indicate that they are in attendance solely to destroy the

teaching-learning process and its environment. Other students openly cry out in frustration, and consider dropping out of school because they cannot learn in such an environment. Some students stop trying to learn and take on the behavior of the deviant students. Advanced and exceptionally brilliant students are not taught on their level in a regular classroom. They are forced to bear the constant disruptions of other students. In some instances they give up and settle for mediocrity. Learning appears to be somewhat futile for them in such an environment. Furthermore, programs like CLUE, Creative Learning in a Unique Environment, are not designed to meet the daily educational needs of these students.

Ann Robinson, president of the National Association for Gifted Children, and Dawn Settle, president of the Pennsylvania Association for Gifted Education, say that one often overlooked, yet critically important, issue is the long-standing neglect of our nation's high-ability students, particularly those living in underserved and disadvantaged areas (The Morning Call, 2011).

A contemporary reading session in public school may look like this: There are four or five small, self-contained classes with a pace tailored to special-needs students (Washington Post, 2011). A teacher is instructed by an administrator to give instructions to the advanced and *on target* groups first, and afterwards to let them work independently. Next the teacher is to focus on the special-needs group or groups. They are to be taught first and on a daily basis. The instructor does not necessarily have to work with the advanced group on a daily basis. When the severely challenged group is left unsupervised, because the teacher needs to work with an advanced or *on target* group, it becomes unruly and off task. Students do things such as have personal conversations, tear up supplies and curriculum, play, walk in the classroom without permission, resulting in the teacher having to focus on that group again. As a result, each group

does not get equal time with the teacher; thus, the more advanced students become frustrated and are left to their own devices. Many teachers do not have a special education teacher or a teacher's aide working with them in the classroom: This is the *ideal*. Most students do not complete their assignments within the allotted timeframe, nor do they complete it for homework - as assigned. The author has found that the advanced and on target students have more questions than the special- needs students, and that they also need fulltime assistance from the instructor. Teachers are also instructed to utilize "groups" for teaching Math as well. With the utilization of groups, students inadvertently learn bad educational habits and practices.

A great teacher can fail - conversely, a poor teacher can succeed - for reasons unrelated to teaching. Many factors affecting student learning are beyond a teacher's or school's control. Consider just a few factors, solely about students: lack of motivation, distorted educational expectations, impoverished educational background, psychological problems, destructive educational attitudes, varying speeds at which students learn, varying aptitude and interest in a subject, and rebelliousness against authority. You can bring a student to learning but you can't make him learn (Charlotteobserver.com, 2011).

There are criminal minded students who attend public school, as early as 1st grade. There are sexual predators in the 1st grade. Some students are thieves. Many others sit in class trying to keep their backpack in view at all times. There are *crack babies* in regular classrooms. There are abused students in public school, physically and mentally. There are children with ADHD in regular classrooms. There are students with learning disabilities from mild to severe to emotionally disturbed in regular classrooms. There are gang members in school. Many times, gangs of students roam the hallways knocking on teachers' doors during class time.

Inappropriate sexual acts occur on campuses during school hours. There are murderers in public school. Some students are killed as a result of school related incidents. The following is a recent crime report released by Memphis City Schools.

The report shows a nearly 25 percent drop in serious infractions that lead to simple assault charges in the districts 14 most violent middle and high schools....The level of serious crimes in those schools also decreased. Serious crimes include staff and student assaults, gang issues, fighting, drugs and weapons possession.... Another change evident in the report is the number of kids taken to juvenile court during the school day. That number dipped almost 35 percent with around 1,200 students transported last year compared to about 800 students this year.... (My Fox Memphis, 2011).

Many people in America do not value or respect education, nor do they value or respect those who work in the field of education.

A General Lack of Respect for Public Education and Those Who Work in the Profession

It is reported that Finland has one of the most successful school systems in the world. Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen stated that teachers are respected in Finland, and that high talent is attracted into the profession (Cyber College Internet Campus, 2007). Teachers are required to have a master's degree, and Finland has one of the highest percentage of Ph.D.s in the world. Teachers are regularly sent on courses during their long holidays to upgrade their knowledge and skills (Cyber College Internet Campus, 2007). According to the author, these practices or similar ones should be adopted in America. Moreover, American society needs a paradigm shift towards public education and public school teachers. In general they are not respected, valued, or highly

esteemed as they should be. Children are imitators; if society does not respect and esteem teachers, nor will students.

Many teachers employed in public schools have health problems as a result of working in their profession. Many teachers' physical and mental health is impaired as a result of stress brought on by students and administrators. They are cursed at; spat upon; knocked down; hit; objects are thrown at them; yelled at; falsely accused; sabotaged by students and staff members; blackballed by administrators; *fenced in* like wild animals; harassed; instructed to falsify students' grades, and are punished when they do not; and receive very little support and positive feedback from administrators. Some are daily afraid for their lives. They have an enormous amount of paperwork in addition to regular teaching related duties and responsibilities. They work many hours after school, even if they have a family. They are the *scapegoats* of public education. Some administrators' philosophy of education does not entail holding students responsible for their behavior or their learning, teachers are held accountable for them. A Principal who recently resigned from public education had this to say:

If I could lift that school up and put it in a functional school system, it would be perfect.... the dysfunction he encountered.... led him to quit this month, fed up and burned out.... He said he is quitting a system that evaluates teachers but doesn't support their growth, that knuckles under to unreasonable demands from parents, and that focuses excessively on recruiting neighborhood families to a school where most students come from outside the attendance zone (The Washing Post, 2011).

Stanback (1992) argues that human behavior is predicated upon one's beliefs; thus belief is *key* in explaining human behavior (pg. 20). According to the author, teachers are compelled to

teach fallacious learning theories and use substandard teaching methodologies when they are cognizant that they do not help raise students' standardized test scores. Many of these pedagogical theories and teaching strategies and methodologies are not espoused by teachers.

There are a plethora of erroneous beliefs infusing public education today, and millions of dollars are spent (thrown away) implementing them. An example is Efficacy Training. Its underlying philosophical assumption is that there is no such thing as a special education student. It purports that recent brain research has proven that learning disabilities are temporary. For a disability to be eliminated, one only has to keep teaching the student. As he or she learns, although slowly, the brain will correct the disability, i.e., heal itself. Another erroneous theory is Social Promotion. It is based upon the theory that if children *feel good* about themselves, they will succeed. When it is applied in public education, students are promoted for not learning, thereby given a false sense of accomplishment. In actuality, children feel good about themselves when they earn a grade. The earlier they learn to apply their cognitive components (Stanback, A.M.,1992) to problem solving, the more accomplished they become. Thus, teachers are required to implement multiple fallacious theories in the classroom daily, in addition to adhering to a very rigorous *Instructional Map* schedule; while subsequently, as many as one-third of students entering higher education need to take some type of remedial or developmental course (Chicago Sun-Times, 2011).

In a recent article Richard Mohammed stated that in high school he thought he was a pretty good student, but when he entered college he was asked to take remedial courses. His test scores revealed that his reading and writing skills were poor. He felt that his high school had not prepared him for college. It was a very challenging experience for him, and he concluded that he

didn't have the proper background to meet the challenge (Philly.com, 2011). Although principals play a key role in the success of public education, many of them are not qualified to hold the position of *Chief Educators*.

Administration in America's Public Education System

Principals are not *Chief Educators* although they function in this capacity. Many are not as educated as some of their staff members. Some have never taught school, and others have taught only the lower grade levels; yet, they make major educational decisions in a school. According to the Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010-2011 Edition.

Principals, assistant principals, central office administrators, academic deans, and preschool directors usually have held teaching positions before moving into administration. Some teachers move directly into principal positions; others first become assistant principals or gain experience in other administrative jobs at either the school or district level in positions such as department head, curriculum specialist, or subject matter advisor.... In most public schools, principals, assistant principals, and school district administrators need a master's degree in education administration or educational leadership. Some principals and central office administrators have a doctorate or specialized degree in education administration.... Educational requirements for administrators of preschools and child care centers vary with the setting of the program and the State of employment. Administrators who oversee preschool programs in public schools often are required to have at least a bachelor's degree (Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010-2011 Edition, 2009).

The author asserts that all administrators should hold a master's degree or a doctorate degree in his or her area of expertise or a related field. Also, in general, most public schools change Superintendents every four or five years; the timeframe may vary.

Each incoming Superintendent brings his or her new philosophy, new programs, new organizational structures, and new bureaucrats. To reorganize a school system every few years is a colossal expense and a colossal waste of public funds; particularly when the incoming or outgoing superintendents are not instrumental in rising national students' test scores.

Taxpayers' Return on Their Investment

A recent *Rasmussen Reports* measured the satisfaction of taxpayers with public education and found that:

Voters overwhelmingly believe that taxpayers are not getting a good return on what they spend on public education, and just one-in-three voters think spending more will make a difference.... Only 11% of voters think the taxpayers are getting a good return on that investment. Seventy-two percent (72%) disagree and say taxpayers are not getting their money's worth. Sixteen percent (16%) are undecided (Rasmussen Reports, 2011).

When America's international ranking among educated nations is 15, and students are entering college unprepared, taxpayers are not getting a good return on their investment. Furthermore, when recent graduates do not attend college, enter the workforce, or join the Armed Forces, taxpayers are not getting a good return on their investment.

A study conducted by the College Board Advocacy and Policy Center (June, 2011) found that of minority males in the United States between the ages 15 to 24 in 2008, only 0.9% of African Americans, 0.6% of Asians, 1.1% of Hispanics, and 1.9% of Native Americans with a high school diploma enlisted in the military. It found that of minority males ages 15 to 24 with a high school diploma and employed in 2008, 20.1% were African American, 5.1% were Asian, 13.6% were Hispanic, and 48.0% were Native American. The percent of minority males with a high school diploma between the ages of 15 to 24 that were unemployed in 2008 is as follows, 34.4% were African Americans, 29.8% were Asians, 46.5% were Hispanics, and 39.2% were Native Americans. Also, of minority males ages 15 to 24 with a high school diploma that were incarcerated in 2008, 9.9% were African American, 3.4% were Asian, 5.2% were Hispanic, and 2.7% were Native American. Data indicate that the transition between high school and higher education or the workforce is not synchronized, it lacks synthesis.

In many ways, American schools mirror Welfare. Children whose parents are in a certain economic strata get free breakfast and free lunch. When needed, students have free transportation to and from school. Textbooks are free. Title 1 Schools receive funds for certain school related activities. Many students come to school unprepared and ask for pencils and paper every day. Counseling and many other services are free. Many parents receive funds when their child has a disability. These are just a few of the services that public education affords parents and students; these services are financed with public funds. Notwithstanding, there is still a high rate of dropout and many students graduate unprepared or incapable of entering the workforce. Many students in public schools manifest behavior associated with "entitlement." The former are some of the personal experiences and insights gleaned by the

author while working in public schools that led her to develop a new framework for public education in America.

A New Framework for Reinventing America's Public Education System

The new framework is not intended to be exhaustive, but utilized and built upon. It is based upon the existing mission statement of the United States Department of Education, which is to (1) Strengthen the Federal commitment to assuring access to equal educational opportunity for every individual; (2) Supplement and complement the efforts of states, the local school systems and other instrumentalities of the states, the private sector, public and private nonprofit educational research institutions, community-based organizations, parents, and students to improve the quality of education; (3) Encourage the increased involvement of the public, parents, and students in Federal education programs; (4) Promote improvements in the quality and usefulness of education through Federally supported research, evaluation, and sharing of information; (5) Improve the coordination of Federal education programs; (6) Improve the management of Federal education activities; and (7) Increase the accountability of Federal education programs to the President, the Congress, and the public (United States Department of Education, May 4, 1980). Not all of the goals of the Department's mission statement are utilized - only goals, one, two, and three. All the subsequent relationships between public education and secular organizations are to be understood as partnerships and not private ownership. Also, within the new framework, many of the objectives of the United States Department of Education's goals overlap, such as community involvement; partnerships between public education and grass root organizations; partnerships between public education and businesses,

profit and non-profit; and partnerships between public education and community based organizations. According to the College Board Advocacy and Policy Center,

The United States must be poised to regain our once-preeminent international position in educational attainment.... We must then move forward with creating more community-school partnerships (College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011).

The United States Department of Education's first goal to be discussed is to strengthen the Federal commitment to assuring access to equal educational opportunity for every individual.

The First Goal of the United States Department of Education's Mission Statement

President Obama stated that if Britain and the United States are to build new partnerships, adapt to new circumstances, and remake themselves to meet the demands of a new era, it must begin with their economic leadership. He referenced Adam Smith's central insight that there is no greater generator of wealth and innovation than a system of free enterprise that unleashes the full potential of individual men and women (The White House, 2011). Based on the author's framework, corporations, industries, and small businesses would train their employees in their corporate owned colleges. The recruitment process would begin when students are in middle school. Selected students would be required to forego attending traditional colleges and universities in lieu of company run ones. After completing college, they would also be required to continue their employment with the company for a predetermined number of years. These institutions would be required to develop rigorous recruiting programs and make the information available to the public at-large. This would be a requirement for participating in the program. Today, there is enough data available to track a student from Pre-K to 12th grade. Companies

would only be allowed to recruit students based on predetermined criteria such as academic grades, character, and the ability to utilize acquired knowledge. Accountability would be built into the program. This would be one way of creating equity and generating wealth within America. These institutions would have access to America's best and brightest students.

Associated Press recently published that,

Cammarata is one of two dozen winners of a scholarship just awarded by San Francisco tech tycoon Peter Thiel that comes with a unique catch: The recipients are being paid not to go to college. Instead, these teenagers and 20-year-olds are getting \$100,000 each to chase their entrepreneurial dreams for the next two years.... Merfield, the valedictorian of his Princeton, N.J., high school class, is turning down a chance to go to Princeton University to take the fellowship. Thiel himself hand-picked the winners based on the potential of their proposed projects to change the world (May, 2011).

The new framework would require advanced, average, low achieving, underachieving, special-needs, and resource students to attend separate schools. Students would be allowed to change schools when they meet the predetermined criteria for entrance into a different one. All teachers would be required to hold a Master's Degree or above in his or her field. Each school would be specifically designed and equipped to meet the needs of its students. Each would be a state of the art school. There would be full-time counselors, therapist, psychologist etc. on staff when applicable. School counselors, school psychologist, nurses, and such are already in public schools, but they rotate from school to school and are not available to students on a fulltime basis. Some students are not serviced within the school year due to backlog. Schools would not be allowed to patronize or discriminate against any race, creed, color, ethnic group, or religious

group. This would be a requirement of accreditation, and strict accountability laws would be applied.

All 11th and 12th grade curriculums in advanced and average schools would be on a par with first and second year college courses. A Department of School Discipline would be established to deal with discipline problems in each district and in each school. The author strongly suggests that Kaufman's idea of Learning Commons and developing a new State Board of Education based on an accreditation model be explored in-depth (NPR, 2003).

Teachers would select teaching strategies, teaching methodologies, students' curriculum, and develop departmental lesson plans. After five years of instruction, they would be required to take a one year paid sabbatical to study, design, and implement new programs within the school system and/or district. The sabbatical would not be in lieu of the summer months break. Upon returning from sabbatical, teachers would be required to submit a major paper related to teaching and learning. A teacher's library would be built to house these papers etc., and they would be made available to the public-at-large. Ph.D.s would head all public school departments and hold all administrative positions. Additionally, teachers holding a Ph.D. would be required to take their sabbatical in a foreign country, to study its school system. The United States Department of Education's second goal to be discussed is to supplement and complement the efforts of States, the local school systems and other instrumentalities of the States, the private sector, public and private nonprofit educational research institutions, community-based organizations, parents, and students to improve the quality of education.

The Second Goal of the United States Department of Education's Mission Statement

Democracy is not easy, and extremist and nationalist alike would use it to reach their own personal goals (The White House, 2011). The New York Times reported on just such an activity in Texas. The

.... meteoric rise and financial clout of the Cosmos Foundation, a charter school operator founded a decade ago by a group of professors and businessmen from Turkey. The group's Harmony Schools unit has become 'the largest charter school operator in Texas, with 33 schools receiving more than \$100 million a year in taxpayer funds.' Some of the schools' operators and founders, and many of their suppliers, are followers of Fethullah Gulen, a charismatic Turkish preacher of a moderate brand of Islam whose devotees have built a worldwide religious, social and nationalistic movement in his name. Gulen followers have been involved in starting similar schools around the country – there are about 120 in all, mostly in urban centers in 25 states, one of the largest collections of charter schools in America.... The growth of these 'Turkish schools,' as they are often called, has come with a measure of backlash.... (New York Times, 2011).

One of the controversies surrounding these type of schools is that of a religious organization receiving public funds.

Who is watching? There is "separation of church and state" in America. How is it that charter schools are functioning as a *madrassa* in the United States? It is well known that China and many European and African countries have *a nation within a nation*. The overarching umbrellas of America's public education system are patriotism and democracy. Initially, public

schools were established primarily to create a society of educated voters, so that America's democracy would survive throughout the ages, guided by the United States Constitution, a living document. If America is to remain *one nation under God*, it must not allow foreign laws to be fused with its laws. The United States Constitution is fundamentally the only law that should govern America. If this fusion is allowed, indeed America would go the way of China, Europe, and Africa. Sharia Europe published that,

Initially, Sharia law was applied discretely within the small Muslim communities of Europe. But after two generations of high birth rate and immigration, those communities have grown to where the Sharia law now challenges the Judeo-Christian foundations of their host European nations (Sharia Eurpoe, 2008).

President Obama posed this question to the British Parliament, "And if we fail...., who would take our place, and what kind of world would we pass on?" (The White House, 2011). What are really at stake for America at this pivotal point in history are American culture, the American worldview, and Democracy. Do the masses of Americans really want to be subjected to Sharia law, or live like people in Pakistan, Syria, Libya, Sudan, Iraq, Iran and the likes? According to the author, every school in America should be required to teach American patriotism, regardless of its religious persuasion. In regards to citizenship, patriotism is a priority.

In the new model, the Federal Government would produce a TV program to be used as a teaching tool in American schools. It would be utilized primarily to foster patriotism within students by exposing them to the world-at-large, an American worldview, and current events. It would broadcast a weekly message from the White House to the students. It would be a

mandatory curriculum, regardless of whether a school receives public funds or not. If a school refuses to broadcast and teach the course, it would be denied its charter or lose its accreditation. All students will not become economically successful or independently wealthy, but all students should be taught to be patriotic.

Will all students go to college? No. Will all students graduate from high school? No. There would truly be alternative ways of educating deviant and nonconforming students in the new system. The United States government in partnership with public schools would found schools requiring these types of students to attend. One would be based on the Military model. Another would be based on the International Schools model. The latter would be located in some of the poorest countries in the world, and students would be required to solve specific problems within these societies. As Representative Kaufman (2003) said, this is a privilege that only the rich can afford (NPR, 2003). Travel is an alternative to traditional education.

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) presently has a Military Academy. The purpose of the Academy is to instill goal-directed, success-oriented attitudes and behavior in the cadets.

The CPS Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC) Academies are unique four-year learning centers for strongly motivated students who wish to develop leadership and team-building skills. Students study in a small school environment of focused learning, guided by a team of mentor teachers and military teaching partners, and receive military training, as well as an Education To Careers curriculum. Each academy focuses on a specific branch of the military; some are schools-within-a-school in a general high school and others are school-wide academies (Chicago Public Schools, 2011).

The voyage of the Amistad is a program designed to teach students through experience via travel. The four-semester college course is designed to recall an 1839 revolt by Africans captured for the slave trade. It will stop for ports of call in Canada, England, Portugal, Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States. The students will study the Underground Railroad in Nova Scotia, the Return to Africa movement, and British connections to the transatlantic slave trade in three courses taught by a historian from Washington, D.C. They will also learn practical navigation skills, and study how ships sail and the oceanography of the Atlantic as a means of feeling what the original slaves must have felt while navigating the ship after their revolt. They will also contribute to the ship's web log, and will stand watches. The Amistad's voyage will demonstrate to students that the economies of powers such as France and England and the wealth of the world were rooted in the textile, sugar, and coffee trades that the trade supported...

(Advance, 2007).

Additionally, there are numerous types of study abroad programs and student exchange programs in American colleges and universities. Not all students who attend public schools will fare well; some will dropout and never return, and some will be incarcerated.

How should public schools and the incarcerating institutions deal with these students?

Based on the author's framework, these students would be required to attend a school/work program. They would be required to attend school a portion of the day and to work a portion of the day to pay for their education and their room and board. These students would be taught the standard public schools curriculum, as well as civic responsibility while incarcerated.

Schools cannot address the needs of youths involved in the juvenile justice system without considering their educational needs". Several studies have shown crime and education are inextricably tied together.... (ScienceDirect, 2008).

According to an article published in The Journal, the United States spends an average of \$9,644 a year per preK-12 student compared with \$22,600 per prison inmate. It states that by increasing the high school completion rate by just 1 percent for all men ages 20 to 60 would save the country up to \$1.4 billion per year in reduced costs from crime. Furthermore, sixty-five percent of convicts are dropouts, and lack of education is one of the strongest predictors of criminal activity. "A dropout has an eight times higher likelihood of being in jail or prison during his/her lifetime than a high school graduate" (The Journal, 2011).

The State of Arkansas has developed a *cloud-based learning program* that can provide continuity of instruction to help juvenile offenders stay on track for graduation. The State argues that incarcerated youth are on a fast track to becoming incarcerated adults, i.e., *incarcerated adulthood*. This occurs in part because they are being exposed to a prison-culture mindset while incarcerated, and because detention separates them from their school culture, and perhaps more importantly their school work. "When these students return to their schools, they are even more off track for graduation than when they left" (The Journal, 2011). The article states that

It doesn't have to be this way. With cloud-based learning programs, instruction can reach these students in their detention diasporas, keep them engaged in learning, and improve their chances for graduation. The state of Arkansas has shown how this can happen (The Journal, 2011).

Free Venture Program is a program in which juvenile inmates work, pay off their monetary debt to society, pay taxes, pay room and board, and make deposits into a personal savings account:

Twenty percent of their net wages (after taxes) are going towards restitution for victims of violent crimes.... and after the 20 percent is taken for restitution, another 20 percent is taken to pay for room and board on site. Additionally, money is placed in a mandatory savings account in the worker's name, which is meant to help with starting a new life upon release.... (Correction Reporter, 2011).

The program is a success and many of the inmates give the organizers accolades for improving their life. The United States Department of Education's third goal to be discussed is to encourage the increased involvement of the public, parents, and students in Federal education programs.

The Third Goal of the United States Department of Education's Mission Statement

Why do taxpayers support public education? Why do taxpayers support welfare? According to the Alliance for Excellent Education, America's public school system is instituted to enroll, engage, and educate youth to be productive members of society (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011). America also funds welfare to ensure that children from low income homes are educated and will become law-abiding citizens capable of giving back to society. To date, this goal has not been realized.

Local communities, states, and the American economy suffer from the dropout crisis as well - from lost wages, taxes, and productivity to higher costs for health care, welfare,

and crime.... Census projections show that the minority populations with the lowest graduation rates are poised to become half of the U.S. population by 2050.... According to... an Alliance issue brief, if minority students continue to receive inferior educations and leave high school without diplomas and adequate preparation for the twenty-first-century economy, the nation's graduation rate and economic strength will both decrease further (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011).

A State Auditor audits public school funds, who audits aid to dependent children (ADC)? Based on the author's framework, welfare recipients would be accountable to taxpayers for the academic success of their children. This would be done through a partnership between the United States Department of Education, local welfare agencies, and local school districts. The new model of public education would require parents receiving welfare to attend a yearlong parenting class, and if they do not, their funds would be discontinued. If their children do not maintain a C average in school, their funds would be reduced, and they would be required to take remedial courses. If their children have chronic absenteeism and behavioral problems in school, their funds would be reduced. Parenting skills and home environment are determining factor of a child's success in public education. Parents must be held accountable for the success of their children's education and for the public funds they receive from taxpayers. "Families are children's most important educators" (New York Times, 2011).

According to Lee & Ransom (2011), nearly half of young men of color age 15 to 24 who graduate from high school will end up unemployed, incarcerated or dead; of the deaths, 0.3% will be African Americans, 0.1% will be Asian, 0.2% will be Hispanic, and 0.3% will be Native American. This study also found that one of the overriding factors for the participants' inability

to persist in educational institutions is a lack of family support and/or their inability to reconcile home and school life (Lee, M. J. Jr. & Ransom, T., 2011).

This is not a new idea. The North Carolina DSS Family Support and Child Welfare Service Statewide Training Partnership published this in 2004:

Every day, judges and social workers in North Carolina and across the United States refer parents to parenting classes. They do so in the hopes of making families more harmonious and children safer. If the family is receiving child welfare services, often attendance at these classes is compulsory.... Clearly, parenting classes are very important to our child welfare system (Training matters, 2004).

An analysis of Catherine Rampell's (2011) research data found that there is a very strong positive correlation between income and test scores in the disciplines of critical reading, math, and writing (New York Times, 2011).

On every test section, moving up an income category was associated with an average score boost of over 12 points. Moving from the second-highest income group and the highest income group seemed to show the biggest score boost. However, keep in mind the top income category is uncapped, so it includes a much broader spectrum of families by wealth (New York Times, 2011).

The difference in what this author proposes and similar programs throughout the United States is that parents would be held accountable for the public funds they receive from social services agencies for the aid of their dependent children and for the educational success of their

own children. This discussion concludes with a synopsis of the author's argument of the reinvention of America's public education system.

Conclusion

Today educators tinker, fixing problems at the edges, and adopt best practices that are already in the field. They rarely shed light and invent something that is not yet on the table or in the books. This will not suffice for America today. Although many reforms have been instituted over the past 20 years, the data indicates that they have not been successful in restoring America's preeminence among educated nations. If America's preeminence in education is to be restored, and its role as a world leader is to be maintained, its public education system must improve dramatically, and a healthy respect for education and those who work in the profession must be restored.

Presently, America is at a pivotal point in history. Many argue that rising nations represent the future, and that the time for America's leadership has passed. There are new and dangerous threats facing the United States today, such as, Islamist extremist, subversive influences within American society, a failing public education system, a dwindling economy, the manifestation of factions in society that would use democracy as a tool to take away the rights and freedoms of Americans, a lack of patriotism and civic education in public schools, crime, poverty, inequity, economic and race polarization, and a shrinking middle class, while the economies of China, India, and Brazil are growing at an expedient rate. Israel has built a new "Silicon Valley," and some of the most advanced universities in the world are located in Asia and the Middle East (AFP, 2011; U.S. News, 2010). President Obama says that America must first lead economically; but is this feasible with a failing public education system? Without an educated

workforce, America runs the risk of losing its supremacy in the International community and its Democracy. If America is to succeed, it must invent a public education system capable of confronting and overcoming its present and future challenges. Americans live in a global economy that is largely of their own making (The White House, 2011). Have we taught others that we ourselves should become castaways? In this article, the author introduces a new framework for reinventing America's public education system, and an analysis of the data indicates its feasibility. Why should we fail?

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