



## Education and the American Dream

Nicholas Kristof writes in a *New York Times* column: "The best escalator to opportunity in America is education. But a new study underscores that the escalator is broken.... A basic element of the American dream is equal access to education as the lubricant of social and economic mobility. But the American dream seems to have emigrated because many countries do better than the United States in educational mobility."



Kristof then cites a study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (O.E.C.D.) that places the United States fifth among nations that have people with college degrees. We rank 12<sup>th</sup> in K-12 educational achievement, while once-impoverished South Korea now ranks first.

Almost everyone will agree that the surest way to achieve the American dream is through education. That's particularly true of those born in America, for we know that many poor immigrants achieve the American dream without having gone to school here. Their success stories are legendary. For them the door to the American dream was free enterprise and economic opportunity.

But the great irony is that elementary and secondary education in America is not what it's cracked up to be. In fact there are failing schools all over America that prevent millions of American children from ever getting the education they need to achieve their American dream. Despite universal compulsory attendance, we have millions of minority youngsters who spent years in public schools and were never taught to read or write and are relegated to lives of poverty in the inner cities. Their main ways to achieve the American dream are through sports or the entertainment field.

There is also a growing white underclass in America, the result of poor education in dysfunctional K-12 public schools. In other words, our education system is sabotaging the efforts of millions of young Americans who want to be at least as well educated as their parents. And the situation promises to get worse as the confusing, ill-conceived new curriculum based on the Common Core State Standards makes its way through the American education system creating academic chaos and student failure.

While poor K-12 education is preventing millions of young Americans from attending college, ironically our colleges and universities are now being filled with over 900,000 foreign students, an all-time high. According to the Institute for International Education, foreign students contribute about \$27-billion to the U.S. economy. Some will remain in the United States after graduation to pursue their American dream; others will return to their native countries to become members of their ruling elites or to pursue success as entrepreneurs.

In 2013, 274,439 Chinese students came to the United States to study as undergraduates in our colleges and universities. In addition to the Chinese, large numbers of students come from India, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Canada, Taiwan, and elsewhere. Four institutions have more than 10,000 foreign students: New York University, University of Southern California, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Columbia, and Purdue. In Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT has a very large contingent of foreign students eagerly mastering our high technology. The number of American students studying



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abroad is 290,000.

How is it possible that the American dream has become so illusive to millions of young Americans? The answer is so simple that most Americans can't believe it. Virtually all American children in our public schools are taught to read by the sight method, even though our alphabetic system is phonetic. Why is this done? To deliberately create widespread reading disability in order to dumb-down the nation. If you need proof, read Charlotte Iserbyt's mammoth study, *The Deliberate Dumbing-Down of America*, now available free online.

And why are we being dumb-downed? So that the progressive educators can change America from being a constitutional republic into a socialist-collectivist society. The thousands of professors of education who control the education of our teachers have been indoctrinated in the educational philosophy of John Dewey, the leader of the progressive movement. He outlined a plan to socialize America in an essay written in 1898, "The Primary-Education Fetish."

Dewey knew that our capitalist, individualistic system relied on high literacy for its impetus. The best way to undermine that system would be to change the way children are taught to read. Instead of using the phonetic method that made us the most literate people on Earth, he advocated using a non-phonetic method that forces children to read English as if it were Chinese, an ideographic system. He wrote: "Change must come gradually. To force it unduly would compromise its final success by favoring a violent reaction." And why would there be a violent reaction? Because all totalitarian regimes create anti-totalitarian resistance.

So now we know why our children are having such a difficult time learning to read. And now we also know how to solve the problem. Teach all children to read with intensive systematic phonics so that they can all achieve high literacy. Once all of our children can read, the entire curriculum would have to be smartened up and our process of education might become what it once was: a means of enhancing the lives of our citizens and making the American dream a reality for all.

I would also recommend that the schools use my very simple, inexpensive, and highly effective reading program, *Alpha-Phonics*, which I created in 1983 to provide parents with the means of teaching their children to read at home. Alex Newman, a fellow writer for *The New American*, recently began teaching his four-year-old to read with *Alpha-Phonics*. He sent me the following e-mail:

[I] just wanted to let you know how GREAT your alpha-phonics book has worked for my oldest son, who is four. He went from virtually no reading to being able to read sentences with almost no problems after just 15 lessons or so. This tool you've created is AMAZING and should be used in schools around the world. So thank you for that!

So we know how to teach reading in America. It is no great mystery and a lot less costly than the Common Core nonsense. If the City of New York's public schools adopted *Alpha-Phonics*, they would save millions of dollars and be on their way to a system that works as well as it did back in the 1930s.



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