

# How Public Schools Are Sabotaging America

By Samuel L. Blumenfeld

Top CEOs in the computer field have been bemoaning the fact that American schools are not turning out students who are proficient enough in math and science and able to do the work needed in the computer industry. Nor are our students able to compete with their counterparts in other countries, namely India and China.

Craig Barrett, Chairman of Intel, said in an interview in USA Today (11-8-01), that our education system “is dumbing down the U.S. citizenry and educating the rest of the globe” in our graduate schools. Our educators haven’t “fully recognized that the standard of living is going to be dependent on the quality of the workforce.” That strong warning, issued over four years ago hasn’t made much of a dent in the thinking of American public educators.

Bill Gates, the famous founder of Microsoft, in an address at the National Education Summit on High Schools (2-26-05), more or less reiterated what Barrett had said in 2001. He asserted that American high schools are obsolete and unable to meet the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He presented some deplorable facts about our education system:

Today, only one-third of our students graduate from high school ready for college, work, and citizenship. The other two-thirds, most of them low-income and minority students, are tracked into courses that won’t ever get them ready for college or prepare them for a family-wage job.... Either we think they can’t learn, or we think they’re not worth teaching.

I am terrified for our workforce of tomorrow. In math and science, our 4<sup>th</sup> graders are among the top students in the world. By 8<sup>th</sup> grade, they’re in the middle of the pack. By 12<sup>th</sup> grade, U.S. students are scoring near the bottom of all industrialized nations.

As for the international competition, Gates painted this worrisome picture:

In 2001, India graduated almost a million more students from college than the United States did. China graduates twice as many students with bachelor’s degrees as the U.S., and they have six times as many graduates majoring in engineering.

So what’s the solution. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation thinks it has one: redesign the high schools:

The key problem is political will. Elected officials have not yet done away with the idea underlying the old design. The idea behind the old design was that you could train an adequate workforce by sending only a third of your kids to college

and that the other kids either couldn't do college work or didn't need to. The idea behind the new design is that all students can do rigorous work, and—for their sake and ours—they have to.

And Gates has put his money where his mouth is. His foundation has already invested almost one billion dollars thus far to help redesign the American high school.

I am always amazed at the ignorance of billionaires, smart enough to create great new industries, but totally misinformed when it comes to the problems of our education system. The problems do not start in high school. They start in primary school, and often in kindergarten and pre-school. The blatant educational malpractice that takes place in those early school years is what sets our students on the road to academic disaster.

The educators can get away with this academic genocide because their methods seem to produce acceptable results up to the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. But after that, it's all downhill to the bottom of the slope in 12<sup>th</sup> grade. And by the time we get to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, everyone, including Mr. Gates, forgets what happened in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade.

We've written extensively about how the teaching of reading by the whole-word method produces the symptoms of dyslexia. We've explained how these teaching methods were devised by our top educators to produce the results they wanted: the dumbing down of America. And Mr. Gates believes that he can stop the dumbing down process by redesigning the American high school with more rigorous courses in math and science.

But if the majority of kids can't read well enough, how is making the high school curriculum tougher going to help them? If Mr. Gates would spend a couple of million dollars getting intensive phonics into the primary schools, he might have a better chance of redesigning the entire system, not just the high schools.

But many American parents have decided not to wait until Bill Gates has redesigned the high schools or our educators have decided to redesign our primary schools. That is why the homeschool movement continues to grow. In the next few months, when virtually every state in the union will have a homeschool convention, it behooves concerned parents to look into this revolutionary way of educating their children by attending one of these conventions.

And if you have a child ready to learn to read, do not put that child in a public school where his or her brain will be injured by educational malpractice. Prevention is well worth the cost of remedial tutoring in future years. If you would like information about my own very effective phonics program, just email me. At least your child will not become a victim of the public educators. Of course, some of you will insist that your local teachers are just fine. But it doesn't take much to destroy a young brain, even if the teacher has a smiling face.