

US Education IN CRISIS

Why we must
take action now



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Why can't US students compete with young people educated in other parts of the world?

Not only have foreign educational systems caught-up and in many cases significantly surpassed the US in basic subjects like math and science, but education in many parts of the world also includes foreign language instruction at an early age. So young people in other countries have a basic skills advantage, and a significant language advantage over US children.

According to John Stossel, ABC News Correspondent for the 20/20 Special "Stupid in America", the US educational system is failing. "We gave identical tests to high school students in New Jersey and in Belgium. The Belgian kids cleaned the American kids' clocks.... and New Jersey's kids have test scores that are above average for America." Even more embarrassing, the Belgian students had excellent English proficiency

With a poorly educated workforce and high employment costs in the US, employers are starting to look elsewhere for talent. According to Thomas L. Friedman, Pulitzer Prize Winning correspondent and author, globalization is the most influential trend of our times. US jobs are moving

overseas and those that stay in the US require considerable interaction with people from other cultures. US citizens are expected to live and work in other countries and to have skills that meet or exceed those of people living elsewhere.

Unfortunately, examples of the fallout from our educational deficiencies abound. In a 2006 international college computer-programming contest, the only US university that ranked in the top 12 was MIT and they were number eight. Most of the top awards went to universities from Eastern Europe and Asia. Also, US companies are starting to look overseas for research and talent. Microsoft funds research at two universities, both outside the US and hires many of its employees from India. In addition, much of the US manufacturing base has moved to Asia.

Richard Florida, George Mason University professor and author of *The Flight of the Creative Class*, believes there are larger implications to the education crisis. "If our talent base weakens our lead in technology, business and economics will fade faster than any of us can imagine."

One would think our poor international performance and the potential long-term consequences of educational deficiencies in the US would spur people to action, but little seems to be happening. Most US educational reform efforts seem to be focused on incremental adjustments to the status quo. With primary and secondary schooling a 13-year process, it is imperative for us to recognize that we have a critical problem and encourage innovative approaches to correct it. Otherwise we may have a generation of US children with limited opportunities.

