

## Education Emergency: Our Children (and US) at Risk

As an independent physicist I've spent 40± years on environmental advocacy, and energy education. In the later part of this journey I've become increasingly distressed about what is happening in our education system.

After speaking out about this several times, in 2013 I was asked to put on a presentation to the US House [Science, Space and Technology Committee](#), as well as to the North Carolina Legislators. The unabridged version of both of those talks is online at [ScienceUnderAssault.info](#).

Since then, most of what I've seen indicates that the situation is getting worse, rather than remedied. This is a summary of key education parts that need to be immediately addressed. Hopefully it will encourage citizens to get more involved with rectifying this extraordinarily important matter.

1 - We can not effectively fix anything until we are on the same page. I believe that the place to start here, is that we need to fully agree on the overall objective of the education system. *Exactly what is the product we expect to get at the end of a laborious 12+ year assembly line?*

In my view, the number one criteria for determining whether the educational system has been a success or not is: *do these graduates have the ability and inclination to do Critical Thinking?*

Google founder [Vint Cerf](#) says that there is no more important skill to teach than [Critical Thinking](#). He calls it the one tool we have to defend ourselves from the onslaught of misinformation we are saturated with today. He argues that Critical Thinking would enable citizens to be more thoughtful about what information they **accept**, then **process**, and then **use**. That skill is a major benefit in literally every aspect of life.

My experience is that while the education system gives lip-service to Critical Thinking, when the rubber-meets-the-road, it's not really happening. An easy test is to ask any college or high school student today what they think about global warming. Do they provide a thoughtful, thorough analysis — or simply regurgitate propaganda?

My first recommendation is that this be adopted by every state education department, every local school board, every academic institution, etc:

**"It is our obligation to produce critically thinking graduates."**

**2** - I'm a zealous defender of my profession, Science. Most people are not aware of it, but Science is under a ferocious attack, worldwide. The reason is that individuals and organizations promoting political agendas, or their own economic interests, are acutely aware that **real** Science is not their friend — as it will expose them for what they are.

Those self-serving parties realize that even though most citizens have faith in Science, very few actually *understand* what Science is. So they take advantage of that discrepancy, by *purposefully* making **false Science claims**. They are fully aware that only a small number of people will understand the fraud — and even fewer will say anything public about it.

From what I've seen, the most egregious assaults on Science are taking place in such newbie science branches such as *Environmental Science, Earth Science, Ecology, etc.*

This campaign is being supported by slick internet video "science" series like [Crash Course](#), [Bozeman Science](#), etc. Listen carefully to the *Crash Course* founder explaining why they made over **200** education videos. He says "We don't really have a coherent answer." **SAY WHAT?!** I call these **QVC Science**, as (IMO) they are effectively polished sales pitches.

Propagandizing Science starts in our local schools. The good news is that the solution is also there — and is *entirely* under our control (see #3).

Recommendation number two is that I'm advocating that every state education department, every local school board, every academic institution, formally *adopt* and *implement* this standard:

**"Science education will be apolitical."**

**3** - In my countrywide travels and correspondences I've heard from many parents of students. Quite a few have complained about various matters going on in their district. I asked them what response they got when they expressed their concerns to the teacher, principal, school board or superintendent? Most said essentially the same thing: *they were reluctant to speak out for fear of retribution to their child*. What a wonderful system.

The remaining citizens are those with no school children. Those people understandably believe that the school system is being held accountable by those with the most at stake: **parents of current children**. *But no!*

My wife and I are in the second group. We were warned that because we had no kids in the system, that defenders of the status quo would instead attack us personally if we spoke up publicly about the secondary school system. We'd be accused of being anti-superintendent, anti-school board, anti-teacher, and/or anti-children.

It seems rather hypocritical that school districts who pride themselves for enforcing a "no tolerance" bullying policy between students, would actually tolerate intimidation of citizens who have the temerity to speak up about school system improvements...

Most people (including us) would like the federal government to stay out of the education business. Additionally we would also prefer that the state have minimal involvement in the education process. We want the ability to locally decide what is best for **our** children and **our** community.

We rarely hear about the flip side to this freedom: **responsibility**. If we want to control things ourselves, for *our* interests, then that means that there has to be **real community involvement** — *which includes unfettered and unpenalized inputs from parents and citizens.*

So my third suggestion is that every state education department and school district officially adopt the following position for their interfaces with parents and the public (prominently putting it on their websites, letterhead, etc):

**"Please tell us how we can do a better job!"**

When inputs from the public are received the choice is very simple. The recipients can be genuinely appreciative that citizens take the time to make constructive suggestions to improve student education — **or** they can circle the wagons, and defend the status quo. Ironically, it's the later action that necessitates more higher level intervention...

Whether you have children in the education system or not, is irrelevant. The future of our country, is literally at stake here. We all are going to sink or swim based on whether we have an effective education system. Please carefully investigate what is happening in your community.

John Droz, jr  
Morehead City, NC 2/1/16

*"The function of education is to teach one to think intensively, and to think critically."*  
— Martin Luther King, jr.