

Anna Rad

Mr. Rogers

Government 2

23 October 2015

### Educational Reform

The United States is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, however we are poor in the sense of academic standards. Classrooms have been upgraded for new technology, teachers have a college degree, and a majority of students are willing to learn. Somehow there is a disconnect between the amount of funding dedicated to schools, and student success rates. It's common knowledge that students in other countries like Finland, China, Korea, and Japan are excelling academically. US students are getting the short end of the stick and it's affecting their ability to attend good schools and work in well paying jobs. "Waiting for Superman" is a documentary that explores the American school systems. "Throughout the documentary, different aspects of the American public education system are examined. Things such as the ease in which a public school teacher achieves tenure, the inability to fire a teacher who is tenured, and how the system attempts to reprimand poorly performing teachers are shown to have an impact on the educational environment. Teaching standards are called into question as there is often conflicting bureaucracy between teaching expectations at the school, state, or federal level." (Geoffrey Canada). The question is how can we improve teacher training so that all students get an equal opportunity to succeed. We need to increase graduation rates, train teachers to teach the subjects that they know, and teach them to teach to all types of students. "The

Progressive teacher guides learners through carefully designed experiences,” (Elkind). But teachers aren’t doing this because most teachers aren’t progressive.

In the United States, on average only 3.2 million students graduate from high school. The District of Columbia (DC) our nation’s capital had the lowest graduation rate in 2014 with only 59% of students graduating. A study conducted by The Alliance for Excellent Education in 2009 showed shocking results, “approximately 600,000 students dropped out from the class of 2008 “at great cost not only to themselves but also to their communities”” (CBIA). And “Every year more than 380,000 students fail out of college in the United States,” (University of Alabama). In fact The American Psychological Association takes the position that “poverty and dropouts are inextricably connected in the three primary settings affecting healthy child and adolescent development: families, schools and communities” (APA). Many “dropouts face extremely bleak economic and social prospects. Compared to high school graduates, they are less likely find a job and earn a living wage, and more likely to be poor and to suffer from a variety of adverse health outcomes” (Rumberger, 2011). One of the reasons why students are failing can be directly related to some the teachers or their teaching styles.

Some teachers may have a “curse of knowledge” complex. This is the inability to teach a subject that they are extremely familiar and knowledgeable of. Other teachers may be overwhelmed by the teaching curriculum while others may not care because of their tenure status. Another reason could be unprepared teachers. A study released in 2014 by the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), argues that “teaching colleges are too lenient in their admissions criteria and have failed to prepare their students to teach subjects like reading, math and science” (Sanchez). Additionally, the NCTQ would argue, “that not only are these programs

failing to train effective teachers, they're also making things harder for themselves by admitting inferior applicants. Three out of four U.S. schools that train teachers don't require applicants to be in the top half of the college-going population” (NCTQ). A combination of these factors affects every school, in every state, in this nation.

Some teachers don't know to teach to all types of learners. According to Gardner's multiple intelligence, there are a number of learning styles. The types of learners are: Visual-Spatial, Bodily Kinesthetic, Musical, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Linguistic, Logical-Mathematical, and Natural. Most teachers only know how to teach to the Logical-Mathematical learners. “These learners learn by reasoning and calculating. They think conceptually, abstractly and are able to see and explore patterns and relationships. They like to experiment, solve puzzles, and ask cosmic questions. They can be taught through logic games, investigations, and mysteries. They need to learn and form concepts before they can deal with details.” (Gardner). If teachers are only teaching to this type of learner, all the others fall to the side and do not receive equal education. The solution to these problems is a new teacher-training program. A program that teaches teachers to teach to all types of learners, to teach different ways, and make sure teachers are truly ready to teach a classroom before they actually go out and do it.

While it's necessary for teachers to be educated on standards and guidelines for teaching a multidimensional student audience, students need to take accountability for their own success. It's worth noting that schools in low-income areas have a lower percentage of funding to educate students or improve older schools. These same students from low-income homes may be dis-incented to attend class, and some are working to help support their families. It's also

difficult to find teachers willing to work in schools that are located in neighborhoods with high crime rates. Teachers are caring and dedicated to the success of students. In some cases, teachers have classes so large that to work with those that are failing would leave the teacher little time for much else. Other times the teacher may be required to teach in multiple language because the classroom has a number of immigrant children in attendance. Mandating a law won't change the cultural issues we face as a nation. Additional classrooms should be made available and filled with additional teachers. Funding should be made available to improve schoolrooms and modernize the tools teachers' need. Having computers available for everyone is one solution, students mentoring each other is another solution. Creating a bill will not solve all these issues, but it will put us on the path to success. We need, "stricter evaluation requirements should probably be coupled with more aggressive teacher recruitment and retention policies," (Bruno). There needs to be a system that works. We need "state-developed plans designed to improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, increase equity, and improve the quality of instruction," (DoE). We need to change something, or our kids will fail. Already, "To better support the preparation and development of successful teachers, the Department has also proposed setting aside 25 percent of Title II funds under No Child Left Behind (roughly \$600 million) to improve teacher and leader recruitment, preparation, and professional development," (DoE). Something has started to change, but we need to take the extra step to make sure this change works.

Students have had the right to an education for many years. This bill is necessary to ensure that that right is met. In order to help our students succeed something needs to change. Teacher training needs to be reinvented. Teachers need to be taught to teach to all types of

learners, they need to be able to teach a lesson multiple ways, and they need to be the reason our students are succeeding. Our students deserve the right to a good education, they deserve to go to good schools, and they deserve to have good teachers.

## Works Cited

Weber, Karl. *Waiting for "Superman": How We Can save America's failing Public Schools*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2010. Print.

University of Alabama. "Causes of Failure." *Causes of Failure*. University of Alabama, 1 Jan. 2015. Web. 25 Oct. 2015.

Bruno, Paul. "The Importance of the Teacher Supply to Education Reform." *The Brookings Institution*. Brookings, 20 July 2015. Web. 02 Nov. 2015.

CBIA. "The Economics of Failure: How Low Graduation Rates Affect All of Us." *CBIA News*. CBIA, 19 Oct. 2010. Web. 26 Oct. 2015.

Elkind, David. "Educational Reform." *Science* 244.4905 (1989): 631-32. *Macalester*. Macalester, 1 Jan. 2008. Web. 1 Nov. 2015.

Government. "Education Reform." *Education Reform*. U.S. Department of Education, 1 Jan. 2015. Web. 1 Nov. 2015.

Government. "Reform for the Future." *The White House*. The White House, 01 Jan. 2015. Web. 02 Nov. 2015.

Lane, Carla. "Gardner's Multiple Intelligences." *Gardner's Multiple Intelligences*. The Distance Learning Technology Resource Guide, 31 Aug. 2013. Web. 02 Nov. 2015.

Rumberger, Russell W. "Poverty and High School Dropouts." *American Psychological Association*. American Psychological Association, 1 May 2013. Web. 26 Oct. 2015.

Walsh, Kate. "National Council on Teacher Quality." *National Council on Teacher Quality*. National Council on Teacher Quality, 1 Jan. 2013. Web. 02 Nov. 2015.