

Education

SCHOOL TALK

By Dr. Marshall C. Darnell

American Education, Its Value and Faults

One need not read past the front page of many news reports to find statements offering praise or finding fault with America's educational system. There are those who would list the short-comings in a magnified listing, which would depict the decrease in achievement by the students, drugs abuse that is out of control on campuses, and the lack of dedication on the part of the students to accomplish even the simplest of educational tasks. The list would continue and there is evidence to support these contentions, for some of our students. But, there is that group of young people that are taking their education seriously and are achieving at or above their potential.

opportunity to attend the induction ceremony for students who were being admitted into the National Honor Society for one of our high schools. Here was a group of young people who had through ten years of schooling been successful in meeting the established criteria for this prestigious organization. Their grades were excellent, their school participation outstanding, and their character had been judged by the school officials as exemplary. These students had discovered the value of an education and were realizing its worth at an early age.

Aside from the obvious success of these young people there was another notable characteristic for

many of these inductees they had Oriental ancestry. George Bohl, an educational consultant, cited in a recent work, "Critics of our educational system abound. We have learned individuals, scholars and presidential commissions telling us that Johnny can't read, write, cipher, and condemning the educational system for it. If this is the case, how do we explain the Vietnamese student who is apparently doing well." Bohl attributes this success to a strict home life, high parental expectancies, and the belief that education was not a right but an opportunity for which these students are grateful.

There are features of the educational system in this state and nation that need to

be enhanced. There are procedures that need to be reviewed and certainly there are always those new innovative practices that need to be included in the curriculum. The educational system is ever evolving and as citizens we need to move the system in a direction that will produce the most positive results for our students; however, to find that the American educational system is obsolete and needs a major revamping suggests that we may be throwing away a strong and viable system.

Those who take advantage of the opportunities afforded in the public educational system are in our schools. These are the students who have a high expectancy level for themselves and with parental support find academic and co-curricular success in a course of study that would confuse many in the adult population.

Our system may have its faults, but I suggest to you that for those who want to take advantage of the opportunities available there is value in this system that rewards those who prize scholarship, participation, citizenship, and high personal standards.

CHILD WATCH

By Marian Wright Edelman
President
Children's Defense Fund

Teen Pregnancy Prevention: Ten Ideas for Schools

Because our children spend much of their time in school, schools have an important role to play in preventing teen pregnancy. Schools do not have to duplicate the efforts of parents or churches. There are many things they can do effectively on

easier than coping with the complex problems of teen pregnancy.

* Providing remedial services to help all children who are behind grade level in reading and mathematics to catch up. These youths are at high risk of becoming parents too soon.

* Offering day care and other support services to help pregnant and parenting teens stay in school. This is key to preventing repeat pregnancies.

* Providing family life education to students or parents. These courses should start with young students, be geared to the needs of different age groups, and be run by highly qualified teachers. Our youths must have an opportunity to discuss these issues with an adult, and polls show that many parents are not offering their children this opportunity.

* Working hard to get all teens who have dropped out to return to school. If these youths are not pregnant or parents already, they are at high risk.

* Involving parents in helping their children to avoid teen pregnancy or dropping out. Cooperation and input from parents is key to reaching youths effectively and having a real impact.

* Getting the word out about the consequences of teen pregnancy by displaying teen pregnancy prevention posters or holding a school assembly on this issue.

* Encouraging students to form their own groups to prevent teen pregnancy and help each other through peer counseling.

* Sponsoring academic, cultural or recreation activities for less well-off children and youths that can help give them a sense of self-esteem and positive things to do.

* Encouraging youths to participate in community services activities, to help them become more connected to the community.



Mary Wright Edelman

their own. Here is just a beginning list of ideas. Check to see if your school is:

* Making an effort to identify teens that are at risk of becoming pregnant before this happens. Prevention is

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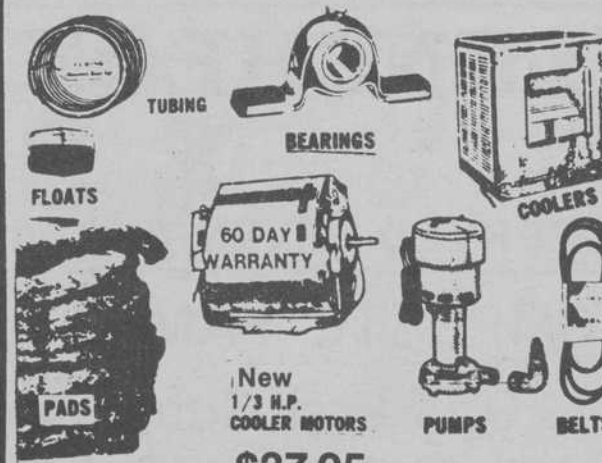
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