

EDUCATION

Learning About Engineering

By Kim 3X Houston

The Honorable Elijah Muhammad stated many years ago that "There is no nation that can get up unless it has a knowledge of Engineering." This raises some important questions, such as: What is Engineering? Why is it so important that no nation can ever get up without a proper

knowledge of it and proper application of that knowledge?

Engineering, according to one definition, is "the art of directing the great sources of power in nature for the use and the convenience of human beings."

According to Dr. Lytia Howard, Assistant Dean for Minority and Special Programs

at the Georgia Institute of Technology, engineering is important because it improves the quality of life for all and makes most functional things in a society run faster, smoother, safer and cheaper.

There are many branches of engineering, including: electrical, computer, mechanical, environmental, civil, chemical,

industrial, genetic, aerospace, agricultural and the list goes on.

Dr. Howard lists the electrical, computer, and environmental branches as three that will hold the highest employment demands in the next century.

She explains that electrical engineers have a foundation that enables them to make a transition into any or all other branches of engineering. Engineers in other branches cannot as easily make a transition into electrical engineering without additional training and study. Because of this, electrical engineers will have wider employment opportunities, she said.

Electrical engineers deal with the generation, transmission, and distribution of electrical power. While it is true that mathematical skills are the foundation of most engineering work, electrical engineering in particular calls for knowledge and understanding of higher mathematics, i.e., statistic and calculus.

Computer engineers deal with designing improved software and hardware systems, and also enhancing the performance of computer chips. Environmental engineers deal with waste management, pollution/pesticide control and radiological hazards, Dr. Howard feels that without environmental engineering, there will be no need for any of the other branches of engineering.

In other branches, civil engineers deal with planning and
(See Engineering, Page 5)

Can We Compete?

By Denise Goodwin-Hockaday

TO COMPETE SUCCESSFULLY IN THE NEW, GLOBAL ECONOMY, all Americans, regardless of race, gender or nationality, must receive quality education. Without it, our kids will not measure up against the highly educated workforces in industrialized countries around the world. This is not just a "Japan" problem folks. It's happening everywhere. Even in nations like Taiwan, South Korea, Australia, Italy, and Poland, students outdistance their American peers in academic achievement like they recently did in an international science achievement test. U.S. ninth graders ranked 15 among 16 countries.

EVEN MORE ALARMING TO AFRICAN AMERICANS, HISPANICS, AND IMMIGRANTS, the current U.S. public education system is failing many of them. By the year 2000, eight-in-10 new workers will come from these groups. What is the connection between a sound education and a competitive workforce?

CLASSROOM TO WORK PLACE: Frustrated students often turn into frustrated workers. Only 13 percent of American workers believe they will personally benefit if they work harder, compared with 93 percent in Japan. Frustration results in low productivity and poor quality products. As a result, the average U.S. auto has a third more defects than an auto made overseas. When the consumer buys better quality foreign imports, it hurts auto manufacturing here and cuts job opportunities in many communities—especially ours. What can we do in the



Denise Goodwin-Hockaday

classrooms to assure that future workers are motivated and creative enough to successfully compete with foreign rivals?

FORTUNATELY, EDUCATORS AND BUSINESS PEOPLE now realize that not only do educational standards need to be increased but the delivery of quality education must go across the board. If each and every American isn't given the right educational tools, jobs and our personal standard of living are at risk. Nations around the world understand the simple concept that quality education is the key to jobs and prosperity. Somewhere, we Americans lost sight of that reality.

INSTEAD, MANY OF OUR STUDENTS SPEND MORE TIME WATCHING TELEVISION than doing homework. Studies show that on-average, Americans put 30-35 hours in front of the tube each week. It's not just home habits that are troublesome, there's room for concern at the schoolhouse. Our school days and school years are substantially shorter than that of our international competitors. When did we lower our standards and let our students lose the work ethic? Have parents and teachers failed students by not setting high enough expectations for them?

SOLUTIONS ARE PLENTIFUL BUT THERE ARE CONSEQUENCES AND COSTS. Some believe that if we require all students to take a national achievement examination to receive their diplomas, then students will be motivated to achieve and a high school education would mean something again. Critics ask: What will we do with the children who drop out in frustration? Others believe that if we expand the school year from 180 days to 220 days, our students would be better able to compete with their foreign counterparts.

SOME ASK IF EXPOSING OUR CHILDREN TO A FAILING SYSTEM FOR LONGER periods really helps. Still others feel we should give principals and teachers more say in their schools and base pay raises on results. Can we really expect teachers to teach hungry, undisciplined children effectively? Would profit-sharing at work make workers more motivated to produce quality products? Who is going to pay for all of those solutions?

(See Competing, Page 5)

New Technology Arrives In The Clark County Classrooms

Las Vegas—The holiday gift giving season has arrived early for students at John S. Park Elementary School. Park is the first school in the Clark County School District to receive new technology purchased with funds from the school bond issue passed by voters in 1994.

Seventeen new computers have arrived on the school's campus, and for many Park students this will be their first exposure to the technology that is sure to be key to their future success. Park's newly created computer laboratory contains 16 new computers and workstations. The school's office received one new computer and the library has gained four new computers and a file server. The computers are linked on a local area network to allow software and file sharing among users.

"This has been an exciting week for everyone at our school," said Linda Agreda, Vice-Principal of Park Elementary School. "After witnessing the awe on the faces of the students when they look around the computer lab, it is pretty evident that the majority of these kids don't have access to technology at home. We have the voters of Clark County to thank for passing a school bond that has brought equity to our educational system by equipping us with the proper teaching tools to adequately prepare our kids for the future."

\$16 million of the bond money is being used to equip approximately 127 schools in the Clark County School District with new computers, CD Roms, file servers, printers and local area networks.

Determining the appropriate computer equipment to purchase was a difficult challenge for the district, not to mention wiring, delivering and installing the more than 4,000 computers to different schools. Faced with this immense logistical challenge, CCSD turned to the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce to secure help from the private sector's technological experts.

The Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce's

Business and Education Collaborative formed a committee to ensure the most efficient use of bond funds for the purchase and distribution of the new computers. At the Chamber's request, 11 members firms donated their management information systems experts to work with employees of the district as members of the newly created Technology Assistance Subcommittee.

"A huge corporate challenge was issued to Southern Nevada's business community and the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce responded by stepping up to the plate," said Dr. Brian Cram, superintendent of Clark County public schools. "The recommendations from the private sector have been enormously helpful to the district in determining the most efficient use of bond funds for equipping our schools with new technology."

A pilot program was developed to test the subcommittee's recommended methods for the first-of-its-kind mass computer distribution and installation program. The three-week effort involving Park, Booker and Hewittson Elementary Schools is on schedule for completion in mid-December. To ensure maximum efficiency, each school will undergo some component of computer installation throughout the three-week program. Today, as students at Park are learning with their new computers, computers are being delivered to Booker and technical wiring is occurring at Hewittson. Elementary school students will learn basic word processing skills and have access to a reference system through the computer software that is accompanying the technology. Schools with high Hispanic populations will be equipped with bilingual writing skills software.

Computer software in secondary schools will teach students office organization skills, spreadsheets, letterwriting and power point presentations. Students will also have access to a fairly sophisticated reference software package.

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McMillan to host parent advisory meeting

A parent advisory meeting for the area served by School Board Trustee James McMillan will be held at 10 a.m. Friday, December 1, at Parson Elementary School, 4100 Thom Boulevard. The meeting topic will be "Keeping Our Schools Safe for Students." Guest speakers will be Jack Lazzarotto, director of CCSD police services, and Danny Reyes, school police supervisor. McMillan represents District C, which includes North Las Vegas. His advisory committee is called the Mac PAC. Parent Advisory committee meetings bring parents together with their elected Board of School Trustees representatives to discuss topics of interest and concern.

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