

E d u c a t i o n

Summer is not a vacation from learning

LET'S TALK To Our Teachers and Grads: Well Done

It doesn't matter if we're trying to slim down our beds or build up our pees and brains, when we're on self-improvement programs it's easy to focus on what's wrong, forgetting we may have some very excellent qualities. Making things better doesn't always mean that what exists is totally dreadful.

So while we're ablaze with improving our schools with an eye to the challenges of the 21st century, let's freeze-frame for a moment to pause and think about—and thank—the teachers, administrators, volunteer school boards and committees, and a host of others, especially parents, who have played instrumental roles in bringing this year's group of high school graduates to school completion. Remember to include in the group those who completed school by earning their high school equivalency diploma, a less traditional way for most to finish high school, but nevertheless a legitimate learning path that works well for many.

To those achieving school completion this season, well done; well done indeed.

School completion and increased annual income are related, so taxpayers who paid the bill for this year's high school graduates and equivalency earners will reap a return on investment as the 1997 group moves forward to join them as taxpayers. Taxpayers also find relief on another financial front: high dropout rates correlate with increased welfare and crime—both high taxpayer tabs.

Rut is a high school or equivalent education enough to head well equipped into the 21st? No, but it's a start. Economic and employment factors are changing, and changing fast, with more and more family wage jobs requiring "knowledge workers." Good jobs requiring only a high school education will plummet, so we have to do much better.

Still, let's keep on our radar screen the fact that our schools are much better than they used to be in many, many ways. We are educating more people, and doing it better. Despite our inclination to beat ourselves up on our way to improving education, research shows that there are encouraging results in educating a broad populace.

Last year the National School Board's Association reported on its study, pointing out that "in 1950 only 34 percent of the population completed four years of high school." And further, "longitudinal studies—data that follow the same group of people over time—indicate that many of those students who do drop out eventually return to school and successfully complete an equivalency degree." And going even further, "according to the National Center for Education Statistics, in recent years about 88 percent of all 25- to 29-year-olds have earned a high school diploma or its equivalent."

Impressive statistics, and if it were 30 years ago we might relax. But it's not. So why do students drop out in the first place? Lots of reasons, but the National School Board's Association reports poor academic performance, and particularly poor reading performance, as a key reason.

So for those who have performed, and now receive that recognition during this graduation season, congratulations. You did it, and now you are challenged to do more. And to those educators and others who fostered and nurtured the possibilities and promise of that student performance, you did it, too. A hard job.

Now we all must do more.
This column is provided as a public service by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, a nonprofit institution working with schools and communities in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington.

As summer vacation approaches, families often make plans to put away the deadlines that come with schoolwork and look forward to a less-pressured schedule of learning activities.

While this is a perfectly appropriate expectation, parents should remember that summer vacation isn't an excuse for children to take a "vacation" from learning.

According to Ernie Hartzog, director of the Northeast Portland Sylvan Learning Center, skills mastered during the school year fade with disuse. Loss of content retention begins within 24 to 48 hours of learning unless the new information is reinforced or applied immediately. Within a month without reinforce-

ment, most of what your child has learned is lost.

"Imagine how little your child will retain from June to September if you don't make education a year-long priority," says Hartzog.

Summer should and can be as much a time for learning as any other time of year if parents plan structured learning activities during their summer vacation.

Hartzog offers some tips for parents to stimulate their child's interest and curb the summer learning gap:

Speak with your child's counselor before summer to determine academic strengths and weaknesses. This will help you prepare for the school year ahead.

Stimulate curiosity and love of learning by planning family trips to the zoo, museums, a local newspaper office, the beach, and other places packed with learning opportunities.

Have your child write to distant grandparents, family members or pen pals. This activity will tell you a lot about achievement in language, spelling and reading.

Develop a reward system for meeting specific goals such as reading three books or cooking five meals.

In some cases, parents need help providing necessary learning opportunities. Consider enrolling your child in a summer enrichment program such as those provided by Sylvan Learning Centers.

The bottom line: there are plenty

of learning opportunities for you and your child to explore during the summer months. By using summer as a time to encourage continued learning, you can help set the stage for a sound performance next fall.

The Northeast Portland Sylvan Learning Center, located at 4300 N.E. Fremont Street, Suite 150, is part of the worldwide network of more than 600 Sylvan Learning and Technology Centers. It provides individualized supplemental educational services to students at all skill levels from kindergarten through adulthood.

Sylvan's focus is on building a strong foundation of academic skills upon which students can build a lifetime of success.

School receives accreditation

The Christie School has been Accredited with Commendation by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations. This is the highest level of accreditation awarded by the Joint Commission, which is the nation's oldest and largest accrediting body.

Formed in 1951, the Joint Commission is dedicated to improving the quality of the nation's health care through voluntary accreditation. The Joint Commission's on-site survey of The Christie School occurred in March 1997.

"Receiving Accreditation with Commendation is a significant achievement, one that recognizes exemplary performance by The Christie School," says Dennis S. O'Leary, M.D., president, Joint Commission. "The Christie School should be commended for its commitment to providing quality care to children and families in its community."

"We are extremely pleased to have achieved this designation," says Daniel Mahler, Executive Director. "Everyone here goes the extra mile on a day-to-day basis to provide the best possible care to the children and families we serve. Receiving Accreditation with Commendation is just the icing on the cake."



Business, civic leaders welcome Adidas

Northeast business and civic leaders Harry Jackson and his wife (from left), King Food Mart owner Elaine Roe and Alberta Street Market owner Jack Chung recently gathered at a dinner party at downtown's Fifth Avenue Suites Hotel to welcome Adidas to the Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. business district.



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