

Reform Project *Pg.1 - Brainstorm*

1. Pollution in the oceans harming wildlife *
2. Deforestation of tropical rainforests
3. Racism causing violence
4. Food waste in 1st world countries
5. The obesity and heart disease epidemic *
6. Teen suicide *
7. Racial bias in the private education system **
8. Stigma against people who are raped
9. Teen drivers *
10. Low Education Standards in the United States **

Low Education Standards in the United States Pg.2 - The Problem

Low education standards in the United States make it difficult to fill the jobs that are both necessary and essential for the future. For example, the requirement to graduate from a *high school* in California is to complete one year of Algebra I. Considering learning Algebra I in middle school is the norm in many European or Asian countries, it is easy to see why standards are lacking. Many lucrative jobs requiring high technical skill like engineers and mechanics have unfilled roles because there simply aren't enough qualified people to take the job. Is it right that people ready to join an expanding workforce with ever more technical jobs to have only a math background up to Algebra I? Obviously, this is an extreme; the majority of people will do mathematics above Algebra I, but it brings an idea of how well American education fares with many other countries. It is necessary to stretch standards to accommodate for the ever increasing amount of skill required in the workforce. While this is not a silver bullet to cure the problems of the current education system, it should bolster the economy and help supply technical jobs.

If the standards in the United States remain the same, this will have negative ramifications on the entire country. People will remain unemployed and more people will be stuck living off low-income jobs that require few skills. As of February 2015, America's average unemployment rate stands at 5.5%, with a portion of jobs being unskilled and low paying. However, some states may have as much as over 7% unemployment rate. This is because people are not meeting the requirements for skilled jobs that they either need to support themselves or want to have, and end up being unemployed because there are few jobs they can qualify for. Without raising standards, many people will lack the education they will need for a well paying career. If standards are not strengthened and more money is not invested into education, America will be stuck in a deficit with a portion of the country struggling to make an income.

Pg.3 - The Solution

In order to end this cycle of unemployment and deficit, America needs to institute changes which will push education as a priority. These changes should include investing more in education, increasing funding to schools and teachers, and provide germane curriculums and adjustments to current practices.

First, increasing funding to teachers and schools will make teaching a job that is secure and desirable and allows schools to promote programs and educational institutions that further a student's education. Right now, a teacher is paid around \$55,000 per year (not including taxes). This is hard to sustain a family and also have spare cash to pursue interests outside of teaching. Considering teachers are the keystone of the education system in every country, teachers need to be given better treatment. Many people are passionate about teaching and very bright individuals, but it is so difficult being a teacher with poor treatment. Invest more money in teachers, not in other less important endeavors. Compare this to the Chinese education system. Teachers are given a lot of respect, have a higher salary, do not have to pay taxes from their salary, and have their own holiday. This attributes a lot to the success of the Chinese education system and how much higher their standards are. People can pursue a profession as a teacher and live a more comfortable life and thus more people can teach higher level material. If teachers were given higher salaries, standards could be raised because there would be more teachers to teach more advanced subjects.

Second, investing more in education will not only help schools, teachers, and students, but will provide long term rewards. According to a TEDx Talk by Sue Khim, CEO of Brilliant.Org, "harnessing the human capital can move the GDP [a measurement of how much goods a country produces] of entire countries." For example, in 1960, Singapore and Jamaica had a similar GDP. Jamaica focused on agriculture, while Singapore invested in education programs. Now, Singapore has a much larger GDP, is fully developed, and is a major producer of electronics and other products. Essentially, focusing more funds on education means a brighter future.

Finally, practices in the current education system must be adjusted. For example, stopping the segregation of "high performance" and "low performance" students. What is meant by this is that if, for example, a student performs poorly in a math class, it is thought "this student isn't a math type" and is moved to a lower math class. This makes it hard for this student to learn challenging material just because they do not have a natural aptitude. Ideologies in other countries like China and Singapore are that every student has the capabilities to achieve in *any class no matter their natural aptitude* as long as they put in the effort. This practice is better because it allows even those who do not have natural talent to soak up the necessary material and succeed rather than be shoved into a class and lose all motivation they would have had.

Obviously, implementing these programs would have several logistic challenges such as the price of implementing these systems and making adjustments to the education

system. However, it is possible to adjust to these systems over time. As said, investing in education is a well paying investment that will exponentially increase GDP over time. Furthermore, there are many wasteful programs that champion unnecessary technology or other practices that can be cut to spend money on what is necessary: increasing the salary of teachers, and raising the standards. Overall, education is an investment worth making regardless of the initial price and logistic challenges.