

ST, JOHNS COUNTY CIVIC ROUNDTABLE

EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT- JULY 2008

In following the latest data of school grades, budgets and follow up comments, several items still trouble me.

First, let me provide some information as background: I taught at a community college, in fact I developed a course and taught several subjects. I also taught for several years in the U.S.Navy nuclear program in the 60's. Admittedly, the pace in the U.S.N. could not be duplicated in public schools, but for example math, for those who didn't have algebra in high school, went from 2 plus 2 equals 4 to integral and differential calculus in eight weeks. Weekly tests were held and if you flunked you were out. The only second chance in the program was at the end when you went to an oral board to determine your qualification. I sat on those boards for our crew. As simple as it sounds, the entire program was reduced to a single question: "could I sleep if you were on watch?" Unlike a meaningless diploma issued to someone who "graduates" but can't read, turning out an unqualified operator could result in the loss of many lives and a submarine.

Culling out "bad teachers" is not a once and done process. Recently I had a conversation with a recent college graduate who told me the following story. He had a difficult subject required for graduation. Early in the first term the professor gave them a "sample test" to help them prepare. He studied hard and squeaked through the first test. It seemed familiar to him, so he looked at the "sample test" upon returning home. Yes, you guessed it. SAME TEST. This ranks up there with the teachers who pass someone who can't do the work but gets passed so they won't have to deal with them next year.

One of the recent articles stated the middle school would lose four of seven reading teachers due to budget constraints. Are you kidding me. Reading is a cornerstone of education. If you can't read, you can't do any of the subjects unless you're a sports star, then you'll get a full ride scholarship to college. It's time to return to a set level of accomplishment for each grade. If you can do the work, you get promoted, if you can't, sorry. Recently, Duval county sent a notice to 300 marginal students about a summer program to assist them. Three people signed up...