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ENDANGERING PROSPERITY

A GLOBAL VIEW OF THE AMERICAN SCHOOL

PUBLICATION DATE: SEPTEMBER 3, 2013

A sobering new book on the long-term cost of a stagnant U.S. education system

“Just when you thought we’d reached a consensus on the need to dramatically improve America’s schools, a chorus is emerging to suggest all is well. Endangering Prosperity contains all the facts and figures needed to put an end to such dangerous and misguided thinking.”

-Joel Klein, former Chancellor of New York City schools

- Are children in Slovenia smarter than Americans?
- Are U.S. taxpayers spending more of their money each year so that our students can lag behind Canada?
- How much economically is lost when U. S. schools fail to improve?
- How uneven is the rate of improvement across the U. S. states?
- Wouldn’t just giving states more money for schools solve the problems?

Those are among the questions asked by three of the world’s leading education scholars in a groundbreaking new book hitting bookshelves on September 3rd, just in time for the new school year.

In *Endangering Prosperity*, scholars from Harvard, Stanford, and the University of Munich shows just how far American students are falling behind their global counterparts and how the looming failure of our education system imperils our economic future.

Through their research, the authors show just how dire the situation is:

- Just 7% of U.S. students performed at an advanced level in mathematics, lower than 29 other countries.
- Only 32% of students were *proficient* (had adequate skills) in mathematics, ranking Americans behind students from Korea, Taiwan, Japan, Canada, Estonia, Slovenia and 21 other countries.
- Contrary to stereotypes, the lack of U.S. student proficiency in math and reading is not a “minority” problem. White students lag far behind proficiency averages for all students in 16 other countries.

Absent a radical change in the way we educate our children, America faces a disconnect between a dynamically changing world economy and a stagnant school system unable to produce the knowledgeable, highly skilled citizens needed to ensure the country's future prosperity. Our lagging schools are costing America hundreds of billions of dollars in GDP each year because they are graduating mediocre students who can't compete globally.

- If America could improve its education system so that students graduate with standardized test scores of German students, the economic impact on future GDP would be ten times greater in present value than the total losses from the 2008 recession.
- If the United States got even more ambitious and matched the performance of students in neighboring Canada, the equivalent would be a 20 percent addition to the paychecks of U.S. workers every year until 2093.
- Bringing the 20 percent of low-performing U.S. students up to international proficiency levels would imply a GDP that averages 12 percent per year higher over the next 80 years.

The authors conclude that the current way we educate our children has failed. Despite decades of exhortation from politicians and assurances from the education establishment, we are spending billions in federal tax dollars on education each year without seeing the anticipated results. Among findings:

- Current expenditures per pupil, adjusted for inflation, are 2½ times what they were in 1970 and class sizes have fallen by 1/3—with no noticeable gains.
- Other countries have shown that a much higher rate of improvement in school outcomes is possible.
- Our best performing states have shown that improvement within the United States is possible.

This book is a call to action that every school leader—and every parent—in America must read – a call to action to take radical steps to overhaul and improve the way we educate our children or face the consequences.

About the Authors

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For more information:

<http://www.hks.harvard.edu/pepg/endingprosperity.htm>

