

Board Learning Discussion Points

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1. ABC Grading System

Every student is different. And letter grades do not really reflect a student's abilities all the time. Depending on teaching styles, they could show that students are good test takers or good at memorizing and regurgitating content rather than being skilled in that area of study. Education in America doesn't treat students like individuals. There's more to learning than getting the most questions right on an exam.

What it does for us...

Allows us to evaluate the progress of all students, rank/compare their achievement and determine those who have met graduation requirements.

What it stops us from doing...

It does not allow each student to create an electronic portfolio to document his/her outcome.

QUESTION

Do you think it is possible to change the current system? Why or why not?

2. GRADE LEVELS

Social promotion is often mentioned as one of education's great failures. Thirty students enter 4th grade and thirty move on to 5th grade. Are all thirty students truly mastering information that is necessary for 5th grade? Absolutely not! But, the system moves them on to the next level. The top 50% will handle this well. The bottom half will become increasingly frustrated and get more and more behind each year. Because they have not achieved mastery, self-esteem decreases and the ability to succeed shrinks. These students are the potential dropouts. Brains develop differently just as bodies develop at different paces. No two students are the same so why do schools place 30 students in a room and expect them to learn at the same pace? Convenience. It is the way it has always been done. Schools have limited budgets and it is getting worse with today's economy.

What it does for us...

Allows us to group students and move them through the twelve-year cycle.

What it stops us from doing...

It does not allow all learners to progress at their optimum rate of learning.

QUESTION

Can you envision such a school? Who would be your biggest obstacle? Parents? Students? Teachers? Community?

3. PRISONERS OF TIME

"Learning in America is a prisoner of time. For the past 150 years, American public schools have held time constant and let learning vary. Some bright, hardworking students do reasonably well. Everyone else -- from the typical student to the dropout -- runs into trouble." *National Education Commission 2010*

The problem, according to the commission, is not just the length of the school year but also the lockstep "gridding" of the school day. The report emphasized that American schools have been operating under the tyranny of time; the length of the typical school period (forty-five to fifty minutes), the school day (8 A.M. to 3 P.M.), and the school year (180 days) is remarkably rigid across the nation. Middle and high school students, especially, are required to march in assembly line fashion throughout the day, where bells still ring to signal the closing of books and the flooding of hallways. The unchanging schedule prevents students from working in-depth on projects and venturing into the community to gather data or talk to local experts. Teachers are also isolated in their classrooms by this rigid schedule, so they miss out on opportunities to learn from other teachers and share ideas.

What it does for us...

Allows parents to schedule vacations and have children home to help harvest crops.

What it stops us from doing...

Continuous learning and development...eliminating learning regression.

QUESTIONS

Can we use time better in our schools today? What barriers need to be examined or changed?