

The Other F Bomb: Our Education Crisis

“F” is for failure.

Last week, I happened upon an [article](#) reporting over 40 percent of Baltimore’s high school students had a 1.0 grade point average or less. In other words, 40 percent of these students were practically flunking their course load.

That shocking figure led me to look at [statistics](#) from U.S. News and World Report, compiled before COVID-19 closed down the schools. Baltimore has 166 public schools and over 77,000 students. Private schools in the city teach [another 17,000 students](#). In the public schools, over 90 percent of the [students are minorities](#), and 58 percent of all students are deemed low income. Only 15 percent of high school students tested as proficient in reading, only 8 percent in math.

Thus, since a majority of students in Baltimore are either failing their classes or barely scraping by, they will likely fail or barely scrape by in life. Despite this sad scene, Americans appear to focus on other political, non-educational topics, rather than the learning that is supposed to be taking place in our schools. It’s time to call this the crisis that it is and begin to do something about it.

For months, Americans have argued bitterly over the justification for school closures, forcing students to wear masks, and the teaching of critical race theory and radicalized sex education in public school classrooms. We’ve heard from some authorities that all subjects, including math and science, are taught through a prism of racism, that boys claiming to be girls should be allowed access to the girls’ locker rooms and to compete in their sporting events, and that teachers should address students by their preferred gender

pronouns.

The blame for this mess—and it's not confined to Baltimore—lies with the schools, the government, and the families of the students. The schools are clearly failing to teach the students. Baltimore City Schools [spend more than \\$18,000 per student](#)—a huge amount of which goes to administrators and ancillary programs—and many of the children come from homes lacking in discipline and with no real interest in education.

This is not a problem waiting to happen in the future. The financial and personal costs of this failure in education are occurring even as I write. By now, for example, many of these young people have either graduated or dropped out of school. Most will find themselves employed—if they can find employment at all—in jobs that will reduce their ability to marry, have children, or own a home. Some will live on welfare and collect food stamps offered by the state. Many will join those they see around them and become criminals. Years ago, I taught adult basic education in a state prison, where about half of my students had the equivalent of a fourth-grade education or less.

We often misuse the word crisis, but in this case it's true and appropriate. If we multiple these statistics from Baltimore and other cities and communities around the country that are failing our students, we encounter enormous consequences in the immediate future. We are creating a dead weight on our society that will affect everything from our military recruitment to our productivity. Even worse, we are failing our children. We are sending them into the world without the core knowledge and credentials necessary for success.

Until we make education, a real education, a top national priority, we can't begin to correct these problems.

So what can we do?

We can return the supervision of programs, curricula, and materials back to the states and even to local levels. We can encourage alternatives to public education like private schools, charter schools, and home schools. Government officials from the president to members of local school boards could hammer home the advantages of getting an education. And we can make sure we vote for government officials who actually care about teaching children the 3Rs rather than Critical Race Theory (CRT).

While we're on that topic, we might also eradicate extraneous programs like these altogether. As a nation, we should be embarrassed that we have high school students who are barely able to read, who have trouble with elementary arithmetic, and who write gibberish.

We can enlist our seniors and retirees and form an army of tutors. We can easily devise programs where we recruit volunteers into our schools, everyone from engineers to retired teachers, to help with classroom teaching, providing students with the example of competent adults willing to share their knowledge and experience with the young.

In short, we should do all in our power to give young people the education they need and deserve.

Meanwhile, the F bomb is silently ticking away.

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