

Education for All Students

by Diane Trautman

I used to wonder aloud why we seem to be running faster and faster and barely keeping up with daily demands. Then a friend told me that her mother had the answer. We're busy working to cover bills for services that our parents never had and managing technology systems (computers, cell phones, blackberries, etc.) that weren't available a generation ago. Our lives changed but we haven't stopped to acknowledge the impact.

Life has changed at school as well. In order to meet state standards, teachers need to cover an expanding amount of information using textbooks that may lack detail and depth. In order to compete with students around the globe (without increasing school days, instructional hours, or financial investment), the curriculum is being driven down to lower grades. Our children are being asked to wrap their heads around concepts in algebra, geometry and sciences that we didn't face until our freshman year in high school. Kindergarten is "the new first grade." And now parents are looking to give their children a competitive edge for pre-school. I agree with child development specialists and educators who say that we are pushing kids to do things that are developmentally inappropriate and detrimental to the long-term well-being of our children.

Another change has occurred in our schools that I believe has been equally damaging. In our quest for stronger academic performance, industrial arts classes have been reduced or eliminated. This pushes every student, regardless of their skills and abilities, onto an academic track, limits the student's ability to explore career opportunities, and sets up many kids for failure. Too many students are turned off of education because they don't see the practical applications of their school lessons or because, despite their best efforts, they can't compete with their classmates. These children need other options.

I recently spoke with Ron Rudzinski who is responsible for the Career Visions program in the Hart District. Ron is a strong advocate for a broadened approach to education and increased opportunities for hands-on learning. He told me that the Hart District and College of the Canyons have partnered to support state legislation that would increase vocational education. Developing new options would give students with practical talents the recognition and support they need to become productive citizens. It would also create a new generation of skilled craftsmen who are vital to our society.

At StudyPros, we support a multifaceted education system that respects and supports the unique qualities of every child.