

Improvement to Education through Setting Priorities

Thomas R. Cuba

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Basis: The intent of this proposal would be to redirect the energies in Elementary and High Schools to working on the real basics of education before the advanced interests or specialty classes. Fully acknowledging the benefits of sports programs and the arts, we must admit that the ground level purpose of our school system is to produce people who have the basic language, mathematics and thinking skills to function as adults. Those must be achieved first and on an individual basis. Many schools already have GPA requirements which must be met for participation in sports. This proposal simply takes that idea one step further.

Background. I was recently speaking with an elected official who was promoting the Trades Program in which a High School student can attend courses at a technical school earning a certificate in a trade, such as plumbing, as well as a diploma. I asked the person if he / she didn't think it was also important that the student in this program also be able to read. The response, and I quote exactly, was "No, most of the shop manuals have pictures."

This proposal would do nothing more dramatic than set standards under which students would be required to meet language, mathematics, and deductive reasoning goals before taking electives or extracurricular courses. A student not meeting the standard, which in today's structure would mean failing the FCAT in that category, would be required to use the time normally allowed for other courses and activities in extra classes within the deficient subject area.

Factually, a person who has language skills will do better in History class than a person who is deficient. A person who has mathematical skills will do better in Chemistry than a person who is deficient. A person with reasoning skills will be much better prepared for Social Studies than one not so well prepared.

The major criticism of the proposal is that it isn't fair to punish these students who don't meet these goals. I feel it isn't fair to send them into their next class or their adult lives without proper preparation. Getting a proper education should not be considered a punishment.