

## **Education Improvement: A Workshop**

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Listed below are the conclusions drawn from the public workshop<sup>1</sup> and numerous other public and private encounters.

### **Conclusions: Arranged in no particular order.**

1. We, the people, have failed to educate a fourth of our children. We have failed to prepare them for adult life, even at the most basic level. We have failed to educate more than half of our minority students.
2. No one is to blame. We are all to blame.
3. We cannot blame class size, poor materials, poor parenting, poor teaching, or underfunding. We can only blame ourselves for not caring soon enough.
4. The commonly cited problems such as class size, classroom behaviours, family settings, (and more) are really lesser problems within the larger problem of having failed our children and each requires solving in its own way. Solving the larger problem of inadequate education requires solving *all* the lesser problems.
5. We cannot legislate family involvement or setting.
6. High Schools are not “Prep Schools” nor “Trade Schools” nor surrogates for families or parental care, but can include nurturing.
7. Student needs are not always the first priority. Student needs *must* supersede our personal needs.
8. The Unintended Consequence of FCAT is that Administrators, Teachers, and Students focus more on the individual and school score than on students actually learning the material.
9. Large and central schools which replaced the neighborhood schools may not have been a wise choice.
10. Twenty Five percent failure is equivalent to Seventy Five percent success: Hence, not everything we do is wrong.

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<sup>1</sup> The Public Workshop was held as a fact-finding event during the campaign of the author for an elected position within the House of Representatives, State of Florida.

11. We need to focus on the 25%, without creating problems with the 75%.
12. *The purpose of elementary and secondary education is to prepare students for their adult life regardless of what careers may be chosen.*
13. Graduates should be prepared to pursue any job, not just the one they selected as a child (refers to Political advertisement paid for and approved by Thomas R. Cuba, Republican for State Representative, District 53 magnet and trades choices).
14. At a minimum our adult population should have adequate language skills and be able to read and write proficiently.
15. At a minimum our adult population should have adequate skills in mathematics and be able to add, subtract, multiply and divide with ease.
16. At a minimum our adult population should have answers to questions not encountered previously.
17. With proper preparation in the three areas of Language, Mathematics, and Cognition, the student will be prepared to enter adult life.
18. A student with these minimum skills will be prepared to pursue a career in the trades or to attend college without having to make a choice while still in the early stages of development. Students who master these skills should be free and encouraged to pursue advanced courses or instruction in the trades.
19. The theory of using prerequisites can be applied to the secondary education system in a positive and constructive manner.
20. Students who are not performing at grade level in the basics as described above should not be allowed to pass on to the next grade nor enroll in more complex courses.
21. Students who are not performing at grade level in the basics, as described above, should be required to repeat the failed course even if that requires that a student is enrolled in more than one language or mathematics class in a term or that the student is required to attend summer classes.
22. Students may well find themselves in the position of taking several language or mathematics classes in one term. While difficult, it is a better situation than having a student failing a later class or having trouble in later life because the student was not properly prepared.
23. This is a mainstream program. Students with learning challenges may not respond to this program and other solutions will still be required.

### **Summary of Proposal:**

Based on the fact that a student deficient in mathematics cannot comprehend physics (etc.), and a student deficient in reading cannot comprehend history (etc.), students should be required to perform at grade level in Language, Math and Cognition before

moving to the next grade level, taking more complex classes, playing sports, or participating in extracurricular activities.

**Analysis:**

The use of prerequisites and remedial coursework will ensure that each student has every opportunity to achieve basic skills while those who have done so, are not held back.

The policy leads to numerous new opportunities in teaching, mentoring, and motivation which are deferred to a later discussion. This, the clear setting of goals and prioritizing student needs, is only the first step.