

HARRY BRAUN FOR PRESIDENT

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THE BRAUN PLAN: AN ENLIGHTENED APPROACH TO EDUCATION

The elementary through high school educational system in America requires fundamental changes if American students are ever to be competitive with their international counterparts. More than a decade ago, Glenn T. Seaborg, a Nobel Laureate who served as National Chairman for the development of high school chemistry courses and was a member of a special national commission that investigated the state of American education, concluded that *if an unfriendly power had attempted to impose upon the U.S. the mediocre educational performance that existed, we might have viewed it as an act of war.* Seaborg indicated that the situation is not getting any better because students are not being "turned on" by teachers that are rarely well-trained in science and mathematics. When asked, "If it takes inspirational teachers to bring students along, and we are not producing very many, what's the answer?" Seaborg replied, "That's a very difficult problem."

Indeed, the fundamental question is how can one teach what one does not know? This issue is compounded by the fact that in most universities, the college of education is where the least accomplished students go for easy A's, and then once they graduate and secure a teaching position, they become virtually impossible to remove because of the tenure system. While the Bush administration advanced a "no child left behind program" based on testing, according to *The New York Times* (September 6, 2003), the Bush administration has failed to have the program properly financed to accomplish the goals, and its Education Department has neglected the all-important issue of teacher quality by simply allowing individual states to adopt an "honor system."

Teaching Teachers

While the attitude of students is certainly an important factor in their educational development, there is no question that the serious problem raised by Seaborg is of paramount concern; namely, that there are few primary or secondary teachers that are equipped to teach technical subjects at all -- much less in a creative and inspiring way. There is, however, a way out of this maze. While there may not be many teachers who are particularly gifted in teaching technical subjects, there is no question that there are more than a few. This being the case, and given the miracle of videotape and/or CD recordings, it is possible to have high-quality video productions made available to virtually every student in the country, on every major academic area. Such programs, which could and should be funded by the state and federal governments, would allow the poorest inner city or rural school children to have access to the very best instructors that exist in the country -- or the world for that matter.

In addition, the educational programs can be made in such a way that the teacher is not just standing in front of a classroom lecturing. Rather, "Star Wars" quality modeling and computer animation could be incorporated to make learning technical fundamentals, as well as critical thinking skills, a truly entertaining experience. There is a special bonus in this approach. As the teachers incorporate the CD/videotapes into their classrooms, the teachers themselves will soon be able to master the material presented, and thereby have their own education significantly upgraded while "on the job." As any teacher knows, the best way to master any subject is to teach it. Another important bonus to this approach is that if a student had trouble understanding all of the material during class (or perhaps the student was out ill), he or she can take the video or CD home, and watch it in the evening as many times as it takes.

This not only provides for individualized learning, but perhaps the other members of family or friends can be present so learning can become more of a family affair. This will also provide parents with an opportunity to gain a better understanding of what their children are being taught in school, and allow the parents to upgrade their education as well.

Starting Young

It is important to realize that mastering a scientific discipline initially involves learning to speak its language, and it has been observed that young children are able to absorb information or acquire languages much easier than their adult counterparts. If this is the case, it is especially important not to let young children idle away a critically important part of their formative years. A generation ago, the typical American child who grew up on a farm was usually given important responsibilities at an early age. This is still true in much of the Third World. In sharp contrast, however, U.S. children are rarely exposed to serious responsibilities until after high school, or in many cases, college.

Students need to understand the value of using their "free" time constructively. This free time is an incredibly valuable resource that is usually just idled away. If it is used wisely, it compounds over the years like interest in the bank. This, however, is a lesson that is rarely taught in most classrooms. Students need to understand that reading fiction is very different than reading factual documents of substance that will collectively serve as their basis of their intellectual foundation, which will ultimately enable them to be more competitive in the global marketplace, and make more informed judgments about the increasingly complex world in which we live. Harry Potter books may be entertaining, but they should not be confused with education.

Educational Funding

Harry Braun's Phoenix Project plan will rapidly transform America into a Saudi Arabia-class hydrogen energy exporter, which will then allow for significant increases in the Department of Education's budget without tax increases. However, it is important to note that a quality education is not just a question of money. Per-capita student expenditures in most industrialized countries, including Japan, are less than those in the U.S., yet America's educational system compares unfavorably to those in virtually all of the industrialized countries -- and even many Third World countries.

As President, Harry Braun will help to resolve this problem by working with American educators to develop the CD/Video productions that will provide an equal educational opportunity to all students, while simultaneously upgrading the professional education of the existing teachers. Harry will then encourage America's educational system to adopt comparable academic standards to those found in best schools in Japan and Europe for each grade level. Educational foundations are critical. As such, if a student is unable to pass a course with at least a 70 or 80 percent proficiency in a given academic subject, that student should not be allowed to progress to the next grade or subject level. The concept of "social passing" needs to be eliminated. In the educational process, it is not the student's age that is important, but what the student has learned.

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