

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Time and mobility in schools

On Tuesday, we discussed an iconoclastic book by psychologist Judith Rich Harris, who claimed parents have very little influence on their children's development outside the home.

But what about school? Surely the Pottstown School District has an enormous impact on its students, especially since so many of them come from impoverished and dysfunctional families.

But to have an impact, you must first have the kids in class.

Pottstown has a high mobility rate. Each year, about 20 percent of the students who enroll in the fall are gone by the end of the year, replaced by others who enter school sometime during the year.

This holds constant for the elementary and middle school grade levels, less so at the high school.

The percentage of students who attend Pottstown schools for all 13 years — kindergarten through 12th grade — varies widely.

For example, 72 percent of Pottstown High School's class of 2014 received all their formal education in Pottstown. The following year, just 32 percent did.

Moreover, even students who attend every school day of the year spend a limited amount of time in class — less than 25 percent of their waking hours. Summer vacation means many students must relearn

information and skills they absorbed the previous spring.

And once students have graduated and gone on to college or directly into the working world, how many remain in Pottstown for the long haul? We have no idea.

And our society is highly mobile at all age levels.

Of Pottstown's nine school board members, for example, only three graduated from Pottstown High School. The others were educated elsewhere. Likewise, only one of seven Pottstown Council members attended Pottstown schools.

The overwhelming majority of Pottstown's professional educators and other public servants like police officers don't even live in Pottstown.

There are 1.7 million students enrolled in Pennsylvania public schools. Pottstown is responsible for educating less than one-fifth of one percent of the total.

It's not just what Pottstown does, therefore, but what all our schools do, that affects our quality of life.

With the sixth highest tax effort in Pennsylvania, Pottstown property owners are doing far more than their fair share to support local education.

We shouldn't ask them to do more.



Commentary by
Thomas Hylton



A RANDOM PAGE OF FRESHMEN, taken from the 1990 Pottstown High School yearbook, is shown. How many stayed to graduate? How many have college degrees? How many are still in Pottstown? We don't know.