

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Who's responsible?

It's a curious aspect of society.

If you want to drive a car or truck, you have to pass both written and field tests to get a license.

If you want to teach, you need to go to college and earn certification.

Doctors, lawyers, architects, engineers and other professionals all need rigorous training to earn a license before they can practice their trade.

But to procreate a child and become a parent, one of the greatest responsibilities in life, no training is required. No financial means testing. You only need a mating male and female.

Some countries provide nurses to visit the homes of new and expectant parents and discuss basic parenting skills. In Pennsylvania, non-profits perform this service on a very limited basis in cooperation with the county department of health.

But for the most part, parents are on their own, and the government intervenes only in cases of reported physical abuse or severe neglect.

Once a child reaches the age of 6, however, Pennsylvania's 500 taxpayer-funded school districts are now required to educate each child until he graduates from high school or reaches the age of 18. If a child is deemed eligible for special education services, the school district is responsible up to age 21.

There are a minimum number of hours and days each district must teach its students, and all teachers must be certified.

Ironically, a multitude of studies show children's most formative years are prior to age 6. This is why districts increasingly offer 4-and-5-year-old kindergarten on a voluntary ba-

sis. But it's not required by law.

The most important skill children learn is understanding and speaking a language, a skill which almost all children acquire from parents, family members and peers before entering school. (Of course, pre-school children's vocabulary varies widely depending on their home life).

Our conventional system of education, which goes back decades, is becoming more prominent in the public mind because of the pandemic, which for the

first time ever has closed bricks-and-mortar schools for the rest of the school year. It will affect how they operate next year. We're not sure how.

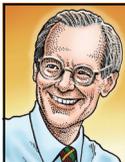
Parents, especially of elementary-age children, must become the primary teacher. Yes, children can get their assignments online from their school teachers and use Chromebooks to do their work, but they still need a lot of at-home supervision.

Recently I wrote about Pottstown's Eddie Schutt, who received a virtual education online, at home, for eight years from fifth grade through graduation. He had a successful learning experience, but it required his parents to be very involved in his school work.

For decades, there's been a myth that schools can and must do it all. But they can't. They never have and never will.

In a famous 1964 study, educational sociologist James Coleman found that the social and educational backgrounds of students, not the quality of school facilities or class size, were the key factors in student achievement.

Despite massive increases in school spending over the last 50 years — more than twice the rate of inflation — that's still true today.



Commentary by
Tom Hylton



NO CERTIFICATION NECESSARY — Although parenting is one of the most serious responsibilities in life, no schooling or certification is necessary to procreate a child.