Oregon Plan for Equity in Education is Pure Madness

August 10, 2021 - Here at ACCESS, we think math is kind of important. We also think that reading and writing are important. That's why we have a writing contest for kids that focusses on things like financial planning and the proper use of credit. We know that most children who graduate from high school have had very little training on how to manage their personal finances; something that they will absolutely fail in if they don't have a working knowledge of math, reading and writing. That isn't something that we want to see. So we were more than appalled by a bill signed into law by Oregon Governor Kate Brown.

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The bill was signed quietly by Brown last month. It places a three-year suspension on any requirements for high school graduates to show that they have basic proficiency in math, reading or writing. Really! This is not a joke!!!

Now you might ask why any state would do something like this. It's fairly common knowledge that these skills are problematic for public schools around the country; especially in inner cities.

According to teachers' unions and a good number of politicians, the reason for this is racism and the solution is to lower or eliminate standards and throw money at the problem. To anyone capable of critical thought however, the problem is really caused by lowering or eliminating standards and throwing money at the problem without addressing issues such as school discipline, personal accountability, setting goals, underperforming teachers and providing a safe learning environment.

A spokesperson for Governor Brown actually had the audacity to say that the suspension would benefit the state's "black, Latino, Latina, Latinx, indigenous, Asian Pacific Islander, Tribal and students of color." We'd like an explanation of that. In what demented world does it help anyone to graduate students who can't read, write or do simple addition and subtraction?

Unfortunately, what this suspension does is make Oregon high school diplomas absolutely worthless, even for students that can read, write and do math. Think about it. As an employer knowing all of this, if you had a choice between a graduate of an Oregon school and a graduate from a school in another state, which one would you choose to hire? And even if you do get a job with one of these worthless diplomas, how long do you think it will take a new employer to figure out that you can't do basic math or form a sentence and then fire you? But it gets even better.

The new law is likely to impact the value of college degrees that come from Oregon public universities too. That's because all seven public universities in Oregon have eliminated the need for student entrance exams. No need to take the ACT or SAT. Just show them your worthless Oregon high school diploma and you're ready to go.

On the other hand, if you are a hiring manager looking for the least qualified candidate, choose an Oregon grad; either high school or college. Doesn't really matter from the looks of it.

This is pure madness. If you are a parent or student in the State of Oregon, you should be very upset. If are a member of one of the ethnic groups named by the governor's spokesperson, you should be absolutely incensed. Rather than addressing the issue of failing schools and trying to turn them around, Oregon is simply throwing up its hands and saying, "Oh well. Deal with it."

Let's hope that voters in Oregon get that message and that they "deal with it" at the ballot box. That is, if they can still read the ballot.
by Jim Malmberg
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