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FROM THE PRESIDENT

To read the full version of the *SQE Forum* on your monitor, click [here](#). To print out the print-friendly version, click [here](#).

If you like our newsletter and would like to help us, please consider making a financial donation (any amount is appreciated) by clicking [here](#). We do not receive any government funding and are thus completely reliant upon our supporters for our continued existence! We will send you a tax receipt, along with our heartfelt thanks.

Your feedback helps us improve the *Forum*. Please e-mail me [here](#).

Best regards, Malkin

YOUR VOTE IS IMPORTANT TO US

Last month, we polled you to find out what you think about your local school board. The results are as follows: 10% thought their school board was functioning extremely well; 19% thought it was functioning pretty well; 19% thought it was functioning poorly; 43% thought it was functioning extremely poorly; and 10% didn't know. Some of your comments appear below in the mail bag section.

This month, we want to know whether you sent/would send your children to independent (private) schools. Please help us by clicking on [vote](#). After voting, you can tell us how your children fared at their schools, independent or public, by clicking on [comments](#). We will print your comments in the mail bag section of the next newsletter.

EVERYONE CAN LEARN GEOGRAPHY

Click [here](#) to access some great web-sites that nurture a love of geography in kids of all ages. Thanks to Franlie Allen for scouting out these resources.

MAIL BAG

Our readers' comments are always interesting and insightful. Click [here](#) to read some of the feedback we've received since our last newsletter—school boards—fundraising—waste of money—loss of good teachers—discouragement of direct instruction, and lots more.

OUR MISTAKE

In our last issue, our report card on Dalton McGuinty's promise-keeping mistakenly said that the Ontario Government had retreated from its legislation to legislate an extension of the age of compulsory attendance to 18. In fact, the Government did pass this law. On our web-site the amended report card reads as follows: "A new law requires students to stay in school until age 18. We awarded a B instead of an A for this promise because there are no consequences for students who leave school before age 18 – except for the tiny percentage of students who end up in truancy court."

WEB-SITE OF THE MONTH

This month, we feature Professor Plum's EducationNation web-site because it is so funny and irreverent. The "Rant Archives", for example, are based on "the empirical generalization that the education establishment is among the most pernicious enemies of our nation". Faculties of education (Professor Plum teaches at one) are dubbed "The Primordial Soup of Fads, Fraud, and Folly". Click [here](#) for more Professor Plum.

FEATURE ARTICLES

[The Weak Case against Homework](#)

In this article, Jay Mathews looks critically at two recent books that criticize the concept of homework – Alfie Kohn's *The Homework Myth: Why our kids get too much of a bad thing*, and Sara Bennett and Nancy Kalish's *The Case against Homework: How homework is hurting our children and what we can do about it*. Mr. Mathews agrees that much of today's homework makes no sense, but he suggests that instead of abolishing homework, educators start assigning homework that does make sense. It's hard to argue. [more](#)

[A Better Deal for Teachers](#)

Thanks to their unions, most teachers believe that more school choice would be bad for them and bad for kids. This article shows how just about everyone would actually be better off with more school choice – parents, students, **and** teachers. In fact, the only group that would suffer would be teachers' union officials. [more](#)

[Brain-Based Learning: More Fiction than Fact](#)

Although neuroscientists are making great progress in understanding how the brain works, as of yet their discoveries are far from being able to guide teachers. This article debunks several "brain-based" myths – differences between "right-brained" and "left-brained" students; the need to make classrooms friendly to boys' brains; and the importance of classical music in learning. [more](#)

[Standardized Testing for Dummies](#)

This article by Mark Holmes is not really for dummies; however, it does provide an introduction to standardized testing – the various kinds, their purpose, their limitations, and so forth. Dr. Holmes sprinkles anecdotes from his long career as an educator throughout the article. [more](#)

[Are We Asking Enough of our Students?](#)

This article compares Ontario's 1932 detailed plan of mathematics study for grade 3 with Ontario's 2006 EQAO test for grade 3 students. It appears that the 1932 expectations were far more stringent. [more](#)

WHAT'S NEW?

[The Child is the Father of the Man](#)

Statistics Canada reports that “children aged 8 or 9 whose reading ability in school was better than their peers had significantly higher test scores in literacy a decade later.” [more](#)

[School Choice in Sweden](#)

Sweden, the poster child of socialism and big government, funds its independent schools on the same basis as its state schools. This Fraser Institute paper describes the strengths and weaknesses of this policy. [more](#)

[Math Education: An Inconvenient Truth](#)

Using multiplication as an example, this 15-minute video shows parents very simply and clearly why their kids are having trouble with math at school. Although the video references American texts, the principles hold true for Canadian texts such as *Math Quest*. [video](#)

BOOK REVIEWS

Collective Bargaining in Education: Negotiating change in today's schools. Jane Hannaway and Andrew J. Rotherham, eds. Harvard Education Press. 2006. 312 pages.

This book brings together essays from the few researchers who have systematically studied the effect of collective bargaining on education, along with other analysts, practitioners and teachers' union officials. The volume shows the disappointing polarization that characterizes discussion of this topic. Since collective bargaining shapes the way public schools are organized, financed, staffed, and operated, it is high time that its role be placed under a strong light. This book starts the process. Click [here](#) for an interesting excerpt that explains the difference between employee interests and children's interests.

Educational Entrepreneurship: Realities, challenges, possibilities. Frederick M. Hess, Ed. Harvard Education Press. 2006. 299 pages.

As recognition grows that American and Canadian education systems are so calcified that reform is practically impossible, reformers are
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starting to think outside the box. One possible option is to harness the power of entrepreneurs to shake up public education and bring it into the 21st century. This book takes a look at some new models that are being tried out today. Click [here](#) for an interesting excerpt that discusses some of the reasons why entrepreneurs have not been all that successful to date.

Myths, Lies and Downright Stupidity: Get Out the Shovel – Why Everything You Know Is Wrong. John Stossel. Hyperion Books. 2006. 284 pages.

A fun read, this book describes many popularly held beliefs on a variety of topics, including parenting, health, business and government. Of particular interest to those following the education scene is the chapter titled “Stupid Schools”. As with other areas of the book, the format is to state a “myth” and follow it with a “truth” counterpoint. Regular readers of the SQE Forum will be familiar with many of these education myths, but will enjoy the way the author lays out his counter-arguments. (review by Nancy Wagner) Click [here](#) for an interesting excerpt that explains why some politicians aren’t motivated to champion school choice policies.

SQE ACTIVITIES

SQE Newsletter Archives

We have added most of the old SQE and OQE newsletter archives to our web-site, organized alphabetically by topic. If you want to find out more about, say, semestered schools, just click [here](#) and scroll down to “Semestering” and you will find a number of articles on the subject.

AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

If computer error messages were written in haiku....

Yesterday it worked
Today it is not working
Windows is like that

For more ruefully-true haikus on computer disasters, click [here](#).

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