

The problems with the u.s. education system

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The Problems With the U. S. Education System Low test scores, random acts of violence, and crumbling buildings are only the most obvious signs of our decaying education system. While in some schools students have stellar graduation rates and are well prepared for college, students in other schools struggle to get the needed direction and instruction they need. What accounts for this difference and what is the cause of the inadequacy of some public school systems Examination can show us that it may not be the system that is at fault, but the results of the inherent power structure and its inadequacy in confronting social conflict.

Private schools have a much higher level of success than public schools. Costing between \$10, 000 and \$30, 000 per year, their enrollment is limited by economic class, and though not immune from problems, they are generally more isolated from the catalysts found in our public school system. For the most part, the students are of similar class and background which limits the stratification caused by group conflict. However, public school systems are subject to geographical, economical, and political influences which can cause great disparity in the quality of public education.

With the more diverse location and population of our public schools, educators are forced to confront and negotiate the conflict among groups. The system needs to accommodate parents, school boards, teachers, and students. In the hierarchy of the power structure the students, the least empowered, tend to form in various groups with common bonds or a common cause. Economic class will group with members of a like class. Racial and ethnic groups will form in a common force against the authority. Genders will bond to advance the goal of equal rights. As the groups gain self-identity, they begin to stratify into recognizable entities, each with an

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identifiable level of authority or power.

As each group competes for more power, it can cause violence in severe cases or may take on subtler ramifications. Lower economic groups may exert peer pressure to persuade its members that education is useless and there is no reason to succeed in school. This can be intensified by their limited exposure to education in their family or neighborhood setting.

Females may unite in common cause to advocate entry into sports programs thereby causing friction with male athletic departments. As the groups become more pronounced as stratified entities, the hierarchy begins to view them as groups and loses sight of the students as individuals. This results in the educators treating students as a stereotype of their class. Standards are then set to satisfy the group and not the individual. This ultimately results in the system setting lower expectations of the group. It can affect everything from seating arrangements, class participation, lack of adequate teacher feedback, or result in giving undeserved reinforcement. Multiple studies have confirmed that a teacher's lowered expectations can cause a student's performance to drop by as much as 10 percent (Cotton).

The escalating cost of higher education has placed a college degree out of the reach of many students in the lower economic class. The finest universities are generally only open to the economically elite who have a strong family tradition of college experience and the means to attend. This can cause further discouragement in high school students as they perceive their future as a choice between incurring enormous student debt or going to work. Gender bias can contribute to the reluctance of females to enter key technology and science programs. These various classes see themselves as isolated against an authoritarian and unjust system. These conflicts, if not

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negotiated, can eventually lead to a breakdown in the system. That they exist at all, are the primary reason for the widespread failure among many public school systems.

Works Cited

Cotton, Kathleen. " Expectations and Student Outcomes." School Improvement Research Series. 2001. 12 Dec. 2005 < [http://www. nwrel. org/scpd/sirs/4/cu7. html](http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/4/cu7.html) >.