

# IF NOT NOW, THEN WHEN?

In April, 2008, I found myself sitting next to an important aide to John McCain on a flight from DC to GR. It was 2 hours of bliss for me as I was able to get first hand information about many important topics. The future and importance of EDUCATION was a main discussion point. When I asked why education was not more important on the agenda (as I believe it impacts so many other issues) his reply went something like this: In general, people don't know much about education and they don't seem to care.

When I ask people why they don't spend more time learning about and advocating for a more successful educational system, a frequent answer goes something like this: Our educational system is fine, after all, I'm a product of it and I'm doing okay.

I just spent my vacation reading THE GLOBAL ACHEIVEMENT GAP, by Tony Wagner . His point is that the world is a very different place. It's a time of rapid social, technological and economic change and is accelerating at a rapid pace in almost every country around the world. The "Old World academic rigor" of getting the right answers (mostly on standardized tests) is over. Wagner states, "the New World of work, learning, and citizenship today-the rigor that matters most-is the ability to ask the right questions... In today's world, it's no longer how much you know that matters; it's what you can do with what you know."

Wagner, a consultant for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, has spent countless hours in classrooms observing in what the public would consider the best of schools. He provides many examples of teachers who "teach to the test" and are practicing "old world rigor". There are also some examples of exemplary schools where students engage as active learners and must show what they know and teachers are thoughtful, passionate and reflective facilitators who really get to know their students.

Here's something to think about for the beginning of the school year. Wagner explains in great detail the SEVEN SURVIVAL SKILLS FOR TEENS TODAY. They are 1) critical thinking and problem solving, 2) collaboration across networks and leading by influence, 3) agility and adaptation, 4) initiative and entrepreneurialism, 5) effective oral and written communication, 6) accessing and analyzing information, and 7) curiosity and imagination. Although these are written as high school skills, I believe they are very important in the early grades, too. Students should be living these skills on a daily basis.

In THE GLOBAL ACHEIVEMENT GAP, you'll learn what today's employers want (and they're not getting), how to teach kids who are wired constantly to technology, and how students are assessed and held accountable for their learning.

Soon, Congress will be debating changes to No Child Left Behind. It's up to all of us to learn as much as we can about our educational system so we can advocate for the smartest solutions. Creative Learning has several copies of this book available to loan out if you'd like to read more. We also have a group of interested citizens who will be meeting periodically to discuss the points made in the book and visiting local schools to observe and become more aware what is happening. You are welcome to join us. Please e-mail me at [creleacen@aol.com](mailto:creleacen@aol.com) for more information.

Cathy Albro