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## American High Schools Deprive Students of Honest Education

**S**CHOOL children are receiving advanced sex education in lower grades, substituting television for homework, and learning to ride buses, but evidence continues to mount that they are not getting all they need in reading, writing and arithmetic.

Two scientists from Washington State University in June told a regional meeting of the American Chemical Society that a six-year study showed that 15 per cent of college entrants who planned to take chemistry were not prepared for the courses.

The scientists said students "are so seriously deficient in basic arithmetical skills and knowledge of elementary physical principles that success in any physical science or mathematics courses is impossible."

Such students may have high school diplomas, but they are no longer regarded as adequate measures of what students have learned or are capable of doing, either in college or in business.

People are not surprised when high school dropouts prove to be incompetent in basic educational skills. Failure to learn to read and write early in life often is a reason why they drop out. They can't maintain interest in school if they can't study.

It is worse when high school graduates and adults are identified in ever larger numbers as "functional illiterates."

Obviously, educational policies established by federal courts and higher pay for teachers have not raised quality of education. Neither have innovative methods, relaxed discipline, or permissiveness for pupils to "do their own things."

Average verbal and mathematical scores in Scholastic Aptitude Tests and in the American College Testing Program have been declining steadily for more than a decade.

The National Association of Boards of Education recently was quoted in a national magazine as saying: "The public is tired of excuses. The plain fact is that to the post-high school institutions and to the employers, high school graduation—a diploma—no longer guarantees even minimum competence in basic skills."

What can parents do about it? Not much, except to try to teach more at home. Cross town busing has scattered pupils, breaking up traditional neighborhood concepts of public schools and weakening or destroying parent-teacher relationships.

School boards include many dedicated, public-spirited citizens, but their power to improve the situation is restricted by federal court orders, legislative actions and teachers unions.

Economics isn't the only area hit by inflation. There is reason to suspect that reports of "grade inflation" may be true and that giving pupils higher marks than deserved is too common.

This may move youngsters through school at a steady pace and might make teachers look good on the records, but sooner or later pupils must face what they fail to learn.

If high school graduates can't read, write and figure at acceptable levels, are we treating them fairly by making them think they are getting an education? This may be no more honest than selling them a car that won't run. It's cheating them!