

Jamie Vollmer cannot answer three basic recall questions – Isaac Barr

Mr. Robert Glass,

I got an invitation to The Blueberry story of Jamie Vollmer and examined his book. I am not sure why he was invited. There is plenty of information about him including videos.

<http://youtu.be/O9TUrHMZMno> I can only say that as a stand-up comedian he is very good. He gave his show many times over and by now he knows his entertaining job.

To say that he has insight into a practical approach for building public support for America's public schools is gross exaggeration. He was asked: "What do you do when you get a bad supply of blueberries?" "I will return them" he said. When a school system provides bad education to students it cannot be returned. It is damage forever.

Still he may not be able to answer our three recall questions that most Bloomfield district community asked again, again and again:

1. Why was the democratic process in our school violated when financing of a new high school was rejected twice?
2. What is the best education strategy to achieve a defined educational goal?
3. What financial burden can our community tolerate?

These questions are beyond Mr. Jamie Vollmer ice cream maker expertise. Yet, Vollmer believes that schools have to "change". I deeply detest the word "change" since it does not tell us, as we discovered in the last few years, in which direction this change should go. I presented again, again and again the scientific evidence that early education, not high school education, are the key for progress. He does not believe that it is a "people problem" yet every study reflects on the new generation of teachers that must emerge. The role of parents and the students themselves is crucial, of course. Parents, peers and teachers motivate the students. Vollmer does not feel that public schools have to run like a business. If public schools would not have run on public money he probably would have been correct. But here in the reality of present existence: we aim to the best possible education goals at the least expense for the community. What Vollmer is suggesting is to ignore the cost of the blueberries supplied for his ice cream factory. As a multi millionaire he probably got the farmers to supply him blueberries at the lowest possible cost. We have the same desire when it comes to finance the schools. Vollmer is a good stand-up comedian. I prefer though Dame Edna. http://youtu.be/2_N5TRk1Qt8

I agree with Mr. Vollmer that "schools cannot do it alone", but we must try to fill the gap by extending the school year by 40 days, selecting better the teachers and continue to train and groom them to be what they deserve "nation builders". We always claimed that buildings, even modern ones, do not advance scholastic achievements. There is no place where he claims that "if only we would have had modern school buildings education in America would have been saved.

Sincerely, Dr. Isaac Barr.

Addendum from Jamie Vollmer presentation:

America's public schools can be traced back to the year 1640. The Massachusetts Puritans established schools to:

- 1. Teach basic reading, some writing and arithmetic skills, and**
- 2. Cultivate values that serve a democratic society (some history and civics implied).**

The founders of these schools assumed that families and churches bore the major responsibility for raising a child.

Gradually, some science and geography were added, but the curriculum was limited and remained focused for 260 years.

At the beginning of the 20th century, society began to assign additional responsibilities to the schools. Politicians and business leaders saw the schools as a logical site for both the assimilation of immigrants and the social engineering of citizens of the "Industrial Age." The trend of increasing the responsibilities of the public schools has accelerated ever since.

FROM 1900 TO 1910, WE ADDED

- 1. nutrition**
- 2. immunization, and**
- 3. health to the list of school responsibilities.**

FROM 1910 TO 1930, WE ADDED

- 4. Phys. Ed., including organized athletics,**
- 5. the practical arts,**
- 6. vocational education, including home economics and agricultural education, and**
- 7. school transportation began to be mandated**

In THE 1940s, WE ADDED

- 8. business education**
- 9. art and music**
- 10. speech and drama**
- 11. half day kindergarten, and**
- 12. school lunch programs appeared (We take this for granted today. It was, however, a significant step to shift to the schools the job of feeding America's children 1/3 of their daily meals.)**

IN THE 1950s, WE ADDED

- 13. expanded science and math education**
- 14. safety education**
- 15. driver's education**
- 16. expanded music and art education**
- 17. foreign language requirements were strengthened, and**
- 18. sex education was introduced (topics continue to escalate)**

IN THE 1960s, WE ADDED

- 19. Advanced Placement programs**
- 20. Head Start**
- 21. Title I**
- 22. adult education**
- 23. consumer education**
- 24. career education**
- 25. peace, leisure, and recreation education**

IN THE 1970s. THE BREAKUP OF THE AMERICAN FAMILY ACCELERATED, AND WE ADDED

- 26. special education (mandated by federal government)**
- 27. Title IX programs (greatly expanded athletic programs for girls)**
- 28. drug and alcohol abuse education**
- 29. parent education**
- 30. behavior adjustment classes**
- 31. character education**
- 32. environmental education**
- 33. women's studies**
- 34. African-American heritage education, and**
- 35. school breakfast programs appeared (Now, some schools feed America's children 2/3 of their daily meals. Sadly these are the only decent meals some children receive.)**

IN THE 1980s, THE FLOOD GATES OPENED, AND WE ADDED

- 36. keyboarding and computer education**
- 37. global education**
- 38. ethnic education**
- 39. multicultural/non-sexist education**
- 40. English-as-a-second-language, and bilingual education**
- 41. teen pregnancy awareness**
- 42. Hispanic heritage education**
- 43. early childhood education**
- 44. Jump Start, Early Start, Even Start, and Prime Start**
- 45. full day kindergarten**
- 46. pre-school programs for children at-risk**
- 47. after school programs for children of working parents**
- 48. alternative education in all its forms**
- 49. stranger/danger education**
- 50. anti-smoking education**
- 51. sexual abuse prevention education**
- 52. health and psychological services were expanded, and**
- 53. child abuse monitoring became a legal requirement for all teachers**

IN THE 1990s, WE ADDED

54. conflict resolution and peer mediation
55. HIV/AIDS education
56. CPR training
57. death education /
58. expanded computer and Internet education
59. inclusion
60. Tech Prep and School to work programs
61. gang education (in urban centers)
62. bus safety, bicycle safety, gun safety, and water safety education

IN THE FIRST YEARS OF THE 21ST CENTURY, WE HAVE SUPERIMPOSED UPON EVERYTHING ELSE

63. A layer of high-stakes, standardized tests

AND IN MOST STATES WE HAVE NOT ADDED A SINGLE MINUTE TO THE SCHOOL CALENDAR IN FIVE DECADES!

All of these added items have merit, and all have their ardent supporters, but they all cannot be assigned to the schools. No generation of teachers in the history of the world has been asked to meet this goal.

Americans in every community must come together to answer two essential questions: **What do they want their children to know and be able to do when they graduate, and how schools and the entire community can be organized to ensure that all children reach the stated goals.**

***THE BOTTOM LINE: SCHOOLS CANNOT DO IT ALONE.
SCHOOLS CANNOT RAISE AMERICA'S CHILDREN.***