

Opinion: Ignore education at our own peril

By Robert Reich

Over the long term, the only way we're going to raise wages, grow the economy and improve American competitiveness is by investing in our people – especially their educations.

Yet we're falling behind. In a recent survey of 34 advanced nations by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, our kids came in 25th in math, 17th in science and 14th in reading. The average 15-year-old American student can't answer as many test questions correctly as the average 15-year-old student in Shanghai.

I'm not one of those who believe the only way to fix what's wrong with American education is to throw more money at it. We also need to do it much better. Teacher performance has to be squarely on the table. We should experiment with vouchers whose worth is inversely related to family income. Universities have to tame their budgets for student amenities that have nothing to do with education.

But considering the increases in our population of young people and their educational needs, and the challenges posed by the new global economy, more resources are surely needed.

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