

Ending Illiteracy in America One Question – Three Answers

Question:

Doesn't everybody want every child to learn with no child left behind?

Answers:

Teachers – Yes.

Parents – Yes and No.

Textbook Publishers – No.

Teachers

In all my years of teaching, I have never met a teacher who did not want every child in his or her care to learn without ever leaving any child behind. However, wishing it was so is not the same as making it so.

The philosophy of the Intern Program through which I earned my teaching credential was, "What is being taught now isn't working, so try something different." However, finding something different that would lead to better learning for our inner-city students was far easier said than done. Of the twenty-three Interns in our program, only two ended up teaching any differently than if they had simply earned their teaching credentials more traditionally.

Implementing the math curriculum that Mary and I created required far more effort on a teacher's part than did the textbook-workbook approach. For teacher everywhere though, the extra time involved was well worth it when the result was every child in every teacher's class learning with no child left behind.

When Mary's *Workjobs* sold more than 100,000 copies before it was even advertised, the book's publisher was quite impressed. He told Mary that 15,000 copies was considered a best seller in that teacher-market. If 15,000 was the measure of a best-seller, then what would the sale of 600,000 copies of *Mathematics Their Way* represent? 600,000 teachers choosing a curriculum that required more teaching effort on their part than simply using the textbook-workbook model.

The most common remark from teachers written on the Mathematics Their Way end-of-workshop evaluation forms was, "I wish I had been taught this way when I was in school." Doesn't everybody want every child to learn with no child left behind? The universal answer from teachers everywhere is YES!

Parents

For parents the answer is yes and no. While no parents want other parents' children to fail, the focus of their attention is, of course, their own child. The parent of a faster learning child would not be pleased if his or her child's learning is slowed simply to allow slower learning students to keep pace.

Textbook Publishers

For textbook publishers, the answer is NO. If the answer for textbook publishers were yes, then this book on Ending Illiteracy in America would be telling the story of how illiteracy had come to an end. The very existence of textbooks and workbooks as a classroom teaching tool guarantees the separation of children from one another, not by their inherent ability to learn, but by the speed at which their learning takes place. Learning takes time. When there is time, it takes place. The numbered pages of the textbook dictate that when each page is turned, every child should be ready for that next page. If there a child who needs more time, the textbook publisher's view is, that is the measure of that child's inability to learn and not the textbook's inability to teach.