



Wasting Minds: Why Our Education System Is Failing and What We Can Do About It

Ronald A. Wolk

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Why has successful school reform been so difficult to achieve, despite decades of well-intentioned efforts, endless rhetoric, and billions of dollars of investment? Why do most U.S. schools continue to produce disappointing results? Why is there such a disconnect between the schools we need and the schools we have?

In this thoughtful and insightful book, Ronald A. Wolk tackles these questions head-on, identifying key assumptions that have shaped the debate on school reform for the past several decades, including the emphasis on standards and testing, calls for a longer school day and year, the push to enroll more students in advanced math classes, and the quest to place a highly qualified teacher in every classroom. Backed by research and other evidence, he points out the flaws in each assumption, and then proposes alternative assumptions as the basis for new, innovative schools that would emphasize such elements as

- * Individualized instruction, with various pathways for learning;
- * Real-world contexts for learning;
- * Performance assessment;
- * A restructuring of public education to expand preschool; and
- * Transformation of the teachers' role from instructor to advisor.

Acknowledging that the current system is too entrenched to accept radical reform, Wolk suggests incorporating his assumptions into a separate, parallel strategy for new schools. The result is a provocative proposal for teachers, administrators, policymakers, parents, and others to consider as they contemplate the future of public education in the United States.

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