

Education

Community Comment
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Both my girls were born and raised in Humboldt County. They went to Arcata Elementary School and graduated from Arcata High. They both went away to college at our urging to live somewhere else and be out on their own. One married after graduation and lived for a time in Texas. She was productive while there achieving a Master's Degree and having a baby. The other studied abroad for a year and also completed a Master's degree. They both chose to come home and complete a teaching credential. I had the joy of watching two young women decide to become educators; teachers. Since both my wife and I have been in higher education for some time, it's not surprising that the love and respect for the teaching profession would rub off. It's the level of commitment and dedication for the students that's surprising and encouraging.

Both want to stay in Humboldt County and raise families here. They have both been substituting and looking for a full time opportunity to dive in to a challenging and rewarding career. They are fully aware that this is not where the money is but it seems to be where their hearts are. Both are well respected for what they have demonstrated so far and have been mentored by excellent teachers.

These young women, more than most of us, realize that the education of our children is perhaps the single most important element for the success and wellbeing of our future. They understand we are competing on a global scale for meaningful work, research, and ideas that will shape our children's and our country's

future. They take this challenge seriously.

The Arcata Elementary School Board met the other night and delivered crushing news. With enrollment down and a dwindling source of income, pink slips would be sent out. Positions would be cut including teachers and classroom aids. This is not an indictment of the board; this is happening all across this country and this state. These cuts are not the elimination of poor teacher performance, instead these cuts are the result of a downturn of the economy and therefore, the loss of revenue.

But more than that, this is happening because we don't support quality public education. We don't fund it appropriately and consistently. We play politics with the funding and lawmakers and special interests make the rules. Many parents dump their kids with out the buy in. Kids come to school unprepared, not fed, and with an attitude. We load a classroom to the limit, mainstream some children that drain the attention of the teacher and the other students, and then don't support good teachers when they need us.

The education of our children is the single most important activity of any society. Our founders understood this. So did my immigrant grandparents. They had no formal education yet they clearly knew that was what would create opportunity for their children and grandchildren. We have to secure the same opportunity for our kids. Desperate times might call for desperate action. But I think they also create opportunity for change and new ideas. We all need to be a part of creating our future. We cannot let our children, our future, down.

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.