



---

**REAL EDUCATION:  
FOUR SIMPLE TRUTHS FOR BRINGING  
AMERICA'S SCHOOLS BACK TO REALITY**

**By Charles Murray**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 19, 2008

Last year, the *Wall Street Journal* did something unprecedented and gave over its op-ed page to AEI's Charles Murray for three consecutive days. During this time, he began writing about the current state of America's education system and its need for transformation. The main theme of his pieces was that politicians and educators are living a lie, refusing to talk about the ways that students' differing academic abilities should shape the country's schools. These editorials prompted a massive response from college professors, teachers, parents, and students themselves who saw the truth of Murray's arguments in their own lives. Murray concluded that the time was right for a conversation about education that reassesses the system at its core. In his new book, *Real Education: Four Simple Truths for Bringing America's Schools Back to Reality* (Crown Forum, August 2008), Murray focuses on four simple, hard truths that are rarely discussed or even acknowledged by educators and politicians. The titles of the first four chapters correspond to these realities:

- **Ability Varies.** Ability in many skills—from shooting baskets to solving quadratic equations—varies widely. While Murray agrees that schools should do what they can to nurture all of these abilities, he confronts the fashionable educational theory of “different kinds of intelligence” and demonstrates that in reality only two of these “multiple intelligences”—linguistic ability and logical-mathematical ability—are crucial to success in academics. By failing to tailor education to the way that these core academic abilities vary, schools are shortchanging all children.
- **Half of the Children Are Below Average.** Supported by decades of research, Murray tackles the great unspeakable truth that schools have no choice but to leave some children behind. Many children are not smart enough to become proficient in reading and math, and educators do not know how to make them more competitive through special interventions.

- **Too Many People Are Going to College.** A bachelor's degree has become meaningless for most majors, yet society tells all young people that unless they get a BA, they are second-class citizens. Murray says that this is a devastating message for the majority of young people for whom college is not the right place to continue their education after high school. Whether one measures a college's value by learning, income, job satisfaction, or maturation, Murray demonstrates that college is not the best option for all.
- **America's Future Depends on How We Educate the Academically Gifted.** Let's face it, Murray writes: "It is not that America's future *should* depend on an elite that is educated to run the country, but that, whether we like it or not, America's future *does* depend on an elite that runs the country, and its members are overwhelmingly drawn from among the academically gifted. We must make sure that the education system does the best possible job of educating the gifted—not by pampering them, but by holding their feet to the fire."

In the concluding chapter, "Letting Change Happen," Murray suggests how the United States should move toward a more productive education system by providing the basics of a liberal education to everyone, helping students find something they love to do for a living and can do well, and undermining the artificial importance of a bachelor's degree. Murray points out specific ways in which these goals can be achieved—not through top-down government dictates but by allowing parents, teachers, and employers to make the kinds of changes they already want to make.

Charles Murray is available for interviews and can be contacted directly at [cmurray@aei.org](mailto:cmurray@aei.org). Alternatively, please contact the AEI public affairs department at 202.862.4870 or at [vrodman@aei.org](mailto:vrodman@aei.org) with additional media inquiries.

###