

IS A COLLEGE EDUCATION WORTH IT?

by Sally and Brian Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

I have just been listening to a very stimulating discussion between Phil Valentine, Nashville, TN Super Talk radio host and a guest who called into the show. The question, 'Is college worth it?' immediately caught my attention. Being college-educated myself, I was quick to respond with a resounding, 'Yes!' But then, I thought, there are quite a few questions that should be asked to confidently be able to answer with an unequivocal, 'Yes'.

Here are some of those questions. Is college education in general worthwhile? Of course! Tertiary education encourages students to strive to know, to create and achieve goals, and to become expert within their area of passion or interest.

Are all students capable of being successful in completing a college education? No, obviously not. Academic intelligence has for far too long been given top place because academic giants, usually in universities, believe that what they think and create is best for everybody. Wrong! Then they influence the Department of Education and school districts, through 'research-based data', to take on their trendy, quirky new ideas. How so many of these have failed miserably!

My husband has four degrees, but he loves hard physical work. He believes that there are at least two other types of intelligence. Firstly, there is manual dexterity seen in the work created by amazing artisans and creative crafters. The academic elite usually can't turn their hands to this sort of work because it relies on a different set of skills set in a different part of the brain.

Working with one's hands to earn a living has never been given anywhere near the value of academic ability, yet in so many beach properties you can see trades vehicles parked in the driveways. The vehicles are not there because a tradesman is doing work there. They own the property! Do you remember the last tradesman's bill for your plumbing or electrical work?

High Schools have systematically dropped classes in woodwork, metalwork, cooking, sewing and other technical courses in favor of a one-path journey to academic wonderland. Fortunately, we still have technical colleges for students to be able to reach the required manual knowledge and skill level. We should be testing for manual dexterity quotients, MDQ, and encouraging our children on that path if a high MDQ is discovered.

The other form of intelligence, he believes, is emotional intelligence. You may have great academic skills or be a great artisan, but if you have an impaired emotional development you may not be able to reach your potential in either field. Those with a high EQ can see things more clearly and concentrate on

developing their potential. He believes that these people are the 'movers and shakers' that our society desperately needs.

Employers often advertise jobs requiring tertiary education when, in fact, the job really doesn't need that level of knowledge or skill at all. Why do they do that? Because they think that they will be getting someone who can process issues effectively? Unfortunately, employers may be missing out on prospective employees with skills like practicality, common sense and good old experience.

Parents sometimes try to live out their own unfulfilled dreams through their children. "I never went to college, so I will make sure you do." If the child is capable, then of course most parents would want the best possible career for them, but the reasons need to be examined. Is it reasonable for a parent to have high expectations for their child? Yes. Are unreasonable expectations acceptable? No. Trying to force a child into law school or medicine to follow the family tradition is not fair if the child has no inclination or ability in that area.

If a child wants to go to college it is always important for parents to seek out their motivation. Has their child talked seriously about going to college for some time? Do they want to study in an area in which they have already shown aptitude? If parents have been saving for a college education for their child, wouldn't they want the money to be spent wisely and not merely to enable their child to goof off in a college as far away from home as possible? Is their child choosing their major wisely? They need to be thinking about the kind of income that will support them in their work life or pay off a student loan in a timely manner. I have met many graduates who have chosen such random subjects that their degrees are of no practical use. They have often chosen to major in subjects where there is already a glut in the employment market.

Many graduates work in jobs way below their capabilities and qualifications and those jobs often have no relationship to the college path they chose. Why? Sometimes it is because employers want qualifications AND experience. You can't get experience if you cannot get a job. Sometimes the graduate's qualification is so generalized, there is not the depth of knowledge to suit the job requirement. Sometimes it is because there is a whole lot of difference between being a student and taking a job requiring high level skills and responsibility and they can't handle it.

We need to encourage our kids to do the best and be the best they are capable of being. With our encouragement they need to start thinking of a career path from the time they are in their early teens. If that career requires specific knowledge and skill then ensure they choose the kind of education that will best prepare them for it, be it at college, a technical institute or in some kind of practical apprenticeship. Each is as valuable as the other.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also

check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.