

# Gates: U.S. Education System Needs Work

Advertisement

By DONNA GORDON BLANKINSHIP  
The Associated Press  
Monday, November 13, 2006; 6:46 PM

SEATTLE -- Microsoft Corp. Chairman Bill Gates said Monday that the U.S. higher education system is the envy of the world but primary and secondary schools are failing to adequately prepare students for college.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Gates said the experience of being a parent of three kids \_ ages 10, 7 and 4 \_ has led him to spend more time thinking about schools. Specifically, he said the U.S. education system needs higher standards, clear accountability, flexible personnel practices and innovation.

Gates, whose children are in private schools, said every state should require students to take three or four years of math and science to graduate from high school \_ 25 states currently have such requirements. He wants states to have the power to intervene at low-performing schools.

"Real accountability means more than having goals; it also means having clear consequences for not meeting the goals," he said in a speech earlier Monday to Washington state educators who came to hear the results of an education task force.

Gates said schools should also be able to pay the best teachers better and offer incentives to attract people with rare abilities.

"It's astonishing to me to have a system that doesn't allow us to pay more for someone with scarce abilities, that doesn't allow us to pay more to reward strong performance," he said. "That is tantamount to saying teacher talent and performance don't matter and that's basically saying students don't matter."

He also spoke of some creative school programs \_ particularly charter schools run by private companies \_ that should be a model for innovation in the nation's schools.

"This nation has to do something very challenging, which is to provide a strong education to almost every student," he said.

Gates will start working full-time in mid-2008 at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which seeks cures for the world's diseases and to improve American education. He said his role at the foundation isn't going to change that much, because he won't be running it.

He said the foundation, which received a \$1.5 billion donation from fellow multibillionaire Warren Buffett in June, was discussing ways it could accept donations but that it was not actively seeking them.

© 2006 The Associated Press