

California EDUCATOR

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THE **VALUE** OF **PUBLIC** **EDUCATION**

*"All of us
do not have equal
talent, but all of us
should have an equal
opportunity to develop
our talent."*

JOHN F. KENNEDY

DAY OF THE TEACHER — PAGE 24 / MAY BUDGET REVISION — PAGE 30



Clockwise from left: Valencia High School teacher David Inemer gives his algebra class some food for thought about how their future earning potential is directly linked to the quality of their education; Natalia Schatz works on a math problem; students give Inemer their undivided attention.

Students get real-world lesson on how education pays off

“How many of you would do well in school if you got paid to go to school?” David Inemer asks his algebra class at Valencia High School. Some of the students raise their hands. “What if you were paid \$600 to \$1,200 a day to go to school?” he asks. Nearly all of the students raise their hands.

Inemer, a member of the Hart District Teachers Association, explains to his math students that the more education they have, the more they will accrue during their lifetime, increasing the amount they will have “earned” for each day spent in school. He adds that they could double or triple that amount with a few years of college.

“It’s like getting paid to go to school,” he explains of the long-term earnings.

The idea seems to agree with students, who tell him they never looked at it in that way before.

“But who will give you the money?” asks Inemer.

Many of the students look perplexed and one tentatively raises his hand.

“The government?” the student suggests.

“No, it’s not the government. It’s your future boss or bosses,” says Inemer. “That’s because you are worth more to your employer

with an education.”

But monetary compensation is just one component of the true value of an education, says Inemer.

“If you have an education, you will live longer. You will be less likely to get divorced. Your kids will be healthier.”

Studies show other benefits, he continues. “People with an education are less likely to use illegal drugs. They are more likely to vote. They are less likely to be on welfare. They are more likely to have health insurance. They are more likely to have access to the Internet.”

Having an education will also affect your children and your children’s children, he tells them. “Children whose parents did not go to college are less likely to go to college. And if your kids don’t go to college, their children are less likely to go. So if you go to college, you will be helping your children and your grandchildren. That’s deep. You can change the legacy of your family through education.”

Education is also beneficial — and indeed invaluable — for society, Inemer points out. “You might save lives by becoming a doctor. You might make other valuable contributions.”

The teacher then asks students how they would feel if they had \$20 on their desk and another student grabbed it and walked away. Several students say they would be angry, and perhaps even fight to get their money back.

“How many of you have sat in class and let someone else get in the way of your education by running their mouth and done nothing about it?” he asks.

Many hands go up.

“You did nothing about that, but you would get in someone’s face over \$20? Your



education is worth much more to you than \$20. Maybe it's worth millions. It will help you to feed your family someday. If someone gets in the way of your education, you need to let them know it's not okay."

He makes a point of letting students know that an education doesn't always mean four years of college. It can mean taking hands-on classes to enter a trade.

Inemer also encourages students gifted in other areas to "follow their dreams" to become musicians or artists after graduating from high school.

"I wish someone had come to my school in ninth or 10th grade and talked to me about the value of an education," says Inemer, who leads student assemblies on the topic. "You don't know how lucky we are to have free education. Some countries only educate the best and the brightest. If that had happened when I was in high school, they would have said 'not you' and I would have been left out in the cold."

At the end of the lesson, Inemer asks his

students to sign a form. It reads: "By making this commitment to value your education, you have chosen to change your life forever."

"As a result of this commitment, your mind will be expanded, doors will open for you, and you will have opportunities to succeed in life beyond your greatest dreams."

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**— David Inemer,
Hart District Teachers Association**

Students take the certificate with them and get ready to leave.

But Inemer has a few parting words. He reminds them that it won't always be easy to honor that commitment.

"There will be days when you are tired and distracted. There will be days when you might feel lazy and you might feel like giving up. But you can't give up. I'll be here to help you if you need it. I will, I promise I will." ♡

