

Do we really need an \$8,000,000 Science Wing?

If you read my last column, you already know I am against a tax increase of any kind to fund an \$8 million science wing at Cleveland High School. Various excuses and reasons have been made by the city board of education for why the wing is needed. In fact, the board urged the city commission to go ahead and approve the start of construction prior to passing a tax increase.

Why? I often don't just burst out laughing, but when I heard their reasoning, I couldn't help but laugh. Their reason? They said the county is about to start building a new school, and if they don't get to start the science wing before the county starts their school, there might not be enough construction workers available to build both schools at the same time. Do these board members have their heads buried in the sand? Have they not read that Tennessee's unemployment

rate is at almost a record high, and predicted to go even higher? Trust me, city school board, if and when you get the money for a science wing, if the economy gets worse as predicted, you will have people willing to drive from other states to get one of those jobs.

Another excuse tossed around by the board for a reason to build a science wing is "we have to prepare our students for VW." I haven't gotten the requirements from VW, but most other automobile plants that locate in the US from other countries require more than a high school diploma to begin with, and actually hire people with prior experience in the field.

Why do we not need a science wing? Besides the fact of not needing to raise taxes in a recession, I have a very valid reason. The term "graduation rate" is now the most popular term in the secondary education

community. Don't be fooled by the misleading term local and state educators use to tout their success. According to the Alliance for Excellent Education, "Although the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires states to use a particular graduation rate calculation, poor definitions and inconsistent implementation have resulted in a range of confusing graduation rate calculations that do not provide the accurate measurement intended by the law.

On the US Department of Education web site, the definition of graduation rate is the percentage of those who start their senior year, and graduate at the end of that same year.

Whoa - how about all of those students who drop out in the 8th grade, 9th grade, 10th grade, and 11th grade? Educators don't want to talk anymore about that ol' term "drop out rate." The definition for "drop out rate" is

how many students start to school in the 1st grade and never graduate. Hmm - seems like we never see that statistic anymore! I'm going to make a statement, and I will be glad to retract it in next months column if Dr. Denning or the city school board can furnish me statistics showing I am wrong. 33% of all students who start in the Cleveland City Schools in 1st grade will drop out before they ever graduate. That is 1 out of every 3.

What happens to that one child out of every three? They end up in minimum wage jobs, and also during their lives, they will draw the most public assistance.

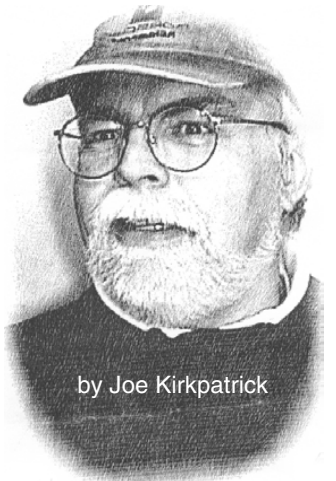
Also, poverty, which largely comes from lack of education, is many times perpetuated to the next generation. Who are these children who drop out? They, on the most part, are children who don't do well in one or more subjects, and come from homes that do

not value education.

What can we do? Vocational education at Cleveland High School has been very successful. However, students participating in the program still have to maintain passing grades in all of their regular subjects. Many of the students who drop out might do very well in vocational programs, but they simply cannot keep up with the required curriculum outside of the vocational program.

If we are going to have a tax increase for education, let's be a leader not only in Bradley County, but perhaps in the nation.

Let's think "outside the box." Let's build a vocational wing focused on those who would otherwise drop out. Teach them auto body work, carpentry, furniture refinishing, and training for many other skilled and semi-skilled jobs that don't require mastering math, English, or science. Let's actually do




by Joe Kirkpatrick

something to prevent 1 out of every 3 students who are in our school system from dropping out. If you want to spend \$8 million on local schools, let's spend it on the children who are truly being left behind.

- Any comments? Contact Joe Kirkpatrick at: tristateim@aol.com

The People News Gives You A Voice




"IT HELPS TO BE ON A WINNING TEAM."

— Earvin "Magic" Johnson

9 OUT OF 10 JACKSON HEWITT® CUSTOMERS GET A TAX REFUND.*

MENTION THIS AD AND RECEIVE A **\$25.00** DISCOUNT ON YOUR TAX PREPARATION.

(423) 476-5308
851 Keith St., Cleveland
OR
inside Wal-Mart Super Center
Ooltewah or Athens



JACKSON HEWITT®
TAX SERVICE
A Partner and a PathSM

* Based on 2007 & 2008 Jackson Hewitt customers receiving a federal tax refund. Current year customer experience may be different. A taxpayer's refund eligibility is determined by his/her individual tax situation. Most offices are independently owned and operated.

Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu & Kid-Jitsu Classes forming now!




Call today for a
FREE LESSON
559-8992



55 Mouse Creek Rd.
Cleveland, TN 37312
(across from Little Debbie)

- * Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu ages 16-96
- * Kid-Jitsu ages 5-15
- * Taekwondo Lessons ages 4-94
- * Family Discounts
- * Unlimited Attendance
- * Nationally Certified Instructors
- * Fall/Spring Break Karate Camp

Enroll your kids in a FUN activity they can start now and stay involved in all year 'round. Best of all they're never bored because they'll learn something new EVERY DAY.

www.itatiger.com

www.popestk.com

Smalley's Shoe & Boot Repair

Colony Square 2522 Keith St. 472-9545
"Quality Work Guaranteed"



Jump Into Spring
with a **FREE Shoe Shine**
1 pair per person



Shoes, Boots, Luggage, Jackets, Saddles, Tack Etc.
TIM SMALLEY, Owner
Hours: Tues, Thurs & Fri 9 - 6 Weds & Sat 9 - 1 Closed Sun & Mon