

Looking At The ISSUES

February 9, 2007



A “Perfect Storm” is Coming, Says ETS

Recent reports citing “doom and gloom” for America’s economy are certainly nothing new. Many, such as *Rising Above the Gathering Storm*,¹ look at our ability to stay economically and educationally competitive in a global context where China and India increasingly churn out large numbers of college graduates. Now comes a new report from the publisher of the *SAT*, and it doesn’t mention India or China.

On Monday at the National Press Club in Washington, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) released what it is calling a landmark report, *America’s Perfect Storm*. The report contends that three powerful forces — inadequate literacy skills among large segments of the population, the continuing evolution of the economy and the nation’s job structure, and an ongoing shift in the demographic profile of the nation, powered by the highest immigration rates in almost a century — are creating a “perfect storm” that could have dire consequences for our nation. If anyone but ETS had released this report, it might be easy to file alongside the others but it is clear that they are very, very serious about its implications.

In this spirit, ETS President and CEO Kurt Landgraf issued a strong statement with the release of the report, “America’s Perfect Storm is a wake-up call with implications for education, business, policy makers and every parent and child. It describes forces at play in society that will affect all of us in the near future. ... If we fail to act now on the warnings sounded in this report, the next generation of children will be worse off than their parents for the first time in our country’s history. The American dream could turn into an American tragedy for many.”²

As the report states, “these three forces — substantial disparities in the distributions of skills, economic restructuring and demographic trends — are each powerful in their own right. But as they play out together over time, the result is truly a perfect storm that, unlike the storm chronicled by Sebastian Junger, continues to gain strength with no end in sight.”³

ETS feels that there is still time to institute policy changes but lacks specificity as to what these might entail. Their focus here is demographic and making a case. The complete report and video news conference is available at: www.ets.org.

Looking At The Week

Leadership Stark County

Dr. Adrienne O’Neill and Mel Lioi, Assistant Superintendent, Stark County Educational Service Center, made a presentation this week before members of Leadership Stark County.

United Way Council

Dr. Joseph Rochford and Adele Gelb are serving on the United Way of Greater Stark County’s Children and Youth Impact Council chaired by Judge Michael Howard. They are evaluating funding requests of programs in the Graduation and Training Beyond High School group.

¹ National Academy of Sciences, available at: <http://www.nap.edu/catalog/11463.html>

² See: *ETS’s America’s Perfect Storm Report Has Converging Forces Threatening Our Future*, Press Release, Monday February 5, 2007, Educational Testing Service. Available at: www.ets.org

³ (2007) *America’s Perfect Storm: Three Forces Changing Our Nation’s Future*. Executive Summary. Available at: http://www.ets.org/Media/Education_Topics/pdf/ExecSummAmPerfectStorm.pdf