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Edu 7701 – Instructional Strategies

New American Secondary Schools

Ventures (Grades 7-14)

What wonderful opportunities await the children of the 21st century and the process by which they will learn. Technology has afforded them limitless options; however, the road by which they will travel must be carefully planned. The Ventures model is assuming that there is a support structure in place, namely the family. With the economy in crisis mode and the family nucleus no longer whole, the school has become the pseudo family unit for many students. Although Ventures will provide a cohort leader, the program is relying on the family unit for most of the support which just doesn't exist.

The projects proposed look exceptional. To me it's like taking a class trip every day of the year – who wouldn't love that! I believe that the goals that have been set forth integrating technology and crossing the curriculum with projects are challenging. I just don't know how realistic it will be to expect a 7th grader to work independently on some of these units. I feel middle school students are better served working in a structured environment. I do understand that the program will begin as regular classes for the early months which will be adjusted as the students acclimate. My preference would be to incorporate most of these units/projects in a traditional environment, again, due to the breakdown of the traditional family and the lack of a support system at home.

Students DO need to be at school at 7:30 am. If they are not at school, then where are they and who are they with? Their parents are most likely working which leaves the students home alone. I believe that a formal education does not have to occur Monday through Friday from 7:30 to 3:00 and that education does, and should, take place 24/7. I would not only like to see them in a cohort environment from 7:30 to 3:00, I would like to see them continuing these projects until 4:00 or 5:00 year round.

My other concerns involve the qualifications of the cohort leader. Is he/she a certified teacher? Guidance counselor? Social worker? Administrator? Who is to fund all of these projects? What happens if a student is not happy with the program – do the “credits” transfer? And what happens if the student moves?

Ultimately I would love to see this program supplement and enhance my current academic program – not replace it – not yet anyway.