

# F o o d f o r T h o u g h t

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# Meet the “Millennials”...

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- The 1<sup>st</sup> generation reared on Google—
- These 15-24 year-olds can tap comments into a blog, role-play in a chat room, log onto Facebook, run Madden NFL, check for voice messages & upload pictures of themselves ALL while watching TV shows...
- They have time (5+ hours free time/day)
- They have the Web (“a mega-world of great books, beautiful art, historical info, political blogs...”)
- **BUT...**

# Tests & surveys show a disturbing trend...

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- 12<sup>th</sup> graders who tested BELOW BASIC in reading jumped from 20% in 1992 to 27% in 2005
- In 2005 nearly half of 12<sup>th</sup> graders were BELOW BASIC in science—math scores were only slightly better
- In a 2006 study of COLLEGE SENIORS:  
22% identified a line from the Gettysburg Address  
99% identified Beavis & Butthead

Even their DIGITAL research skills are poor:

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- In 2006 an ETS survey found that less than half of high school and college students could tailor a Web search or select relevant points and present them in clear form.
- Barely half (52%) correctly judged the objectivity of certain Websites.

So every student needs a laptop, right?

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NOT according to studies—in California, Texas, Munich, Scotland, NY, Virginia, Florida—concluding again and again:

- There is no evidence of improvement in reading or mathematics or other student achievement with classroom laptops.
- A number of schools have eliminated expensive laptop programs after 5-7 yrs, finding them “educationally empty—and worse.”
- **WHY WORSE?**

# SCREEN READING IS NOT LIKE BOOK READING

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- Screen readers don't read text word by word & sentence by sentence
  - —they
  - jump
  - around or read in an “F”-pattern,
  - scanning down a page, narrowing
  - towards the
  - bottom,
  - ignoring
  - the
  - bottom
  - right of
  - the screen. (Nielsen Norman studies, 1990-2006)
- Online reading habits DO NOT favor:
  - acquisition of knowledge
  - development of vocabulary beyond 8<sup>th</sup>-grade level
  - ability to concentrate fully on a single text (such as a legal argument or a logical proof)

# On the other hand...

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- **BOOK READING** — especially out-of-school leisure reading — “correlates more closely with a student’s grades than any other media.” (Mark Bauerlein on the Kaiser Report *Generation M* )
- **BOOK READERS** have higher test scores because they get a more sophisticated vocabulary than TV watchers or Web surfers —vocabulary is the key to success in every subject.

# In fact...

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- In the 1990's dozens of "high-poverty" schools nationwide —with no extra money to spend—switched their curriculum to intense focus on MATH, READING (2 hours/day in grade school), and WRITING (1 hour/day).
- The result?
- 90% of students achieved standards in at least one area.
- Even science scores improved, despite decreased emphasis on "covering the curriculum."

## B u t i n g e n e r a l . . .

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- From 1982-2002, “reading rates fell through the floor” –a 28% rate of decline among 18-24 year-olds. (Bauerlein)
- “They are a generation abandoning print and paper.” (Rosemary Duff, ChildWise)

But they've got the Internet, right?

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- Only 9% of elementary aged children reported “looking up information for schoolwork” last time they went online. (ChildWise survey)
- **ON AVERAGE 8-18 yr-olds spend:**
- 6 hours, 21 minutes per day with screen media (multitasking pushes electronic exposure to 12 hours per day) (Kaiser, 2005, *Generation M*)
- 13-14 hours per week playing video games
- 9 hours per week on social networking sites

# W h a t ' s t h e O p p o r t u n i t y C o s t ?

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- “Software god” Bill Joy, cofounder of Sun Microsystems, says:

“This all [blogging and games]...sounds like a gigantic waste of time. If I was competing with the United States, I would love to have the students I’m competing with spending their time on this kind of crap.”

# Democracy needs informed citizens...

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- But for the Millennials, “The Internet doesn’t impart adult information; it crowds it out.”
- Digital technology has meant 24/7 peer contact (and pressure).
- “Young users...upload & download, but they haven’t learned to analyze a complex text [or] comprehend a foreign policy decision.” (Bauerlein)

Schools alone cannot overcome  
ignorance or apathy

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- Two-thirds of a young person's waking life happen outside of school & homework.
- The Millennials ARE and WILL BE what their home, social, and leisure lives make them.

# Bibliography

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