

# Longtime educator's book offers critical view of education system

By Joel Stottrup

*American education should be providing each student with about \$7.35 worth of education daily.*

*Individual rights should be curtailed in the classroom so that the majority of students can learn. Disruptive students should be eliminated from the classroom.*

*All classes need to have homework.*

*Let's teach children to read, write and calculate, not make money (for school fundraisers).*

*Schools need to teach phonics.*

*Always remember, it is the student's responsibility to discipline himself or herself not the teacher's*

*Parents should not demand individual programs for individual students.*

*Feel-good-programs to help students like school should be eliminated, as school should be for classroom learning.*

*Lawsuits against school districts should have caps that are appropriately set.*

*Lawsuits should be allowed if a school is not providing an education for the students attending that school.*

*Teacher negotiations, what a waste of time and energy, a terrible process for administrators, an unnecessary stoppage of learning an impossible task for school board*

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The above are just some of the many ideas that Lowell Schwalbe, 64, of Princeton accumulated about American education in his 43 years as an educator/administrator and has put into a book called *Educaneese Rebuked*.

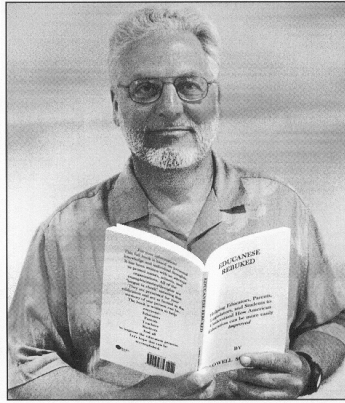
The subtitle on the cover says: *Helping educators, parents, legislators and students to understand how American education can be more easily improved.*

Inside it says that the ideas are also for the legal profession, school boards and school administrators.

The book, which is in paperback form, contains drawings by local artist Katherine Ann Lichy.

Schwalbe writes about the importance of making sure a school is covering the basics in education, having order in the classroom, using standardized testing and not letting politicians have as much control as they do of the schools.

His educational career includes 16 years as a full-time teacher, 17 as an administrator and the last 10 as a substitute teacher.



Lowell Schwalbe holds up a copy of the book he recently wrote. Photo by Joel Stottrup

He has substituted in the Princeton, Milaca and Elk River school districts.

The book sometimes urges people to take action if they believe in his suggestions.

For example, in one spot he asks the readers if they are willing to check students' time on task.

"If you find they are wasting most of the school day it is your responsibility to change it; he writes. "Get it done now."

Schwalbe also calls for teachers to spend more time teaching students and said this could be done by lengthening the school year.

The book begins with a swing at fraud that he says has been conducted by various educators in school districts, such as by turning in inflated claims for expense reimbursement.

Schwalbe states on the book's back cover that the book is based on his personal knowledge and thoughts.

"It has been written with an attempt to protect names, schools, and organizations," it continues.

All the examples and stories in the book are "factual as the memory of one person can be," he writes.

Schwalbe's book, if nothing else, calls for a more orderly school environment where that may be lacking.

He told a story of a girl who showed up in school with no undergarments beneath her dress. When the teacher demanded an explanation, the student replied that it was a pay's to advertise." When the girl was sent home to put on something appropriate, she returned wearing her mother's full-length wedding dress.

Schwalbe wrote that he thought the administrator at the school was correct to have the girl finish out the school day in the wedding dress.

Another admonishment in the book is for teachers to not dress so

casually as some he has observed. One teacher Schwalbe wrote about dressed in torn clothes in an attempt to seem like he was one of the students.

Schwalbe also has opinions about the job of substitute teaching. When asked last week how he likes it, he answered that he does if he is free to teach in the way he thinks is right or is given a direction and a plan to follow.

A question someone might ask is how Schwalbe came up with the idea that each hour a student spends in school should be worth about \$7.35.

He arrives at that by dividing the annual revenue the school district gets by the number of its students and by the number of school hours per student. The \$7.35

is just meant to be an average figure, he said last week.

Schwalbe recommends against a teacher teaching to the students with the lowest academic level in the class.

He advocates splitting the class into groups at various times so that the best students are grouped with the ones not as advanced. It is a sacrifice by the best students but then the best should be grouped together at intervals, he said.

*Educaneese Rebuked* also tackles the value of education in other ways. It says each person stands to lose a lot of money by not attending grades K-12.

If a student should say they just want the money that their education is supposed to be worth and stay home from school, Schwalbe

said, they still lose out because they "remain dumb."

Even something of value is taught at the elementary level about green lights and red lights at intersections and could keep a child from getting killed, he said.

Schwalbe responded to questions about the book.

For example, what has he to say about teacher negotiations since he must have been a recipient of that when he taught full time.

"I have maturity" since then, he answered, saying he is opposed to any negotiations where beginning teachers don't get a salary increase while ones with years in teaching do.

He spoke of how he was once head negotiator for teachers in a school district and got female teachers to receive equal salaries as male teachers, and for the right of women to wear pants to school.

When Schwalbe was asked about his teaching philosophy he said he is not saying districts should go back to just teaching the "three Rs," nor to a discipline system where students were physically punished.

But districts should "eliminate educaneese, eliminate stuff that isn't important to teach," he said. What is important are math, science, social studies, English, music, art and physical education, he explained.

What about competitive sports?

"Sports need to be extra, above and beyond the classroom," Schwalbe answered.

Anybody can be in sports who wants to. Sports should not be taking away from the classroom. If a student misses class to go to a sporting, music or art event, it should be weighed as to whether they should go or not."

Schwalbe asked why activities beyond the basics couldn't be held during evening, Saturdays or during vacations.

Schwalbe, speaking about the need for education, said he likes the cartoon he has seen of an old guy on a park bench asking a kid for a handout. When the man learns the boy is skipping school he hands money to the boy, telling him he is going to need it.

"I think education is very important," Schwalbe said.

"It is very important for kids, very important for parents.

After all my experiences, they haven't convinced me differently. It's the reason I wrote the book. It's the reason I had it published."

Asked if he has received any feedback yet on the book he began writing in 1998 and completed this past April, he said the feedback has been complimentary so far,