:es& to the NEWS
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RELEASE: SEPTEMBER 16

S.A.T. SCORES REPORT

Now that school is open and educators are back at their desks, a series of newspaper articles has surfaced claiming that the schools are doing a super job, and that the recent report by the national advisory co1T111ittee on S.A.T. scores was really all wrong in blaming the 14-year decline on educational methods.

The excuses are unconvincing. If the schools are doing such a great job, how come the Navy has had to start a remedial reading course to try to raise the reading skills of their new seamen from the third to sixth grade level?

An inability of sailors to read urgent warnings has resulted in the costly mishandling of expensive and dangerous equipment. The Navy has to teach reading as a matter of self-defense. A recent study of 23,000 Navy recruits revealed that more than one-third could not read at the 10th grade level.

If the schools are doing such a great job, how come 17 percent of all student loans are in default? I'm not talking about the conscientious 83 percent who paid back their loans, or of the small percentage who are unemployed.

I'm talking about the ones who could pay but haven't, either because they think the government doesn't need the money or they can get by without paying. Among the deadbeats are a basketball player making $85,000 a year and a psychiatrist admitting to $31,000 a year.

If the schools don't teach children the basic skill of reading, or the moral duty to pay their honest debts, then the taxpayers are being ripped off and the pupils are being defrauded.

The Scholastic Aptitude Test is taken every year by more than a million high school students. For the last 14 years, the average scores have shown a

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steady decline. From 1963 to 1977, the average .score of students taking the verbal test fell 49 points, and the average math score fell 31 points.

The decline became so embarrassing that the College Board, which sponsors the test, appointed a blue ribbon committee funded with $800,000 to find out why.

The decline in S.A.T. scores cannot be explained because more students from historically-disadvantaged groups are now college bound and hence taking the tests. In addition to the decline in average scores, there has been an alarming decline in the number of top achievers.

The blue ribbon committee came up with a long list of explanations that i.cludes many over which. the schools have no control, such as the increase in single-parent families, Watergate, and the Vietnam War. However, the blue ribbon committee also put the finger on two areas that should receive priority attention from the schools.

The report was critical of the schools' [11]neglect of critical reading and careful writing,[11] and their use of such modern methods as grade inflation, auto matic promotion, tolerance of absenteeism, less meaty textbooks, and too many elective courses.

The committee was also right on target when it criticized widespread television viewing. The hours that the average child s ds watching television are hours that he doesn't spend reading books. Television viewing doesn't merely use up valuable time -- it teaches habits that are hurtful to concentration, good study, and sustained academic activity.

In the early part of this century, schools had only a fraction of the money they have today, and teachers coped with classes that were twice as large and pupils from immigrant families who had language handicaps. But they all learned to read and write quite well.

According to a recent poll, four out of every 10 parents now believe they can't depend on the schools to teach their children to read and write. It is clear that we are not getting our money's worth for the $75 billion Americans spent on education last year; and the S.A.T. scores prove it.