

The New Criterion

Features

May 2008

The age of educational romanticism

by [Charles Murray](#)

On requiring every child to be above average.

This is the story of educational romanticism in elementary and secondary schools —its rise, its etiology, and, we have reason to hope, its approaching demise.

Educational romanticism consists of the belief that just about all children who are not doing well in school have the potential to do much better. Correlatively, educational romantics believe that the academic achievement of children is determined mainly by the opportunities they receive; that innate intellectual limits (if they exist at all) play a minor role; and that the current K-12 schools have huge room for improvement.

Educational romanticism characterizes reformers of both Left and Right, though in different ways. Educational romantics of the Left focus on race, class, and gender. It is children of color, children of poor parents, and girls whose performance is artificially depressed, and their academic achievement will b ...

Charles Murray is the W H Brady Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.

[more from this author](#)

This article originally appeared in The New Criterion, Volume 26 May 2008, on page 35

Copyright © 2012 The New Criterion | www.newcriterion.com

<http://www.newcriterion.com/articles.cfm/The-age-of-educational-romanticism-3835>