

A...B...what?

Bill Gates, George Lucas and Langston Hughes all have one thing in common; literacy has helped them achieve high standards. Literacy today is the key tool to guarantee success in an individual's life. The problem is not everybody is getting the help they are asking.

In the classroom, some students may try to graduate from high school. However, statistics show about 4 students out of 10 may not be able to go on to college. The main cause of this is lack of support from their teachers. They are a very important factor to a student's progress in life.

If students receive the support, he or she will be more successful. Not just that, they will also develop the confidence of talking to anyone, not just the teacher, about their troubles. This will also lead to better communication skills, more trust for the outside world and a better understanding of their own values.

If they are denied their needs of help, students will think less of themselves. Teachers who pay no attention to their students is sending a message psychologically saying, "I don't care about you, and if I don't care about you, then who will?" Students will lose their representative voice if they are ignored. They may also think of others as being useless.

Of course, teachers are not the only ones who are impacting teenagers. There are others, who want to help, but just can't give support for many reasons.

"Just Read" is a non-profit organization that is willing to help illiterate kids graduate and have more successful lives. Sounds like the problem is solved right? Well, is not that simple. "Just Read" needs tutors in order to help out, but there are many factors that are keeping tutors and other willing volunteers from donating their time.

A recent survey, done by a soon-to-be high school graduate, was given out to random local tutors.

Of being asked the question "did you like school", more than 80 percent responded yes, meaning they had more than willing teachers, parents or any other authoritative figures to help them with studies. They want to do the same, but when they were asked if they ever heard of Just Read, more than 75 percent answered with a simple no.

They were finally asked if they wanted to help out with Just Read and their goal, many replied that they wanted to help; they just didn't have spare time. Tutors want to help other to become better person overall, but because of their lack of knowledge about organizations like Just Read they can't fit any dedication into their already busy schedule.

People may think, "How can this affect me?"

Illiterate teens most likely will turn to gangs, drugs, theft and other illegal actions to gain acceptance or as an easy way to earn cash. Out of the 4 people who don't graduate, about 3 commit these illegal acts. The community will have a major blow when 30 percent of its citizens find what I call "cheats to life" as a primary function of living. They destroy what others have worked so hard for.

But why will they turn to actions so hurtful to others? In today's world, more than 90 percent of the jobs offered to individuals require you to read or write. If a teen can't write, he or she can't apply to more than half of the universities in this country alone; universities like the UC's require one or more essays to write or type. If teens can't read, they can't even apply for a majority of fast food markets like In n' Out Burger or Pizza Hut.

Since they can't work for the money, they will take the advantage of selling drugs and stealing from others. To them , it is a "dog eat dog world".

Those who have literate skills have more possibility of succeeding in life.

Bill Gates, for example, is currently worth more than 50 billion dollars. He wrote all kinds of programs for personal computers and created a multi-national corporation. Langston Hughes, an African American writer and poet, wrote many stories that have the base line of slavery in the south back in the 1800's and racial discrimination during the 60's.

George Lucas could never created the epic story about a galaxy far, far away in a time long ago without literacy. He would never be able to creating such intensity and creativity without being literate.

Literacy, overall, it a crucial tool to live the ideal life. If we all pitch in to help out teens with deficient literate skills, not only are we changing the lives of the teens, we are also helping to improve the community as a whole.