



The research says that my grandson, William, will do very well in school.

By the way, my grandson, William, will be coming to visit next week. He lives in Portland. Betty and I have two grandkids and our third is expected sometime in March. I would be happy to show you pictures of them. Something I've learned about being a grandparent is that it doesn't matter to me whether I've already shown you their picture, or that I've already told you that cute story about them.

If you hang around me long enough, you're going to see it and hear it again.

But, I digress, so back to my prediction. Don't you just love it when we, in education, say, "the research says?" The next time you hear somebody say that, ask them what research they're talking about. Most people won't have a good answer to that question. The ones that do have an answer are usually talking about research that has found correlations. For example, did you know that a greater percentage of children from lower income families experience less success in school than children from middle to high income families? In addition, research has shown that a greater percentage of children from certain ethnic backgrounds do better in school than those from other ethnic backgrounds. Another fact that you can't deny is that a greater percentage of students from families whose parents have a high level of education do better in school than those children whose parents don't have a high level of education. And, there are studies that show a larger percentage of children from single parent households struggle more in school than children from two parent households.

Those four statements are all true, HOWEVER, I want to make it very clear that a child's cognitive capacity is not a direct result of his or her family income, color of skin, parents' level of education, or the number of parents living in the house. These are all correlations. And, the problem is that sometimes people stop their research there. Even more likely, is that others read more into the research than there really is. Then they push for public policy and legislative initiatives that are well intentioned, but wrong minded.

So, how can I say with confidence that William will do very well in school? It's not because he falls on the fortunate side of any of the factors mentioned above. As a matter of fact, he doesn't fall on the fortunate side of all of those correlation studies. I'm still willing to bet that he does very well in school. You see there is research that studies correlations, and then there is research that studies causality. That's the gold standard.

Next week, I'll talk about "what the research says" about developing a child's cognitive capacity and how anybody in most any of life's circumstances, as we know them, can raise smart, intelligent kids that will thrive in school.

Yours in Christ,

Jim Makey
Principal