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Troy Senik: Defining Education Down

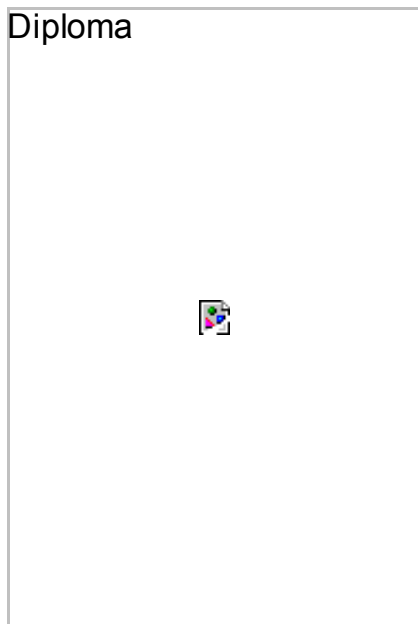
By *Ricochet*

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Earlier today, [Diane asked](#) [2] why San Francisco is so culturally out of step with the rest of the nation. Well, if the Bay Area is the *reductio ad absurdum* of liberal social views, Detroit may well be its counterpart when it comes to dysfunctional left-wing governance. Andrew Coulson, writing at The Cato Institute's [@Liberty](#) blog, [reports today](#) [3]:

Diploma



[4]

A study funded by 10 major foundations reported yesterday that 47 percent of Detroiters are functionally illiterate [5]—unable to read a bus schedule, fill out a resume, or make sense of the directions on an aspirin bottle.

When I checked back in 2008, Detroit public schools were spending \$13,000 / pupil [6], which was then above the national average.

The report notes that half of the illiterate population has either a high school diploma or a GED (emphasis mine). That's beside the point. Virtually the entire illiterate population has completed elementary school, the level at which reading is theoretically taught. That's seven years of schooling (k-6), at a cost of roughly

\$100,000, for... nothing.

By now, most of us on the right are familiar with the utter falsehood that more money equals better outcomes when it comes to education. What's most striking about these statistics, however, is that *more degrees* don't equal better outcomes either. If half of the city's illiterate population has a GED or a high school diploma, what can we conclude about the values of those credentials? That they're worth about as much as a Weimar-era German Papiermark.

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