You have questions and a genuine concern on the current and future state of education in the USA. You often ask why education has become so poor. Why is the US lagging in math and science scores? What are we (the government? the parents? the schools?) doing to improve our education?

I attach a provocative op-ed article published in Time Magazine (2006), “How to Bring Our Schools Out of the 20th Century”. Read and discuss its contents with friends, your group members (and also in class). More importantly, what has happened in the last 6 years. Has education improved? Are we getting any better? Has the quality and effectiveness of undergraduate teaching in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) improved?

Today's news is revealing:


http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/09/14/03stem_ep.h31.html

http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2011/09/13/essay_on_the_economy_and_science

In addition, please also find attached an educational research article focusing on "THE UNDEREDUCATED AMERICAN," from the G Washington University Center on Education and the Workforce. We not only have to improve/better education but we also have to offer a college education to millions more of Americans. How can we do this? Is it even possible? Are we definitely falling behind?

You and are proud citizens of the USA. You are an informed citizen and a responsible student and professional. You and I take the issue of education (very) seriously. Our survival (and that of your children) depends on it.

Hence, read the material provided, find more material and resources to make an informed opinion, discuss it with your group/in class, and write an essay (due on Sept 29) 600 words max on the topic of "Education in the US: how can we recapture our leadership in the world, how can we ensure the progress and
success of this and future generations, how can we promote/deliver STEM, etc."

Clearly the topic is too general and the solutions (work to do) too complicated. I expect you to tell me more about what you are doing or will do (with your family) to be ahead and to ensure a prosperous future.

Incidentally, DO not be content with the resources I provide you. Find more sources, and please be sure to CITE (reference) them correctly.

Luis San Andrés
MEEN 489 Lecturer FALL 2011

More on last night NEWS (9/14/11)

The CBS Evening News (9/14, story 7, 0:35, Pelley) reported that the scores are "slipping. In reading, the high school class of 2011 averaged 497 out of 800. That is down three points from the year before, and it is the lowest on record." The piece notes that writing scores fell as well, but adds that the College Board stated that an increased number of students taking the test "may have dragged down the scores."

Noting that the "combined reading and math scores fell to their lowest point since 1995," the AP (9/14, Pope) adds that the College Board attributed the drop to "the record size and diversity of the pool of test-takers. As more students aim for college and take the exam, it tends to drag down average scores." The AP presents this report within the context of "other tests taken by more representative groups of high school students" which showed more steady results, but concedes that this is "just the second time in the last two decades reading scores have fallen as much in a single year."

In its coverage of the "disappointing SAT scores," the Washington Post (9/15, Chandler) reports that reading scores "reached the lowest point in nearly four decades, reflecting a steady decline in performance in that subject," noting that educators in the Washington, DC, area "were scrambling to understand double-digit drops in test scores." However, the Post quotes College Board Vice President James Montoya, "The good news is we have more students thinking about college than ever before. Anytime you expand the number of students taking the SAT and expand it the way that we have -- into communities that have not necessarily been part of the college-going culture -- it's not surprising to see a decline of a few points."

Under the headline "SAT Reading, Writing Scores Hit Low," the Wall Street Journal (9/15, Banchero, Subscription Publication, 2.02M) also reports on this story in terms of falling scores and record lows, noting that the College Board's statistics indicate that some 43% of test-takers did not perform well enough to indicate college readiness. Moreover, the Journal notes, recent ACT college entry tests indicated that only some 25%were prepared to succeed in college.