

Let's admit that our children's education is horrible...
and commit to changing it.

No one wants to admit to him/herself that their child is getting a horrible education that is not preparing them to live a happy and fulfilling life in the new millennium. It's just too painful to admit. Yet, it is more painful when a child is unable to dream positive and realistic dreams, and then realize them.

Our Children Deserve Better Schools



"The teacher seems nice and the principal seems concerned. He's getting A's and B's, sometimes a C. Yet my child rarely has homework, only speaks ebonics, and has trouble with math. If only there were still lots of good factory jobs? But there aren't. The children did poorly on the standardized tests, the school may not even remain accredited, and 18% of the students dropout each year. I want to believe my child is being prepared... but is he? "

I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired, of everyone responsible for the nurturing and positive holistic development of our children blaming each other, but not themselves, for failing our children. EVERYONE is responsible: parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, friends, church members, neighbors, voters, tax payers, community leaders, teachers, educational administrators, principals, superintendents, and boards of education, state representatives and senators, administrators, and governors. EVERYONE is RESPONSIBLE.

While adults are blaming each other, the majority of African-American children are dying an emotional death, and/or intellectual death, and/or literal death, and who is to blame is irrelevant! The real issue is "How much can each individual positively impact this situation?" and then immediately and aggressively move to implementation... because children's lives are being lost!

Horrible just isn't good enough

What is the real problem, the root issue, the cause of this horrific situation? We no longer have enough positive human resources devoted to holistic child development—and student outcomes won't improve materially until we give them the positive human resources required for them to thrive.

Before we moved from rural areas to the cities, grandparents were in the home. Their principle task was to assist with positive and holistic child development. We left them behind when we moved to the cities, and if they followed, more often than not, they no longer lived with their grandchildren. Time is everything in child development, and grandparents used to watch, correct, nurture, and love grandchildren as their primary task in life!

Rural one-room schools were staffed by one teacher. That same teacher taught the same children for several years. That teacher called her students "my children", and meant it. She knew the siblings, the parents, and grandparents. She certainly knew the children as well as their biological parents did. She was equally concerned with the positive development of character, virtue, values, life skills, and academic achievement. The community demanded total commitment to the degree that teachers were not expected to marry or have children of their own, lest that interfere with their commitment to the development of the children they taught. Let's compare that teacher/student relationship with that of today. Children have the same teacher for a single year, until middle school when they have five, maybe seven, different teachers a year—sometimes for only a semester. Students have dozens of teachers, but who really knows the child well enough to effectively develop them? As a result, students too often believe that no one in the school actually knows or actually cares about them. But the foundation of learning is a student/teacher relationship!

During the last few decades, we have moved from 80% of women being homemakers, devoting primary energy and an enormous amount of time to child development, to 80% of women being employed outside the home. As a society, we did nothing to compensate for this enormous removal of positive human resources devoted to child development.

There used to be an enormous amount of positive human resources devoted to child development: grandparents in the home, mother in the home, and a teacher who was actually a surrogate parent who spent several hours a day with the same child for several years. The primary people in the child's life knew each other very well, and they all knew the child very well—for they all invested enormous amounts of time in the child. The investment of time by empowered adults, over time, is the key to positive and holistic child development. It is also the necessary ingredient for transmitting positive character, virtue, values, life skills, and academic achievement.

The solution is two-fold: specific teachers working for many years with the same children, and those teachers, in fact, being highly empowered adults.

Our social structure and the demands of life today are such that most parents need help in order to impart positive character, virtue, values, and life skills in their children; in other words, to successfully empower them. Parents today need help! And the place where society already invests almost \$10,000 per year per child to aid every child in reaching their potential is the public schools.

Effective teachers must be empowered adults themselves, possessing themselves high character, virtue, values, and life skills; and they must be truly committed and devoted to empowering the children who they serve. And, in order to do this, they need to serve the same children for many years, for they need the time to learn them, heal them, and launch them. Teachers have the necessary time available to supplement parents by truly learning, and teaching, and motivating, and nurturing our children. Parents need the aid of the persons whom we pay (teachers) to assist them in the human development of children. When I ask teachers, "Could you be effective if you had the same children for four years," they don't hesitate. They say, "OF COURSE!" And for those teachers who are empowered adults, who possess positive character, virtue, values, life skills, and academic skills, they are absolutely correct!



A REALISTIC AND ACHIEVABLE (FIVE POINT) PLAN TO SAVE OUR CHILDREN

Point One: INSTITUTE MEGA-LOOPING...Keeping the same teacher with the same children for many years.

Allow the same educator to serve the same children for grades one through four. Then bring this teacher and her students together with another teacher and her students for grades five through eight. Then bring two of these groups of students together for grades nine through twelve, and assign

four educators to them for the full four years of high school. Each student would only have six primary teachers from first grade through twelfth grade. This is a vastly more powerful and effective structure for the education of children, than today's single year student/teacher relationships. Today, no educator has the same child long enough to effectively impart character, virtue, values, life skills, or academic achievement. So if the child doesn't get it at home, and this is the case for a significant percentage of our children, then they just don't get it at all.

Point Two: EFFECTIVELY UTILIZE TODAY'S TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM...The utilization of computers to deliver much of the basic academic curriculum is vastly superior to today's pedagogy.

There is simply no reason that today we have to tell kids to "Sit down, be quiet, pay attention, and memorize this material for the test." It was never appropriate. It ignores whether the child already knows the subject matter and is bored to death, is not yet developmentally ready, or is missing necessary sequential building blocks of knowledge and/or skill development that simply won't allow the child to understand the lesson that day.

Given today's technology and computer-based student-paced core curriculums, this can be corrected. They allow the teacher to monitor learning of the core curriculum at a detailed level that heretofore was impossible. It eliminates the failure and frustration of students who didn't master essential building blocks of knowledge/skill before moving on to more complex ones. It allows children to work at their own pace,

and to assume responsibility for their individual learning. It frees the educator to lay awake at night figuring out how to reach the child, rather than losing sleep preparing lesson plans for the next school day. It brings America's best minds into every classroom, master educators who know how to present complex ideas clearly and incrementally, so that learning is easier and more enjoyable.

The teacher will be freed to intercede with the specific learning challenges of specific children; to direct group projects, inter-disciplinary learning, and activities which reinforce and demonstrate learning; to address specific issues of character, virtue, values, and life skills; and to be relieved of mounds of basic paperwork, normally required to be corrected by hand.

Point Three: EMPLOY ONLY TRULY EMPOWERED ADULTS AS TEACHERS...Each must be the empowered adult you want your child to become. Pay them what they should be worth and fire them if their outcomes with children are not exemplary.



Child development is a human endeavor. The best of everything else, without an exemplary faculty, is useless. Teacher certification is not the key. Most private schools don't even require it. They do, however, require exceptionally well-educated and empowered individuals who love children, and can motivate, educate, and inspire them, while modeling and demanding the character, virtue, and values we want imparted to our children—our future and our immortality. Whatever the reason, if a teacher can not be effective with a stable group of students, then following appropriate training, coaching, and supervision, he/she must be removed from the classroom.

In far too many school systems today, every teacher knows many other teachers, who, in their opinion, are actually harmful to children. This is totally unacceptable. Our children deserve better. Yet we can't require a vow of poverty from those who choose to devote their lives to nurturing the lives of little human beings. It is a noble and most important profession, and we must pay consistent with this.

Point Four: STOP SENDING KIDS HOME HOURS BEFORE THEIR PARENTS...Make school hours 8:00am to 5:00pm, and have several short vacations (spread throughout the year) rather than a three-month summer break.

Teachers need more time for academic instruction, individual coaching, consulting colleagues, being coached by instructional coordinators and principals, preparation, reflection, and meeting with parents! Kids need less television and unsupervised activities. Many powerfully positive things can be accomplished with some of the extra time: help with homework, chess and debate teams, arts and crafts, vocal and instrumental music, drama, reading, etc. Many of the after-school activities can and should be coordinated by less expensive specialists, even parents and volunteers, freeing the regular teachers for the important activities enumerated above. The additional time also facilitates the teacher's role as a primary conveyer of character, virtue, values, and life skills.

Every educator will attest to the problems inherent in a continuous three-month summer vacation. Too much is forgotten, requiring too much precious time being spent reviewing/relearning and getting children acclimated to school again. Whether or not additional school days are added, for most children they are not needed, the school year should be spread over twelve months. Several schemes for doing this have already been successfully implemented in many localities.

Point Five: ALLOW THE PRINCIPAL TO BE THE CHIEF EDUCATIONAL OFFICER...Principals should not have to be business people. Have someone else supervise the non-educational operations of schools.

Hire competent managers to ensure that the school is clean, that meals are timely and nutritious, that the leaky roof gets fixed, and that support staff receives supervision. Let principals concentrate on being the chief executive of holistic child development, not the chief operating officer of support staff and support functions. Let experts in those functions supervise them on a multi-school basis. Free the principals to develop truly effective schools that are exemplary conveyors of positive and holistic child development.

EXECUTING THE FIVE-POINT PLAN NEED NOT COST MORE THAN WHAT WE ARE CURRENTLY SPENDING.

If children are nurtured from the beginning, many costly student interventions won't be necessary. Also, significant costs can be avoided by timely and effective intervention. The really important things that happen inside the classroom are between an empowered adult and a student. Powerful things will happen in every school when the educators are able to experience the power of mega-looping (being responsible for the same children for many years). Children need a meaningful, long-term relationship with a few empowered adults...not simply exposure to many. Children need their worth validated by empowered adults who invest significant time with them and thus know them well, rather than being forced to feel like cattle: that no one really cares enough about to even get to know them.

Reallocating funds under this five-point plan to reward exemplary classroom teachers, to allow the use of technology, to free the principal to be the chief educational officer, and to extend the school year, will provide an exemplary return—without the investment of additional dollars. If additional costs are required, citizens will vote for it—given a specific and detailed plan as to why it is needed and exactly how it will be spent—for we do value our immortality, our children.



INSANITY IS CONTINUING TO DO THE SAME THINGS WHILE EXPECTING DIFFERENT RESULTS.

This is exactly what is going on. We're told that reform is happening, but mostly it's the same structure and student-teacher grouping. Since meaningful relationships are the key, outcomes don't change significantly. Our educational leaders, while acknowledging severe problems, do not recommend bold, decisive, and aggressive changes. Instead, they blame others. This plan represents a decade of research and struggle by the author with the issues of education and child development. Support it, or present a better plan, but allowing the status quo to continue and expecting that our children will be fine is insanity.

The problems that this plan addresses are not unique to African-Americans and/or poor people. They are indicative of major structural changes in the allocation of positive human resources directed at holistic child development. It is logical that the negative impact of these changes will first be seen and initially be most severe in communities with less stable families and fewer resources. This has happened. But already we see the indications that more affluent communities will soon suffer similar outcomes. Structural changes have resulted in the needs of children not being met, and the resultant outcomes will first be felt where the support systems for children are weakest, but no community will be exempt. This five-point plan addresses the needs of all children, and all children need its benefits.

One of every four St. Louis African-American male children will spend time in prison. Today, two-thirds of all African-Americans in St. Louis are being born to single-parent families. The numbers continue to grow, and everyone and anyone who cares about children must stop lamenting and get busy seeing that solutions are implemented. It is everyone's responsibility.

The ancestors wail, while our children die – literally, emotionally, and intellectually.



**YOU MUST BE THE CHANGE YOU WISH TO SEE.
YOU MUST BE THE TRANSFORMATION!**