

EDUCATION

Chicago 2016

True education gives us power to remove impediments in the pathway of our progress. Education for the black community must involve and be predicated on the development and transmission of applied knowledge. Knowledge, that allows our community to evolve into a highly productive social structure which supersedes our survival instincts and creates a framework for economic, political, social, environmental and spiritual growth and development.

Each member of the family, in particular children and their direct care providers must be given an opportunity to learn in a supportive, safe, and productive educational environment. Equality of EDUCATIONAL opportunity has to be driven from within our community. To deny our children and ourselves opportunities to achieve and acquire proper education is to deny ourselves and our community its collective human rights.

The American educational system and by extension, the black community is in crisis because we have failed to take collective responsibility for the education of our children and our community. Dependence on the “hostile majority,” to take responsibility while abdicating our responsibility to educate ourselves and our families; continues to perpetuate systematic underperformance and a measurable level of depravity in our neighborhoods. NBAC-C understands our collective neglect and is recommitting itself to reversing the trajectory of our communities by educating, motivating and mobilizing us towards the development of a self-sustaining education system that meets our community’s needs.

Public Policy Recommendations

1. Support Implementation of public policy focused on; equitable public education for all Black People of African descent up to their highest attainable level, with special federal support for higher and pre-college level education, controlled by Black people at a level of at least 25 percent of the annual budgetary expenditures authorized in each relevant area of the country. (This recommendation is specifically aimed at public community colleges and state supported colleges and universities.)
2. Develop strategies for influencing and/or controlling the policies, administration, curriculum, and resources of schools that educate Black Children of African descent.
3. Develop strategies for supporting and establishing successful alternatives for educating children and their direct care providers, such as weekend schools offered in homes, churches and other community centers.
4. Support Implementation of African-Centered curriculum wherever our children attend school.
 - a. Develop Centers for African people’s history education encapsulated in Black historical and cultural context.
 - b. Affirm Africa as the birthplace of humanity and the cradle of civilization.
 - c. Address the learning styles of African People.
 - d. Teach the accomplishments and contributions of African people to humanity.

- e. Re-establish and affirm the African Worldview based upon the Principles of MAAT (peace, truth, harmony, balance, order and reciprocity).
 - f. Affirm and infuse the Arts as integral and a necessary component to an African- Centered Education.
5. Increase federal and state funding for the education of children of African descent, including state lottery revenue in proportion to the amount of lottery wages made by Black People of African descent.
 6. Support compensation of teachers commensurate with their role in society; support tax credit to teachers, which increases with seniority.
 7. Establish and support an African-Centered Training Academy.
 8. Support efforts to create a National Board of Education of Black people of African ancestry. This body should certify African-Centered teachers, institutions, and consultants.
 9. Implement dress codes and/or school uniforms to counter the rampant materialism and sexism in the society at large.
 10. Local Organizing Committees will challenge racial tracking in education.
 11. Establish a national commission/foundation that addresses the education of Black People of African descent funded from our own resources. The commission/foundation's charge is to encourage and develop national and local research, planning and implementation of new models of education at all levels.
 12. Develop educational programs that prevent the incarceration of Black Youths of African descent as well as assisting those who become involved in the criminal justice system.
 13. Support funding and community oversight for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), where 30 percent of Black students receive their undergraduate degrees, to ensure that our young people are receiving applied knowledge that can transform our communities.

Community Strategy

1. **Advocate for** church and family involvement in education
2. **Support** Improvement of fundamental literacy rate among school children and adults by encouraging families and neighbors to start reading clubs led by youths and elders.
3. **Spearhead or support** activities that improve fundamental literacy rate among school children by encouraging families, businesses and civic organizations to adopt a school and provide reading materials (**The Perfect Score, children reading book**) and reading club for children and adults
4. **Establish and or support** Manhood and Womanhood Training
5. **Advocate for** the Elimination of all racial and cultural bias in standardized testing
6. **Support a policy** requirement for Internet access for all schools
7. **Advocate for the Provision of community Internet access** in all neighborhoods including homework centers (**churches can help with this because there is one on every corner**)
8. **Advocate for Core Curriculum** that includes reading comprehension, math, science and the arts for all students and the study of self-help and one's environments
9. **Advocate for and support basic economics (Financial Literacy) education** beginning at the earliest stages of development

10. **Actively participate in any grassroots support of** Equal distribution of resources and technology to schools
11. **Support** neighborhood schools where you live
12. **Encourage and participate in** parental involvement in the educational process and total life of the child
13. **Support community focus on** early intervention and pre-school programs
14. **Advocate for and support the prioritization of math and science in school curriculums** for all students
15. Study the impact of racial tracking in schools
16. **Support the inclusion of the values of love, respect, collective responsibility, problem solving and community-focused leadership** in schools and in the community
17. **Engage and support the call for** young college students to get involved with community centered education

What the Community Can Do

1. Begin conversations at churches or other civic organizations on what mechanisms can be developed in the community to help our children and adults learn to read and learn financial literacy
2. Engage each other to identify community members whom have a passion and solutions ideas for education and would like to work on solving our education problems from within
3. Partner with, start and or join civic organizations focused on education reform
4. Share information on the current system, challenges and opportunities (best education practices) that can lift our children and community into superseding current education standards consistently
5. Consciously seek out and rally around education ideas that we can agree on (what unites us)
6. Figure out how to help teaching students pass the state teaching test
7. Create internships in our local schools for teaching students
8. Support the hiring of qualified black educators in predominantly black schools
9. Encourage parents to support their children and the education institution they attend

What Individuals Can Do

1. Engage a child or children and help them learn their ABC'S and 1,2,3's (the earlier the better)
2. Encourage your neighbors and young parents to begin teaching their children their ABC'S and 1,2,3's
3. Volunteer to homeschool children or help with homework on your block if you are retired
4. Encourage your youth at home to volunteer their time to help others with homework and mentorship
5. Start your own afterschool homework group on your block or your neighborhood
6. Start a community education group at your church or civic organization
7. Contribute your time or resources to a local literacy group working to help our children and community become literate

8. Support local write in or call in campaigns to your elected officials regarding education improvements
9. Educate yourself and your family about education policies and its impact on our community
10. Join NBACC and volunteer your time and skills to educate, motivate and mobilize our community

The following is an overview by Ron Barker, Education Specialist that synthesizes the challenges our children face in the current education system as well as potential solutions that can be adopted to reverse the disparities.

Laser-beam Focus on the Main Problem:

The number one skill that black children need to have in order to be successful in school; and in life...is the ability to read 'with' comprehension. In doing a comprehensive analysis on the six major learning stages that a child goes through in America, what I call **Cribs To Careers**, I discovered that not only was America's educational system not teaching our black students strategies on how to develop the skills necessary to be able to read 'with' comprehension, but with its most vulnerable and impressionable age group, the three to five year olds – where children initially form their opinions and attitudes about school and education in general, it was literally sending them down, **"The Road of Lost Potential," ...OF WHICH MOST COULD NOT RECOVER!**

What I found...well first let me tell you my thought process: with all the talk of the **Common Core State Standards (CCSS)** to be implemented all across the country this past (2014-15) school year; I wanted to break down why everyone in education that wanted this change felt that Common Core was the way to go. So after reading every book, magazine and newspaper article that I could find on the standards, I got the sense that businesses had been pushing this change for quite some time because their recent college grad hires didn't have the necessary skill-sets needed to be successful in today's global marketplace.

All of my readings talked about how businesses felt that teachers needed to change the way they have taught in the past (through lectures and worksheets) to letting students actually do what it was that they were supposed to be learning, and to create a test that made it possible for students to have to prove what they'd learned by explaining how they came up with their conclusions...in other words, teaching through hands-on learning to better prepare students for what they would be expected to do in a real-world learning environment. Hence, the **Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)** test was born.

And as I stated earlier, the one thing that all of the educational experts seemed to agree on was that every student needed to be able to read 'with' comprehension if they were going to be successful in school...and in life. So following the theme of hands-on learning, I created a comprehensive analysis on our entire educational system as it pertained to hands on reading...I call it, **The Cribs to Careers Hands-on Reading Chain Links**. It's a breakdown of all of our learning groups according to age brackets as it pertains to hands-on reading. There are six groups...or chain links. The groups are: newborns to age two...what I call Cribs; the 3 to 5 year olds (prek and kindergarteners); the 6 through 13 year olds (1st –

8th grades...elementary school; the 14 to 18 year olds (the high-schoolers); the 19 through 22 year olds (the college students) and the 23 year olds and up (Careers)...that's how I got the title, Cribs to Careers.

What Exactly Is Reading 'With' Comprehension?

The generally accepted definition by educational experts is:

Listening Comprehension + Word Recognition = Reading Comprehension.

I found this simple, yet accurate definition to have been what kept me focused on what was important to constantly look for as I analyzed each of the six learning stages of my comprehensive analysis.

And as previously mentioned, as I looked at each of the six groups as they pertained to hands-on reading, the only group that didn't use any hands-on reading was the 3 to 5 year old age bracket.

Allow me to explain: with the newborns though age two group, when a child is born, since there's only one of them, the mother puts the child in her lap when she reads – what is known as lap-reading. This allows the child to hear the story at the same time they are looking at the words and pictures and helping to turn the pages. This is why some children can actually teach themselves how to read due to their mothers' lap-reading exposing them to both halves of the reading 'with' comprehension equation; Listening Comprehension + Word Recognition.

But when the child is placed in the three-year old age group in preschool, since there are twenty, twenty-five or sometimes as many as thirty kids in a classroom, the children are made to fold their hands criss-cross applesauce (it used to be called 'Indian-style' until it was considered politically-incorrect) while the teacher reads them a story. Consequently, the children are just expected to sit there as nonparticipants as the teacher does everything. This is done every day on a reading rug for not only the three-year old age group, but continues with the four-year old age group...and the following year with the five-year olds in kindergarten. So the great work that the mothers did exposing their child to both halves of the reading 'with' comprehension equation and with teaching their small child that reading was a hands-on learning activity when they were first born through age two gets totally wiped out by their child just sitting there with their hands folded only being exposed to one half of the reading 'with' comprehension equation...listening comprehension for three full years - because their teachers are the only ones to have a book!

A Tragic Flaw in the System: What makes this three-year time span even more devastating to the children is that these three years are the child's formative years where they are forming their opinions and attitudes about school and learning in general.

And by the teachers doing all of the work when it comes to the one thing that all experts agree to being the number one thing that a child needs to being successful in school, it gives our young black children the misconception that there will always be someone there to do their work for them throughout their education...when we know that's not going to be the case. Therefore, the three years from age three to age five is what I've deemed, "The Road of Lost Potential."

Role-Models Are Important – Or Are They?

According to the U.S. labor statistics, there are only 2.7% of men that teach in preschool and kindergarten. That means the vast majority (97.3%) of preschool teachers are women. So when little boys...who are full of testosterone are asked to sit with their hands folded for long periods of time to listen to reading...they can't and won't do it. So they get into lots of trouble, which causes them to get behind and not reach their potential. The girls on the other hand, who see their women teachers as role-models, happily fold their hands and sit quietly when they see that this makes their teachers happy. But with the constant mindset of pleasing their teachers, they begin to lose their ability to take risks and consequently not challenge themselves. As a result...they don't reach their potential either due to a severe lack of confidence.

And this lack of confidence really begins to show up later in girls' lives when they grow up and are afraid to take risks, especially when it comes to developing their ideas and going into their own businesses. All the research shows that the Achievement Gap is already there 'before' both the boys and the girls enter kindergarten. All this 'stuff' (mental anguish from not being adequately prepared to be successful in school) really begins to show itself in my next age group; the six through thirteen year olds...the elementary school-aged children.

In first grade, the students are finally given their own books, but they don't have the beautiful color-illustrations that made reading fun and entertaining like they had in preschool and in kindergarten. And in first grade is where they usually they give students the dreaded word lists...if not before.

The problem with word lists is that they don't do anything to help a child develop strategies for reading 'with' comprehension. That's because the words are all alone...they are not read in any context. Therefore, they just help children read almost as if they are reading a grocery list; butter, sugar, milk, eggs. They are reading the words, yes, but with no understanding. In the teaching profession that's what we call, "Word Calling." This ineffective way of teaching students how to read 'with' comprehension doesn't show up until they take their first standardized test in third grade. And the sad thing is when the teacher or parents whose children were only reading words and not reading 'with' comprehension get the results of their third grade reading test, and the teacher tells them that their child is reading on a kindergarten level, the parents wonder how could that be when their child had been reading since they were three or four years old. As we know all too well, black children's educational situation only gets worse from here because schoolwork is cumulative, meaning that what's to be learned in the third grade is the foundation of fourth grade work; what's to be learned in the fourth grade is the foundation of fifth grade work - and so on. It's like being behind on a mortgage; when January's amount doesn't get paid; when February comes both months' amounts are due. That's why it's nearly impossible for black children to catch up once they fall behind.

SOLUTION:

Armed with this new information, I decided to write a children's book that would make a 'real' difference in young children's lives, I called my business partner and fellow writer/musician, Tim Whalen. As we began to decide what our story was going to be about, we went back to what I'd learned from the top performing students at the school where I was the Reading Specialist: that if you wanted to motivate children to remember a story, it better not be boring...or predictable. So when it was time for

us to choose the subject matter for our story, we didn't take any chances. We chose to incorporate the three things that we found that all young children seemed to love; animals, music and bright colors.

To ensure that our emergent readers would be intrigued and stayed engaged, we decided to mix things up a bit. Actually, we decided to mix things up a lot. Instead of using the same old zoo animals that young children were familiar with, we thought, what if we used zoo animals, but...changed all of their colors? And what if they could all play musical instruments? And could all sing and rap? And what if they formed a band called...now get this, the Zoo-premes! That's right, the ZOOPREMES!

So that's what we did. We created a blue lion, a pink and green-striped zebra, a chimpanzee that always wore a bright red tuxedo, and a purple elephant with solid gold tusks. We gave them all names and distinguished personalities, then further developed the plot by creating a story of how they all got together to form the band, The Zoopremes.

Doing this allowed us to make the story longer and more interesting so that we could divide it up into twelve short chapters. Breaking up the story into twelve short chapters would demand multiple sittings. These multiple sittings would emphasize "comprehension" by encouraging young children (for the first time) to remember what was previously read to them in order to make sense of the story.

After finalizing the story, we then commissioned an illustrator to draw all of the pictures and found a printer outside of the United States to agree to print the extra-long children's story. When the children's books finally arrived from the printer and we saw all of our brightly colored Zoopreme characters professionally laid-out over our rhyming text like a modern-day Dr. Seuss book; neatly separated into twelve short chapters, entitled, **Mr. Barker & The Zoopremes in *The Imaginary Zoo***, that's when we realized that we had created an entirely new genre of children's book; A FULLY-COLOR ILLUSTRATED CHAPTER BOOK! What we affectionately call a "picture-chapter book."

We couldn't help but to marvel at what this innovation would mean for America's educational system: We had just created a new genre of children's book that, if used correctly, could possibly be the crucial missing link that would bridge the gap between picture books and chapter books. But the operative word is 'correctly' because after we did market research at preschools to see if indeed they would use our new genre of children's book like a chapter book, we learned that the culture of reading much shorter picture books in just one sitting took precedent over even considering only reading a chapter or two at a time. This among other problems we found to be major hurdles as to why children were never given their own books to read to get exposure to the other half of the reading 'with' comprehension equation...Word Recognition:

- 1) Economics: picture books cost \$16.95 apiece and are read in one sitting. So to buy each student a book for each story would be the \$16.95 multiplied by the number of students in the classroom times the number of stories to be read...a small fortune!
- 2) Children have to be taught how to care for books: giving young children their own books means they would have to learn how to care for the books and how to turn the pages without tearing them.

- 3) Children have to be taught how to follow along as the teacher reads aloud: to maximize having their own books as the teacher reads aloud, the children must somehow be taught how to follow along.
- 4) Problems two and three would be the duties of the teacher's aides: The teacher's aides lack the time and the expertise to create ways for their students to follow along as they read aloud to them.
- 5)

These four huge huddles are the reasons why it has been so much easier to just maintain the status quo of doing the same thing (Criss-cross applesauce) decade after decade after decade of reinforcing that the number one skill that a child needs to have in order to be successful in preschool and kindergarten is not to know the Alphabet or how to count to ten or twenty, or to even be able to read, but to be able to sit quietly for long periods of time. When we visited the ten preschools to test our picture-chapter book, it was clear that the teachers and teacher's aides were more than willing to take on these challenges; their love for children was the reason why they were childcare providers in the first place. The problem was finding effective educational tools that were developmentally appropriate for their age group.

Template for How to Teach 3 to 5 Year Olds to Read In The 21st Century:

I have created a new genre of children's book, a fully color-illustrated picture-chapter book; an innovative way for the young students to follow along as their teachers read the story aloud to them called Three-Steps To Reading 'With' Comprehension, and a revolutionary Teacher's guide that lets educators ask their students questions in 'real-time' (meaning as they are reading the story) as opposed to not asking any questions or waiting until a chapter or entire story is over.

The Perfect Score Short Story:

Instead of trying to explain all of the components to my reading program, I have written a fictionalized short story, entitled, **The Perfect Score**, that demonstrates how everything works together to nurture young children's natural abilities. The beautiful thing about the Teacher's Guide is that it explains how to teach the children everything – so there's no training needed for the preschool teachers – OR FOR PARENTS! The problem is that I have to actually create it to be manufactured.

Expenses to work on it full time: I would need to have \$40,000 + \$10,000 to cover taxes to be able to quit my job and work on creating the Teacher's Guide full time.