



“Moving from Complaint to Possibility...from Planning to Implementation”

Education: Primary and Secondary

Education is the foundation for financial success and responsible citizenship. Historically, the lack of education has led to the absence of hope, wasted lives, violence, incarceration, and even death. The entire educational system, from pre-school to university, must be held accountable to the community. It must empower students to live creative, effective and contributing lives. We therefore challenge the education community from Kindergarten through Grade 12 to do the following:

- **Increase** efforts to assure African American students achieve educational success within all learning environments at *all* levels.
- **Increase** family participation and support for school districts' Student Assistance Programs (S.A.P.). Families should be encouraged to have input into the school's efforts to maintain S.A.P. funds.
- **Be accountable** for educating all students. Work with community advisory boards and student advisory boards to identify unsound educational practices and develop curriculum changes that will improve outcomes for African American children.
- **Commit** to develop and implement an expanded black history curriculum that establishes links to the past and that makes connections with the present, regardless of the racial mix in the school. Ensure that this curriculum will be taught throughout the year, not just during Black History Month. Make an ongoing commitment to include information that reflects the life achievements and struggles of people of color, both past and present, who can serve as positive role models for all youth. Provide appropriate library resources to support the curriculum.
- **Incorporate** classes that teach the values, cultural principles and belief systems of African, African American and other cultures. Utilize them as a tool to empower students, their families and the community to heal from the violence that prevails today. Investigate local, national, and international approaches.
- **Institute** and expand curriculum at all grade levels to include lessons about democracy that include such topics as fundamentals of constitutional government, civil and human rights and equality before the law, free and fair elections, due process of law – which should be, and are, the pillars of democracy. Teach young people the true meaning of a *fully* democratic society.
- **Review** current textbooks and resources, replacing them with those that provide a multicultural approach, and develop a curriculum that addresses the needs of African American students.

- **Include** courses that assist the student in becoming competent with technology. It is not enough to "teach to the test" in order to meet minimum educational requirements.
- **Require** students to participate in community service opportunities as a requisite to high school graduation. Service provides opportunities to learn important life skills and explore potential career options.
- **Require** guidance counselors to provide individualized career counseling and track the student's progress toward meeting educational goals.
- **Require** parents, administrators, guidance counselors and teachers to review the student's progress toward meeting educational goals on a monthly basis.
- **Ensure** that community-based organizations have a thorough knowledge of graduation requirements so that they can offer an action plan to parents and students for completing graduation requirements from high school. This resource should be available in the community for all school age youth to assist them in furthering their post high school education.
- **Provide** information regarding financial assistance for students wishing to obtain further education and training after high school.
- **Encourage** students planning to attend college after graduation to take college courses while still in high school. These courses should be affordable and scholarship discounts should be offered to students with strong grade point averages (GPA).
- **Hire** school principals and other administrators who set high achievement standards for their staff and for the students who exhibit abilities to inspire -- not just those who technically meet the bottom-line requirements.
- **Hire** more teachers throughout all grade levels, who reflect the diverse cultures and races of the community, particularly, more African American male teachers. Increase the number of people of color in managerial and administrative positions.
- **Encourage** teacher's unions to do more to recruit and provide a supportive work environment for African American teachers.
- **Provide** effective cultural sensitivity training to all teachers, counselors, administrators, and staff.
- **Open** school buildings for community use during non-school hours.
- **Advocate** for meaningful parental, family, and caregiver involvement by providing opportunities for *everyone* to get involved, including working parents and caregivers. Implement programming to encourage parents to support parent/ teacher/student organizations.
- **Encourage** more organizations and agencies to sponsor mentoring programs and provide in-school facilities for them. Expand existing in-school programs that successfully serve youth.

- **Invite** social service providers, including mental health professionals, to speak to teachers, parents and the community on various issues that have an impact on students' learning and development.
- **Ensure** that all school activities, including career days, talent shows, and clubs, reflect the diversity of the community.
- **Provide** separate meeting space for speak-out sessions, lectures and assemblies related to issues addressed by the Coalition Against Violence in this document
- **Be** more responsive to community outcries concerning expelling and suspending African American children for trivial and unnecessary reasons. Examine the negative effect oppressive school policies have on student morale and mental well-being. Such oppressive policies undermine learning and provide opportunities for other negative behaviors.
- **Examine** the fairness and effectiveness of the suspension/expulsion policy. Discipline measures should be corrective, yet supportive, to help students without having to disrupt their education.
- **Advocate** for redefining discipline as a movement away from interpreting misbehaviors or wrongdoings as acts of defiance or opposition to authority. Disruptive behavior may simply be a declaration of frustration, rather than defiance to the school system.
- **Decrease** punishment inequities across race, gender and socio-economic lines. Practice more sincere and effective ways to decrease suspension or expulsion rates which disproportionately affect African American students.
- **Increase** utilization of diverse cultural-values models, which can be incorporated with the current school's discipline processes. Provide training and/or additional training for teachers on how to handle disruptive students. Also, incorporate social-emotional learning programs that teach students how to manage their own emotions and behaviors throughout their school experience.
- **Make** better effort to inform and educate students and families about the school system's expectations for acceptable behavior. Provide public awareness announcements in area newspapers and other media, or post policies on school websites.
- **Provide** parents and the community with information about appropriate corrective services (whether school- or court-ordered) that are not punitive. Such service must be meaningful and relevant for the purpose of challenging students to understand their responsibility to school and to society.
- **Reexamine** the truancy policies currently in place with regards to African American girls and boys. Give parents assistance in keeping students in school through more effective case management to decrease truancy.

- **Utilize** families, concerned community members, and business owners to assist in identifying students who are not in school.
- **Ensure** that school staff persons make every effort to contact parents and caregivers when students have been designated absent by the beginning of classes, for the protection of all students.
- **Require** parents and other caregivers, in the interest of children's safety, to provide the schools with working phone numbers.
- **Make** schools and areas surrounding schools safe zones, specifically with regard to drugs, gangs, and violence. This may include enforcing existing policies around these issues, and/or creating new ones.
- **Identify** and implement age and grade appropriate methodologies that address issues of drugs and alcohol and their impact on education, as well as violence in the community.
- **Utilize** peer education programs to address drug and alcohol abuse and factors which can lead to violent behavior.
- **Welcome** parent-community-teacher involvement in improving employment prospects and developing training programs.
- **Disseminate** resource lists that offer youth information about career paths, existing youth employment programs, apprenticeship programs, and training.
- **Provide** information to parents and caregivers so they know what counseling and training programs are available to their families.