

CityKidz:21st Century

What resources are available for your special needs child?

Great academic exercises for your child inside!

Education in the past - How does it impact the present and the future?

Join our online community at www.citykidzworld.com.

“Closing the Gap”

Local resources in Central Jersey



See the contest inside on pages 3 & 4.

Welcome to CityKidzWorld!

Children are the most precious people among us. They deserve the best that society and their parents can offer. We all do the very best that we can for our children, but sometimes as we are struggling to provide everything to children - as parents, as families, and as communities - we wish that we understood more about the possibilities.

What is the true potential of your child? It has been said many times, it takes a village to raise a child. Parents and schools are members of that village, but how can the community provide more resources directly to children?

CityKidz:21st Century is a publication that seeks to reach out directly to parents and children and share success stories, tips from experts for parents, descriptions of opportunities for children, unique paths to success and growth for children, and opportunities for children to try new things in the form of contests and activities.

CityKidz:21st Century, and the website, www.citykidzworld.com, will support the educational nurturing of children from the cradle to college. Become a member of this village. Read stories written by other parents, experts on education, and read and view the work of young contest winners each issue.

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Inquires about submitting editorial and calendar information should be sent to info@citykidzworld.com.

This is an Edwards Educational Communication Services Production.



Local Restaurants that Support Education in the Central Jersey Community



Asare's Den Restaurant
 Specializing in West African/Carribbean Cuisine
 "Bringing Cultures Together"
 855 Hamilton Street
 Somerset, NJ
 Phone: 732-246-7600
 Fax: 732-246-7360

Asanka Delight
 Ghanaian/African Kitchen
 "Like You've Never been feed before"
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 732-249-2700/732-249-2701

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Encouraging Authentic Imaginative Play

How often do you see your young, energetic children running around play acting?

What are they pretending?

Are they uttering lines from a song that they have heard on the radio?

Are they acting out the behaviors of actors and characters that they have seen on television shows?

Are they making up tunes that you have never heard and writing lyrics that do not follow the latest musical trends?

Do they create their own characters that do things that you have not seen on the most popular television shows?

What playing style tends to be considered the most clever? If the playing style that indicates that your child knows how to copy seems the most impressive to you, you are not on the side of experts.

Studies show that children who have too much exposure to media are not truly using their own imaginations when they play. They are copying. Some people may think that children must copy to learn. After all, students are expected to remember what they are told in school and those who are best at remembering and copying information are considered intelligent, right?

Isn't it the same thing?

In some ways it might be, but there are also special places for children who are imaginative and creative. These are the children who are considered gifted and who are provided opportunities to learn independently and are provided advanced studies.

Learning how to use his or her own mind at a young age is an important trait and it is something that a child can use for the rest of his or her life.

Encourage your child to practice authentic play.

*Take that toddler from in front of the television.

*Let your toddler explore your house, your yard, or a park in your area.

*Let them use their hands to explore with paints and paper.

*Give them a set of blocks or other manipulative toys.

* Let toddlers and even older child flip through picture books.

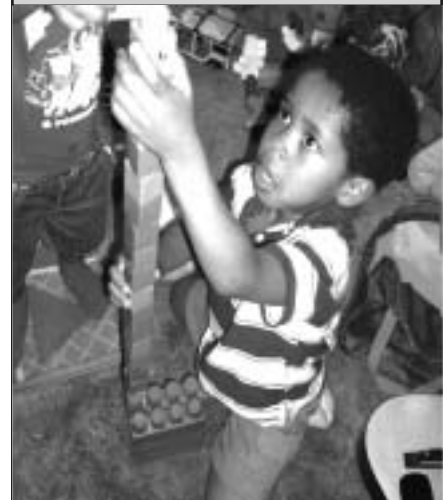
*Let your children have quiet time in which they are allowed to develop their own thoughts without the help of battery powered gadgets that talk to them when they shake them or push buttons.

*Talk to your child and ask your child questions on his or her own theories on the world.

Authentic Play



Simple independent toys and activities encourage imagination.



Imagine Your Future Contest

Deadline: November 15, 2008

Categories:

2nd – 3rd grade

Draw a picture showing what you will be doing in five years.

Guidelines: Drawings may be in crayon, colored pencil, or watercolors.

Please submit scanned drawing to info@citykidzworld.com.

Please type **Imagine Your Future Contest** and your grade in the **subject line**.

4th and 5th grade

Write an essay describing the world and your part in the world in five years.

Guidelines: Essays must be 200 words, double-spaced. Please submit your essay to info@citykidzworld.com in a Microsoft Word file attachment.

Please type **Imagine Your Future Contest** and your grade in the **subject line**.

6th – 8th grade

Write an essay describing the world and your part in the world in five years.

Guidelines: Essay must be 300 words, double-spaced. Please submit your essay to info@citykidzworld.com in a Microsoft Word file attachment.

Please type **Imagine Your Future Contest** and your grade in the **subject line**.



“Closing the Gap”





Imagine Your Future Contest

Deadline: November 15, 2008

High School (9th – 12th grade)

Write an essay describing the world and your part in the world in five years. You may include art work.

Guidelines: Essay must be 500 words, double-spaced. Please submit your essay to info@citykidzworld.com in a Microsoft Word file and submit artwork as a jpeg file. Type **Imagine Your Future Contest** and your grade in the **subject line**.

1st place in each age group will be published in the CityKidz:21st Century – December 2008 issue and honored on the www.citykidzworld.com web site.





A Young Teacher Finds a Way to Bring Meaning to the Lives of His Students

By Derick Edwards

We live in a society in which our children are constantly threatened with negative outside influences. Children who live in the inner city or impoverished suburban neighborhoods have to deal with negative peer pressure on a daily basis. The pressure can cause children to make bad decisions; ones that might even claim their lives. This peer pressure from negative influences can cause children to have various unproductive behaviors. Many children who live in the inner city or impoverished neighborhoods believe that these negative influences are the only way to survive. Survival however, is a mindset. Survival is not what you do to make it through the day or through the month or through the year; it is what you believe you can accomplish and how hard you work to achieve your goal. The most crucial choice a child can make when choosing a survival mindset is who they enlist to help them achieve their goal.

When children have positive goals and a positive mentor who is willing to help them achieve their goals, success, *no matter how small*, is possible. The achievement of a positive goal is the greatest counterbalance to peer pressure. Most children succumb to negative peer pressure because they feel they have no other choice; if there is no counterbalance or another positive option, most children will ultimately choose to succumb to negative peer pressure.

In 2004, I identified three children who were at-risk. All three lived in less than desirable neighborhoods. There was gang violence all around them. Two of the young men were being recruited by reputed gang members to perform an illegal task to prove their worth. The third was number seven in a family of 13 children. The mother was a struggling single mom attempting to raise all 13 children on her own. The father was caught up in the criminal justice system. The father was not a positive influence. His family moved every two to three months to another house in the neighborhood after they destroyed the house they were living in. His family also lived on welfare.

One of the three boys also had parents who struggled with inappropriate, unproductive behaviors. His 13-year-old older sister has some of the same problems. Both parents were out of work and that family also lived on welfare.

Lastly, the other boy I identified had a brother whom he idolized. His brother was a gang member. Gang members were constantly at his house. His mother and father had problems with their relationship. Did I mention these boys were only age 11 (Hispanic), 12 (Caucasian) and 13 (African-American).

A Young Teacher Finds a Way to Bring Meaning to the Lives of His Students

All three boys were at-risk. Something had to be done to help these young men before they became statistics. I found a common interest that all three boys shared and through that interest created a positive goal for the boys to attain. All three boys were fixated on hip/hop and rap music. They watched every video. They knew every contemporary popular artist. They wanted to be rappers. Some people might believe that three children, ages 11, 12 and 13 wanting to be rappers is a ridiculous goal. Some people might believe that rap is negative and has a negative influence on children. Some people might believe that these boys were lost and nothing could help them. Not me. I saw promise; I saw purpose. I saw an attainable goal and way for these three youths to be rescued from *imminent* failure.

I worked with these young boys. I taught them to dream as big as they could and to believe that they could achieve their goals no matter how impossible they seemed. I became their positive mentor. They became my students. The boys now had a strong positive male role model in their lives. These boys now had structure in their lives where structure had not existed before. The boys had to adhere to several rules, some of those rules being (in no particular order):

1. Avoid all negative influences.
2. Practice their songs daily.
3. Show respect to your family.
4. Think carefully through every decision before reacting.
5. Believe in yourself and your dream.
6. Believe that anything is possible.
7. Attain your goal by working hard and don't give up.
8. Always remember to be humble.
9. Respect and protect each other.
10. Discipline yourself and each other.

What started out as a positive outlet for these three boys to avoid the negative influences that inflict them on a

daily basis, became something much, much more. The boys believed in their dreams. They allowed their dreams and positive goals to become the focus in their lives, and because of that; they successfully stood strong against the negative peer pressures they faced. Ironically, the boys became the role models themselves. They also successfully achieved their dreams. The boys became rappers and formed a group and called themselves "Cross Breed".

The name "Cross Breed" is symbolic of the boy's ethnicity. Cross Breed's music was a hit. Children all over the neighborhoods and in the city of Chicago were buying their music. One year after creating their positive goal and working to achieve it; now at the age of 12, 13 and 14, the boys were invited to appear live on WGCI FM radio - the largest radio station in the state of Illinois. They were interviewed and their song was played. This happened on three separate occasions. They also made appearances on B96 FM radio. They performed all over Chicago and in their hometown

of Aurora, Illinois. "Cross Breed" performed at schools and birthday parties, community centers, and parks.

All three of these boys achieved success through hard work and commitment. They created a positive goal for themselves and achieved it. Survival for them was a mindset. They believed they could accomplish their goal and worked to achieve it. I am happy to report that all three boys are entering their junior and senior years in high school and are set to graduate and go to college.

Our youth today face terrible peer pressure to do the wrong thing and make wrong decisions. It is up to us; the adults (positive mentors), to identify the at-risk youth and help them achieve their goals. Who knows, you might just change a life that is otherwise destined for failure.

Derick Edwards was a teacher in Aurora, Illinois, in 2004 when he started mentoring the students he speaks of in the column. He is now an assistant principal in a suburban district outside of Chicago, Illinois.

Brain Exercises

Schools provide education, learning and assignments, but it is important for people to understand that one cannot always wait for an “assignment”. It is important for young people to learn how to become self-starters and learn how to independently pursue academically productive activities.

Parents: Invite your children to get some ideas from this Academic page.

Affirmation Journals

(Ages 5-7)

1. Find an unlined notebook.
2. Acquire a set of crayons.
3. On page one, draw a picture of one of the best days that you have ever experienced.

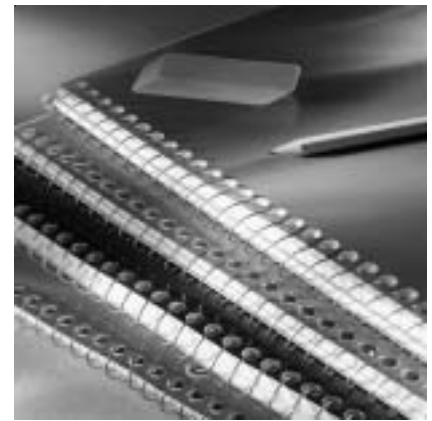
Develop the Thinking & Writing Habit!

(Ages 8-11)

1. Find a notebook.
2. On page one, use half of the paper to draw a picture of one of the best days that you have ever experienced.
3. On the other half of the paper, write down why this is your best day.

Ages (12-17)

1. Acquire a notebook that you can dedicate to journaling.
2. On page one, write about things in your life that make you feel empowered.
3. Write about why those things make you feel powerful.



Go to www.citykidzworld.com and participate in the Dreams and Affirmations forum.

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Business and Sales

Copy Editing

Writing

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mdwards@citykidzworld.com.

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Summer.

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Trenton Boxing Program Helps Kids Fight for Their Dreams

By Aaron Bracy

TRENTON –

Feelings of hopelessness are sometimes overwhelming for some of the people living in some areas of Trenton.

Hopelessness is in the vacant lots, boarded-up houses, glass-covered basketball courts and trash-strewn streets that fester in New Jersey's capital city. And it's on these streets where hope sadly too often masquerades as a life of inappropriate behaviors and choices.

In some places in Trenton, though, there is a shining light amid all of the despair, a place where kids can escape from the dangerous streets, feel safe and reach for their dreams. Inside the Trenton Housing Authority building, kids flock daily to an after-school boxing program that really is a "life" program more than a pugilist's paradise.

Appropriately, it is called the "Team Hope Boxing Program."

Started last September by Trenton boxing trainer James Downing and his nationally accomplished daughter, Sacred, the goal of Team Hope is to help kids face the challenges of life in Trenton by learning the demanding skills of boxing in a safe haven that promotes not just athletic gain, but educational and personal growth as well.

"We teach them there's a fight in the ring and a fight outside the ring," said Sacred Downing, 23, a five-time national champion who is regarded as one of the top female boxers in the country. "The jab keeps people away in the ring and it can be used outside the ring, not physically, but keep the jab out there to keep (bad) people away from you."

On a beautiful day in June, the kind that's ripe for doing no good on the streets, Sacred Downing led 26 youngsters ages 5-18 (up to 70 show up on a daily basis) in an assortment of cardiovascular exercises and shadowboxing drills. Without a ring, there is no sparring in the program, which runs Monday-Friday, 4-6 p.m. The actual boxing is done on the weekends when James Downing piles youngsters into a van for trips to various tournaments around the region.

When Sacred is done putting the kids through an hour and a half of grueling body work, James Downing moves them into the cafeteria where they gather in a circle



Group shot of Team Hope Boxing Program



(l-r) Kwanzi Downing, 17 years old; Sacred Downing, 23 years old; and James Downing. (James is the trainer and father of Sacred and Kwanzi.)

as they do each day to discuss life. Sacred urges the kids to take care of their bodies by not drinking soda and by soaking in a tub, and James asks everyone to rise from their chairs and hug one another while mouthing the words, "Everything's going to be all right."

It's a beautiful scene.

"Boxing isn't the purpose but it is the vehicle The Creator has given them to take them to the purpose," James

Trenton Boxing Program Helps Kids Fight for Their Dreams

Downing said. "Here we can tap into their gifts and talents and turn that negative energy in a positive direction. A lot of our young people have given up and we have to work together to clean that up."

The circle gives the kids a chance to share their problems with one another, and they feel comfortable doing it because they consider each other a family.

"For some of these kids, their only family is family that's part of a gang," James Downing said. "Many come from single-parent families or two-parent families where the parents are working around the clock and can't give them quality time. In here, other people love them and are concerned about them, and we're not asking them to steal or rob."

In some places in Trenton, though, there is a shining light amid all of the despair, a place where kids can escape from the dangerous streets...

That's what brings Hector Davila, 15, there every day.

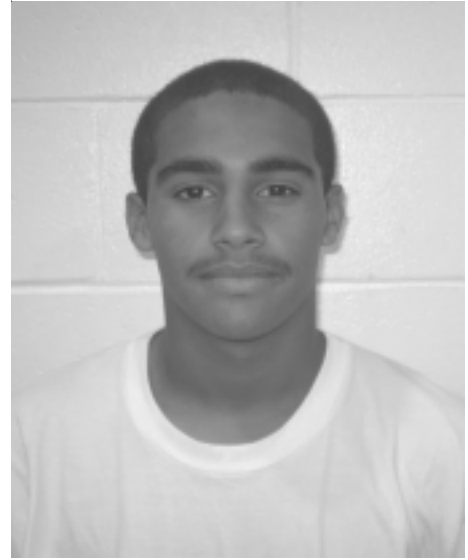
"It's a positive place that encourages you, not like other places that will take you away or try to take you away," Davila said. "It's a comfortable place and you don't have to be ashamed if you're having trouble or worry that you're not cool enough; there's no stress."

Davila said the program has helped him focus on his goal of joining law enforcement, while strengthening his resolve to resist the gang life that has gripped too many of his family and friends.

"I know what I've got to do and I'm going to do it," he said. "I'm not going to repeat the bad, negative cycle. I want to get out there, I want to see over the fence and not be in the same place for too long."

Like Davila, Aneisha Burgess, 15, has resisted the temptations of the street.

"Outside here it's like a whole different world because people want to go against you," she said. "But in here's it's like when you come to the gym it's a second family."



Hector Davila, 15 years old



Aneisha Burgess, 15 years old

What the program has given Davila, Burgess and the others, in addition to firmer abs and stronger arms, is hope.

That's what Team Hope is all about.

"Hope," Sacred Downing said, "is faith that we are going to make it."

— Anyone interested in participating in the Team Hope Boxing Program, or making a donation, should contact the Greater Donnelly Weed & Seed office at 609-278-5011.

What does Central Jersey offer your community?

Somerset

Sports

Franklin Township Little League
51 Dekalb Street
Somerset, NJ 08873
732-828-1233

Offers: Franklin Township Little League is an organization that coordinates local children's leagues of baseball and softball.

Dynamic Duo Martial Arts
84 Veronica Avenue B1015
Somerset, NJ 08873

Offers: Our mission is to create an atmosphere of self-discovery and personal growth, which increases physical fitness and self-defense skill and nutrition, encourages the foundation of high personal standards, and empowers our students with control over self (body, mind, and spirit), thus enabling them to live a happier and more successful life.

Franklin Park

Library

Franklin Township Public Library
485 DeMott Lane
Somerset, NJ 08873

New Brunswick

Sports

New Brunswick Recreation
411 Joyce Kilmer Avenue
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
732-249-9200

Offers: Organized competitive sports, leagues for adults and youths, and seasonal events. Provides a number of special events such as road races, festivals, clinics, tournaments, and fundraisers to support the community. The center also serves as a center point for teen homework assistance, information, and counseling.

Community

New Brunswick Tomorrow
390 George Street
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
732-246-0603

Offers: New Brunswick Tomorrow is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to fostering public/private networks of agencies, institutions and volunteer organizations that are enriching the lives of the people of New Brunswick, promoting self-sufficiency and personal dignity for every individual.

Perth Amboy

Library

Perth Amboy Public Library
196 Jefferson Street
Perth Amboy, NJ 08861
(732) 826-2600

Lawrenceville

Library

Lawrence Public Library
2751 Brunswick Pike
Lawrenceville, NJ 08648

Trenton

Recreation

Boy and Girls Club
Trenton NJ, 08609
Telephone: 609.392.3191
x28

A unit of: Boys & Girls Club
of Trenton/Mercer County

Mercer House
1430 Parkside Ave
Trenton, NJ 08638

Good Book Alert!



Elementary School Reading

*Eating the Alphabet: Fruits and Vegetables
from A to Z.*

By Loise Ehlert

How Many Fish?

By Caron Lee Cohen

Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: An African Tale

By John Steptoe

Young Adults and Teens

*5,000 miles to freedom : Ellen and William
Craft's flight from slavery*

By Judith Bloom Fradin

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isn't just a magazine!
It is a place for students and
educators to connect.
Teachers and Educators find
out how to partner with
CityKidz:21Century by going
go to www.citykidzworld.com.**

A Mother Writes About How to Recognize A Special Needs Child

An Ounce of Prevention

By Desiree' Watts

Early intervention is one of the most important gifts you can give your child. Most often parents are not aware of some of the warning signs to be on guard for. As a mother of a special needs child, I noticed a series of developmental delays worth taking note of after browsing through a pamphlet from the doctor's office that listed a basic guide of children's milestones. By listening to my "mothers' intuition" and comparing my sons developmental progress, I noticed that there were several concerns worth mentioning to his pediatrician. I decided to keep a baby book like most new parents. In keeping a baby book or quick journaling daily of accomplishments and concerns, a parent can lessen distress and become psychologically and emotionally prepared for any difficulties. Depending on your family's schedule, as parents you spend the most crucial hours with your child such as bath time, overnights and weekends. It is also important to communicate with any caregivers or daycare providers regarding progress. More importantly, the supplementary information you collect is invaluable when meeting with your health care provider during check ups. Here are some questions to consider:

- **Is my child developing according to age appropriately such as feeding and toileting habits?**
- **Is my child developing the appropriate motor skills?**
- **Is my child communicating adequately, such as interactions with other children and family? Proper eye contact when interacting with others? Babbling?**
- **Does my child play appropriately such as stacking blocks, engage in patty- cake and peek-a-boo with others?**

According to Donna Murray, PhD, CCC-SLP, Assistant Professor of Clinical Pediatrics, the Director of Treatment at The Kelly O'Leary Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders in the Division of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, located at the Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center in Cincinnati, Ohio "There is no one sign. In fact, when looking for developmental deficits and delays in young children parents should look for a cluster of red flags. A good place for reference would be at www.firstsigns.com here parents can find a variety of helpful information."

There are also other creative ways to learn about and record your child's developmental progress such as blogging, reading other parent blogs, subscribing to free internet based newsletters and joining parent centered forums on the internet.

Kristen Crow, mother of seven, has blogged about and authored three children's books
<http://special-needs.families.com/blog/your-childs-developmental-milestones-a-guide-for-parents>
www.kristencrow.com

Another web site that focuses on milestones:
<http://milestones.geoparent.com/>

Here you can blog and read other parent blogs at Tot spot:
<http://lifehacker.com/395921/share-your-babys-milestones-at-totspot>

It is also important to realize that no one child is the same and there is no set rule of thumb for a child's basic development. As one child will walk at 8 months old, another will walk at 10 months old. Every child will develop at his or her own pace within the guidelines. However, it is important to stay abreast of your child's progress. It is also an exciting and fun way to learn about your child.

Education is the Great Equalizer in America

By **Dr. Marvin Edwards, Ed.D**

Most observers who have viewed education across the decades would say that progress has been made. The question, however, is how much ?

Over 160 years ago, Horace Mann, the father of American education, said education was the “great equalizer”. Is it working?

Let’s look at history to answer this question.

In the early years, this country’s education was mainly the concern of the upper class and the rich. Although there were schools for common folks, little was required or expected beyond learning to read, write, and compute.

Ultimately, America understood that everyone needed to be educated and the public school was created. Is education the same for everyone?

A Historical Perspective: Personal Story

As an African-American child, growing up in the Midwest in the 1950’s and 60’s, I and my siblings were aware of our parents educational background.

My parents both attended rural schools in the south in the 1920’s that were designated schools for Black children. Most schools, particularly in the South, were segregated by race. The teachers who led the Black schools were only required to attend a training program of less than two years to be qualified to teach. None of the teachers had college or university training. Most of the elementary schools were one-room cabins with students of various ages in the same room.

My father completed elementary school through grade eight; and like many of his male counterparts, he went to work as any able-bodied respectable young man would do. My mother, on the other hand, like many other young women of the times, enrolled in the rural high school and completed her schooling through the grade twelve. Late she attended and completed a training program and became a teacher in a rural elementary school. That was the way it was for poor and ethnic minority students in the 1920’s and 30’s.

Except in isolated cases, Black high school graduates did not attend college. Those who did, with rare exceptions, attended the all-Black colleges, which were mostly located in the southern sector of the United States. The level or amount of education for Black people generally had no bearing on the ability to obtain employment or to enter a profession during that era. Was education the great equalizer for that generation at that time? I think not.

School changed for the next generation who experi-

enced the schooling process in the 1940’s and 50’s. Teachers were required to be university-trained and certified to teach. All students were required by law to attend school. Public schools were the most common schools throughout the country. Many wealthy people sent their children to private schools, however, most elected to send their children to the public schools. Schools remained segregated by race with some rare exceptions.

The civil rights movement had its beginning by insisting that schools should not be segregated by race. Ultimately the Supreme Court sided with the plaintiffs and ruled that schools segregated by race were unconstitutional.

The outcome of schooling for economically-challenged and ethnic-minority youngsters remained essentially the same. African-American males often dropped out of high school, based on seeing no value, since there were not opportunities for African-American males with a high school diploma any greater than those who did not complete high school. For most, attendance at college was unrealistic. African-American females finished high school in greater numbers than African-American males. As was the case with African-American males, few African-American females went on to



Dr. Marvin Edwards

attend college. Those who did attend college mostly selected the historically Black Colleges. Others attended state colleges and experienced discrimination and segregation.

The civil rights movement and the subsequent court decision ushered

in some progress with integration; however, there was active resistance to school desegregation all across the United States even in the face of the law. It was this generation that made many sacrifices to move into the mainstream of what was typically White institutions and received overt and covert discrimination on a daily basis.

It could have been the experience of being a pioneering generation that led this era to raise their own children with the expectation that they would complete elementary and secondary school and go to college. It did not happen with every family; however, there was a cultural shift that included education as a priority even though many economically- challenged and ethnic- minority parents had no idea

Those who prepare, regardless of economic and social conditions, will have doors opened that historically were not always opened.

con’t on page 17

You are What You Read

By Wendi C. Burton

Sometimes you do not get what is expected when you settle down to read a Christian fiction novel for an “urban” audience. So what do you get?

Christian fiction publishers hold fast to conservative Christian values. Their books are populated with characters who “don’t drink alcoholic beverages, don’t play cards, don’t dance, don’t gamble, don’t use profanity, don’t engage in strong violence, don’t display overt sexuality, and don’t enter into unchaste relations,” according to Ron Benrey, author of *The Complete Idiots Guide to Writing Christian Fiction: Inside Advice on Crafting Compelling, Faith-based Stories*. Visit the website of any publisher of Christian fiction and read their submission guidelines. These hard and fast rules of publishable Christian fiction are also listed on their individual sites.



Have Standards Been Unfairly Relaxed for the Urban Audience?

The observation of these values in Christian literature for a so-called urban audience is absent. A person who chooses to read Christian fiction expects a good and compelling story written from a Christian worldview. An “urban reader” has that same expectation.

Publishers of “urban” Christian fiction have also been noted to:

- Publish novels with horrendous editing. Typos run rampant throughout the books and the number of grammatical errors is unforgivable.
- Publish novels with blatant profanity. This is distracting for a reader who expects it to be absent in Christian fiction.
- Publish novels with a juvenile writing style. Adult Christian fiction should not seem to be written for a younger audience. This insults the intellect of the target audience.
- Publish books with an unnecessary amount of adverbs. In some cases, adverbs seemed to be made up (i.e. “What are you doing?” she glared at him *diabolically*.)
- Publish novels with characters that are stereotyped and poorly drawn.
- Publish novels with open sexual innuendos and graphic sex scenes. These scenes are particularly shocking for Christian literature. Some readers may be offended.

What does all this mean? It would seem that there are different rules when the audience is considered to be urban. Publishers of this subgenre of Christian fiction sometimes market literature that is second rate.

This is a phenomenon that does a disservice to both the readers and the authors of these books. The authors will not improve skills without thorough evaluation of their manuscripts. Constructive and useful criticism is needed to improve the prose authors are churning out for their urban audience. Meanwhile, the urban audience does not receive highly polished and sophisticated Christian literature.

Every reader deserves no less than the best effort on the part of the publisher. Readers buy and read books from the publishers author because they expect to invest their time in a fiction novel that will entertain.

As it stands, the writer and reader languish in ignorance of what truly is versus what should be. Hopefully the day will come when one or the other (reader or writer) will become aware of the unacceptable state of this particular phenomenon and demand the quality they deserve from those that should care.

What Can You Do to Help Publishers Understand that You Need Standards? *next page*

Help The Publishers Make Better Choices

By Wendi C. Burton

When you come across Christian fiction that raises eyebrows, here are some things you can do:

1. Contact the publisher. On the outside of the back book cover, the publisher is always named along with a website address. You can write via e-mail or secure a mailing address from the website. If you'd rather voice your opinions or concerns vocally, call the publisher. The contact phone number will be on the website as well.

2. Contact the author. Nowadays both brand new debut authors as well as established best-selling authors have a website and/or a blog. Send an e-mail to the author and offer well documented concerns and opinions about their writing piece. At best, the author will take the nuggets from you, the reader, for what they are, which are precious, mind and skill stretching truths. Authors who want to improve their writing craft will take your advice to heart and use it to that end.

3. Contact the book sellers. The retail or mail order or online store where you purchased your novel are in the business of selling books that entertain, thus make them money. Perhaps the book was misplaced when being catalogued and your strong and documented suggestions and opinions about whether the book in question should be marketed as Christian or inspirational fiction, while containing content that is offensive to a reader seeking Christ-centered fiction stories, will cause the book seller at minimum to pause. If enough readers contact book sellers, the books can ultimately be returned to the publisher and they in turn would be forced to look at the quality of literature they provide to their target audience.

Pick up a pen and write a letter or type an e-mail or give a call to those who are in a position to do something about subpar literature for the connoisseur of Christian fiction. Your voice and your opinion and your suggestion count but it must be heard to be effective.

Education is the Great Equalizer in America *con't from page 15*

how their children would get to college. Most did not attend college, but enough did that a new paradigm was established.

The next generation of youngsters educated in the 1960's and 70's benefited from the sacrifices of their parents that made school completion a standard, although there were far too many who opted not to take advantage of opportunities that had developed. The professions and trades that were previously closed to many ethnic minority groups had loosened their restrictions and were allowing non-Whites to enter.

The 1980's and 90's ushered in more opportunities than ever before. Anyone who would contemplate dropping out of school was ostracized. School completion was an expectation. College attendance was rapidly becoming a standard. Many economically-challenged and ethnic minorities were attending public and private colleges all across the country. The historically Black colleges continued to get their share of students; although, many students opted to attend state and private colleges.

This historical sketch shows that what is available today for economically-challenged and ethnic-minority students has not always been the standard. It was an evolution, from "piece meal" education to equal-opportunity-for-all education. It could be observed that education over the last generation, in particular has rapidly moved toward becoming the "great equalizer". Those who prepare, regardless of economic and social conditions, will have doors opened that historically were not always opened. Clearly, there is still evi-

dence of economic and racial discrimination; the difference today is there are tools to fight discrimination and win.

No one in this generation should accept less than the best for their children. When your child is born, you should decide right then that he/she will receive all of the advantages that education can bring. While progress has been slow, as evidenced by the generational sketches given here, the pace has quickened in the last generation. At this pace it is possible that the generation 20 years from now will find it difficult to believe that any of the issues described herein ever happened.

Your children and your children's children will be amazed by these stories as they look around and see people who look like them routinely leading corporate America, as well as governing states and even leading the country. It is no longer just a dream. It is today's reality. It will continue to be reality as long as you understand the importance of education from the day your children enter school and through their graduation from college. The future is theirs. There are no limits. It was not true when Horace Mann made his "great equalizer" statement 160 years ago, but today education is the "great equalizer". Remember this, and do your part as you prepare your toddler to enter school.

Dr. Marvin Edwards has several degrees in education. He was a superintendent for more than 20 years and now teaches at Aurora University.

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Personal Experience

“What I Wish I Knew”... About Gaining an Education

By John Dempsey

That is an expression that has been uttered over and over again. It can be said by someone who wished they had the foresight to see the popularity in a three dollar cup of coffee and invested in a certain leading retailer of the brewed drink. It can be spoken by a person who realized at the end of their life that they love to write stories, yet spent their life working for a global brand as an easily replaceable piece of the corporate world.

Today, it can be used by many college students when they look back on their primary schooling and see how they may have been misled by their elementary school teachers and education in general, not properly being groomed for future academic and social success. Here are a few pieces of knowledge that would have been nice to have an early foundation built upon.

As one grows into a more mature student and increases their own self-awareness about personal habits, they develop distinctive study traits and essentially teach themselves strategies for class and test preparation. Not that self-discovery is not an important part of growing into an adult, but for someone who has trouble concentrating on source material they are not easily interested in or associated with, like yours truly, a class on how to effectively use your study time would have come in handy. Why not give students the fundamentals of proper studying and let them develop their own unique style, the same basic method in developing writing skills, then let some of us take years to establish our own studying guidelines?

While on the topic of building individual style out of basics, one of the biggest problems with the current collegiate and twenty-something generation is no one knows what they want to do. Students spend years and thousands of dollars on schooling they will never

use because they wind up getting a job in an unrelated field, or on classes in one major only to find out it isn't a good fit for them. Schools should not only be teaching students, but helping us figure out what type of person we are interested in becoming. Waiting until college or entering the workforce to begin figuring out what a person wants to do with the rest of their life is waiting too long. Give students a path, a road with many options that they can deviate if they choose to, teach them how to travel that path, but give a path.

Let's not stop there, though. Do not just help students figure out who they might want to become, but who they already are, and there is no reason to wait until high school, let alone college. Personality tests are readily available, such as the Jung Typology Test; just google it and a person may find out in thirty minutes what it takes them years to discover about their personality. Take something like this and develop a kid friendly version that is easy to understand and dissect. There is no reason why children should not know what type of person they are, and their strengths and opportunities.

Measures like these may help children who have underdeveloped social skills, and better prepare them for the social event of their life, high school. A time when students are laying the foundation for who they will become as an adult, they don't need anymore problems piled on their plates, yet those who lack the social skills can suffer from various elements. High school can be a fantastic four years and for many people it is, but a large percentage, if not a majority, cannot wait to get out by senior year and start over in college, because by that time they have developed the necessary skills to be socially successful, skills there is no reason they could not have had entering high school.

Those are a few things that I either would have like to have known at a younger age, or been helped out with discovering.

A top ten list might look something like. . .

1. How can I study better?
2. Who might I want to be/What might I like to do?
3. Who am I/What type of person am I?
4. How can I survive high school?
5. Homework cannot be done in the class before it is due.
6. Do what you want to do, not what others want you to. (It's OK to tryout for the play)?
7. School is a lot harder when you don't do your homework.
8. The kid with the best snack is the coolest.
9. Shoprite bags make awesome book covers.
10. Make friends with the smartest kid in class.

John Dempsey of South Amboy is a first generation college student. He is currently a freelance writer who works for Apple Retail. He also attends Middlesex County College and is pursuing a degree in journalism.

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