



Building a 21st Century U.S. Education System

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The Missing Ingredient in School Reform: A Political Base

David Hornbeck

I am blessed with four amazing grandchildren. What I think public education should produce for all children is what I want for Holly, Tom, Jensen and Fyn. All children deserve as much.

All children deserve the education experiences that equip them to succeed academically in a high quality, four-year undergraduate college or university program (whether they choose to attend one or not).

All children deserve the education experiences that prepare them after high school to take the next appropriate step toward employment that is fulfilling and generates sufficient earning power to support a family at a level that encourages good health and happiness for a lifetime.

All children deserve the education experiences that contribute to the development of values such as courage, fairness, trustworthiness and a deep commitment to securing and maintaining the benefits and responsibilities of democracy for all, including those who have been historically left out.

I want them to have choices. The public school experience of my grandchildren¹ will help make them intellectually accomplished and curious; productive workers; good citizens; and happy people. That same opportunity must be accorded all children, not just those with the benefits of white privilege.

Modern education reform dates to at least 1954 when the Supreme Court declared that separate schools for black and white students were unconstitutional. That was followed when, in response to the Soviet Union's successful launch of Sputnik, the federal government passed the National Defense Education Act in an effort to produce the mathematicians and scientists required to keep up with the Soviets. Since then we have seen the:

- Elementary and Secondary Education Act (originally passed in 1965 and reauthorized several times since, most recently as the legislation that, given its deficiencies of funding and implementation, cynically promises to leave no child behind);
- Head Start established in 1965, followed by repeated attempts to increase access to quality preschool experiences;
- Title IX, enacted in 1972, seeking to end discrimination against girls and women in education; the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (originally passed in 1975, reauthorized several times, since 2004 in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act);
- Competency-based education in the late 1970s;
- *A Nation At Risk* in 1983 declaring that we would have considered it a declaration of war if our education system had been imposed on us by a foreign power;

- Five Education Summits of governors and business leaders that followed an initial presidential/gubernatorial summit at Charlottesville in 1989; and
- Focus of the last 16 years has emphasized standards-based education and evidence-based instructional practices.

The result of this half-century of education reform effort has been remarkable in two ways. First, we now have the knowledge to educate successfully virtually all children, regardless of personal or individual circumstances. That is not to say that we should stop trying to learn more about how children learn and the features of effective instructional and management practices, theoretical and practical. It is to say that we know more than enough to base public education policy on the premise that we know how to educate all children successfully.

The second remarkable result of the last fifty years of efforts to improve public education is how significantly we have failed to take advantage of the knowledge we have generated about teaching and learning, especially in relationship to poor children, children of color and children for whom English is a second language. There is still not a single school system of any size or diversity in the United States in which virtually all children are even minimally well-educated much less to the levels I envision for my grandchildren and that should be accorded all children.

We Know What Works

As a result of my work in Kentucky helping design the Kentucky Education Reform Act; work with The Business Roundtable in developing their first set of Essential Components of a Successful Education System; chairing the Council of Chief State School Officer's Title I Commission; and implementing our comprehensive systemic reform effort, Children Achieving, in Philadelphia over six years, I am convinced that there is an identifiable set of components that must be present if all children are to succeed and that all will not succeed if one or more of the components is not present.²

However, it is not my intention here to argue a certain set of components as being necessary to radical change in delivering a quality education to all children. There will be some who would choose fewer than I, some who would suggest one or two more and some who would arrange or state them a bit differently. I am sure that most who seek real systemic change and I could reach essential agreement around which components will generate sufficient power through their synergy to move the huge and often recalcitrant school systems of America to what they can and must be.

I should also say that while I deeply disagree, there are those who come close to arguing that one silver bullet or another is all that is necessary...small class size or small schools or preschool programs or quality teachers for every child every year...and they point to research to support their contention. It is not even my point here to argue against those ideas since in each of these cases, the performance of children would be improved by passionate, faithful, widespread implementation of the chosen silver bullet. The best example is the proposition of providing quality developmentally appropriate early child-

hood programs. We absolutely know they work. We have at least 30 years of research to that effect. We know that they save huge sums of money. Virtually every family with the means ensures that their children have access to some sort of organized learning experience by age 3, many earlier. The only families that do not provide such experiences are families without the means. And yet not a single state guarantees the opportunity for an early childhood program, quality or otherwise, to all children beginning at age 3 and only a few pretend to do so beginning at age 4.

The Education Trust makes the point that we know what to do in a different way. They have identified hundreds of schools across the United States for which demographic data suggests they should perform poorly but instead perform much better than expected and in many instances better than district or state averages. They also note a number of districts in the country that perform substantially better than would be expected, extrapolating from district demographic data. The Education Trust cites four practices that are important in achieving these results: clear goals; challenging curriculum aligned with standards; extra instruction for those who need it; and teachers who are well prepared to teach the subject matter.³

My point is simply that we know what works and most of that knowledge has emerged over this 50-year history of school reform.

We Have Failed Miserably

The Education Trust reports that only 14 percent of Latino 4th graders are proficient in reading while 57 percent have not even reached the basic level of performance. In math, nine percent of 8th graders are proficient and 60 percent are below basic.⁴

The Trust also reports that for African American students the numbers are even worse. 12 percent of 4th graders are at the proficient level and 61 percent are below basic in reading. For 8th graders, only seven percent achieve proficient in math and, again, 61 percent are below basic.⁵

Graduation rates again provide significant evidence of failure to serve all students well.

The Harvard University Civil Rights Project reports the graduation rate for whites at 75 percent (not a number evoking great pride in itself) but for African American, Latino and Native Americans only half earn regular diplomas.⁶

For the richest country on earth, performance in an international context can best be described as modest. On the 2003 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), U.S. 4th graders were twelfth of 25 countries in math and sixth in science; at the 8th grade level, the U.S. was ninth in math and fifteenth in science.⁷

Public Will is the Missing Ingredient

If all students have the capacity to perform to high standards of achievement and the knowledge exists to help them do so, the reason they are not succeeding is the absence of the necessary conditions. And, the reason those conditions do not exist is that the public is not demanding that political leaders and policymakers create them.

There are many reasons for the absence of public will and political resolve. Among them are:

- 1** Many people continue to believe that black and brown children do not have the fundamental capacity to learn to the levels to which we aspire.
- 2** Many people believe that while black and brown and white low-income children may have the innate capacity to learn to the levels to which we aspire for our grandchildren, demographic, economic and family circumstances create such huge barriers that, as a practical matter, they will not learn.

These first two groups include educators, legislators, business people and millions of ordinary citizens. They even include some of the parents of the children who are ill served and some of the children themselves. The cultural and racial belief mantra that black, brown and low-income white children cannot or will not learn is so deep that too many with whom we have failed have bought the myth themselves, making it a self-fulfilling prophecy. It is manifest most often in young people exhibiting low self-esteem and parents who tolerate low expectations of their children and ascribe low performance to the conditions within which they live.

- 3** Many believe that, with sufficient intervention, children with whom we have historically failed might learn to higher levels but feel that the cost is too great to provide the interventions, especially if the cost is to be borne by them.
- 4** Many think that the barrier is the education bureaucracy; that even if the knowledge exists to educate all children, public school systems are so broken, teacher unions and school boards and administrators are so incompetent or self-serving or calcified that the system cannot be reformed to do what is necessary.
- 5** Many without children of school age simply think that it is not their responsibility to provide a quality education to all children.
- 6** Some with political power believe that the soul of public education has been captured by secularism and the result is a corrupt, godless system that must be abandoned in favor of alternatives that permit prayer, single religion hiring and other exclusive ways of thinking about and organizing education.
- 7** Finally, and perhaps most damning of all is a combination of apathy, feeling like we don't have time, the proverbial sense that one "can't successfully fight city hall" and, among the poor, a level of despair that is disabling.

In combination, these are powerful forces that keep our nation from creating the conditions that will result in all children succeeding.

The missing ingredient in education reform over this half century is public and political will. We have not informed, organized and mobilized a public that demands a quality education for every child. We have provided for parent committees to sign off on various local, state and federal plans. We have in some places given meaningful financial and program decisions to school-based groups with heavy non-educator representation. We have built local education funds and foundations that maintain a friendly but arms length, critical friend relationship to school districts.

Almost every district has some sort of business-education partnership. A myriad of service and faith organizations provide support to schools and districts through after-school activities and other support services to the students themselves. Most schools and districts have school volunteer programs, some numbering in the thousands of volunteers. We call these activities public engagement or community outreach. Indeed most districts and schools even have community outreach or parent liaison or school-community partnership personnel on board (almost always among the lowest paid staff).

I do not criticize these activities. Indeed, over a lifetime as an educator, I have been responsible for establishing, building, enhancing and encouraging every single one. But the fact is all of them together do not add up to the power to insist on policy and practice at the school, district, state and federal levels that will provide a quality education to every child in America.

What Do We Do?

The answer is simple; doing it is hard. The answer is to build a permanent, large, powerful, small “p” political infrastructure state-by-state among people who embrace the traditional American values of fairness, trust, responsibility and strong caring communities. The issue agenda would be to deliver, as a matter of policy and practice in each state, a quality of education designed to result in every child being intellectually accomplished and curious; productive workers; good citizens; and happy people; that is to say every child would enjoy the quality of education experiences that I demand for my grandchildren.

In August 2000, after six years as superintendent in Philadelphia, I had reached this conclusion. It would be impossible to achieve the goal of delivering a quality public education to children and youth historically left out without a strong permanent organized grassroots group of people to insist on it.

I traveled across Pennsylvania for three months talking with faith groups, youth organizations, parent groups, education reform school people and community organizations to determine whether there was an appetite for serious, large scale activist organizing. I consulted with friends such as Wendy Puriefoy, President of the Public Education Network; Marian Wright Edelman, President of the Children’s Defense Fund; and Eileen Lindner, Deputy General Secretary of the National Council of Churches (and when he became General Secretary some months later, Bob Edgar).

Deciding the appetite to organize and mobilize did exist, by April 2001, I had raised over \$4.5 million from ten foundations: Annenberg, Clark, Fels, Ford, Heinz, Mott, Pittsburgh, Schott, Surdna and William Penn. I hired as Executive Director Donna Cooper, a smart, tough, committed experienced organizer, who had been a Deputy Mayor in Philadelphia. We then hired 20 people and opened seven offices in places chosen strategically around the state. Good Schools Pennsylvania was born.

Our primary strategy was to establish groups of ten people each who were asked to meet monthly. In each meeting, guided by a nine unit curriculum, written in partnership with The Center for Greater Philadelphia at the University of Pennsylvania, each small group of

people learned about public education policy in Pennsylvania and across the nation; how it is delivered; and discussed how it could be better in policy and practice. Each month, each participant was asked to write two letters to elected officials and policymakers, asking them to take actions that would improve the quality of education in the Commonwealth, especially for those youngsters historically left out.

Within 18 months, we had established over 300 of these small groups of 10 people. A majority of the groups came from a faith community congregational base. Starting with the bishops of the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America-Southeast Pennsylvania and the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church, we ultimately secured the commitment of 17 of the peers of these three bishops plus other significant religious and parent leaders in the state. Each of the bishops and their peers set a goal of establishing a number of small groups equivalent to 25 percent of the number of congregations within the faith tradition unit like a diocese or presbytery or synod for which they had responsibility.

In addition to the small groups built from the congregational base, with significant leadership from local education funds, affiliates of the Public Education Network, and from superintendents like Vicki Phillips in Lancaster, in partnership with their PTAs, we also developed several dozen parent generated groups.

With the small groups as a base, we held a prayer vigil on the steps of the state capitol every month for 18 months. We would pray, sing, listen to brief homilies and then scatter throughout the capitol to bring a message of social justice within the framework of public education to the legislators of the state. We rarely had fewer than 300 people attend. A different group led each month. One month Arthur White, president of the Pennsylvania Baptist State Convention brought 300 African American Baptists; the next month Tony Campolo and 300 evangelicals hosted the event; and the next the Methodists and the next Jewish leaders and so on for the 18 straight months. This was in stark contrast to the usual practice of advocacy groups coming to Harrisburg with a modest number once or twice a year. We were clear that we had to be present in a highly visible and persistent manner.

We also established 23 college chapters and worked with students in 50 high schools. Indeed, the largest numbers of participants in Harrisburg rallies were when the students had responsibility. Twice over three years they produced more than 1,500 young people. From time to time we would hold large rallies in different parts of the state, with drawing cards such as Marian Wright Edelman and Congressman Chaka Fattah consistently producing a 1,000 people or more. We used such rallies to recruit additional small group participants and to let people know they were joining with large numbers of other people in the quest for social justice for the children.

In 2002, we made a commitment to make public education the number one issue in the gubernatorial campaign. We did just that many times over. First, we focused on the Democratic primary, as there was no Republican primary. In the dust-up between Ed Rendell, the Mayor of Philadelphia and Bob Casey, the Auditor General, Rendell clearly expressed a more specific and powerful vision for educating all children and won the pri-

mary. In the general election, the contest pitted Rendell against Mike Fisher, the state's Attorney General. Good Schools Pennsylvania was present everywhere the candidates showed up, pounding away at the education message. It was no contest on the education front. All Fisher could talk about were vouchers, charters and accountability and, frankly, even on those points, there was little evidence that he had thought very much about education issues.

In contrast, Rendell had honed his message of all children needing opportunity; accountability; adequate funding, equitably distributed; the importance of education to economic development; and lower property taxes. He knew the issues and he knew the language partly as a result of serving as a very supportive Mayor during the six years of our Children Achieving work. He conveyed the strong message that his commitment was deep. Good Schools Pennsylvania obviously liked the message because it was essentially our message.

After the election, Rendell continued to press the education agenda. He hired Donna Cooper away from Good Schools to be his Director of Planning, later giving her cabinet status as Secretary of Planning. He appointed Vicki Phillips, the former Lancaster superintendent, at our urging, to be Secretary of Education. Donna and Vicki put together the specifics of Rendell's education program and budget package. It was terrific.

During the legislative session of 2003, Good Schools Pennsylvania continued the monthly meetings of the small groups and the letter writing but shifted from 300 people one day a month in the capital to 100 every day on all legislative days during the six month budget session from January through June. More than 7,500 people came on one or more of those days, pressing hard our education agenda. The Governor acknowledged our role when he said that Good Schools had carried the ball 95 yards; it was his responsibility to carry it across the goal line.

He (and we) tried very hard and accomplished much. But the largely conservative legislature fought the Governor tooth and nail and passed a budget early on, which he promptly vetoed, vowing to continue to veto every budget until he got what he (and we) wanted on education issues. I think that in December Pennsylvania was the last state in the nation without a budget. In the end, Rendell settled for a lot less than he or we wanted. But in that session and since, he has been the best education governor in Pennsylvania since at least the Milton Shapp era in the early 70s.

Our big mistake in Good Schools was to see it as a three-year campaign, not an effort to build a permanent infrastructure. We envisioned making education the big issue in the governor's race, helping create the climate that would result in sweeping, comprehensive policy change in the 2003 legislative session and then go out of business.

That was, of course, significantly too optimistic. The problem was that we had designed our fundraising, staffing and spending effort around the campaign so in late 2003 with Donna Cooper in the Governor's office and the funds virtually spent, Good Schools almost went out of business. With some effort in fundraising and serious cuts in staff, we survived at a much-reduced level. As this is written in 2006, Good Schools has a modest

staff and modest goals but is on its way back, having just helped lead the effort to convince the legislature to conduct a cost of education study that they (I left the state and active leadership in 2003) hope will lead to structural changes in the way education is financed and practiced in the state.

The Way Forward

We were encouraged by the degree of success we had in organizing Good Schools Pennsylvania. We learned a great deal, not least that success depends on a long-term commitment, not a short-term campaign. Experience with Good Schools and observations of the effectiveness of the Internet and other technologies as communication, organizing and fundraising tools begins to point the way forward.

As this is written, I am engaged in a design year, using California, Colorado and Ohio as the design states to think through how one would develop a national grassroots organizing effort that has the power to change the nature of conversation in the public square to one that reasserts the importance of the common good as the driving force in the way decisions are made in a democracy and through a state-by-state national movement to ensure that all children have quality public education available.

A large, new powerful small “p” political organism (and I use the word organism, not organization, to capture the idea of a highly dynamic group of people) making fairness, trust, responsibility and strong, caring communities the driving values of their movement building and quality education for every child the centerpiece issue can transform who we are as a nation. Anything less will continue to leave the direction of the nation in the hands of those whose values center around self and individualism and quality education as a privilege for the few but not for the middle class, black, brown, poor or those for whom English is not a first language.

In contrast, most Americans believe that all children, their own and the children of others, should have a fair shot at the American dream. From a religious point of view, most Americans believe that God loves and wants the best for all children not just children of privilege. Most Americans believe that the founders of America wanted to create a country in which all had opportunity if they worked hard and that the government was created to help protect and deliver that opportunity. Most Americans seek meaning in their lives, in their work, in their families. Most Americans want a say in the way their cities, towns, states and the nation function and want to have trust and confidence in those in positions of authority.

Most Americans are both red and blue, Republican and Democrat, conservative in some things and more liberal in others. Most Americans want other Americans to be happy and don't want to do things, at least maliciously, that get in the way of others' happiness. Most of us are really pretty ordinary, decent human beings...same basic wants and needs, same fundamental fears and desires.

However, most of us have no vehicle, no sense of voice in which we think we can really impact the larger forces around us. We may even have a sense of what needs to be done

about education and other matters but see professional educators and elected officials doing pretty much whatever they want without accountability, without much passion. Our sense is that those people simply want to get elected, serve special interests that fund their campaigns, or keep their jobs. And, thus, most Americans tend to fall back into the pack that takes care of its own, including those elected officials and educators, many of whom would like for things to be different.

We must create, patiently and with careful attention to detail, a new voice to which most Americans can relate in ways that cut across traditional boundaries of politics, religion, race and sexual orientation. We must find common ground in which we leave hot button issues outside the door, not because they are not important but because they keep us from attending to other equally if not more important issues that bring us together - common commitments to fairness, trust, responsibility, safe, caring communities and out of those values public education. We must cease to let hot button issues like abortion, gay marriage and vouchers define the way in which we think about and treat each other in all other aspects of our life together.

I propose building an organism that has the following characteristics:

1. Anchored in 10 or 12 states that constitute a critical mass in the United States.

These states would be bellwether states. Some would be part of the critical mass because they are large and have significant numbers of children reflecting all demographic characteristics. California is a prime example; one of every eight children in public school in the nation is in public school in California. One might look to a state like Nevada where the population is growing, where there will be new seats in the Congress created in 2010 that may be more competitive in the short run because there will be no incumbent. One might look at a New Hampshire or Iowa due to their sometimes disproportionate impact on national elections. One would naturally look to states where there are apparent allies in the middle of the political spectrum where one might demonstrate the effectiveness of large numbers of new advocates coming together around a common agenda. A state like Ohio is an attractive candidate since it appears to reflect the nation's present serious divisiveness. Or, a state such as Colorado is interesting where Proctor and Gamble has reportedly done product research for decades apparently because what Coloradoans like is reflected in the tastes of the nation. Whatever the criteria, it is important that the handful of states be of such a character that if the movement building in those states is successful, it is likely the rest of the nation will follow.

2. A visible presence through online organizing and the media in the other 40 states.

This would have two objectives. One would be to begin to build a friendly environment nationally, in which the more aggressive work in the targeted states will be encouraged. This would be in contrast to nesting the target state work in a hostile national climate that could more easily prove destructive to early fledging work in the targeted states. The second objective would be to lay the groundwork for changes in those states to ensure that all of the students in those states have access to a quality public education.

3. The fundamental motivation for participants should be a moral one. There are many other reasons to want such a movement to develop and succeed: economic, legal and political, for example. However, the threshold at which those motivated by these other factors decide that their goals have been met is often, in my experience, a lower one. When we have enough workers or the party to which I belong has enough voters to win the next election or we have met the minimum constitutional legal standard, there is a tendency to compromise before the larger goals are achieved.

On the other hand, those who come to the movement because it is the right thing to do will keep their eyes on the goal. They will see tax policy, educator accountability and other controversial measures in a different way. They will not be as easily overrun by the traditional interest groups whether on the right or left. They will, in short, be driven by the idea that it is right for all children to have a quality public education as good as I want for my own children and grandchildren; that it is right that all of us are accountable in the name of the common good for the education of all; that fairness, trust, responsibility and safe, communities ought to exist for all families because that is the morally right condition.

4. Target constituencies should be chosen based on a natural moral or values-tinted lens through which they tend to act. These would include faith communities who see social justice as a central tenet of their faith; young people, who generally have not yet been corrupted as deeply as some of the rest of us by the responsibilities of a mortgage or even the lure of material acquisition; people from Black, Brown and poor communities who have been most heavily impacted by the injustices of the system; and women (mothers and grandmothers in particular) who love more easily, who are less ego driven, looking to solve problems, not just to win.

In urging the engagement of these target populations with moral or values-tinted lens, I observe that movements that have been arguably successful—abolitionists, those who fought for child labor laws, suffragists, civil rights activists, war protesters—were driven by a moral imperative and the target constituencies suggested here were important leaders in those efforts.

5. Technology has made it possible to communicate, call people together, think strategically with ideas arising from all participants and raise money in unprecedented ways. Blogging, podcasting and websites like Move-on.org, Faithful America.org, MySpace.com, friendster.com, GiveKidsGoodSchools.org and scores, maybe hundreds, of others have changed the nature of movement building. Howard Dean's presidential campaign of 2004 altered political campaigning and blogging conventions now draw serious attention from presidential wannabes.

The small “p” political infrastructure that is a requirement to create the policy framework that will deliver quality public education to all children, ensure its faithful implementation and sustain it will need a sophisticated technology base that is as powerful, inventive, transparent and flexible as the most sophisticated that Karl Rove, Wes Boyd and Joan Blades, James Dobson, Joe Trippi or *Kos* ever imagined.

The participant base will need to be massive and it will need to be built on the basis of relationships. The largest online organizing efforts, conservative and liberal, have built

huge data bases from hot button, front-page issues like Monica Lewinsky, the Iraq war, abortion and gay marriage. For better or worse, public education will never have that sort of sizzle. Thus, we must build equally large data bases on relationships. We need to create the capacity to bring the character of commitment of Moveon.org and the social networking of friendster.com together. One example would be to put the pyramiding concepts behind Amway and Mary Kay to work for social justice.

Imagine 500 church organizations (just 10 on average in each state), community foundations, black sororities or local league of women voter chapters, school districts, seminaries, non-profits each identifying just 40 of their board, staff, volunteers, or members. Each of the 40 are asked to make four commitments: 1) to the public education agenda that will deliver a quality public education to all children; 2) to engage in one coordinated action per month such as writing a letter or attending a prayer vigil; 3) to contribute \$20 to fund the movement; and 4) find 5 friends that will make the same four commitments. If those five then find five who find five who find one final person (four degrees of separation), it would yield a base of 5 million people nationally. This large, powerful, virtual small “p” political infrastructure would be built on two simple foundations. One is the idea that my grandchild and the grandchildren of all other grandparents should have the kind of future that requires them to have a quality public education. The other base is the base of friendship...one friend asking another to help rebuild America through the values of fairness, trust, responsibility, and safe, caring communities by providing a quality public education to all.

6. Small groups on the ground must anchor the effort. Whether Rick Warren is organizing his megachurch in southern California or alcoholics anonymous is building another chapter or Good Schools Pennsylvania is organizing its congregation-based groups, people who know one another and develop a sense of responsibility to one another are at the heart of sustaining engagement. Work in the targeted states should be anchored in such small group organizing with the base in institutions that already have a large natural network that can be tapped such as faith communities and schools.

Sustaining small groups over a long period of time is extremely difficult. The primary way one does it is to engage the participants regularly and to engage them in things that are deeply meaningful to them. One way of doing that within the framework of the ideas laid out here is to build a virtual mini-network like the larger one described above as a way to empower the small group to accomplish important goals at the local level. If each small group consisted of 12 people, for example, and each of them found 2 friends who found 2 friends who found 2 friends who found 1 friend, it would yield a virtual mini-net of 264. With the 12 as the “mother-source,” that small group of activists could attend to whatever issues might affect the children of the neighborhoods in which they live—stop lights, playgrounds, health care and individual issues at the local school. One small group could combine with five or 10 others in a town and, given the turnout in most local school board elections, would, no doubt, determine who is elected. Of course, the small groups and the mini-nets would also then play an active role in the larger policy efforts at the state and district levels.

7. A strong professional staff and the funds to compete in the political world. One of the most successful such infrastructures in the United States is Focus on the Family. It has more than 1,000 employees and an annual budget of \$100 million. I do not believe that the effort I propose would need to be of that magnitude, but it will not succeed as a small, volunteer driven operation. It will need to be able to purchase media, hire the best technology and communication advisors, pay staff competitively and maintain a substantial travel budget.

The funding would have to include wealthy individuals and foundations in the beginning but within a few years, the effort should wean itself from any reliance on foundations since foundations are fairly cautious and many become nervous in the world of advocacy. They also cannot be relied upon for permanent funding. In addition, there will come a time when it will be important for the organization to engage in 501(c)(4) and, perhaps, even PAC activity to get its job done. To do this will require a participant driven funding base.

All of this, of course, is quite doable within the suggested structure. Note that if the organization developed the 500 organizations driven, 5 million participants base, with each contributing an average of \$20 annually, the organization would raise \$100 million from that source alone. That should be the goal.

Conclusion

The nation's present treatment of our children does not reflect the widely shared American values of fairness, trust, responsibility, and strong, caring communities. There are a large number of Americans who cut across traditional, partisan political lines who embrace these values and who seek a voice that calls elected officials and policymakers to account for reasserting such values into discourse and policy in the public square.

Our public schools are failing with children of color, low-income students, disabled youngsters and children for whom English is not a first language, measured by graduation rates, absolute performance, and the gaps between them and their more advantaged counterparts. Moreover, they are not performing as well as they can or should with many other students. We know what we need to know educationally to change those facts. The missing ingredient is public will.

The four most compelling reasons for this work are:

- Solving the challenges of public education is the right thing to do.
- The democracy depends on solving the challenges of public education.
- The economy depends on solving the challenges of public education.
- The happiness and well being of our citizens and the livability of our communities depends on solving the challenges of public education.

Building public and political will through organizing and mobilizing citizens, who are willing even eager for change, can result in renewed support of our democracy, a sound economy, successful individuals, and healthy communities, moving us steadily toward strengthening all aspects of our children's lives and building the future to which we aspire on behalf of future generations.

Endnotes

1. Our 11-year old, 7-year old and 6-year old grandchildren attend Baltimore City public schools; the 2-year old will follow at the appropriate time. The two fathers, also products of Baltimore City schools as well as Haverford and Bowdoin are Baltimore City school principals and one of the mothers is a school psychologist. I mention our multiple connections to urban public education only to note our families' lifelong commitment to and support of public education. Our work to provide good schools for our grandchildren and all children is a personal and active daily challenge, not a theoretical one.
2. The following is a summary of the necessary components:
 - Use the belief that All Children Can Learn to High Levels as the standard against which all other policies and practices are explicitly measured
 - Set high expectations for everyone by establishing a set of rigorous, challenging promotion and graduation standards, making clear they should go beyond English, math and science and include standards around such priorities as the arts and citizenship; ensuring that the standards should deepen the curriculum, not narrow it.
 - Implement an assessment system that effectively and richly measures all of the standards.
 - Design a system of accountability for everyone that includes a different system of compensation for educators tied to the desired quality of educators from teachers to the superintendent and to the student results one seeks from the system.
 - Shrink the centralized bureaucracy and let schools make more decisions.
 - Ensure quality teachers and administrators for every student every year.
 - Ensure that every child has access to a quality, developmentally appropriate early childhood program beginning at least by age three.
 - Ensure that all children have the health and social services support they need to succeed in school.
 - Provide up-to-date technology and instructional materials aligned with standards and ensure the use of instructional practices that are evidenced based including extra help for students that need it.
 - Develop the public will to insist on public education that serves all children.
 - Ensure adequate resources and use them effectively.
 - Be prepared to address all of these priorities together, starting now.
3. www.edtrust.org
4. www.edtrust.org
5. www.edtrust.org
6. The Civil Right Project, Harvard University, "Confronting the Graduation Rate Crisis in California", March 24, 2005. www.civilrightsproject.edu/research/dropouts/dropouts05.pdf
7. www.nces.ed.gov/timss/TIMSS03Tables.asp?figure=2&QUEST=1

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