

**Failure is Not an Option
Action Program**

by Douglas R. Johnson
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INTRODUCTION - Fix the Crisis.

Fluvanna Schools are "Leaving Behind" approximately thirty percent (30%) of the Black Students and fifteen percent (15%) of the White Students.

This Failure is Not an Option.

Our School System seems content with slowly building up to literacy in over five (5) years.

There is no reason to wait as other schools have already achieved the "Blue Ribbon" designation of excellence.

"Of approximately 120,000 public and private schools in the US, Sacred Heart School of Danville was one of only ten (10) schools in Virginia to receive the 2006 designation indicating being in the top 250 schools in the United States." [The Catholic Virginian, October 23, 2006]

All of the Blue Ribbon Schools in Virginia are:

Buckhorn Elementary School
500 Gordon Lake Road
South Hill, VA 23970-5501
Ph: (434) 447-3075

J.E.B. Stuart Elementary School
3101 Fendall Avenue
Richmond, VA 23222-2699
Ph: (804) 780-4879

Kilby Shores Elementary School
111 Kilby Shores Drive
Suffolk, VA 23434-6403
Ph: (757) 925-5575

Pocahontas Middle School
12000 Three Chopt Road
Richmond, VA 23233-1134
Ph: (804) 364-0830

Rural Point Elementary School
7161 Studley Road
Mechanicsville, VA 23116
Ph: (804) 723-3580

Sacred Heart Catholic School
540 Central Boulevard
Danville, VA 24541-2321
Ph: (434) 793-2656

Saint Leo the Great Catholic School
3704 Old Lee Highway
Fairfax, VA 22030-1806
Ph: (703) 273-1211

St. Thomas More Cathedral School
105 North Thomas Street
Arlington, VA 22203-3603
Ph: (703) 528-6781

T. Ryland Sanford Elementary School
480 Colony Road
Newport News, VA 23602-6310
Ph: (757) 886-7781

Yuma Elementary School
Route 3
P.O. Box 264
Gate City, VA 24258-9409
Ph: (276) 386-3109

POINT ONE - Community Tutoring

We need to develop community tutoring programs where students that are being left behind by the Fluvanna Public Schools can be given emergency remedial help until they can come up with a working program for Literacy Now.

A student who does not "get" the basics, will get left further behind each year because of the lack of foundation.

We all know the phrase "this is a football" in building a top rate football team. You need to go back to the basics before you can build on them.

We look to the school system to identify students who do not achieve the level of "good" so we can offer them a voluntary

program that will be conducted at community locations after normal school hours.

The locations will be donated. These can be private facilities, church facilities, or actual public school facilities made available after school hours.

Staff will be recruited from the community and utilized based on individual abilities.

Instruction will be in three modes. There will group meetings featuring motivational speakers. There will be small group classes. There will be individual one on one tutoring.

Motivational Mode

I have heard the cause that students do not learn because they have no one at home to motivate them. Some accept this excuse as being final with no remedy.

I believe community leaders must move in to fill any gap left by unsupportive home environment.

This can appeal to race, religion, or any other uniting concept.

While on our Disney Vacation Club recent Cruise, My wife and I had the privilege to hear Bonnie St. John speak. She is a young Black woman who only has on leg. Her other leg is only a stump going about 3/4 the way to the knee. From her thigh down, it is all metal.

Bonnie overcame her handicap and learned to ski. She went on to become a Paralympic Silver/Bronze Ski Medalist. She takes away a lot of excuses.

While it is always best to have a live speaker, we could also use a live video feed, or even pre recorded presentations.

Classroom Mode

When Public Schools "main stream" students who need remedial help, they may look after their "feelings" but they do the students a true disservice as far as literacy is concerned. Because these students do not understand and or have not mastered the basics, when new material is presented, they cannot help but fall further and further behind.

One of the problems is that the just what is the Basics is not understood by the students.

Did you ever walk into a large shopping mall and come to a full map of where all the stores are? At first it is totally confusing. The basic information for that map is to first locate where you are. Each map at each entrance has a big X to indicate the location of that map.

The Classroom Mode is designed to show the students where the X is. The football coach starts with "This is a football". The point is we go back to the beginning. "This is a number" for Math and "This is a letter" for Reading and Writing.

Tutoring Mode

While tutoring is normally one on one, a small group of about a half dozen can be tutored together. Sometimes thing click when you hear a concept explained to another.

Facilities

The Motivational Mode needs an auditorium size facility. This could be in a school like Carysbrook or the Middle School. If a church is used, it could be the sanctuary.

The Classroom Mode needs a room where ten to twenty chairs fit comfortably. A board needs to be clearly visible. It could be fixed on a wall or on an easel.

The Tutoring Mode needs much smaller rooms than the Classroom Mode. Any room bigger than a closet could probably be used. If a private residence is used, two or three rooms could be used a couple of days each week.

POINT TWO - Establishing the Program

One person may be able to outline the program but to in order to carry it out, there needs to be broad support. This includes various type of support.

Community Leadership

The terms Black and White are only used because that is the terminology of the No Child Left Behind program. My parents are from two different countries and my wife is from more than two

countries. The concept of Race is going to be eventually given up as more groups intermarry. Unfortunately that is not the case now so we will continue to use the labels.

The black community needs to have its leaders lend their names to this program for it to be given the credibility to assist those students who need help the most as full thirty percent (30%) of Black Students are being "Left Behind" by the Fluvanna Public School System.

With other than black leaders adding their names, the program can be usable for all Fluvanna Students who are being left behind.

Executive Committee

There needs to be a core of individuals who help develop this program into a functioning system that actually helps students achieve not only the basic literacy mandated by the No Child left Behind program but also start on a path to excellence.

Staff

There also needs to be volunteers to do not only actual teaching but also support staff. The main criteria is that they be willing to help our students. Many help with athletic activities now and I expect many will be interested in helping relieve this obvious literacy crisis.

CONCLUSION

This document is designed to be a call to action. If action does not follow, the ideas are meaningless.

Hopefully these ideas will prove to be seeds which will grow for the main purpose of helping our students.