Failing Schools, Agile Education, and Learning & Civil Rights

“There have been a lot of old alliances being protected. And the children are not being protected.” – Rev. Al Sharpton

“I am a strong support of teachers, but I’m not going to be bound by just a certain way of talking about these things” – Barack Obama

**Education and Civil Rights**

- **Half** of all Black American students leave high school without a diploma.
- Two fifths of all students in cities like Cleveland, Columbus, and Philadelphia don’t graduate.

Whichever issues you care about, the dreadful status quo of education in our cities and among minorities holds us back. **We need more doctors, lawyers, technicians, priests, diplomats, bankers, and skilled carpenters, to come from urban minorities** (there the local majority!).

**The Big News**

**Sharpton, education plan may tear union ties**

Decades-long ties between civil rights groups and teachers unions could be split by a new effort, led by the Rev. Al Sharpton and New York City Schools Chancellor Joel Klein, to close the nagging achievement gap between white and minority students.

Unions have blocked what many reformers say are innovative ideas, such as alternative pay grades for teachers, expanded charter schools and moving excellent teachers into needy schools.

"There have been a lot of old alliances being protected, and the children are not being protected," he said. "And if we're going to move forward, we're going to have to be able to have new alliances here -- that might mean some old relationships with teachers unions, principals unions and all are going to be a little troubled. But we cannot say that we're going to close this achievement gap but protect ineffective teachers or principals or school chiefs or not challenge parents."

He noted that in cities such as Detroit, only one in three black males earns a high school diploma. – USA Today

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**TV Looks at the Kids, the Teaching**

Meet some teachers, admins, and their charges in this John Morrow series:

- [Education Leaders Attempt Reform in D.C. Schools](http://www.boldapproach.org/ba/module/134) Oct. 01, 2007
- [Rhee Fights For D.C. School Reform](http://www.boldapproach.org/ba/module/207) Nov. 19, 2007
- [Schools in New Orleans Face Tough Road to Rebuild](http://www.boldapproach.org/ba/module/161) Nov. 23, 2007
- [Schools in D.C. Face a Complex Road to Reform](http://www.boldapproach.org/ba/module/155) Apr. 02, 2008
- [New Orleans Education Chief Faces Struggles](http://www.boldapproach.org/ba/module/150) Apr. 03, 2008
- [D.C. Teachers Struggle to Adapt to School Reforms](http://www.boldapproach.org/ba/module/157) Jun. 18, 2007

Visit a school that once produced greatness: [Hard Times at Douglass High: A No Child Left Behind Report Card](http://www.boldapproach.org/ba/module/200) HBO (Reviews)

Jay Leno meets a soon-to-be teacher: [Ed School Poster Girl](http://www.boldapproach.org/ba/module/201)

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**Isn't It Really Just Poverty?**

Some think there is little hope for these neighborhoods, that schools cannot overcome the poverty of the surrounding area, or that improvement will come only after more massive state programs.

- [A Broader, Bolder Approach to Education](http://www.boldapproach.org/ba/module/383)

**Isn't It Really Just Under-Funded Schools?**

Some remain convinced: money is the primary issue.

- [Tell Congress: Support Education Funding for Great Public Schools](http://www.boldapproach.org/ba/module/384) nea.org/funding

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**The People Are Willing to Pay For Education, Yet They Also Expect Results.**

- [What Americans Think about Their Schools](http://www.boldapproach.org/ba/module/385) Hoover Inst.
- [Still At Risk: What Students Don't Know, Even Now](http://www.boldapproach.org/ba/module/386) Common Core

"I will die fighting this fight. My last breath will be fighting this fight." – David Brennan
The Education Equality Project (educationequalityproject.org)

“The sad reality is that these systems are not broken. Rather, they are doing what we have designed them to do over time. The systems were not designed with the goal of our public education system will fail you; that you will not graduate from high school, that your ability to function successfully in the twenty-first century economy will be limited, and that you will have no real prospect of achieving the American dream.” - The Education Equality Project

The Painful Stats SilentEpidemic.org

Today, at nearly 1,000 high schools across the country, graduating is at best a 50/50 proposition.

In 1700 high schools—1 in 8—at least 2 of every five kids will be gone before they are done. (JHU brief). Many schools (How does your local high school measure up?) see as few as 20% of their students stay in school.

Because such schools often have larger than average population they affect more than their share of students. Fully one in five US students attends such a school.

Does Dropping Out Matter?

- 75% of state prison inmates are dropouts.
- In 2001 only 55% of young adult dropouts were employed.
- The 23 million high-school dropouts aged 18-67 will annually contribute $50 billion less in taxes.

But, Can They Do the Work?

The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts Gates Foundation.

“It is not the case that most of these kids were academic failures...: nearly 90 percent said they had passing grades, and 70 percent said they could have graduated if they had tried.

“Much of the time the failure was tied to expectations and values. Two-thirds said they were not motivated to work hard, and would have worked harder if more had been demanded of them.”

High Performing High Poverty Schools

High Performance in High Poverty Schools: 90/90/90 and Beyond Harvard G.S.Ed.
Learning from Six High Poverty, High Achieving Blue Ribbon Schools U.S. D. of Ed.
Research review: High-performing, high-poverty schools Center for Public Education

How to Put Kids First?

“The sad reality is that these systems are not broken. Rather, they are doing what we have designed them to do over time. The systems were not designed with the goal of student learning first and foremost, so they are ill-equipped to accomplish what is demanded of them today.” - The Education Equality Project

Turning Around the Nation’s Worst Schools Conference (video, etc.)
No Excuses: Closing the Racial Gap in Learning Abigail Thernstrom, Stephan Thernstrom

Contracts (Agile?), Kids, and the Profession of Teaching

Teacher Rules, Roles, Rights Studies by the National Council on Teacher Quality
Teacher Education: Coming Up Empty National Council on Teacher Quality - Yearbook
Leadership Limbo: Teacher Labor Agreements in America’s Fifty Largest School Districts
Invisible Ink in Collective Bargaining: Why Key Issues Are Not Addressed

In a 2003 survey, 87% of teachers said that students should pass a standardized test to be promoted. Stand By Me: What Teachers Really Think about Unions, Merit Pay, and Other Professional Matters, Public Agenda.

In 2008, many teachers (subjected to the “High Stakes Testing” mantra) say testing hurts students. Does it? High-Achieving Students in the Era of N.C.L.B.

Agile funding? Fund the Child

“Today, money does not follow children to the schools they attend according to their needs. Instead, money flows on the basis of staff allocations, program-specific formulae, squeaky-wheel politics, property wealth, and any number of other factors that have little to do with the needs of students, the resources required to educate them successfully, or the educational preferences of their parents.” –100 % Solution

Ed Jones built OpenHistoryProject.org, and writes on education at FiresideLearning.ning.com, and TellingTheStory.org openhistoryproject.org/rebellion