

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People



Pennsylvania State Conference of NAACP Branches
Education Committee

Statement of House Bill 1980

Submitted to the Pennsylvania General Assembly: House Education Committee
June 27, 2012

The Pennsylvania State Conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People stands with the National Office of the NAACP in its overall goal to ensure that all students have access to an equal and high-quality public education by eliminating all education related racial and ethnic disparities. The NAACP at the national, state and local levels believes there is no greater civil rights issue in the United States today than the preservation and protection of universal, free, and appropriate public education.

The Pennsylvania State Conference of NAACP Branches, through its Education Committee, has given close attention to the contents and intent of HB 1980 introduced by Representative Aument to amend Public School Code further providing for rating system.

As a result, we strongly urge all members of the House of the Pennsylvania General Assembly to call for the removal of Section 1123 (D) (ii) “Student performance which shall comprise fifty per centum (50%) of the overall rating of the professional employee ... and including (A), (B), (C), (I), (II), (III) from this Bill.

Our concern is based on the following:

It is the most drastic form of employer punishment to separate an employee from his or her means of earning a living. Hence, decisions to do so should be based on work performance issues over which the employee has control.

We are aware that there are supporter of the drastic movement to weight student test scores as 50% of a decision to dismiss an educator for incompetence. One such supporter, Pennsylvania Partnership for Children, maintains that shortcomings in educator performance “are reflected in a troubling gap between student performance and teacher effectiveness.”

This organization uses the statistics that, “In the 2010-11 school year, 28 percent of students who took state standardized tests scored below grade level in reading and 24 percent scored below grade level in math. Yet that same year, nearly every teacher – 99.5 percent - was rated as doing a “satisfactory” job educating our children.” This group then comes to the unsupported conclusion that the teachers are directly responsible for the scores and should have been rated as unsatisfactory. They state, “Clearly, the system we have now is in need of improvement.” (Pennsylvania Partnership for Children, email, June 25, 2012).

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However, there is no credible source that proves that attaching student scores as the major component in educator rating systems improves student learning. At the same time, there are scientific questions concerning what does in fact impede student academic performance. For decades, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, the juvenile justice community and other child advocates have examined the impact of adversity on children and the prevalence of trauma in children who live in adversity.

These experts are clear in defining poverty; hunger; homelessness; community chaos, family chaos, racism, separation of families due to incarceration or military deployment, divorce and other overwhelming experiences as causes of trauma in children. These experts define the physical and psychological impact of trauma and make it clear that these factors impede the cognitive processes essential to strong academic performance.

For years, these professionals have called for a trauma informed education system and explained that trauma is a medical condition that behaves physically in children in ways that impede the cognitive processes. As well, there are systems for school reform that assist children in overcoming the impact of adversity and that are proven to facilitate successful social and academic school performance. (See References.)

Educators who practice in schools where adversity pervades the lives of their students will suffer a disparate impact from legislation that mandates test scores as 50% of a dismissal for incompetency decision. Therefore, we hold that it is cruel and unusual punishment to make student evaluation outcomes the controlling factor in the decision to remove a person for his or her income.

In support of children, the Pennsylvania State Conference of NAACP Branches urges the Pennsylvania General Assembly to hold hearings on real impediments to student learning. We call on the House and Senate Education Committees to hear from the professional communities that have researched the conditions of the children of the Commonwealth and to address those conditions.

We strongly urge the removal of punitive legislative proposals that have a disparate impact on those teachers who work with the students most in need. We support addressing the issues that truly impede successful student performance and appropriate social behavior.

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We look forward to sharing this research with members of the state legislature in the near future so that effective and constructive legislation can be crafted to address these conditions and provide students access to the services they need in order to achieve to their intellectual capacity and develop their human potential.

We also stress the need for fully funding universal public education so as to allow schools to restore the art and music programs, language programs, higher level math and science programs and extracurricular activities necessary for a thorough and efficient public education.

Included here are a few resources that examine conditions that impede student performance. As well, full tapes of the May 25 Conference are now available and we will be happy to share those. There you will hear experts detail the adversities that are the true impediments to the school performance of Pennsylvania's children.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Duvall-Flynn

For the Education Committee of the Pennsylvania Conference of NAACP Branches

Mr. J. Whyatt Mondesire, President

References

Media Area NAACP 2012 Conference on the State of Education: Calling for a Trauma Informed Education System

Dr. Gordon Hotas, MD - Keynote Speaker

Understanding and Addressing Childhood Trauma: The Role of Informed Care

David Sciarra, Esq.

Neither Thorough Nor Efficient: School Funding Inequity in Pennsylvania

April 14, 2012 - Chester County Coalition for Public Education Workshop: Calling for a Trauma-informed Education System

Ms. Wanda Moore

A Whole Environment Approach to Working with Youth

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(James Comer Interview - PBS)

Yale University. Hedrick Smith: Dr. **Comer** you have studied the problems of **education** in child development in this country for a long time. What is the underlying ...

www.pbs.org/makingschoolswork/sbs/csp/jamescomer.html - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

Dr. James P. Comer - Comer School Development Program

James P. Comer, MD, MPH. Dr. **Comer** is the Maurice Falk Professor of Child Psychiatry at the **Yale University** School of Medicine's Child Study Center, and has ...

www.schooldevelopmentprogram.org/about/people/.../comer.aspx - [Cached](#)

Archived: THE COMER SCHOOL ... - U.S. Department of Education

James Comer's School Development Program, also known as the Comer Process, is intended to improve the **educational** experience of poor minority youth.

www2.ed.gov/pubs/OR/ConsumerGuides/comer.html - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

James P. Comer | The Forum for Education and Democracy

James P. Comer. **James P. Comer, M.D.** is the Maurice Falk Professor of Child Psychiatry at the **Yale University** School of Medicine's Child Study Center in New ...

forumforeducation.org/conveners/james-p-comer - [Cached](#)