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Turning a troubled, drug-ridden, violence-prone high school around is a challenge faced more and more frequently by principals, administrators, and Boards of Education in urban, inner-city areas across the country. Getting a meaningful education in an urban environment today requires strategy significantly different from that of schools in suburbia. Much has been written and shown through the national news media about "bat-swinging" bullhorn-toting Joe Clark, the famous, (or infamous, according to some critics) principal of Eastside High School in Paterson, New Jersey. But, there is a more important side of the story that needs to be told about a tough authoritarian and disciplinarian, who demands the kind of academic achievement and excellence that leads to higher accomplishments and graduates who are prepared to enter the economic mainstream of American society.

The Joe Clark Philosophy

Clark's philosophy for changing "a blackboard jungle" into an institution of learning" has three major elements: order, pride, and academic achievement. These components are integral parts of the "New Management Plan" that he implemented in July, 1982, one month after he officially assumed his post as principal. The plan represents his business-like approach to the administration and management of Eastside High. It also reflects the authoritarian

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their approach to it. All of my problems have taught that God is still in charge. He is the best Power, and I will continue to look to Him Who strengthens me.

discipline of both his previous military experience and his twenty years as an educator.

The implementation of his plan has been no easy feat but is something Clark carries out with relish. He takes an active role, because as he has stated, "Lethargy on the part of the principal is the most flagrant factor in the inferior education at urban schools." He further contends, "For the most part, urban administrators are indifferent, indecisive and often unwilling to take a stand or make unpopular decisions. They are responsible for the destruction of the lives of students."

No Education Without Order

Establishing order and rules for discipline were his first steps when Clark took over the reins at Eastside High. Although much has been made of his methods, he states, "Discipline is only a means to an end. And that end is an improved education...without (order) nothing else can take place." Believing that establishing order requires "persistence and energetic dedication on the part of the chief administrator," as well as "firm convictions and the courage to face opposition," Clark has pursued his goal relentlessly.

He notes that the problems he faced and still faces are not unique to Eastside High but are nationwide. However, he points out proudly, "We've fixed one thing: order, discipline (with) drugs gone, rapes (and) assaults...gone." Clark also obtained better teachers and a better school administration. Now, the 36-inch Willie Mays Big Stick is relegated to a space in his office. His firm and confident voice, amplified by his ever-present bullhorn which he uses to get the attention of the 3,000 garrulous teenaged students,

reminds them of what is or is not acceptable in behavior as they come and go to class. Walking the hallways of the four-story, 180-year old school structure, Clark personally ensures that order and discipline are maintained.

Pride in self and school

Clark maintains, "Students will not develop self-pride unless there is an atmosphere of school pride. This is the element that many educators overlook." When he became principal, he had the building thoroughly cleaned, repaired, and painted and hired a new security staff. Almost six years later, the litter and graffiti, students hanging around outside when classes are underway—the usual trappings of inner-city schools—are markedly absent from Eastside High. Administrative bulletins, printed slogans posted at strategic locations on hallway walls, as well as announcements broadcast throughout the school at the start of every day, keep students informed of what is expected of them.

But, the most important difference between Eastside High and other troubled inner-city schools is the attitude of the students, the self-pride so clearly demonstrated by many. Clark caused the students to address head on the general perceptions of blacks and Hispanics as no good, lazy, not able to compete intellectually and challenged them to change those perceptions. Additionally, he noted that "year after year" the handful of white students were all in the top 25 percent of the school academically and that every year there was a white valedictorian in a school where 2/3 of the students are black and almost 1/3 are Hispanic. He again challenged both students and teachers to disprove the pervasive theory of ge-

netic intellectual inferiority. Now the distribution of blacks and Hispanics in the upper 25 percent is more reflective of the school's population.

Clark's personal interest in and knowledge of his students have also affected the pride they take in themselves and Eastside High. As he monitors the halls, he uses his one-on-one interface with students, as well as his bullhorn, to compliment and praise the successes of particular individuals and to scold when needed.

The school newspaper, the *Eastside Criterion*, is representative of the pride and excellence in academic achievement that Clark stresses. With membership in the Columbia Scholastic Press Association, the paper is a well-written, well-organized student product that approaches the quality of a professional newspaper. The national news media coverage of the school and its principal has had a beneficial effect on the students, evidenced in the February issue of the *Criterion* which contains a reproduction of the TIME magazine cover (February 1, 1988) which featured Clark. The caption boasts: "In case you missed it, Eastside is proud that Principal Joe Clark made the cover of TIME." The paper also carries a story on one of the various incentives that the school offers, a math contest sponsored by the school's math department. Clark donated the \$200, \$100, and \$50 saving bonds that were awarded to the first-, second-, and third-place winners, respectively.

Focus on Academic Achievement

Once order is established and pride is instilled, "then and only then, can the student and the school grow and flourish academically," according to Clark. For the students at

Eastside High, 65 percent of whom are welfare recipients, his concern is to have students equipped enough that, if they go on to college, they will have what it takes to finish college, not just participate for a while because of Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) programs of college minority goals, efforts that usually result in failure for the unprepared, adding to the spiraling drop out rate for minorities in colleges and universities. However, he is more interested in students acquiring the means to become productive participants in the economic mainstream than in how many go on to colleges or universities.

Clark admits to being "perplexed over a dilemma that seems pervasive among blacks...(which) alludes to the fact that blacks must go to college to achieve a reasonable facsimile of success." In a strong indictment of black school administrators, he says, "Black and Hispanic students...are academically inferior to white students...(and) are ill-equipped to succeed in colleges." Clark accuses blacks who control schools in such urban cities as Washington, DC, Detroit, Chicago, Newark, and Plainfield of knowingly turning out inferior black students, labeling the administrators "pusillanimous poltroons" who blame Ronald Reagan for the problems of inner-city schools. He asserts, "You need committed, dedicated individuals who are concerned that schools are safe, orderly and that an instructional process takes place that's able to get at the root cause of the dilemma we face."

Because many inner-city school students "do not possess the skills, the internal fortitude, the pertinacity that would enable success," which Clark perceives is

the result of black administrator's antipathy and apathy, his focus is on better preparation of the Eastside High students. He suggests that other urban, inner-city black school administrators address their own educational processes which are, as he describes them, "at best, abominable," rather than sitting back and watching "generations upon generations of young blacks, who are to become the backbone, ultimately, of black folks, watching them be destroyed by lack of enthusiasm."

Continuing his strategy for enabling academic achievement, Clark requested that 60 senior students leave the school in December, 1987 because they lacked the grades and credits to graduate this June. Despite the resulting controversy that received nationwide attention, he feels strongly that he "transferred them to some place else to go...to alternative education, adult school, GED, or whatever." The fact that there are currently no alternative education, or vocational schools (in Paterson), Clark states, is the fault of the Board of Education. Not all of his 3,000 students are academically oriented, and alternative sources of education need to be provided. But, they are not available, as Clark puts it, "because blacks and Hispanics are involved...(and) no one cares." His dropout rate is higher because, as he states emphatically, "I will not keep 18-, 19-, 20-, 21-year olds. If I just left them here, my dropout rate would be lower, my enrollment higher, and decadence wider." Sacrificing the total student population for the sake of "60 misfits" is not part of Clark's plan for academic achievement at

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