

Forum

Student Citizenship "Ain't Good"

On May 30 the local newspaper presented an article on the soundness and effectiveness of the Superintendent's Strategic Plan. The title of the article was "Off-Target." It made us aware of the waste and time-consuming policies and jobs we have or are perpetuating in the name of education for our children. If the system's Strategic Plan calls for additional responsibilities beyond teaching for teachers and principals, then I am afraid that the job of educating children will not be done effectively. Teaching children means teaching them to read, write, compute, how to use knowledge and how to interact with others in the process.

We need to wake up as a school system and board of education. The results are in, in the form of student violence and death in our streets. While all kinds of committees are meeting to suggest many tasks for teachers, the real issues of improved discipline and better teaching of children remain unsolved. The issues surrounding how people treat each other should be important aspects of what we do in schools.

It is time for the superintendent, staff and school board to make a commitment to deal with the issue of diversity. How many more deaths of young people will we have to endure in this community to make us realize the importance of training teachers to better work with minorities and other children who are different from the teachers who teach them?

Have we stopped and counted the number of children, over the last 10 years, who have died from acts of violence? Have we studied where they come from and their last stop in our education setting? Are the schools we have designed to take in the most disruptive and disconnected been successful? So far, death has not been kind to any particular race. They have been either black or white males.

The sad story is that we do not give schools and teachers enough help with children in the K-5 years. We find out in the early years those who will be disruptive and those who will try a life of crime. Again, every school needs at least a group of three, whose job would be to work with students who need special attention.

Our schools set the tone or reinforce the attitudes of the community. What has been reported so far has not been good. Hate groups are rising in our community and schools. Chil-

children are not born with the ideas of these groups. They are indoctrinated and nourished in these ideas. Our Strategic Plan does not truly target the real needs of our schools, particularly the needs of teachers, students and parents.

There is a desperate need to target sound teaching for the 80 percent group of students who are in the average range. Parents of A.G. students certified by biased tests need not worry. Their children will always have challenges as a result of organized advocacy group work. The 80 percent have no such support. Our failure to address the needs of this group helps perpetuate



GENEVA SAYS

By GENEVA BROWN

crimes that are taking place in our country. Our young people under the age of 20 are committing these crimes.

We really need to focus on four issues. One is the teaching and modeling of respect for authority and others, which could lead to better citizenship. The others involve strengthening our focus on consequences of behavior and effective teaching. If, as I read in the local newspaper, we need "a task force to define specifically what we want students to know, to do, and be like when they leave school," then, folks, we really do not know what schooling is about. If we do not already know these things, then we are in serious trouble.

All the money spent on "School Work Is Our Work" and the Strategic Plan may have been better spent on a better discipline plan and on training teachers about diversity. Then these teachers can in turn teach their students how to get along better with others. Our children begin, at early ages and early stages, to deal with hate. If we do not put in programs to counter-act this, we will see crime by our young escalate more.

Again, I call on this school system and board to look and study the real issues. I ask them to make a commitment to bring in programs that will deal with teaching teachers, and all who work with children, on how to work with minorities and those who are different. Only then can we begin to turn violence and crime around and instill better citizenship values in our students.

Symbols and Signs of the Times

Symbols with a special meaning. Think about the signs you encounter on a trip. They guide you to make the right turns and also provide information that leads you to your destination. We, too, are like signs — we provide information and guidance to others as they travel along life's highways.

Take stop signs for instance. They frustrate and help us. They stop us cold in our tracks, making sure we look around before we proceed. People help us this way by causing us to stop where we are to think about what we are doing before we continue.

Caution signs tell us to proceed slowly. Sometimes, in this microwave society of ours, we are moving too fast through life and someone — a friend, family member or mentor — gives us advice that enables us to avoid injury, emotional or physical, to ourselves or others.

Signs also provide the distance to our destination, the direction we should follow and the milestones along the way to measure our progress. We all need someone who has the knowledge to lead us step by step, tell us how far we've come and the distance to go to reach our goal, and how we will know if we are on track.

Take Joe Dudley Sr., president of Dudley Products Inc. in Greensboro, for example. He is the epitome of a human sign — a sign leading the way for others. He recently was the keynote speaker for the statewide basketball tournament and drug-prevention conference hosted by the Housing Authority of Winston-Salem. He inspired young and old and challenged all to think, never give up and have hope.

He proved to be a human sign of an even more personal nature to me that day. And it all began with a conversation about our mutual love and respect for reading.

Talking to him was like getting tips from a professional athlete who has taken his game to a higher level. His response to my questions about various books untangled the cobwebs in my mind. He emphasized reading with a purpose and studying what you read. His insightful comments challenged me to reach the next milestone in my personal development. I was ready for immediate action.

There have been many other human signs

like Joe Dudley who have influenced my life — people I have listened to, looked at and spent time with. I remember my grandfather's profound, yet simple, to-the-point comments. I recall him saying he was not surprised at my accomplishments but would be surprised if I were not successful. On another occasion, I asked his advice on getting church members to attend Sunday School. He responded by saying, "Nig, you go and do what you are supposed to and when people are ready, they will come." These points are etched vividly in my mind and continue to guide me today.

Coach Fletcher Jones at Livingstone College in Salisbury, my defensive football coach, said, "Do something, even if it is wrong. At least you can be corrected." After all the preparation for a game, studying film and reviewing assign-

ments, you must act. Life is the same way. All the books we have read and the lessons learned mean nothing if we don't take action. Coach Jones encouraged us to act. Do something! Make a decision! Someone once said, "When the student is ready, the teacher will appear." A sign will provide the direction; just take action.

Vincent Harding records an incident in "Hope and History" that illustrates the importance of signs in our life. Upon asking a young leader why youths find themselves so deeply enmeshed in the traps and deadly valves of the world, he said something like this: "You know, out on those streets its like being on a dark, country road at midnight, with no moon and no lights to guide you; and you can't see any signposts at all. So they're lost, don't know where to go, and they can be pulled down into any hole."

"What we need," he said, "are signposts to help us find the way. I don't mean no regular signposts. I mean like live, human signposts — people, people we can look at, be with, listen to — that's what we need. Signposts."

Human signs. Maybe not as quickly recognizable as "Stop" or "Caution" but symbols with a much more special meaning. Stop, look and listen to them. The impression they will make will last a lifetime.

Doonesbury

BY G.B. TRUDEAU

MS. BOOPSTEIN: THIS IS JOSH LYMAN AT THE WHITE HOUSE... OH, HI, MR. LYMAN! THE ROOM IS GREAT!

GOOD, GOOD. LISTEN, WE'RE TRYING TO SCHEDULE YOU IN TOMORROW NIGHT, BUT WE HAVE TO GET DAVID GERSEN TO SIGN OFF ON YOUR VISIT.

WHO?

THE PRESIDENT'S NEW IMAGE GUY. DON'T WORRY, IT'S JUST A FORMALITY.

A STARLET? UM... SHE WAS ALREADY IN THE PIPE-LINE, DAVE.

A STARLET? WHAT IS THE MATTER WITH YOU PEOPLE? YOU MUST HAVE A VERY HIGH THRESHOLD FOR MEDIA PAIN!

SORRY, MR. GERSEN. BUT IT WAS THE PRESIDENT'S CALL. HE MET HER OUT IN CALIFORNIA...

SO WHAT? DOESN'T THE GUY HAVE ANY LEARNING CURVE AT ALL?

YOU WANT TO TALK TO THE PRESIDENT ABOUT HIS LEARNING CURVE? GO AHEAD—HE'S IN.

THANK YOU. I WILL...

EXCUSE ME, MR. PRESIDENT, I... ACK!

HI, DAVID! DON'T WORRY—IT'S JUST A TOUCH-UP TRIM.

SIR, YOU HAVE TO GIVE THE HOLLYWOOD CONNECTION A REST! IT'S KILLING YOU OUT THERE! YOU CAN'T JUST INVITE EVERY STARLET WHO...

DAVID, BARBARA ANN BOOPSTEIN IS A RESPECTED COMEDY ACTRESS! SHE'S BEEN IN "PORKY'S IV," "CHUGALUS," AND SEVERAL MADE-FOR-TV MOVIES! AND SHE HAS A FEATURED WALK-ON IN "SLIVER"!

NOW, IT'S TRUE SHE'S NO SHARON STONE, BUT THAT'S THE WHOLE POINT!

I'M TAKING HER OFF THE SCHEDULE, SIR.

DAMMIT, DAVID, I'M TRYING TO REACH OUT TO THE LITTLE PEOPLE OF HOLLYWOOD!

JOSH, CANCEL THE BOOPSTEIN VISIT. THE PRESIDENT HAS COME TO HIS SENSES.

BUT... BUT WE ALREADY SENT A LIMO TO PICK UP HER AND HER HUSBAND.

THEN CALL THE DRIVER...

DON'T WORRY, WE'LL SEND THEM AN AUTO-GRAPHED PICTURE OR SOMETHING. THEY'LL GET OVER IT.

B.D., DO YOU REALIZE OUR LIVES ARE PEAKING TONIGHT?

THEY BETTER BE—THREE GRAND FOR A DRESS IS INSANE.

SORRY IT DIDN'T WORK OUT, FOLKS. SHALL I DRIVE YOU BACK TO THE HOTEL?

THAT'S OKAY, WE'LL WALK.

I DON'T BELIEVE IT! WHAT WERE THE ODDS OF THE PRESIDENT BEING CALLED TO A NATIONAL SECURITY MEETING?

PROBABLY PRETTY GOOD.

IT'S NOT FAIR! OUR ONE BIG MOMENT IN THE SUN, AND IT'S OVER BEFORE IT EVEN BEGAN! IT'S JUST NOT FAIR!

HEY... IT'S THAT STARLET—BARBARA ANN SOMETHING!

NAH, COULDN'T BE. THE HOLLYWOOD THING IS BEHIND US.

MR. PRESIDENT? DO YOU HAVE A MOMENT?

NOT REALLY, DAVID.

SIR, THIS IS IMPORTANT. WE HAVE TO STOP THIS UNBROKEN SUCCESSION OF GAFFES, BLUNDERS AND MISCALCULATIONS. WE NEED A GOOD WEEK!

IF WE COULD HAVE JUST ONE COMPLETELY ERROR-FREE WEEK, WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO TURN THINGS AROUND. BUT WE NEED A STRATEGY...

YES, SIR, FIRST, YOU GO ON VACATION...

HMMM... I DUNNO. THAT COULD LOOK SUSPICIOUS.

GUEST COLUMN

By NIGEL D. ALSTON



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