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OPINION

Proven methods for reaching gifted diverse children

By Brent Adams Mundt

SPECIAL TO THE POST

"Nationally, Black students are underrepresented in gifted education programs, and educators continue to seek ways to identify more gifted Black students and geniuses. The dilemma is not only how to recruit them, but also how to retain them."

Ebony Magazine, June 2006

Teacher training rests at the heart of this issue, and as reported here on August 24 there is an exciting new program that is being inaugurated in our city this fall that honors Dr. Mary Frasier.

Deceased in 2005, Dr. Frasier was legendary for her charm and demeanor. She was known as the "mother of multiple criteria" - a new, contemporary way of looking at children that exponentially increased the number of African-American children in gifted programs in the state of Georgia. Her consultancy around the U.S. thereafter was effective in opening doors to culturally and economically diverse students.

Along with Mary's tool, the Frasier Talent Assessment Profile (F-TAP), there are numerous strategies and tactics developed by colleagues over the past three decades.

When the de facto baton was passed to Donna Ford at Vanderbilt University, Dr. Ford recruited many capable colleagues into the fold. The result at NAGCS upcoming convention: a rigorous track of 38 sessions has been designed during the national convention of gifted experts this fall in Charlotte. And 90 principals and teachers will emerge prepared to identify the high potential in their classroom.

"The 21st century is witnessing an unprecedented change in its demographics. Like no other time in history, our nation is becoming overwhelmingly diverse, with African Americans and Hispanic Americans increasing drastically in numbers. However, as our nation and schools become more diverse than ever before, we have witnessed little demographic change relative to diversity in gifted education programs, classes, and services. This pilot program not only honors the legacy of the beloved Mary Frasier.

It provides real world training for principals and teachers who can use these tools on Monday morning November 7, 2006 in their classrooms" Dr. Ford offered.

At the top of the "toolbox" is, appropriately enough, her F-TAP tool - and that specific methodology will be taught by Tarek C. Grantham, another expert in the field at the University of Georgia. Dr. Grantham was a colleague of Frasier's and learned "at the feet" of the legend - and he will lead off the training by hammering home this proven tool.

"There is no more fitting tribute to Mary than to know that 90 educators will depart our convention knowing how to address the four barriers that she posited so eloquently: attitude, access, assessment and accommodation. I am beyond honored to be asked by Dr. Ford to teach the F-TAP tool. After that orientation, we have divided the training sessions into those four areas so teachers can break down the complexities. The ripple effect of this training will pay dividends for years to come."

The balance of the sessions delve into identification and special populations, many of which are research-based and generated from Jacob K. Javits Grants, the only federal program that invests in developing talent in minority communities. Civil rights were a lifetime passion of Senator Javits and it has been one lasting legacy in gifted education for minorities since 1988.

Thanks to scholarships provided by Wachovia and other generous donors, these 90 educators from around the country - 50-plus from Charlotte Mecklenburg - will learn the most up-to-date strategies available from the authoritative voices and information pioneers. "Wachovia is proud to support this program because education is one of our top community priorities," said Frank Addison, Wachovia's Director of Philanthropy. "This program will identify and serve children with high potential in low socioeconomic settings who are struggling to be noticed for their gifts."

Local educators here in Charlotte are also fortunate to have the year round support of gifted expert, Dr. Shelagh Gallagher at UNC Charlotte. With Wachovia funding, Dr. Gallagher will conduct ongoing professional development and support as the tools are implemented throughout the district's Title I schools.

"In alignment with Mary Frasier's vision, Wachovia and NAGC will aid CMS educators in the fight against current and historical under-representation of economically disadvantaged students, students of color, students from ethnic minorities, and students with limited English proficiency. The contributions of these two organizations will significantly impact First Ward Academy's ability to identify and educate gifted minority students. The more attention that educators dedicate to refining the identification process, the more representative gifted educational services will become. Our team from First Ward is extremely excited about our training through this powerful initiative.

Shelton L. Jeffries, M.Ed., Ed.S.
Principal, First Ward Academy

Reaching and teaching. Recruitment and retention. The chances for high potential children who are culturally diverse and from low income settings being recognized and served will greatly increase November 2-5, 2006. Parents interested in this issue should access www.ncagt.org to learn more about Parent Day on Saturday, November 4 - and there is a discounted price for those who learned of it from The Post.

Note: In the August 24 issue, Dr. James Gallagher was identified as an "architect of Head Start in the Johnson Administration, when in fact he was Deputy assistant secretary for research planning and evaluation in the office of the Commissioner of Education the Johnson Administration.



Condi pimps the civil rights movement

When I sat down to watch "60 Minutes" Sunday night, I knew that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice would be appearing. I expected the same old run-of-the-mill defense of the Bush administration and, in that respect, she was predictably predictable. But when the discussion turned to her upbringing in my native state of Alabama, it was clear that this smart, able and doctrinaire bureaucrat was basically pimping the Civil Rights Movement.

She talked in moving terms about the four girls killed in the bombing of Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham. One of them, Denise McNair, "was my little friend from kindergarten" and another, Addie Mae Collins, "was in my uncle's homeroom in school."

Referring to her childhood, Rice said: "Nobody lived in an integrated fashion. Since you couldn't go to a restaurant until 1964, or stay in a hotel, or go to a movie theatre unless you wanted to sit in the rafters...in the Black only section...colored-only section. And my parents were deter-

mined to try and shield me from some of those humiliations."

Rice was 8 years old when that bomb exploded in Birmingham. I was 16 years old at the time. Perhaps because of our age difference, I knew then and I know now, there was no way any parent could shield their children from the indignities of de jure segregation. My mother couldn't shield me from the fact that after working all day as a domestic, she was forced to ride home in the back seat of her employer's car. My stepfather couldn't shield me from knowing that if I rode the city bus to town, I would have to sit in the back - which is why I always walked if I couldn't catch a ride with a relative or friend. My parents couldn't shield me from racist ministers appearing on television, saying that if God had wanted us to be equal, He would have made us the same color. Nor could they shield me from being called the n-word or being forced to attend all-Black schools and live in all-Black neighborhoods.

By all accounts, Rice was a Black blue-blood. Her father, John Rice, was a Presbyterian minister and guidance counselor. Her mother, Angelena, was a science and music teacher. And what did they do to eradicate those oppressive conditions that African-Americans were forced to endure?

"My father was not a march-in-the-street preacher," Rice told an interviewer for the Washington Post. The decision to use children in protest demonstrations is one of the main reasons the walls of segregation came tumbling down in my home state. But Rev. Rice would have no part of it.

"He saw no reason to put children at risk," she told the Washington Post. "He would never put his own children at risk."

And that's the point. Many Black middle-class families refused to confront America's version of apartheid, yet when the doors of opportunity flung open, they were the first to march through them, riding on the back of poor people who were unafraid to take risks.

Many of us teenagers were willing to take risks that many adults wouldn't. I was in the 10th grade when Joe Page, a fellow student at Druid High School, drove us to Birmingham to protest the deaths of those four girls. We were supposed to be in school, but going to Birmingham was the best education I could have received at the time.

Another childhood friend, Ronnie Lineberger, and I were in the middle of most street demonstrations in Tuscaloosa and we know the smell of tear gas. Another schoolmate, Jean Corder, and her entire family were active in the movement. We found a

way in 1965, my senior year in high school, to participate in the last leg of the Selma-Montgomery March.

As teens, we took risks and in most instances, our parents would have preferred that we take the safe way out. Our parents didn't want us harmed. They didn't want us beaten. They didn't want us tear-gassed. They loved us as much as Condoleezza Rice's parents loved her. But our parents also knew that the system was wrong. And while they worried about our safety, they allowed us to fight for our rights.

So, watching Condoleezza Rice on "60 Minutes" talk passionately about the Civil Rights Movement when her family sat on the sidelines, stirred a lot of emotions. She can talk passionately about the horrors of that era yet seemingly feel no shame that her parents chose to sit on the sidelines.

Perhaps that's why Rice feels so comfortable defending George W. Bush, arguably the worst president on civil rights in more than 50 years. Unlike her parents, she is not on the sidelines - she's on the wrong team. And in the wrong role - Super Fly.

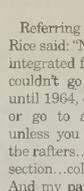
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U.S. leaders need to address poverty

Poverty is alive and well in the world's richest nation, according to a recent report by the Washington, D.C.-based Center for Law and Social Policy.

The nation's poverty rate rose to 12.6 percent in 2005, up from 11.3 percent in 2000. Now, one in every six children lives in poverty. A total of 37 million Americans are poor, up 5 million from 2000. "For the past few decades, 'poor' has been nothing more than a four-letter word. Not since President Lyndon Johnson proclaimed a War on Poverty in 1964 has there been a commitment by American leaders to address poverty. Political energy has focused instead on ending not poverty but welfare," the report noted.

The picture is particularly bleak for African-Americans, 24.7 percent of whom lived in poverty in 2005, compared to 22.5 percent in 2000. Nearly one in three black children under 18 years of age is poor, compared to 18.5 percent nationwide. The United States ranked second behind

Mexico of the world's wealthiest countries with the highest childhood poverty rates, according to UNICEF's Child Poverty in Rich Countries report for 2005.

Hurricane Katrina put a face on poverty in living rooms across the nation and around the world. Nearly half of Americans believed that the United States had become a nation of haves and have-nots, according to a 2005 poll by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. This disparity is particularly evident to African-Americans.

According to a Pew poll in 2004, 81 percent of blacks said they felt the rich were getting richer while the poor were getting poorer, compared to 65 percent of Whites. And among 28 developed countries, the United States stands behind Mexico in terms of widest gap between the rich and the poor, according to CLASP.

Back in June, Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School held a forum on urban poverty in which NUL Policy Institute head Stephanie Jones participated along with New York Democratic Rep. Charles Rangel and others. A resounding consensus was forged - that poverty must be put on the national agen-

da. They were not alone in their concern. They are among many others as worried about poverty in our nation and the world.

As part of its so-called Millennium Development Goals, the United Nations has resolved to halve the number of people living on less than a dollar a day by 2015. In August, U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson made narrowing

the divide as one of his department's top priorities. In the U.S. Congress, Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., introduced legislation in 2005 patterned after the U.N. millennium goals to reduce child poverty in the United States by 50 percent within a decade. In June, Sen. John Edwards, D-N.C., declared poverty "the great moral issue of our time" in unveiling a plan to eliminate it in 30 years.

Connecticut passed a law calling for a 50 percent reduction in child poverty by 2014. And similar legislation in California is awaiting the governor's signature. Poverty not only robs the poor of opportunity and

breaks their spirit, it costs our nation money - well beyond direct services. For every one-percentage point rise in the poverty rate, metropolitan areas are forced to spend an additional \$27.75 per capita on non-poverty related services, according to CLASP.

That probably explains why Mayor Michael Bloomberg recently announced his own war on poverty in New York City, where one in five residents dwell below the poverty line. In 2002, Miami Mayor Manny Diaz launched a \$2-million anti-poverty campaign in response to his city being designated the poorest major city in the nation by the U.S. Census.

Poverty cuts across all political lines. It is not a blue or red issue. It's, as the CLASP study notes, a purple issue. Of the 10 states with the highest poverty rates, 70 percent are represented by Republican senators and 60 percent led by GOP governors. Of the congressional districts with more than 20 percent of their residents poor, 80 percent elect Democrats.

MARC H. MORIAL is president and CEO of the National Urban League.



CHARLES RANGEL