

OUR VIEW

A Message To Parents

Monday begins another school year and that means parents must commit (and in some cases recommit) to your child's education.

Before the havoc wrought by No Child Left Behind. Before the entrance of privately run Edison Schools into the Clark County School District. Before the clamoring over below average per-pupil funding. Before current superintendent Carlos Garcia. Before passage of 1998's billion-dollar school construction and revitalization bond. Before 1997's state education reform law. Before the school district became of the nation's largest and fastest growing. Before the push to get a middle school built in West Las Vegas. Before superintendent Brian Cram. Before superintendent Kenny Guinn. Before desegregation and forced busing in the '70s. Before H.P. Fitzgerald.

As far back as you can trace education, not only here but everywhere, it's always been as much about what does (or doesn't) go on in the classroom as about what happens once a student leaves campus. Enter, parents.

Parents are a too-often forgotten part of the educational equation. Either by willful neglect, tacit indifference or a stifling inability, many have failed to be teachers they should be at home. Complaining about what's wrong with an educator, a class, a principal or a school is well within a parent's right, but to agitate without helping to elevate, to identify the discrepancy but do nothing to fix it is disingenuous and foolhardy.

Parental involvement should consist of more than chastising a teacher your child doesn't get along with, protesting a bad grade or chewing the principal's ear. It should consist of involvement in Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), of verifying that what your child is being taught will allow him or her to compete academically, of work to fill any gaps (minimal books in the library, dilapidated playground equipment, poor lighting, too little technology), of boning up on the issues facing your child's school, region and district, of advocating (to whoever will listen, school board trustees to lawmakers) for better educational infrastructure, all while staying abreast of the latest iterations in education. It's not enough to ask your child, "Did you have homework due?" The question works better as a declarative statement: "Let me see your homework."

According to the National Coalition for Parental Involvement in Education, students whose parents are actively involved in their matriculation do better in school and in life; parental involvement, says the NCPPIE, also lifts teacher morale, strengthens schools, fortifies surrounding communities and empowers parents.

"Parents (or other responsible family members) and schools should communicate regularly and clearly about information important to student success," reads NCPPIE's web site. "Schools should inform families about standards and how they relate to the curriculum, learning objectives, methods of assessment, school programs, discipline codes and student progress. Sharing information can be accomplished through the usual means of newsletters, handbooks, parent-teacher conferences, open houses, as well as home visits, homework 'hot lines,' the Internet, e-mail and voice mail... Personal contact, whether by telephone or in person, is the best way to promote two-way communication."

As the NCPPIE reminds, parents are their child's best advocates and, "as advocates, parents make sure their children are being treated fairly and getting all the help they need to do well. Many schools collaborate with families to develop personal learning plans for each student. Parents should fully understand their child's program (remedial, advanced, honors, Title I, special education, etc.) and how that program would ensure they learn to high standards."

As the 2004-05 academic year approaches, all parents need to do everything they can to ensure that their most important asset—their child—isn't left behind.

POINT OF VIEW



White on Black politics: A close up

By Louie Overstreet
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Last spring when I forecasted that the election would get down and dirty, my thoughts were on the national scene. While events of the last several weeks have proved me to be correct, I had no idea that local grassroots politics would travel the same "low road" that is now taking place on the national level.

Maybe I should not be surprised that it has now happened on the local level. I have observed politics long enough to know that it is almost a universal truth that when cronies no longer sleep in the same political bed, the inevitable result is that a personal vendetta will be waged by one of the parties.

As a case in point, former cronies of Assemblyman Wendell P. Williams have in an every calculated manner waited to the eleventh hour to make a personal attack on him.

The manner in which the vendetta is being waged against Wendell is in the form of a flyer whose generation is of questionable origin; more on this later. During the last week or so the flyer was mailed to voters in the district Wendell has represented for 18 years.

The attack, in the basest reference I can make, represents a White on Black political crime. Former cronies of Williams, Assemblywoman Chris Giunchigliani and Community College Professor John Cummings used a front man, Joe Lamarca to set up (as quoted in a major



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daily), over drinks, a group called Citizens for Ethics in Government.

It has become evident that the sole purpose of the group was to mail-out an attack flyer to District 6 voters. My reasoning is based on the fact that if this group were really concerned with ethics in government and in the interest of being fair and balanced they would have mailed out a flyer informing voters in Commission District B that the current commissioner for this district, Mary Kincaid-Chauncey, is presently under federal indictment.

Here's a little background on the group of Citizens for Ethics in Government. While Joe Lamarca lives in a gated exclusive enclave in District 6 (one of only a couple in Wendell's entire district) where the homes start at a million plus dollars, the address the group filed with the State Attorney General's office is a post office box in a shopping mall way out at the corner of Durango Road and West Charleston Boulevard, which is at least 10 miles from the heart of District 6. Also, get this, the contact number listed for the group is

the cell phone number of John Cummings. Boys and girls can you say political hanky-panky?

With this as a back drop, the question becomes, why would a White person living in one of more exclusive subdivisions in Las Vegas concern himself with an Assembly race where the person representing the District is Black and the average per capita income for persons in this district is less than \$10,000 a year? The average annual per capita income for persons Wendell has represented for nearly two decades would barely cover two monthly mortgage payments on houses in the area where Joe Lamarca lives.

The question to be answered is why is Joe being used by Chris and John? The answer is that the duo is waging a behind the scenes political vendetta against Wendell. You do not have to be a detective to uncover the fact that Chris' husband, Gary

Gray is serving as a campaign adviser to Harvey (we hardly know you) Munford, who is vying to unseat Wendell.

Now, here is where the plot thickens. The reason the vendetta is being waged is that it's all about the "Benjamins." In other words, money is the root of all evil.

Many of you may recall the relentless attacks Wendell came under by the White dailies for some civil problems he was experiencing. Well, in any event, the attacks on Wendell have resulted in the "law of unintended consequences" rearing its ugly head.

People who abandoned Wendell and went on the attack have also suffered some unexpected financial setbacks. Chris resigned from her \$60,000+ part-time college job and John had to sue the community college to maintain a job at a considerably reduced salary and he no

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