



Education Is Power

By THOMAS E. WILSON, PH.D

This writer has participated in several conversations this past week where parents' responsibility for the behavior of their children while they are in school was discussed. The question was: Are parents to be blamed by teachers for every act of adverse behavior performed by their children while in school?

It appears that parents are being made the scapegoats for every act of unsavory behavior committed by their children while in school. The usual answer to the question of: "Why does Johnny behave in the way he does?" is that "He is reflecting the attitude of his parents and of his home training. This "pat answer" is used quite frequently with reference to the Black child.

A close investigation of this answer reveals the escapism engaged in by some members of the educational community in order to shirk their responsibility for providing the kind of educational program needed by our Black children.

Children must be motivated in order for adequate learning to take place. Motivation, or the creation of the desire to learn, is paramount, especially in early education.

Motivation is of two kinds: extrinsic and intrinsic. Extrinsic motivation is the motivation that comes from external sources: parents, teachers, peers, etc. Intrinsic motivation comes from within the person himself/herself. External forces may work to help create intrinsic motivation. The child is usually born with a desire to learn. Our biggest task as educators is to nurture this motivation to learn in order that it will continue throughout the child's school life. Motivational activities may take place at home, at school, or in the streets. Teachers, supposedly, are trained in motivational techniques, and, if allowed, will usually put this training into practice.

It seems absurd to hear a trained teacher say that he/she cannot get a child to learn in school. The answer

may lie in the techniques used in motivating the child to learn.

We may surmise from the above that the child who comes to school unmotivated to learn and is not motivated by the school environment may become a behavior problem.

Usually we as teachers will immediately seek to absolve ourselves of all blame for the undesirable behavior of the pupils, and will cast serious negative aspersions on the parents in an attempt to divert attention from what is or is not being done in school. Granted, part of the blame should be placed on the parents and the home situation, but the school system must also share in the responsibility. Parents are only partially to blame for the behavior of children in school. We as teachers and school administrators must also step forward boldly and accept part of the responsibility.

Another part of the educational triangle, the child or student himself/herself, is rarely held accountable for his or her behavior. Why not place part of the blame squarely on the shoulders of the person performing the negative acts? Children of school age usually know right from wrong. If the pupil engages in negative behavior, why can't he/she be held to share some of the blame?

If parents have done their best to instill positive principles within the child, and if the teachers work with the parents and the child to provide manageable experiences, and if the child can honestly say that his parents and teachers are sincerely trying to help him/her, then we as teachers can stop blaming parents and start teaching the child.

Most Black parents seriously desire that their children get the very best education possible, but are highly frustrated when they are told that their child is reflecting their negative attitudes toward the school and that they are not cooperating. Teachers should be very sure that they have done everything possible before calling the parents away from their jobs for in-school consultation. A day lost on a job during these days may mean the loss of a job, or the loss of enough money to feed and clothe their family properly. Let us not be guilty of imposing undue hardships on another person.

INVOLVEMENT FOR YOUNG ACHIEVERS TO HOLD SECOND ANNUAL DINNER

LOS ANGELES, CA — Involvement for Young Achievers, (IYA), a program designed to stimulate academic achievement in local students, will hold its second annual fundraising dinner on Sunday, November 21, at the Biltmore Hotel.

Brad Pye, Jr., managing editor of the Los Angeles Sentinel, will be honored at the event, and Jim Hill, KNXT-TV sportscaster, will serve as the master of ceremonies.

Anheuser-Busch, Inc. and its southern area wholesalers are participating as sponsors of the dinner.

"Involvement for Young Achievers is designed to identify both strengths and problem areas in students at the secondary level before they go on with their educational or business careers," said Dusty Baker, Jr., Los Angeles Dodger leftfielder and Honorary Dinner Chairman.

"IYA sponsors programs to develop and maintain the students' skills, and, in addition, fundraising events such as this provide scholarships for the students."

Over 500 guests are expected to participate in the dinner, according to Genevieve Lara, president and founder of IYA.

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