

**A CALL TO THE CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA:
Step Up to the Opportunity to Revitalize Education**

Education without a doubt is crucial to the success of our students to develop into productive members of society. Obtaining a quality education that enforces and reinforces math, science, writing, and cognitive thinking will separate those who desire a prosperous future from those who are simply content with getting by. This edition of *The Cumberland Flag* is dedicated to the subject of Education. This issue presents a perfect opportunity for an open discussion regarding the role of the Black Church in the present-day Education System. Historically, the Black Church has been an institutional stronghold in the Black community often times serving as the primary educator of both children and adults. In carrying out its role as Community Educator, the Black Church not only provided opportunity for academic and occupational education, but the Church also created and sustained a cultural ethos that has enabled African Americans to combat racial prejudice and hostility for generations. I believe it is time for the Black Church to resume a more active participation in educating our Community.

Education and learning are one of my many passions. I am a prolific reader and researcher on any number of topics. I listen and learn from any number of sources to include *The Reconnect* Christian blog and website. *The Reconnect* site is authored by Ms. Carmen LaBerge a writer, speaker, and Christian talk radio host. While I am not always in agreement with every idea stipulated by the author, I do however find many of her ideas on education reform worth exploring. In the May 17, 2021 edition of *The Reconnect* blog, Ms. LaBerge offers several innovative ideas and program initiatives that could have a very positive impact within the CPCA Denomination and our communities if adopted. What follows are excerpts from that article that highlight several initiatives that I believe are worth studying.

To my CPCA friends and colleagues consider this: instead of stepping away, what might it look for the Church to step intentionally into the chaos and restore order through a renewed commitment to education as ministry? **For our consideration:** is it possible to imagine the reclamation of education as something that the Church provides? What reinvigorated role might the Church play in public education?

The number one way to influence education is for Christians to be working as teachers, administrators, coaches, bus drivers, mentors, and classroom assistants — seeing the public

school as a mission field where Christians serve vocationally as ministers of the Gospel. Other tangible ways to step into the chaos:

- Formally commission in your church every church member who is involved in public education to see their vocation as ministry. This includes elected officials, school administrators, teachers, coaches, mentors, classroom moms, school volunteers, the lunch ladies, school resource officers, and yes, parents.
- Bless students and educators: Start or join back-to-school supply programs, weekly food distribution backpack programs, prayer walk school campuses on the weekends and after hours.
- Adopt a school, a grade level or a classroom: pray for them consistently, support godly teachers, and assist serving in the classrooms. Start by asking a nearby school what they need, what would help and what they want. Assume nothing. The answer might surprise you.
- Find out what kind of volunteers schools in your city utilize and circulate that information in your church bulletin, newsletter, and digital communication. Every school need people to read to younger students and to help with homework in after school programs.
- Teach the Bible in your public school to ground students in the Truth. Yes, this is legal and it's happening. Schools release kids to take all kinds of classes off campus during the school day, why not offer a Bible class?
- Start after school programs and summer enrichment programs (beyond VBS), which include both Biblical instruction and homework assistance. If your school already has a Good News club, volunteer to help. If they don't start one.
- Start ministries with families whose children have special needs, are in special education and life skills classes.
- Reach out to single moms. You know how hard it is to get it all together for your kids, get them what they need, where they need to be, and keep them busy with healthy activities all summer, over school breaks and teacher workdays.
- How many ***retired teachers***, school administrators and academics populate church pews waiting to be mobilized for a renaissance in education in America? What might happen if parents knew that churches were the go-to place for school supplies, backpack ministry, homework help, mentoring for their kids, summer enrichment activities, and the kind of generational family support that we take for granted?

Ready to think and act big? CPCA let's talk....a discussion worth having.

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