

EMPATHY EDUCATES

PATH TOWARDS TRUE PROGRESS IN PUBLIC EDUCATION POLICY

Empathy Educates is dedicated to establishing fair and equitable education policy, one that ensures equal education for all. *EE* forges a path for real and effective reforms; we fight entrepreneurial attempts to “restructure” our schools. We embrace a balanced curriculum that enriches the Whole Child. We proclaim business-like efficiency models do not promote learning.

Empathy Educates is devoted to public education. We are a venue for active, people-powered, grassroots education innovation. A young organization, *Empathy Educates* is thousands of people strong. We are the people united through an audacious promise to preserve and transform public education. We live in every community in this country. We use 21st century digital technology, town hall meetings, seminars, rallies, marches, missives, and artistic expressions to advance solutions that bring learning back to American children. *EE* brings the American public back to our classrooms. We strategize, organize and mobilize. *Empathy Educates* strives to Rebuild the American Dream Through Education.

- We take action to emphatically declare—and achieve—real education policy advancements.
- We gather, rally, and stand together to stop the corporatization and privatization of American schools.
- To expand the movement, we tell our stories and raise our voices on the streets, in our neighborhoods, in cyberspace, and through the mainstream-media.
- We partner with parent organizations, community organizers, labor, and civil rights leaders. Supportive artists, musicians, filmmakers, and other creative innovators inspire others to join us.

Our mission is to build and strengthen schools for the Seventh Generation. Schools are defined, not as buildings, but as learning centers comprised of students and staff, each engaged in edification. In that spirit, we submit The Equitable Education Policy Path. We establish that public education must be an American priority. Education is a basic civil and human right. Every child’s right is to attend a high quality public school and receive a high quality education.

Quality is easily characterized and evident in our best schools. In good schools, classes are small. In other words, the student-teacher ratio is slim.¹ Curriculums allow for critical and creative thought. Indeed, lessons evoke inspired originality. Testing, for application purposes is diagnostic in nature. The term Teacher Evaluation is ascribed to a Letter of Recommendation an educator writes for a student.² The curriculum is comprehensive and guided by profession pedagogues, not policy makers. In the lower grades and throughout, science, music, art, physical education, library, second language, and computer lab time is assured. “The frequency and length of special classes vary according to the age of the children.”³

In every school we wish to ensure that policies reflect the established practices of the best.

We offer these students a rich and rigorous interdisciplinary curriculum designed to stimulate creative inquiry, intellectual achievement and independent thinking in a world increasingly without borders. We encourage these students to test themselves in athletic competition and to give expression to their artistic abilities. We draw strength from silence—and from the power of individual and collective reflection. We cultivate in all members of our community high personal expectations and integrity, respect for consensus, and an understanding of how diversity enriches us, why stewardship of the natural world matters and why service to others enhances life. Above all, we seek to be a school that nurtures a genuine love of learning and teaches students “to let their lives speak.”⁴

TO ENSURE THAT, AS A NATION, WE EDUCATE ALL OUR CHILDREN EQUALLY *EE* WILL ACT TO...

- ★ END THE USE, OVERUSE, AND/ MISUSE OF STANDARDIZED CURRICULUMS AND HIGH-STAKES TESTING
- ★ DECONSTRUCT AND PUT AN END TO THE PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION
- ★ HONOR, PRESERVE AND PROTECT CIVIL RIGHTS THROUGH EDUCATION, OF, BY, AND FOR THE PEOPLE

“AMERICA’S FUTURE WILL BE DETERMINED BY THE HOME AND THE SCHOOL.

THE CHILD BECOMES LARGELY WHAT HE IS TAUGHT; HENCE WE MUST WATCH WHAT WE TEACH, AND HOW WE LIVE.”

–Jane Addams [Public Philosopher, Sociologist, Author, And Leader In Women’s Suffrage Movement]

1 Sidwell Friends FAQ. Student Teacher Ratio <http://www.sidwell.edu/admissions/admissions-faq-2/index.aspx>
2 Sidwell Friends Application Process. Teacher Evaluation <http://www.sidwell.edu/admissions/application-materials/index.aspx>
3 Lower School Curriculum http://www.sidwell.edu/lower_school/academics/index.aspx
4 Sidwell Friends School Philosophy http://www.sidwell.edu/about_sfs/school-philosophy/index.aspx

REBUILD THE AMERICAN DREAM THROUGH EDUCATION

THE FUNCTION OF EDUCATION IS TO TEACH ONE TO THINK INTENSIVELY AND TO THINK CRITICALLY. INTELLIGENCE PLUS CHARACTER - THAT IS THE GOAL OF TRUE EDUCATION.
– Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 1963 March on Washington

We, the American people, promise to defend and advance a simple ideal: education and justice... for all. American children want to learn. From tots, to the teenage years, and even into adulthood, our youth work hard to acquire an education. The young play by the rules thinking that this is the right thing to do. Every one of our offspring – rich, poor or in-between, regardless of skin color or birthplace, no matter their abilities – has the right to a high quality education. Indeed, that is the promise, individually and as a nation, we make to our children; we will provide them with the best.

Today, the American Dream, receiving a quality education, is a nightmare. Children are Left Behind. The young are told to Race To The Top; however, boys and girls are punished for merely trying to. Funds for books, teachers, and schools are cut. Even children of lesser ability are eliminated from classrooms. Lessons that invite critical and/or creative thought were banished years ago. Why? Americans were told that our schools, and thus, our Nation was At-Risk when it was not.

AMERICA SCHOOLS ARE NOT FAILING NOR ARE OUR CHILDREN OR TEACHERS. AMERICA IS RICH WITH CREATIVITY. WE ARE AN IMAGINATIVE BUNCH. GIVEN EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES OUR YOUNG LEARN. CHILDREN ACHIEVE WHEN LESSONS ARE INSPIRING. TEACHERS TEACH. EDUCATORS NEED NO SCRIPTS. FORCED TO TAKE OR ADMINISTER ONLY TESTS, NEITHER THRIVES.

AMERICAN CHILDREN NEED RESOURCES, TEACHERS, AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS, NOT CUTS.

Currently, education in America is separate and unequal. Some students and schools have, more have not and have no way to acquire what is missing. To compensate for the little cash-on-hand and a lesser desire to invest quality education, schools cut classes, buy fewer books, and instead purchase testing tools. Scores on these exams are meant to prove that all is well. The system works without adequate resources. Our best teachers too are fired. Learned educators are thought too costly. These decisions place our children and a quality education system at-risk. Untrained “academics” are placed in classrooms where the student population is most in need. New to the profession, and with little guidance, these teachers justly feel unprepared and soon burn out.

Together, we must rebuild our education dream, reinvest in our young and their schooling. We must provide for the future. Our children and this nation depend on our believing what is real. Our schools did not place our nation at-risk. Our suspension of disbelief did. We have a civil rights, nay human rights crisis, not an education crisis.

★ **1. INVEST IN AMERICA'S CHILDREN.** Preserve and transform public education. Ensure that health care services are provided to all our children, immigrants and those born within this nation's borders. Fund wraparound services... intensive, comprehensive care management processes for youths with serious or complex needs. Keep public education strong. Hire, not fire teachers. Rebuild crumbling classrooms.

★ **2. INVEST IN PUBLIC EDUCATION.** We should provide universal access to early childhood education, make school funding equitable, invest in high-quality teachers, and build safe, well-equipped school buildings for our students. A high-quality education system, from universal preschool to vocational training and affordable higher education, is critical for our future and can create badly needed jobs now.

★ **3. FUND SCHOOLS EQUITABLY.** We must invest in American innovation, sensitive to the fact that poorer communities need more resources. American needs to provide the funds to pay for quality resources and teachers regardless of the socio-economic status of a community. Twenty-First Centuries technologies need to be made available to impoverished children, as well as the wealthy and those of middle-means. We must provide our children with the latest and greatest tools, and ensure that education is inspirational. Imaginative minds crave a challenge. Leave No Child Behind.

★ **4. OFFER PUBLIC EDUCATION FOR ALL, IMMIGRANTS AND AMERICAN BORN.** Unemployment rates among people who never went to college are double those who have a postsecondary education. The need for highly skilled workers is growing. By 2018, an estimated 63 percent* of all new U.S. jobs will require workers with an education beyond high school.

★ **5. ENSURE EQUAL EDUCATION FOR ALL.** From instruction to discipline, equality is essential. Equivalent access for all must be our nation's standard. Current court decisions strengthen the deleterious divide and disproportionality. We must ensure that all, physically and mentally challenged, “gifted,” Non-English language speakers and children whose second language is English are served equally.

★ **6. PROVIDE AGE-APPROPRIATE EDUCATION.** Learning is a process. Children develop in time when challenged to explore constructs that are meaningful to them. Increasingly, 3 to 5 year olds are required to perform academically at a level once deemed appropriate for 1st – 3rd graders. The result is our young experience less direct play and hands-on experiences that lay the foundations for later academic success. Likewise, early elementary instruction focuses on rote rather than learning needs.

★ **7. OFFER FAIR/BALANCED INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT.** End scripted, rote instruction and high-stakes testing for students, teachers, and schools. Adopt Authentic Curriculums and Assessments, Portfolio Reviews, Student Journals and Interviews. No Child Left Behind and Race To The Top quick-fix agendas employ one-size-fits-all standards and testing. Since adopted, failure has become the norm in our schools.

In what the Center on Education Policy characterized as an “overstated” claim, the Obama Administration's Secretary of Education Arne Duncan reported in 2011, 82 percent of American schools were failing. Instead, an estimated 48 percent “failed,” up from 39 percent a year earlier.

★ **8. PUT THE PUBLIC BACK IN THE LEAD.** The people make all our schools better. Students know best what they need to learn and what works well in the current education system. Parents too are profoundly aware of what aids learning for their young. Teachers, trained experts in education are there in the classroom, and are in-tune. Rely on inclusive, collaborative people-powered policies; they will rebuild the education dream.

★ **9. STRENGTHEN DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION.** We need equal education – a system in which money doesn't buy policy, curriculum plans, or secure contracts for services rendered. We must ban anonymous political influence, posed as philanthropy. The doors in D.C. cannot be open to entrepreneurs and closed to the people. Immigrants and their children want to join in our democracy, so too do the less able children or those of lesser means. In a democratic country, all deserves a their right to dream.

* Help Wanted Georgetown University <http://ow.ly/g1wcv>