

## Republican Perspective

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### DOES BLACK KIDS EDUCATION MATTER?

*“The direction in which education starts a man will determine his future in life.” Plato*

Many of us know the plight of Detroit and its struggle to regain prosperity. Not too many know that almost one-half of adults in Detroit are functionally illiterate. This is according to reports by the Detroit Regional Workforce Council and the National Institute for Literacy.

We read daily about murders in Oakland and Richmond. The progressive Left is quick to tell us that laws restricting our Second Amendment rights are the answer. Little is mentioned about the weapon that is doing the most damage - public schools. Reading success data for Oakland grammar schools shows that students of color continue to fall behind in third grade reading.

It is not “breaking news” that inner city schools across the country are failing to teach elementary school children how to read. Many of these children are black and it doesn't seem to matter. Nor is it news that the mayors of the nation's largest cities are Democrats that owe political favor to the Education Establishment. What is the future of black children who remain functionally illiterate? Will it be the responsibility of the country's employers to teach them to read and solve math problems because of failure of the Educational Establishment?

What skill and subject taught in elementary school is more important than reading? Our remembrance is being taught the alphabet and pronouncing syllables. This no longer occurs in many inner-city elementary schools if the Education Establishment adopted “sight-reading” or what is known as “Whole Language”. Under this method, teachers make children memorize English words one by one by one. Letters and syllables are not sounded out but words are learned as designs or logos.

Bruce Price who founded the website [Improve-Education.org](http://Improve-Education.org) provides an example of what a first grader may face under Whole Language. The child receives no phonetic assistance and is unaware of letters or syllables. The design looks like this: xdytsw pqk wdht dghmz. The teacher says “the last word is pronounced water”. What in the world is the kid going to do? Is he searching for some visual clue that will remind him of water? Is it any wonder why inner-city illiteracy rates remain high under this type of methodology?

Some might call this educational malpractice and place me in this category. This progressive experiment is being fostered on kids from poor families and single parents. These kids receive a mediocre education with poor reading skills. They are passed

along year after year until high- school graduation with a bleak future. Yet the teachers unions do everything in their power to stop the development of charter schools. Nowhere in the “Core Values of the National Education Association” will you find a statement holding teachers accountable for students performance. Charter schools, by themselves, may not be a panacea but at least offer an alternative to educational malfeasance.

The teachers unions and politicians promote the value of a public school education and we agree.

However, public schools that fail in the learning experience need to be addressed. Nationwide, about 12 percent of parents have their children enrolled in private schools. In Chicago, 44 percent of public school teachers have their own children enrolled in private schools. In Philadelphia, it's also 44 percent. In Baltimore, it's 35 percent, and in San Francisco, it's 34 percent. What does that tell us?

Politicians who fight against school choice behave the way teachers do. Fifty-two percent of the members of the Congressional Black Caucus who have school-age children have them enrolled in private schools. Thirty-seven percent of members of the House of Representatives and 45 percent of Senators who have school-age children have them enrolled in private schools.

British first graders read by Christmas (I think it is OK to use that word). Montessori schools teach kids to read and write by age seven. Whole Language claims success by producing semi-literate kids by high-school!

According to a study by The National Academy of Sciences, “Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children”, recommends first-grade instruction that provides explicit instruction and practice with sound structures that lead to familiarity with spelling-sound conventions and their use in identifying printed words. The bottom line is that all children have to learn to sound out words rather than relying on designs and pictures to determine meaning.

It appears to progressives and President Obama, that the education of black kids is not a pressing matter. After all, climate change is our most pressing problem...

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