

A PUBLIC EDUCATION MANIFESTO

United Black Christians

United Church of Christ

Promote Safe Spaces for Learning and Community Engagement

We have called on others in the past to address public education in an effort to advance the academic progress of our children, now we call on ourselves to take the mantle and lead our churches in the noble cause to provide safe environments in which students can enhance and enrich their educational pursuits and become engaged citizens. We hereby call on our local church clergy and lay leaders to harness every available resource to provide for the betterment of our children's desires to successfully achieve high performance levels on standardized and non-standardized academic tests and to become actively engaged, well-informed citizens. We call on clergy and laity to partner with public school administrators in their respective local communities along with civic, fraternal, and socially-responsible organizations to generate a culture of high academic expectation and engaged citizenship. We call on clergy and laity to work closely and courageously with educators, both active and retired, to create strategies, programs, and activities that will establish a climate of high academic expectation and active community engagement. We also call on clergy and laity to use their facilities, campuses, and grounds to stage and coordinate events and opportunities that will assure the maintenance of a culture and climate in which high academic expectations will thrive and active community engagement will become the broadly accepted norm. Further, we are confident our children will excel as scholars and engaged citizens with the support, guidance, encouragement and extraordinary effort extended by clergy and lay leaders.

Assure Sufficient and Equitable Financial Resources

Just as we have called on others in the past to take the lead in assuring adequate, sufficient, and equitable funding is earmarked for public education, now we call on ourselves to make continued and enhanced financial commitments that will guarantee the best possible outcomes toward our children's scholastic and community engagement goals. We call on clergy and laity to forge local campaigns that enlist every available resource to elevate quality public education, including the development of an actively engaged citizenry as the highest financial priorities in our local communities. We realize our children are required to compete with scholars and citizens from around the world with increasing mandated responsibilities in the future. In a word, they should become "engaged learners." In order for them to be properly prepared to meet societal needs, they must be educated and trained in the critical areas of science, math, health, technologies, language arts, world histories, world cultures and theology. Our children's academic foundation must be based on relevant, emerging intellectual and industrial areas of study. We call on clergy and laity to create spiritually-directed, humanity-oriented, creation-centered, justice-inspired and personally-designed platforms on which this educational initiative is structured.

Develop Leadership and Parental Involvement

Just as we have called on others in the past to increase public involvement in the improvement of public education, now we call on ourselves to engage adults, including parents, to take the lead in improving the quality of our children's academic, community and cultural exposure. We call on parents and adults in our congregations and immediate communities in which the United Church of Christ is located to become actively engaged in classrooms as a supportive presence to teachers and educators. We call on those parents and adults to become continuing education scholars in pursuit of advancing their own knowledge and increasing their own confidence in public education. We call on clergy and laity to provide facilities in a safe environment where adults and parents can express their visions for our children's scholastic and community-wide success. We call on local church leaders to champion the cause of quality public education and active community engagement and to defend this initiative as consistent with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, including caring and protecting our children from all harm: physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual, and intellectual.

The United Black Christians of the United Church of Christ presents this document at the XXVIII General Synod Convened in Tampa, Florida, July 1-5, 2011