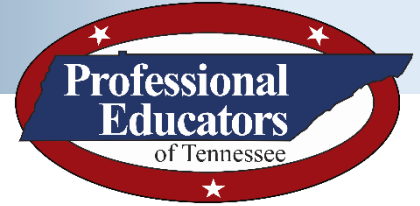


EDITORIAL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OUR PUBLIC INTEREST

The Marine Corps teaches how to adapt, improvise and overcome. It is a mindset. No challenge is too big for a Marine, no cost too great. The greatest battle most of us will ever fight is the one between our ears. Your mind is indeed a battlefield. When you win that battle, you will win a lot of wars.

One of my favorite authors is Erwin Raphael McManus. He writes that “every battle that you ever face in the outside world must first be won in your inner world.” McManus, as usual, is correct. In a world often in chaos, we need to overcome our most dangerous enemy—ourselves. We all need self-reflection, and more importantly, we need to master ourselves.

In public education, we have sometimes forgotten the basics. We have neglected reading, writing, and arithmetic. There are some very justifiable reasons, but secondary issues have often replaced primary functions. Some of those issues have lost public support for public education. We have to keep first things first.

The truth is that we are often ill-equipped as educators for some of those tasks. We were never designed to be first responders to school shootings. We are not mental health experts or criminal investigators. We cannot address greater societal issues like poverty or hunger. We are first and foremost teachers. Our mission is to educate the next generation. It is also how we are ultimately judged.

I have increasingly been speaking out about external influences, and outside money, being injected into our public education mission. I don’t always disagree with some of the objectives these groups may have, but recognize that their goals are secondary to the purpose for which public education is designed. Some of these issues would be better addressed in other settings.

Let’s be honest. Some of the people spending money to shape our public education agenda are not experts in the field, and have an ulterior motive. Money changes behavior and lots of money change lots of behavior. We need to better police outside influence and dollars within public education. As Ursula Wolfe-Rocca wrote in *Rethinking Schools*: “Donor-enabled initiatives have largely bypassed democratic processes, empowering the wealthiest Americans to make crucial decisions about curriculum, funding, teachers, and schools.”

Americans are now deeply polarized into voting blocs. We cannot allow these same divisions to permeate our classrooms. We need to reject any ideology that teaches our students they are victims. That philosophy is often destructive, creating a distraction from the potential all children possess. We often hear excuses for why

SUMMARY

It is not public education's responsibility to bring world peace. It is their job to educate children, so they can grow up to be responsible citizens and fight for those causes they wish to champion.

children cannot learn. We must embrace the concept that all children can learn. The “all children can learn” philosophy creates a cultural change in education. We must build a supportive learning environment around all children.

Education is supposed to be the great equalizer. All children, no matter their parents' income level, race, or origin must be treated equally. Arne Duncan, a former Secretary of Education looked at the inverse. He accurately pointed out, “Students who receive a poor education, or who drop out of school before graduating, can end up on the wrong side of a lifelong gap in employment, earnings, even life expectancy.” When children can read well, write fluently, and do basic math, the possibilities for them become endless.

Giving students access to quality schools is good public policy and is in our best interest as a society. We cannot tell a child when he enters our school that we expect less of them because of race, or gender, or national origin. We should expect the best and as educators give them our best. And we should fight together for resources when necessary. We must focus on students mastering the basics if we expect them to build a better society. A child who cannot read is never going to lead. According to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, “Reading is the single most important skill necessary for a happy, productive and successful life.”

I understand that some children are born into circumstances we cannot even imagine. I am once again reminded by McManus’s words: “A heart filled with violence will never see a world filled with peace.” It is not public education’s responsibility to bring world peace. It is our job to educate children, so they can grow up to be responsible citizens and fight for those causes they wish to champion. Education is a battle worth fighting. We just need to adapt, improvise and overcome. No challenge is too big, no cost too great. However, we must keep our priorities in order by focusing on the basics.

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