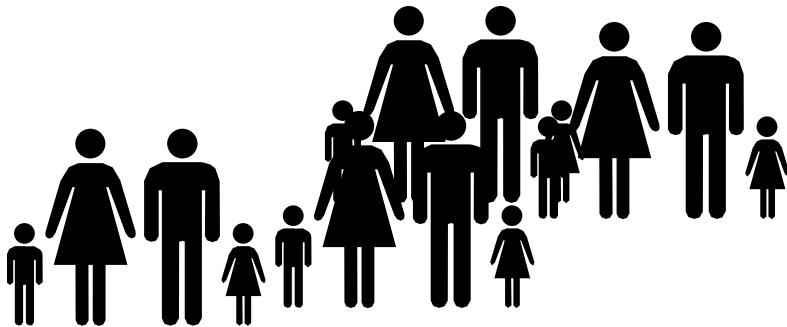
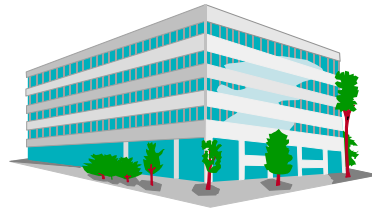


# **Building Healthy Schools and Quality Education in Mississippi for All Students**

**through Full Funding of a  
Coordinated Inter-Disciplinary Strategy**

**Brown Paper #2**  
by the  
***Mississippi Delta Catalyst Roundtable***

**Submitted to the Mississippi Legislative  
Task Force on Children At-Risk**



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**Southern Echo (statewide)**

**Youth Innovation Movement Solutions (Lee County)**

**September 14, 2007**

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## Some Brass Tacks

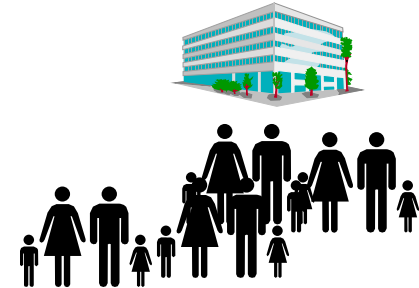
- The **current base student cost** in the MS Adequate Education Program formula for fiscal year 2008 (7-1-07 to 6-30-08) is **\$4,574.00**.
- The **current enhancement** for students at-risk in the MAEP formula is **5 %**.  
**5 %** of \$4,574 = **\$228.70**. This means that under the MAEP formula local school districts receive from the State of Mississippi only **\$228.70** for each student that qualifies as a student at-risk. This does not begin to meet the need!
- In 2005 the Augenblick study determined that in order to meet the education needs of **students at-risk** in Mississippi the enhancement above base student cost per student ought to be **114 %**. The State of Mississippi commissioned this study.  
**114 %** of \$4,574 = **\$5,214.36**. Therefore, each school district should receive **\$5,214.36** above base student cost to meet the needs of each student at-risk.

COMPARE the difference between what is needed and what we do:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>\$4,574</b> – base student cost</li> <li>+ <b>\$5,214.36</b> – 114 % enhancement</li> <li>= <b>\$9,788.36</b></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>\$4,574.00</b> – base student cost</li> <li>+ <b>\$ 228.70</b> – 5 % enhancement</li> <li>= <b>\$4,802.70</b></li> </ul> |
|--|--|

- NOTE: **Rankin County School District** stated it actually cost **\$10,393.00** in the 06-07 school year to educate **students at-risk**. “*Unleashing Possibilities for All Students*”, page 7, Report to the MS Legislative Task Force on Children At-Risk, August 17, 2007, by Rankin County School Superintendent Lynn Weathersby. **In Rankin County, therefore, the cost to educate each at-risk student is \$5,819 above base student cost, which is 122 % above base student cost.**
- THEREFORE, the State is **under-funding** the needs of each student at-risk by approximately **\$4,985.66** under the *Augenblick* projected analysis and by **\$5,590.30** under the *Rankin County School District* actual experience!

## 1. Introduction



### Mississippi High School Graduation Rates - Class of 2005-2006

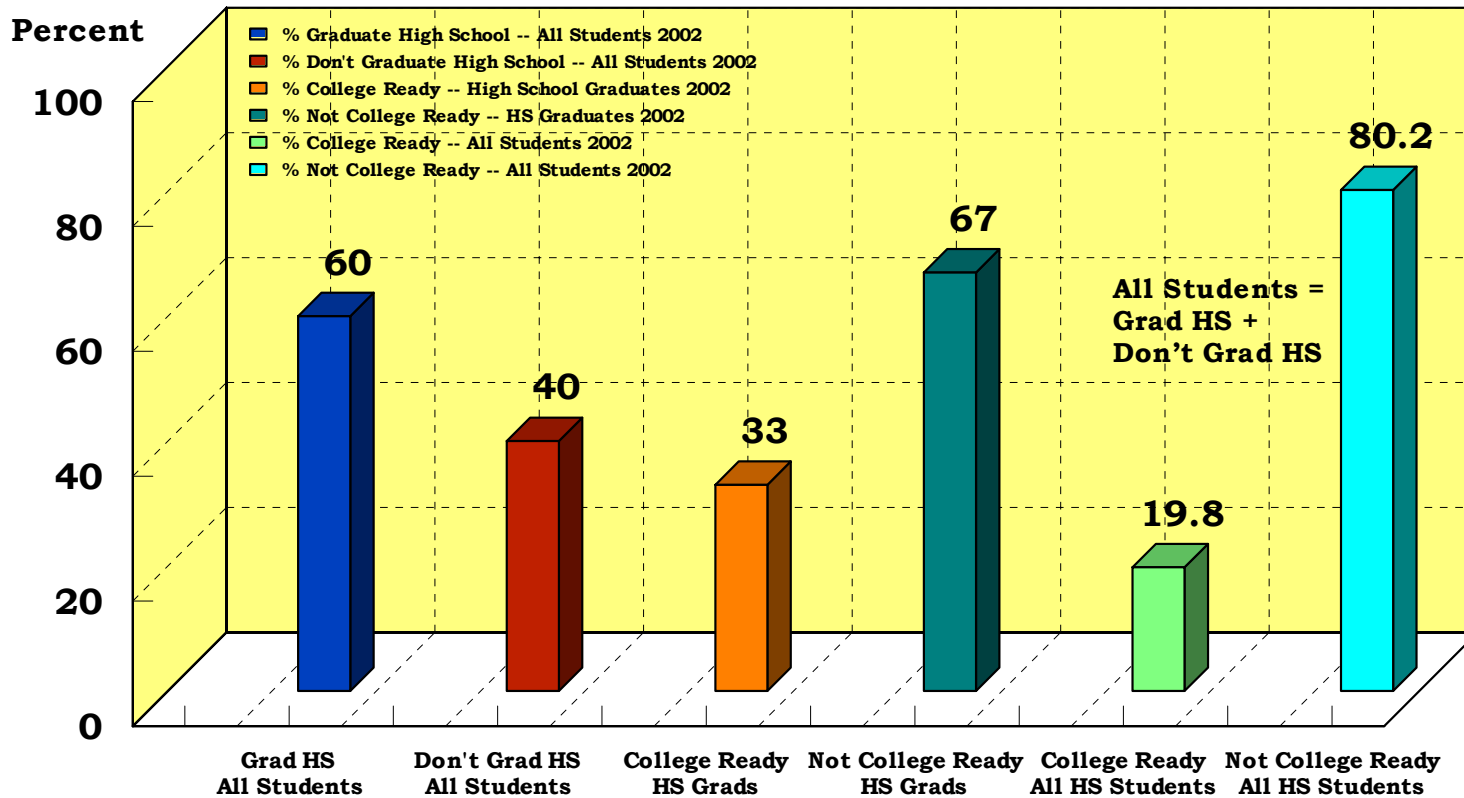
- **Only 61 % of Mississippi public school students graduated high school on time, according to the latest data provided by the MS Dept. of Education.**
- **Therefore, 39 % of all Mississippi public school students did NOT graduate high school on time.**
- **In 2005-2006 there were approximately 494,000 students in Mississippi public schools, grades K-12. If student outcomes do not improve, at current graduation rates we can anticipate that approximately 192,660 of the more than 494,000 students will not graduate high school on time.**

## **Mississippi “College Readiness” Rates – Class of 2005-2006**

- **Only 33 %, or 1/3, of Mississippi public school students graduate high school “college ready”: that is, effectively prepared to undertake the minimum requirements of a 4-year college or university.**
  - **Therefore, 67 %, or 2/3rds, of Mississippi public school students that graduate high school are NOT “college ready”.**
- **Each year more than 494,000 students attend Mississippi public schools. If we do not increase the 61% graduation rate, we can anticipate that only approximately 301,340 of those 494,000 students WILL graduate high school on time.**
  - **By the same token, at current graduation rates we can also anticipate that approximately 192,660 of those students now attending grades K through 12 WILL NOT graduate high school on time.**
  - **At the same time, since only 33 % of Mississippi students graduate “college ready”, we can anticipate that if student outcomes do not improve that approximately 198,200, or 67 %, of the 295,800 students that will eventually graduate high school will NOT be sufficiently prepared to undertake the minimum requirements of a 4-year college or university.**
- **So – if we combine those who will not graduate high school on time with those who graduate “not college ready”, then we can anticipate that approximately 390,860 of the more than 494,000 students now attending K-12 in Mississippi public schools eventually will leave the school system NOT “college ready”. Conversely, only approximately 103,140 of the 494,000 public school students now in K-12 WILL graduate “college ready”.**

**Chart #3**  
**Mississippi High Schools**  
**-- Class of 2002 --**  
**High School Graduation**  
**and**  
**College Readiness Rates**

If student outcomes do not improve, this data suggests that if those who do NOT graduate are combined with those who graduate NOT college ready, the percentage of all students NOT college ready will be 80.2 percent, or 395,386 of the roughly 493,000 students currently in the public school system.



The data in the text and charts on pages 3-5 herein have been derived from the study entitled: **Public High School Graduation and College Readiness Rates: 1991-2002, Education Working Paper #8, by Jay P. Greene, Ph.D. and Marcus A. Winters, Published February 2005 by the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research and Funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Charts prepared March 2006 by Southern Echo, Inc., Jackson, MS.**

## **Consequences for Mississippi's children and families, and for the general welfare of the community**

- **Children that do not graduate high school have very poor employment prospects in our evolving economy.**
- **Persons with a 4-year college degree, according to the data:**
  - 1. earn substantially more income than a person without one, or a person with a 2-year degree from a community or junior college;**
  - 2. are better prepared financially to support a family,**
  - 3. are more engaged in the civic, cultural and social life of the community;**
  - 4. pay more taxes to support public education and other necessary government functions, and**
  - 5. are much less likely to need government assistance programs.**
- **Children that do not graduate high school often wind up on the streets unemployed, without financial resources to sustain themselves or a family, few meaningful programs to assist them, and are at significantly greater risk of winding up in either the juvenile or adult justice system.**

## **Consequences for Mississippi's children and families, and for the general welfare of the community, *continued***

- **This is a prescription for our children “getting into trouble” rather than becoming productive, engaged citizens. It costs between 7 and 10 times more to incarcerate a young person than to educate a young person. Education is the best path to safer communities.**
- **Under-education of our children is also a prescription for maintaining some of the highest poverty, poorest health, and lowest birth weight rates in the nation. Persons with less education and less wealth are less likely to take advantage of medical services, cannot afford necessary medical services or medication, and have higher incidence of disease and lower life expectancy.**
- **In our evolving 21st century economy, low graduation rates, low college-readiness rates, and a poorly trained workforce without the skills needed in our evolving economy makes Mississippi less competitive for the attraction of investment capital and new job opportunities to Mississippi.**
- **Low graduation rates and poor preparation for college in Mississippi makes it exceedingly difficult to develop a new pool of students who become qualified first-rate **accountable** home-grown teachers and administrators to replace our teachers and administrators (who cannot be expected to go on forever) that retire or otherwise leave Mississippi school systems. It also means a smaller pool of students that can become scientists, engineers, mathematicians, medical professionals, researchers and specialists, entrepreneurs, craftsmen, tradesmen, public officials, and **accountable and effective community leaders**.**



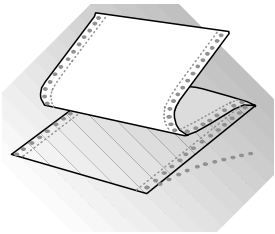
## THE PLAGUE OF PERSISTENT POVERTY

- **2007 Census figures released in August 2007 showed a slight decline in the national poverty rate.**
- **In Mississippi, however, the rate is up from 19.9 percent in 1999 to the current 21.1 percent.**
- **The Mississippi Center for Economic Policy released a report in April 2007 that showed that nearly 130,000, or **39 percent**, of Mississippi's working families are **low-income**. The report also said **35 percent** of the state's jobs are **low-wage** occupations.**

Source: Clarion Ledger, September 2, 2007

## 2. Importance of including the *expertise* of parents and students in policy formation and implementation

- There are two kinds of data that are used to inform the development of public policy: quantitative data and qualitative data.

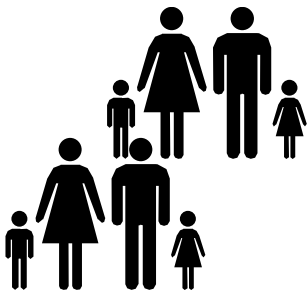


- **Quantitative data** uses the aggregate of statistical data to assess the impact of public policies, or the lack of them, on different segments of the population. In this way we can evaluate the intended and unintended consequences of the conscious policy choices made by those with the apparent authority to make them.



- **Qualitative data** uses the narrative stories of individuals, such as parents, students and educators, to illuminate experiences that are representative of whole segments of the population. The learnings from this process provide insights that cannot be captured in statistical data. Unfortunately, qualitative data provided by parents and students is often under-valued as a result of deep-seated biases within the culture.

- Many **grassroots community organizations** are comprised of **parents and students** who are working to create a quality public education accessible to all children.



- Grassroots organizations have become skillful at using both quantitative and qualitative data to develop public policy recommendations to dismantle the achievement gap, transform the culture of public education, and to bring together parents, students, educators, business leaders and public officials to work together in this process.

**A sample of examples of grassroots community use of data to analyze what is happening in their communities and to shape their recommendations for changes in education policy:**

**Quantitative data:**

- **Community organizations have used data provided by the MS Dept. of Education, NAEP, Rural Schools and Community Trust, US Dept. of Education, the Manhattan Institute and other research facilities to create tables, charts and maps that enable parents, students, educators, public officials and legislators to visualize:**
  - a. **The persistence of the student achievement gap in performance on standardized tests across 3-year cohorts in MS grades 2 through 8;**
  - b. **The correlation between critical teacher shortages and student performance on standardized tests;**
  - c. **The correlation between low-wealth under-performing majority-black school districts and the location of new prisons in the State of Mississippi; and**
  - d. **The impact of funding of MAEP and the children at-risk enhancement component on the financial resources of each school district.**

**Qualitative data:**

- **In many school districts community organizations have brought parents and students together with school officials, educators, public officials and legislators to enable parents and students to share their experiences with patterns of abuse or denial of rights. This collective use of credible qualitative data assists skeptical school officials, educators, public officials and legislators to understand the reality of school for many parents and children in ways that only live exchanges can. Sometimes cold statistics simply do not enable people to appreciate the impact of conditions.**



**MS Code 37-1-2**  
**Parents and Students**  
**must be included in**  
**education policy**  
**formation and**  
**implementation**

- The research-based evidence consistently shows that **effective parent and student engagement in education policy formation and implementation** is a keystone to the success of transforming the culture of public education and instituting meaningful reforms. That is why grassroots organizations of parents and students need to be an integral part of the process.
  - This principle is embroidered in the fabric of Mississippi education law at **MS Code 37-1-2**, where it states:

**“SEC. 37-1-2. Legislative findings and determinations; state policy.**

The legislature finds and determines that the **quality of public education** and its effect upon the social, cultural and economic enhancement of the people of Mississippi **is a matter of public policy**, the object of which is the education and performance of its children and youth. The legislature hereby declares the following to be **the policy of the State of Mississippi**:

(a) That the **students, parents, general citizenry, local schoolteachers and administrators, local governments, local school boards, and state government have a joint and shared responsibility for the quality of education** delivered through the public education system in the State of Mississippi ....

(h) To encourage the **common efforts of students, parents, teachers, administrators and business and professional leaders for the establishment of specific goals for performance ....”**

- We should also note that 37-1-2 sets a standard for what parents and students are entitled to expect from a Mississippi public education as a matter of state policy, as embodied in state law:

(f) To provide quality education for all school-age children in the state;

(g) That excellence and high achievement of all students should be the ultimate goal;

- As a matter of state policy (37-1-2), it is not sufficient to *graduate* students. The public school systems have a *duty* to provide a “quality education” accessible to “all students”, notwithstanding that the MS *Adequate Education Program* funding formula legislation only talks in terms of “... Adequate ...”.
- **The State cannot provide a “quality education” unless the State and local school districts provide sufficient funds to deliver a “quality education”.**
  - Consequently, **all** parents and students have a *corresponding right* to a quality education as a matter of state law. See 37-1-2(f) and (g). Further, under 37-1-2(h) parents and students are supposed to be part of the process by which a quality education is defined, policies designed to enable it, and strategies implemented to achieve it.
- So – here is the crux of the dilemma and why we have to proceed with a comprehensive analysis of the problem and its solutions:

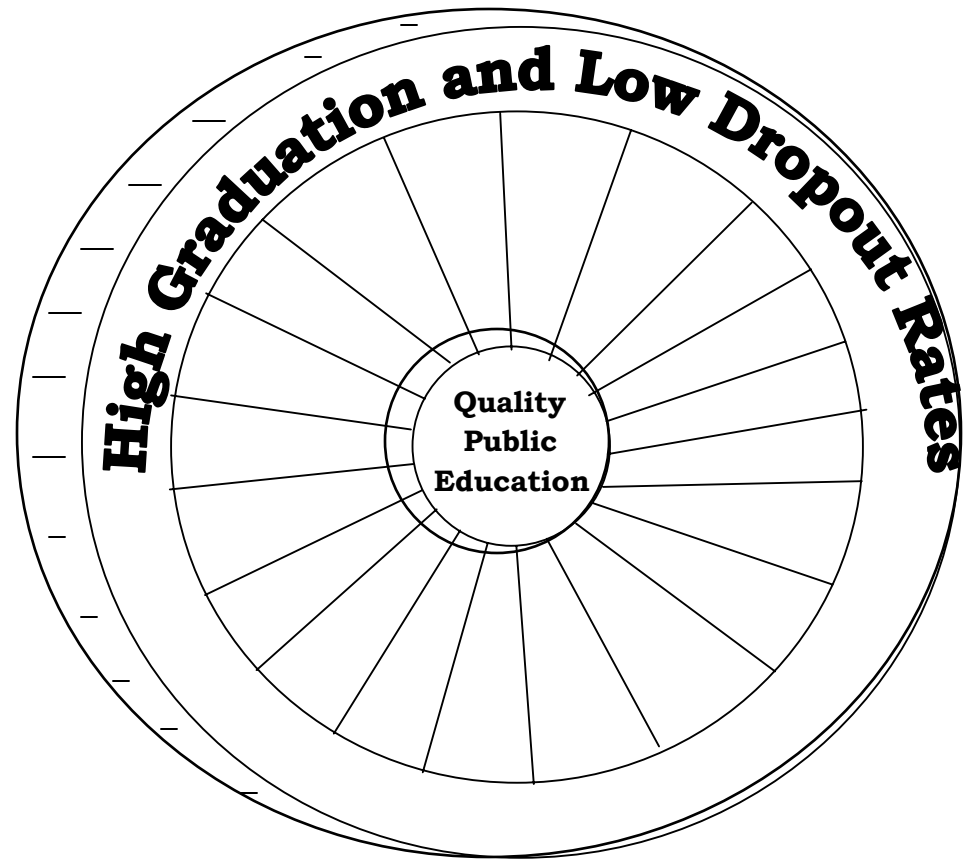
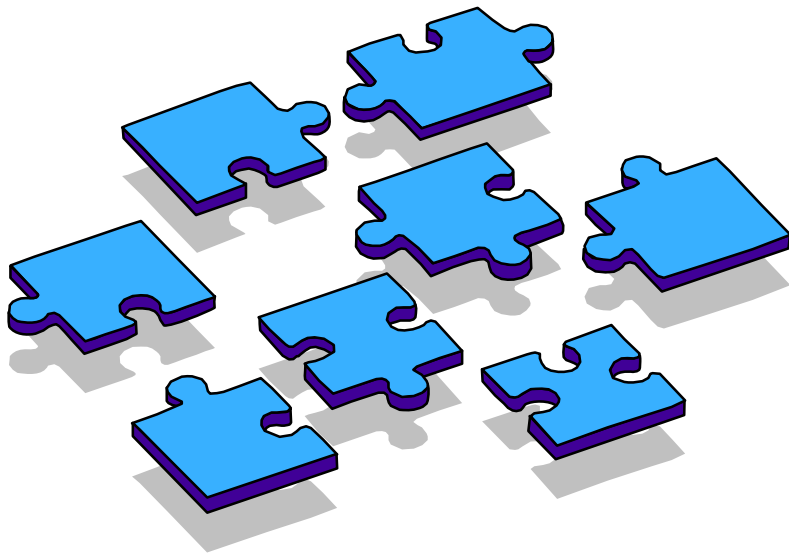
*We need to keep children in school so that they can obtain a quality education that prepares them to be effective citizens. But we need to be able to deliver effectively a quality education in order to keep our children in school.*

The question, therefore, is: What is to be done?

### **3. Spokes of the Wheel and Pieces of the Puzzle -- Maximizing strategic impact through program coordination**

- **Public schools are key to the development of a culture.** This is one of the key arenas where our children develop their knowledge, understanding, skills and tools, norms for behavior, sense of themselves, expectations for themselves and others, and capacity to deal with adversity and success.
  - **Public schools are a function of the culture.** They do not exist in isolation from the culture. Quite to the contrary. Public schools tend to reflect what is going on in the culture, for better or worse.
  - **Many of the problems that public schools have are deeply-rooted in the culture.** For example, the student achievement gap across race and class lines is the intended consequence of conscious policies. The Hampton Plan set this course in 1868 and our elementary and secondary school children are still faced with systemic under-preparation for higher education or the workplace of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- **The low graduation and high dropout rates do not result from a single cause** or a two-dimensional imperfection in the way schools function. Rather, these outcomes are a symptom of the conjunction of problems that are deeply rooted in the culture. The remedies needed require an analysis and set of strategies appropriate to the complexity of the problem.

**Coordinating education programs is like bringing together the many pieces of a complex jigsaw puzzle. It is imperative to be able to identify all the pieces, understand their uses, assess how they fit together in the larger picture, and then enable them to work together to maximize their intended impact.**



**The many and varied education programs are like the spokes of a wheel. As individual programs they have little capacity to have the intended impact. When they are coordinated together inside the analytical wheel and coordinated to work together they can maximize their impact.**



**Toward these ends there is a need for:**

- a. The development of a **comprehensive and accurate analysis**, rooted in truth-telling, of the nature of the problems faced regarding graduation and dropout rates;**
- b. The building of an **understanding of all the programs**, federal, state and local, that are intended to have an impact on some aspect of the problems identified in the analysis;**
- c. The use of **training and re-training** for all education stakeholders -- including parents, students, educators and public officials – to deal with the problems of bureaucracy, turf, customs and practices that function like deep mud under the wheels of progress;**
- d. A **strategy for coordination** of all of these programs in order to maximize their effect in addressing the underlying problems;**
- e. Support for and enabling of the **systematic involvement of parents and students** in the policy work in order to take advantage of their knowledge and capacity and to ensure their effective investment in the process.**



#### 4. Spokes of the Wheel and Pieces of the Puzzle – Some elements that need to be considered in the development of a coordinated Dropout Prevention Plan

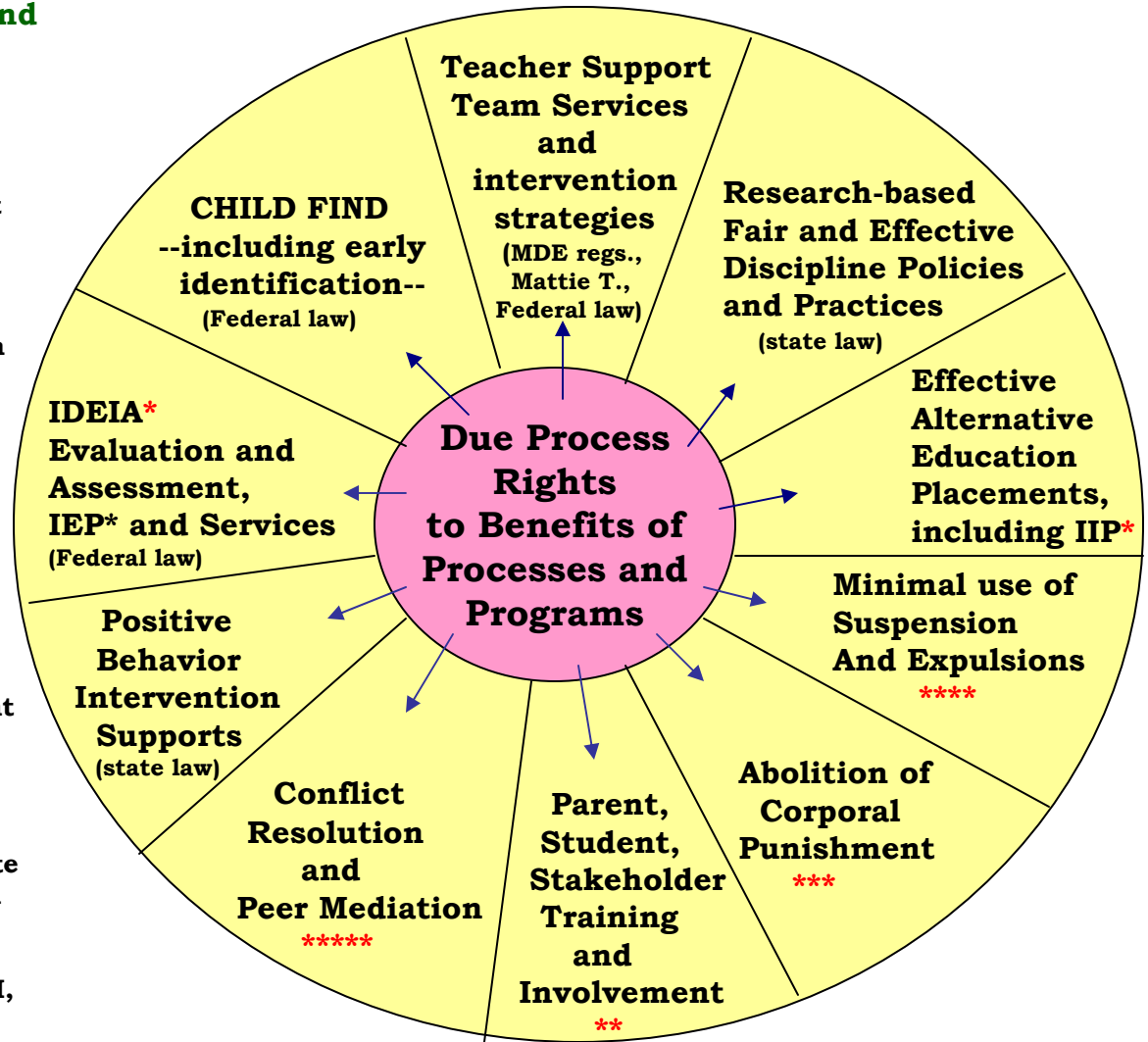
##### A key working premise:

- **Keep students in school.** When students are not in school they cannot learn, cannot succeed in school and eventually will not finish school. **No Child Left Behind, IDEIA, Child Find, Title I**, the state's **Teacher Support Team** regulations, and **effective alternative education placements** are all rooted in the premise that everything must be done to keep students in schools and provide them with the education and support services that they need and to which they are entitled. We do not have to re-invent this wheel or create new pieces of the puzzle. So, as part of a coordinated strategy:
- **Enforce student and parent rights under Due Process of law.** It is urgent that we eliminate arbitrary and capricious policies, customs and practices that push students out of school, onto the streets and toward the jailhouse.
  - The Mississippi Supreme Court held in the juvenile case of *T.H. III* that every child has the right to a free public education under the **Due Process Clause** of the Mississippi Constitution. The United States Supreme Court held in *Goss v. Lopez* that a student has a property right in his public education that is protected by the **Due Process Clause** of the United States Constitution.
  - These cases involved the suspension and expulsion of students. The Courts held that the students have constitutional rights that must not be denied by arbitrary rules, regulations, customs or practices, or by the capricious and unpredictable enforcement of them.

**Visualizing the connection between enforcement of Due Process rights of parents and students with existing programs that are intended to assist students to stay in school, learn and graduate with their class.**

1. Compliance with Federal and state law is a **duty** of the school district.
2. For every duty of the school district the parents and students have a **corresponding right** to require compliance by the school district.
3. The state has a **duty** to provide each school district with the **funds necessary** to comply with the law!

- \* IDEIA = Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act
- \* IEP = development and implementation of Individual Education Plan
- \* IIP = development and implementation of Individual Instruction Plan
- \*\* Parent and Student Training, Involvement
- \*\* Training for School Bd members, Supts., Administrators, Teachers, support staff, municipal and county officials
- \*\*\* Use of corporal punishment violates state law requirement to use discipline rooted in research-based evidence
- \*\*\*\* See, for ex., MS S. Ct. decision in TH III, Teacher Support Team, Title I, etc.
- \*\*\*\*\* See state law on Safe and Orderly Schools



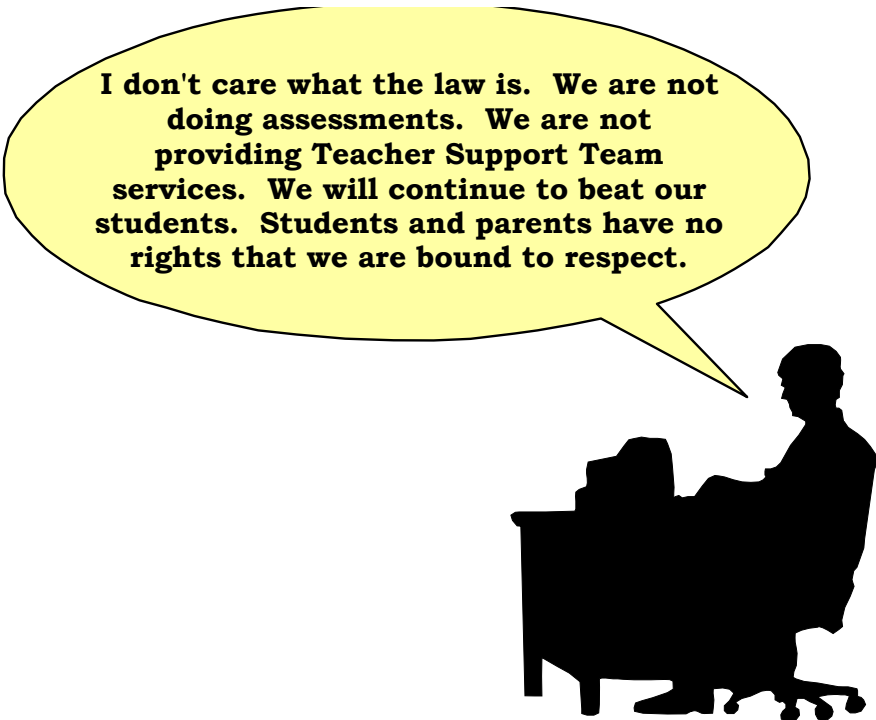
## **Examples of due process violations:**

### **Example # 1:**

**Student A finds out one morning that he has failed his 9-week test. That afternoon during class Student B, who is a good student, calls Student A “stupid” because Student A is doing poorly in several classes they have together. Student A is hurt and angered and yells loudly at Student B to stop taunting him.**

**The teacher stops the argument and sends Student A to the principal for disrupting the class. The teacher recommends that Student A be beaten or suspended. The Principal gives Student A a choice: 5 licks with the paddle or a 9-day suspension. Student A feels bad about himself and does not want to be in school right now, anyway. Student A elects the 9-day suspension. The Principal suspends Student A for 9 days. Student A does not get any education services during the 9 days.**

**HOW MANY DIFFERENT DUE PROCESS RIGHTS OF THE STUDENT AND HIS PARENT OR GUARDIAN WERE VIOLATED BY THE CONDUCT OF THE TEACHER AND THE PRINCIPAL?**



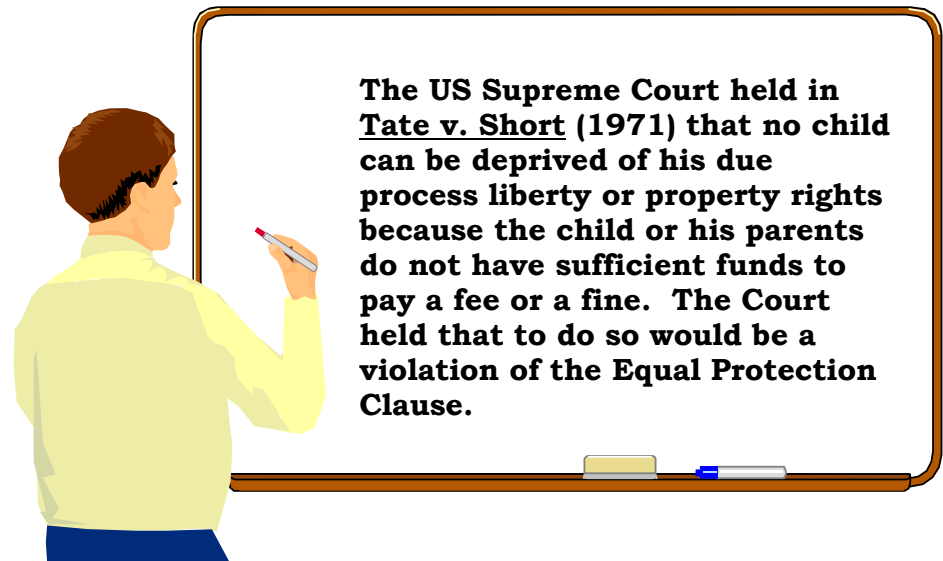
**I don't care what the law is. We are not doing assessments. We are not providing Teacher Support Team services. We will continue to beat our students. Students and parents have no rights that we are bound to respect.**

### Example # 2:

Student C finds out when he registers for school that he must pay a registration fee that covers certain school activities and class materials for his courses. At the same time Student C's mother, who is the sole support for four children in the school district, provides personal economic data that qualifies her children as students "at-risk" under the US Dept. of Agriculture guidelines and "at-risk" qualification standards under the MS Adequate Education Program. Student C and his three siblings all qualify for free lunch under the guidelines. Student C's mother does not have sufficient funds with which to pay the registration fee for any of her children.

Student C is told by the school Principal that he cannot register for school because of the failure to pay the registration fee and is sent home. The three siblings of Student C are also denied registration by their respective Principals and are sent home. The Principal tells Student C's mother that none of her children will be allowed in school until the registration fees are paid.

**HOW MANY DIFFERENT RIGHTS OF THE STUDENT AND HIS PARENT OR GUARDIAN WERE VIOLATED BY THE CONDUCT OF THE PRINCIPAL?**



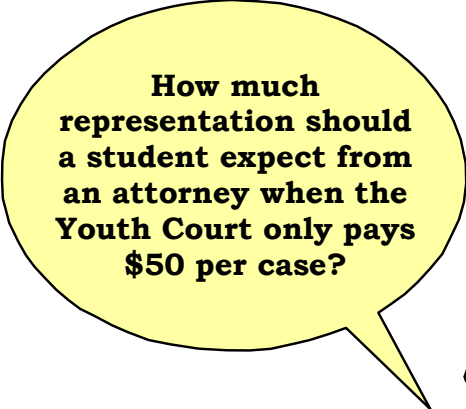
### Example # 3:

Student D is ten years old and in elementary school. Student D and Student E are on the playground during recess playing basketball. Student D and Student E argue loudly about the game. Student D pushes Student E and Student E pushes back. Student E trips and falls backward on the ground, scraping his elbow.

Two teachers are busy talking with each other at one end of the playground. They see the dispute, intervene after it is over, and send both students to the Principal for discipline. The Principal suspends the students and recommends expulsion. The School Board expels both students for 12 calendar months. Since it is March this means that each student will be unable to complete the current year and will return the following year too late to get credit for the following year. As a consequence, each will fall two years behind.

The Superintendent also refers the two students to the Youth Court for prosecution as juvenile delinquents. The Court appoints a single attorney to represent both students. The attorney interviews each student for 5 minutes and recommends they plead no contest to the charges. The parents of each student complain to the Youth Court Judge that the attorney did not provide meaningful representation. The Youth Court rejects the parents' concerns and orders both students to a period of months at the Training School, where they will receive little or no effective educational or other support services.

**HOW MANY DIFFERENT RIGHTS OF THE STUDENT AND HIS PARENT OR GUARDIAN WERE VIOLATED BY THE CONDUCT OF THE TEACHER, PRINCIPAL, SUPERINTENDENT, SCHOOL BOARD AND YOUTH COURT JUDGE?**



How much representation should a student expect from an attorney when the Youth Court only pays \$50 per case?



**Example # 4:**

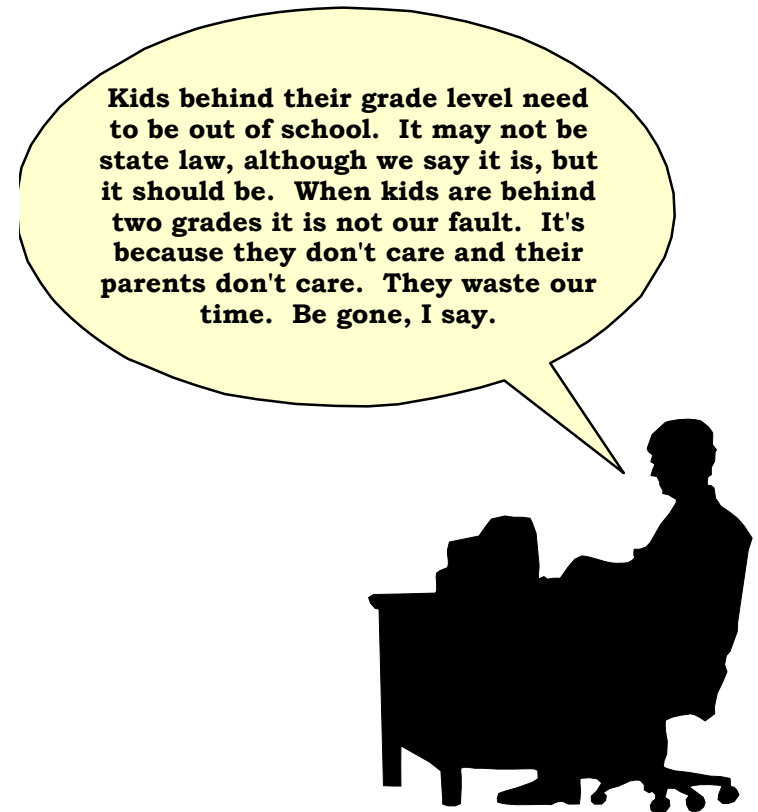
**Student E is almost 18 years old and has enough academic credits to be in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Student E is a B+ student. However, Student E has missed a great deal of school due to Sickle cell anemia.**

**The school guidance counselor held a meeting with Student E to advise Student E that:**

- **she was two years behind her age group,**
- **she could not graduate with her class,**
- **she was too old to be in school another two years,**
- **that the school district would not let her continue to attend the high school because that was the state law,**
- **that it would be in her best interest to drop out of school to get her GED, and**
- **that if she did not drop out to get her GED that she would not be allowed to continue at the high school, so she would not get to graduate anyway.**

**Student E was distraught. Her mother was angry. Together they explained to the guidance counselor that Student E needs to graduate high school so that she can attend a 4-year college. The guidance counselor replied that she wasn't qualified to go to any 4-year college and that such a goal would prove bitterly disappointing "for a girl like her." The guidance counselor insisted that Student E leave school now, and implied that she should stop trying to be more than she had a right to be.**

**HOW MANY DIFFERENT RIGHTS OF THE STUDENT AND HER PARENT WERE VIOLATED BY THE CONDUCT OF THE GUIDANCE COUNSELOR?**



### **Example # 5:**

**Student F is in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade in elementary school. The student is subject to the school district Uniform Dress Code.**

**The dress code states that:**

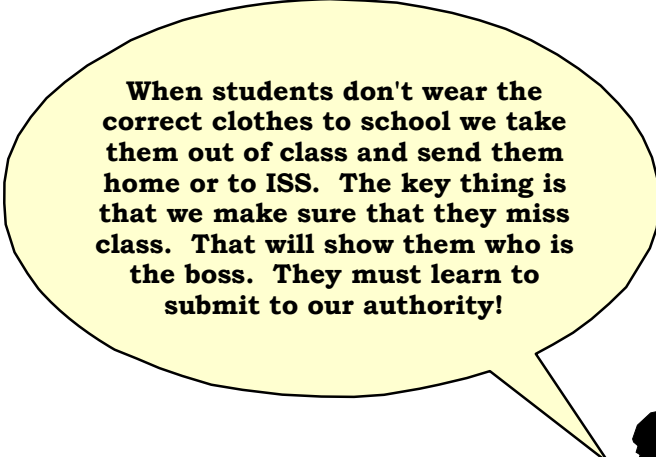
- **the pants worn by a student cannot have stitching on the pants that are a different color than the color of the pants;**
- **the pants worn by a student must be blue, provided that the shade of blue is not too dark and not too light (compare pants color with “permitted color scale” printed in Handbook);**
- **the undershirt worn by the student must be white and the socks worn by the student must be white;**
- **a student in violation of the dress code must be removed from class by the teacher, must automatically receive a zero for each day the student is in violation of the dress code, and the student will not be permitted to take any tests during those days, nor make them up.**

**Student F enters school wearing a blue pair of pants that has a manufacturer-designed brown stitching on the back pocket of blue pants, a light gray undershirt and light gray socks.**

**The classroom teacher searches each child that enters the classroom to determine if the child is attired in violation of the dress code.**

**Student F is sent to the Office for discipline because his pants are too-light blue, the pocket stitching does not match the pants, his undershirt is not white, and neither are his socks.**

**HOW MANY DIFFERENT RIGHTS OF THE STUDENT WERE VIOLATED BY APPLICATION OF THE UNIFORM DRESS CODE?**



**When students don't wear the correct clothes to school we take them out of class and send them home or to ISS. The key thing is that we make sure that they miss class. That will show them who is the boss. They must learn to submit to our authority!**





**Following is a list of programs and requirements that have been mandated either by federal or state laws or regulations to keep children in school, enable them to learn, and provide the supports needed for them to graduate on time. It is unfortunate in many school districts that all or parts of this framework are violated rather than implemented.**

- **IDEIA – Evaluation and Assessment, IEP and Services**
- **Individual Education Plans, development and implementation of ...**
- **Child Find, including early identification**
- **Title I and Title IV Dropout Prevention Strategies**
- **Local School Dist. Dropout Prevention Plans**
- **Healthy Schools Programs**
- **Positive Behavior Intervention Supports**
- **Conflict Resolution and Peer Mediation**
- **Teacher Support Teams Services and intervention strategies**
- **Effective Alternative Education Placements, including IIP**
- **School Psychologist and Counselor Services**
- **Classroom Management Skills Training (Title II)**
- **Leadership Development Training for Administrators and Teachers**
- **Qualified teachers in every classroom**
- **Parent Training and Involvement**

## Summary

Under our existing Constitution, statutes and regulations the Working Principles ought to be:

1. Keep children in school. It is wrong to put a student *out of school* for any reason short of a clear and present threat to the safety of other students or the student's own self. To do so contradicts and undermines the goals of the programs and regulations set forth above. Further, even when a child must be put out of school, there must be effective education and other support services provided to that student.
2. Provide a quality education to all students. Students must receive all of the educational and support services to which they are entitled.
3. Coordinate planning and implementation of federal and state programs and regulations through the new MDE Dropout Prevention – Maximize Graduation process.
4. Involve parents and students in the planning and implementation of the new MDE Dropout Prevention – Maximize Graduation process.
5. Fully fund the MS Adequate Education Program AND fully fund the needed increase in the MAEP formula for students at-risk.
6. Enable parents, students, and other community education stakeholders to be involved in the formation and implementation of education policy.