

Workforce Development—A Manifesto Schools AND Cleveland Community College Working Together!!! It's About Time!!! Common Sense Approach by Robert A. Williams

“Workforce Development” is a brand new term in “education” circles for an old fashion concept. That old concept being to provide every child with an opportunity to an education sufficient to provide the basis for that child to independently succeed in society. This old fashioned concept was sufficient for mankind to survive through the history of the world. Today, this boils down to our children being able to qualify and obtain a job and being able to support themselves and their families. Pretty simple stuff.

However, If you listen to so called workforce development (education) experts at CCS and CCC of today you soon learn that these same words mean different things to those experts than what those words mean to you and me. Basically those differences in meaning reduces down to what is making the most money for those particular experts. The “New Math” is a good example of experts gone wrong. The old math was good enough to develop atomic energy and put a man on the moon. The new math has failed most students as well as the Country. The USA 50+ years ago had the best education system in the world. Now we don't even make the top ten. So much for all these so called experts.

So, what to do???

The answer is clear when you think about it and apply just a bit of common sense. You go back to the methodology in education we had 50+ years ago that had evolved from what had worked through out the history of public education in America which began in 1642.

For example, I started the First Grade at Fallston School in 1953 when America was Number One in the world in Education. Of course Cleveland County was not Number One in America in education back then and neither is it now. Schools were segregated then and there was Prayer and the Bible in schools back then. But the basic educational methodology was there for success. That methodology being to teach the three R's. Reading, 'Riting and 'Rithmetics. Plus a smattering of vocational education. Shop classes for the guys and Home and Family living for the gals.

Church and Family life rounded out a child's education back then. At Church related activities like Bible School in the summer, we learned how to build birdhouses and other things out of wood. Learning to use simple hand tools to make things or fix things that were broken. Taking things apart and hopefully putting it all back together again was my favorite. At home Mama gave us chores like washing dishes, cleaning up the house and washing and ironing our own clothes. Working in the garden too. We always had a large garden. Just about everybody did. We knew where food came from at an early age. We learned by doing that it took hard work to put food on the table.

At school we learned the ABC's, how to read and write (and cursive writing too), count and do our arithmetic. We started with the basics and gradually worked our way up. Every school had a shop where you learned about hand tools and power tools too. I learned how to weld in the eighth and ninth grades. We learned how to judge cattle, pick cotton, identify seeds and

all kinds of other stuff that lasted for a lifetime. We also worked jobs in the community. We had three grocery stores in Fallston and many of us bagged groceries on afternoons and Saturdays. When we turned 16 some of us went to work in cotton mills to help support our families. The children of farmers learned how to farm. To milk cows, plow, keep up farm machinery, harvest crops, etc.

Cleveland Community College did not exist at that time. We learned what we learned in regular schools and when we graduated, we went to work or college. Often both. Or, to the military. Vietnam mostly. Some did not return alive.

There are plenty of us still around who remember the education we received over 50 years ago and how we were prepared to enter the workforce. And did. We have a history of success in various degrees and each of us wants that success for our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. On and on.

Taking all of our collective education and experience, this is what we expect from Cleveland County Schools:

1. Reinstate School Construction Strategic Plans to evaluate present population densities and demographics and construct smaller K-12 schools to better encourage parental and other related local participation. Every such school shall contain equal facilities and shall include vocational courses of study.
2. A course of study at every level shall be developed such that all students are taught age appropriate reading, writing, arithmetic with additional math, sciences, history, civics, agriculture, vocational. etc. as the student progresses. Honors and remedial classes shall also be included.
3. The age appropriate curriculum shall include studies of how things work, the principles of operation, how they are constructed and maintained, hand tools, common power tools and their use and the various skills that are associated. Such

classes shall be part class work and part hands on use of such tools.

3. Lesson plans and text books must be adopted such that a balanced educational process is obtained. Just like we had years earlier. Not much "new" is required.

4. Classroom teachers will teach to the lesson plans as developed and all aspects of "political correctness" and "teaching to the test" will be eliminated.

5. Lessons in home economics, etiquette/manners, civic duty and responsibility, light industrial work, marriage and family planning, home repairs, agriculture, cooking, cleaning, and other such social and family living skills shall be included in an age appropriate manner.

6. Lessons on how government operates at the local, state and federal level must be taught so that the population will know how to inform and direct elected officials to pass laws as necessary to restore education to a true workforce development program in order to implement a restructuring of public school systems to accomplish the intended purpose as outlined above.

This is what we expect from Cleveland Community College to provide smooth transitions from High Schools:

1. To develop courses of study such that the lessons learned in the graded schools are seamlessly advanced beyond the basics taught in High School to meet the needs of our local industry as well as specialized industrial processes and trades. Examples are structural and pipe welding. Machine shop processes, etc.

2. To develop training courses for vocational trades such as plumbing, electrician, certified pipe welding, electronics, computers, HVAC, Construction, Auto repair, woodworking/furniture making, etc.

3. To offer High School Equivalency courses to earn GED degrees for those whose circumstances did not allow them to obtain a High School Diploma.

4. To offer advanced courses in English, History, arts and sciences as a prelude to higher education at the college degree level and beyond.

5. To partner with local industry or business for specialized training for that particular industry or business. In such cases CCC would provide the training and the industry or business would provide the funding for that training, materials and equipment.

Of course this is a bare-boned outline of a plan to bring the education system in Cleveland County back to the purpose of educating our children so that our children are taught what is necessary to become a part of a trained workforce. To become educated adequately so as to become self sufficient and a law abiding contributing member of our local community. This will not be accomplished overnight with some kind of "magic answer" that will solve all our workforce development problems overnight that Commissioner Eddie Holbrook is looking for. But this plan works. We are proof of that.

Other proofs are our crime rates and prison population back then was much less. Many people left their doors unlocked at night and were not afraid. The old Cleveland County Courthouse was in operation and had only one courtroom. Most other county agencies were also located in that same building. Downtown Shelby was booming. Downtown Fallston, Kings Mountain and other towns were booming. Cotton mills were booming and full of employees. Large businesses like PPG and Fiber came to Cleveland County without major giveaways of taxpayer dollars. And paid good wages too. Just about everything was "Made in the USA" by USA workers. The Cleveland County Fair was the best in the state and never asked for taxpayer dollars. Need I say anymore?