



# Reinventing Education, Hope, and the American Dream: The Challenge for Twenty-First Century America

*Mel Hawkins*

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The crisis in public education has ominous implications for the future of our way of life. Equally ominous is that the forces on both sides of the battle for the future of education are tragically wrong. The reform initiatives of "No Child Left Behind;" "Race to the Top;" privatization; blaming teachers and their unions; standardized testing; charter schools and vouchers are all recipes for disaster. Equally disastrous are preserving the traditions of public education and excusing schools and teachers because of the challenges of poverty and racial segregation. It is the focus on failure of the part of both sides that is distracting us from the simple truth about the problems in education and that keeps us from a practical solution that will transform education in America. Instead of "Why do kids fail?" The question we should be asking is "Why do some students succeed in our schools and what characteristics do they share in common?" What we discover is that whether they are white, black, rich, poor, live in a thriving or deteriorating neighborhood, or come from an intact or fractured family is that almost every highly performing student has, 1) a parent who holds out high hopes and expectations for him or her and who believes that an education is the ticket to the American dream; and 2) who accepts responsibility as full partners in the educational process with their children's teachers and principals. Each and every one of these parents works hard to instill a powerful motivation to learn in the minds and hearts of their children. The other thing these high performing students share is that they have learned, with little or no help from us, how to progress successfully through the educational process. We must forget about all of the excuses and distractions of poverty and focus our complete attention on two objectives: 1) reinventing the educational process to do a better job of teaching every child how to be successful and, 2) working to engage an ever-increasing percentage of parents as full partners in the educational process. Nothing else matters! Reinventing Education, Hope, and the American Dream: The Challenge for Twenty-First Century America, is focused on putting teachers in a position in which they can teach and students in a position where they can be successful. The book offers 19 specific recommendations to fix the educational process, and 14 specific recommendations to repackage and resell the American dream and to engage American mothers and fathers as full partners in the education of their children. What we will also discover is that, in each of our communities and school districts, we have the power to act on these recommendations. We do not require any one's permission nor do we need an act of Congress or state legislature. All we need, now, is you!

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