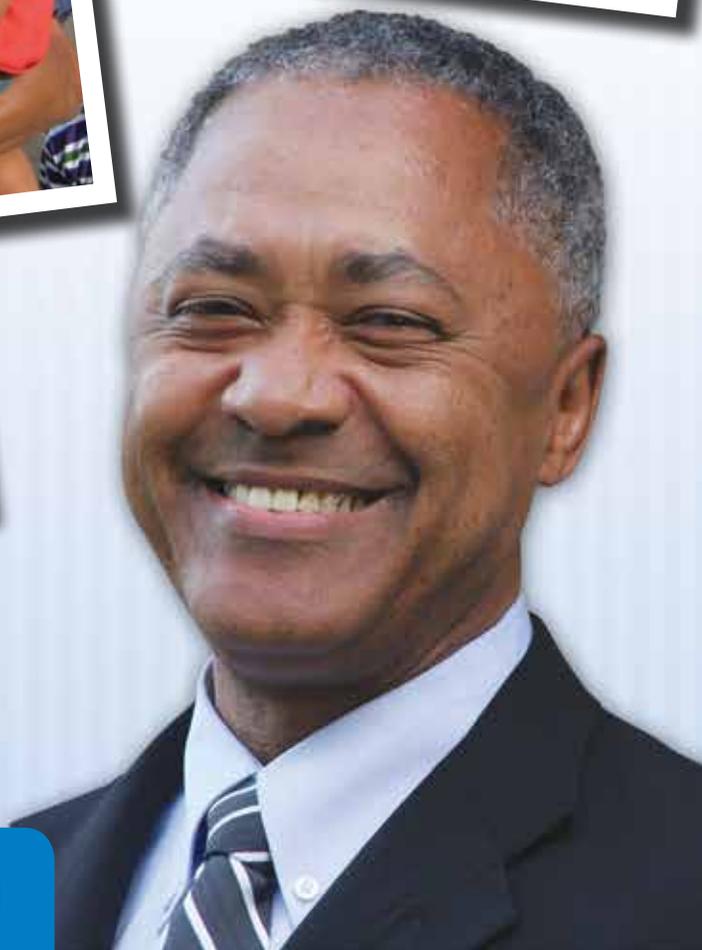


# Education Policy



**Don Samuels**  
**FOR MAYOR**

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*“Offering our children an outstanding education is one of our most fundamental, perhaps our most fundamental obligation as a country. Whether we meet that obligation not only reflects who we are as Americans, it will shape our future as a nation. Countries that out-educate us today will out-compete us tomorrow.”*

**– President Barack Obama**



Education has always been, and will continue to be, the foundational equalizer in America. It has lifted millions of people out of poverty, unleashed innovators whose creations have changed the world and built some of the best research institutions anywhere, like the University of Minnesota. We know that children are born into different and, quite often, unequal circumstances. Those circumstances provide privilege to some, additional opportunities for development to some; and an easier path in life for some. Yet, education has proven to be the most prominent and effective means of narrowing those differences and providing every person with a chance to succeed in America.

The promise of giving every child an opportunity to be successful is slipping away. The greatest tragedy is that this isn't breaking news. We've known that this fundamental piece of the American Dream has been in danger for decades, and we've done very little about it.

Thirty years ago, the Department of Education commissioned a report entitled "A Nation at Risk" that highlighted the severe problems our nation faced in regards to our educational outcomes. Among other things, it stressed the fact that our schools were perpetually and predictably failing to prepare our poor and minority children for a future in college or a career. Now, three decades later, the numbers have only gotten worse.

It's clear that education is at a crossroads in America. This persistent and continuous educational decline has led to severe job skills gap. Nearly every industrialized nation in the world is surpassing our students in reading, math and science by considerable margins. In an increasingly globalized world, this is unacceptable. Furthermore, this educational decline has led to a measurable decline in economic growth. The achievement gap between U.S. children and children in other countries cost the U.S. economy \$2.3 trillion in economic output in just 2008 alone<sup>1</sup>. Our education system is not providing young people with the skills to help drive a 21st century economy. We cannot maintain our global dominance if we continue to see these subpar educational outcomes.

As if those outcomes weren't bad enough, Minnesota, and Minneapolis in particular, are leading the charge toward mediocrity.

- » Minnesota is dead last in the nation (50th) in graduating Native American and Latino students within 4 years<sup>2</sup>
- » Only 36% of 3rd grade Latino students are proficient in reading at grade level.
- » Minnesota is second to last (49th) in the nation in educational outcomes for African American students
- » Fewer than half of Minneapolis students of color, which are the largest growing demographic and comprise 66%+ of MPS, graduate high school on time.
- » 40% of Minnesota high school graduates, regardless of color or socioeconomic status, entering post-secondary institutions require remediation courses<sup>3</sup>.

The facts paint a bleak picture of our future if we are unwilling to drastically change today. We cannot afford, figuratively and literally, to continue down this path. We need a transformational change in education. The good news is that, with the right leadership, we can change course. We can ensure opportunity for every child. It can be done.



## What can a mayor do about education in Minneapolis?

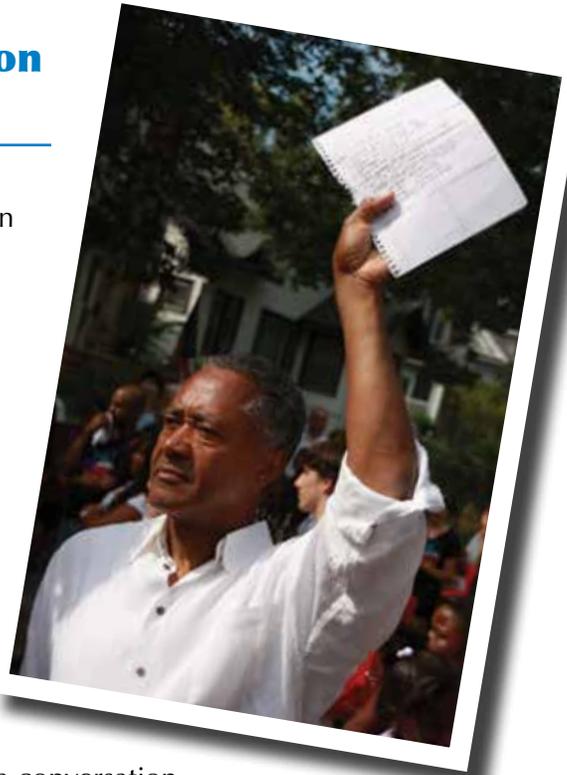
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This is probably the question I hear most on the campaign trail. It is assumed by some that because the Mayor of Minneapolis has no statutory control over schools, that person can't have much influence over the education in the city. They are dead wrong.

We know that whatever the schools plant, the city reaps. If we as a city plant continued failure, we reap crime and dependency. We know this can change, but it will take leadership unseen in a Mayor of Minneapolis to date.

We know that whatever a Mayor chooses to focus on, the media and public will focus on. This has been played out in the leadership shown by Mayor Rybak on issues like the Vikings Stadium, Streetcar development or Bike Lanes. We know a Mayor can start a conversation about the values we share, the outcomes we demand, and the results we expect in Minneapolis.

There are mayors across the nation doing it right now. Newark, Los Angeles and Denver are all cities that have made great progress in making changes to the education system, and those changes were led by a mayor with no formal authority over the schools.



## Case Studies:

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### Newark

Democratic Mayor Cory Booker has helped lead an education transformation in Newark public schools by focusing efforts on outcomes, children and prosperity. While he has been mayor, he has helped bring in over \$100 million to Newark Public Schools in an effort to reform the compensation structure. He has helped institute performance metrics so that the residents of Newark are paying for results and outcomes in education, not just effort and attendance.



### Los Angeles

Former union organizer and prominent Democratic Mayor Antonio Villaragoisa focused like a laser on education transformation efforts in Los Angeles. The City had some of the worst outcomes in the nation with under 45% kids of color graduating on time. He helped double the amount of high performing schools in the L.A. School District and he helped raise graduation rates by double digits. He helped bring change to the schools by leveraging his vast union relationships to push defenders of the status quo to transformational change.



### Denver

Democratic Mayor Michael Hancock helped bring transformation to Denver Public Schools in a variety of ways. First, he launched a mayoral cabinet level initiative with education reform experts focused on depoliticizing the education transformation effort. Second, as a member of the Denver City Council, he helped write the bipartisan Innovative Schools Act of 2008, pushed for the Educator Effectiveness Act of 2010 bringing accountability and data management to Denver's schools.



Mayors across the nation are getting engaged on the issue of education, without any formal control, because they know it will determine the future success of their cities. It can be done in Minneapolis as well.

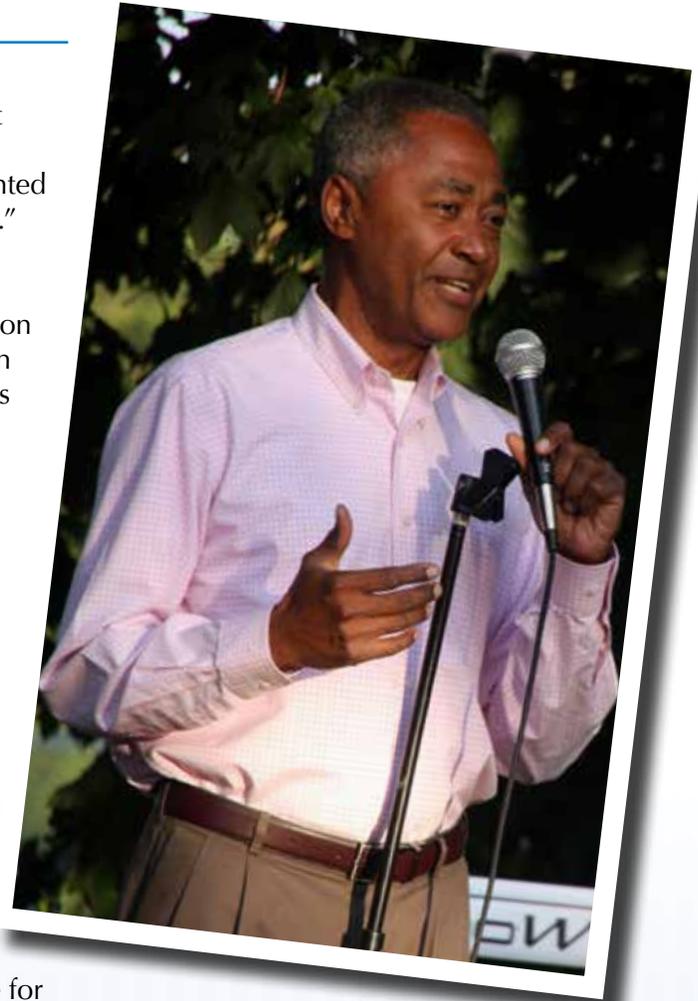
## What I will do.

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Education very well may be the most important issue facing the city of Minneapolis. There are others running for Mayor who will say, "If I wanted to focus on education, I'd run for School Board." That's not the type of Mayor I'll be. The stakes are too high. The future success and vitality of Minneapolis, Minnesota, and America depend on an educated and skilled workforce as well as an engaged and empowered citizenry. The future is at stake. Not only should the mayor be deeply engaged in education in our city – the mayor cannot afford NOT to be involved. No mayor can balance a budget in Minneapolis without asking – how productive will our workforce be? How much revenue will we generate? How much will we innovate? What new jobs will we create and what businesses will be attracted to relocate here? How much will it cost taxpayers to send kids to prison instead of college? If a mayor can't balance a budget without answering those questions, the next mayor of Minneapolis can't afford to be absent on education.

The time has come for the mayor of Minneapolis to articulate a vision and narrative for education, partner with the Minneapolis Public Schools, and help provide the political space for the Superintendent, the Minneapolis School Board, state legislators and other stakeholders to make the tough decisions necessary to bring a transformational change to our schools. I will be unlike any other Mayor in City history when it comes to partnering with the Minneapolis Schools, and demanding the success of ALL students.

As Mayor, I'll convene academic, business and philanthropic leaders to start the Trust for Innovation in Minneapolis Education (TIME) Fund, which will be privately funded to develop grants and forgivable loans to organizations and schools that show great progress through new approaches to the challenges our public education system faces. These funds will be devoted to two major pursuits. First, TIME funds will be used as incentives to reward those schools that show dedication to outcomes without adding an additional tax burden on the city. The Fund will also serve as a lender of last resort to help turn around chronically failing schools by offering them the financial and organizational support they need to succeed.



## Path to success in education:

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When it comes to giving every child a great education, we already know what works; we just need to scale it up. I was responsible for starting the Hope Collaborative, which brought the principals from 10 of the highest performing schools across the country to share their successful strategies with Minneapolis. These schools were extremely successful in educating poor, urban, and minority students. They were reversing the achievement gap, and nearly all of the principals outlined the same strategies. Much of those strategies were the same ones employed at the best schools in Minneapolis – Harvest Prep and Hiawatha Academy.

First, they have shown us that we must start from an understanding that in order to truly transform outcomes for our children, we must all be working together for that same goal...the children. In every decision, in the classroom, in the district, in the home, and in government, we have to ask ourselves, “Is this going to make these kids better students,” and then have the courage to act accordingly. Here’s what every successful school is doing to educate our young people:

## In the classroom:

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### Belief

The ugly core at the center of the achievement gap is this: We have allowed ourselves to be convinced that some children are destined for failure. As a society, we have accepted a paradigm that says that if you are academically successful it is because you are smart, studious, or both. And if you choose to fail, or were born into unfortunate circumstances, then there is nothing that could have been done.

We often hear that poverty is a barrier in education that cannot be overcome. We know that is just not true. Minneapolis’ two best schools are Harvest Prep Academy and Hiawatha Academy and those schools serve 99%+ kids of color, 95%+ free or reduced lunch kids and yet, their outcomes beat the state average by double digits every year. We know all kids can learn. We must hold high expectations for all of our children, support and nurture them along the way and they can succeed. In fact, studies show that “high expectations...ranks second among school-level factors that impact student achievement.”<sup>4</sup> We can no longer afford to have different expectations for different groups of kids.

In South Korea, teachers are referred to as “Nation Builders”, and it’s true. Everyone believes that EVERY child can learn, regardless of circumstances. We must do the same. This belief gap must be closed in America, and it all starts in the classroom. The single greatest influence on our children’s educational outcomes is the person standing in front of the classroom. We know great teaching can transform lives. We must ensure that every student walks into a classroom with a great teacher. We can no longer look at education as a form of service delivery, where teachers deliver lectures and if the students don’t get it, that’s on them. We must ensure that comprehension is the primary goal. Effort is not sufficient. We need to be focused on outcomes.

## Useful and timely data

*“Teachers need real information right now about what’s happening to their kids. The high stakes is TODAY, because you can do something about it.”*

– **Geoffrey Canada, Harlem Children’s Zone**

Teachers need information. They need to know what’s working and what isn’t. And they need it in real time, not at the end of the year when it’s too late to make changes. They need that information to be able to adjust classroom lessons, assignments and tests. By having more information in a supportive classroom, we can provide teachers with necessary information, and students with better outcomes. It is only when we support, nurture and provide ample opportunity for professional development and growth can we expect to hold anyone accountable for outcomes.

## Commitment

Our kids do not spend enough time in the classroom. This puts America at a competitive disadvantage relative to other nations across the globe. To win the competition of jobs and prosperity, we need longer school years. We need longer school days. Right now, most of our children are spending as little as 180 days in class for 6 ½ hours per day, placing us in the bottom half of industrialized countries. By adding just one hour of instruction per day and adding an extra 20 days over the summer, we can give our students over THREE YEARS of additional classroom instruction over the course of their K-12 education.



## In the district:

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### Local empowerment

Far too often, the hands of school leaders are tied in making decisions about personnel, development and work culture. If No Child Left Behind taught us anything, it's that one size does not fit all; infrequent, high stakes testing with no real support does almost nothing to improve the education of our children. To ensure better outcomes in our education system, we must empower local leaders to lead. We have seen strong leadership from Minneapolis Public Schools Superintendent Bernadeia Johnson, but she can't do it alone. We need to empower principals to build a team that they believe will help bring success to their school and then hold those leaders accountable for reaching standards that we set, as a community, together. Research has shown that strong leadership can add up to 7 months of additional academic growth per student per year<sup>5</sup>.

### Elevate the teaching profession

To get the best from our talented and dedicated teachers, we must be committed to cultivating, nurturing, professionally developing and rewarding our teachers. You would never hear anyone suggest that a doctor or a lawyer was someone who couldn't cut it in a "real" job. Yet educators in our society are routinely disrespected, underappreciated, under-empowered, and underpaid. We need to elevate the profession of teaching.

*"If you have teacher evaluation...and you don't provide support, it's punitive, and if you do provide support, it's transformative"*

**— Mary Anne Sullivan, Dem Indiana State Representative**

- » We must commit to having all effective teachers in the classroom. This means meaningful evaluations and a clear recourse for those whose students habitually and perpetually lack progress.
- » We must compensate all teachers more. They deserve to be paid like the professionals that they are. When they perform above and beyond their peers, they should be rewarded for that as well.
- » We need to assist in the professional development and networking of teachers. Learning the newest, most effective techniques, compulsory continuing education, and a healthy, constant dialogue among peers is a staple of every other profession; so it should be with our teachers.
- » Teachers cannot be viewed as interchangeable parts. We need to identify great teachers, no matter what their background and training, and empower them to succeed.

Once we've done that, we should be aiming to get the best teachers in front of the neediest kids. In high poverty, high minority schools whose teachers have above-average qualifications, students were almost nine times as likely to have college-ready academic skills as their counterparts in other high-poverty, high-minority schools with lower teacher quality<sup>6</sup>, yet our policies don't emphasize the best and most effective teachers teaching to the neediest children.

## **In the home:**

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### **Parents**

Unlike most politicians, I am not afraid to talk about the role that parents need to play in the success of children's education. I will directly engage parents who are not actively a part of their child's learning by providing opportunity for them to have their voices heard, empowering them to make decisions in their children's education, and holding them accountable as well.

Parents must be empowered with information to help them make the best decisions and right choices. They should know how their child is performing academically, what their child should know, how much homework time is required and which schools are the most successful at teaching their children. By providing information to parents, they can and will make choices that are in the best interest of their child; that choice based upon information will help drive up quality for all of our public schools. There are some localized efforts in certain parts of the city to do just that, and I will advocate for such programs to be implemented district-wide.

Also, Out-of-School Time (OST) and summer learning opportunities are critical for kids to develop a well rounded set of skills and competencies. Each day, I see how the most vulnerable children are affected by a lack of constructive opportunities. As the person who created the organization that would later become the Northside Achievement Zone, I understand what it means to provide growth opportunities outside of school for our young people. These opportunities are as critical for middle class families as for poor families, if we are to give our children every opportunity to succeed.

## **Early childhood:**

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Of course, all of this begins long before a child ever steps into a classroom. The neuroscience on early learning and brain development is clear: most brain development happens in those earliest years. In fact, 85% of brain development happens before age 5<sup>7</sup>. Studies show that students who enter school with no preparation find it almost impossible to catch up. Early childhood education must be a critical part of any achievement gap closing strategy.

Because of the leadership shown by the Minnesota Legislature this year, \$46M has been set aside for scholarships to allow parents to get their children in Pre-K learning programs. This is a monumental step to ensure that every child has the opportunity to reach his or her fullest potential. While we are thankful for the expansion of early childhood education, we cannot be satisfied until every child goes to school ready to learn.

## What it takes:

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*“How many more people, young people, are we going to lose waiting for ‘the system’ to get better?”*

– **Howard Fuller, BAEO**

That is what it is going to take to prepare our children for college and career in a 21st century economy. It’s not going to happen overnight, and it’s certainly not going to happen by accident. It’s going to take a new approach, a community effort, and a Mayor who knows it can be done. I am the only candidate who can be that Mayor.



- 1) The Economic Impact of the Achievement Gap in America’s Schools, McKinsey & Company, 2009
- 2) National Center for Education Statistics Annual Assessment, 2012.
- 3) WCCO Report (<http://minnesota.cbslocal.com/2011/01/25/study-more-college-students-need-remedial-classes/>) Accessed July 29, 2013.
- 4) A Crisis in Our Community, Closing the Five Education Gaps, African American Leadership Forum, 2013
- 5) RESET Education Initiative, Minneapolis Foundation, 2013.
- 6) Haycock, Kati. “Congressional Testimony to Committee on Education and Labor.” Washington, D.C, 2007.
- 7) Research conducted by the Rauch Foundation, 2012.