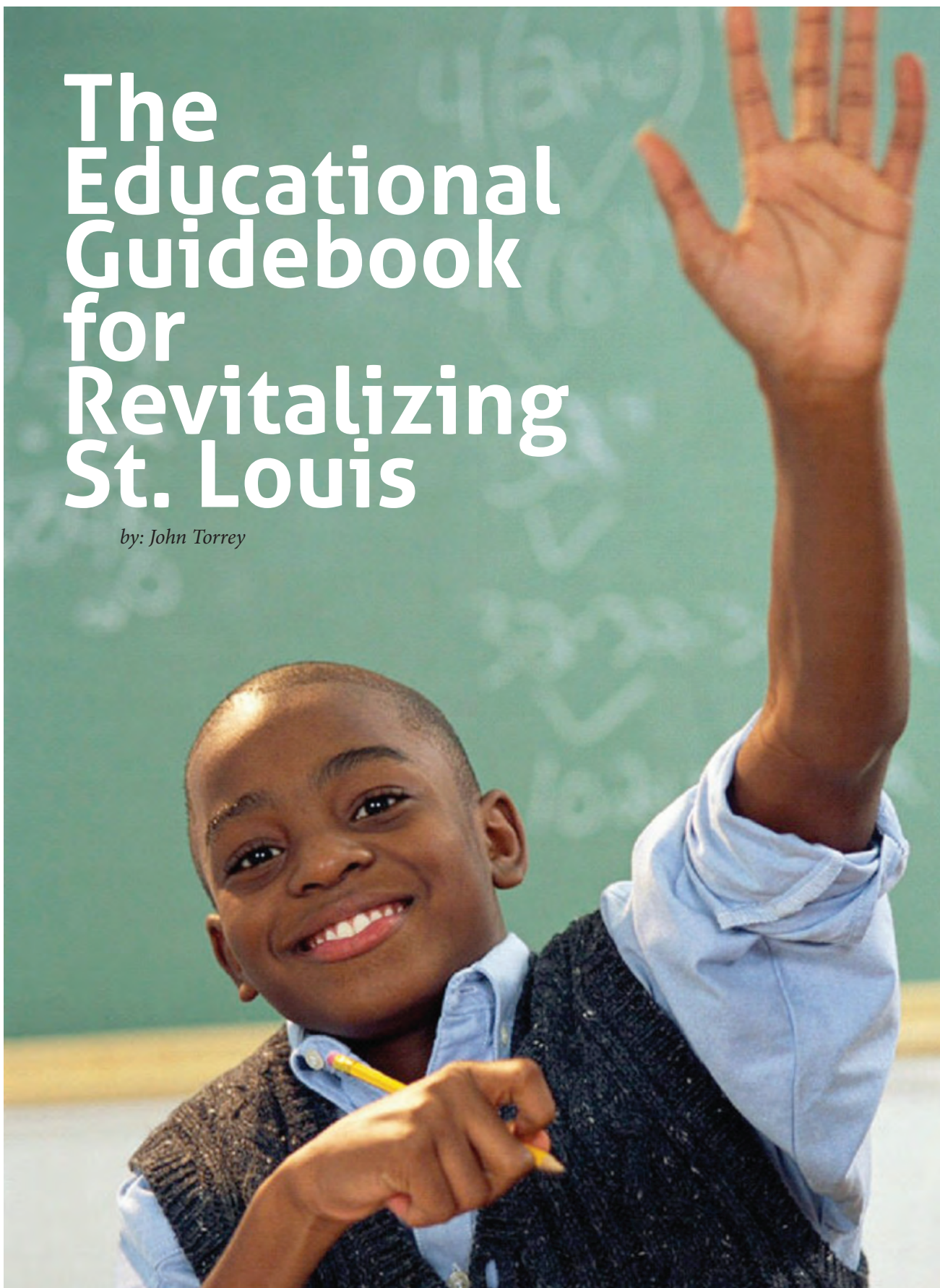


The Educational Guidebook for Revitalizing St. Louis

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Education: The Catalyst for Revitalization and Empowerment

We, as African Americans, constantly preach the importance of education and its benefits, but we don't demand academic excellence from our children or ourselves. While St. Louis puts more educational options at the fingertips of African Americans than any other city in America, our hypocrisy of words and deeds shames the sacrifice of our ancestors. We should not disrespect our past by denying our future. It is our duty to embrace education.

Our empowerment and the revitalization of our community are directly tied to gaining the skills that a quality education provides. By dumping the negative mental legacies of slavery, that keep us from academic and professional achievement, we can dramatically improve our quality of life and live up to our full potential as participating members of Metropolitan St. Louis. Our empowerment, facilitated by making conscious and informed decisions about our careers and education, will shape our happiness and fulfillment as productive citizens.

The World Has Changed

We are in the midst of a revolution that has radically changed the requirements for success. Let us first examine that change. Today, the ability to think is the requirement of employment. This intellectual revolution has been surging for decades as “thinking” jobs have been replacing “labor” jobs. There is simply no doubt that in America’s future, “a strong back and a willingness to work” are just no longer enough.

In addition, the employment landscape of today is vastly different than that of just twenty years ago. The increase in computers performing jobs that many Americans used to perform, combined with companies exporting factory, repetitive, and call center jobs overseas, have rendered the American employment landscape bleak.

Now employers are no longer impressed with the jack-of-all-trades and his or her wide variety of skills and multiple job experiences. Employers are looking for workers who have specialized knowledge, specialized skills, and are a one of a kind benefit to the work environment. Great employees are indispensable employees. Their skills are integral to productivity and they provide a worthwhile intellectual service.





Today's Requirements for Success

Today's requirements for success are radically different than they were just 20 year's ago. A qualified candidate for any position must be a quality human being with character, virtue, values, and life skills. In addition they must have an analytical mind with the ability to think critically, ask the right questions, and make informed decisions. They must also be able to take initiative, possess self-management skills, have a reliable and productive work ethic, embrace change, be adaptable, and be versatile. What is more, a qualified candidate will have a different mindset and no longer think and act as an employee but rather as a valued, fully invested, engaged, constantly improving "associate."





Position Yourself to Succeed

Where can you go to gain the knowledge and specialized skills to become indispensable in the workplace? Graduate programs, colleges, universities, community colleges, career schools, trade schools, and job training programs are some of the ways to achieve the specialized skills that you need in order to help become the professional that you desire to be.

The specialization of employment opportunities and the need for employees with niche skills have made it that much more important that your skills and knowledge are current and your ability to deliver is competitive. There are many ways to better position yourself for an economically satisfying life. The most important of which is a high quality education. Within the economic climate of today, the skills that a quality education delivers provide the keys to success.

For most of us, continuing our education comes with a cost. Perhaps our life schedule isn't conducive to going back to school. We could even be fearful that we will fail when we go back, and decide to "wait until we're ready." Maybe it

seems like it costs too much money to go back and you just don't think you have the funds to afford it. While nothing compares to a quality education it is always best to be absolutely sure you are being financially responsible. You must carefully examine current and future job income, weighing them against each other, before assuming additional costs or debt.

Educationally Position Your Child for Success



While other cities typically have only one public school option, St. Louis has over 20 school districts available in the Metropolitan area alone! Parents – know your options! Your child may currently be in the most convenient school, but that’s not always the best school for your child. Whatever you want for your child’s education can almost certainly be found among the choices available in St. Louis. St. Louis plays host to 24 separate public school districts, charter schools—which are self-governed and funded by tax dollars making them free to parents, parochial and religious schools, private schools, and the

Volunteer Interdistrict Choice Corporation or “bussing program.” St. Louis parents and guardians are privileged to have many choices when it comes to the education of their children.

The right decision will follow careful investigation and consideration of the uniqueness of your child. Don’t be afraid to ask for assistance or rely on the informed adults around you to help you determine which educational option is right for your child. Former teachers, counselors, social workers, pastors, relatives, other parents, and even school nurses might be just the qualified someone to help you make these important decisions.

Parents must be willing to make whatever sacrifices are necessary to gain a top quality education for their children. Parents must be their child’s strongest educational advocate to assure their child receives the best education possible. Nothing should discourage any parent or guardian from helping their child excel academically. There is no excuse! Foster in your child a curiosity and love of learning so that they can grow into lifelong learners and responsible citizens. Ultimately, your child’s educational success isn’t just the school’s responsibility – it’s yours, too.



You Must Also Nurture Your Child to Success

Stay involved and always stay in communication with your child. As a parent, it's your job not only to get to know your child's likes, dislikes, and favorite foods, but more importantly, what your child's hopes, fears, and aspirations are. Explicitly discuss and coach your child about them. Help nurture your child's realistic dreams, and don't be scared to talk about the heavy stuff.

Be a positive role model. Children must have at least one long-term, meaningful relationship with an empowered adult, and their parents are the first options for that relationship. Be a positive role model for your child by demonstrating what it means to be a kind, loving, genuine person every day.

Empower your child. Be the positive example of virtue, values, and life skills that your child needs. Also don't be afraid to enlist the help of other empowered adults. From—tutoring services to your neighborhood library, from Boy or Girl Scouts to the local karate dojo, and from after school programs to Rights-of-Passage programs—seek out the resources necessary to develop your child's potential. It's the way to develop high character, virtue, values, and life skills within your child.

Know your child's friends. Your child's friends are a direct reflection of the kind of person your child is becoming, so pay close attention to who your child hangs out with. Are these kids that you would want your child to spend unsupervised time with? If they aren't, then don't let your child spend time with them! On the other hand, if you like the values that your child's group of friends



embodies, then encourage them to spend supervised time together and develop relationships with their parents to foster more structured activities.

Love your child with all your might. Every child deserves to experience unconditional love. Remind your child how much you love him or her daily. There's nothing as powerful for a child as the continued love and support of a parent.



Ultimately we must define for ourselves what we want and what role formal and informal education will play in making those goals a reality. Exactly what is our desired revitalization? We could consciously and actively seek:

1. A community constantly evolving in empowerment via character, virtue, values, and life skills.
2. A healthy environment for the mind, body, spirit, and for fostering personal success.
3. To consciously and explicitly prepare our children for an exemplary and honorable life.