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INSIDE OUT: A NEW VIEW OF EDUCATION REFORM FROM A SOCIAL WORK PROSPECTIVE

DAPHNE HENDERSON, PH.D., LAPSW

ALICIA MAYA DONALDSON, MSSW, LCSW

*UNIVERSITY: UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE AT MARTIN, SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM
120 SOCIOLOGY BLDG., MARTIN, TN 38238
DAHENDER@UTM.EDU, AMAYA@UTM.EDU*

Abstract: Inside Out: A New View of Education Reform From a Social Work Prospective

Bullying; Suicide; Teen Pregnancy; Substance Abuse; Increasing Drop Out Rates; Behavioral Problems, Emotional Disturbances; Autism Spectrum Disorders; Increasing classroom diversity; Inadequate teacher to student ratios; Decreasing student academic performance- these are just a few of the issues plaguing the public education system today. "Stakeholders in public education have been questioning the preparation and practices of teachers, and the leadership of principals and superintendents in an effort to discover what is wrong and to find cost-effective solutions" (Greene & Lee, 2001). While the current focus has been on increasing academic performance and greater accountability, multiple barriers continue to impede these goals. Research indicates that comprehensively addressing issues of health, mental health, family problems, environmental factors, and other barriers to academic performance of at-risk students will lead to better student outcomes and effective restructuring of the current school reform (Adelman & Taylor, 2000, Youth and Violence, 2000).

The purpose of this roundtable discussion workshop is to initiate dialogue on the importance of increasing effective reform measures in education. A new approach is needed to identify preventative measures that can increase student success. Developing a multisystemic approach will provide a different prospective on this issue, changing the focus from intervention to prevention. Social workers should have a pivotal role in this multidisciplinary process, as the holistic approach is the core foundation of the profession. Every facet of this country is impacted by the educational system, and failure is not an option. Without effective educational reform, this country or its future leaders will not have a fighting chance.

By the end of this workshop, participants will have:

1. Initiated dialogue regarding the need for a multisystemic approach focusing on early intervention in areas of concern.
2. A greater understanding for the need of a multi disciplinary team approach.
3. A greater understanding of the positive impact that social workers can have in public education.
4. Specific ideas focused on the development of an action plan to address these issues.

