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Former Top U.S. Education Department Official Examines
'Changing the Odds for Children at Risk: Seven Essential Principles of Educational Programs that Break the Cycle of Poverty'

WASHINGTON, D.C.—In her new book, “*Changing the Odds for Children at Risk*,” Dr. Susan Neuman, professor at the University of Michigan School of Education writes, “We need to recast our priorities, to fund programs that have solid evidence of results—programs that stake their reputation on their abilities to exponentially improve the performance of at-risk children.”

Neuman brings a unique perspective to this effort as her life’s work has taken her from the front of the classroom as an elementary school teacher to the halls of power in the White House and on Capitol Hill. She served as Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education in the Bush Administration from 2002–2004 and is regarded as one of the key implementers of No Child Left Behind. During her tenure she established the Reading First program (funded at \$6 billion) and the Early Reading First program (\$75 million).

“*Changing the Odds for Children at Risk*,” published by Praeger and available on Amazon.com, takes the reader along as Neuman goes into the field to investigate educational programs up-close and develops what she calls her “Seven Essential Principles of Educational Programs that Break the Cycle of Poverty.”

“Susan Neuman offers a compelling, first-hand look at what works in education today in ‘*Changing the Odds for Children at Risk*,’” says Former North Carolina Gov. Jim Hunt, chair, Hunt Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy. “She has taken the best of what she has learned from her research and public service and combined it with the realities of what actually happens in thousands of schools every day in America. We would be wise to learn from her efforts and apply the seven principles she advocates for as we try to fix our schools.”

Neuman’s book is all the more pressing given taxpayers spend more than \$400 billion dollars a year on education, yet the high school dropout rate is still 30% or higher in some cities. She believes the rhetoric of leaving no child behind has trumped reality.

Neuman’s book includes examinations of:

1. Actively target the neediest children.
2. Begin early in children’s lives.
3. Emphasize coordinated services, particularly for children whose families present multiple risks.
4. Focus on boosting academic achievement through compensatory high-quality instruction.
5. Deliver instruction by trained professionals, not by aides or volunteers.
6. Acknowledge that intensity matters, defending against any dilution of program quality as a waste of public resources.
7. Always hold themselves accountable for results and for children’s achievement.

- **Philadelphia's Books Aloud** initiative that encourages reading by focusing on child care providers. Program data show that it results in preschoolers receiving statistically significant gains in receptive language, phonological awareness and other measures.
- **California's and Texas' After-School Enrichment Program** that provides in-depth training to its program directors who lead activities.
- **Charlotte, N.C.'s Bright Beginnings early education program** that has graduates who score at or above average in reading skills both at the end of kindergarten and first grade.
- **Early Head Start Programs nationwide** that have helped to improve scores on standardized tests of infant and toddler development, and led to better developmental functioning, greater parent involvement and lower levels of family conflict and stress.

Neuman's writing takes the lessons she has witnessed and infuses them with her research and knowledge to create a persuasive set of principles that policy-makers, political leaders, educators, parents and all taxpayers and citizens can learn from and apply.

Neuman writes that, "In light of this extraordinary convergence of increased awareness of the problem, knowledge of what works and renewed commitment toward educating every child in America, the bleak cycle of poverty and disadvantage that has until now appeared so intractable can be broken forever."

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