

FOREWORD

by Salome Thomas-EL

I am writing the foreword to this important book after spending a Saturday morning with about 100 students and teachers in our school's Saturday Academy program. This program is voluntary for students and allows them to work on reading and writing skills with some time built in for fun activities to explore their critical thinking, and some exercise too. It helps that we provide them with pizza for lunch before they journey back home for the weekend, I'm sure. Watching those students and teachers revel in the company of one another, strengthen the relationships they develop during the week, and engage in rigorous and fun activities, makes me feel very good as a teacher, principal and father. Finding innovative ways to encourage students and teachers to explore their curiosity and the wonders of learning should be on the minds of principals and school leaders around the world.

As a teacher and principal in inner-city schools for over thirty years, I have always felt that we focused on teaching students to see the turns in life, and not enough on thinking about what might be around those turns. In *Building a Curious School*, Bryan Goodwin has provided a road map for educators who are interested in helping their students become independent thinkers and to advocate for themselves. My mission during my entire career has been to provide students with a culture that fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills and allows them to find success in school and in life. I wanted the students to become resilient and comfortable with their own struggles, failures, and victories, and to explore their curiosities about school and life. As teachers and administrators, it is important for us to build curious cultures in our classrooms

and schools so that we foster those powerful relationships that we know can develop when we care and love one another.

In this thought-provoking book, teachers, principals and parents can read about the importance of teaching students about service and making meaningful contributions to their communities. Those who know and have met me over the years are aware that being curious about our student's lives is one of my Four C's of school success. We can learn so much about our students and their communities through our own curiosity, care and concern. Once we are aware of the needs of our students inside and outside of school, we can become so much better at building and developing strong relationships that will sustain our children for years to come. Curious teachers and principals become better learners and must always place a priority on developing learning cultures instead of teaching cultures. Educators and parents who are curious about children are so much more likely to be engaged, supportive, understanding and successful. Successful schools are filled with curious kids and adults.

In *Building a Curious School*, educators and parents can learn practical ways to instill curiosity in their classrooms, schools and homes. We also learn that building strong relationships with our children requires us to establish cultures that foster critical thinking, risk-taking and curiosity. Children ask hundreds of questions each day at home before they begin school, but once they arrive to us, they are told to be quiet and to raise their hands if they wish to speak. Yes, children need to learn manners but we must also nurture their curiosity and encourage our students to ask more questions for deeper learning and understanding. Testing children on a regular basis won't make them smarter, but fostering curiosity, engagement, rigor and joy each day will!

If your goal is to inspire parents and students to knock down the doors to get into your school instead of to get out, then this book is a must-read for you and your colleagues. Building schools that attract parents will require us to become more curious about their children and to spark that same curiosity in them. Making connections and developing long-lasting relationships with our students and their families will become the key to their success and resilience. That happens when we become curious educators who realize the tremendous impact we have on our students. This is even more important for families living in struggling communities.

We can no longer afford to be tiny sparks for our kids! Increasing the curiosity of our students will lead to them becoming better citizens who work toward building a better world. With an increased focus on social emotional learning and equity for all students, schools can become the kinds of places kids look forward to attending each day, even on an occasional Saturday.

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