*TOWARD A NEW VISION FOR OUR CHILDREN AND THEIR SCHOOLS: I HAVE A DREAM...*

*I dream of schools where children’s art hangs in gallery spaces filling the hallways*

*And children gather in clusters in the mornings before class to hear books and poems flowing on the voices of teachers*

*I dream of schools that host conversations about books in the corridors and in alcoves throughout the building*

*Of schools that post poems and quotes in public spaces where children wait for lunch, cue up in line for water and restrooms, to enter the library or wait for buses.*

*I dream of schools that feature teachers’ favorite books face out throughout the hallways and in the office*

*Where children don’t know what AYP means, and don’t know where their class ranked on any test, and are greeted at the front door each morning like family returning from a long trip.*

*Where children are treated with the same respect afforded the CEO of a Fortune 500 company.*

*Where mistakes are seen as evidences of valiant attempts.*

*Where kindness is spoken with sincerity*

*Where collaboration and cooperation trump competition*

*Where all people are deemed worthy simply because they inhale and exhale*

*Where everyone is assured of both physical and emotional safety*

*Where your last name, country of origin, skin tone, sexual orientation, gender identity, language facility, economic status, politic views, religious traditions have no bearing on the attention you receive from teachers and others in the school*

*I dream of schools where days are not scripted by those who could not find the Post Office in your town*

*Where time spent engaged in inquiry, reading, making art, writing, interviewing, dancing, problem solving, dramatizing is more highly prized than time spent filling in bubbles, choosing the right answer to someone else’s questions or logging on to prove you read.*

*Where libraries will be as important as stadiums and auditoriums rival gymnasiums*

*Where children are eager to arrive and reluctant to leave*

*Where devotion to time for reading and writing can rival attention to the lunch schedule*

*Where teachers read aloud with the zeal of a street performer and the frequency of a birdsong*

*Where principals lead by example, know children by their successes, place books over bus schedules, teachers over text scores, students over stanines, communication over control*

*I dream of schools where teaching is judged by the character of the students leaving, their treatment of others, their concern for humanity, and their ability to think and reason with clarity and compassion*

*Where a teacher’s knowledge is the map used to chart the course of learning and his/ her heart is the navigator directing the journey*

*Where learning “how” is more important than learning “what” and knowing “when” and “why” are as important as getting the right answer*

*Where trying is more important than triumph and successive approximations are valued as much as success itself*

*Where children sit in small clusters for lunch gathered around a book discussion, a quote of the day, an issue to resolve in the classroom community while dining in a civil setting*

*Where children learn to engage in open dialog, respecting the ideas of others, entering and exiting a conversation in civil ways without raising a hand to be given permission to share their thinking in a free, civil, democratic society*

*I dream of schools where teachers do not feel forced to turn the pages and do what comes next in a program they do not believe in*

*Where teachers are treated with respect and professional courtesy, where their voices are listened to and trusted*

*Where hallways are read, viewed, puzzled over, seen as bearers of clues to riddles and brain teasers found throughout the building*

*Where walking in straight lines, and raising hands are less important than caring for classmates*

*Where writing is evaluated more on what is said, how it moves a reader, stirs an emotion, evokes a response, causes one to pause to think or change than on how many sentences were in a paragraph or how many paragraphs are in an essay*

*I dream of schools where readers are asked what they make of a text rather than asked to log on to give the correct answer to someone else’s questions*

*Where children are found discussing the actions and motives of a character instead of recording the details of that character’s home or clothing*

*Where children are more familiar with poets than NFL players, more familiar with authors than actors, more familiar with illustrators and artists than with athletes, more familiar with inventors and social activists than the names of video games, more familiar with mathematicians and scientists than sit-coms and March Madness*

*I dream of schools where children know they are cherished and trusted, where they feel safe to risk being wrong in order to learn lessons more important than arriving at the right answer*

*Will you join me? Will you stand up for the children of this nation? Will you take a stand on the issues that matter most to the preservation of their one, precious childhood.*

*Lester L. Laminack*

*Asheville, NC*

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*Source:* [*http://www.lesterlaminack.com/index.htm*](http://www.lesterlaminack.com/index.htm)