

COVID Talks And Beyond: The Black Church Edition

Tips For Assisting Churches And Parents With Decentralized Education

August 18, 2020 Edition

Today's episode of "COVID Talks And Beyond: The Black Church Edition" focused on providing practical guidance to assist the church community, and parents, in supporting childhood education in the current decentralized educational environment resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Our two guests, Dean of the Howard University School of Education Dr. Dawn Williams, and champion of education equity Ms. Ashanti Carter, provided our audience with the following practical tips that deserve widespread dissemination. The highlights included:

- As parents become more intimately engaged in their children's education, they will inevitably become aware of their child's strengths, but also of their weaknesses. Sometimes this can produce anxiety for the parent and it is important to recognize this, prepare for it, and not let those concerns become overwhelming.**
- These are frustrating times for parents and children. Acknowledge your feelings and manage your expectations. Allow yourself the "grace" that you deserve to stay calm for yourself and your child.**
- Check on the mental health of your child and use family dialogue as a way of safely and compassionately acknowledging any concerns that they need to express. It is important that they have a safe environment to express their feelings.**
- It is important to establish a routine that you and your child can find predictable and that instills discipline. Many will find that coordinating your work schedule with your employer will be a key element for accomplishing this.**
- Create a special place in the home that is dedicated for education. Many parents don't have an abundance of space in their home but, even a small uncluttered corner that can accommodate a small desk can suffice. Remember to turn off all social media while the child is in their special learning place.**
- Learn to see everything you do with your child as a learning opportunity. For example, taking a walk (with your masks properly worn) provides an opportunity**

to talk about photosynthesis as you observe the trees, plants and flowers. Cooking together can provide a great math or science lesson. All of us have access to “Google” online tools that allow us to study in preparation for these kinds of teaching opportunities.

- **Consider e-mailing your child’s teacher to learn what will be covered over the next week so that you can prepare yourself ahead of time to be supportive.**
- **Remember that educating at home sometimes provides a more focused learning environment for a child. A lot more can be done sometimes in a shorter period of time without all the other ancillary activities associated with the school environment. So, take advantage of this until the more desirable goal of the complete in-school experience can be resumed.**

Church leaders and congregations can be especially helpful to parents and children during this remote learning time. Consider the following:

- **Pooling resources to help families gain access to computers and wifi technology. Remember that many parents are struggling to support the education of several children at once, each of whom need their own computer, in addition to the parent’s own computer requirements. We also know that access to wifi can be challenging for many families. Facilitating young people’s access to either the church’s wifi or those of parishioners may be critical for many families in need.**
- **Assist in establishing parent support groups that enable groups of parents to pool their resources to assist several children at a time.**
- **Put out a call for retired teachers and other members of the congregation who have specialized expertise to provide tutoring and mentoring services.**

As we have always known: it takes a village to raise a child. Our children, and their parents, need us now more than ever. Let’s not let them down.