



# GUILFORD EDUCATION ALLIANCE



## Lift Every Voice: Phil McCall

The next installment in our ***Lift Every Voice*** series comes to us from GEA board member, Phil McCall. Phil received a B.A. from Morehouse College and a J.D. from the Atlanta Law School. He continued his education by completing the Executive Management Program at Northwestern University. A veteran of the U.S. Army, Phil held executive positions at CIGNA and Waste Management, Inc. He also served as an adjunct professor of business law at N.C. A&T State University. In addition to serving on GEA's board, Phil is on the boards of the Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color (COSEBC) and the United Way of Greater Greensboro.

"My parents made academic achievement a priority," writes Phil, adding that his mother and several relatives who were educators made teaching a "family business." And while Phil has achieved outstanding academic and career success, he sees clearly the barriers that prevent this for too many.

Phil's perspective is reflected in the history of our country. It is also rooted in a deep and abiding belief in the power of education and the promise that

collectively we can make our future more just for all. We are grateful for his words and his continual service in our community. -- Winston

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## The Family Business

### By Phil McCall

Growing up in Birmingham, Alabama in the 50's and early 60's, school (next to church) was the most important place to be for me, my friends and relatives. In fact, my mother, a third grade teacher for 50 years, made teaching a "family business" as several relatives joined the profession.

**During this period of strict segregation in “Bombingham”  
(as the city became known), an education was the most effective  
vehicle to escape the cruel clutches of racism.**

Like most parents in our community, my parents made academic achievement a priority to ensure a better life outcome for me. While most of our schools were old and in need of repairs, our principals, teachers and staff would not allow any excuses for failure. Second-hand books, scarce lab equipment and being barred from the public libraries would not stop academic achievement. In short, the old "God will make a way out of no way" mantra was alive and well. The passion, optimism and expectation of our educators shaped a vision of what could be - something that we students could not see at the time. But, as we came to realize over the years, they were right!

**Last November, I had the opportunity to serve as a  
“Principal For A Day” as part of GEA’s annual event.**

I saw teachers, administrators and staff fully engaged with enthusiasm, high energy and creativity while facing the challenges of COVID19. This was in addition to the many issues and barriers they were facing before the pandemic began; just like my teachers faced so many years ago. The old adage “the more things change, the more they stay the same” is still alive.

**A darkness continues to grow over public education  
in our country; particularly in urban areas where minorities  
are most prevalent in numbers.**

Since the Brown vs. Board of Education decision was handed down in 1954, much of white America has openly sought to undermine school integration. And our state and communities are no exceptions.

**There has been a concerted effort to avoid compliance outright, to  
underfund and divert resources from public schools with much success  
and little political challenge.**

The notable increase in the number of private schools, charter schools and suburban development-established public schools, where minorities are minimal residents, are key drivers in this effort and accelerate the gap between white and black and brown students in educational achievement.

**Until this changes, we, as a community, will all be the losers.**

Minority students are as talented, creative and academically capable as any others - if provided the resources and support they need as early as possible. Too much valuable potential is lost when these students are denied a quality education in safe and well-maintained schools.

Education is a key driver to vastly reduce poverty and build a talented work force that can qualify for higher wage jobs and careers, pay taxes, improve health conditions, purchase homes and even donate to local nonprofits. All of which feed the economic engines in any community. Just as important, a well-funded and technology-equipped 21<sup>st</sup> century, integrated school system will make our community very desirable and attractive to both businesses and families seeking a quality location in which to live.

**We can lift the darkness from our current public education environment; but we must exercise the collective will to do so.**

Forward thinking, courage and commitment to build this future will make all of us winners for decades to come.



**Racial Equity & Social Justice**  
**A Conversation with Dr. Sharon Contreras**  
**March 3rd, 12noon**

Join us for a virtual discussion on racial equity and social justice and what this really means when it comes to changing outcomes for students.

Dr. Joe Blosser from High Point University will facilitate this talk with Dr. Contreras, GCS superintendent. We'll dive into some data and have time for questions. Sign up today to receive the Zoom meeting information.

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