

This is My Story by Victoria M. Young

From the beginning of my parental experience in the public education system the reality was that my children would receive an average basic education. Because of our location, they weren't going to get the best the United States had to offer. But their father and I were there for them to fill in the gaps as best we could and our children would be fine.

That was not true for others. Through my volunteer work in classrooms, I was observing the number of children who did not appear to have a parental advocate to guide them through the system and identify where they needed help. Their parents could not, would not, or did not support their learning. Did they not understand how essential their help might be for their child's success? Or, were there another factors involved?

The issues I found worth fighting for on behalf of these kids included: safe and disciplined schools, reading, writing, math, and (particularly hard fought and lost) proper science education. Along the way, some minor battles were won but the eighteen years of participation in my districts' schools was not fruitful enough to satisfy the need that was becoming more obvious across the United States. None of what I experienced was unique to my district. That reality was obvious in the multitude of research available on all the educational issues that concerned me.

As a veterinarian, I do see school children much like any young animal going through their "imprinting phase" or what they refer to as "phase-sensitive learning" in the human behavior fields; what happens to them will make a huge difference in the way they deal with issues for the rest of their lives. Children desperately need to see good examples of crucial life lessons consistently modeled for them and they need their learning to be accomplished in a developmentally appropriate manner. Seeing children being "under-served" pushed me to look for answers.

My research left me with milk crates full of statistics and other information stacked in a closet. The time had come to clean that closet out. I approached it with every intention of throwing all the junk out. But that mass of collected knowledge proved worth reading one more time. The repeating thoughts and themes were jotted down. And out of the pile of rubbish came the organization of a manuscript. It started out as *Just a Parent* and became *Education's Missing Ingredient: What Parents Can Tell Educators*. I became a published author.

But my story did not end, nor did my research. And *The Crucial Voice of the People, Past and Present*, my second edition of *Education's Missing Ingredient*, is why I'm still in the education reform fight. I discovered voices from the past that need to be heard. And I continue to hear ordinary citizens with common sense and the human potential to do the right thing. Their voices need to be listened to and their wisdom acted upon.

"Knowledge is of no value unless you put it into practice." — Heber J. Grant