

## **II. Carnegie Corporation: 1982-1997: Research-Based Action for Constructive Child and Adolescent Development** by David Hamburg

**Editor's Note: *This is the second part of an essay written by David Hamburg, President of Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1982-1997. Part one of the essay appears in the Fall 2010 issue of The Carnegie Reporter.***

Carnegie Corporation mobilized an excellent staff with full board cooperation and a national network of experts to work on healthy child/adolescent development as well as lifelong learning, linking research, policy, and practice. With focused attention and strategic funding, the Corporation made a concerted effort to advance the nation's understanding of child and adolescent development and to foster positive outcomes for children and youth in the face of drastic changes in American families and society. This effort was carried out through many grants for research and innovation, as well as the sponsorship of special study groups making practical recommendations based on solid data and excellent working models.

During the 1980s, an important consensus began to emerge within the scientific and professional communities about ways of meeting the developmental needs of children and adolescents. Carnegie Corporation sought to clarify this scientific and professional consensus and make it widely understood throughout the nation, utilizing all the modalities available to the foundation, from community meetings to White House conferences; from research monographs to popular books; from major newspapers to television networks to radio broadcasts; from mayors to governors, to members of Congress, to the President and First Lady. Special contributions were made by Corporation staff members Vivien Stewart and Alden Dunham; and board members Shirley Malcom, Ray Marshall, James Watkins, James Comer and Billie Tisch.

Throughout human history, preparation of children and youth for responsible and productive adult roles has always been a primary task and responsibility of human societies. In this era of drastic change, it is necessary for our society to adapt in order to meet the fundamental needs of child and adolescent development.

The Carnegie approach evolved in distinctive ways that made this work socially useful:

1. The foundation tackled very hard problems that are vitally important for the future of all our children and hence for the future of the nation, including ways of overcoming the adversity of poor, depreciated communities.
2. Those efforts were built on a strong science base, linking biological and behavioral sciences.
3. This science base was related to real-world problems, translating research into social action as opportunities could be envisioned. To

do so, Carnegie Corporation fostered communication between scientists and practitioners in education and health; supported creative innovations and working models in communities; and put emphasis on evaluative research to assess systematically the upshot of these innovative models—asking what sort of action is useful for whom under what conditions.

4. Carnegie Corporation utilized its grant-making, convening and publishing functions to stimulate and foster a comprehensive, science-based national education reform movement that could be sustained over decades.
5. In doing so, it clarified an array of biological, psychological and social factors that influence learning, in and out of school. This meant dealing not only with biological and behavioral underpinnings of school readiness, but also with drastic and stressful changes in families and communities—in the powerful context of the transforming global economy.
6. Carnegie Corporation focused on pre-collegiate education—from early childhood education through K-12 public schools. This was the arena most urgently in need of long-term upgrading.
7. The Corporation put strong emphasis on the pre-school years to build motivation and readiness for school and for lifelong learning.
8. For each phase of development, Carnegie Corporation clarified the essential requirements for development and their implications for lifelong learning, health and decent human relations. The work linked each phase to the next, constructing a developmental sequence of experiences, opportunities and interventions that foster constructive, long-term development.
9. The foundation's grantees, staff and board explored, in depth, and identified a set of pivotal, frontline institutions that have a daily opportunity to help meet these essential requirements and found ways to strengthen their capacity to do so under contemporary conditions of world transformation. These frontline institutions are family, schools, health systems, media and community organizations (including religious ones). And they in turn need support and help, in serious and thoughtful ways, from powerful institutions: government, business, scientific community, and relevant professions.
10. At the elementary and secondary levels, the Corporation used education in mathematics, science and technology as the entering wedge—both for the intrinsic value of such education in terms of curiosity and problem solving, and for the practical significance of such education in the emerging technical world of the global economy. From the life sciences, there emerged specific education for health; and in due course, education for conflict resolution and violence prevention. Emphasis was placed on equal opportunity for girls and boys, rich and poor, to the maximum extent possible. This work extended to developing countries in Africa.

11. Carnegie Corporation recognized the centrality of teaching in education and therefore sought, through multiple means, to upgrade teaching as a profession. Several then-governors were especially helpful with this effort, including James Hunt, who has served on the Corporation's board, Thomas Kean, who is the foundation's current board chair, and Bill Clinton.
12. In all of this, there was the inextricable linkage of education and health and the effect of the social environment on both. Children impaired by physical or mental health problems tend to do poorly in school. The other side of the coin is that education is a powerful vehicle for shaping health promotion and disease prevention over the entire life span. In advancing understanding of these issues, Drs. Julius Richmond, Frederic Robbins, Elena Nightingale and Beatrix Hamburg played crucial roles.

A recurrent theme for the Corporation's work in this area was the *prevention* of bad outcomes. Prevention is based on anticipation, even long-range foresight. In this effort, the best available knowledge from research is used to clarify the main paths to a particular kind of adverse outcome—i.e., major risk factors. Steps are then taken to counteract or avoid the risk factors, especially through appropriate changes in behavior. To do so, attention is given to pivotal institutions that can shape and support behavior positively, away from the risk factors and dangerous directions. Thus, in seeking to avoid casualties of childhood and adolescent development—whether in disease and disability, ignorance and incompetence, crime and violence—Carnegie Corporation focused on key institutions to shape healthy learning and constructive lifestyles.

During the 1980s and 90s, Carnegie Corporation organized various study groups of experts and national leaders to address the needs of children and youth during specific developmental periods. The most extended effort was the decade-long Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. It focused on early adolescence, ages ten to fifteen. From its work there emerged a number of reports, including *Turning Points* (1989), *Fateful Choices*, (1992), *A Matter of Time* (1992), and *Great Transitions* (1995). These were thoughtful, clearly written syntheses that were valuable to practitioners and policymakers, as well as to the general public. Two scholarly books assessed the research evidence on healthy adolescent development and on health promotion in adolescence, *At the Threshold* (1990) and *Promoting the Health of Adolescents* (1993).

Carnegie Corporation also carefully addressed the needs of very young children. *Starting Points*, which focused on children ages 0 – 3, published in 1994, made a powerful impact on the nation. The next report, which linked early childhood and early adolescence with its focus of middle childhood, was released in 1996. It was called *Years of Promise*.

Together, these reports covered the entire spectrum of early life, from the prenatal period to age fifteen, and formed the basis of a coherent developmental strategy for all the nation's children and youth. All these reports were widely disseminated to the public and have had a strong effect on policies and programs

throughout the nation. They constituted a unique resource in this vital field and their influence is still being felt.

Most of the recommendations urged a realignment of priorities and better use of existing resources, eliminating activities that did not significantly improve care, development, teaching, and learning—redeploying resources to programs that are demonstrably effective. Can we do better than we have been doing? These reports gave a clear, specific, powerful affirmation. They showed the way to *prevent* much of the damage occurring to children and young people. Their recommendations to various levels of government, the private sector, and local communities were highly practical and continue to reverberate throughout the United States. I put together a synthesis of all this work in my book: *Today's Children: Creating a Future for a Generation in Crisis* (Times Books, 1992).

The Carnegie Council's ten-year run was followed up by the National Academy of Sciences through its five-year Forum on Adolescence, which I chaired.. A variety of universities and non-governmental organizations have also strengthened their child and adolescent programs in light of the Carnegie Corporation principles, and the work has had many policy impacts, especially on state governments.

In the long run, the vitality of any society and its prospects for the future depend on the quality of its people—on their knowledge and skill, health and vigor, and the decency of their human relations. Preventing much of the damage done in child and adolescent development, however inadvertently, can have powerfully beneficial social and economic impacts, resulting in a more effective work force, higher productivity, lowered health costs, lowered prison costs, and great relief of human suffering. This is the spirit in which Carnegie Corporation's work has caught the national attention and maintains a great tradition going back to Andrew Carnegie.

### **Learning to Live Together: Preventing Hatred and Violence in Child and Adolescent Development**

The work I've pursued in the early 21st century flowed both from Carnegie Corporation's efforts to improve child development and its focus on violence prevention. Humanity has reached a situation in which those who retain ancient harsh attitudes and hateful beliefs can acquire destructive powers that dwarf those of our ancestors. Can we raise our children for constructive, pro-social human relations rather than for hatred and violence? This is a central challenge of our time. A fruitful conjunction of developmental and social psychology with educational research can provide the foundation for a humane, democratic, and safe course of child and adolescent development, ultimately helping to protect humanity. In our 2004 book, *Learning to Live Together: Preventing Hatred and Violence in Child and Adolescent Development* (Oxford University Press), Beatrix Hamburg and I illuminated the major influences that shape the attitudes and beliefs that children and adolescents hold toward other groups. Directing these attitudes and beliefs along a positive path involves a *lifespan* perspective, fostering pro-social influences from infancy to adulthood. It involves an

*institutional* perspective, providing developmentally appropriate education that starts in the family, then continues from preschool through elementary and secondary schools, and into the universities. The book also considered the roles of media, information technology, the Internet, religious institutions, and community organizations in human development today. It is a synthesis that highlights promising lines of inquiry and innovation that can greatly diminish hatred and violence in childhood and adolescence and build a basis for humane relationships.

At the adult level, the book advocates education for political leaders in the prevention of war and genocide as a neglected and potentially valuable contribution to global security. Over the past two decades, Carnegie Corporation has fostered educational innovations based on independent scholarship that directly involved political and military leaders of the United States, Europe, Russia and Africa. Experts from various fields brought to bear knowledge and skill in preventing war and genocide. The dynamic interplay of these experts with distinguished governmental leaders has set a valuable precedent. These initiatives showed how scholarship and practice can draw on research-based knowledge to help make education more constructive, conveying both the facts of human diversity and our common humanity.