



## The Building Community Institute

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E-Newsletter



# "The Foundation"™



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## Education: The Power of Imagination @ Work

Thank you for inviting me into your reading room during this hot month of August. I was recently in Phoenix, Arizona to talk to hundreds of educators from around the country, and where they assured me that the 115-degree temperature was 'dry' and therefore totally bearable. Well, wet or dry, 115 degrees is very, very, hot. No I have not become a side-chair weather person. I just wanted you to know that with great imagination, you can turn the dessert into an Oasis. However, the makeover starts with our imagination. It is powerful! It was obvious to me that someone or a group of people had stood somewhere on a barren rock in the hot sands of Arizona and imagined a place where trees grew and cool air surrounded you. And then came the hard job of taking their shared imagination to the drawing boards. Can this really happen? All the obvious obstacles were there to be seen and felt and had been in places for centuries. But the dream of this 'other' place-the one imagined - was so overwhelming that all of their combined skills were brought to bear and guess what, an air-conditioned, marble-lined resort sprung up in the desert. The power of imagination and the will to download your thinking cannot be underestimated.

Today, this 'can-do/must-do' mindset is critical for all sectors of our society, especially our schools. Our 'imagination' provides us the framework of thinking beyond what we see and the obstacles that oftentimes refuse to go away. We must create this 'other picture' in our heads. I remember when I was a boy in the Mississippi Delta and picking cotton was my way of life. That was my reality, my desert. But, I also recall my active imagination. On those long work-days in the fields, I dared to imagine the possibilities that awaited me. And part of the process was downloading my imagination to hard and consistent work. Embracing education turned my imagination into reality. It worked. Overtime, the fields of the Delta became corporate corridors, international plazas, Harvard University and even NATO in Brussels.

**As the K-12 school system starts up all over the country, so does the engine that drives our nation.** Our nation depends upon succeeding generations understanding their role and embracing their responsibilities. This is what we imagine for them-rightfully taking their places in our shared society. However, reality tells me that surrounding many of our youth will be incredible obstacles, so much so, that you might think that the 'cotton rows' will never end in your lifetime or that an air-conditioned resort cannot be built in the desert. In spite of the reality of numerous obstacles, **you still have the one powerful asset that continues to change and shape the world, your ability to imagine.** Educators, I encourage you to download your imagination. Infuse your lesson plans with wild and wonderful possibilities. Gather around you, others, who share your vision for similar outcomes and talk it up every chance you get. And for the student who has not yet caught hold of the vision for their personal success, become their 'Man of La Mancha' challenging them to see themselves beyond their 'cotton fields,' graduating from middle and high school and excited about the opportunity to take their lives steps further by embracing Higher Learning as their logical and rightful next step.

**Educators, as you succeed in making your imagination for them reality through daily conversation and action, every aspect of our society becomes the beneficiary.** From all sectors of our society, thank you for continuing to fuel the engine-the 60 million young people on the K-12 Educational Corridor- that runs our nation.

**- Clifton L. Taulbert**