



# The City Thinks 2009: Education, Poverty and a Call To Action Essay and Art Contest for Students Grades 6-12



## **What will it take to successfully educate all students in our nation?**

Both the statistics and reality of education in many of our urban schools indicate that challenges exist in successfully educating students for the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These problems can be adversely affected by poverty, violence, and lack of resources. Consider Geoffrey Canada's work in the Harlem Children's Zone as reflected in the Paul Tough article (available on the Public Forum website) and book *Whatever It Takes: Geoffrey Canada's Quest to Change Harlem and America*, as well as your own research/experience regarding education to answer the question: "What it will take to achieve educational success for all?"

**In addressing this question, include past initiatives, current constraints and your own experience in addressing the idea of educational reform in urban schools, including some of the following aspects:**

- Whom should be helped through educational reform efforts, and how? Who should be involved?
- What needs to be provided for and by students, teachers, and others in the community in order to produce meaningful improvements in our educational system? How do we do that?
- What should our expectations be of all those involved in education, and what results will be achieved through the course of action you recommend?

Tell the city what you think!! If you are a student enrolled in grade 6–12, create an essay or art project to share your ideas. [Contest Guidelines](#) (for complete rules and application, please see the Forum's website):

1. There will be 3 grade categories for this contest: 6th/7th/8th grade, 9th/10th grade, and 11th/12th grade.
2. In preparation for your project, you may read Paul Tough's article about the Harlem Children's Zone available at [www.springfieldpublicforum.org](http://www.springfieldpublicforum.org). Your work should reflect the themes and ideas in the essay question and in the Harlem Children Zone's project.
3. Entries will be judged on originality, creativity, reflection of question/theme in your work. Essays will be judged on the additional criteria of clarity of organization and writing. Art projects will also be judged on artistic skill.
4. For the art contest, you must use paper and either pen, pencil, crayon, pastel or paint to address the above questions in your project. Projects must be one dimensional, and must be a minimum of 9 x 12 inches, and a maximum of 18 x 24 inches. Essays may not exceed 500 words.
5. The judging categories are: grades 6-8, grades 9-10, grades 11-12. Essays must be submitted electronically to [canavan\\_patricia@yahoo.com](mailto:canavan_patricia@yahoo.com), and art projects submitted at the Springfield Central Library's Children's room (765 State St., Lower Level). Application forms must be mailed to Public Forum, P.O. Box 5374, Springfield, MA 01101.
6. Submission deadline for all essays, artwork and application forms is October 23rd, 2009 at 5 p.m. Winners will be announced at the Geoffrey Canada dinner and lecture, November 4, 2009, and may attend the pre-lecture dinner with Geoffrey Canada as a guest of the Public Forum.

*"What would it take to change the lives of poor children — not one by one, through heroic interventions and occasional miracles, but in big numbers, and in a way that could be replicated nationwide?"*  
- Paul Tough in *Whatever It*



For application form, rules, *NY Times* article about Harlem Children's Zone, and more information about City Thinks, visit [www.springfieldpublicforum.org](http://www.springfieldpublicforum.org).

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