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UR grad Nicole McCawthan knows how to help city schools

MARK HARE • JUNE 27, 2010

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When she did an internship at two city middle schools, McCawthan says she thought that the students were even more "lifeless" than when she was in their grade. That motivated her all the more. "I want to share what I have been given," she says.

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When children come from families that have known nothing but failure for generations, they are unlikely to turn themselves around. They need to be surrounded by high expectations, and the intensive help they need to get better grades. They also need to know how to play the success game — how to advocate for themselves, what their rights are, who to call for help, how to find a job or a scholarship.

Upward Bound enrolls 60 students annually from five city high schools at a [price](#) of nearly \$4,800 per student annually. It isn't the only program to work on this principle. There are mentoring programs that do the same thing. And of course, we could merge city schools with suburban schools to create a middle class culture.

If we are serious about improving success in city schools, we must extend the opportunities and supports of an Upward Bound-type program to every city student, not just a few dozen. Failure is the alternative. Isn't it time to stop pointing fingers and start opening doors?

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Mark Hare

Mark has been a local columnist for the *Democrat and Chronicle* since 1997. Before that, he was editorial page editor for the afternoon *Times-Union*, and before that deputy editorial page editor for the *Democrat and Chronicle*. He began his career there as a reporter in 1984. He is a native of Owego, Tioga County. He is a graduate of St. John Fisher College and the State University at Brockport. He was a high school teacher for six years before switching to journalism.



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