

Marva N. Collins



“Not much is ever expected from our children. Since very little is expected, very little is accomplished.”

“Success doesn’t come to you, you go get it.”

“It never dawned on me that they couldn’t learn. Kids don’t fail. Teachers fail, school systems fail. The people who teach children that they are failures – they are the problem.”

“No one should rule any child out of the educational picture.”

--Marva N. Collins

Born: August 31, 1936 (Monroeville, Alabama)

History

Marva Collins is an African American woman, who started her own school in Chicago, IL back in 1975. Before this she had substituted in many Chicago schools and decided she did not like what she saw. She used a \$5000 pension she had received and built the Westside Preparatory School on the second floor of her home. At first, many people were reluctant to accept her school, but as time went on things changed. People were seeing the huge difference Marva Collins was making in the lives of her students. She was very dedicated to her work and her students. Today, she is still striving to better the education children in America are receiving.

Building her own school was difficult and challenging for her, but because of her persistence and determination she was able to fulfill her dream. Funding for her school was limited, so she did most everything herself. Her husband, Clarence Collins, supported her in every possible way. He helped her build her school and offered financial support. Often times Marva would ask parents to volunteer to make improvement in the classrooms. She did not want to waste any money on things she could do herself. Instead, any extra money she earned, she put back into the classroom.

Marva is a dedicated woman who values hard work and self-confidence. As a result, she sets high standards for her students. She never lets them say they can’t do it, because she feels they can do anything. Her approach to education has been very successful over the years. Her students spend a great deal of time reading and writing. By the time most of her students reach the 8th grade, they have the reading ability of a freshman in college. Also, Marva has never denied an education to students who were unable to pay tuition. She feels that it is much more important for them to get an education than pay tuition they owe.

Currently there are three schools that bear her name. Also, she trains thousands of teachers across the nation to become effective teachers, and has been since 1985. She gives speeches and holds workshops for educators. During 1995, she earned 370,000 dollars from her speeches and all but 70,000 went back into her schools. She offers an education to many children who come from low-income to moderate-income families. Marva is a very respectable woman who has helped many children succeed when no one else thought it to be possible. She has been an excellent role model for many teachers, and has proven that nearly anyone can make a difference with the right attitude.