



Minnesota's Hope: A vision to build trust and respect

How can you look at a 1-year-old and not feel love, hope, and some kind of responsibility? There is nothing like looking at a young child, whether it's their tears or giggles, their lively innocence says, "I am here, life is good, and I can be great!"

We as adults have responsibility for assuring every child has the life chances we would want for our own children, grandchildren, nieces or nephews.

Let's imagine for now that we want Minnesota to be the best state for children ages birth to 18 in the entire United States. Our State has that "certain something" to do this, from being the first to commit volunteer troops in the Civil War to first in the nation in voting in 2020.

Children ages birth to 18 are about 20 percent of the population and 100 percent of our hope for the future. Let those of us in the 80 percent commit ourselves to finding new energy, new ways, new resources to step up for our children in their formative years.

A key element for us to do that is to stress the need for each child to develop positive character and open the door so that each child has that opportunity. If we want the best for all our children, we need to give them the kind of opportunity that counts. They need first-rate education, good parenting, and a safe community to thrive in.

Character is both the compass and the engine for our children today and for our society tomorrow to accomplish great things.

A conscious commitment by Minnesota's adults to strengthen the support for our children in a myriad of ways will not only help them, but could also refine the challenging, polarized atmosphere we are facing today. Despite our many differences, we can, and we must unite around our children—our common future.

Which adults are we talking about and what qualities in our children can we nurture together?

The adults that have a connection to and care about kids. Whether you're a young adult, senior, parent, family member, worker, employer or volunteer, this new spirit of unity and collaboration can help us all do so much better.

We are calling this collective effort, "Minnesota's Hope."

So how can we collectively open the door to enable our children to reach their full potential?

First, we invite your support to embrace this shared vision and help evolve it. We welcome your suggestions and sharing of your current work that contributes to strengthening this initiative for the betterment of the next generation of learners and leaders. With that, we could start conversations around the following and what is in the art of possibilities for each of these areas and next steps:

1. **Honor** each child as unique with a distinctive path to their best future. Let them know that they are loved, valued and accepted for exactly who they are.
2. **Help** them learn how to identify and regulate their emotions so they can understand themselves and others better and be successful in building healthy and respectful relationships.

3. **Enable** them to make more and better choices as they grow up. Their sense of personal empowerment and responsibility will guide them to to be the best version of themselves.
4. **Provide** them safe places in which to thrive, be it at home, at school or in the community. We adults can and must recommit ourselves to that.
5. **Set boundaries** and hold our children accountable, not only at home but with friends and in the community. Adults need to be a team in doing this.
6. **Encourage** our children to explore their world and let them know that trying new things and failing can be a foundation for future success.
7. **Be real** with our children and admit our own imperfections and humanness. They yearn for the truth and to understand that each of us is flawed, but also that we have our own defining moments and lessons learned to share.
8. **Listen** to them, really listen. When we do that, we get closer to understanding them, and thus get closer altogether.
9. **Ensure** every child knows that they have at least one adult who truly cares about that them and can be a real “go-to” person when the child is in pain, in trouble or needs someone to lean on.
10. **Tell** every child that they are the hope of the future and that they can “be all that they can be.” Someday it will be their community, their state and their Nation to lead.

What specific strategies and concrete steps can our state’s adults undertake to help our children realize their full potential and how can families then be supported to help make that happen? How can we get real about these lofty ideas and goals?

We can implement this together in a concerted, focused group effort and dialogue with one another to find that path forward, forge new ideas, find new resources and identify specific action steps to get the job done on behalf of our children. And we would suggest that representatives of those groups then establish a pipeline of communication, ideally to develop a common, mutually supportive plan.

This cooperative venture and the great things that can come from it must all be done willingly, authentically and voluntarily. Ideally, mutual trust will grow from the voluntary and objective collaboration and a new, durable network of support could be created that would enable sustained success. This blueprint for success could be done with the same blend of high ideals and concrete actions that have led to the growth and success of our nation.

With focused love, smart hope, and a deep sense of care and shared responsibility, we can enable our children to do remarkable things in the years ahead.

Let’s do it. Are you with us?

We welcome your comments, questions and support; email these to Barb at bbergseth@synergyexchange.org.