

The great Nelson Mandela once said, “Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.” Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights claims “everyone has the right to education”. Oh, but what a tragic world we live in! Even today, education is not easily accessible to so many, especially those with financial, social, and other disadvantages. Standards of living vastly differ from one place to the next. My belief is that knowledge should not be sacrificed but rather sacrificed for, and doing so, we can create the future rather than imagining it. Benjamin Franklin famously said, “An investment in knowledge pays the best interest.” Therefore, the North South Foundation must do everything it can to aid the educationally disadvantaged. The North South Foundation has the potential to be a trailblazer in closing the educational gap by putting into play a three step plan: look for solutions drawing from parallels, optimize funding to appropriate organizations, and leverage the NSF community in the solutions.

At the outset the challenges faced with providing education have a strong correlation to similar issues faced in other sectors. In particular, let’s take a look at the healthcare sector. Just like with education, there is a colossal disparity with the amount of medical attention some families get versus others largely caused by differences in income, race, social, geographic and other factors. In response, the government is trying to increase healthcare access for impoverished communities by funding community-based organizations that go into underserved communities and get a sense for how the people are doing healthwise. Rather than a check-the-box phone call, these grassroots organizations go door to door taking time to diagnose and talk through health problems. Healthcare is being solved through these local organizations well-funded and with the right equipment. Similarly with educational access, a local and accurate

diagnosis is necessary to really understand which communities are deprived of educational access.

The second step of the plan would be for NorthSouth to divert some of its funding to the larger governmental organizations that fund the aforementioned grassroots organizations. Within the United States, disparities with income and education are commonplace. To further explain, income and education are directly related. Lower income school districts receive less tax money and therefore are less likely to have basic school necessities like school supplies. Poorer areas like the Detroit Metro area, where I live, would need much more funding than wealthier areas such as the San Francisco-San Jose Bay area in California. This funding can be used to pay for curricular, infrastructural, and technological improvements in poorer districts. Therefore, the distribution of funding would need to be supplied more to impoverished communities.

Most importantly, NorthSouth can directly be a part of this local activism by offering our NorthSouth students the chance to educate the underserved. The best and brightest of NorthSouth kids can be paired up with a younger child, and they will learn from each other. The underserved child gets to learn from some of the brightest minds, and the NorthSouth student is given an opening into how the world of an underserved child looks to understand how blessed they are. Rather than at the rigorously competitive level exhibited at NSF competitions, NorthSouth middle and high schoolers can teach at a more pre-primary or elementary standard to these underserved children. The supply and demand can be brought together at a local level with NorthSouth's help. However, change is seldom achieved without appropriate motivations. To

accelerate the rate of change, here are a few practical opportunities to align incentives and motivate the NSF community to ignite this cause.

A student community service criterion should be added to advancing to NSF Nationals. As an example, if a student that wins their chapter Geography Bee doesn't meet the community service hours requirement, they wouldn't be allowed to advance to the national competition. Specifically, the community service hours would be earned by helping local families that face educational hardships.

Additionally, an intra-chapter competition for the students with the most community service hours within each NorthSouth geographical chapter would earn recognition and encourage further community service. The top chapters and students by community service can be recognized for their excellence during the NSF Nationals.

By using the three-step process to aid closing the educational gap, NorthSouth can make a lasting impact within communities. Hundreds of local teachers spread across the country can improve overall educational standards in the United States. Education is one of a few foundational factors that dictate the trajectory of growth for not just the current populace but also many generations into the future. Rome was not built in a day but the first brick was certainly laid with hope and confidence. NSF and the young generation need to pioneer in championing for educational access and equity for all. A concerted effort to broaden education can only happen if each of us pledge to do our best to help this great cause. So what's stopping each of us

from taking the leap? Let's converge as a community and forge the requisite steps to bring about lasting change to drive educational equity.