

GIVING MEANING TO SIMPLE WORDS: 'GOOD', 'EQUAL' AND 'EVERY'

The Boys, Girls, Adults Community Development Center takes its mission in life from the words of the men who wrote the Constitution of Arkansas in 1874, when the state had emerged from the Civil War and Reconstruction and looked for ways to improve life in Arkansas. They decided that the only hope for Arkansas's future was to give every child in Arkansas a good education. So, our Constitution declared that from that day forward the one thing that Arkansas government *had* to do was provide a good education for every child, whatever taxes were needed to do it.

Although the government would largely ignore that absolute mandate for the next 150 years, the founders' words still ring true for BGACDC today and should for all of us:

“Section 1: Intelligence and virtue being the safeguards of liberty and the bulwark of a free and good government, **the state shall forever maintain a general, suitable and efficient system of free schools ...**” They added that the education was to be for every single child.

Eighty years later (1954), in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the U. S. Supreme Court declared that Arkansas and other states had done a miserable job ensuring that suitable education, at least for Black children. We have been involved for the past 65 years in a struggle over whether and how to actually do that. In 2005, in a case started by our neighboring school at Lake View, the Arkansas Supreme Court for the first time in history declared that the Constitution's words in 1874 actually meant what they said—a *good* education for *every* child—and that the state legislature and governor had to provide the money and the means to get it done.



Since our founding, BGACDC has considered that our mandate, too—to find ways that we can help the schools, but primarily the parents and community leaders, to provide the learning that will enrich the futures of our children and the community at large. It's a task for which we hope that everyone can lend a hand and heart.

