A CONSCIOUS UNIFYING POLICY REFORM FOR EDUCATION, JUSTICE, AND HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS

By Gloria Campuzano

Our government may wish to consider an integrated unifying policy reform for education, justice, and healthcare. It's time that the three systems have a common vision and link.

VISION: Healthy communities where everyone is secure with a feeling of well-being of body, mind, and spirit.

Secure: The basic needs (food, shelter, and clothing), health, safe environment, public safety, food safety, and so on.

Solutions would focus on food, nutrition, and diet related conditions such as food insecurity, hunger, obesity, chronic diseases, eating disorders, mental health (alcoholism, drug abuse), and food-drug interactions.

"*Let food be your medicine and your medicine be your food.*" Hippocrates

GOAL: Cultivate a holistic and sustainable education honoring our planet earth and its inhabitants with integrated food systems, healthy and secure communities.

OBJECTIVES: By the end of year 2020 our three systems will:

- Foster sustainable communities bringing economic development to urban and rural Oregon.
- Decrease school dropout rate, juvenile delinquency cases, chronic diseases, and mental health cases. This would greatly reduce burdensome expenses.
- Have established integrated curriculums (reading and writing, mathematics, science, wellness, culture, and so on) for each grade in elementary schools, career and college oriented curriculums in secondary schools, and life-transition skills curriculums in the juvenile justice system.
- Have a common social policy tool addressing the risk behaviors in the youth that the Center for Disease Control calls upon. This tool should have an ethics focus:

  Social Ethics that allow coexisting peacefully in community:

  * Do no harm, non-violence, thus promoting self-esteem.
  * Truthfulness.
  * Honesty and integrity.
  * Accountability and responsibility in sexual ethics.
  * Balance and moderation.

  Personal ethics in order to live a balanced life, promoting:

  * Good health, good hygiene, good nutrition, and healthy living.
  * Contentment.
  * Mental strength, perception, self-discipline, being positive, and transforming internal change to be manifested positively in the world.
  * Self-study and self observation.
  * Peace and spirituality.

STEPS AND CONTINUED SUPPORT:

1. Farms to school, school gardens and green houses to laboratory school kitchens (to strengthen science, mathematics, and health curriculum). Include the garden in all the Kindergarten (kind children's gardens). Children taking care of nature take care of themselves.
2. Nutrition and wellness education (by well-trained professionals) to positively impact problem-solving skills, test scores, school attendance rates, and overall sense of well-being: healthy and active bodies = creative minds.

3. Provide a coordinated school health approach with meaningful family and community partnerships addressing the School Health Index in all districts to identify specific needs.
4. The common link that consciously unifies education, justice, and healthcare system is yoga. Begin teaching do no harm and the practice of contentment and make a big issue of them from Kindergarten (and even better in preschool programs such as Early Head Start, Head Start, Family Relief Nurseries, Birth to Three, Primary Connection, and Child Care Centers).
5. Support OSU Extension Service programs to nurture healthy children. Both SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and State Nutrition Action Plan) plus both NEP (Nutrition Education Programs): EFNEP (Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program) and OFNP (Oregon Family Nutrition Program) are essential education programs for the growing number of children in child-care settings and schools due to the decreasing family incomes. The ODE is a partner with NEP: http://extension.oregonstate.edu/nep/

WHY A UNIFYING POLICY REFORM TOOL? Yoga teaches us positive values and ethics that are part of its philosophy such as honesty, integrity, accountability, responsibility, sexual ethics, self-discipline, healthy and mindful eating, happiness, contentment, and non-violence. Yoga offers a unique way to bring people to a deeper understanding of themselves and others. The resulting self-awareness combined with concrete tools and life skills gives them what they need to change self-destructive behaviors into productive, healthy life-style choices. Through breathing techniques, asanas (postures), meditation and practicing personal and social ethics, the goals are to achieve peace in our communities and union with body-mind-spirit.

Research has shown that people benefit from yoga. Evidence-base studies indicate yoga may be a useful tool for social policy. However, when many people hear the word yoga, they imagine contorted postures or practitioners chanting a rare language or hippies with a wry smile. There is nothing mysterious about yoga. Simply, yoga means "union" of body, mind and spirit. Yoga is an art, a science, a philosophy, a way of living... Yoga is not a religion. Yoga is not a sport - although athletes benefit from yoga and there are yoga competitions. Yoga provides one of the best means of self-improvement and attaining one's full potential through a continuous practice empowering self-discipline.

The National Center for Alternative and Complementary Medicine provide the status on yoga research suggesting that yoga improves mood and a sense of well-being, counteracts stress, reduces heart rate and blood pressure, increases lung capacity, improves muscle relaxation and body composition, helps with conditions such as anxiety, depression, and insomnia, improves overall physical fitness, strength, and flexibility, and positively affects levels of certain brain or blood chemicals.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. Since yoga philosophy teaches personal and social ethics, our schools and communities will have to deal less with risky behaviors in the youth, mental diseases and lifestyle related diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and obesity. The savings in the preventive healthcare, education and judicial systems will benefit us all. Our government should consider yoga as a conscious unifying policy reform.
2. Let nourishment be the recipe for peace. Cultivate the root (children first) to grow healthy branches.

ECONOMIC DATA:

1. Each high school dropout costs nearly $154 billion in additional income over the course of his/her lifetime (All 4 Education Org., 2011).
2. In 2008, over 93,000 juveniles were incarcerated. The cost was about $5.7 billion per year, even though majorities were held for nonviolent offenses (Justice Policy Institute, 2009).

3. Chronic conditions account for more than 75% of the $2.6 Trillion annual medical care cost in the U.S.A (CDC, 2009). The annual medical care cost in 2005 was $1.4 Trillion.
4. The funding for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Programs is estimated at $251 million for 2012. This is $24 million below the diminished budget that the agency faced in 2010 according to John Kelly (Youth Today Org., 2011).
5. The estimated federal budget for 2012, for example is $10 million for alcohol-abuse prevention, $8 million for gang and youth violence prevention, $8 million for the Community-Based Violence Prevention Initiative, plus $100 million for grants (Youth Today Org., 2011).

Gloria Campuzano, MS, RD, LD, CYT, originally from Colombia (and U.S. citizen) is a dietitian for over 30 years and introduced to yoga in her teen years. She volunteers in health committees and boards and teaches yoga at Oregon rural schools to address risk behaviors of youth and holistic nutrition.
** For consultation on training teachers on integrated wellness curriculum development and "down to earth" policy change with the personal and social yoga ethics (with or without using the mystical language of yoga), please contact me at GoyaYoga@q.com or 541-912-7789.*

SUGGESTED WEBSITES AND READING:
Nationwide, yoga is being accepted in many wellness centers, the juvenile justice system, and schools. It is promoting healthy behaviors for young people suffering from unhealthy eating, stress, drug use, and poor academic performance:

1. www.yogaservicecouncil.org
2. www.streetyoga.org
3. www.theartofyogaproject.org
4. www.niroga.org
5. www.yogaed.org
6. www.yogacalm.org
7. www.yogakids.com
8. www.yogaintheshadows.com

Yoga for people with PTSD:

9. www.irest.us

Yoga Therapy:

10. www.IAYT.org
11. http://nccam.nih.gov
12. Hedge SV, Adhikari P, et al. *Effect of three-month yoga on oxidative stress in type 2 diabetes with or without complications: a control clinical trial.* Diabetes Care. 2011; 34 (10):2208-2210.

Social policy articles: *"Federal Programs for Youth More of the same won't Work"* by Baron and Sawhill:

13. www.youthtoday.org

Healthy, Safe Youth and Coordinated School Health:

14. www.safeyouth.gov
15. www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth

Yoga, nutrition, risk behaviors in the youth, integrated curriculum, and environmental and social change. This booklet is a message for leaders to promote healthy communities:

16. Campuzano G. *Traveling into the Light: A Mystical Nourishing Journey. Includes: Teenage Wellness and Prevention Objectives, Yoga Resource Guide, and Food for Thought.* OR, 2011. ISBN: 978-0-0615-42234-3. GoyaYoga@q.com
17. Campuzano G. *The Healing Power of Yoga.* Oregon Live Guest Columnist: http://www.oregonlive.com/opinion/index.ssf/2012/01/yoga_a_conscious_unifying_poli.html

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