



HILDERBRAND PELZER III

THE PRINCIPAL WHO LIFTED UP ONE OF THE LARGEST JAIL SYSTEMS THROUGH EDUCATION



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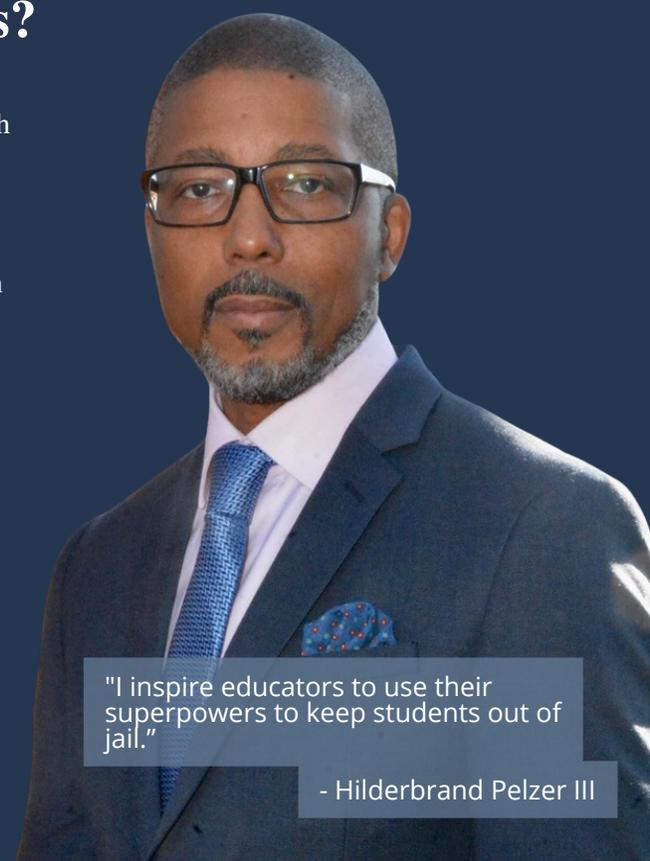
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media kit

Why should the education of incarcerated youth matter to educators?

Known as the Principal who lifted up one of the largest jail systems through education, few can speak about it with the passion of award-winning principal Hilderbrand Pelzer III. After speaking at the 2008 Annual Conference of the Council of the Great City Schools, superintendents, school board members, and district-level leaders stood in line to speak with Hilderbrand. They all praised his inspiring talk about his educational work with incarcerated students in Philadelphia. His invaluable insights into correctional education inspires educators at all levels to boost their confidence in teaching struggling and reluctant students, meet the needs of vulnerable and marginalized students, prioritize equitable access to resources and support, and persevere when working with both low-achieving students and in highly challenging environments.

Hilderbrand's stories of how incarcerated youth made him an educator will captivate your audience. Attendees will leave with knowledge about the intricate connection between school and negative feelings of self-worth and juvenile delinquency.



"I inspire educators to use their superpowers to keep students out of jail."

- Hilderbrand Pelzer III

AS FEATURED ON



BIOGRAPHY



With over three decades of experience, Pelzer has earned a stellar reputation as an educator, inspirational speaker, and leader. He understands that education is tough and has made it his personal and professional mission to help educators overcome challenges in schools and succeed. His leadership as a principal has earned him numerous honors in this area. One notable honor was the Queen Smith Award for Commitment to Urban Education, a national award recognizing significant contributions to urban education by an urban educator. In 2008, Pelzer was chosen from among 66 of the largest urban school systems across the United States to receive this award from the Council of the Great City Schools. He also received the Moral and Courageous Exemplar Urban Educational Leadership Award from Cabrini University's Center for Urban Education, Equity, and Improvement in 2019 and the prestigious Lindback Award for Distinguished Principal Leadership in 2014.

Pelzer is a native son of Philadelphia, where he was raised with strong character values and a desire to excel. He obtained a bachelor's degree in physical education from Hampton University and a master's degree in educational administration from Cheyney University. Later in his career, he received his Superintendent's Letter of Eligibility from Saint Joseph's University. Hilderbrand

has also completed the Leadership for Large-Scale Improvement training program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education's Harvard Institute for School Leadership.

Throughout his career, Pelzer has been driven by a vision of improving students' lives through quality education and meaningful mentorship. His passionate approach to being a change agent has earned him the respect and admiration of students and peers alike. Pelzer has achieved something that few educators have accomplished: he has led five different types of urban schools and has participated in three major reform efforts to turn schools around. Pelzer has directed educational programs in correctional facilities, and he has also designed two high school models for expelled students. Among his accomplishments is the creation of a successful school model for serious high-risk youth offenders in Philadelphia's prison system. His leadership challenged long-held, false assumptions about access to quality education for juveniles in adult correctional settings. He has designed an evidence-based model focusing on system level solutions to legal, logistical, and educational challenges in a correctional setting, clearly demonstrating his ability to strategize, focus on students, and collaborate in a large, complex, public-sector organization. Based on his well-established track record of expanding opportunities for students in highly challenging environments, particularly incarcerated youth, young people who have dropped out of school, and expelled students, he is actively sought out to speak, inspire, and motivate educational professionals and community leaders.

Early in his career, Pelzer found inspiration in incarcerated youth. Working as a physical education teacher at the Bensalem Youth Development Center, a secure state facility serving incarcerated male juveniles, Pelzer realized that he was on the right career path. He developed a curiosity to learn why incarcerated youth were disconnected from their learning in school. As his experience and expertise grew, he quickly understood that he not only had to enact change to help incarcerated youth, but also inspire teachers who could make lasting change in classrooms and schools. He leverages the lessons that he learned at the Bensalem Youth Development Center and, later, in the Philadelphia prison system to help educators grasp the intricate connection between school and feelings of self-worth and juvenile delinquency.

Throughout his career, Pelzer has drawn on his solid educational foundation to build a strong resume as an educator and leader. He has held positions as an assistant regional superintendent, a principal, an assistant principal, and a physical education teacher. These roles have fueled his passion for bringing quality education and mentorship to students in the most challenging life situations. He has profound and sought-after expertise and insight on K-12 education, leadership, educating high-risk students, juvenile and adult correctional education, juvenile correctional school organization, and the incarcerated side of the school-to-prison pipeline.

In his book, *Unlocking Potential: Organizing a School Inside a Prison*, Pelzer examines urban education from a perspective that is highly underrepresented in national discussions, namely incarcerated students. The book draws on his early professional experiences and his nationally recognized public education work within one of the nation's largest jail systems, the Philadelphia prison system. He offers insights into the indispensable mental perspective and leadership strategies that he relied on to create a school model that cultivated a strong educational culture in Philadelphia's six major correctional facilities. His invaluable insight on correctional education underscores the prominent role of education in all institutions that have children under their guidance.

FEATURED TOPICS

Teacher Perseverance

Encouraging teachers to persevere in the face of challenges.

Cutting Off the Pipeline to Prison

Incarcerated youth illustrate the needed improvements in schools.

Juvenile Justice Education

Would you consider a school that looks and feels like a prison to be a model of success?

Criminalizing Black School Boys

What seeing former students end up in the Curran Fromhold Correctional Facility taught me about failing to meet the needs of black male students.

Unlocking Potential

What I learned about strategic leadership when I took on the fifth-largest county jail system in the United States.

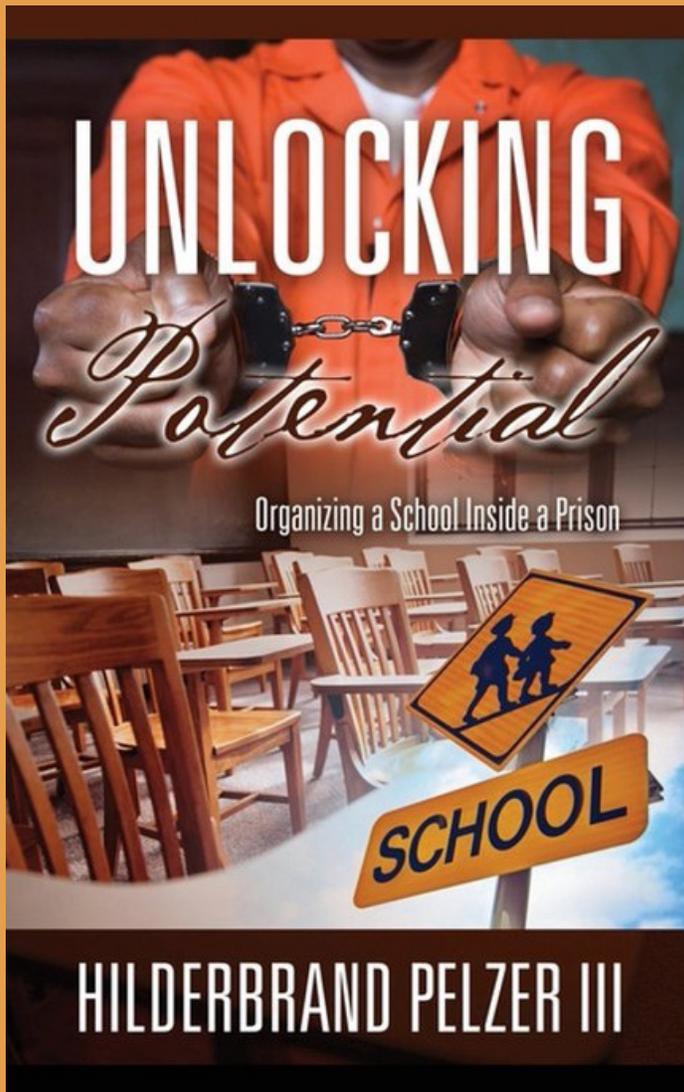
Other Topics

- Reimagining the Preparation of New Teachers
- Educational Equity for All Students
- Leadership: What School Leaders Can Learn from Incarcerated Youth
- The Management of Educational Change
- Mental Health in Elementary Schools
- Committing to Schools with the Most Pressing Challenges



Watch videos here

AUTHOR



Examine urban education from a perspective that is under-represented in national debates, namely incarcerated students.

Throughout the United States, especially in the poor neighborhoods of large cities, too many public schools are failing to reach, teach, and engage thousands of struggling youths. Poor educational backgrounds, reluctance to be in the school environment, and socioeconomic pressures lead to failure in the school environment. As a result of these failures, thousands of school-age youths are sent down the path to the school-to-prison pipeline.

In the book, the Philadelphia prison system provides the backdrop. This is just a hint of what sets *Unlocking Potential: Organizing a School Inside a Prison* apart from other books in the genre. It is about Pelzer's invaluable perspective on urban education as much, if not more than, about underscoring how education can and should play a prominent role in all institutions that are responsible for children.

Heralded by the Midwest Book Review as "strongly recommended for those in charge of education of imprisoned youth" and "a guide" for those facing educational challenges, *Unlocking Potential: Organizing a School Inside a Prison* is a springboard for a deeper conversation about K-12 education. It creates an authentic connection that helps educators of all levels overcome daunting issues in urban education and affect positive change. Each chapter shares inspiring stories and insights that will help educators vigorously tackle the work required to improve schools.

Discounted books are available (up to 25% off)
from the publisher, Outskirts Press

<https://outskirtspress.com/UnlockingPotential>

amazon

\$15.95

amazonkindle

\$9.99

TESTIMONIALS

“Mr. Pelzer’s work is truly inspiring and life-changing for the youth impacted. I appreciate his dedication to speak on issues of literacy, dyslexia, teacher preparation, the juvenile and criminal justice systems, and more. His book, *Unlocking Potential*, addresses many of these issues . . . I highly recommend him to speak to your organization.”

Stacie McClam, JD, M.Ed
School Dismissed, LLC

Director & Producer of *Robbed: A Mother's Peril - The Kelley Williams-Bolar Story*

“Hilderbrand is an extremely thoughtful leader who is deeply passionate about educating all children, particularly those students labeled as ‘most difficult’ or ‘unmotivated’.”

Dr. Traci Teasley
Michigan Department of Education

Partnership District Liason

“I can personally attest to the fact that Mr. Pelzer is an expert on this subject and worked miracles inside the Philadelphia Prison System. ”

Leon A. King, II, Esq.
City of Philadelphia

Commissioner of Prisons (Ret.)

“Powerful keynote to close out our conference. Thank you for challenging our team to overcome our challenges to unlock the potential of our students.”

Adam Johnson
North Carolina Department of Education

Director of Education Services

“It’s people like Mr. Pelzer who inspire you to want to learn.”

Prince Andrew
The Duke of York

“Pelzer has based his career on motivating students and teachers and focusing on the impact literacy has on success later in life.”

Angela Hockler
Kent County Public Schools

Coordinator of Student Services

“The work that Hilderbrand had put in to create an environment that values education was very apparent. It further illuminated my belief that young men of color when given positive models and mentors can be affirmatively developed, reclaimed, and transformed no matter their circumstances.”

Ron Walker
Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color

Executive Director (COSEBOC)

“Hilderbrand Pelzer shares his experience and practice in working with the most at-risk population of incarcerated youth. His educational model is of value to all educational settings as his core belief lies in building relationships with all students.”

Dr. Frank Garritano
Phoenixville Area School District

Principal, Ed.D.



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