

SENIOR LIVING

Dixon & Grace

How They Built a Village That's Lasted 50 Years

By **Bonita Gooch**
Editor-in-Chief

Key Points

- In 1973, Bill Grace & Leon Dixon founded the W.E.B. DuBois Learning Center.
- The center offered academic tutoring with Afrocentric material and themes.
- The organization's success was due to strong leadership, togetherness, and a dedicated army of volunteers.



When other programs failed, Bill Grace (Left) and Leon Dixon Jr. built a community-based education program that's lasted for 50 years. They share their secret sauce, which they say can work for other social entrepreneur organizations.

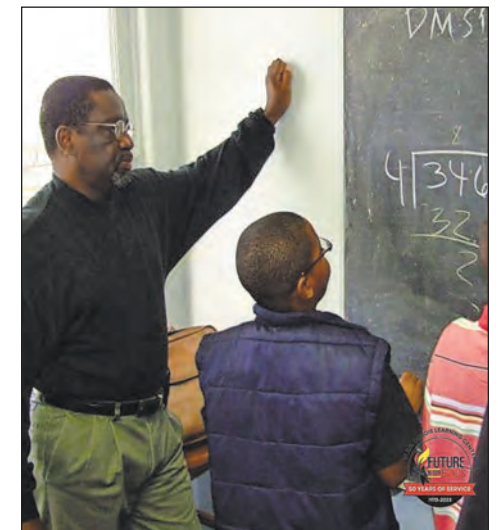
Quality academics and Black Consciousness remain the foundation of what would become a nationally recognized program that has lasted 50 years and educated thousands. But, don't think for one minute that it was easy.

Dixon & Grace

William Bryant "Bill" Grace was born in 1943 in Allenton, AL, and joined the

Air Force to better his status in life. After the Air Force, Grace was on his way to California to live when he stopped in Kansas City to visit his older brother.

That was 1966, and Grace hasn't moved since. While Grace was in KC, he ran across an old Alabama acquaintance who shared with him information about what was happening in the "movement" in cities like Detroit.



A strong base of community volunteers were at the core of the organization's success.

That started Grace's lifelong reading and studying about the Black experience.

Lester Leon Dixon Jr., born in 1940, is a KC native. A coach helped him get a football scholarship to attend Texas Southern University, where he earned a bachelor's and a master's degree in mathematics.

When he returned to Kansas City, he landed a job at Bendix, one of the city's largest employers. It was there that a coworker handed him a copy of "The Autobiography of Malcolm X."

When they were introduced to the Black

The '70s marked the start of a new era. Black Americans were moving from the civil rights era to a new era of Black Power and Black Pride.

This transition to Black Consciousness thinking was led by a growing number of young activists. In Kansas City, two young leaders w Bill Grace and Leon Dixon, recognized the role a good education – not just in basics but in our history and culture – was to this growing cultural phenomenon.

In 1973, they came together to form the W.E.B. DuBois Learning Center, and creatively developed an academic tutoring program, embedded with Afrocentric material, topics and themes.

"The academic advancement was the cake; the Afrocentric exposure was the icing," wrote Leon Dixon in his 1994 book "Future in Our Hands."

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You Can Support the Dementia Caregiver



More than 11 million people in the U.S. are providing unpaid care to a person living with Alzheimer's or another dementia. In 2022, the estimated 18 billion hours of unpaid care was valued at more than \$339 billion.

The Alzheimer's Association offers free resources online and on the phone for caregivers. A professionally staffed 24/7 Helpline (800.272.3900)

offers information and advice to more than 300,000 callers each year and provides translation in more than 200 languages. The Alzheimer's Association caregiving pages (alz.org/care) contain information and resources to support caregivers across the caregiving. ALZConnected is an online community that allows caregivers and individuals living with the disease to connect with others to share thoughts,

questions, and ideas with each other 24 hours a day.

The Alzheimer's Association and AARP Community Resource Finder connects caregivers to a variety of local resources by simply entering their zip code. The database includes listings for a wide range of services, including: housing options, adult day

care, home care, medical services, legal services, and other community resources.

In honor of November as National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month and also National Family Caregivers Month, the Alzheimer's Association offers 8 tips to support an Alzheimer's caregiver:

1. Educate yourself about the disease.
2. Build a team of family and friends who want to help with caregiving.
3. Give caregivers a break.
4. Check in — call, send a note or stop by for a visit.
5. Do the "To-do" list.
6. Be specific with your offer to help. Instead of saying, "Call

me if you need anything," say "I'm headed to the grocery store before I stop by, what can I pick up for you?"

7. Help during the holidays.
8. Join the fight and volunteer with the Alzheimer's Association.

For more information, call 800.272.3900.





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It's Medicare Open Enrollment Period: What You Need to Know

For info straight from the source, go to Medicare.gov

By **Bonita Gooch**
Editor-in-Chief

Every year, Medicare participants have an opportunity to sign up or change plans during the seven-week open enrollment period that begins Oct. 15. The deadline to finalize your decision on what kind of coverage you'd like to have for 2024 is Dec. 7.



What is an Annual Notice of Change?

If you have a Medicare plan, your provider is required to send you a "Plan Annual Notice of Change" (ANOC) each fall. The ANOC includes any changes in coverage, costs and more that will be effective the following January. It's important to review any changes to your plan to make sure the plan still meets your needs. If you don't receive an ANOC by October, or you'd like to cancel your plan, contact your plan carrier.

What if You Receive a Non-Renewal Notice?

A Medicare non-renewal notice will be sent if your plan is leaving the Medicare program in the coming year. If you receive one, you must choose a new plan. For help researching different types of Medicare plans, visit the Medicare info page.

Choice of Medicare plans? Enrollees can choose between Original Medicare, which includes both Part A and Part B; Medicare Advantage plans; and Part D prescription drug plans.

Open Enrollment for Medicare Plans in 2023

Those who want to stay on their current Medicare coverage do not need to re-enroll. However, the costs and covered benefits can change from year to year, so it is recommended to have a look at the coverage choices available each year. That way you can choose which options best meet your health needs.

You can find info and compare personalized options for health and drug coverage with the Medicare Plan Finder at Medicare.gov. The Centers

for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has updated the Medicare Plan Finder with Medicare health and prescription drug plan info for 2024.

You can also call 1-800-MEDICARE to get help 24 hours a day, seven days a week on which plan would be best for you.

Health Insurance Programs

The 3 Major "Parts" of Medicare:

Part A: covers hospital stays, skilled nursing, and hospice services.

Part B: covers outpatient services, most doctor visits, and most drugs that need to be administered by medical professionals.

Part D: covers most "self-administered" prescriptions.

Most retirees receive Medicare Part A coverage for free because they paid Medicare taxes throughout their careers over the 40 quarters required, equivalent to 10 years. Those who don't qualify for free Medicare Part A could pay between \$278, the same as last year, and \$505 a month in 2024, an increase of \$1

over last year.

Medicare Part B premiums will see an increase this year after dropping for the first time in around a decade last year. The standard monthly premium will rise by \$9.80 to \$174.70 for 2024, from \$164.90 in 2023.

2023 according to CMS. Likewise, the annual deductible for all Medicare Part B beneficiaries will be \$240 next year, an increase of \$14 from the previous year.

More Medicare Advantage Plans

Some seniors elect to add additional coverage for things like vision and dental through a Part C or Medicare Advantage plan. Medicare Advantage is a private plan alternative to Original Medicare. It provides additional health benefits to Part A and Part B under one plan. Those services can include eye-wear, hearing aids and dental benefits, among other features. The number of people enrolled in the program climbed to 30.8 million in 2023, or 51% of Medicare's roughly 60

million participants.

Since 2017, the average number of Medicare Advantage plans that enrollees can choose from has steadily risen. In 2023, there was a choice of 43 plans for the average beneficiary, up from 33 two years prior. The average monthly premium in 2024 for all Medicare Advantage is projected to increase by 64 cents to \$18.50 per month. At the same time, in 2024 the average monthly Part D premiums are forecast to be around \$55.50, a nearly 2% decrease from \$56.49 last year.

Additionally, "thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act, people with Medicare Part D prescription drug coverage will continue to have improved and more affordable benefits, including a \$35 cost-sharing limit on a month's supply of each covered insulin product," along with other additional savings, says CMS.

For the full scope of info regarding getting health-care coverage through Medicare in 2024, the federal government provides an official handbook.



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Carolyn Wims-Campbell Still has a Commitment to Public Service

The fiery 81-year-old is a trailblazer for education & civil rights.

By **Thomas White**
Kansas City Reporter

Carolyn Wims-Campbell is 81, but isn't slowing down anytime soon.

She just received the Col. William E. Richards Award for her work with the Topeka chapter of the NAACP. Branch President Carlton Scroggins praised her, saying she's always ready to help whenever and however the situation warrants.

He also noted that she is not shy about voicing her opinions.

"Carolyn will be the first to roll up her sleeves to delegate, relegate, instigate, or most importantly motivate," said Scroggins. "We love her dearly, like a sweet and saucy aunt who you don't want to cross."

The local chapter of the NAACP is just one of Campbell's many roles these days.

She also serves on the policy council for Sheldon Head Start in Topeka; Shawnee County

Oral Health Coalition; as a commissioner on the Kansas Volunteer Commission; and as a stewardess for her church, St. Mark's AME in Topeka.

In 1995, she was elected to the Topeka Board of Education, where she served for 12 years.

During this time, she reveled in the opportunity to connect with the community and effect positive change. Her impact extended further when, from 2012 to 2016, she became the first Black person elected to the Kansas State Board of Education.

Starting in 1992, she's worked at the state capitol in the office of the Kansas Legislature. She currently works in the office of Senate Minority Leader Dinah Sykes and plans to return when they are back in session this January.



Carolyn Wims-Campbell was the first African American to serve on the Kansas State Board of Education. ANTHONY S. BUSH

"If the lord's willing, I'm going to be there," says Wims-Campbell. "I am thankful to God for allowing me to accomplish what I've wanted and for putting people in my path to tell me that this is what I can do."

Early Years

Wims-Campbell grew up in North Topeka and attended Black-only schools, where she thrived under the guidance of strong Black educators.

She attributes her love of learning to those early days when she was a classmate of Linda Brown, the namesake of the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* case.

Integration was largely not a problem for Wims-Campbell, except for a guidance counselor who suggested a career as a waitress over pursuing higher education.

Undeterred, she enrolled in business school after graduation and became just the second Black person hired at Southwestern Bell in Topeka, where she worked in the benefits office until the company's closure in 1991.

Shortly after, she began working at the capitol, starting with Bill Brady and followed by a long list of legislators to whom she wasn't shy about giving her opinion. She worked with senators Donald Betts, Anthony Hensley, and Rip Gooch, father of *The Community Voice* owner Bonita Gooch.

"One of my proud moments was serving as an executive assistant to Rip Gooch," says Wims-Campbell. "That was an honor to serve a Black legislator."

Beyond her official roles, Wims-Campbell's commitment to education manifested in volunteering at Avondale East, where her child attended, and countless other boards and commissions.

Wims-Campbell emphasizes the importance of volunteering, attending board meetings, and immersing oneself in the community to understand the needs and intricacies of public service.

Her advocacy for continuous learning and broadening one's knowledge base echoes through her accomplishments and the positive changes she has championed.

"Don't let someone else determine your future," says Wims-Campbell. "Find like-minded people to support you, and don't listen to what you can't do."



Carolyn Wims-Campbell with fellow honoree Danielle Martin at the Topeka NAACP Freedom Fund Banquet in October. Wims-Campbell was recognized for her years of service to the community and the local NAACP branch.

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Consciousness Movement, both Dixon and Grace totally embraced it. Today, they are among the most well-versed Black history scholars in the city. We guarantee, if you spend 15 minutes with these brothers, you'll leave enlightened.

Dual Tutoring Programs

It was their interest in Black Consciousness that led both men to start educational programs for Black youth in the Kansas City area.

Grace was part of a group of young community activists who established a Youth Leadership and Development Program at Paseo United Methodist Church, a church under the leadership of the Rev. John L. Preciphs.

Grace was working with a group of "troublesome" boys at Central High School, teaching them from his personal materials on the Black movement.

The boys responded positively, and Grace wanted to make the program available for more youth. He moved the program from Central to Paseo UMC in 1972.

One of the books they studied was "The Souls of Black Folk" by W.E.B. DuBois. To make a statement and to help keep the name alive, he decided to name the program the W.E.B. DuBois Reading Center.

Dixon, who worked with friend Emanuel Cleaver II to form a Kansas City chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, was tutoring children one-on-one in math and spreading the word about Black history.

He saw how much both were needed and realized he could reach more youth if he organized a tutoring program. He took the idea to the SCLC and they agreed to help sponsor the program.

The SCLC Mathematics Clinic launched



The program is currently enrolling students and seeking volunteers.

in fall 1973.

The Introduction

Despite their similar interests in the Black Consciousness Movement and in tutoring, Grace and Dixon didn't know each other.

Pastor Preciphs, who was active with SCLC, knew them both and their complementary interests and programs. He arranged a meeting between them, and they agreed to join forces. Dixon accepted the W.E. B. DuBois name, and Grace agreed to change "Reading Center" to "Learning Center," because they both felt it allowed for the addition of more programs in the future.

A Winning Team

In addition to their knowledge and awareness of Black history and culture, both Dixon and Grace had an overwhelming willingness to help others.

But there were a lot of differences between the two. Dixon shared an analysis of their differences in his book.

"Grace is more action-oriented, Dixon is more pensive; Grace is more of an implementer, Dixon more of a visionary; Grace is most comfortable with folk from the 'streets,' Dixon is most comfortable with folk from the 'suites,'" wrote Dixon.

Their "complementary styles" were an asset for the growth and sustainability of the DuBois Learning Center.

With limited funding, the organization relied on volunteers and worked out of churches.

As the program began to grow, they recognized the need for a program administrator. It was a role Grace stepped into and served in for decades while Dixon managed the tutoring and academic portion of the center.

Growth

By the early '80s, the learning center was a successful program attracting not only students but a great group of volunteers. Many of them stayed with the organization for years.

A large number of the math tutors were young Black engineers, who were recruited to KC to work for some of the city's major employers. While many of the reading volunteers were current or retired educators.

The programs finally moved out of the churches in 1982 when they were given as a donation a former home for boys, located on 4.5 acres of land at 55th and Cleveland. The group received the property from the Leon Jordan Memorial Foundation, an affiliation of Freedom, Inc., The foundation accepted the donation of the land with the intention of passing it on to a deserving community group.

They consolidated their programs at the new facility and the organization grew in leaps and bounds. By the organization's 15th birthday, there were nearly 400 students attending the learning.

For the next 25 years, the center grew and offered expanded programming that included:

- College and vocational counseling
- Science tutoring
- Computer & IT programming training
- Media programming

At its peak, W.E.B. DuBois had more than 600 students enrolled and a long waiting list.

The Secret Sauce

What makes an organization last 50 years when so many fail? It starts at the top.

Dixon and Grace agree, saying a successful organization's leaders must have a clear idea of why and what they want to accomplish. But they must also be seen as having a deeper commitment to the organization's vision and be willing to work harder at it than anyone else.

"How can you expect anyone else to do what you are not willing to do?" wrote Dixon in his book.

The duo said another secret to the organization's success was togetherness.

"I can truly say that in all these years, I have seen no envy, jealousy or rancor among the prime movers at the learning center," wrote Dixon.

Beyond Dixon and Grace, the organization was supported by an army of volunteers who gave unselfishly to the learning center over the years. The volunteers were at the core of the organization's success.

"Just as you build a building brick by brick, you build an organization person by person," wrote Dixon. "The people involved with the learning center believe in its objectives and its vision, believe in themselves and their ability to make a contribution and, perhaps most importantly, believe that we are making a difference – to individuals in the community as well as the community at large."

The W.E.B. DuBois Learning Center Today

By **Jeanene Dunn**,
Kansas City Contributor

While Dixon and Grace have stepped away from running the W.E.B. DuBois Learning Center, they remain the names associated with the institution they founded. They are doing what they always wanted to do -- pass the baton on to the next generation of leaders. The future is in good hands.

The Location

After years of operating at 55th &

Cleveland, the W.E.B. DuBois Learning Center had to relocate because the building had several issues that were too costly to repair.

They currently operate out of a former Kansas City Public School Building at 4510 E. Linwood Boulevard

Current Programming

The center is still rebuilding following a total closedown during the COVID-19 pandemic. It serves students in grades 1-12 and offers free tutoring or instruction in:

- Math
- Reading
- Science
- STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) courses

Additional Services

- Enrichment programming
- Educational and vocational counseling

Training for Adult Learners

Adults seeking to learn beginning and advanced computer skills, or receive

certification in coding and networking can enroll in classes.

Students and Tutors Needed

If you're seeking a volunteer opportunity, want to enroll your student or yourself, or learn more visit the W.E.B. Learning Center's social media pages on Facebook and Instagram, or the website, at <http://www.du-boislc.org>.

Stay on top of 50th anniversary events throughout the 2023-24 school year on the center's website and social media pages.