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ABSTRACT

This issue features the opinions of some highly respected, but often controversial, educators who stand outside the mainstream of education reform. They often advocate more structured and top-down approaches to the problems of urban students as they consider the standards that must be created to promote achievement for all students. "No Magic Tricks: It's a Systems 'Thang'" by Anne C. Lewis argues that urban districts can provide the systemic context needed to make city schools places of high achievement for students and teachers. "What Works with City Kids: An Effective School Model" by Lenaya Raack presents the visions of educators Asa Hilliard and Barbara Sizemore for creating successful urban schools. "First in the World: Federal Math and Science Initiative Targets City Schools" by Dan Weissmann recounts efforts of the National Science Foundation to improve urban schools. "Full-Service Schools and High-Risk Youth: Collaborating To Make a Difference" by Joy Dryfoos describes the combined efforts of human services providers and school personnel. Four former urban superintendents offer suggestions and challenges for today's urban schools in "Unsung Heroes: Ex-Superintendents Speak Out." Finally, this issue's CITYSCHOOLS Profile by Donna M. Williams looks at the work of Lisa Delpit, a crusader for urban and minority children. (SLD)

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ED 390 974

CITYSCHOOLS

A Research Magazine About Urban Schools and Communities

Volume 1, Number 3
Fall 1995

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Making City Schools Work

What we know
What it takes

IN THIS ISSUE

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Asa G. Hilliard III

Through today's schoolhouse doors walks a highly diverse generation of children. These children challenge our schools to provide culturally responsive education and prepare them for active participation in a global community.

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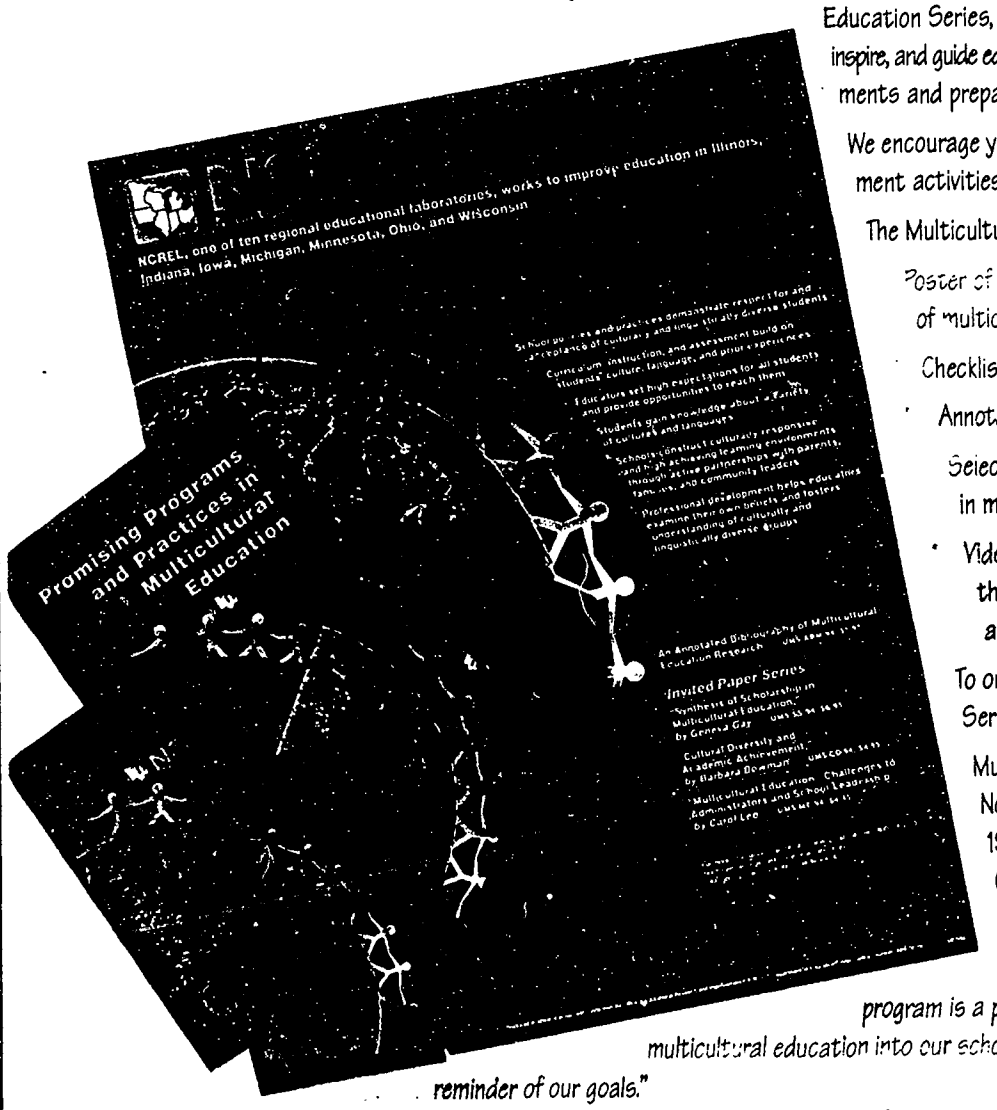

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"Blending cultural diversity into the fabric of our program is a primary goal. These resources have helped us integrate multicultural education into our school curriculum and practices and the poster is a visible reminder of our goals."
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Betty Cittadine, Assistant Principal, Lane Tech High School, Chicago, IL

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"The materials are a reminder to consider the special needs of our diverse population."
Dolly Helsel, Assistant Superintendent, Chicago Heights School District 170, Chicago Heights, IL

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CITYSCHOOLS

A Research Magazine About Urban Schools and Communities

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL)

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FROM THE EDITORS

Welcome to CITYSCHOOLS, a new research magazine for educators, parents, community members, and policymakers at all levels–people who work with urban children and make decisions about their education.

Urban educators know that increasing poverty is leaving city kids without many of the supports they require. Schools and educators are asked to provide these supports, often without adequate access to recent research about urban children and their families, neighborhoods, and communities.

The importance of recent educational research cannot be overlooked. It warns us that conventional school models are inadequate for coping with the developmental needs of today's urban youth. It also offers new models that tap the abilities of city learners.

CITYSCHOOLS' mission, therefore, is to help educators, parents, and other concerned members of the community gain greater access to this emerging knowledge base. We want to help schools turn theory into practice.

CITYSCHOOLS is a research magazine, not an academic journal. We seek to report on research regarding the transformation of urban schools and make it more accessible to practitioners in urban classrooms. We plan to show the research at work in real settings–to tell the stories of real educators who are finding solutions to enduring educational problems.

CITYSCHOOLS is also a forum for all members of the urban school community who are struggling toward educational change. We seek to stimulate discussion and debate among the personnel of large and small city school districts, which share many demographic, social, economic, and political characteristics.

CITYSCHOOLS is a magazine for those who believe that urban school transformation is an urgent issue of both policy and practice. It is a magazine for those who believe, with us, that schools and communities must have access to knowledge before they can create effective designs for reform and change.

We welcome you as a reader and invite your feedback and participation in the dialogues stimulated by CITYSCHOOLS.

What standards must we create if we plan for all children to achieve?

Every time I'm in the room with Barbara Sizemore or Asa Hilliard, I leave ready, not only to slay dragons, but to go looking for them, too! These two veterans of educational reform radiate unlimited energy and undying commitment to kids others have too easily written off. They are champions for poor, minority children who they believe can and must be educated by this country's public schools. Many of these kids are in city schools. Sizemore and Hilliard's work with these kids and their schools is a major focus of this issue of CITYSCHOOLS.

Lisa Delpit, standing solidly in the advocacy tradition of these two education giants and the subject of this issue's CITYSCHOOLS Profile, also takes up the battle for children of color and she unapologetically takes progressive school reformers to task for making unilateral decisions about what works for "other people's children." She demands a voice for the children's community, their parents, their teachers, and those with the biggest stake in the children's lives.

In this issue of CITYSCHOOLS, we feature the combined voices of these highly respected – but often controversial – educators. They do not stand in today's mainstream of school reform. Some say their approaches are too structured, too top-down, too authoritarian, that we must solve the problems of families and homes or, even more ambitiously, the problems of urban school systems before we can educate all children at high levels.

In this issue, *CITYSCHOOLS* asks a fundamental question: What standards must we create if we plan for all children to achieve? Out of all that we know about educating children from poor, urban communities, one thing is certain: Getting different outcomes is highly dependent on the capacity of the individual school to support and sustain innovative, effective academic programs for all kids. Research evidence doesn't falter on this point. But what we do and how, when it is "other people's children," does.

Creating an urban systemic environment that doesn't falter when it comes to kids and their learning has to be the ultimate goal of school reform. This issue presents some divergent opinions on that subject. We ask Barbara Sizemore, Asa Hilliard and Lisa Delpit, What does it take to make city schools work? But we also ask ex-superintendents from some of the largest city school districts in the country; we ask Anne C. Lewis, a nationally recognized observer and writer about education reform; and we ask one of the most visible federal reform efforts, the Urban Systemic Initiative from the National Science Foundation.

– B. J. Walker, Editor-in-Chief

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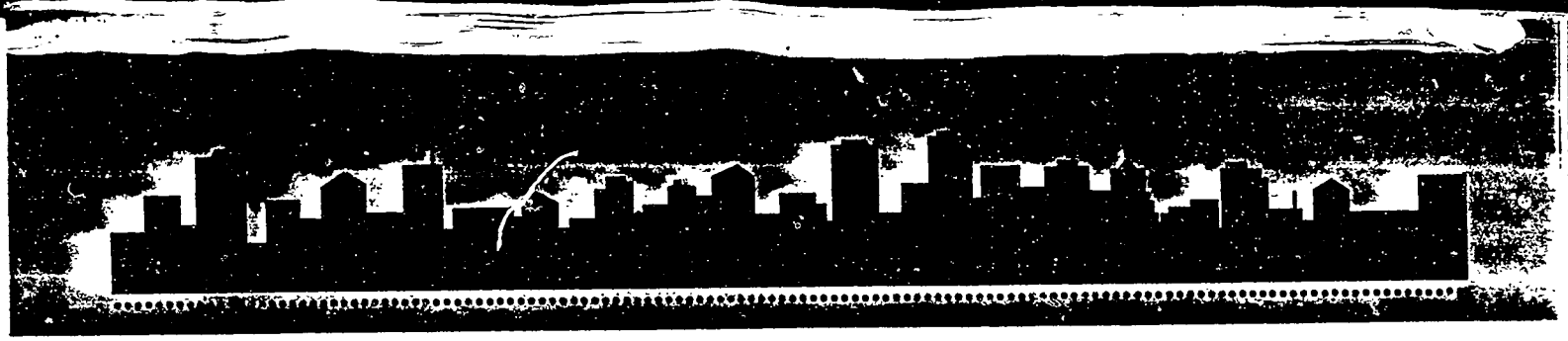

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Volume 1, Number 3 Fall 1995

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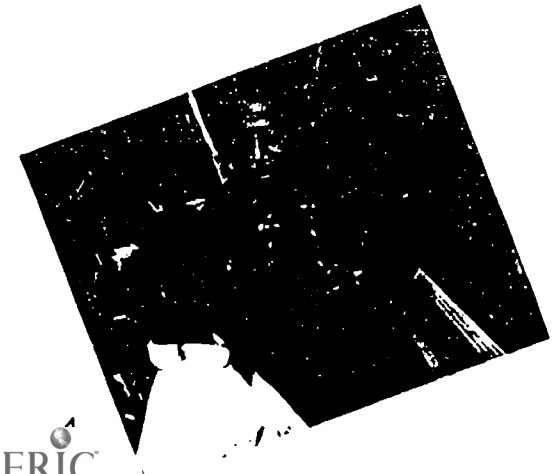

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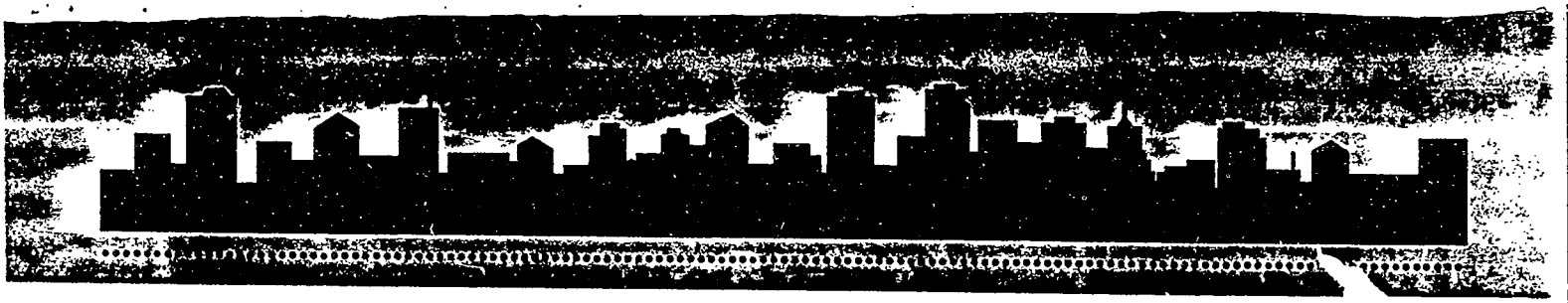

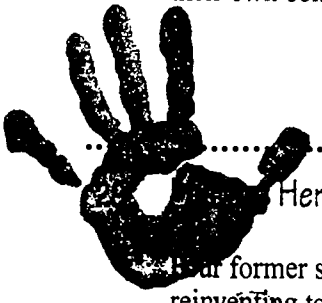

Articles and [illegible] welcomed!

We want to hear from our readers. If you would like to submit an article for publication in our upcoming issue, express your opinion on one of our articles, or share your thoughts and ideas on issues critical to city schools, please address your correspondence to *CITYSCHOOLS* Editorial. Letters may be edited for clarity or length.

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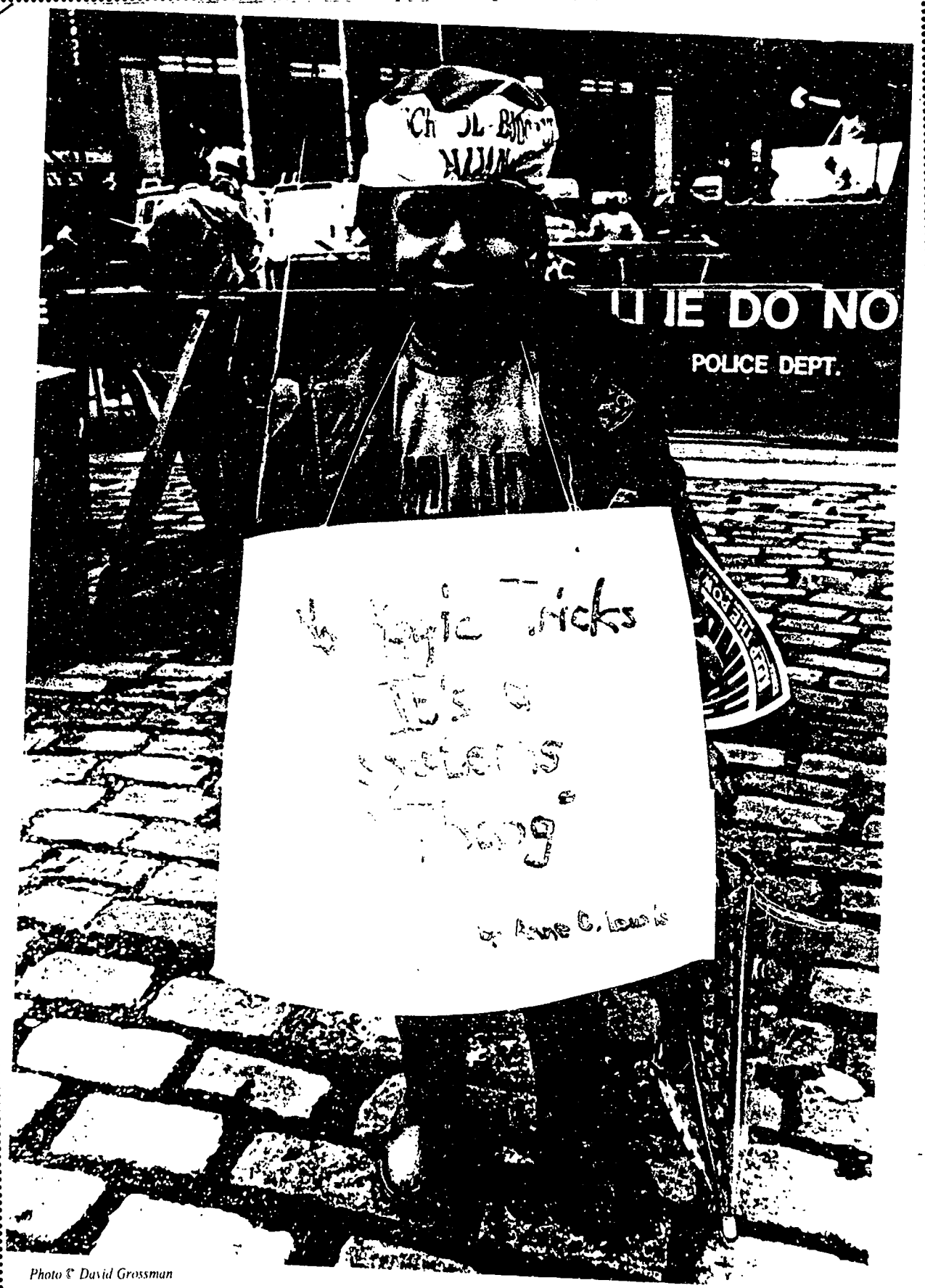

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While state policymakers at the annual meeting this summer of the Education Commission of the States (ECS) mulled over proposals to radically dismember urban school districts, a few teachers were listening, and some spoke their minds. "I'd rather be teaching in an urban school," they generally said. "It's more of a challenge," or, "I feel this is where I am needed most."

It is heartening to hear such positive affirmations of teachers in urban schools. If the picture given differs from that offered by policymakers, it is because it was snapped in classrooms. The essential point of the many and diverse restructuring and reform efforts under way in urban education is – or should be – the improvement of achievement by *all* students. So the lens eventually must capture what happens between teachers and students in classrooms.

WHAT IT TAKES TO LEARN AT HIGHER LEVELS

Several sets of contexts determine if students will learn at much higher levels. The first is professional development. Most important for teachers is the opportunity to develop knowledge about higher standards and expectations and the skills to foster them in their students. This issue of ***CITYSCHOOLS*** rightfully stresses good professional development. (Note that the emphasis should not be "training" or even "staff" development, but professional development.) It also points to special skills needed by teachers to ensure that poor and minority students achieve what they are capable of doing. This requires a thorough understanding of the developmental needs of children from diverse backgrounds and an ability to discern among many fads and programs. Teachers in urban schools need to be confident, well-informed professionals.

Another context is that set by the school environment. The vision, the use of time, the instructional focus, and the supports given teachers, students, and parents all affect student learning. Principals set this context, as the researchers in this issue point out. There may be a few exceptions where teachers are able to work around poor principal leadership, but such efforts rarely last. More important, they fail to change the district-level conditions that allow unprepared or unfit principals to serve.

Broader contexts also matter. There are two. First, there are federal initiatives and programs that spur better teaching and learning. And, second, there are community supports, such as collaborative services, that help students and families cope with interlocking problems.

Photo © Kathy Sloane

The context almost forgotten in these articles, however, is the one that ultimately makes good teaching and learning possible in urban schools. That is the *systemic* support teachers and schools receive. Exemplary "turnaround" efforts in individual schools will remain isolated and eventually wither away unless school districts have the vision, structure, and leadership to envelop them in an overall effort to dramatically improve student achievement.

The generation of children now in urban school systems needs fundamental changes [illegible] the [illegible]

This issue of ***CITYSCHOOLS*** expresses optimism about what can be accomplished in classrooms and schools to enhance student learning. Policymakers, on the other hand, are pessimistic about the ability of urban systems to focus on student learning or, what is most disturbing, to even care about it. At the ECS meeting, there were few defenders of urban systems as they now operate and many suggestions for "deep-sixing" them and starting all over.

A FRAMEWORK FOR HOPE

Calling it a "framework for hope," ECS has proposed "new American Urban School Districts" that do away with current governance structures and reorganize along different lines. They could be geographical, with learning taking place in many settings, or tied together electronically, or be mergers of school and city governance systems. Speaking at the ECS meeting, Ernest Boyer, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, proposed dismantling central offices and turning them into renewal centers serving the schools. It is at the school level, he said, where all decisions should be made and accountability required.

Looking at the changes in policies across the states, it is obvious that policymakers and politicians are groping for solutions to what they perceive as the urban system problem. Nineteen states

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The relationships between the central office and individual schools were respectful and mutually supportive.

now have charter school legislation. New state assessment systems, such as the one in Maryland, pinpoint schools in trouble and mark them for "reconstitution" or eventual closure if they do not improve. The New Jersey State Department of Education has become a takeover specialist. The Illinois legislature turned control of the Chicago system over to the mayor, and the receivership situation in the District of Columbia has unleashed numerous recommendations to completely revamp the school system.

The political reason for all this attention to urban school systems is that they have become the new equity agenda. It is safer to blame and reorganize urban systems than it is to continue a more encompassing fight for equity. The second reason is the focus of this issue: the need for much higher expectations and student achievement, or, conversely, the failure of urban systems to improve student achievement significantly.

A TALE OF 12 SCHOOLS

Policymakers may tinker with more creative structures and policies for a long time, but meanwhile the generation of children now in urban school systems needs fundamental changes in what they learn and how -- now. This writer has been fortunate to follow 12 middle schools in five cities that were part of a reform network funded by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation. The five-year project ended in 1994. By that time, the contexts for change outside of the individual schools were much more obvious than they were at the beginning. They show that it is possible to support and produce much higher student achievement in urban school systems despite instability in leadership/finances and the worsening social problems of their students. Not all districts could do it, but those that did shared these common characteristics:

Improved student learning and achievement guided the vision, mission, objectives, and practices of the districts, from the central office to the classroom. These were "data-driven" districts that used results to push their agendas.

Professional development focused on goals for student achievement and was teacher-driven. Not only did teachers design and implement professional development, but they also depended heavily on the analysis of student work as the center of discussion and collaboration among themselves. The "silver-bullet" teacher workshop and the individual project/program either disappeared or were integrated with resources that deepened teachers' knowledge of content and pedagogy. Professional development was – and still is – ongoing and focused. Principals received professional development, too, geared toward skills that set the environment for changes in classroom learning.

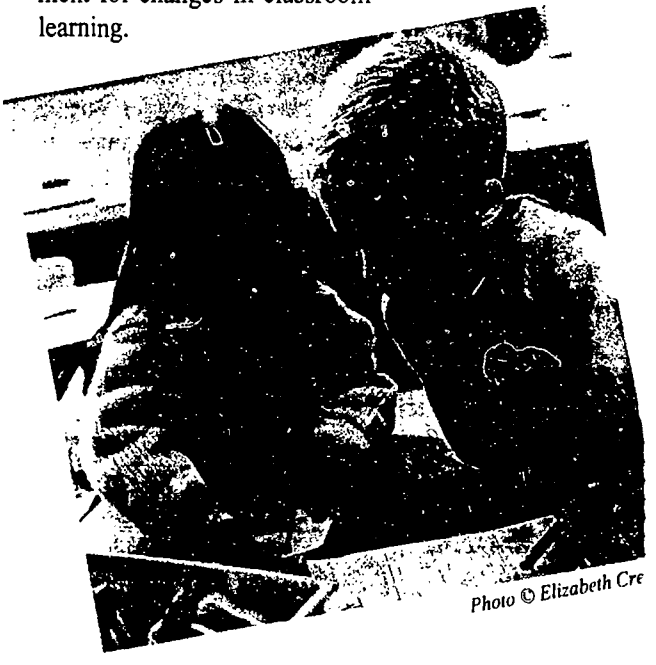

Photo © Elizabeth Cre

Both bottom-up and top-down pressures were used. All of the districts used some form of decentralized decision making at the school site. States or districts provided standards. Schools had great latitude in how they chose to meet them. Where achievement did improve, there also was strong accountability from the top. In these instances, either states had assessments that evaluated school progress or districts had policies with clear goals and accountability measures. (This insistence on accountability is built into the Urban Systemic Initiative of the National Science Foundation, as noted in one of the articles in this issue.)

The relationships between the central office and individual schools were respectful and mutually supportive. Some griping in both quarters is to be expected – no relationships are perfect – but districts and schools

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agreed on the goals and kept communication lines open about reforms. When a district that was successful in organizing middle schools for higher achievement pushed for certain reforms, it also provided support and welcomed feedback.

Accountability: The districts recognized the inappropriateness of standardized assessments and sought other ways of finding out what students knew and could do. Some changed because state assessments changed; others began to develop their own plans, such as for portfolio assessments.

Mutual Trust: Enough trust existed among teachers, principals, and the district administration to allay traditional fears about reforms interfering with union contract language.

None of these characteristics popped up overnight as *the* solution to higher student achievement. They evolved, often arduously, over several years and required extraordinary leadership by teachers, principals, and central administrations. Nor were they dependent on stability of leadership; all sites experienced turnovers at every level. The goals, however, remained steady.

Middle schools that offer students the opportunity to take a second period of math or reading during the regular school day instead of other electives have been found to show significant gains in standardized test scores in both reading and math.

Nonetheless, they well illustrate the components districts can put together to create systemic support for higher student learning. There were no magic tricks or enormous additional resources available to help the districts/schools improve student learning. None adopted the kind of radical restructuring proposed by ECS.

Photo © David Grossman

A BOTTOM-UP APPROACH

What they were able to do was internalize the ideas expressed by Asa Hilliard or Barbara Sizemore or Lisa Delpit, as described in the following pages, and move them out of individual classrooms into a district ethos.

Urban districts across the country face formidable problems. The list of social ills within their boundaries grows. Also, according to revised estimates by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the projected school-age population between 1995 and 2005 – only one decade – will increase by 19 percent, not the 4 percent predicted a few years ago. Most of the increases will be among children of color; most will be living in cities.

In addition, the long partnership with the federal level to support the education of poor children may be undermined by actions in Congress; some states are pursuing single solutions, such as charter schools, that avoid systemic efforts.

If the teachers who spoke up at Denver are right, urban districts can be vital, exciting places in which to teach. And if the lessons learned from the Clark project are legitimate, urban districts can provide the systemic context needed to turn them into high-achieving places for teachers and students.

Anne C. Lewis is a freelance writer based in Maryland. She writes nationally on urban school reform efforts.

An Effective School Model

by Lenaya Raack

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Don't talk to Asa Hilliard about the educational limitations of at-risk city kids. Hilliard, Fuller E. Callaway Professor of Urban Education at Georgia State University, doesn't even like the term *at risk*. "It really doesn't say anything. Kids don't need any labels other than their names." He has his own definition of *at risk*, and it has nothing to do with children. It does, however, have everything to do with education, especially in today's highly charged atmosphere of urban reform and school restructuring.

Hilliard believes that if kids are at risk of anything, they are at risk of "not having high-quality schools." According to Hilliard, "The children come intact and whole and capable, and if they find the right environment, they thrive." He bristles at the common belief that "a poor child is somehow an intellectually impaired child who needs something to help him to adapt at a minimal level to a normal system." "Not so," says Hilliard emphatically. "Virtually all the children that we get from any of the neighborhoods are fully capable of meeting the highest standards that schools require."

"Unfortunately," says Hilliard, "our current ceiling for students is really much closer to where the floor ought to be." He explains that "people have been so comfortable criticizing the low-performing students that they've accepted less than what all students are capable of achieving." Hilliard believes that books such as *The Bell Curve* encourage educators and policymakers to believe that the children entering urban schools are somehow "broken." These books, he asserts, "tell people that a quarter of the population can't make it." He also blames "a segment of the respected academic community that have literally sold that idea to large numbers of the public."

PROBLEMS IN URBAN SCHOOLS ARE NOT INSURMOUNTABLE

Hilliard doesn't deny that there are problems. Violence, drugs, and dysfunctional families are too well documented to be discounted. Unlike some of his colleagues, however, Hilliard doesn't believe that these problems must have negative effects on a child's learning. His experience has shown him that we don't have to fix something before children can learn. "Whatever the child's experience outside the school, the school has an opportunity to create its own environment and if that environment is a nurturing, orderly environment, then it's the rare child who doesn't flourish." Hilliard points to schools such as Vann School (see p.16) and the Madison School in Pittsburgh – schools that are turning out well-educated children in the midst of troubled urban neighborhoods.

Hilliard believes that "good schools come first and, in fact, poor schools can create environments that are susceptible to violence." He sees the creation of good schools as "an antidote to violence."

How do these schools do it? There's nothing magical about it, Hilliard maintains. The schools themselves are no different from others in their community. They have the same poverty base, the same school population, the same social ills. The teachers are neither extraordinary nor especially charismatic; they're just ordinary people. "Usually we explain success away by suggesting that the people who achieve it are somehow so unusual that you can't expect anyone else to meet their standards and that's absolutely false," explains Hilliard. What sets these schools and teachers apart is an unshakable belief that all children can learn and an unwavering commitment to making it happen.

THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS

Hilliard notes that while successful schools may have different philosophies of education and edu-

"The children come intact and whole and capable, and if they find the right environment, they thrive."

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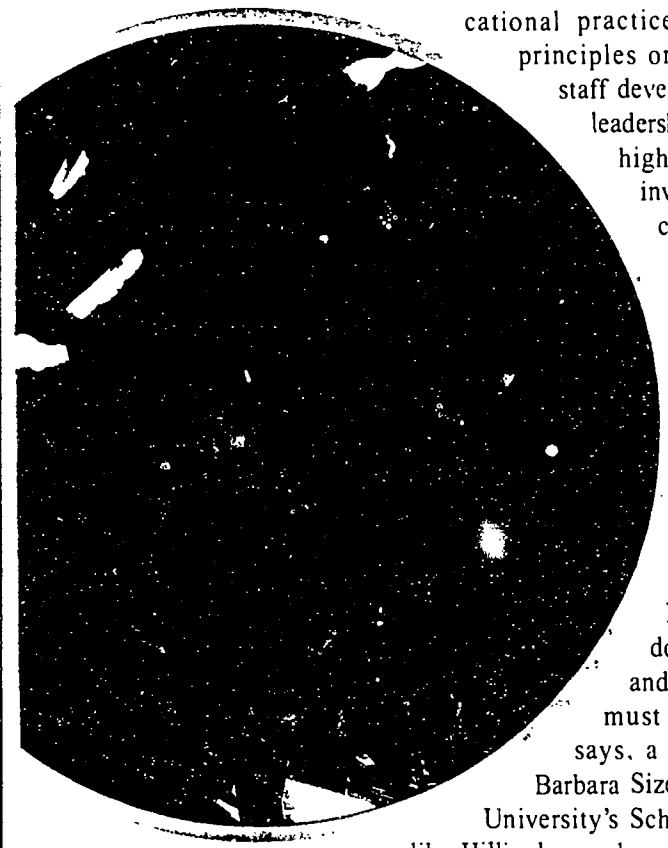

Photo © Ellen Senisi

cational practices, they share nine principles or essential elements: staff development, instructional leadership, school leadership, high expectations, parent involvement, productive climate and culture, monitoring student progress, effective instructional strategies, and learning essential skills (see sidebar, *Why Every Child Can Succeed*).

Schools don't have to do anything extraordinary, contends Hilliard. "We have to do the basics very well and consistently and they must become, as Barbara says, a routine." *Barbara* is Barbara Sizemore, dean of DePaul University's School of Education and, like Hilliard, a zealous advocate for the belief that all children can learn. According to Sizemore, schools are failing students because they're not tailoring instruction to the students' needs. "People are bringing their college education to the school and trying to jam it down the throats of the kids and make it fit whether it fits or not," she contends. "And if it doesn't fit, they blame the kids." Sizemore ticks off a list of common educator complaints: The students aren't interested in learning, their parents don't care, they live in bad neighborhoods, there are gangs.

What schools need to do, says Sizemore, is teach children to learn, and that means teaching them to take tests – all kinds of tests. The trend toward relying only on portfolio and performance-based tests does not sit well with Sizemore. It's not that she doesn't like them. It's just that children "still have to take the SATs, the ACTs, and the LSATs to get into college." As Sizemore points out, "DePaul, where I work, is not accepting by portfolio." An exasperated Sizemore complains, "The only place you get in by portfolio is prison."

The answer, says Sizemore, is to teach children reading, writing, and mathematics – so that they can pass both standardized and performance-based tests – and to teach it with an eye toward the students' different cultures. Sizemore advocates 10 routines for schools to follow that she has developed from practice and research on high-achieving, predominantly minority schools: assessment, placement, pacing and acceleration, measuring, monitoring, discipline, instruction, evaluation, staff development, and decision making. These routines form the basis for the School Achievement Structure, an instructional model from DePaul University's Educational Leadership Program. They're not new, admits Sizemore. Indeed, the most common reaction is, "Oh yeah, well everybody does that." But they work, she and Hilliard agree.

Phot

The successful schools that both Hilliard and Sizemore see and work with move quickly to create an atmosphere of discipline. "You can do that within a few months because you establish your expectations with children and begin to have routines that are reliable so that everyone comes to know exactly what is to be expected," explains Hilliard, adding that the children willingly accept this order in their lives. "The children don't like the disorder any more than the teachers do," he contends. "Once teachers understand that, then you realize that the children's own wishes are your greatest ally."

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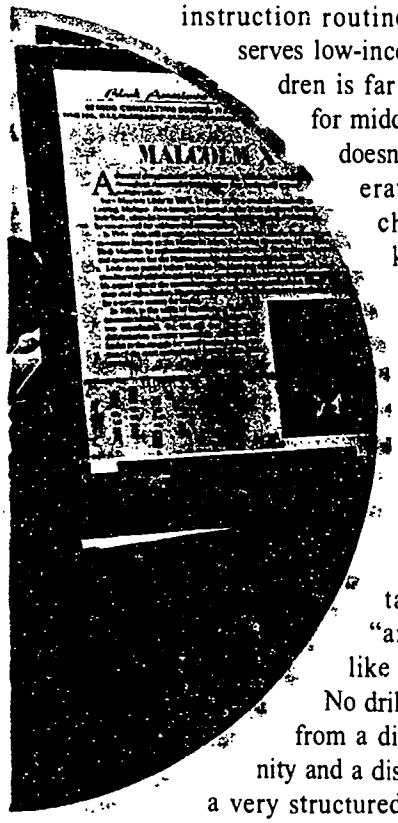
WHAT DOES AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LOOK LIKE?

Both Sizemore and Hilliard contend that an effective school must have high expectations and an unshakable belief that all children can learn. Sizemore rates instruction as the number one priority of effective schools. She explains that the instruction routine in a school that serves low-income, minority children is far different from one for middle-class children. It doesn't work to try cooperative learning with children who don't know how to study. "You have to first teach them how to study and how to be students," Sizemore explains. Unfortunately, she sees many teachers who have been taught to frown on "anything that looks like structure. No rote. No drills." Kids who come from a disorganized community and a disruptive family need a very structured school life to get everything done," she explains, adding, "If they can't get this from their teacher, then they won't get it at all."



by Sloane

Sizemore is adamant that instruction also must take into account a child's background. She is disturbed by the prevailing belief in teaching colleges that a good teacher can teach anybody. "My question is. How can a teacher teach Mexican immigrant children if he or she doesn't know the culture or the language? How can a teacher teach African American children who live in a low-income census zone if that teacher doesn't know anything about these children – their language, their lives, their history – and what the teacher does know is 50 percent wrong?"

A project working with high schools in metropolitan New York/New Jersey found that the way high schools assign students to classes and programs does not meet the educational needs of students, especially those from disadvantaged populations. Assignments are based primarily on inadequate information about each student, limits on physical and staff resources, external bureaucratic regulations, and internal political issues rather than on the student's academic needs and concerns about teaching and learning.

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"We try to encourage teachers to use placement to facilitate instruction, not label the kids."

Sizemore's routines, like Hilliard's essential elements, require looking at familiar ideas in new ways. The most important, she asserts, is assessment. Unlike teachers in high-achieving schools, teachers in low-achieving schools don't use assessment to inform their teaching and practice, she says. They prepare their curriculum based on their textbooks and experience, not on what their students know. This approach can lead to "terrible assumptions that are sometimes wrong," warns Sizemore. Assessment can give a teacher a starting point and a focus. Teachers can then prepare a chart for each student that tells the student what he or she knows and doesn't know. This chart includes everything that the student needs to know to be a good student at the next level. "It's very motivational," contends Sizemore, "because [the student] is in a race with himself, maybe with the other kids, too, to see how much he can do and how fast he can do it." It also helps the teacher with placement.

She tries to teach teachers to place students according to skills, not the traditional low-achieving school system of high, low, and middle. Kids can deal with being told that their group is going to work on multiplication, while the other group works on division. "There's no stigma to it," says Sizemore. "We try to encourage teachers to use placement to facilitate instruction, not to label the kids." She offers another example: "All ninth graders take algebra, but those who have the need are also given an algebra support. This is for kids who haven't quite mastered the skills in mathematics, but it's not called basic mathematics or dummy's mathematics. It's called algebra support so that kids understand that what you are learning here is to support you in your work with algebra."

Schools also need to take a new approach to staff development. Staff development means more than "buying a workshop from the cafeteria of staff development activities that you might find at a conference somewhere," explains Hilliard. It means giving professionals time to do problem solving. It means that faculties and their principals get together; define their instructional aims, goals, and objectives; collect information to find out if they're achieving them; and brainstorm and use trial and error to find ways to meet their goals.

Both Sizemore and Hilliard agree that a fair, clear, and firm discipline policy is critical to ensuring a school's positive learning environment. Everybody, from the parents on up, need to understand the consequences of students' actions. According to Sizemore, schools need discipline routines to deal with behavior problems. The teacher's role is to enforce these routines and teach kids to solve problems so that their motivation to behave is internal rather than external. Schools with severe discipline problems need to start with an in-house suspension room. "This has to be a mechanism for removing children from classrooms immediately so that the teacher's time is not consumed entirely in discipline and teaching never occurs," explains Sizemore. "Otherwise, there will never be any growth and achievement."

At the helm of this urban school reform and restructuring effort is a strong, independent principal who takes charge and doesn't look for leadership from outside the school. His or her main job, contends Hilliard, is to cut through the chaos and "get everybody on the same page." "You have as many different agendas as you have individuals working in the school," explains Hilliard, "and so you've got to have some collective focus and collective responsibility on the part of the faculty, and that can be orchestrated and generated by the kind of leadership that the principal brings." Sizemore sees the principal as "the inspirational, instructional leader" who carries the banner that says, "All children can learn; I expect these children to learn, and it will happen here."

To those who say, "We can't possibly duplicate such a person," Hilliard replies, "Yes, you can." All you need is the will to want change. He has a ready list of schools across the country to prove that it can be done.

THE WILL TO CHANGE

Where does this will come from? Anywhere, according to Hilliard. From the professional community or from within a school. "I've seen faculties just decide that they wanted to do things differently," he explains. Citing one California school, Hilliard recalls, "The faculty just got together one year and decided they didn't like being on the bottom. They went to their principal and asked for the freedom to try to problem solve and change their

Photo © Jim Pickerell

school and they did it." Hilliard was equally impressed with the Benton Harbor Public School District, which two years ago was the lowest achieving school district in America. One year later the district received an award as the most improved school district in Michigan. Hilliard points out that the district made this improvement without changing the faculty. "I think most teachers have the capability to make the changes to make themselves powerful teachers," he affirms. Sizemore admits that it is not easy to change behavior, "But once you get a critical mass of teachers who have changed their behavior, first your growth doubles and triples and then your achievement rises." Echoing Hilliard, Sizemore argues that schools must have the will to change and "believe in kids."

"We tend to blame the child for what we have failed to provide," Hilliard explains. But "if you examine the cases where children succeed, the changes that were made were in the system – not in the children. The schools reorganized themselves, changed their goals, established monitoring systems, went through staff development. No one went out and made the parents get married again, took the drugs out of the community, took people off welfare, or got them all free and reduced lunch or medical care."

POLICYMAKERS' ROLE

Hilliard believes that the primary job of policymakers is to ensure accountability in the system: "The one thing about the policymakers is that they cannot micromanage schools." He cites the lack of accountability among policymakers who allow a school to continue without any change in leadership when the kids fail year after year. He is concerned about policymakers who feel the need to mandate changes from open classrooms to closed classrooms or from one textbook or reading program to another. They're causing more harm to the system than good, he laments. Hilliard feels strongly that policymakers "should be making decisions about the superintendent, the principal, and the supervisors; and those people who are not able to raise the productivity of children should be replaced by those who can."

"I think the school could make a difference if it is committed to the kids," asserts Sizemore. A concerned Hilliard wonders whether schools are headed in the right direction: "I want my kids to have computers and I want them to have on-line access to the Internet and all of that. I think they're entitled to that. And I want them to have recreational facilities after school, all the things kids need, but those things – as important as they are – have little to do with whether kids are successful in mathematics. What determines whether they are successful in mathematics is the quality of math teaching."

> Research on programs designed to provide children with an extra year of kindergarten/first grade reveals that they have no more effect on student achievement than if the children were simply promoted in the first place. These practices cost children a year of their lives and produced, at best, initial gains in achievement – gains that disappeared within one or two years.

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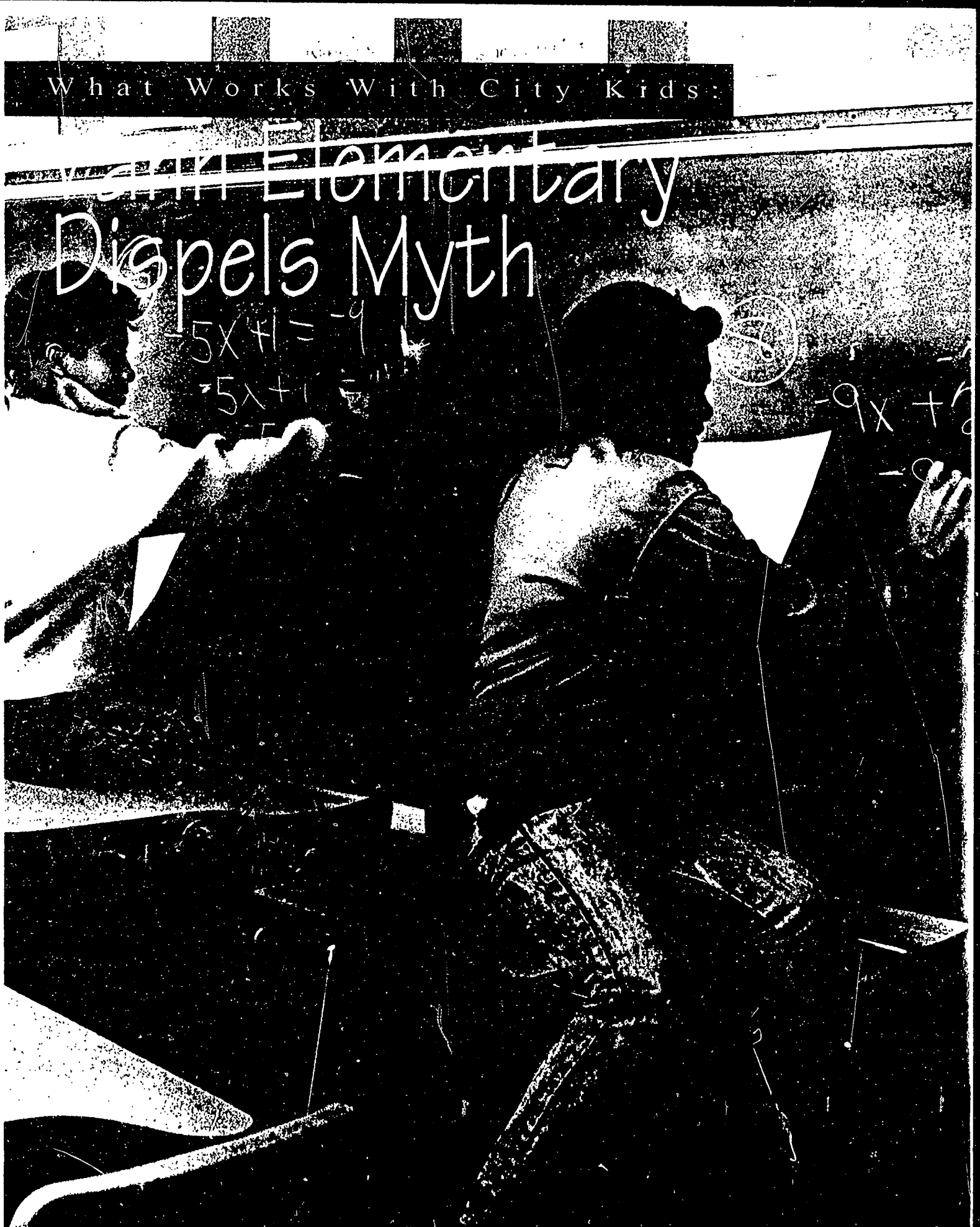
Elementary Dispels Myth



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Parent and Teacher Involvement, Discipline, and Structure Create a Climate for Learning at Vann Elementary School

"You have to be a risk-taker and you certainly can't be interested in a promotion," says Doris Brevard, listing the requirements for her job. Brevard is the principal of Vann Elementary School in Pittsburgh, an all-black K-5 school with an enviable record of high test scores and highly motivated children.

Success requires creating the right educational climate, according to Brevard, and that means enforcing discipline, having children come in with the right attitude, and setting the tone for parent involvement. "I don't permit irate parents to meet with the teachers," she offers as an example of her approach. "They must come through the office first and I'm always there." It's the principal's job to develop this climate, says Brevard.

Her main role as principal, she says, is to meet the needs of the children. "You have to find out where they are coming from, how much preparation they've had as far as school is concerned, and you build on that."

Brevard believes that discipline is important for every child and particularly for those at Vann – most of whom come from low-income families in troubled neighborhoods. Her students appreciate the structure they find in the school, which stresses self-esteem and pride in oneself. They like knowing exactly what is expected of them in certain places and at certain times. School is a welcome relief from "the complete chaos of so many of these homes where you have very young parents or the single parent involved in their own lives, and they're not too concerned about the children."

Vann has teacher-centered classrooms. "I set the rules and regulations for the building," explains Brevard. "The teachers set the rules and regulations and procedures for their classrooms, and I back them to the hilt." As long as the children are learning, Brevard believes in letting the teachers decide how best to instruct their classes. The teachers know she has an open-door policy for any problem – whether school-related or personal. "I want them to feel free to bring it to me and we'll talk about it," Brevard says.

A visitor to Vann School would immediately notice its highly structured environment. Students walk through the halls in lines. They are required to have hall passes. And they're wearing uniforms for the second year in a row (a necessity, Brevard reports, to counteract the gang influence).

Structure is also apparent in the classrooms. Vann teachers practice traditional methods of instruction. Teachers stand in front of students and teach, and students sit in their desks and listen. For reading, students are grouped homogeneously in their classrooms in one of two levels according to their ability. All of the students are tested for reading and math when they enter the school to determine their placement.

Unlike too many urban schools that pass kids from grade to grade regardless of their abilities, Brevard insists upon 85 percent to 90 percent mastery of skills. Children in grades K-3 are retained if they have not mastered the required reading and math skills. Fourth and fifth graders are seldom held back, though, because of social implications.

Brevard points with pride to the school's consistently high test results: "As far as the African American test results, our test results have always been at the national norm. On many occasions we have even surpassed the Caucasian and Asian norm." She cautions that the results fluctuate depending on the group of children in the school. However, she explains, "we've never gone below 64 percent in reading, and we've gone as high as 74 percent."

Brevard reports that after a rocky start, many of the parents have come around to see things Vann's way: "They're very upset when they first come in because they feel we're a little bit too demanding, but usually at the end of the school year they're very pleased with the achievements of their children."

While Vann's accomplishments have been praised throughout the country, Brevard has yet to receive recognition from her own school district. Brevard explains philosophically, "African American children are not supposed to be able to learn. I've dispelled that."

Success requires creating the right educational climate . . . and that means enforcing discipline, having children come with the right attitude, and setting the tone for parent involvement.

Photo © Kathy Sloane

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Kelso Elementary: Home Sweet Home

TAKE A $4,000 PAY CUT? ALL THE WAY

But for sixth-grade teacher Anne Garrell, the choice was easy. She resigned from the Los Angeles Unified School District and returned to Kelso Elementary School in Inglewood, California, for lower pay but much higher rewards.

"The kids would just be passed from grade to grade and no one really seemed to care that half my class couldn't read," recalls a disillusioned Garrell of her experience in Los Angeles. "I had to come back here where I knew that I could do everything that I could to educate the children."

First-grade teacher Shelly Chaplin also returned to Kelso from Los Angeles. "I left and I went to L.A. Unified to make more money, and I did not feel comfortable there."

Kelso is a crowded K-6, year-round school with approximately 900 students. Students come from a low-income area that is about 65 percent Latino, 1 percent Filipino, and the rest African American. Like many urban schools, Kelso is surrounded by violence and gang activity. But unlike most of its counterparts, Kelso is able to shut out inner-city problems, and its students are flourishing.

What sets Kelso apart is a staff dedicated to the school's philosophy that every child will learn. According to Garrell, "The principal, the administration, and the teachers consider the students first. We find out what the kids need to know and we teach them."

"We push the children to their ability," explains Chaplin. "We don't make excuses because they are a minority or don't know the language or come from a broken home."

The staff at Kelso work well together, according to Chaplin. They help each other and share their activities. An amazed Garrell relates, "I hear about other schools where the primary grades are one thing and the upper grades are another and they don't talk. We don't have that kind of a separation here."

These teachers say that Kelso works because of its insistence on structure. Garrell reports that everything is structured at Kelso, from the curriculum to playground activity. "These kids thrive on the structure we give them." Chaplin explains, "When the kids walk in the room, there is some type of work waiting for them." Then, everyone reads all morning long. "I know the primary grades read until at least 11," says Chaplin. "We do reading, too," adds Garrell, "from 8:30 to 10:15. We also try to make sure the child is at a level he can perform at."

Chaplin remembers with dismay teaching fifth grade in Los Angeles: "I was forced to teach [some children] fifth-grade reading when they were reading on a second-grade level. I might as well have been teaching them Latin." In the primary grades at Kelso, she says, "We get the children to work with phonics and then we build on more of the whole language."

Kelso also stresses writing, according to Garrell: "We do writing across the curriculum." The principal, Marjorie Thompson, looks at writing samples throughout the year. "She makes sure that we are doing what we are supposed to do," says Garrell. Both Garrell and Chaplin are quick to praise Thompson, who provides the support they need to teach. If she has a child who's not learning, Chaplin heads straight to Thompson and asks what can be done.

Discipline is a necessary component in a school where many children have none. According to Chaplin, many of the children "roam the streets and they do whatever they want." "We let them know how they are expected to act," explains Garrell. "We have a set of expectations not only for academic performance but for behavior and we stick to it." "Children want rules; they thrive on it," Chaplin adds. And if there is a behavior problem, she knows she can count on Thompson to remove the child from the classroom. This is a far cry from her principal in Los Angeles, who, according to Chaplin, "told me to count to 10 because I was making the child mad."

Chaplin brags that Kelso's kids "stand out above and beyond." A majority go on to higher education. "They have such good self-esteem," she explains, "because they get into the high schools, the junior highs, or the middle schools and they are the cream of the crop there."

Why Every Child Can Succeed:

TEACH URBAN CHILDREN? IMPOSSIBLE!

RAISE THE TEST SCORES OF LOW-ACHIEVING STUDENTS? NEVER!

That's the party line too often heard from the public and educators. Some people, however, know better. Parents see their children thrive in schools that exist amidst poverty and gangs. Teachers see their students' scores rise as undisciplined children turn into avid learners. Principals fight for the right to tailor their schools to students who have shown that they are as bright as their suburban counterparts.

These schools do exist and their students do learn. You can learn about them and discover the beliefs they have in common through a video and print program, *Every Child Can Succeed*, produced by the Agency for Instructional Technology.

The program looks at a variety of schools, both urban and rural, where children are succeeding against overwhelming odds. These are not cookie-cutter schools. They vary in size and structure as well as locale. But each school has a principal and teachers who believe that all children can learn no matter what their backgrounds. And each has a common set of beliefs – or essential elements – that form the foundation of their teaching.

Viewers can visit some of these schools through the videotape or read about them in an accompanying book. The book contains descriptions of the schools, suggestions for using the project, and explanations of how to implement school reform.

Educating all of our children has become a national mandate. "We have no choice," says Asa Hilliard, chief consultant for the program. "The children in our schools today will lead our nation into the next century. Our future will be as successful as they are."

Essential Elements of H

1. Staff Development –

At highly effective schools, staff development:

- Is practical and concerned with instruction and conditions in participants' classrooms.
- May involve the principal working with teachers, teachers working with each other, and outside experts working with staff.
- Is continuous and ongoing, as all staff are encouraged to grow and learn professionally and are given support for dealing with new and chronic problems.
- Is a priority of the principal who offers support and opportunities for growth.
- Encourages teachers to recognize colleagues' skills and provide mutual support and involvement.

2. Instruc[illegible]onal Leadership –

In highly effective schools, principals are usually the instructional leaders. They:

- Lead the staff in developing a clear mission and goals for their schools, empower staff members to achieve the goals in ways most consistent with their teaching styles, and act to promote quality instruction.
- Create a culture in their schools that encourages learning and inspires teachers.
- Are highly visible in the classrooms, cafeteria, playground, street crossings, and hallways, and are always motivating staff and students.
- Support a positive work environment for their teachers, taking responsibility for handling all necessary management and logistical problems.
- Are team players, working to build cooperation and cohesion among the teachers and involving student families in the school's mission.

3. School Leadership –

Principals at effective schools are responsible for all school activities. They are:

- Closely involved in choosing teachers and replacing them if they do not share the school's philosophy or cannot carry out the school's mission.
- Risk-takers and oppose the district on policies that, in their view, are detrimental to the students and teachers.
- Constantly monitoring what is going on in the school – not only in classrooms, but on field trips, in staff development meetings, and in reviewing test scores.
- Committed to supporting their teachers' professional growth and bringing in all possible resources to reinforce teaching.

4. High Expectations –

Effective schools are characterized by a:

- Shared belief that all students can learn, and this belief translates into a willingness to find new instructional strategies if traditional ones do not work.
- Demand for high achievement; expectations are communicated to students and parents, including mastery of basic skills and higher-level thinking skills.
- Staff that adapts the curriculum and instruction to students' learning styles and constantly encourages children to have high aspirations for the future.

5. Parent Involvement –

Effective schools reflect the findings of research that:

- A high level of parental involvement in children's education enhances their chances for success.

ighly Effective Schools

- Parents can be a driving force in bringing about change in schools.
- Involvement alone is not as important as the nature of the involvement. It must be focused on the goals of the school and the students' achievement.

6. Productive Climate and Culture –
Highly effective schools:

- Have a shared mission or goal focusing on improved student performance. The mission statement remains a goal continually sought but never quite achieved.
- Are determined to create and maintain an environment conducive to order, discipline, and learning; a readiness to change and adapt strategies to improve student outcomes; and constant monitoring to find what works.
- Reflect a consensus – if not actual shared decision making – on goals and means, and foster good communication among staff and with students, parents, and community members.
- Reflect the productive climate in frequent, public, and systematic recognition of students for positive behavior and performance.

7. Monitoring Student Progress –
Effective schools are characterized by:

- Policies involving frequent and regular assessment of student progress to drive school improvement efforts toward excellence and equity.
- Use of data to evaluate and implement instructional practices and strategies, to communicate high expectations, and to involve parents and the community in the school's efforts.
- Development and use of a variety of monitoring techniques.

8. Effective Instructional Strategies –
At highly successful schools:

- Grouping procedures are used to help all students, especially those who are low-achieving, succeed academically.
- Staff and teachers have developed appropriate pacing of instruction, with the emphasis on accelerating instruction for low achievers so that they catch up with their peers.
- Staff and teachers use techniques usually reserved for gifted and talented students with all students. These techniques ideally include active and enriched learning opportunities with interaction with peers and teachers.

9. Learning Essential Skills –
At highly effective schools:

- Faculty and staff work together to emphasize mastery for all students.
- Ample and efficient time for learning is given high priority, and teachers make sure that little time is wasted in giving assignments, starting classes, or making transitions between activities. While this "no nonsense" approach does not guarantee high achievement, it is a prerequisite to effective teaching and learning.
- Teachers avoid "social" promotions and develop curricula that require students to master each step before proceeding.
- Strategies are in place to identify those students who are having difficulty and to provide them with extra help.

Source: Every Child Can Succeed: An Action Guide © 1992 Agency for Instructional Technology.

Photo © David Grossman

FIRST IN THE WORLD

Federal Math and Science Initiative Targets City Schools

by Dan Weissmann

The National Education Goals, adopted by the nation's 50 governors and championed by the Bush Administration in 1990, call for the United States to become "first in the world in math and science achievement" by the year 2000.

Whatever rankings existed, the United States had a lot of catching up to do, especially in its cities. In some big cities, kids could graduate from high school without ever learning algebra. And in many cities, only half of all students even graduated high school.

For students of color, many of them city residents, the news was worse. In 1990, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a federally sponsored snapshot of student achievement, showed that eighth-grade minority students had learned, on average, only half as much math as their white peers.

16 CITIES/$240 MILLION

To bring city kids up to speed, the federally funded National Science Foundation (NSF) is pouring a projected $240 million into a plan to overhaul math and science education in 16 major cities. The program, called the Urban Systemic Initiative (USI), will pump as much as $15 million into each city over five years. Nine cities started their efforts last year, and seven more are starting in September 1995.

The results so far are encouraging. Miami high schools now require that students at least take algebra before they graduate. Kids in Chicago have to take algebra by the eighth grade and will soon have to take three years of lab science and three years of math to graduate. Phoenix, Arizona, is training all math teachers in a cutting-edge curriculum called the Interactive Math Program. The Dallas Independent School District is creating brand-new K-12 curricula for science and math.

Federal funding for science and math education isn't a new idea; it's been part of the NSF's mission since the Foundation's inception in 1950. In fact, the USI still represents less than one-third of the NSF's spending on K-12 education.

But until 1990, NSF funded only piecemeal efforts: a ninth-grade math curriculum in one city, a set of trainings for biology teachers in another, some after-school science clubs in yet another. However good those programs were, they reached only a small fraction of the nation's students. NSF had never required programs to address more ambitious, systemwide goals, such as bringing the United States closer to its National Education Goals or closing the achievement gap between white students and students of color.

Enter Luther Williams, who took over the NSF's education department in 1990. "Luther came in and said, 'You guys have been getting a free ride. You don't have guidelines for accountability,'" recalls Eric Hamilton, who directs Chicago's Urban Systemic Initiative. "He said, 'This is an economically, socially, morally unacceptable course for this Foundation to be pursuing. We will no longer tolerate your not serving all students.'"

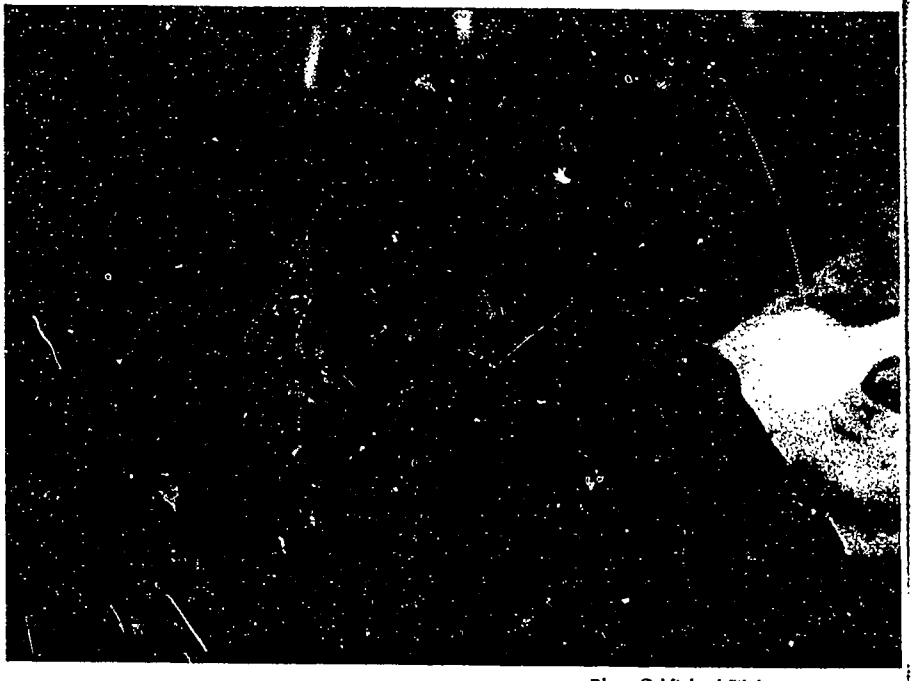

Photo © Michael Siluk

Williams founded the Office of Systemic Reform to replace little programs with long-term, systemwide efforts. The Office started with a set of five-year, state-level efforts, and in 1993, Williams introduced the USIs.

NSF MOVES FROM FUNDING PROGRAMS TO FUNDING SYSTEMS

"Systemic reform" didn't just mean doing business on a larger scale; it meant changing with whom the Foundation did business. Before systemic reform, NSF would typically give a grant to a university, which would create a program and then "offer" it

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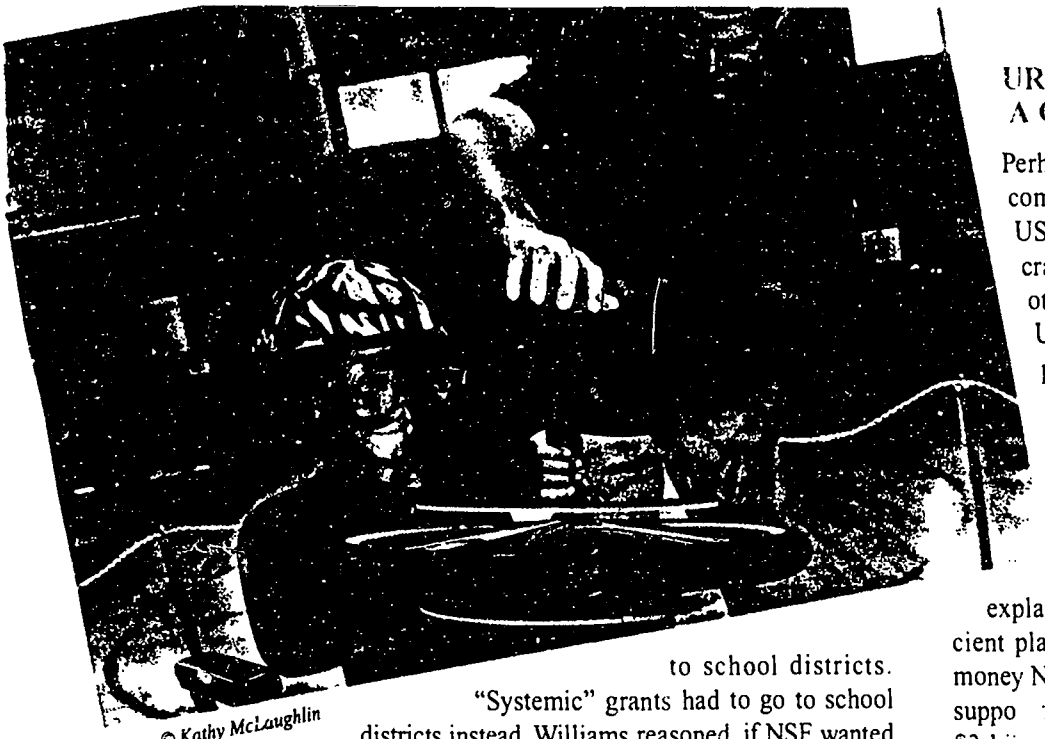

Photo © Kathy McLaughlin

Systemic reform meant doing business with a broader scope.

to school districts.

"Systemic" grants had to go to school districts instead, Williams reasoned, if NSF wanted to hold grantees accountable for results, especially systemwide results. After all, school districts were more directly responsible for student achievement than universities.

Systemic reform also meant changing the kinds of business arrangements that the NSF made. Instead of giving grants, systemic programs required that cities propose "cooperative agreements" – contracts – which included what Williams calls "deliverables." For instance, most USI cities have pledged to require three years of high school math and three years of high school science for graduation. (Courses such as general math or consumer math don't count; Williams calls such courses "nonsense.") If cities don't follow through on their promises, their funding isn't renewed. As of the current year, all of the cities that started USI programs in 1994 have had their funding renewed.

Finally, and most important, systemic reform meant doing business with a broader scope. "We said to ourselves, 'Remember, we've got this goal – first in the world,'" recalls Pierce Hammond, now acting administrator for the Office of Systemic Reform. "So we decided to try to include everything in the world we could think of that mattered." Their list of goals included improving policy; strengthening connections between elementary schools and high schools, which in some cities operated from different school districts; generating public understanding and support; making the most of outside resources such as museums and research labs; considering the question, What skills do businesses want employees to have?; and developing new methods of assessment.

URBAN SYSTEMIC INITIATIVE: A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

Perhaps the most important reason for that comprehensive approach was to ensure that USI didn't simply become another bureaucratic program – layered on top of all the others that already existed. For that reason, USI agreements require that cities incorporate all other math and science programs – including mandated programs such as federal Title I and bilingual education – into USI initiatives. NSF officials wanted assurance "that, in a given day, a kid doesn't go from a 'USI math' class to a 'regular' math class," explains Hammond. Comprehensive and efficient plans are important because the amount of money NSF provides is tiny, given the problems it's supposed to help solve. For example, in Chicago's $3 billion annual education budget, a $2 million NSF grant is small change; that change needs to be carefully spent if it's going to improve education for all students.

So far, bringing resources together – people, money, organizations – has been a major accomplishment for USI programs. Consider:

Phoenix's USI program is a collaboration among 9 of the 13 different school districts that serve the greater Phoenix area – 8 elementary districts and the high school district they all feed into. It's the first time these districts have worked together.

High school teachers in Detroit had never gotten a chance actually to talk with elementary school teachers before they started attending USI-sponsored meetings, says Detroit USI director Juanita Clay Chambers.

In Dallas, "in the past, we had people who wrote curriculum and we had people who wrote assessments, and the two groups had never met each other," says Linda Johnson, the city's USI director. "Now they write in the same room."

BREAKING THROUGH THE BOTTLENECK

But progress hasn't always been easy or assured. The Chicago USI program "got off to a very shaky start" last September, says director Eric Hamilton. There was almost no one around to start the program, in part because Chicago's central administrative staff had been decimated by years of cuts. By February things seemed more on track, as Hamilton and his staff organized a citywide

conference *and* successfully lobbied the city's Board of Education to increase science and math requirements.

The first few months were harrowing, but Hamilton reports that the very difficulty of the process only convinces him of USI's importance. "If this had gone like clockwork," he says, "I would have to be asking myself what the point was of doing it. The fact is, there are systemic bottlenecks, and things don't move." Which only proves how necessary a program like USI is, he says.

One of the biggest bottlenecks, says the NSF's Hammond, is a national mind-set. Americans, educators included, don't expect everyone to become literate in science and math. "In our society, we tend to believe that there's a 'pipeline' for math and science," he says, "and that kids drop out at every step: high school graduation, a college degree, graduate school. The numbers diminish drastically with each step, and somehow, that makes sense."

In other words, the education system's failure to give many students adequate science and math education doesn't seem like a crisis because it seems normal - so people feel less motivated to change it. Cincinnati's USI director, Kathleen Ware, says that getting teachers, parents, and administrators to "buy in" to the idea that all students can and should take more challenging math and science courses - and succeed – has been the biggest obstacle in implementing that city's systemic reforms.

A MATTER OF LIFE OR DEATH

Luther Williams contends that such a change of public attitude is a matter of life and death for many students. When minority students score only half as well as white students on national math tests, he says, "they are not simply young Americans who don't know mathematics. They have undergone a process that is akin to economic death. If you assume that one has to have a reasonable acquaintance with math and science in order to get a decent job, then these young people are out of it. Whether they know it or not. And that's a permanent condition."

Dan Weissmann is a contributing editor of ***CATALYST: Voices of Chicago School Reform****, an independent publication that reports on Chicago's school improvement efforts.*

CONTACT:

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National Science Foundation
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Arlington, VA 22230
(703) 306-1690

USI CITIES:

Year 1 (started September 1994):

Baltimore, MD
Chicago, IL
Cincinnati, OH
Dallas, TX
Detroit, MI
El Paso, TX
Miami, FL
New York, NY
Phoenix, AZ

Year 2 (started September 1995):

Cleveland, OH
Columbus, OH
Fresno, CA
Los Angeles, CA
Memphis, TN
New Orleans, LA
Philadelphia, PA

Middle schools that offer students the opportunity to take a second period of math or reading during the regular school day instead of other electives have been found to show significant gains in standardized test scores in both reading and math.

FULL-SERVICE SCHOOLS AND HIGH-RISK YOUTH: COLLABORATING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

by Joy Dryfoos

Excerpted from a speech to the annual staff meeting of Ounce of Prevention

The problems of American youth are well documented. Hundreds of researchers produce thousands of charts and graphs, and misery numbers appear in *USA Today* and on TV as well as in endless academic journals and annual reports.

Most of what we learn from research comes in categorical packages, subsets of what adults call "risky behaviors." About five years ago, I took all that categorical stuff and tried to make some sense out of it. I concluded that a certain group of young people were involved in most of the categories. You all know a kid like this: failing in school, truant, using substances, engaging in unprotected intercourse, not much hope for the future. I came to the conclusion that about one in four young people aged 10 to 17 growing up in the United States were like that kid – doing it all and therefore at very high risk of never growing up into responsible adults, never making it in school, never entering the labor force, and never becoming effective parents.

Recently, I reviewed current research and you know what I concluded? About one in four kids is still doing it all and will fail to thrive unless they receive immediate attention. I also concluded that about one-fourth of our youth are on the brink of trouble and can go either way depending on whether they receive assistance.

Children in trouble have many common characteristics: early involvement in high-risk behaviors, absence of nurturing parents, poor school performance, lack of resistance to peer influences, residence in disadvantaged communities, depressed and stressed out.

Lack of nurturing by an adult is a significant marker of trouble.

These characteristics should frame our discussion of prevention. Every child who grows up with these factors does not turn into a failure. Researchers have recently discovered that some young people make it despite all odds. In almost every case, the young person has formed an attachment to a responsible adult. This is the flip side of high-risk behavior, where lack of nurturing by an adult is a significant marker of trouble. With this fact strongly in mind, we can proceed to a discussion of how to make a difference.

Photo © David Grossman

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Our knowledge of the characteristics of high-risk youth gives us a good starting point for thinking about programs. What would a program look like that included early intervention, strengthened families and tried to compensate for missing supportive adults, addressed issues relating to school performance, focused on peer influences, and worked on mental health problems? In my view, the needs of contemporary young people call for multicomponent, long-term efforts involving many agencies working together. In designing programs, you have to incorporate a more holistic approach that pays attention to family, school, and community factors in the context of the broader social environment.

In my own work trying to design a model that incorporates a broader approach, I have come up with a concept I call the "full-service school," joining together the thrust toward quality education with the need for health and social services, all in one location. Although I am obsessed with the idea of using schools as the physical location for comprehensive programs for youth, I know that similar models can be very successful in community-based structures.

All over the country, people like you are coming together to create new kinds of institutional arrangements: school-based clinics, youth service centers in schools, settlement houses, schools, family resource centers, community schools. What they all have in common is the desire to move toward one-stop integrated services, located in schools, but not run by schools. The job for the schools is to produce a learning environment. The job for community agencies is to bring into the schools everything else that is needed to enrich that learning environment to make sure that it is effective. Some of the remarkable programs that people are inventing include health and mental health services, social services, group counseling, family advocacy, parent education, community policing, after-school child care, recreation and cultural events – even a laundry in the school.

These programs require the coming together of two or more administrative entities into various forms of collaborative relationships. Collaboration in the '90s is defined as a relationship between organizations with jointly developed structures, high trust, consensual decision making, shared responsibility, shared sense of ownership, mutual accountability, and sharing of resources and rewards.

Most of what we learn from research comes in categorical packages, subsets of what adults call "risky behaviors."

Photo © David Grossman

Researchers have recently discovered that some young people make it despite all odds.

We can learn quite a lot about this process of working together from early returns from California, Kentucky, and Florida, where there are huge state efforts to create school-community collaborations. The starting point for building comprehensive integrated programs is the plan. I love the phrase *common vision*. A whole array of interested parties from the school and the community, representative parents and students, have to come together to figure out what their institutions should look like. What are the pieces that have to be put together to respond to the needs of the families and the children in that community? What will make that school better able to address youth development issues? What can each community agency bring to the table?

The actors in this drama must organize themselves into some form of working group with rules and procedures. The first few meetings may be ragged; school and community people have to learn each other's style of communication. As projects move from the planning stage to the implementation stage, coordination becomes even more complicated. Over time, people come and go, and often the innovators leave before the plan is made.

Community agencies generally take the lead, even in school-based initiatives. Proposals are more likely to be written by community-based practitioners. Obviously, school administrators have to approve of the proposal, but sometimes school people feel left out of the process. It is very important that principals, teachers, guidance counselors, and school nurses be involved from the beginning.

Once a collaborative project is launched by one or more community agencies in a school, the action shifts to the school building. Turf issues are endemic. Bringing outside health or social services into a school building under the auspices of an outside agency is an invitation to turf wars. Two or more different staffs operate under separate jurisdictions in terms of union policies, pay schedules, hours of work, and direction. Without careful planning and negotiation, the school staff can be very threatened by the appearance of a new group of workers in the school.

A significant area for potential conflict is discipline. The school has its own practices, such as suspension and other forms of punishment, that may be antithetic to the practices of the newcomers. Confidentiality is another area of potential conflict. Procedures and policies regarding recordkeeping must be well established before any program is implemented.

One key to successfully overcoming these situations in schools appears to be a sensitive principal who, right from the planning stage, involves his or her school personnel along with the outside personnel to create a team approach. Serious and ongoing inservice training must take place with both the existing staff and the outside agency staff to negotiate areas of tension and to learn to understand where each side is "coming from."

Questions have also been raised about placing the locus of full-service programs in schools in communities that are distrustful of the educational establishment. Some school systems are so resistant to change that community leaders have little confidence that the quality education part of the full-service vision will ever materialize. Human resource planners have proposed an alternative model that places services in buildings run by community-based organizations in which families feel comfortable and are assured larger roles in decision making. The service integration theory still holds, but the locus of services is placed firmly in the neighborhood, directly operated under local control. The school board has no place in this model, obviating the difficult negotiations that can be stressful and time-consuming.

In sum, all around the country, school personnel and community practitioners are finally finding each other, discovering "natural comrades" in the struggle to assist young people to grow up to be functioning adults. Although the methodologies for evaluation are difficult and unrefined, early returns suggest that comprehensive programming has the potential for producing better outcomes both in terms of school achievement and reduction in high-risk behaviors.

The visioning process is producing new ways of looking at our vital institutions: family, school, and community. Human service providers and school personnel are finally coming together to shape their *own* contract with America. Collaboration is *not* a panacea: Systems are difficult to change. You have to start where you are, moving the pieces around, creating arks to ride out the flood. We are all in this together, and I am convinced that together we can make a difference.

UNSUNG HEROES:

EX-SUPERINTENDENTS SPEAK OUT

One of the unsung heroes of change in urban schools is the superintendent. Often the target of political maneuvering, media attention, and community pressure, today's superintendent must bring a variety of skills to bear on an often volatile educational and social reality. He or she must blend business acumen, management skills, political savvy, and a thorough understanding of classroom business, and, at the same time , be grounded in urban culture. The best leaders are practical visionaries whose roll-up-the-sleeves approach embraces the daily details. And, as many of them have learned, looking good on TV doesn't hurt.

In this issue of ***CITYSCHOOLS***, we've brought together four progressive former superintendents with longstanding experience in urban school settings. They offer testimony to and a rare, balanced glimpse of the trials and joys of urban superintendency.

Tom Giugni has worked in school districts throughout the state of California since 1956 as a teacher, principal, and superintendent. His most recent appointments were as superintendent of the Sacramento City Unified School District (1979-1986) and the Long Beach Unified School District (1986-1992). Currently he is the executive director of the Association of California School Administrators.

Shirl Gilbert is assistant professor of education at Purdue University. He began his educational career as a teacher in the St. Louis Public School System in 1967. He was named superintendent of the Indianapolis Public Schools in 1991. Gilbert has published widely and is a much-sought-after speaker on issues around educating urban students.

Ruth Love is currently a distinguished professor at San Francisco State University and president of Ruth Love Enterprises, Ltd. During her career in the educational arena, Love has served as the Superintendent of Schools for the Oakland Unified School District and the Chicago Public Schools. She has lectured throughout the United States and overseas, and has authored an extensive repertoire of books and articles on the subject of education.

Donald Ingwerson was appointed Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools in 1994 by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. During his 12-year tenure with the Jefferson County Public Schools, the Louisville School District became a role model for the implementation of the touted Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990. In education circles, Ingwerson's name has become synonymous with innovation and school reform.

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What was the vision of your superintendency?

GILBERT: We wanted to build a world-class school system, so we went through about a year of strategic planning. Then we began immediately to make sure that the planning document didn't become a book on a shelf collecting dust. Our plan allowed for assessment and evaluation along the way, which helped people to see that we were making a difference. Six of the seven years I was in Indianapolis, the youngsters improved academically on their test scores. We had a higher percentage of student graduates in the last four years I was there.

Parents were substantively involved. We got the federal courts to change the desegregation order. The first year, 95 percent of students in Indianapolis were able to go to the school that they selected, and that number improved in the second and third years. In the first year, we got 1,500 kids to come back to IPS from private and parochial schools.

GIUGNI: I have a firm belief in site-based decision making, which I implemented in Sacramento and Long Beach. In both major districts, I changed how we were organized. Everyone who was in a city position had to reapply or be put in a different position. When you have a staff that has been there for a long time, change makes them feel uncomfortable. When you make it clear to them that they still have a job, just a different one, that still makes them feel uncomfortable. But now they are more responsive to your leadership. They can't hide behind what they've been doing forever. What I also learned is that they all blossom. It was beautiful.

INGWERSON: My vision for reform in Jefferson County was to get the educational practices of professionals in tune with the trends of the nation. We provided a great deal of training so that all echelons of the educational establishment were singing off the same song sheet. I wanted to make sure that teachers were no longer talking in their own jargon and principals weren't talking in their own management jargon, with parents wondering what both meant. We implemented professional development programs that brought teachers, administrators, and parents together around one concern, and that concern was the needs of students. As we began to focus on the child, we began to see what aspects of the system were both inhibiting and helping progress.

LOVE: The role of the superintendent and the central office is to facilitate education at the school level. The superintendent's job is to make sure that schools have what they need to do the job. Sometimes we lose sight of that role. Sometimes we think our role is to lead the politicians, to do public relations. The purpose of the central office is to help people. It's not just holding the job in curriculum or staff development or research or accounting or whatever. It is to facilitate education at the local level.

What was the greatest challenge to your superintendency?

LOVE: Learning to take problems in workable units and solve them. We have a tendency to want to change everything at once. In a system like Chicago with a half million students, that's not possible. Change is a process, not an event. It's not going to happen because you issue a policy or edict or because you give one great speech.

INGWERSON: Probably the biggest challenge was to help people understand the needs of children. Everybody had a different assessment. Some blamed the children and some blamed the parents. Some blamed desegregation. Some blamed society. Some blamed teachers. We didn't have our act together; we didn't have a clear picture.

GIUGNI: Probably the biggest problem I faced in implementing site-based decision making was inbreeding. Many of the administrators in both Sacramento and Long Beach had begun as teachers and then moved up through the system. Also, in Long Beach, we had to overcome the fact that although we were good, we could be better. We had to get people to buy into the site-based decision-making concept, and we had to move slowly.

GILBERT: While we were trying to enrich the entire school district environment, the reality was that some situations were better than others. Everybody ought to have access to all of those environments. Unfortunately, insensitivity, institutional racism, economics, and elitism all come into play and a small majority of folks end up making decisions for the vast majority. As the chairman of all the kids, I had to make hard decisions around those issues. For the most part, the community was with me. There was a small minority of parents who had vested interests in maintaining their little area of the world that was, in fact, a series of private schools in the public school system.

As long as people feel that schools are failing, other forms of education are going to abound.

Talk about the political realities of managing an urban school district.

GILBERT: The urban environment is a tough one politically. I prided myself on being able to ride that bronco successfully. I finally ran into an issue that I was unable to deal with as far as my continued tenure. I was naive in that I trusted a staff person who was undermining my efforts to make student assignments an equitable process. If I learned nothing else I learned that you can't assume that people are going to try and do the right thing. People are motivated for many reasons, and sometimes those motivations are not in the best interest of the majority of the students.

LOVE: The legislature wants to be on the winning team. They don't want to do anything that is controversial. Their primary goal is to get reelected it would seem. If they see that you're making progress, they will go with you. In Chicago, when we established the teacher incentive program to really motivate teachers to work with kids, it was the legislature that thought it was a marvelous idea. That's because I laid the groundwork before we announced it to the public. We also have to work with the unions. It's not necessary to always look at labor relations as labor versus management. Sometimes it could be labor and management working together. I believe there will be more "win-win" situations related to labor relations in the future. If not, you'll lose sight of the youngsters, and the public sees that as not educating children.

INGWERSON: One of the biggest inhibitors to reform was politics – how one group competes with another rather than building consensus and working together for a better quality of life. But once we got that in order, we generated a lot of energy and responsiveness and ideas and creativity. But first, we had to get rid of the "show me" attitude and replace it with "what can we do?" and "how can we help?" I had to model that. I had to be inclusive rather than exclusive. I had to make sure that everyone felt that I felt they were important. I had to spend a great deal of time with people. Then we institutionalized the process so that people could see it was ongoing and broader than just one person. Reform was about the entire community, and we had to get leadership to buy into that concept to win trust and confidence.

GIUGNI: I really believe that superintendents must be grounded in urban politics. You do that, I think, by living it. I would hope that school districts would hire individuals who have had high-level positions in other urban districts. One of the mistakes superintendents make is bouncing from one urban district to another, one state to another. I think it is critical to try to stay in the same state because every state has its own quirks. I made a choice to stay in California because I had established a network. I had the support of other superintendents and legislators I had known for years.

Talk about trends in education (charter schools, privatization, vouchers, etc.).

INGWERSON: The fact of life is that privatization, vouchers, charter schools, etc., are going to be around. Those ideas are going to be encouraged by some segments of our society, and they will continue to be available probably in increasing numbers depending upon the quality of programs that we offer in public schools. As long as people feel that schools are failing, other forms of education are going to abound. My feeling is we should not cut them off, but we should make them earn their right to exist.

LOVE: Decentralization is a good concept because you put the responsibilities closest to the locus of control. Privatization is something else. Privatization is a flawed way of thinking about bringing business practices to schools. Those privatization measures that I am aware of are simply vehicles for making money off the backs of children, contracting out services that educators cannot implement. Food service, transportation, and a few other services now contract out, but I have not really seen privatization add anything to public education yet.

GIUGNI: I agree with privatizing food service and transportation operations, but, frankly, I look at some of these major companies and I know some of those individuals personally. There are a few examples of success, but on the whole, it is not working. Now, I actually support the concept of charter schools. Some have been very successful in the inner cities, but I think some of the charter movements are not operating on an even playing field. It is unfair to allow one school to operate without the same requirements that the state imposes upon another school. Why can't we change the law so that *all* schools operate with fewer restrictions?

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GILBERT: The financial realities of urban public school education require that we go into partnership with private business. It is absolutely ludicrous for board members and communities to fight the outsourcing of some indirect educational expenditures that can cost less in the private sector. I had a situation in Indianapolis where I had 500 bus routes to and from school. Two hundred fifty of them were run by IPS and cost me $14.2 million. I had another 250 that were contracted out to a transportation company and that cost me $7.8 million. Paying twice as much money for the same service is ludicrous.

What do you believe are the most pressing issues in the classroom today?

LOVE: I would be pleased if superintendents could go out and teach a class. That is not what you're hired to do, but it is important to know what you are asking other people to do. What does research tell us about education now? What should we be implementing? What should we be doing? That is important. Superintendents need to be more futuristic. They have got to see that as we go into the 21st century, technology will play a significant role. With more and more families working in the home, there will be home classrooms in the future.

INGWERSON: Probably the nastiest problem that the nation is trying to deal with right now is how should we approach teaching – for the test score or for content? Teachers seldom get the opportunity to hone their skills or to teach information rather than the test. Teachers need to know that they have the freedom to teach *children*, not just some program that is outlined by a bureaucrat.

What parting advice would you give to urban superintendents?

GILBERT: I think we have got to look at governments in schools and in America. Lay board members are elected or appointed for specific terms, but they don't receive training, which is why some of the programs aren't working. We ought to have some minimal eligibility requirements. Right now all you have to be is 21 years old. There ought to be some requirements of experience, education, and training. People come on board in major urban districts that are multimillion-, sometimes mulubillion-dollar operations. Many are good people, but they don't understand.

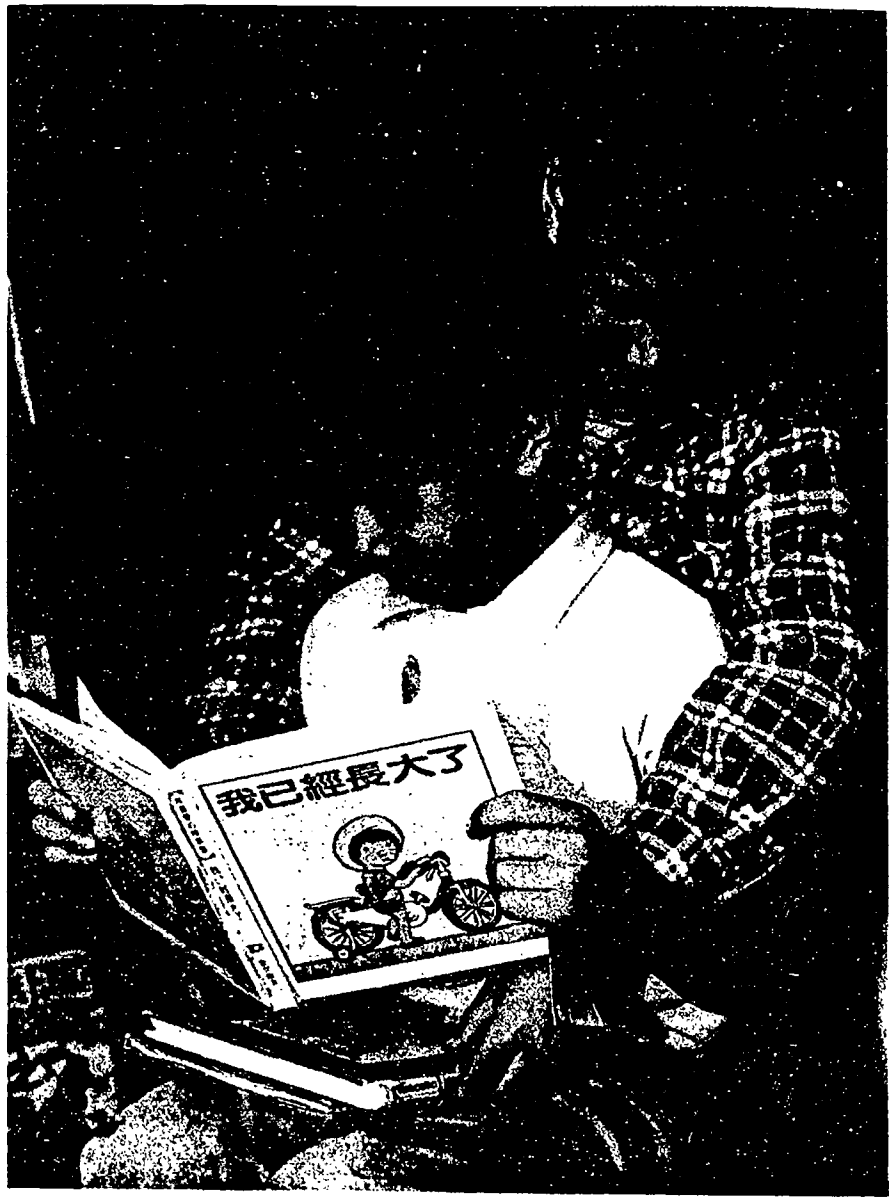

Photo © David Grossman

INGWERSON: The most effective educational systems are those that are finally able to get to the school level and have teachers, students, and parents working together to really grow. Sometimes growth is painful, but it shouldn't be so painful that you don't want to go to school. That takes constant monitoring, feedback, and reinforcement.

LOVE: Be prepared to make sacrifices. You can't expect superintendency to be just a job. It's your whole life. It's important also to know that while there will be a lot of rewards, there also will be a lot of criticism. You'll survive it all.

GIUGNI: Never look back. Make a decision, then move on. Don't try to rethink your decision because, with all the other things you have to deal with, it will just drain all your energy. Focus on the future, not the past.

Superintendents need to be more futuristic. They have got to see that as we go into the 21st century, technology will play a significant role.

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CITYSCHOOLS Profile:

Lisa Delpit

by Donna M. Williams

Lisa Delpit currently serves as the Benjamin E. Mays Chairholder at Georgia State University. In 1990, Delpit's work on school-community relations and parent involvement earned her a MacArthur Award. She also received the Harvard University Graduate School of Education 1993 Alumni Award for Outstanding Contributions to Education and the 1994 American Educational Research Association Cattell Award for Outstanding Early Career Achievement. She is a nationally and internationally known speaker and writer, and she has used her training in ethnographic research to spark dialogues among educators on issues that have an impact on minority students.

Those with good intentions say they want to create an educational system that would be best for "my" children, because what's best for "my" children will be best for everybody's children. The difficulty is that all children don't have exactly the same needs.

Lisa Delpit, *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom.*

Lisa Delpit has touched a painful nerve in the body politic of the American educational community. This nerve has historical and geographical length, and social, economic, and political breadth and depth. It informs urban school reform efforts, university research, and educator-peer, parent-teacher, and student-teacher relationships. It is the live wire that both separates and binds the country's many races and cultures.

It all began in 1986 with a frustrated letter to a colleague. Delpit was involved in teacher training at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks where she observed the methodologies used to teach Native Alaskan children. Delpit was "perturbed by what [she] saw happening to children of color and teachers of color in the Fairbanks schools. . . . White conservatives and liberals were battling each other over what was good for these 'other people's children,' while excluding from the conversation those with the most to gain or lose by its outcome."[1] Delpit was so offended by academe's deaf ear that she decided to submit her original letter to the *Harvard Educational Review* as an article ("Skills and Other Dilemmas of a Progressive Black Educator"). In it, she expressed her concerns with The Writing Project movement and the frustrations many teachers of color felt at being left out of the discussion on literacy instruction.

Delpit was unprepared for the storm of debate unleashed by the article. Writing Project members across the country were incensed. "Despite my attempt to say that we must not abandon the very good ideas of the process approach, but must be open to modifications based on the voices of parents and educators of color, they perceived me as unequivocally attacking their work. Many African Americans, on the other hand, told me I had made public beliefs they thought no one else shared. I received letters from all over the country. African American teachers thanked me for writing about their experience, and some white teachers wrote that the article helped them identify problems in their own classrooms; yet many questioned my

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motivation in attacking a well-meaning program that had the best interests of all children at heart."[2]

The debate still rages on. "Skills and Other Dilemmas" and a second article, "The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People's Children," are 2 of the top 20 articles most requested for reprints in the history of the *Harvard Educational Review*.

This was not the first time the soft-spoken crusader for children found herself in the eye of a storm. Delpit was raised in a poor community in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, during the Jim Crow era. "Racism was the fabric of our lives back then," she says. Her uncle was lynched. White policemen beat up her father. Some time later, her father died from kidney failure because patients in the "colored ward" weren't allowed access to the dialysis machine.

Delpit was among the first wave of black students to integrate a local high school. There, she and the other blacks met with much resistance and open hostility. She remembers a white nun telling an animated class to "stop acting like a bunch of niggers." That school closed after her first year; the parents refused to support it because "too many black kids were coming." Racism at her second high school was present, but not as overt.

From her family, Delpit learned how to fight injustice. "I learned that there is no peace without justice," she says. Her father, the owner of a restaurant, gave poor children in the community free l ches. Her brother participated in the protest marches of the 1960s, and later became the first elected black official in Baton Rouge. Delpit herself advocated for change in her high school. In fact, she persuaded the faculty to bring to the school the classic blue-eye/brown-eye workshop that heightens awareness of racial issues.

First and foremost, Delpit considers herself an educator. "Teaching is in my genes. My mother was a teacher; my sister was a teacher." When she was five, Delpit organized a school in the neighborhood, and she, not surprisingly, was the teacher. "That continued all the way through elementary," says Delpit. "I even organized a dance class at recess. In elementary school, from third grade on, when a teacher was absent, the principal would ask me to take over the class."

Her love for teaching and children sent her to Antioch College, where she received her B.A. in education and psychology in 1974. She did her graduate studies at Harvard and received her doctorate in 1984. Delpit was first introduced to the progressive teaching methodologies of "process" and the open classroom in graduate school. Ironically, her first practical experience in the classroom foreshadowed her work in multicultural education as a researcher, educator, and advocate. A virtual educational laboratory, Delpit's first classroom in Philadelphia comprised a racially and economically mixed population: 60 percent poor black children and 40 percent well-to-do white children. The white children

> Five effective tutoring programs have been identified that accelerate the achievement of at-risk children: Reading Recovery, Success for All, Prevention to Learning Disabilities, the Wallach Tutoring Program, and Programmed Tutorial Reading. Evidence showed that these programs had lasting effects, especially if the students continued to receive low-cost follow-up. There was less retention in grades and fewer referrals to special education.

thrived academically in Delpit's open classroom; black children, however, "threw the books around the learning stations. They practiced karate moves on the new carpets."[3] She was praised by other white teachers for her work, but deep down, she knew something was wrong.

"People get in political camps and assume that a political camp can drive instruction."

Later, Delpit's work in Alaska, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, and various urban and rural areas in the United States would help clarify for her the underlying issues of power and control that dominate educational reform, textbook publishing, research, instruction, and classroom management. She was more convinced than ever that the education of children should not be a political hot potato tossed between progressives and conservatives.

"People get in political camps and assume that a political camp can drive instruction," says Delpit. "But, as Herb Kohl said, 'There are no progressive methodologies, only progressive values.' The point is, you have to educate the children in front of you by whatever methodologies are appropriate for those children and not be blinded by your own need to belong to a particular political camp." True cultural diversity, says Delpit, inspires educational methodologies appropriate for the children being taught. Political ideologies are irrelevant.

The "very strict" black nuns who taught Delpit in elementary school used rote instructional methods, but they knew that poor black children needed skills "within meaningful contexts" in order to maneuver in the mainstream. It wasn't until she got to tenth grade that she actually wrote text longer than a couple of sentences. By then she had "diagrammed thousands of sentences, filled in tens of thousands of blanks." Children today need the same type of balanced instruction. They need process and skill-based instruction. Experienced, creative teachers will know how, when, and with whom to apply any given method.

"People keep looking at improving instructional models," says Delpit. "What's important for African American children and others is the need to look at the nature of the *relationships* between the teachers and the children and families, particularly between the school and the children."

From Delpit's ongoing research and interviews with African American, Native American, and Native Alaskan teachers, she has learned that the following are essential elements to the making of a good teacher:

Photo © David Grossman

1. Good teachers
care whether students learn. They challenge all students, even those who are less capable, and then help them to meet the challenge.

2. Good teachers
are not time-bound to a curriculum and do not move on to new subject matter until all students grasp the current concept.

3. Good teachers
are not bound to books and instructional materials, but rather connect all learning to "real life."

4. Good teachers
push students to think, to make their own decisions.

5. Good teachers
communicate with, observe, and get to know their students and the students' cultural backgrounds.

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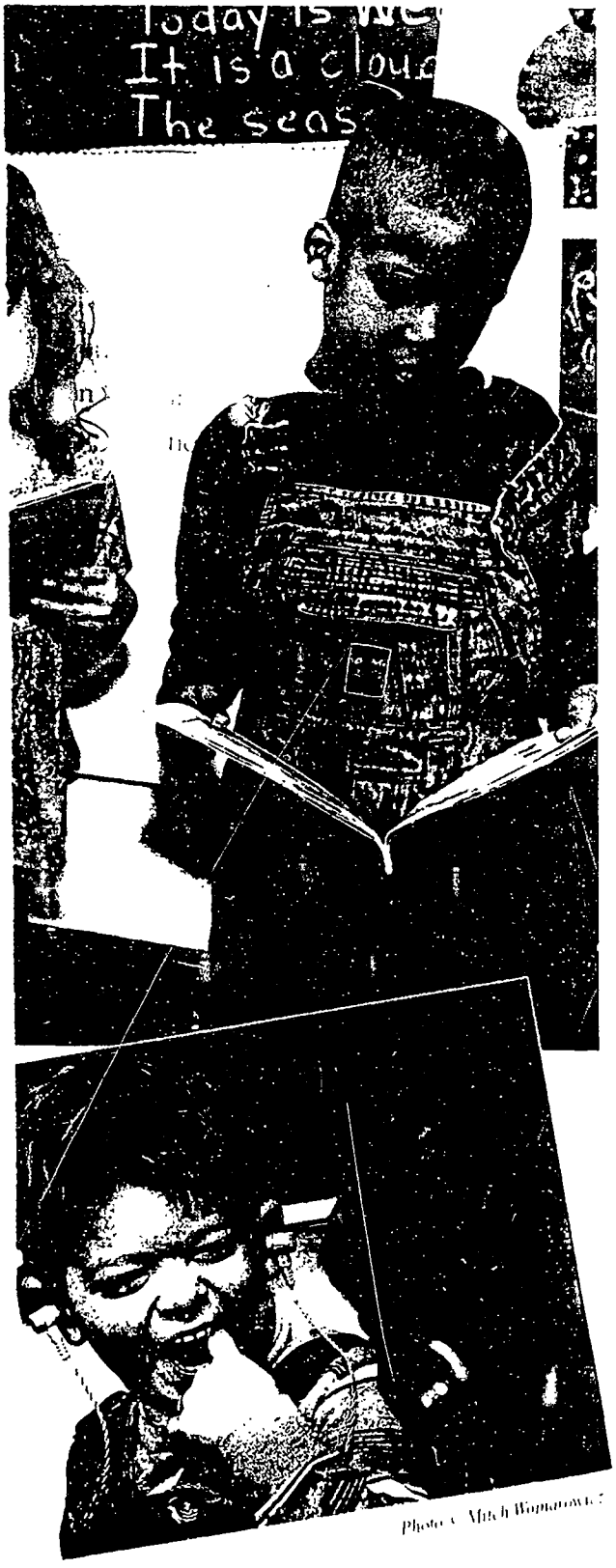

Photo: Mitch Wojnarowicz

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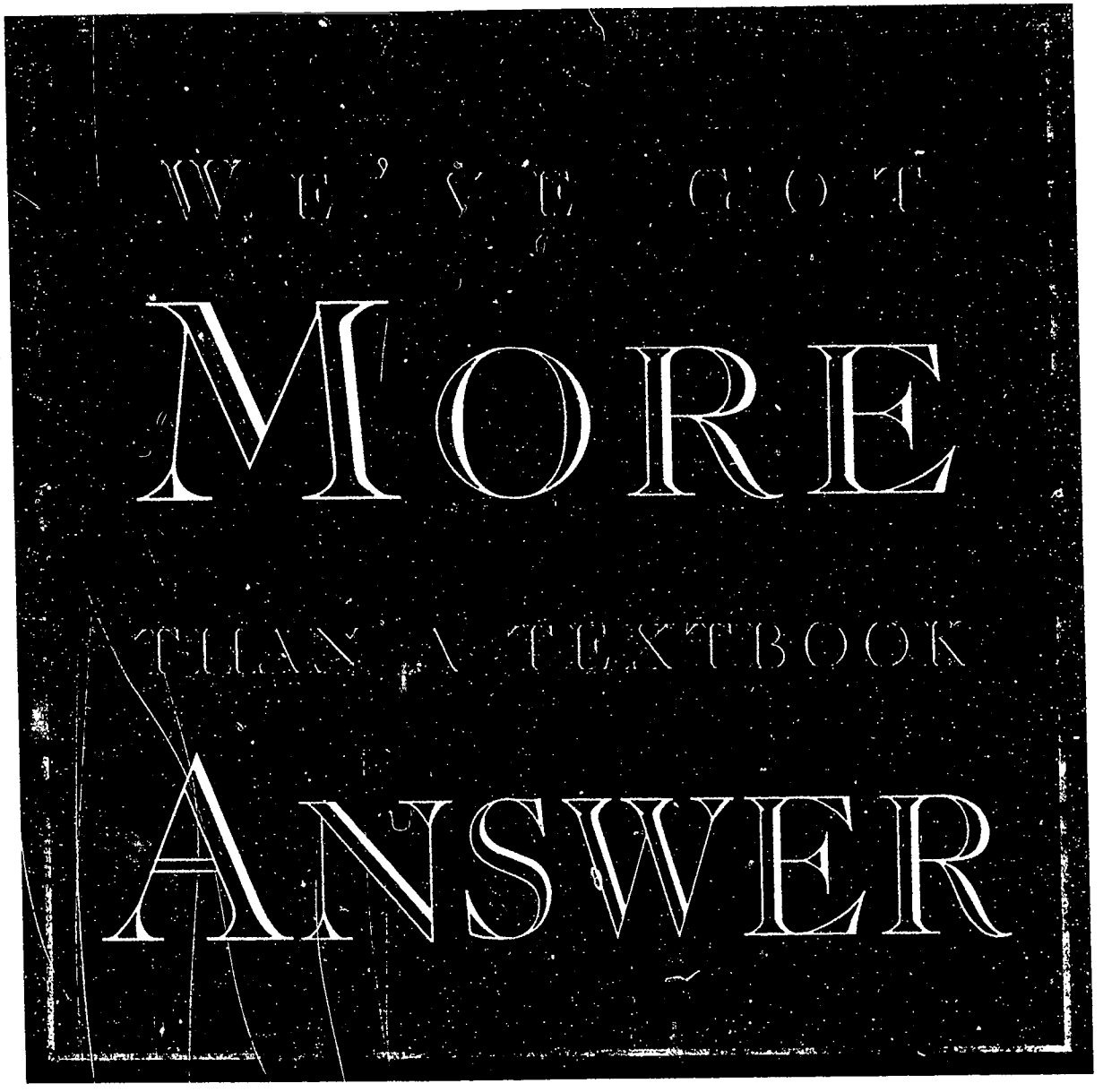
CITY SCHOOL CHALLENGES?



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