



**National Urban Alliance
for Effective Education**

**The Pursuit of Equity &
Excellence in Educational
Opportunity**

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Cognitive psychologists have engaged for years in an attempt to identify difference in IQ between whites and nonwhites. A case in point is provided by Diamond (1997): "...numerous white American psychologists have been trying for decades to demonstrate that black Americans of African origins are innately less intelligent than white Americans of European origins (p.20)." Murray (1995) continues to write in support of The Bell Curve (1994), authored with the late Richard J. Herrnstein, that America faces an "...emerging class society in which the intellectually blessed become ever more rich and powerful and the intellectually deficient find it harder and harder to cope (p.1)." Right-wing foundations such as Scaife, Smith-Richardson, Olin and Bradley continue to argue that increased spending on poor children of color is a waste of resources when compared with the positive effects of an increase of resources for white middle-and upper-class students (Dowie, 2001).

The argument of intellectual superiority among racial and ethnic groups has been used by many to explain the academic achievement gap between whites and nonwhites, and the subsequent futility of using social and government interventions to eliminate it (Herrnstein, Murray, 1994; Murray, 1995; Murray 2003). It remains perplexing that those who base learning potential on IQ results, incessantly fail to understand the degree to which social environment and educational opportunities can affect the results (Diamond, 1997; Ogbu, 2003, Weiss, 2003, Hilliard, 1996). Research and social science has taught us that cognitive abilities are heavily influenced by social environment. Many argue that it is nearly impossible, then, to discern any influence of preexisting genetic differences (Diamond, 1997; Ogbu, 2003; Steele, in press, Gould, 1981; Jensen, 1980; Hilliard, 1994; Fuller, 1977).

It has been said that Albert Einstein once defined insanity as doing the same thing over again and expecting different results. Sadly in this country we continue to lament the lack of social progress on seemingly intractable issues such as poverty, inequitable educational opportunity and a deepening racial life gap, and we continue to try the same interventions over and over. Yet many of our interventions do not take into account the 21st century reality that our schools face (Froning, Cooper, 2003).



The tipping point in America's increasing tilt toward diversity may well have been reached (US Census, 2000). In June, 2003, it was announced that Hispanics have become the largest "minority" group in the United States. Researchers predict that by 2020, 50% of the students in the nation's public schools will be nonwhite. And by 2050, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the Hispanic/Latino American population will increase 300 percent to become 24 percent of the total population.

As the nation's demographics change, so does the schools' responsibility to meet the needs of this new diverse student body -- or an increasingly segregated one, as is the case in many urban and metropolitan areas with primarily poor, black and brown student populations (NY Times, 2003). The choices this country makes in terms of funding education, and in striving for racial balance in student achievement in our public schools, remain central to the continued vitality of our nation. The challenge is a broad one. Martin Haberman (2002) has written: "...schools rather than functioning as the great equalizer, tend to both reflect and replicate social-class structures and societal biases...the end result: families in the top 25% of income send 86% of their children to college; while families in bottom 20% send 4% of their children to college (p.1)."

There are numerous reasons cited in the literature as to why an achievement gap exists between African-American, nonwhite and White children. The most prevalent are: 1) the lack of political will by stakeholders to close the gap (Hilliard, 1991); 2) a lack of belief in the capacity of nonwhite children to succeed at the highest levels (Delpit, 1995; Kohn, 1998); 3) lack of opportunities for poor children of color to attend "good" preschools (Adams, 1996); 4) a belief that intelligence is innate and fixed and a conclusion that the educational disparity is a fact of nature (Singham, 1998; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994); 5) the belief that the gap is a result of economic disparity, Singham, 1998); 6) the existence of a cultural gap between teachers and children of color which causes missed opportunities for learning (Delpit, 1995); 7) a media-reinforced focus on relationships between racial identity and academic performance (Hochschild, Scovronick, 2003); 8) application of a social threat and "bad" teaching by teachers which leads to underperformance (Steele, 2003; Mayshark, 1996; Darling-Hammond, 2000); 9) unequal access to high-level courses and challenging curriculum (Darling-Hammond, 1990a; Darling-Hammond, 2001); and 10) negative peer pressure exerted by nonwhites on nonwhites (Ogbu, 2003).

All but #4 of the reasons for the achievement gap make some sense and by the nature of the problem cited, in turn, suggest courses of action. Sadly, however, the course of action most often proposed to address the achievement gap takes nonwhite students out of the mainstream and onto dead-end educational pathways. Hilliard (1998) reflects on the following:



"The educational and socialization strategies being proposed for African children in the United States reveal a system...[which supports a]...widespread use of bootcamps for the delinquent and violence-prone; direct instruction for low-achieving students [which deny them access to higher thinking and creates an achievement barrier that may condemn them to a lifetime of underperformance]...special education for those who act-out and who were not nurtured during their early schooling; compensatory education and minimum competency schools to help the masses meet the basics; vouchers and choice in order to give the affluent a way to take care of their own and to ignore other people's children. (p. 17)"

Even though such educational interventions for poor children of color have been shown not to eliminate the gap, we continue to use them over and over again. Some have stated that we continue to do so because we have fallen victim to social engineering, i.e., that we have been led to believe that those children who are challenged by poverty, and lack European ancestors, just don't have the capacity for the level of learning which might lead to "rich and powerful" careers (Murray, 2003; Murray, 1995, Diamond, 1997). The question is then asked, why raise the poor nonwhite's aspirations through social activist policies only to see them dashed by "innate" cognitive limitations? Murray (1995) as the Bradley Fellow for the American Enterprise Institute (a think tank for conservative causes) has gone so far as to write in the highly influential far-right publication, "The Public Interest": "It is time for policy analysts to stop avoiding the reality of natural inequality, a reality that neither equalization of opportunity nor a freer society will circumvent (p.8)."

In spite of Murray's (1995) specious arguments, cognitive abilities are heavily influenced by the social environment experienced during childhood, and tests used to assess cognitive abilities tend to measure cultural learning and not pure innate intelligence (Diamond, 1997). The position taken by this author is that there are many success stories about dramatic achievement for children of color cited in individual schools throughout this country (Hughes, 1995; Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Sizemore, Brossard & Harrigan, 1982). The schools do this without mysterious methods, programs or equipment. They do it mainly by exposing the poor and ethnic minorities to the same quality of instruction usually reserved for the more affluent and/or dominant groups in the society (Kozol, 1991).

There is also increasing evidence that when poor children of color are provided access to successful educational programs, they are enabled to enter an institution of higher education of their choice (Ogbu, 2003, Allington, Cunningham, 1996, Haycock, 1998, Bowen & Bok, 2003). Why does the puzzle of the achievement gap persist in the face of the fact there is evidence of dramatic achievement for poor children? I believe that an often-cited quote of Ronald Edmonds (1982) provides the answer: "We can whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children, whose education is of importance to us." I, as others, believe it is a matter of will (NUA, 1999). I also maintain that



Edmonds (1982) was correct, when he asserted that schools can succeed for all students, in spite of a lack of parental participation in their children's learning by those families deeply challenged by poverty.

If we as a nation are to develop the will for change for all students, where do we begin? Obviously the journey starts with those who serve children during the school day – the teacher. This first step is supported by a large body of research suggesting that the single most important school-based factor in student achievement is the teacher (Sanders & Rivers, 1996, Mayshark, 1996). A broader challenge is how we as a nation trigger not only academic improvement in the individual school, but success in entire school districts (Butler & Kahle, 1997; Resnick & Hall, 1998). This writer knows of only a few instances where national reports suggest achievement that has been dramatic for a district (e.g., District 2 in New York City, and the Brazosport School District in Texas).

What I propose in this chapter is to build on common principles of effective school factors that translate consistently across examples of school success, and which when applied, can lead to theories and applications of sustained change for entire school systems. As noted this change process begins with the educators who have the most exposure to schoolchildren, and allows the translation of best practice into application through consistent, cohesive, and sustained professional development (Allington & Cunningham, 1996; Hilliard, 1997). It continues with applications of those factors related to effective schools research (e.g., strong principal leadership, coherent curriculum and instruction, sustained use of student data for instructional purposes, adherence to structural changes relative to classroom and school size, and, when possible, sustained parental involvement). This is the heart and intent of this chapter, translating what we have learned through effective schools and cognitive research into systemic application.

The National Urban Alliance for Effective (NUA) was first formalized in 1989 as an extension of the work of The College Board to improve access to higher education for urban nonwhite students. NUA was first launched at Teachers College, Columbia University in 1991 as a center in collaboration with The College Board and targeted school districts, e.g., Milwaukee, San Francisco, New York City, Prince George's County, Maryland, and Kansas City, Missouri. The mission of the NUA is to advance the members' passionate belief that "all students can be taught to use the higher order processes and engage in the advanced learning tasks demanded by a changing global community, and that race and poverty must not be used to erect insurmountable social barriers to academic success and life-long learning" (NUA, 1999, p. 1). That is, the intention is not only to increase the achievement of nonwhite students but to increase the capacity of all students as well. This dual goal is vital because, as Delpit (1995) writes, "Sporadically we hear of 'minorities' scoring higher in basic skills, but on the same newspaper page we're informed of their dismal showing in higher order thinking skills" (p. xiv). While we applaud the gains made by students on basic



skills, we are cognizant of the fact that as this country increases the gap between the haves and have-nots, we do not want children of color to be left behind because they lack the higher order thinking skills now required for success in higher education and the increasingly demanding workplace (Marsick, 1998; Resnick & Hall, 1998).

Functioning from 1991 - 2000 as an urban center located in Teachers College at Columbia University, the NUA has engaged in a wide range of varied activities that aim at helping school districts improve their policies and practices with respect to enhancing student performance. Typical activities include conducting systemwide instructional audits, conducting research, advocating for change with policymakers and key stakeholders in communities, producing documentaries and television programs which disseminate best practice, and coordinating symposia and conferences which highlight success. The central activity in most of these collaborations has been to implement the NUA's Professional Development Model (NUAPDM) for improving students' comprehension, thinking, and literacy at all grade levels and in all content areas.

More recently, the NUA has initiated a partnership with the International Reading Association (IRA) to extend and disseminate NUAPDM and to reinforce a social movement that facilitates social justice for all. The partnership has led to the creation of the Urban Partnership for Literacy (UP). Using the vast resources provided by IRA's membership, the initiatives of organizations such as The Council of Great City Schools, and the collective leadership of targeted urban districts, UP intends to accelerate learning for urban students so that the achievement gap between white and nonwhite children and youth is eliminated. The NUA and UP focus on the professional development of teachers with the aim of helping them promote high achievement among students for whom expectations are debilitatingly low.

The Professional Development Model (NUAPDM)

The NUAPDM is based on the recognition that if all students are to meet high standards in mastering challenging content and skills, teachers must understand the importance of "addressing the prior knowledge, the learning context, the cultural, linguistic and cognitive abilities, and the motivational patterns of all students" and must use the best instructional strategies for developing students' higher order skills and understanding (NUA, 1999, p. 1). Using an instructional assessment, NUA consultants first study how the school and the district focus on instruction and provide engaged academic time for students. The assessment establishes the context and rationale for the professional development plan for the district that reflects the NUAPDM, which is designed to improve students' comprehension, cognition, and literacy. Consultants in an NUA initiative meet with groups of teachers to engage them in reflective analyses of their practice and to introduce research-based, classroom-tested strategies that develop and



extend students' thinking and literacy skills. These same consultants go into the teachers' classrooms to demonstrate these strategies in reading, writing, math, science, and other subject areas, and then coach faculty members in how to use the strategies themselves. In addition, the consultants help faculty in assessing instructional and organizational arrangements, in developing and implementing plans for improving these arrangements, and in becoming collaborative, peer coaches as they continue to improve their practices on their own. The larger professional development framework within which a multi-school initiative proceeds usually includes four sets of first-year activities that are sequenced and carried out as follows (NUA, 1999).

The Workshops

A minimum of five large, cross-school workshops are held during the school year. NUA recommends that a minimum of one-third of each school's staff attend the workshops to ensure successful team building and school-wide implementation of the strategies. The workshops are a vehicle for initial presentation of the strategies and for engaging teachers in the kind of reflective analysis of their work that will increase their capacity. Each strategy is modeled in large and small group sessions and is applied to real life situations and content. Also, the presentations demonstrate how content knowledge is refined and enhanced with a focus on developing reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. All strategies are integrated with implications for teaching and learning, curriculum development, and assessment.

The rationale is given for each strategy introduced, consultants model its use, and participants are given time to practice it during the workshops and/or in their own classrooms. A strong metacognitive and affective component is part of each workshop, especially during the first year of the program. NUA consultants are particularly sensitive to instructional issues related to: ethnic and racial bias; gender bias; inclusion and different kinds of learning, differentiated instruction; and attention to multiple intelligences; as well as those issues related to ESL and LEP students.

The On-site Demonstration Lesson

Consultants visit the participants' schools to demonstrate how to apply the strategies presented at the large group workshops in classroom instruction. Before each lesson, a briefing meeting is held to explain what the lesson is about, the strategies that will be used, the rationale for selecting the strategies, and the principles of learning on which the strategies are based. All on-site demonstration lessons by consultants take place in real classes; address the heterogeneous make-up of the average urban class; and are conducted in front of a number of observers from the site school and possibly from partner schools. The demonstrations use authentic instructional materials; and are related to the existing course of study and curricular demands. Most importantly, these lessons



vividly illustrate the significant differences in advanced level thinking when correctly selected cognitive strategies accelerate learning for all types of urban students.

After the lesson, a debriefing session is held to allow observers to discuss and reflect on what they saw. Observers are encouraged to question or even challenge the NUA consultant if they are unsure or uneasy about the application of the strategy. This debriefing is an important part of the visit since it allows teachers to engage in conversation regarding principles of learning that were the focus of the demonstration lesson as well as more routine questions about how to apply the strategy in their own teaching.

The scope of the demonstrated strategies is wide, ranging from highly focused approaches to teaching specific skills or content, to strategies that can be used in many subject areas and many grade levels to increase achievement. Some engage students as a whole group while others are used to build students' skills as members of small, collaborative groups. The consultant selects strategies to demonstrate primarily so that teachers can see how students can think and learn beyond their teachers' expectations and, in some instances, even beyond their own expectations.

The On-site Seminar

Some site visits are conducted as seminars to help participants with individual or school-wide implementation issues and to give participants opportunities to examine their own knowledge, attitudes, and expectations as well as their own biases related to culture, gender, race, ethnicity, and the teaching of higher level thinking. On-site seminar activities may include: (a) review of the school improvement plan; (b) analysis of the school achievement data; (c) problem identification and problem solving with respect to school reform efforts; (d) classroom observation; (e) peer coaching; (f) development of integrated lesson plans; (g) mini-workshops based on specific requests from the teachers, and (h) workshops for parents.

The Leadership Training

The literature is replete with studies that recognize the impact of principal support on instructional change. Recognizing this, the NUA works with participating principals to help them develop their skills as instructional leaders. The administrative development includes such activities as guidance in analyzing achievement data, evaluating curriculum, aligning instruction and assessment to district and state standards, and refining abilities at observing and evaluating the delivery of instruction.



Although true educational reform starts with improved instruction in the classroom, principals and teachers have realized the need for whole-school efforts that involve the intentional, systematic cooperation of faculty and administration. It is for this reason that NUA requires a participating school to have at least one-third of its staff involved in the Workshops and Site Visits and asks that the principal attend both events as often as possible. A team of teachers who participate together with the principal are more likely to use what they have learned than those who attend alone. When principal and teachers participate together, they develop as a team while they increase their capacity as individuals.

School teams are guided to identify problems that may impede instructional reform. Together, the team members analyze the data that reflect on their students' performance and formulate a plan of activities that all agree to follow. Such activities develop a school's capacity for sustaining the growth towards excellence that they begin when they are directly involved with NUA. A strong and knowledgeable school team insures that when the NUA initiative ends, the faculty and administration will continue using the refined skills they have acquired and continue improving their instructional program. Also, as the project progresses and as teachers gain expertise in the use of the strategies, they are invited to enter the NUA apprenticeship/induction program. Apprentices are trained in the mission of NUA, the use of cognitive strategies to develop students' advanced skills, and, in effective workshop delivery of professional development services. Successful apprentices become consultants in their districts and exert their own leadership over the instructional program (NUA, 1999, pp. 4-7).

The first year and subsequent years of an NUA project also include a variety of related leadership activities involving other administrators and lead teachers and a number of special institutes for school-and district-level staff. Also, after the first year the focus of the cross-district workshops shifts from specific cognitive strategies to thematic and interdisciplinary instructional design and to a deeper focus on the psychology of learning. At that time, additional and/or alternative teachers from the participating schools are selected to attend.

Use of Instructional Strategies

Underachievement among urban students is most evident and alarming with respect to comprehension and literacy skills (Allington & Cunningham, 1996; Cooper and Sherk, 1989; Delpit, 1995; Haycock, 1998; Levine & Levine, 1996; Wheelock, 1999; Mahiri, 1999, Ogbu, 2003, Jackson, 2003). The instructional strategies that are at the heart of NUA are widely known, reflect extant research in literacy and yet are implemented unevenly across urban schools in this country (Ogbu, 2003). These strategies are based on cognitive research on how people learn (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 1999; Bruner, 1960; Feuerstein & Jensen, 1980; Newell & Simon, 1972). In addition, they draw on an understanding that



children bring different skills and strengths to the learning experience (Bransford, et al., 1999; Gardner, 1993a, 1993b). For this reason, the NUA strives to help all teachers master the strategies most appropriate for their teaching situation and use them consistently in their practice.

The instructional strategies used by NUA are described elsewhere (Harris & Cooper, 1985; Nessel & Baltas, 2000, Jackson, 2003). While the term strategy properly refers to a systematic plan for achieving a specific goal or result, the term skill has acquired a very elastic set of meanings. These meanings can range from the high specific, such as eye-hand coordination, to the very complex, such as thinking and study skills, which may be thought of as virtually synonymous with strategy. For these reasons, it is probably best to define "strategy" as "a skill in use," and in so doing, the importance of skills will not be overlooked. The strategies also become internalized skills when they are applied to real-world situations, e.g., community service. It is important to recognize that this list, or any list for that matter, is only a beginning, a guide which can enable the applications of such to move into deeper cognitive applications.

1. Comprehension

- o Thinking Maps
- o Mind Maps
- o Key Word Prediction
- o Read-Talk-Write
- o Anticipation Guides
- o List-Group-Label
- o Pattern Guides
- o Directed Reading-Thinking Activities
- o Readers' Theater
- o Semantic Mapping
- o Story Mapping
- o Strip Story
- o Team Webbing (Carousel)
- o Think-Pair-Share
- o Declarative Statements for literal, interpretive and applied levels of thinking
- o Concept Attainment & Formation Strategies
- o Concept Development Strategies
- o Facts and Inferences
- o Read And Think Math
- o The Language-Experience Approach

2. Writing for Learning and for Self-expression



- o One-Sentence Summarizing
- o Learning Logs
- o Reader-Response Journals
- o Key Word Notes
- o Possible Sentences
- o Writing for Mathematics
- o Cubing
- o Dialogue Journals
- o Double Entry Journals

- o Read, Talk, Write
- o Imitation Writing
- o Synectics
- o Restating and Paraphrasing
- o I-Search Reporting
- o Eyewitness (Saturation) Reporting

3. Speaking for Learning and for Self-expression

- o Think Aloud
- o Think-Pair-Share
- o Draw-A-Face
- o Read-Talk-Write
- o Reciprocal Teaching
- o Active Listening
- o Socratic Seminars
- o Oral Interpretation
- o Choral Reading
- o Readers' Theater
- o Creative Drama
- o Question-Answer Circle
- o Inner-Outer Circle
- o Panel Discussions
- o Role-playing

4. Word Recognition and Word Analysis

- o Phonemic Awareness Activities
- o Highly Recurring Phonic Elements
- o Phonics Hopscotch
- o Repeated Readings
- o Word Sorts
- o Building fluency



- o Choral Reading
- o The Language-Experience Approach
- o Hear-See-Use Vocabulary
- o Morphology and Etymology

5. Vocabulary and Concept Development

- o Concept Formation and Attainment
- o Vocabulary Notebooks
- o Word Walls
- o Dancing Definitions
- o Analogies
- o Synectics
- o Hear-See-Use Vocabulary
- o Thinking Maps

As noted above, the NUAPDM assists teachers in learning about and analyzing the appropriateness of strategies for improving comprehension, thinking and literacy. The NUA approach is based on the premises that there is no single strategy or approach that is universally effective for all grade levels, subject areas, or classroom situations, and that a given strategy may be more suitable for one teacher or student than another, i.e., there is not a definitive list of strategies that all teachers learn through association with NUA. Rather, the strategies are used as vehicles for encouraging them to think about instruction in more effective ways. NUA finds that teachers appreciate the opportunity to reflect on their practice with the guidance of experienced consultants and to make professional decisions about the particular strategies they will use in their own classrooms. Many participants soon become skilled in making such decisions and in planning and delivering lessons that can improve the comprehension and literacy of all students. Teachers soon come to trust the NUAPDM because they are respected for their prior experience and knowledge and, in connection with this trust, learn that the NUA provides both degrees of freedom in instruction and rigor. Teachers are encouraged to make their own choices about what to do in their classrooms but are also encouraged to think clearly about those choices and to be able to articulate their reasons for making them. It is the firm belief of the NUA that scripted approaches which force a lockstep approach to learning may result in unthinking behavior on the part of teachers and in learning dead-ends for the students, who know that they are being taught mechanically.

What is different and unique in the above? Many instructional change efforts for teachers offer an overwhelming, complex array of "best" instructional practices that focus on teacher behaviors, as opposed to the direct facilitation and mediation of student-centered thinking and learning. Thus the cycle of systemic underachievement may deepen as incremental changes occur through scripted applications. In making selective use of research-based strategies focused on



advanced thinking skills (e.g., problem-solving and decision-making) and tailoring their use in specific contexts, NUAPDM strives to uncover and use the broad principles of learning on which all “best practices” are based so that the learner can transfer these principles to a variety of classroom and real-world applications. Recognizing the unique issues and economic stress that urban students face, the use of cognitive strategies and the delivery of content are always applied with a recognition of the role that culture and language play in learning (Freire, 1994; Freire, 1973). Many children of color who are challenged by family circumstances are more dependent on school for learning than those students who come from wealthier circumstances. It is for this reason that NUAPDM strives to teach the concept of “school dependent children” versus the “at-risk” terminology often applied to urban student cohorts.

To this end emphasis is also placed on the use of interdisciplinary and thematic instruction which allow opportunities for developing reflective, creative and critical thinking skills. Additionally, using instruction which is focused on advanced thinking skills, allows opportunities for students to bridge between what they know and need to learn (Means & Knapp, 1991; Levine & Cooper, 1991; Cooper & Sherk, 1989; Pearson, 1978; Herber, 1978). Students can be taught to comprehend new information, to transfer broad cognitive principles to a variety of instructional circumstances, to ponder and ask questions, to evaluate on best courses of study before they learn the basics. Rather than focusing on what may be inadvertently interpreted as a cookie-cutter approach, (one which demands that one strategy be applied in a linear fashion along with the content), teachers are guided by NUAPDM to move beyond linear learning to a much richer and more complex approach to teaching and learning. Cognitive research has revealed that student learning does not proceed in a linear fashion and the responsibility of the teacher/coach is to help students increase the number of learning connections and insights -- where the concepts learned lead to ever increasing connectivity and transference. Effective teachers have students move towards complexity by using identifying similarities and differences, engaging in cooperative projects, summarizing, elaborating, utilizing multi-step problem solving and reflecting on their thinking with a range of tools (Hyerle, 2003).

In many urban classrooms, the cycle of systemic underachievement deepens as incremental changes occur. Hyerle (2003) has written that low expectations mixed with negative perceptions of students' cognitive ability persist when learning is perceived as linear with learning gates students must pass (as in having to learn basic skills before moving to more advanced skills). Students in large urban school systems are caught in a vicious cycle of perception and performance not of their making. All too often scripted and test-driven approaches lead to an abuse of the drill-test-drill-retest cycle; resulting in students being deadened by the school experience, demoralized by the thought that there is nothing but drills to look forward to, held back because they do not respond with enthusiasm to what they are given, and finally deciding out of



boredom that dropping out is preferable to remaining in.

Ultimately the challenge facing those interested in eliminating the achievement gap requires sustained attention to the four factors most clearly affecting school effectiveness: 1) instructional (high standards in content and pedagogy), 2) structural (school-based procedures determining grouping, tracking, class and school size, administrative and organizational arrangements), 3) professional development which provides teacher access to best practice and 4) community engagements (include parental and stakeholder involvement here). Attention to each is necessary if we are to help students accelerate their learning (Darling-Hammond, 1997, Darling-Hammond, 2000, Darling-Hammond, 2001).

Sustained and cohesive professional development provides the glue which binds the complex effective school factors. This will require that districts rethink what has been identified as a rather dismal track record for conducting in-service training or staff development (Allington & Cunningham, 1996). Traditional staff development approaches by districts, such as, one-shot workshops, sporadic in-service training which is highlighted by a "superintendent's day," workshop-type presentations conducted during stolen moments of a faculty meeting, staff retreats, after-school training, or even the establishment of a district-based professional development center, which often provide an unsystematic way of introducing teachers to "new" ideas, have provided little evidence of success.

Conclusion:

What I have attempted to do within this chapter is to illustrate the complexity of implementing successful school system change procedures. Each of the research-based processes previously outlined is designed to provide a framework that can incorporate district-based interventions. The categories outlined are broad and meant to offset years of pernicious belief systems about student capacity for learning, are focused on translating theory into practice and may provide signposts which can fuel renewed and committed leadership by stakeholders. Traditional approaches to professional development and the education change process remaining prevalent today are doomed to continue the treadmill that Einstein notes in his definition of insanity stated earlier in this chapter. Sustained and compelling educational change begins with, among other things, a dialogue, and a careful review of the various reform practices chosen by central and school-based educators. Questions need to be answered regarding the broad theoretical and pedagogical principles common to each, and change overload for participating schools must be avoided (Levine & Cooper, 1991; Fullan, 1991). All too often NUA representatives have observed educators who some have called, "change junkies," i.e., those who utilize a checklist approach to school change, and who feel that as long as they are able to point to reform programs underway in their district or school, they are doing what is necessary for improved academic achievement.



Einstein said something else that remains as relevant today as it did 60 years ago, "The problems that exist in the world today cannot be solved by the level of thinking that created them." Education remains the pathway that leads people out of despair and hopelessness. A new process of school change requires enormous commitment, leadership (both within and outside the school district), adherence to those prerequisites of successful programmatic implementation identified above (see also Levine & Cooper, 1991, Jackson, 2003), and sufficient time for interventions to take hold at the school and central levels. Contrary to popular belief, and though districts can witness initial spurts in achievement when a change or new interventions is begun, we are finding in our work that 3 to 5 years is not sufficient for sustained change to take hold. Because of student and teacher mobility, social factors such as poverty, frequent change in administrative leadership, policies and shifting funding cycles, we are finding that 5 to 7 years may be required before institutionalization takes place. Yet with that said, for those districts which embark on systemic reform, successful indicators will include a sustained upward trend in achievement over the course of the seven years (Indianapolis Star, 2003).

If we are to see the elimination of the achievement gap nothing less than long-term and total commitment to this goal by all stakeholders in school communities, state departments of education, and the federal government will suffice. Additionally, American education must come to terms with the conflicts between what parents want for their own children and what they want for American children in general. Given the shifting demographics cited earlier, this country will increasingly have to rely on the academic success of other people's nonwhite children. If we are to continue to succeed as a nation, we can no longer continue to place personal interests of one ethnic/racial group above the common interests of Americans. Somehow the politics of education and social change have to be minimized, so that the primary focus of educational reform is driven by the refrain: "What is best for all the children and what evidence supports the intervention." Implemented correctly, effective school and cognitive research can support that goal. Students in this country and worldwide, for that matter, deserve nothing less.

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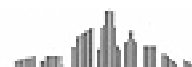
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