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## Addressing Urban School Reform: Issues and Alliances

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by [Eric J. Cooper](#)

The 1980s began with momentum and high expectations for progress in urban schools. The decade closes, however, with little momentum and few victories for urban education. <sup>1</sup> Yet, the rhetoric of reform has reached new heights with calls for change emerging out of all quarters of the educational and political establishments. From our position as a nation at risk, Americans have moved to address concerns related to students at risk. <sup>2</sup>

As discouraging as this decade has been for the parents, children, teachers, and administrators of our urban schools, it is encouraging to note that some progress has been made. <sup>3</sup> Indeed, future generations may find a benchmark for urban school reform in these years. Urban schools have been subjected to intense scrutiny during this decade. Slowly and systematically, researchers have tried to identify successful administrative and organizational arrangements for improving urban schools. <sup>4</sup> However, it can be said that as much was learned about what does not work as what was learned about what does work. As this decade ends, there is a need to present a picture of what we have learned so far and a need for an analysis of what has worked in urban schools.

Supporters must rally behind a solid, research-based agenda for reform. If we are to address the concerns of parents, legislators, educators, and public and private sector leaders, <sup>5</sup> this reform must happen in the 1990s. The need exists to synthesize successful practices for urban school systems which, with limited resources, increasingly strive to serve homogeneous student bodies. The University

Council for Educational Administration cited a recent study which exemplifies the changing demographics of urban schools:

The Council of Great City Schools (1987) study of 44 of the nation's largest urban systems found: 75% minority enrollment (Black, Hispanic, and Asian); 33% of students come from families receiving public assistance; 80% of school children qualify for free or reduced priced lunches; ten different languages are spoken by students; teachers shortages in central city schools exceed teacher shortages in all other schools by 250%. <sup>6</sup>

This article will explore problems related to urban education, suggest approaches that address how classrooms may be instructionally restructured, and speak to the need for local, regional, and national alliances which are based on the assumption that schooling and learning is a multi-institutional responsibility.

### **Reform in the Classroom**

Teachers are emerging from a phase in educational history in which test results were viewed as self-fulfilling prophecies. Tests predicted how children would perform certain school tasks, and teachers taught in ways that confirmed those predictions. <sup>7</sup> Children who scored poorly on reading tests, for example, were placed in slow-reading groups that were taught as if all of their members were slow in reading; thus, the instruction would confirm the tests' predictions. <sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, the test scores often did not represent children's abilities to perform the task that the tests purported to measure. <sup>9</sup> Furthermore, research has shown that children respond to instruction in the way that is expected of them; if they are expected to be slow, and are then taught as if they are slow, children begin to respond in the way others in the group respond, even though the response pattern and the group they are in may be inappropriate. <sup>10</sup> Yet, children often were relegated to the slow reading group even though their assignments were made upon the basis of a prediction and not upon observed behavior. Those children rarely, if ever, got out of the slow groups, and, more often than not, minorities were, and still are, relegated to the lowest tracks on the basis of test performances. <sup>11</sup>

The problem of the test-driven, self-fulfilling prophecy is

particularly difficult for poor students in urban settings.<sup>12</sup> Most standardized reading tests cannot properly predict performance in those cases because the assumptions which underlie the tests construction are inappropriate for the urban student.<sup>13</sup> Frequently, items in standardized tests present concepts and information that are unfamiliar to many urban children.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, such tests require that children work alone, and urban children often have little interest, experience, tolerance, or incentive for that.<sup>15</sup> Typically, urban children (as well as students from other settings) are together much of the time at home and at play, and they learn to rely upon each other for support. They receive social reinforcement for and associate self-confidence and ego-strength with group membership and group activity.<sup>16</sup> When such children are required to work individually, i.e., to take reading tests, they may have short attention spans, may lose interest, and, as a consequence, may not perform at their best.<sup>17</sup>

Since so many urban children have scored poorly on tests, improving their test scores has become the focal point toward which pupils and teachers were directed by administrators and school boards in the 1980s.<sup>18</sup> To this end, worksheet-type instructional materials that resemble items children encounter on standardized tests were created.<sup>19</sup> When hundreds of these worksheets, each of which presents a small, low-level skill related to reading, have been completed, children are said to have completed the "mastery" skills program. Often, these children still cannot read very well, if one defines reading as the ability to discern connected prose for comprehension.<sup>20</sup>

Several negatives regarding the mastery approach have been mentioned by observers. First of all, children begin to associate worksheets with schoolwork. That is, they believe that unless they are doing a worksheet, they are not doing schoolwork.<sup>21</sup> Secondly, worksheets are devised in such a way, teachers are told, that the material teaches itself.<sup>22</sup> As a result, the amount of oral communication between pupil and teacher and between pupil and pupil is drastically reduced. Consequently, teachers spend less time teaching and more time supervising.

The lower noise level of the classroom with the mastery approach to reading skills development has become associated with a more orderly, positive school climate.<sup>23</sup> yet the essential component of language learning has been

so diminished as to nullify these dubious benefits. Reading is a facet of language, and language requires human interaction. If children are to learn language, a part of which is reading, they must interact and communicate.<sup>24</sup> They must have some opportunity to hear words being spoken, to pose questions, to conjecture, and to hypothesize -- all of which, much to the consternation of administrators, increases the noise level in the classroom.<sup>25</sup>

Language usage must be restored to the reading and learning process in the urban classroom. School administrators must no longer allow themselves to be mollified by self-teaching materials of questionable quality that offer easier recordkeeping, quiet and orderly classrooms, and temporary and cosmetic gains in scores on flawed reading tests.<sup>26</sup> The proper relationship between instruction and evaluation is that evaluation should follow good instruction, not drive it.<sup>27</sup> Most tests are not well suited to drive instruction in reading and subject matter, and instructional materials certainly are not good enough to replace the teacher as a model of language, as an initiator of thinking and reasoning, and as the one most important classroom element in the development of conceptual skills.<sup>28</sup>

Teachers' expectations of learning outcomes are based on numerous factors. One such factor is the life experience children bring to the classroom such as the kinds of family and community support that exist for the child.<sup>29</sup> As George has stated,

Teachers behave differently toward low-track students. They tend to slow down the pace of learning, persist less strenuously. Students, consequently, fall further and further behind, and each year they present new evidence to a new set of teachers that they have, in fact, learned less and less and are increasingly unable to perform with the higher-track groups.<sup>30</sup>

Teachers who believe that urban children are mostly disadvantaged, unruly, unsocialized, slow, and backward will treat them that way, thus perpetuating a self-fulfilling prophecy. Teachers who expect students to be successful will work toward that end and, usually, they will produce results that justify their optimism.<sup>31</sup> To overcome the cycle of discrimination and prejudice, teachers in urban schools

must expect all of their students to be successful in school and they must teach them in accordance with that expectation.<sup>32</sup> Educators also must begin to apply research on learning to classroom activities.

In the area of reading instruction, teachers must return language to its proper role. It is natural for children to be fascinated with words, their sounds, and meanings. Nothing can be a substitute for the teacher's enthusiasm about language, learning, and using new words. Instead of classrooms that are quiet and filled with students silently completing one worksheet after another, urban classrooms need to be rejuvenated with active learning, to become filled with the sounds of active students working together in small groups.<sup>33</sup>

Such activity implies that students need to learn how to ask questions as well as to answer ones the teacher asks.<sup>34</sup> Reading is a form of thinking stimulated by written symbols, and students need to know not only how to decode the symbols but also how to get meaning from text.<sup>35</sup> When they answer questions, students occasionally need to be asked how they arrived at their answers. This explication of students' thought processes needs to become an integral part of the language learning experience. Students should be encouraged to give reasons for what they say; only in this way can teachers monitor students' cognitive processes as they engage in academic tasks.

## **TEACHING PRACTICES**

Teachers' work in the classroom is influenced by a variety of external and internal forces. Teachers work in an administrative framework in which certain aims and goals are set and within which formal agreements about conditions of work are made. They work in a domestic framework in which expectations and arrangements with spouses, parents, and patrons are executed. They also work in the framework of the school culture in which peers influence attitudes and practices within the realm of professional and personal contacts. It is apparent that teachers experience stress and difficulty when these forces are at odds or are in conflict. Furthermore, a teacher may be doing all of the right things according to research and the latest thinking, but if what he or she is doing in the classroom is not understood, or if it is at odds with the prevailing view represented in the school, then there is a

strong possibility that the teacher will fail.<sup>36</sup>

The legacy of research from the 1980s is the conclusion that urban teachers must change their teaching practices in the direction of concentrating more time and effort on concept development, cognitive development, reasoning, thinking, and higher-order comprehension skills.<sup>37</sup> A strong base of research linking cognitive development to prior knowledge in learning emerged in the late 1970s.<sup>38</sup> Those studies concluded that, particularly when reading is the learning mode, those students with much prior knowledge and experience relevant to a subject have less difficulty learning new material and retain more than those with inadequate or incomplete prior knowledge and experience.<sup>39</sup> Urban students need the benefit of teachers who know how to access prior knowledge which students might not be aware of and which might help them with the material to be learned.

Finding ways to help students relate what they already know to what is to be learned is called preteaching or preparation. Research has suggested that this is accomplished by teachers in several ways. One way is by encouraging students to make predictions before a reading and/or learning task.<sup>40</sup> Predicting, based on the students' prior knowledge of the topic of a reading selection and on what students think the reading selection will be about, helps students to become aware of their knowledge base. It also helps them to focus closely upon how the text informs the reader.<sup>41</sup> Another transportable practice is to allow students to examine the structure of textual material before detailed reading takes place.<sup>42</sup> For example, if students can determine that they are going to read a narrative selection, then they can review their knowledge of the narrative structure (i.e., a narrative has a setting, characters, plot, beginning, ending, and so forth). If the selection is an expository one, students can be alerted to look for signals that will indicate a particular relationship of ideas (such as cause-effect, comparison-contrast and/or problem-solution; and chronology or sequence). Teachers are in the best position to point out such distinctions to their students.

For some urban children, growth in vocabulary and word knowledge and in-depth understanding are key factors in the reading comprehension equation.<sup>43</sup> By the time a child is in sixth or seventh grade, he or she should know how to read all of the words encountered in everyday speech. Yet,

how do students learn the vast quantity of words that never occur in oral communication and that only occur in text? It is the teacher's role to select those words and to provide students with access to them. In many cases, teachers provide the only access to such words. Teachers must preteach or alert students to pronunciations and discuss word meanings and concepts through informational strategies that provide students with sufficient background knowledge to cope with learning the text in which the words are embedded. Vocabulary/concept preselection is also important because it offsets the natural tendency of readers to skip unknown words during their search for the overall meaning of the text. Students are alerted to look for newly learned words as they read; with word meanings clearly in mind, more precise text comprehension occurs.

### **Focus of Instruction**

Sometimes, the skills mastery approach is employed at the expense of the best interests of students. As has been mentioned, driving test scores up by rote practice on low-level skills may produce a temporary quick fix; while test scores on standard measures may show temporary improvement, such improvement does not hold up over time. Students become familiar with the test content of the basic-skills format in the first four or five grades; yet, when the tests shift their emphasis in grades six to eight from measuring skills to measuring achievement, subject area comprehension, analysis, and critical thinking, many urban students are, again, at a disadvantage.<sup>44</sup> Children in urban schools lose valuable instructional time working on mastery of the so-called basic skills while children in other schools are exposed to interdisciplinary instruction from subject fields that will be studied throughout the school years.<sup>45</sup> As a result of the information explosion in virtually every academic discipline in the past twenty-five years, students must learn more about more subjects earlier. Excessive emphasis on basic skills robs urban students of the time they need to become informed about concepts and subject matter that they will later be expected to have reamed.

Many urban students spend the best part of the first five or six school grades working on instructional basic-skills material that has very little, if any, content or subject matter.<sup>46</sup> If the material does contain any subject matter, it is considered incidental compared to the main purpose, which is skills mastery. For example, the question a student

answers on a worksheet designed to teach a reading skill is different from a question that appears at the end of a passage in a science text. Whether the child remembers the answer to the question on the worksheet is inconsequential because the question is only used to practice a skill which has been removed from the context of the applied learning. Remembering the answer to a question in a science text, however, is important because science knowledge is cumulative; that is, what is learned first serves as the basis for what is to be learned later.

While it is difficult for a child to discriminate between the kinds of questions whose answers he or she should remember and the questions whose answers are just part of basic-skills instruction, teachers can help students in this regard. Teachers are also in the best position to be language models for their urban students. Language use includes listening, speaking, and writing as well as reading, but instruction in the language arts is often so fragmented that children do not see the relationship between these language functions.<sup>47</sup> Frequently, reading is taught separately from writing and/ or spelling, and there is no formal program or plan for students to develop speaking and listening skills in the classroom. Some urban students need help in the expressive use of English, in making and using complete sentences, and in learning how to listen carefully. They need models of expression; they need mediators who can recognize nonstandard English expressions and who can translate those expressions accurately to standard English without degrading either the students' language or the students themselves.<sup>48</sup>

In some instances, language transactions in urban classrooms are difficult for students as well as teachers. A recent experience recorded in an inner-city school provided the following exchange between a teacher and student:

**TEACHER:** What is this word? (Points to the word canal on the chalkboard.)

**CLASS:** *(No response.)*

**TEACHER:** All right. Mark, I think you might know this one. Try it.

**MARK:** A dish of water.

**TEACHER:** What?



**MARK:** (*Louder*) A dish of water.

**TEACHER:** How did you ever get that idea? Class, open to your glossaries, find the word canal, and write the definition in your notebooks. Hurry, we have much more to do in today's lesson.

A great deal can be inferred about the miscommunication that resulted from this exchange. Mark says "dish" for "ditch," and he distorts many other pronunciations such as "mo" for "more," "flo" for "floor," "tess" for "test," and so on. He correctly answered the teacher's question in the only language he had for the occasion. When his somewhat startled teacher responded with "How did you ever get that idea?", Mark was confused, as were many of his classmates who use language in a similar fashion. They knew he meant "ditch" instead of "dish."

What sense could the students in this class have made of this episode? Probably none, except that reading makes little sense and that even when the correct answer is offered, no credit is given for doing so. In the students' view, the teacher is the determiner of meaning, and, in the case cited, even when students believed that they had the same meaning as the teacher, it did not seem to matter. The teacher's attitude about language was the crucial factor in that instance. Rather than acting as the sole arbiter of language transactions in the classroom, the teacher should have assumed the role of translator, mediator, meaning seeker, and model of language for the students.<sup>49</sup> He or she should have replied, "Mark, I thought you said 'dish' of water. Can you tell me more about that? Oh! I see, you mean 'ditch.' Can you say 'ditch?'" The word ditch is correct. You are correct! Very good!"

Such teachers need to be shown that urban children's language is not wrong or bizarre. They need to learn to accept these children's language as it comes, which is another way of saying that teachers need to accept these children as well. Teachers need to understand that children use language to make meaning of the world; thus, what children say is important. The task for teachers in the impoverished urban setting is to shape their students' language so that it becomes useful to the child in learning, particularly in learning from text. The above teacher could have concluded the encounter thusly: "Mark, the word ditch looks like this. (Spells the word out.) Try saying 'ditch.'"

Good! That's the way it looks and sounds when you find it in a book."

In class after class and day after day, urban students use the only language they have to make sense of what they read, see, and hear. Scientifically, their language is neither good nor bad, right nor wrong; it is simply language. It needs to be shaped to conform more closely to school language—that is, standard, non-"street" English—not because the language these students use is wrong, but because there are important benefits to be gained by doing so, the most important being the facilitation of text comprehension. When teachers, using a different standard of language, frequently chastise urban students for the way they use language, students may become alienated from teachers and from school.<sup>50</sup>

### **Materials of Instruction**

Instructional classroom materials are of two general types: (1) materials for skills development and (2) materials for instruction in subject matter. Materials for skills development contain little subject matter; a study of one basal reader, for example, indicated that only 13 to 17 percent of its content was expository in nature.<sup>51</sup> Elementary-level language arts and social studies texts rely heavily on narratives -- stories or story-like passages containing characters, setting, plot, and events -- to frame the instructional program. In many urban elementary schools, most instructional sessions are spent reading such narrative materials. However, the reading of narratives must be balanced with the reading of expository texts which provide a knowledge base upon which subsequent academic subject knowledge and text comprehension skills are built.<sup>52</sup> Recent research on reading comprehension has cast doubts on the assumption that students can automatically transfer inference skills learned from narrative-based reading lessons to subject-matter text.<sup>53</sup> However, many of the reading comprehension skills that are now taught exclusively in basal reader narratives can be taught in subject matter lessons from content textbooks. In other words, an elementary-level science text could be used, for example, as the foundation upon which knowledge of the facts of science and the writing patterns of scientific materials are based. By this practice, urban students could be taught early to recognize the patterns of organization and thought relationships (listing, chronological/ sequential

ordering, and problem-solution relationships) found in expository text which is rarely used in basal readers or skills mastery materials.

It is as important for urban children to become familiar with these thought patterns in text as it is for them to develop their subject-matter knowledge base. They are essential prior knowledge concepts these students will need to handle the more difficult texts that children will encounter in later grades. Thus, a shift to the teaching of reading comprehension from expository texts is also needed.

### **LEVELING TEXT**

Reading is a skill and a tool. As a skill, it must be practiced. The more one reads, the better reader, in general, one becomes.<sup>54</sup> In this respect, reading is like tennis, golf, or pitching horseshoes. Reading is also a tool for learning. In school, children who can and do read their textbooks not only benefit from the text information but also from the practice of reading their assignments. Children who cannot read their textbooks are handicapped in two ways: first, they are unable to increase the stores of knowledge which can be attained by reading text; second, they do not benefit from the practice of reading. Compared to children who cannot or do not read, children who consistently can and do read improve markedly. This difference between non-reading and reading children may be two levels or more.<sup>55</sup>

The concept of "instructional level" applies most commonly to reading instruction and involves the basal reader approach.<sup>56</sup> Traditionally, when a child falls behind in reading in the early grades, the instructional level, or the level of text which is most appropriate for the child to receive instruction, is adjusted. The more closely a text fits a child's reading ability, the more likely the child is to read it and, thus, to gain knowledge and benefit from the practice of reading itself.<sup>57</sup> Leveling texts for classroom instruction accomplishes two important functions: (1) it lowers text difficulty appropriately for children who are not making rapid progress in reading, and (2) it gives such children more reading opportunities throughout the school day and outside of the classroom.

The concept of leveling text is especially important to urban children who read independently. Urban children need

instructional texts that are adjusted appropriately for their reading ability. They also need texts in other subject areas that are adjusted to their reading ability as well. Such content texts could then provide the practice reading exercise these students lack in traditional reading programs.<sup>58</sup>

Leveling text in urban classrooms provides learners with added incentives for reading and learning. For those who read less well, the leveling of text provides more practice reading opportunities and more access to knowledge of other subjects in the curriculum. For the average child, the current system differs little from what would be in effect if textbooks were leveled; students who read at levels above and beyond the standard text are given texts which challenge their best efforts and enable them to move ahead on their own in reading and study situations. For such advanced readers and learners, the challenge to go beyond is a powerful incentive for remaining interested in school, forestalling much of the boredom many of these able learners suffer in urban classrooms.<sup>59</sup>

There are many research-based strategies that apply to appropriate leveling and learning from text. They include:

- activating prior knowledge of students before the text is presented for reading;<sup>60</sup>
- using mapping and graphic organizers to help build schema for students;<sup>61</sup>
- using questioning strategies;<sup>62</sup>
- using concept-attainment models for isolating difficult concepts before and after reading/learning assignments;<sup>63</sup>
- matching reading materials through the use of readability and other information related to comprehensibility, i.e., motivation, interest, organization and preferences.<sup>64</sup>

### **Alliances That Support Change**

Changes in urban education cannot occur in a vacuum. What is known about instruction, students, factors that impede change, and characteristics that support change in the urban setting must provide the basis for any and all reform efforts. Increasingly, it has been recognized that educators will have to draw upon several environmental factors such as the home, the classroom social group, the peer group outside of the school, and the community in

order to effect meaningful change in urban education.<sup>65</sup> As Glaser has reported, the learning environment exerts a profound influence on how and what students learn and on how they use what they learn.<sup>66</sup> It is also generally accepted that the success of innovations, programs, and national efforts for the development of effective schools is in part attributed to the skillful management of the process of change.<sup>67</sup>

Several national efforts have evolved from these assumptions. Smith reported on an effort that has incorporated many of the above factors into a national movement to support the education of Black children.<sup>68</sup> That collaboration is supported by a large group of national organizations who joined to form the National Conference on Educating Black Children (NCEBC). The activities of NCEBC are targeted toward school administrators, teachers, parents, students, boards of education and policymakers, and the community. The NCEBC has formulated and disseminated its "Blueprint for Action," which describes "many immediate, implementable activities to improve teaching and learning for Black students."<sup>69</sup> In addition, a group of school superintendents and NCEBC representatives have met to form a research-based network of school systems, universities, colleges, and national educational agencies—the National Urban Alliance for Effective Education (NUA)—for the purpose of disseminating information on instructional and administrative models that substantially improve comprehension and cognitive skills among students in urban schools. Participating districts and educational agencies of NCEBC and NUA function as a network, sharing ideas and experience regarding effective implementation and adaptation of cognitive models for instruction, assessment, and staff development in the urban setting.

What NCEBC and NUA are attempting to accomplish reflects a recognition that educational change works best when partnerships are created to combine resources and to support the creation of a climate that can nourish the change process. Cronin has called for such coordinated efforts from a practical point of view.<sup>70</sup> Sizer has articulated this need from both a practical and a pedagogical point of view:

School systems may aspire to be independent, fiscally and educationally, but the social system is too complex

and education too expensive to tolerate duplication of effort on all fronts.<sup>71</sup>

If urban school reform is going to become a reality in the 1990s, the idea that improving schooling and learning cannot be left to the schools alone must receive wide acceptance. Indeed, schooling is a multi-institutional responsibility,<sup>72</sup> and support for school change must occur throughout the social system in which the schools are embedded. Academic and organizational alliances are sorely needed. Mickelson et al. reported that,

Virtually every avenue of educational change has been explored and reported; however, one very promising development, school-university collaborations, has received considerably less public attention and evaluation because it is less dramatic and its effects are harder to demonstrate.<sup>73</sup>

Increasing numbers of these public school-university alliances have been formed over the years with the support of organizations such as The College Board; the American Association for Higher Education, and the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges. Several private foundations including the Ford, Johnson, and John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur foundations have also advocated and supported such partnerships.<sup>74</sup>

Building upon the following instructional and organizational components, alliances that attempt to effect significant change remain consistently aligned with the following components of Effective Schools reform:

- an emphasis on cohesive and long-term, schoolwide staff development that focuses on improved delivery of instruction involving the most important learning skills;
- recognition of the need for effective and supportive leadership on the part of principals, faculty, and staff;
- support for the involvement of teachers and other staff in an ongoing examination and revision of decisions and in collegial problem-solving efforts that focus on effective implementation of instruction within and across classrooms;
- restructuring of instructional efforts to facilitate improved student comprehension and thinking in subject areas;
- the setting and sustaining of high goals and

- expectations for students, parents, administrators, and teachers that are consistent with the mission of the schools;
- the utilization of cognitive assessment data as well as other information to identify, define, and resolve problems (Illinois and Michigan have taken some steps toward addressing comprehension assessment; the statewide assessment programs of New York, Connecticut, and Virginia using the Degrees of Reading Power test and The College Board's Advanced Placement program provide models for consideration);
  - the use of information on student performance and other data (e.g., videotapes of student performance, exhibitions of proficiency) to redesign educational programs and organize management and related support systems in the school and in the community to deliver instructional programs;
  - the collection and recordation of quantitative and qualitative data in a fashion that supports longitudinal analyses of individual students and groups of students (including, for example, data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and grade level);
  - the development and implementation of concrete and manageable plans to utilize time and other resources efficiently and effectively throughout the school year;
  - the reallocation of resources and/or the allocation of additional resources (e.g., time, teachers, and materials) to improve the performance of low-achieving students.<sup>75</sup>

For promising practices to reach the classrooms in urban settings, the role that planning, orchestration, management, implementation, and research play in the process of change must be recognized. Textbook publishers and educators must make essential changes as soon as possible if they are interested in helping urban students make the transfer from mastery of low-level, rote memorization tasks to command of the conceptual frameworks that will facilitate lifelong learning and success in careers that require higher-order thinking. Traditional administrative decision making practices -- which have relied on word-of-mouth networks, high-powered salesmanship, reactionary politics, and "top-down" policies, and that have disregarded the need for shared participatory agreement among teachers, administrators, parents, policymakers, and students -- must

be abandoned. Resources must be shared, and research findings must be disseminated among all of the participants in education so that redesign and the mutual adaptation of models can be facilitated. Finally, instructional improvements and alliances such as those reported herein and others occurring throughout the country must be replicated and institutionalized on a larger scale if we are ever to see the dramatic progress that most seem to desire for urban students. In alliance with state departments of education, universities, colleges, educational agencies, and other organizations, urban school systems can better address the common and urgent concern -- improving the comprehension and cognitive performance of urban students.

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