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LETTER

Citing the Success of Two Urban Integration Efforts

To the Editor:

Tierney T. Fairchild's Sept. 13, 2006, Commentary "**Race and Class: Separate and Not Equal**" touched a chord for me, both as an educator and as a parent.

I must, however, disagree with Ms. Fairchild on one major point. She asserts that "black students in more-segregated environments do better than their peers in more-integrated schools." Most urban schools are highly segregated, so it is difficult, in those areas at least, to find integrated models for comparison within a local context. But I know of two examples in which children of color who were bused from urban to suburban schools have performed better than their counterparts who did not get on the bus. In both cases, the receiving schools were not only wealthier, they were also more diverse racially.

One is the long-running METCO desegregation initiative in Boston. The other is Minneapolis' West Metro Education Program, or WMEP, which allowed low-income city residents to choose suburban schools supported by the National Urban Alliance's comprehensive instructional coaching. The Minneapolis reported on April 5 that on state reading tests, students who participated in the WMEP integration initiative tripled the gains of eligible students who did not choose those suburban schools.

Our experience suggests that teaching is more a factor of student success than the racial composition of a class. It is at the center of that combination of policies, programs, practices, and beliefs that lifts and accelerates achievement for all students, especially those children of color who, because of challenges in the home, are "school dependent" for generating and sustaining academic achievement.

Teachers are the professionals who craft and deliver that teaching. As parents, we place our trust in their ability to deliver on the promise that education brings to the lives of our children.

Eric J. Cooper
President
National Urban Alliance for
Effective Education
Lake Success, N.Y.

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