

# THE REDESIGN OF URBAN EDUCATION: CHALLENGES, OPTIONS AND VISION

The CHALLENGES  
we FACE

By Grand Sire Archon–Elect Rodney J. Reed  
Alpha Gamma Boulé

Grand Sire Archon–Elect Rodney J. Reed was asked to deliver the first lecture in a series on urban education that honors Dr. George W. Gore, Jr., one of the outstanding past presidents of Florida A&M University, which for 122 years has served, and continues to serve, the state of Florida and the nation with distinction.

I can think of no issue more important than the effective education of thousands of economically challenged, culturally and ethnically diverse children and youths who reside and attend schools in the nation's inner-city neighborhoods.

With increasing alarm, the voices of parents, concerned citizens, educators, the business community and politicians call for a restructured educational system from prekindergarten to college – one in which all children and youths have equal opportunities not only to develop and acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them to thrive in the technological and knowledge-based world that surrounds us, but also to live rewarding, productive and satisfying lives. Yet for a large population of students in urban neighborhoods, school outcomes are disheartening. We find large numbers of high-school dropouts and large numbers of students leaving school ill prepared for the world of work or to meet the requirements for college-level work. Overwhelmingly, this population comprises black and Hispanic students, many of whose families live below poverty levels. Thus the central theme of this lecture series is of the utmost importance. As a nation, we should no longer tolerate the waste of human potential and the destruction of the human spirit associated with ineffective schools and schooling. Failure to meet the challenge this presents deprives us of the human resources upon which the future of the nation may well depend.

Several years ago I wrote the following:

Large cities, which once may have represented hope for employment, improved human services and opportunities for enhanced life chances for minority and poor families, have become geographical centers of desolation. In the urban cities of industrial nations, what should be a celebration of cultural diversity is often cause for hostility, cynicism and racism. What should be cause for optimism for upward mobility is replaced by lowered expectations, lost hope and aspirations, and intergenerational poverty. In the urban core, or inner city, the quality of life is affected and shaped by high levels of unemployment, homelessness, human neglect, drug and substance abuse and crime.<sup>1</sup>

These words still describe today's reality and underscore the range of seemingly intractable challenges we must confront if we are to reverse prevailing inner-city school outcomes; if we are to increase the probability of achieving educational equity and opportunity within and between schools in urban and more affluent suburban communities; and if we are to replace failure with hope for a better future while simultaneously cultivating the attitude and determination within all children and youths that found voice in the recent presidential election—"Yes We Can."

Let me paint a picture of the landscape we must consider. In the fall of 2007 the projected enrollment in the nation's schools from prekindergarten to grade 12 was 73,720,000 students: 63,067,000 (85.55 percent) of these students were enrolled in public schools and 10,653,000 (14.45 percent) in private schools.<sup>2</sup> Within that population 27.6 percent were enrolled in schools in the nation's 50 largest cities. The high-school graduation rate for students in urban school districts in those cities was 58 percent, compared with a rate of 75 percent for students enrolled in suburban districts.<sup>3</sup>

1. Rodney J. Reed, "Urban Schools" in the *International Encyclopedia of Education*, 2nd ed. (1994).

2. U.S. National Center for Educational Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics*, annual and Projections of Education Statistics, 2007.

3. Christopher B. Swanson, *Cities in Crisis. A Special Analytic Report on High School Graduation*. Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, April 1, 2008.



**Grand Sire Archon-Elect Rodney J. Reed**

In some metropolitan districts, suburban students graduate from high school at a rate double that for students in inner-city schools. Disturbingly, the graduation rate for black males is below 40 percent in at least thirty school districts throughout the nation, including, for example, districts in Cincinnati, Chicago, Atlanta and New York City.<sup>4</sup>

It is estimated that each day 6,829 students drop out of the nation's public high schools: 13 students each second of each day. For spring 2008 it was estimated that more than 1.2 million students failed to graduate with their peer group.<sup>5</sup>

Many, if not most, of these students were black and Hispanic.

In addition, it is distressing to note that black males in inner-city schools are suspended from school at three times the rate of white students and constitute the vast majority of students who are expelled.

Using Florida as an example, in the 2004–05 school year, 21.4 percent of black students were suspended, compared with 9.71 percent of white students. Moreover, in schools throughout the nation, black male students are considerably overrepresented in school classifications for the mentally retarded, and regardless of gender, black students are underrepresented in advanced-placement math and science classes and in programs for the gifted and talented.<sup>6</sup> As a consequence, black students are further stigmatized, the likelihood of perpetuating and reinforcing low expectations held for their educational achievement is heightened, and the probability of their dropping out of school is increased.

At another level, we can reasonably speculate that low high-school graduation rates are associated with engagement in criminal activity as a means of survival. High-school dropouts lack employable skills, and criminal activity may be seen as an option of last resort. Should this be the case, seeds are planted that will germinate and bloom into a debilitating cycle of incarceration, release and recidivism.

With 2.3 million persons in state and federal prisons, the United States leads the world in both the number and the percentage of persons incarcerated. Within this population, black males and females are significantly overrepresented. One in every 15 black males 18 years old and above and one in every 203 black females in the same age category are incarcerated. This bears heavily on family stability and neighborhood development, as well as on state and federal budget allocations.<sup>7</sup>

To maintain prisons and jails, significant allocations of state and federal budgets are required. Thus fewer dollars are available to support education. By way of illustration, in 2007 Vermont, Michigan, Oregon, Connecticut and Delaware spent as much, or more, on maintaining their prison systems as they spent on higher education. In Florida, which is second only to Texas in the number of persons in state prisons, for every dollar spent on higher education, 66 cents is spent on correctional institutions.

In 2007 Florida spent 9.3 percent of its general budget on prisons, a percentage level second only to that of Oregon, which spent 10.9 percent of its budget for that purpose. Nationally, between 1987 and 2007 the amount states spent on corrections more than doubled, increasing by 127 percent, while the increase in higher-education spending lagged far behind at 21 percent.<sup>8</sup> Funds used to support prisons could clearly be better used to support education and, in turn, produce significantly more positive results.

Education has traditionally been the engine for upward mobility and economic advancement. The relation between level of education and income is clear: The higher one's education attainment level, the higher the level of income one can expect to receive. Regardless of gender or ethnicity, in 2006 a person without a high-school diploma could expect to receive an annual salary of \$20,873; with a high-school diploma, \$31,071; with a bachelor's degree, \$56,768; and with a professional degree, \$116,514.<sup>9</sup>

In a similar vein, the relationship between educational attainment and the ability to live above poverty levels is painfully apparent. Predictably, when considering ethnicity, a greater percentage of black families (24.3 percent) and Hispanic families (20.6 percent) live below poverty levels – which for a family of four (two parents and two children below age 18) is \$21,834 – than do white (10.3 percent) and Asian (10.3 percent) families.<sup>10</sup>

The shortage of highly qualified teachers is an additional challenge associated with urban inner-city schools. Since these schools are generally viewed as “tough” places in which to teach, many experienced teachers seek assign-

4. *The Schott 50 State Report, Black Male Data Portal*. Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2009.

5. *Education Week*, June 5, 2008. *Diplomas Count 2008: School to College, Can State P-16 Councils Ease the Transition?* Bethesda, MD: Editorial Projects in Education Research Center.

6. *The Schott 50 State Report, Black Male Data Portal*, 2009.

7. The Pew Center on the States. *One in 100: Behind Bars in America*, 2008.

8. *Ibid.*

9. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Survey*. See Internet site: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo>

10. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, pp. 60–233. Internet site: <http://pubdb3.census.gov/macro/032007/pov/toc.htm>

ments in suburban school districts and in schools perceived to be less challenging. Consequently, many of the teachers in inner-city schools are inexperienced. Teachers in specialized areas such as math and science are in short supply. Students are deprived of the opportunity to enroll in advanced specialized classes and have no access to the in-depth knowledge such classes provide. Many of those classes are required for college entry and for selected college majors. The absence of selected advanced-level courses thus places students at a competitive disadvantage in their quest for college entry and may restrict their selection of college majors.

In addition to school performance in required courses and standardized test scores, college attendance rates are affected by affordability as well. Whereas the percentage of white high-school graduates enrolling in college during the fall term immediately following high-school graduation is 73 percent, the percentage of Hispanic and black students who do so is 58 percent and 56 percent, respectively. Completion of the bachelor's degree within 6 years after enrolling in college again varies by ethnicity: 59 percent of white students graduate within that time frame, compared with 47 percent of Hispanic students and 41 percent of black students.<sup>11</sup>

For black males the college graduation rate is 36 percent, for black females, 47 percent. Black females outpace black males not only in receiving the bachelor's degree, but also in enrolling in master's, doctoral and professional degree programs. It is important to note that the primary reason cited by black students for dropping out of college before receiving a bachelor's degree is lack of finances.<sup>12</sup>

In sum, the statistics depict a distressing set of circumstances that have an impact on school performance and on decisions to drop out of high school, although some students drop out emotionally much earlier than they do physically. Life within urban inner-city neighborhoods – characterized by high levels of poverty, elevated unemployment rates and concomitant lack of employment opportunities coupled with excessive numbers of school suspensions, disproportionately high assignment to classes for the mentally retarded, and low representation in classes for the gifted and talented and advanced placement classes in math and science – restricts opportunities for success. The lack of legitimate role models and the shortage of out-of-school educational opportunities further serve to limit aspirations and career options.

Schooling is devalued, and dropping out before graduating from high school becomes a recurrent theme. The voluntary and involuntary elimination of minority students from the nation's urban schools is occurring at a time when it is increasingly clear that at least a high-school diploma, but more likely a college degree, is a prerequisite for employment and advancement. Decreases in school enrollment and graduation rates serve to lessen life choices, reduce the nation's employment pool and shatter the dreams and aspirations of a large segment of our population.

Such descriptors are not new. They have existed for more than 300 years within this nation. They are not immutable,

however, and we must ensure that from prekindergarten through college and university levels every student, rich and poor and from every ethnic group, acquires the knowledge and skills necessary to become successful and contributing members in the world community. If we fail to do so, we risk becoming a nation in which dreams and human potential will continue to be diminished and the skilled workforce needed to fuel our economy will be further jeopardized. Let me turn to the second theme of my presentation: selected past and present urban-education options.



During the past fifty years a number of options have been proposed and implemented to alleviate inequitable conditions associated with urban schools and those thought to be related to the failure of students enrolled in them. During this period, programs and strategies concerned with educational equity began to surface following the 1954 Supreme Court *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.<sup>13</sup>

The Supreme Court's finding in *Brown* that "separate but equal" was inherently unequal encouraged the development and implementation of programs designed to bring about the integration of public schools. Those efforts included inter- and intra-district busing and legal challenges to equalize fiscal resources. In spite of those earlier efforts, schools in the nation's inner-city neighborhoods have now become resegregated. And in the more recent *Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education* case and its companion case, *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*,<sup>14</sup> the Supreme Court ruled that race can no longer be used to bring about school integration. This raises a fundamental question: If separate but equal was considered inherently unequal in 1954, is not that verdict equally valid today? I think we know the answer: Resegregated public schools continue to be unequal. The will to integrate them on the basis of ethnicity (I use this term instead of "racial group" because we are all of one human race, traceable to Africa, within which there are various ethnic groups), however, requires a level of commitment currently not sufficiently evident. Attempts to integrate schools on the basis of family income level is a legally permissible option, but one that is not feasible for many inner-city school districts.

With the enactment of former President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society legislation in the mid-1960's, intervention programs designed to raise the academic performance level of poor and minority-group students have included the Head Start program, initiated in 1964 for preschool children from low-income families,<sup>15</sup> and Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act: Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged, passed by Congress in 1965.<sup>16</sup>

11. *Measuring Up 2008. The National Report Card on Higher Education*. San Jose, CA: National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2008.

12. "Black Student College Graduation Rates Inch Higher but a Large Racial Gap Persists," *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, June 21, 2008.

13. *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

14. S.Ct. 551 US-(2007).

15. Head Start 42 USC 9801.

16. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Public Law 89-10 Stat 27, 20 USC ch 70.

That act targeted federal dollars for the nation's elementary and secondary schools that served large proportions of economically disadvantaged students. Although not labeled as a school-reform bill, it provided funds for innovative practices and required the involvement of parents in formulating individual school policies and practices.

Specifically geared to school reform during the 1950's and 1960's was the Ford Foundation-funded Comprehensive School Improvement Program and, during the 1970's into the early 1980's, the federal government's Experimental Schools Program. The latter, in eighteen school districts, focused on research, demonstration, documentation, evaluation and dissemination. Neither program had a lasting effect, and when the funding was discontinued, so were the initiatives.

During the late 1970's and the 1980's, following the publication of *On Equality of Educational Opportunity* by Christopher Jencks,<sup>17</sup> a reanalysis of James Coleman's data on school effects<sup>18</sup> that essentially held that schools had little effect on student performance outside the effects of family characteristics, the effective-schools movement began to gain momentum. Whereas studies conducted in the early 1970's focused on school characteristics associated with student performance in reading, it remained for Ron Edmonds in the late 1970's to advance the effective-schools ideology. This held that – given a defined set of school characteristics, which included such dimensions as principals being instructional leaders, high expectations for student performance, and teachers' providing supportive interaction patterns in the classroom – schools could be effective in developing high-achieving students regardless of family economic circumstances.<sup>19</sup>

Although the reform of science education was stimulated in 1957, when the Soviet Union launched *Sputnik*, the first official satellite in space, it was the issuance of the 1983 report *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* that gave impetus to the general school-reform movement:

If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war . . . we have, in fact, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral disarmament. . . .

If only to keep and improve on the slim competitive edge we still retain in world markets, we must dedicate ourselves to the reform of our educational system for the benefit of all – old and young alike, affluent and poor, majority and minority. Learning is the indispensable investment required for success in the "information age" we are entering.<sup>20</sup>

And yet, twenty-six years later, in the areas of math, science and reading, students in our schools lag behind their counter-

parts in many countries throughout the world. As reported in 2006 by the Organization for Economic and Cooperation Development (OECD), based on its Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), in the areas of mathematics and science literacy, 15-year-old students in the United States lag behind their counterparts in the thirty OECD-jurisdiction countries, as well as in the twenty-seven non-OECD-jurisdiction countries participating in the PISA. With students from Finland, Chinese Taipei, and Hong Kong China earning the top scores, U.S. students ranked twenty-fifth out of the thirty OECD-jurisdiction countries in math literacy and twenty-first out of the thirty in science literacy.<sup>21</sup>

When examining the combined science-literacy average scores by ethnicity, white students earned an average score of 523; those reported to be of more than one ethnic group, 501; Asian, 499; Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islanders, 483; Hispanic, 439; American Indian/Alaska Native, 436; and black, 409.

To narrow the achievement gaps noted, programmatic interventions developed by individuals and groups have also been implemented in a relatively small number of the nation's 17,765 public-school districts. Among these are the Success for All program developed by Robert Slavin and his colleagues. This scripted curriculum program is designed to have every child read at grade level by the end of third grade. These researchers also developed the Roots & Wings program that includes Math Wings and World Lab, a social studies and science curriculum for grades one through five.<sup>22</sup>

The School Development Program designed by the Yale University psychiatrist James Comer advocates a process for involving school staff, community agencies and parents in designing solutions to identified problems of students and their parents.<sup>23</sup> And the Community for Learning/Adaptive Learning Environments Model at Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education emphasizes management techniques for organizing and improving the classroom learning environment. This K–12 program seeks to improve the academic achievement of all students, perpetuate active learning and effective teaching processes, and instill positive attitudes in students and staff toward their school and expectations held for student success.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to these efforts to close the academic achievement gap, a number of small charter schools have been established to accomplish that purpose. Generally, charter schools schedule longer school days and shorter summer-vacation periods than regular public schools. Many provide tutoring after school and on Saturdays, with a strong emphasis on reading and math. Some, such as those that are part of the Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP) – founded by David Levin and Michael Feinberg in Houston, Texas – rely on frequent testing and use of test results to guide curriculum decisions. Additionally, in KIPP schools, under the rubric of "character development," considerable attention is placed on students' classroom behav-

17. Christopher Jencks et al, *Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America*, 1972.

18. See James S. Coleman, *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, 1966.

19. Ron Edmonds, "Effective Schools for the Urban Poor," *Educational Leadership*, vol. 37, 1979. A good summary of the Effective Teacher literature is found in Robert L. Green, *Expectations. How Teacher Expectations Can Increase Student Achievement and Assist in Closing the Achievement Gap*, Section II. Columbus, OH: McGraw Hill, SRA, 2009.

20. National Commission on Excellence in Education. *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*. 1983. Retrieved from: <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk/risk.html>

21. *Highlights from PISA 2006: Performance of the U.S. 15-year-old students in science and math literacy in an International Context*. National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, NCES 2008-016. Also see National Assessment of Educational Progress, the Nation's Report Card. National Center for Educational Statistics, Institute for Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, 2005 and 2007.

22. <http://sucessforall.com>

23. <http://info.met.yale.edu/comer/welcome.html>

24. <http://www.temple.edu/LSS/csr.htm>

ior, with instructions on how to sit, listen, ask questions, nod and track speakers with their eyes. A middle-school program, KIPP now operates in several cities across the nation.<sup>25</sup> Similar charter school clusters include Achievement First and Uncommon Schools in and around New York City. Most charter schools require a written contract or pledge, signed by parents and students, agreeing to adhere to certain standards and behavior.

A few school districts – Louisville, Kentucky; Wake County, North Carolina; Des Moines; Beaumont, Texas; and Burlington, Vermont – have, as a consequence of the Supreme Court’s earlier referenced decision in *Meredith*, instituted or developed plans to integrate schools on the basis of economic class rather than race. This approach has the potential to be successful in school districts that are demographically similar to those mentioned. In large urban school districts – for example, Detroit, Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles – which have significantly large percentages of black and Hispanic students from economically challenged family backgrounds, the ability to implement an economic class-based program is problematic.<sup>26</sup>

More recently, the very ambitious No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was passed by Congress in 2001 and signed into law by former President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002.<sup>27</sup> This act was the reauthorization and reform of the 1965 federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title I, Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged, and it seeks to ensure that all children receive a high-quality education, holding school districts accountable for their educational performance at high levels. This landmark act is a major attempt to have all students achieve at grade level in reading, math and science by 2014. It further specifies timelines for meeting its key elements, focusing on four major components:

1. Accountability: time-specific assessments on the degree to which students in grades 3–8 and 10–12 make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in the areas of reading, math and science as determined by standardized tests.
2. Flexibility in the use of federal funds: greater flexibility in transferring 50 percent of federal formula grant funds to address particular school-district needs without separate federal approval.
3. Enhanced parental choice: Parents of children attending low-performing schools that fail to meet state standards for two consecutive years have the option of transferring their child to a better-performing public school or public charter school in the district, with transportation costs assumed by the district. If the school the child is attending has failed to meet state standards for three consecutive years, the child is eligible to receive tutoring and after-school instructional services and to attend summer school.
4. Effective teaching based on what works, as verified by rigorous scientific research: NCLB also mandates that teachers in core subjects (history, geography, mathematics, science, foreign language, language arts, civics and government, economics, arts) possess at least a bachelor’s degree and be fully licensed by the state and demonstrably competent in the subjects they teach.

Although well intentioned, NCLB has been criticized because (a) the federal government has failed to allocate sufficient funds to implement the several requirements it contains; (b) it leads to narrowing the school curriculum and teaching to the tests students are required to take; and (c) it has permitted states to determine educational attainment proficiency standards. Under the administration of newly elected President Obama it is highly likely that these criticisms will be addressed.

In varying degrees, most of the foregoing initiatives have been successful in raising the educational achievement level of a relatively small portion of the total population of poor and minority students in our nation’s urban schools. None of these initiatives are free from criticism, and there is no nationwide agreement that either approach should or can be broadly adopted. What is apparent is that the nation should place greater emphasis on improving the educational performance of all students, particularly those who have been the least successful in our schools. This must be a goal of utmost importance.

It is against this background that my vision for urban education has evolved and become more sharply focused.



My personal vision for urban education recognizes first the inequities black, brown and poor students experience in the nation’s public schools. It is further grounded in the reality that too many black and Hispanic students earn scores on academic tests and standardized assessments that are below their more affluent counterparts:

- Too many drop out before completing high school.
- Too many attend schools in which expectation for academic excellence is not a clear mandate.
- Too many receive implicit and explicit in- and out-of-school messages that convey the belief that they are not expected to be successful and are not highly valued.
- Too many live in neighborhoods in which legitimate role models are absent, there are few opportunities for employment, and a wide range of out-of-school educational opportunities are unavailable.
- Too many come from families that are economically challenged, live in single-parent homes and are victims of intergenerational poverty.
- Too many lack the skills necessary to become employed and to survive in the knowledge-based and highly competitive world in which we live, thus facing a future of grave uncertainty.
- Too few enter college or have the means to afford the ever-escalating cost of attending and graduating from college.
- Too many bear witness to dreams and aspirations that go unfulfilled.

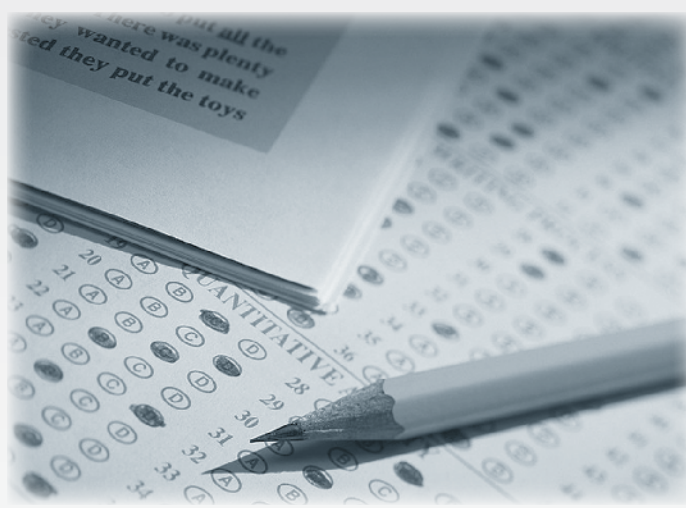
25. KIPP. *What Is a KIPP School?* <http://Kipp.org/01/whatisakippschool.cfm>

26. Emily Bazelon, “The Next Kind of Integration,” *New York Times*, July 20, 2008.

27. No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Public Law 107-110.

And so I envision an urban public-education system in which all students have the full opportunity to develop and realize their educational dreams; a system in which they are the beneficiaries of educational opportunities that are free from structural and human inequities; a system in which excellence is perpetuated, valued and recognized; a system in which differences in academic achievement levels between students on the basis of economic circumstance, place of residence or ethnicity will no longer exist; a system in which all students will graduate with the skills and attitudes necessary for the world of work or to attend and pursue a college degree in any academic or professional field of their choosing; and a system in which every student will have the foundation to live a rewarding and productive life.

At a fundamental level, this vision is linked to the question of the purpose of education in formal school settings. Should schools exist to protect vested interests and maintain the status quo, or should they foster intellectual growth and discovery, creativity of the human spirit and respect for all humanity? In my view, the latter purpose is the correct one and undergirds the imperatives I believe must be addressed if we are to eradicate urban school conditions that disproportionately penalize black and Hispanic students.



# The Importance of Teachers

# URBAN EDUCATION REDESIGN IMPERATIVES

To realize this vision, it is necessary to focus on three areas simultaneously: the importance of teachers and the profession of teaching; the preparation of teachers in schools and colleges of education; and the financial resources to eliminate structural and human inequality in the public schools, to provide college support for students who desire to become teachers in inner-city schools, and to reward effective teaching in these settings.

The quality of learning in schools and colleges and other formal educational settings is directly related to the effectiveness of teachers. All of us can recall teachers who inspired us to achieve and made a positive difference in our lives. It is exceedingly important that dedicated, motivated, well-prepared teachers are recruited to teach in inner-city schools. This is the most essential ingredient for student success.

Most parents, to the extent that they can, encourage their children to be academically successful. Without equivocation, we can support the supposition that the foundation for school success begins and is reinforced within the home. Where this support is absent, however, it becomes desirable for the school community, and others outside of the school, to offer the understanding, sensitivity and stimulation students may require.

Each student brings skills on which to build. Witness the considerable assets students in urban schools display in athletic endeavors; their creativity in music, dance, art, poetry and storytelling; and their natural, though often reluctant, inquisitiveness. And we should be cognizant of the resiliency and coping skills many exemplify in the face of the harsh realities that surround their lives. Students are capable of learning and achieving at high levels when they are able to see the connection between mastery of subject matter or skill area and relevance for personal success and upward mobility. It remains for teachers to unlock the doors to knowledge and to stimulate a desire to learn.

# PREPARATION The PREPARATION OF TEACHERS

Teacher-preparation programs in colleges and universities must be viewed as being among those that are most highly valued and supported, accorded the same prestigious designations as specializations in medicine, engineering, law, business or mathematics and the physical and biological sciences. Too frequently, teacher-preparation programs within the academy are treated as if they are unimportant. And even within schools and colleges of education, some areas of specialization are thought to be of greater importance than teacher-preparation programs.

It should be axiomatic that teaching and the preparation of teachers are vital to the future of the nation and society at large. With a sense of urgency – cognizant of the fact that in the coming years, because of retirements and the growth of the student population, there will be a significant shortage of public-school teachers – leaders within the academy should promulgate the importance of teacher-preparation programs for schools and for college.<sup>28</sup>

Every effort must be made to attract to the teaching profession the best and brightest students, those committed to making a difference in the lives of students in urban schools. It is also critical that these efforts focus on attracting into the teaching profession black and Hispanic entrants, especially males, who are in short supply. In this regard, a promising model used to recruit and prepare black male elementary-school teachers is the Call Me MISTER program that exists between Clemson University and four historically black colleges in South Carolina: Benedict College, Claflin University, Morris College and South Carolina State University.<sup>29</sup>

Of equal importance is the need to redesign teacher-education programs to meet the demands of today's world. Not unexpectedly, some of these programs seek primarily to comply with state and national accreditation dictates in fashioning curriculum requirements. In some instances these requirements fail to meet contemporary challenges. What should be developed are programs that reflect the qualities associated with excellent teachers in a series of required curriculum courses.

It is abundantly clear that excellent teachers possess an in-depth knowledge of the subject(s) they teach. They also possess an understanding and appreciation of social and cultural differences that may influence the learning process. They hold high expectations for student performance and behavior, while simultaneously exhibiting a genuine respect for the students they teach. Further, given

the digitized and technological world in which we live and the world's rapidly expanding knowledge base, they are prepared to use resources available through the Internet, multimedia presentation packages, and computer-assisted tools for design, writing and editing, research and problem solving, networking and collaborative interaction, and tutorials in specified learning areas.

Excellent teachers are knowledgeable about cultural differences through, by way of illustration, the study of cultural anthropology and the study of at least one culture different from their own. They also understand and use effective motivation and communication techniques, have the ability to assess student learning and use it for planning, and are intimately familiar with and use a variety of models of teaching.

Can all these characteristics of excellent teachers be incorporated within a four-year bachelor's-degree teacher-preparation program, in addition to required core education courses? Probably not, and it would be realistic to contemplate implementing a five-year, financially subsidized master's program, with the bachelor's degree serving as the base for entry into an apprentice teacher position. Completion of the master's degree would require not only additional formal study but also being mentored by a successful experienced teacher.

# FISCAL RESOURCES COLLEGE LEVEL

Between 1982 and 2006, college tuition and fees increased by 439 percent, while median family income increased by only 147 percent.<sup>30</sup> With an increase in college tuition and fees of this magnitude it is easy to recognize that college attendance is in large measure a function of family income. This is corroborated by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education report, which states "91 percent of high-school students from families in the highest income group (above \$100,000) enroll in college. For students from middle-income families (from \$50,000 to \$100,000) the enrollment is 78 percent. For those in the lowest income group (\$20,000 and below) the enrollment rate is 52 percent."<sup>31</sup>

Given today's cost of attending college, it is essential that financial aid is continuously available through scholarships, fellowships and programs such as the Pell Grant student-loan program. Additionally, such efforts as the Kalamazoo Promise; the Carolina Covenant at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; North Carolina State University's Pack Promise; and Harvard and Stanford universities pro-

28. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, 2008–09 Edition.

29. Internet site: <http://www.callmemister.clemson.edu/index.htm>

30. *Measuring Up*, 2008. *The National Report Card on Higher Education*. San Jose, CA: National Center for Policy and Higher Education.

31. *Measuring Up*, 2008. Data derived from R. Bozick and E. Lauff. *Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS: 2002): A First Look at the Initial Postsecondary Experiences of the Sophomore Class of 2002 (NCES 2008-308)*. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, 2007.

grams to support students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are significant initiatives. The United Negro College Fund is also an important source of funds used to support HBCUs and their students. These and similar efforts should be considered for implementation by other cities, states, colleges and universities and philanthropic entities.

Support for teacher-education programs, faculty, staff and facilities must also be provided at levels sufficiently high to signal their importance. Endowed faculty chairs for teaching and research on teacher education, classroom laboratories to verify and illuminate successful teaching strategies, and fully equipped technologically rich classrooms in which to prepare future teachers represent some of the essential ingredients for meeting the challenge of preparing tomorrow's teachers.

## FISCAL RESOURCES The School Site

As pointed out earlier, it is critical that all schools in general and urban schools in particular have well-prepared, dedicated and highly motivated teachers. Fiscal incentives that attract and reward the best teachers in inner-city schools should be given serious consideration. One program embracing this philosophy is Mission Impossible: Greensboro, North Carolina, reported to have enjoyed considerable success in attracting effective teachers and financially rewarding them for raising student scores.<sup>32</sup> The Teacher Advancement Program group, Minnesota Q Comp and Denver's ProComp are other examples of efforts designed to reward effective teaching and retain effective teachers.<sup>33</sup>

For many inner-city students, information about the range of professional and academic fields that are available to pursue, the requirements for the successful pursuit of them, and the financial and intrinsic rewards careers in these areas engender is not readily available. This argues for a program of career exploration within the school and for a rich array of high-quality out-of-school educational services, including exposure to successful and caring professional role models.

Schools in inner-city areas should have the fiscal means to lengthen the school day and the school year. This has proved effective in many of the small charter schools – for example, the KIPP schools<sup>34</sup> – and provides an opportunity to spend more time on individualized and group teaching, as well as for the systematic inclusion of art, music and other creative activities within the school day and school year.

Finally, urban schools must have the funds necessary to ensure that the work environment is conducive to effec-

tive teaching and learning. Every teacher should have the necessary equipment and supplies, and every student the infrastructure, to support active learning. Sufficient time must be provided for the assessment of student learning and the formulation of strategies to enhance the learning process, including the creative use of technology. The overall school environment must be welcoming to all students and parents. Evidence of regular and systematic maintenance of school buildings and facilities must be apparent, and the expressed verbal and nonverbal attitudes of all school staff toward students and their parents must be respectful.

## CONCLUSION

These urban education redesign areas – reinforcing the importance of teacher education in colleges and universities; restructuring teacher-preparation programs in schools and colleges of education; and providing the financial resources necessary to eliminate structural and human inequality in urban inner-city public schools as well as provide for college entry and completion – represent the basic ingredients I believe are necessary to actualize my vision of every student's having the opportunity to receive the most effective education possible and realizing his or her full potential. Bringing this vision to fruition will require unbridled commitment and considerable fiscal resources. But we can ill afford not to seriously address the need to effectively educate all students regardless of ethnicity, economic background or physical location.

Over the past fifty years we have seen a small number of successes in narrowing the school achievement gap between inner-city and more affluent students. But the performance of students in inner-city schools continues to lag significantly behind students in more advantaged communities. We cannot and should not wait another fifty years to create and maintain the schools and teachers we need for this century. The world has become smaller and more competitive, and the demand for better-educated citizens is a reality that must be met. In large measure the future success of the nation depends on the extent to which we develop our most natural resource – our children and youths. This must be a goal of crucial concern if this nation is to retain its position of world leadership. Dare we seize the opportunity? I hope the answer is "Yes we will." Ω



32. Guilford County Schools (2008). *Mission Impossible: A Program Overview*. [http://www.gcsnc.net/depts/mission possible/background.htm](http://www.gcsnc.net/depts/mission%20possible/background.htm)

33. Strong American Schools. *A Stagnant Nation: Why American Students Are Still at Risk*, 2009.

Internet site: <http://www.strongamericanschools.org/a-stagnant-nation-why-american-students-are-still-at-risk>

34. KIPP. *What is a KIPP School?* <http://www.kipp.org/01/whatisakippschool.cfm>