Topical Synthesis #4

Educating Urban Minority Youth: Research on Effective Practices

Kathleen Cotton

INTRODUCTION

Few issues in education are of greater concern to policymakers, educators, and the general public than the plight of ethnic and racial minority students in the nation's urban schools. To be sure, many of these young people receive high-quality educations, achieve at admirable levels, and complete high school equipped with the knowledge and skills needed for further education or entry-level employment. An alarming number of these students, however, achieve at significantly lower levels than their white counterparts and leave school--either through dropping out early or at graduation--lacking the skills and knowledge required by employers, colleges, and trade schools.

Research indicates that, collectively, black children, by sixth grade, trail their white peers by more than two years in reading, mathematics, and writing skills, as measured by standardized achievement tests (Lomotey 1989, p. 82), and this disparity continues or widens in later school years. The average performance of black and Hispanic students on the Scholastic Aptitude Test is more than 50 points lower than the average performance of white students (Bates 1990, p. 11). And whereas approximately 12 percent of white students drop out of school, nearly 14 percent of black students and 33 percent of Hispanic students do so (National Center for Education Statistics 1989). Dropout figures are considerably higher in urban areas. Ascher (1985) notes that "the Hispanic dropout rate in urban areas appears to range from a high of 80 percent in New York to a low of 23 percent in San Antonio" (p. 3), and Lomotey (1989) found that the dropout rate for urban black students is nearly 50 percent (p. 82).

In the past, young people without basic literacy and mathematics skills could expect to enter the workforce as unskilled, low-paid workers. However, even this minimal kind of employment opportunity is becoming less and less prevalent. As Slavin, Karweit, and Madden point out in their 1989 resource on educational programming for at-risk students:

The U.S. economy no longer has large numbers of jobs for workers lacking basic skills....Allowing large numbers of disadvantaged students to leave school with minimal skills

ensures them a life of poverty and dependence--the consequences of which are disastrous to the social cohesiveness and well-being of our nation. (p. 4)

In addition, the percentage of minority young people in the nation's public schools is increasing. By the year 2000, one of every three students will be from a minority racial or ethnic group, with the vast majority of these being black and Hispanic young people (Pine and Hilliard 1990). In urban areas, more than half the students currently attending school are members of minority groups, and this percentage will continue to grow.

Another way to look at urban minority school enrollment comes from Corcoran, Walker, and White's 1988 report indicating that 71 percent of all black students and over 50 percent of all Hispanic students attend schools in inner-city settings (p. 7).

Urban minority children also tend to be among America's poorest citizens. Of the many statistics that could be cited, a few from Reed and Sautter's 1990 report on children and poverty should make clear the economic disadvantages experienced by these children and their families:

- More than 12.6 million U.S. young people--nearly 20 percent of all children under the age of 18--are poor.
- Two thirds of poor Americans are white, but the rate of poverty is considerably higher for minorities.
- Four out of nine black children are poor.
- Three out of eight Hispanic children are poor.
- More than 56 percent of families headed by single black women are poor.
- The poverty rate for families headed by single Hispanic women is 59 percent.

And, as Young and Melnick (1988) point out, poverty and its attendant problems are much more severe in the inner cities than in other geographical settings and greatly exacerbate the educational disadvantages experienced by the students who live there.

Many analysts have called attention to the fact that the school improvement and reform efforts that have been undertaken in many U.S. school districts have largely bypassed urban schools (Lomotey 1989, Carnegie Foundation 1986, Cuban 1989, Ruffin 1989). The plight of urban education and the failure of school improvement efforts to bring about significant change have led many concerned Americans to cite inner-city school problems as education's most serious issue. The Carnegie Foundation's recent report on urban education states:

We are deeply troubled that a reform movement launched to upgrade the education of all students is irrelevant to many children--largely Black and Hispanic--in our urban schools. (Quoted in Lomotey 1989, p. xii)

Cuban (1989) speaks for many educators and other concerned citizens when he writes, "The future of urban schools is the primary issue facing the nation's educational system" (p. 29).

A full-scale analysis of urban problems--in education or other areas--is outside the scope of this report. For present purposes, it is sufficient to note that schooling practices have largely failed to meet the learning needs of urban minority young people and that reversing this pattern is critically important--for these students themselves, of course, but also for the social and economic health of the nation.

Fortunately, a great deal is known about the kinds of schooling practices which are effective for educating these "at-risk" students. Educational research and evaluation efforts have identified

many practices which lead to positive academic and affective outcomes for these young people, and these are cited following a context-setting discussion of the effective schooling research.

THE EFFECTIVE SCHOOLING RESEARCH

The effective schooling research base is a large body of educational research literature which documents relationships between an array of district, school and classroom practices, on the one hand, and students' academic and behavioral performance, on the other. Researchers have looked at factors which distinguish schools and classrooms with high-achieving, appropriately behaving students from those in which achievement and behavioral outcomes are less desirable.

This series of "topical synthesis" reports looks at particular topical areas--in this case, effective practices for educating urban minority group students-- in light of what the general effective schooling research has to say about practices which lead to positive outcomes for students in general.

In 1984, staff of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's School Improvement Program developed a synthesis of the research on effective schooling. This popular and widely used resource was updated in mid- 1990 and, in its current version, synthesizes findings from over 800 research documents. Classroom-, school-, and district-level practices shown to foster positive achievement and other student outcomes are cited in the research synthesis.

A review of the research on promising practices for educating inner-city minority youth reveals that it is highly congruent with the general effective schooling research, as outlined in the updated synthesis report. There are two reasons for this: One is that the educational needs of urban minority children are not fundamentally different from the needs of other students in other settings. A second reason is that much of the original effective schooling research was conducted with inner-city, largely minority populations in the first place. If the research on urban minority students reveals any difference from the general effective schooling research, it is that the use of these validated practices is even more critical for the education of this target group of students than for students in general.

THE RESEARCH ON URBAN MINORITY STUDENTS

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESEARCH

The findings reported in this summary are based on a review of 96 resources, 61 of which are research documents demonstrating relationships between educational practices and student outcomes. The other 35 are more general references, addressing such topics as desegregation planning, anti-racism education, program content, minority teachers, and the over- or underrepresentation of minority students in different school programs and other categories.

Of the 61 research documents, 27 are reports of studies or evaluations, 33 are reviews, and one is a metaanalysis of findings from several studies. All are concerned with students at risk of school failure, and most of these are inner-city black or Hispanic students (and sometimes other minority populations as well) from low-income families.

Schooling practices investigated in the research include tracking and long-term ability grouping, tutoring, multicultural programming, parent involvement, different administrative styles,

retention, cooperative learning, bilingual education, anti-racism education, early childhood programming, presence or absence of minority school personnel, and an array of climate and instructional variables.

Outcomes areas measured include achievement in general and in particular subject areas, student attitudes, student self-concept, dropout rates, student motivation, race relations, disciplinary infractions, employability, IQ scores, grades, English language proficiency, incidence of special and remedial education referrals, absenteeism, detentions, and homeschool relations.

RESEARCH FINDINGS: EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

Major figures in the effective schooling research effort--researchers such as Edmonds, Brookover, Weber, and Venezky and Winfield --compared high-performing urban schools with schools that were demographically similar but had inferior student outcomes. These investigations led them and other researchers to identify and list school and classroom factors which seemed to make the difference between effective and ineffective schools. Effective schools, they found, were characterized by features such as strong administrative leadership focused on basic skills acquisition for all students, high expectations of students, teachers who took responsibility for their students' learning and adapted instruction to make sure that learning was taking place, safe and orderly school environments, the provision of incentives and rewards for student performance, and regular monitoring of student progress.

These findings were very important. The work of some earlier researchers (e.g., Coleman, et al. 1966; Jencks, et al. 1972) had concluded that background factors, such as parents' educational and socioeconomic levels, were much stronger determinants of student performance than school-controllable factors such as climate and instruction. They concluded, in other words, that schools couldn't do much to make up for the deficits encumbering students from poor, uneducated family backgrounds.

The findings of the effective schooling researchers about the powerful effects of school-controllable variables overturned the gloomy conclusions of these early researchers. As stated by Soder and Andrews (1985):

By identifying schools that were effective regardless of family income or ethnic status, the Effective Schools research...attributed differences in children's performance to the schools themselves. (p. 8)

Looking at more recent research focused on inner-city schooling practices leads, not surprisingly, to a list of effective schooling components which is very similar to that identified by the effective schooling researchers, plus others which have particular relevance to members of minority racial and ethnic groups. Effective practices for educating urban minority students include:

Strong administrative leadership. Administrators in effective schools give top priority to basic skills acquisition and are actively involved in helping shape the instructional program. They support the instructional improvement efforts of teachers and provide the resources needed to make improvements possible. (Andrews, Soder, and Jacoby 1986; Armor, et al. 1976; Brookover 1981; Brookover and Lezotte 1979; Druian and Butler 1987; Edmonds 1977, 1979a,b; Griswold, Cotton, and Hansen 1986; High and Achilles 1984; Jackson, Logsdon, and Taylor 1983; Levine and Lezotte 1990; Sizemore, Brossard, and Harrigan 1983; Valverde 1988;

Venezky and Winfield 1979; Weber 1971)

Teacher responsibility and sense of self-efficacy. Effective teachers in urban minority schools see themselves as responsible for student learning. They do not perceive learning problems as products of students' personal backgrounds, but rather as indications that adaptations need to be made in instructional approach so that learning can take place. These teachers believe in their ability to reach and teach virtually all of their students successfully. (Armor, et al. 1976; Brookover 1981; Brookover and Lezotte 1979; Cuban 1989; Edmonds 1977, 1979a,b; Jackson, Logsdon, and Taylor 1983; Levine and Lezotte 1990; Alderman 1990; Knapp, Turnbull, and Shields 1990)

High expectations. Closely related to their belief in their own efficacy is these teachers' conviction that virtually all students can master basic learning objectives. Just as important, these teachers continually communicate these high expectations to students through their encouragement and support, and by holding them responsible for in-class participation, completing assignments, etc. Since many students tend to interpret their scores or grades as purely a matter of luck or native ability, these teachers emphasize to students the close relationship between personal effort and outcomes. (Armor, et al. 1976; Brookover 1981; Brookover and Lezotte 1979; Carta and Greenwood 1988; Cotton 1989; Druian and Butler 1987; Griswold, Cotton, and Hansen 1986; Jackson, Logsdon, and Taylor 1983; Johnson and Johnson 1988; Lomotey 1989; Murphy 1988; Pollard 1989; School Improvement Program 1990; Sizemore, Brossard, and Harrigan 1983; Weber 1971; Alderman 1990)

Safe, orderly, well-disciplined environments. Effective inner-city schools are characterized by school and classroom environments that are orderly and routinized, but not rigid. The school and classroom management literature underscores the need for rules and routines, but flexibility, too, is important. As Natriello, McDill, and Pallas (1990) point out, hardand -fast rules only work in settings where there aren't too many exceptional circumstances. The diversity and pressures in inner-city schools, in contrast, require flexible responses, especially regarding nonserious infractions. (Armor, et al. 1976; Druian and Butler 1987; Freiberg, Prokosch, and Treister 1989; Griswold, Cotton, and Hansen 1986; Jackson, Logsdon, and Taylor 1983; Levine and Lezotte 1990; Weber 1971; Knapp, Turnbull, and Shields 1990)

Teaching adapted to different student needs. As noted above, effective teachers of urban minority students are flexible in their teaching approaches, modifying and adapting instructional materials and methods to meet the needs of different students. They are aware of the personal and cultural learning style differences of their students and respond to these with appropriate teaching approaches. (Cuban 1989; Edmonds 1977, 1979a,b; Freiberg, Prokosch, and Treister 1989; Griswold, Cotton, and Hansen 1986; Levine and Lezotte 1990; Lomotey 1989; McPartland and Slavin 1989; Natriello, McDill, and Pallas 1990; Oakes 1986b; School Improvement Program 1990; Venezky and Winfield 1979; Waxman 1989; Knapp, Turnbull, and Shields 1990)

Provision of incentives, reinforcement, and rewards. Verbal, symbolic, and tangible reinforcements help to sustain student interest and motivation, as do other learning incentives, such as games and group-oriented competitions. (Brookover 1981; Carta and Greenwood 1988; DeVries, Edwards, and Slavin 1978; Gooden, Lane, and Levine 1989; Griswold, Cotton, and Hansen 1986; Johnson and Johnson 1988; McPartland and Slavin 1989; Rogers, Miller, and Hennigan 1981; School Improvement Program 1990; Sharan 1980; Slavin 1979)

Regular and frequent monitoring of student learning progress and provision of feedback.

Successful teachers of urban minority students, like successful teachers of students in general, monitor students' progress closely, so as to be able to adapt instruction as appropriate to meet learning needs. These teachers also are careful to keep students informed about their progress and about steps that will be taken to remediate any learning problems noted. (Carta and Greenwood 1988; Druian and Butler 1987; Edmonds 1977, 1979a,b; Emihovich and Miller 1988; Garcia 1988; Gooden, Lane, and Levine 1989; Griswold, Cotton, and Hansen 1986; Jackson, Logsdon, and Taylor 1983; Levine and Lezotte 1990; McPartland and Slavin 1989; School Improvement Program 1990; Sizemore, Brossard, and Harrigan 1983; Weber 1971)

Staff development programs focused on school improvement. Effective urban schools with large minority populations differ from less effective schools in that they have strong programs of staff development focused on school improvement. In addition, teachers in these schools have the power to influence the content and presentation of staff development activities. (Armor, et al. 1976; Gooden, Lane, and Levine 1989; Griswold, Cotton, and Hansen 1986; Jackson, Logsdon, and Taylor 1983; School Improvement Program 1990; Valverde 1988)

Use of school resources in support of priority goals. Decisions about the allocation of time, personnel, money, and materials are made on the basis of which activities are most likely to further the school's priority goals. In effective urban schools, this usually means generous resource allocations to activities which can foster the development of reading, mathematics, and language arts skills in all students. (Druian and Butler 1987; Edmonds 1977, 1979a,b; Gursky 1990; Jackson, Logsdon, and Taylor 1983; Levine and Stark 1982)

Parent involvement. Research demonstrates that parent involvement in instruction, in support of classroom and extracurricular activities, and in school governance is related to positive student learning outcomes and attitudes. Research also shows that such involvement is especially beneficial for many minority children, who may otherwise feel torn between the differing norms and values represented by the home and the school. (Cotton and Wikelund 1989; Griswold, Cotton, and Hansen 1986; Gursky 1990; Levine and Stark 1982; Lomotey 1989; Murphy 1988; Pollard 1989; School Improvement Program 1990; Sizemore, Brossard, and Harrigan 1983; Walberg, Bole, and Waxman 1980)

Coordination among staff of different programs serving the same students. Many minority children in urban schools participate in remedial, special education, or other categorial programs. Researchers have noted that, in high-achieving schools, the efforts of different program personnel are carefully coordinated so that the programs provide a coherent, mutually supportive learning experience for participating children. (Griswold, Cotton, and Hansen 1986; Levine and Stark 1982; McPartland and Slavin 1989; Venezky and Winfield 1979)

The effective schooling attributes cited above emerge both from the general effective schooling research base and from recent research involving minority group students in inner-city settings. The attributes listed below are the products of research which has focused specifically on the special needs of minority group members.

Use of cooperative learning structures. While students in general are often shown to benefit from cooperative learning structures, urban minority students almost invariably do. Some researchers note that cooperation is more in keeping with the cultural values of many black and Hispanic students than is individual competition. In addition to the achievement benefits experienced by many students, cooperative learning has also been shown to enhance students' self-esteem, sense of self-efficacy as learners, cross-racial and -ethnic friendships, incidence of helping behavior, and empathy for others. (Brookover 1981; Conwell, Piel, and Cobb 1988;

Cuban 1989; DeVries, Edwards, and Slavin 1978; Freiberg, Prokosch, and Treister 1989; McPartland and Slavin 1989; Oakes 1986b; Rogers, Miller, and Hennigan 1981; School Improvement Program 1990; Sharan 1980; Slavin 1979; Slavin, Karweit, and Madden 1989; Knapp, Turnbull, and Shields 1990)

Computer-assisted instruction which supplements and complements teacher-directed instruction. While not a substitute for traditional, teacher-directed instruction, computer-assisted instruction which reinforces traditional instruction has been found to be appealing to inner-city children and to enhance their learning. (Emihovich and Miller 1988; McPartland and Slavin 1989; School Improvement Program 1990; Slavin, Karweit, and Madden 1989)

Instruction in test-taking skills and activities to reduce text-taking anxiety. The relatively test poor performance of urban minority students is sometimes the result of failure to understand testing formats and/or anxiety about taking tests. Research supports the provision of direct instruction in test-taking skills and exercises which can reduce students' anxiety about test performance. (Brookover 1981; Conwell, Piel, and Cobb 1988; Cuban 1989; DeVries, Edwards, and Slavin 1978; Freiberg, Prokosch, and Treister 1989; McPartland and Slavin 1989; Oakes 1986b; Rogers, Miller, and Hennigan 1981; School Improvement Program 1990; Sharan 1980; Slavin 1979; Slavin, Karweit, and Madden 1989; Knapp, Turnbull, and Shields 1990)

Peer and cross-age tutoring. Research has established that peer tutoring and cross-age tutoring arrangements are inexpensive and highly effective ways to build the basic reading and mathematics skills of young disadvantaged children so that the need for later remediation of skills deficits is reduced. (Carta and Greenwood 1988; McPartland and Slavin 1989; School Improvement Program 1990; Slavin, Karweit, and Madden 1989)

Early childhood education programming. Research has amply demonstrated that inner-city children benefit enormously from Head Start and other forms of preschool programming, in terms of their later school achievement, attitudes, graduation rates, and many other outcomes. (Cotton and Conklin 1989; McPartland and Slavin 1989; School Improvement Program 1990; Clayton 1989)

Dividing large schools into smaller learning units and fostering ongoing relationships between students and school personnel. At the secondary level in particular, the school performance of inner-city students is often hampered by feelings of alienation. This alienation is the result of large, impersonal schools and of structures in which students have few, if any, ongoing relationships with school staff members. Recent research has established that innercity middle and high school students benefit when their schools are divided into smaller units, such as schoolwithin -a-school or other alternative programs, where students and staff get to know one another and work together over longer periods of time than in traditional structures. In successful programs of this kind, teachers are frequently selected on the basis of willingness and demonstrated ability to work with atrisk students. (Cuban 1989; McPartland and Slavin 1989; School Improvement Program 1990; Gooden, Lane, and Levine 1989; Murphy 1988)

Coordination of community resources. Inner-city students often have problems, such as health or nutrition needs, personal or family drug or alcohol problems, family abuse or neglect, etc., that need to be addressed in order for teaching and learning to proceed successfully. Some inner-city programs have taken on the responsibility of coordinating an array of social services and other community resources to meet students' needs and have produced promising outcomes. (Cuban 1989; Gursky 1990; McPartland and Slavin 1989)

Multicultural programming. Do minority group students benefit from multicultural programming? While there has not been a great deal of research on the effects of multi-cultural education programs in schools, the investigations that have been conducted indicate that both student attitudes and achievement are enhanced by such programming. Advocates note that, to be meaningful, multicultural programs need to go beyond brief, one-shot activities highlighting the exotic foods and colorful clothing of an ethnic group. Instead, they point out that multicultural activities need to be fully integrated into the core curriculum, and that, when they are, they can be powerful means to promoting cross-cultural understanding and respect. Valverde (1988) states:

Developing a multicultural climate is important because of the attitudinal impact it has on students. Principals need to realize that attending to the cultural aspect of human beings is not trivial but central to holding minority students in school and to promoting learning. (p. 324)

(Levine and Lezotte 1990; Lomotey 1989; Sizemore, Brossard, and Harrigan 1983; Valverde 1988; Pine and Hilliard 1990)

Increasing the percentage of minority teachers. There is currently a great deal of concern that, although the percentage of minority group students is increasing, the percentage of minority teachers is decreasing. Over the next decade the percentage of minority teachers is expected to drop from 12 to 5 percent (Pine and Hilliard 1990), while, as noted earlier, the minority student population will increase to 33 percent. Some efforts to attract minority group members to the teaching profession are already underway, and more should be undertaken, since the limited research in this area indicates that higher percentages of black and Hispanic teachers in schools are beneficial to black and Hispanic students.

The relationship between minority teacher population and minority student performance is complex and will not be analyzed in detail here. While no one claims that minority students have to be taught by minority teachers in order to learn well, it seems that there are definite benefits to having plenty of minority teachers in largely minority schools.

It is well known, for example, that black and Hispanic students are overrepresented in remedial programs, special education programs, low-ability groups and tracks, and vocational programs, as well as being overrepresented in the pool of students who repeat grades and those who are given disciplinary referrals, suspensions, and expulsions. And conversely, these students are underrepresented in academic tracks and in programs for gifted and talented students. (Bates 1990; Lomotey 1989; Murphy and Hallinger 1989; Oakes 1985, 1986a)

It is significant, therefore, that as the percentage of black and Hispanic teachers increases, the over- and underrepresentations of black and Hispanic students have been found to decrease. That is, with more minority teachers, the representation of minority students in the various programs and disciplinary categories begins to be closer to their percentage in the overall school population. It is speculated that this is because minority teachers can relate better to minority students and have more patience with their academic and behavioral needs. (Lomotey 1989; Corcoran, Walker, and White 1988; Farrell 1990; Pine and Hilliard 1990; Serwatka, Deering, and Stoddard 1989)

Activities to reduce racial and ethnic prejudice. If the practices cited above are implemented in urban schools, both minority and nonminority students can be expected to benefit, since research demonstrates that their effectiveness is global. The same is true of programs and activities undertaken to reduce racial and ethnic prejudice. It has already been noted, for

example, that cooperative learning activities can promote racial and ethnic harmony, and multicultural activities foster mutual understanding and respect.

Other approaches which have been shown (in Gabelko 1988, Lomotey 1989, Pate 1988, etc.) to foster positive racial and ethnic relations include:

- Film and videotape dramatizations of the harm caused by prejudice and the benefits of diversity. Such presentations have been found to engage viewers' feelings and enable them to see issues from different points of view.
- Cognitive approaches, such as teaching students the fallacies of reasoning. These methods help students to see the illogic and shallowness of prejudicial thinking.
- Counterstereotyping activities, such as focusing on Jewish athletes, Hispanic scientists, black playwrights, etc. These activities help students to appreciate the diversity within racial and ethnic groups and reinforce the fact that "they" are not all alike.
- Activities which enhance self-esteem. These activities have many benefits, including the researchsupported finding that people with higher self-esteem have lower levels of racial and ethnic prejudice.

Pate (1989) warns that not all anti-prejudice educational approaches are equally effective, and that some can even be counterproductive. Direct antiprejudice lessons and some forms of human relations training, for example, must be handled with care, since people are often quite resistant to being told what is true and right to believe.

RESEARCH FINDINGS: HARMFUL PRACTICES

Clearly, we know a great deal about educational practices that benefit black and Hispanic youngsters in inner-city schools. Researchers have also made important discoveries about practices which are, at best, ineffective, and, at worst, very harmful to these students. These are academic tracking, retention in grade without accompanying support, excessive use of pullout programs, and indiscriminate assignment to special education programs.

Tracking. Three significant facts: (1) black, Hispanic, and poor students are overrepresented in lowability groups and nonacademic tracks; (2) research indicates that tracking does not produce greater learning gains than those obtained from heterogeneous grouping structures; (3) research shows that assignment to long-term low-ability groups and tracks is often harmful to students. Taken together, these facts describe a grave situation, one which has led some writers to pronounce long-term ability grouping--and particularly secondary-level academic tracking--as an essentially elitist practice. These writers are quick to acknowledge that proponents of tracking are not usually practicing conscious or deliberate discrimination, but that the effects are nevertheless discriminatory.

Many volumes have been written about the harmful effects of academic tracking on those assigned to low tracks. Ironically, low-track placements, which are supposed to "help" slower learners by offering "easier" and "more appropriate" materials, instruction, and pacing than those used with higher-track students, frequently make learning an unproductive and unpleasant experience. Research shows that, compared with students in higher tracks, those in lower-ability groups and tracks:

- Receive less clear explanations of learning activities and materials
- Experience less interactive teaching
- Are given content that is less academically oriented

- Experience more student and teacher interruptions in their classes and more dead time
- Have more "in-class homework," which reduces learning time
- Have fewer learning activities
- Have more and longer periods of seatwork
- Are often taught by less experienced, less capable teachers
- Experience less teacher enthusiasm and encouragement
- Experience lower levels of student-student cooperation and support
- Once tracked, have access to fewer academic courses in high school
- Have poorer attitudes about themselves as learners and lower educational aspirations.

(Brookover 1981; Knapp, Turnbull, and Shields 1990; McPartland and Slavin 1990; Murphy and Hallinger 1989; Oakes 1985, 1986a,b; Oakes, et al. 1990; Pine and Hilliard 1990; Schneider 1989; Slavin 1990)

Slavin (1990) writes:

...decisions about whether or not to ability group must be made on bases other than likely effects on achievement. Given the antidemocratic, antiegalitarian nature of ability grouping, the burden of proof should be on those who would group rather than those who favor heterogeneous grouping, and in the absence of evidence that grouping is beneficial, it is hard to justify continuation of the practice. (p. 494)

Retention in grade without adequate support. Black and Hispanic students are retained more often than other students, again with the hope that repeating a grade will help them to catch up and achieve at higher levels in the future. And, indeed, retention has sometimes been shown to be beneficial when "instructional arrangements...ensure that appropriate help is provided for retained students" (Levine and Lezotte 1990, p. 37).

Unfortunately, however, retention is often not accompanied by assistance targeted to the specific learning needs of retained students. This kind of retention-without-support ironically ends up creating the kinds of negative outcomes that retention is intended to prevent. Generally, when retained and nonretained students with the same levels of academic performance are compared, retained students:

- Have lower levels of achievement at subsequent grade levels
- Have poorer attitudes toward school and toward themselves as learners
- Are more likely to drop out of school (with the likelihood of dropping out nearing 100 percent for students who repeat two grades).

Alternatives to retention which have been found in effective schools include promotion with high-quality remedial assistance and transition classrooms that allow for flexible grade reassignments. (Frymier 1989; Levine and Lezotte 1990; Lomotey 1989; McPartland and Slavin 1989; Shepard and Smith 1990; Sizemore, Brossard, and Harrigan 1983)

In addition, Shepard and Smith (1990) point out that the annual cost to districts of retaining the 2.4 million students who are held back each year is nearly $10 billion (p. 87).

Excessive use of pullouts. Slavin, Karweit, and Madden (1989), School Improvement Program (1990) and other sources reveal that remedial programs (in which minority students are, again, overrepresented) are frequently operated on a pullout basis, and that assignment to these pullout programs (1) often stigmatizes participants and (2) causes fragmentation and discontinuity in

these students' school experiences. Pullout instruction, researchers advise, should be short term and carefully coordinated with basic instruction.

Excessive assignment to special education classes. Minority students are overrepresented in special education classes, and since these placements are not reviewed for appropriateness as often as would be desirable, these students often remain in these classes long after they cease to be suitable for the students' needs. Inappropriate long-term assignments to special education classes are both damaging to the students involved and extremely expensive. McPartland and Slavin (1989) point out that:

...special education placement is often a dramatic onetime response to low achievement that has major continuing consequences on how educational resources are allocated. (p. 6)

Language Minority Students

Many Hispanic students are non-English speaking (NES) or limited-English-proficient (LEP), as are many Southeast Asian and other immigrant student populations. No review of effective schooling practices for urban minority youth would be adequate without at least a brief discussion of these students' special needs and ways to meet those needs.

There is, of course, a great deal of controversy surrounding the subject of bilingual education. Research is not altogether conclusive about the effects of bilingual education and, perhaps even more significantly, there is deep social and political divisiveness about its suitability. No attempt will be made here to resolve this complex issue. Instead, findings from several recent research studies and reviews will be itemized in hopes that these will make a meaningful contribution to the complex topics of bilingual education and second-language learning. Research suggests instruction of NES and LEP students should include:

- A strong academic core, like that provided for other students
- Identification and dissemination of promising practices for language minority students
- Assessment of English proficiency when the student enters the school system and periodic assessment thereafter
- For NES students, intensive English as a second language instruction, and core classes in the native language when possible (or at least native-language materials in conjunction with a native-language tutor, when these can be arranged)
- For LEP students, a combination of native language instruction and instruction in English
- The use of volunteer tutors to foster English language literacy.

(Ascher 1985; ASCD Panel 1987; Garcia 1988; National Hispanic Commission 1984; So 1987)

CONCLUSION

This paper provides a review of some key documents from the large and complex body of literature on educating urban minority students (particularly black and Hispanic), and offers a look at this literature in relation to findings identified in the effective schooling research base.

As will be obvious to those familiar with the effective schooling research, there is a high degree of congruence between its findings and those cited in the research on urban minority youth. The difference, insofar as there is one, is that middle class children, with the educational advantages conferred by their home backgrounds, can probably be expected to do quite well in school, even

if some of the attributes of effective schooling are absent from their school experiences. For urban minority children, the presence of these attributes is more critical, since they provide the kinds of support that may not be present elsewhere in these students' lives.

Then, in addition to the importance the general effective schooling research findings have for urban minority students, other, more specific practices, are also beneficial to enhance the quality of these young people's school experiences.

To summarize, research indicates that the following elements enhance the achievement, attitudes, and behavior of minority group students:

- Strong leadership on the part of school administrators, which includes mobilizing resources to support the acquisition of basic skills by all students
- Teachers who believe they are responsible for students' learning and capable of teaching them effectively
- High expectations for student learning and behavior on the part of administrators and teachers, and active communication of these expectations to students
- Safe, orderly, well-disciplined--but not rigid-- school and classroom environments
- Teachers who are adept at modifying instructional materials and strategies in response to students' differing learning styles and needs
- The provision of incentives, reinforcement, and rewards to enhance student learning motivation and acknowledge achievements
- Regular, frequent monitoring of student progress and provision of feedback
- Programs of staff development which are focused on school improvement and influenced by teachers themselves
- Use of time, personnel, money, materials, and other resources in support of the school's priority goals
- Active involvement and use of parents for instructional support, classroom help, and input into governance decisions
- Coordination among staff of different programs serving the same children
- Use of cooperative learning structures
- Computer-assisted instructional activities which supplement and complement traditional, teacher-directed instruction
- Peer and cross-age tutoring
- Provision of early childhood education programs
- The use of small learning units within large schools, e.g., school-within-a-school, other alternative learning programs
- Promotion policies which allow accelerated remedial instruction and/or transition classrooms as alternatives to retention
- Provision of support targeted to the learning needs of those students who are retained in grade
- Coordination between school and community resources as needed to support children in need of services outside the school
- Multicultural programming, which is integrated into the overall school curriculum
- Recruitment and hiring of minority teachers
- Learning activities to reduce racial and ethnic prejudice
- Personnel, material, and activities to meet the needs of language minority students.

Research supports the elimination of tracking/long-term ability grouping and a reduction of retentions in grade. Research findings have also led investigators to call for much more judicious use of pullout programs and assignments to special education.

Other writers have quoted the stirring statement offered by the late Ronald Edmonds at the conclusion of his 1979 article "Effective Schools for the Urban Poor." Because they are an apt conclusion to the present discussion, these words also appear here:

We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us...We already know more than we need to do that...Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far. (p. 23)

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> Reviews the history of desegregation legislation and activity in the United States since the historic Brown vs. the Board of Education decision. Notes that the degree of desegregation accomplished in the early years after the Brown legislation has been maintained.

Tillman, J. "Preparing Effective Classroom Teachers for Urban Schools: A Quintessential Role for NCATE." Action in Teacher Education 11/2 (1989): 39-40.

> Outlines problems associated with preparing teachers for working in urban schools and identifies steps that NCATE can take to increase understanding of teacher preparation needs and address these needs.

Tyler, R. W. "Educating Children from Minority Families." Educational Horizons 67/4 (1989): 114-118.

> Offers research- and experience-based suggestions for reaching and offering relevant and effective learning experiences to minority--and often poor--children. Emphasizes community-based improvement strategies.

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> Discusses issues and problems associated with intercultural interactions and proposes staff development programs designed to help school staff anticipate and deal with common intercultural misunderstandings.

Walsh, D. "Critical Thinking to Reduce Prejudice." Social Education 52/4 (1988): 280-282.

Reviews the intellectual and attitudinal characteristics essential for critical thinking and discusses the application of these to reducing prejudice among young people in school settings.

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