

Overview & Research Note

Overview

Raising Minority Academic Achievement: A Compendium of Education Programs and Practices is the culmination of a 22-month effort to identify, summarize and analyze evaluations of school and youth programs that show gains for minority youth across a broad range of academic achievement indicators from early childhood through advanced postsecondary study.

The purpose of this report is to inform policymaking and funding decisions by providing easy-to-read, accessible, concrete, and research-proven evidence of academic achievement gains for minority youth, and information on successful program strategies. The report also aims to provide information that researchers, practitioners (school administrators, youth program directors, teachers, counselors, youth workers), families, community members and young people can use to evaluate, design, implement and advocate practices effective in raising minority academic achievement.

This report is divided into two major sections. Section I contains four chapters. Chapter 1

provides background and summary data on minority academic achievement and, as the title suggests, raises the question, is there—*Achievement for All?* Chapter 2, *Measuring Academic Achievement*, introduces the 38 education initiatives summarized in Section II, and describes the measures and levels of academic achievement for minority youth reported by evaluators. Chapter 3, *The Search for the “Magic Bullet,”* describes the most prevalent strategies used by programs in which minority youth made significant academic achievement gains. Chapter 4, *Moving Forward*, provides recommendations based on the report’s findings.

Section II contains the 38 three- to five-page summaries of program evaluations and studies in alphabetical order. The summaries are preceded by an introduction, *A Journey Through Educational Research*, which reflects on the difficulty of finding evaluations meeting the criteria for inclusion and makes several observations regarding educational research. The *Glossary* defines research terms used in the report.

Research Note

Following is a detailed description of the process by which AYPF chose the 38 educational initiatives that appear in this report.

1. Acceptance Criteria

At the outset of this project, a search was set in motion to collect evaluations of programs and initiatives aimed at improving the academic achievement of minority youth. Before initiating the search, the editorial team established the following criteria to guide the acceptance of documents:

- ♦ *Population* – The evaluations had to contain data on racial or ethnic minorities as defined in the adjacent box.

In this report, the term “minority” is used to identify racial/ethnic groups in the United States other than whites of European origin. The report uses the U.S. Census terminology for “minorities” including African Americans, Asians/Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans/ Eskimos, but adopts the broader category “Latinos” rather than “Hispanics.” In addition, Asians/Pacific Islanders has been shortened to “Asians” and Native American/ Eskimos to “Native Americans” except in the summary of the *Alaska Rural Systemic Reform* program. The terms African American and Latino are used in this report even when evaluators used the terms Black or Hispanic. Although an effort was made to cover all groups, more information was found on African American and Latino youth than on other minority populations.

- ♦ *Measurements* – The studies had to include measurable (quantitative) data related to academic achievement of minorities. Preferably, they would present a set of measures including: school attendance; grades; credits completed; test scores on state mandated tests and/or national achievement tests (such as SAT, ACT, Achievement Tests and Advanced Placement Tests); high school graduation, college access, retention, and receipt of undergraduate and graduate degrees.
- ♦ *Methodology* – Since expected findings were quantitative, the evaluations should adhere to accepted standards for quantitative research. Therefore, the following requisites were delineated: (a) research design – experimental or quasi-experimental, pre- and post-treatment, and longitudinal studies; (b) research period – the study should cover at least one school year; (c) researcher – preferably independent, that is, not directly associated with the program’s funding source or implementing organization to avoid bias; (d) sample – randomized sampling procedures, control and comparison groups should be matched to the treatment group by demographics and level of academic achievement; and (e) the data should be analyzed statistically with levels of significance not to exceed 5% (for discussion about the methodology used in the evaluations, see *Section II, Introduction*).
- ♦ *Period* – Preferably, programs and initiatives should be current. For this reason, the search was limited to evaluations conducted within the past five years, with two exceptions: ongoing longitudinal studies, such as the *Abecedarian* report, and studies that are still frequently cited in discussions of initiatives, such as the *Tennessee STAR* research.
- ♦ *Scope* – In a departure from previous AYPF compendia dedicated solely to successful programs and practices, we decided to include studies of large, well-known

programs and relevant federal initiatives that fit these criteria, even if they had mixed or negative findings. Another group of acceptable studies were qualitative research that provided a voice to minorities on the factors that they saw as influencing their academic success.

2. *Search Strategies*

The search for evaluations included the following sources:

- ♦ Large databases, including the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) and library collections.
- ♦ Internet search of over 50 associations and research centers dedicated to education and minorities.
- ♦ Direct contact with program coordinators, policymakers, funding officers, and researchers.
- ♦ Distribution of flyers requesting evaluations during forums, conferences and similar events.
- ♦ A request for evaluations posted at the AYPF web site (<http://www.aypf.org>).

The search also relied on the expertise of the project’s Advisory Board to indicate relevant reports and researchers who specialized in this field.

3. *The Review Process*

The written summaries passed through a review process divided into four steps:

- ♦ *Internal review* – The editorial team reviewed all summaries, making comments, and suggesting changes or documents to be eliminated.
- ♦ *External review* – The summaries approved in this first review were then sent to an external reviewer to assess once more the quality of the research, propose

improvements, and suggest further elimination of weaker documents. At this stage, members of the Advisory Board also had the opportunity to read the summaries and make comments and suggestions.

- ◆ *Researchers' review* – After another round of editing, the summaries were provided to all the program evaluators and directors to review for accuracy.

- ◆ *Final review* – The AYPF directors and the editorial team read the summaries once more for final editing and approval.

Of the more than 200 documents reviewed, 38 made the final cut. Although this report is a collaborative effort, it should be reiterated that the final decision on which summaries to include and the opinions expressed in the report are the sole responsibility of AYPF.

Chapter 1: Achievement for All?

Schooling is a top concern of many Americans, including the subject of presidential and legislative debates. No matter how wide ranging the issue, the overriding question is: “How can we raise academic achievement?”

This question has been approached with increasing gusto since the 1983 *A Nation at Risk*¹ report decried “mediocrity” in education and has intensified after results from the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) showed U.S. students trailing students from other developed nations. The reaction has been a heightened interest in testing student achievement and a flurry of education reforms, many of which have not been subjected to strict analysis and rigorous evaluation.

We know from a number of indicators that progress is being made in advancing academic achievement in American schools. In 2000, *Do You Know the Good News about American Education?* reported positive information about our public schools, including decreases in high school dropout rates; increases in the number of students taking more challenging courses; improvements in mathematics and science achievement; increased SAT and ACT test scores; more students taking Advanced Placement classes; more students going on to higher education; and more Americans completing four-year college degrees.²

However, there is evidence that these gains are not evenly distributed across populations of students. Are higher average indicators hiding pockets of low performance or large gaps in achievement? While this question is relevant to many categories of students (e.g. across gender, socio-economic status and disability status) the focus of this publication is on racial and ethnic minorities.

Are we keeping the promise?

In effect, *A Nation at Risk* set the bar of high achievement—“Our goal must be to develop the talents of all to their fullest.” It also provided the

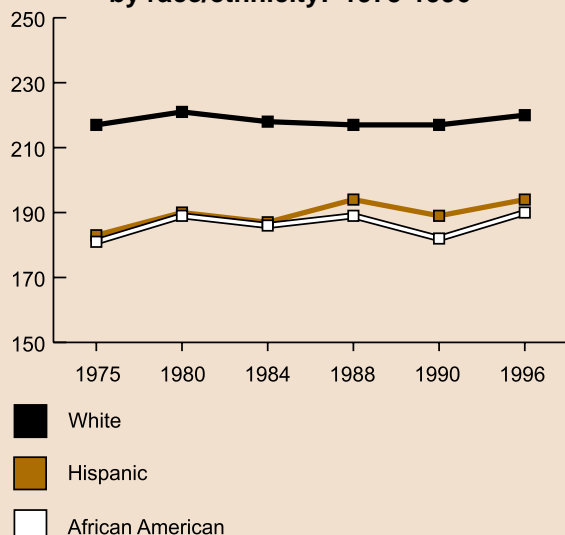
caveat: “that a public commitment to excellence and educational reform must [not] be made at the expense of a strong public commitment to the equitable treatment of our diverse population.” Finally, it honed in on the repercussions of failure to include all young people in these elevated expectations. The concern with excellence was maintained in the educational legislation that followed, including the *Goals 2000: Educate American Act*, the *Improving America’s Schools Act* and others. States have also enacted legislation requiring high standards for all students and more accountability for public schools.

The question is, are we keeping the promise?—a promise echoed over and over again in challenges to “leave no child behind” and reflected in the collective voice of many education leaders that minority academic achievement may be the most important educational and social issue of the century.³

Despite the encouraging statistics on educational achievement for young people in the aggregate, there is no denying that, for the majority of African American, Latino and Native American youth in the United States, the educational system is not fulfilling its promise. In fact, when data is disaggregated by race or ethnicity, disparities appear. Assessments of kindergarteners already show that African American and Latino children are over-represented in the lowest quartiles of achievement tests.⁴

As minority children move through their school years, the differences persist. For the past 30 years, minorities (except for Asians) have scored consistently lower than whites on all National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests.⁵ For instance, the average 1975 NAEP reading scores for 9-year-old African American and Latino students were about 30 points lower than the average scores for white students. After some improvement in the early 1980s, the gap in 1996 increased again, as shown in Figure 1. For 17-year-old students, the 1980s represented a period of

Fig. 1 - Average NAEP reading scores of 9-year-old students by race/ethnicity: 1975-1996



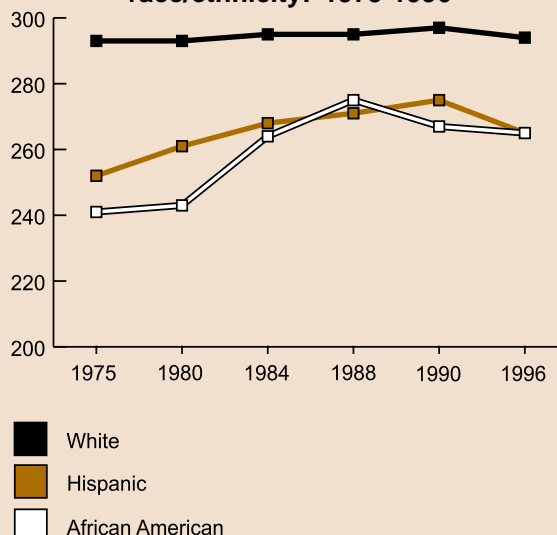
Source: Adapted from U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education 2001, NCES 2001-072*, Washington, DC: U.S.

improvement, with gaps in average scores being reduced by 40 points for African Americans and more than 20 points for Latinos, but again falling, although less sharply, in the 1990s (Figure 2).

It is true though that more Americans are graduating from high school now than 30 years ago, and the graduation gap between white and minority students has narrowed significantly. In 1971, 82% of whites in their mid-twenties had graduated from high school compared to 59% of African Americans and 48% of Latinos. In 1999, white and African American high school graduation rates were much closer at 93% and 89%, respectively. However, the Latino high school graduation rate still lags far behind both white and African American high school graduation rates at 62%.⁶

Similarly, SAT scores reveal an increase in minority academic achievement in recent years, yet a gap remains. The gap is largest for African American students, whose mean scores on the math and verbal sections of the SAT are approximately 100 points lower than the mean score of white students. Latino and Native American students have less of a gap, between 45 and 75 points lower than the mean

Fig. 2 - Average NAEP reading scores of 17-year-old students by race/ethnicity: 1975-1996



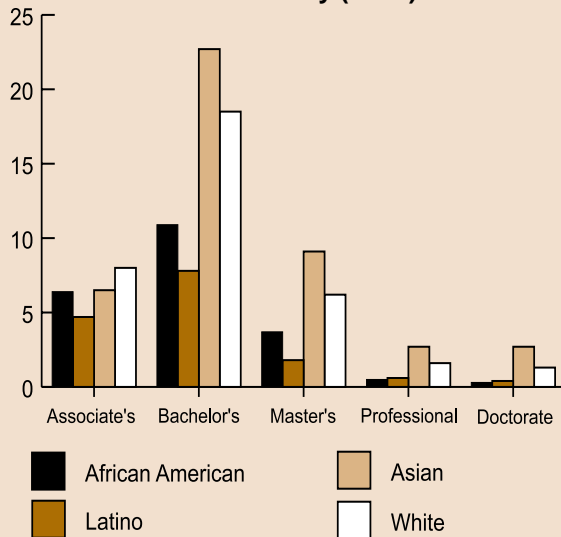
Source: Adapted from U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education 2001, NCES 2001-072*, Washington, DC: U.S.

score of white students. Asian students outscore white students by 35 points on the math test, but have a mean that is about 30 points lower on the verbal test.⁷

Although college access for minority students has increased in the past 30 years, an achievement gap still remains. Between 1971 and 1999, the percentage of white high school graduates who completed a bachelor's degree or higher increased 13%, from 23.1% to 36.1%. In this same period, the increase was only 5% for African Americans, from 11.5% to 16.9%, and 4% for Latinos, from 10.5% to 14.4%.⁸ As Figure 3 indicates, in 1999 whites were twice as likely to obtain a bachelor's degree than their African American and Latino peers. Asians out-performed all other subgroups in the completion of postsecondary degrees, except for the associate's degree.

In summary, minority youth have showed steady gains in many academic indicators in the past decades, but they still have a long way to go to reach parity with their white peers. Explanations about the reasons for this discrepancy are many and agreements are few. On average, minorities are

Fig. 3 - Percentage of population 25 years and older with postsecondary education by race-ethnicity (1999)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Current Population Survey, March 1999. Educational Attainment in the U.S., table 10. Online at www.census.gov/population/socdemo/education/p.20-528/tab10.pdf

starting from much lower baselines, at least in part a reflection of long years of segregation and discrimination. Inequalities in income, school resources, and the quality of teachers have also been frequently cited. A discussion on the many theories about the academic achievement gap is beyond the scope of this report. However, as this publication shows, when programs and policies emphasize academic achievement and provide quality supports, minority youth rise to the occasion.

Why is minority academic achievement such an important issue?

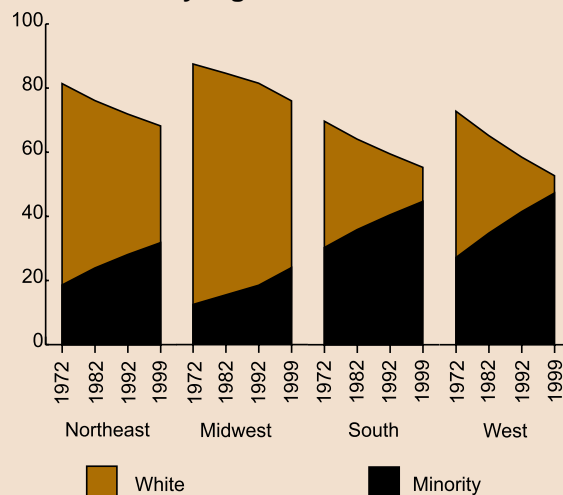
Although non-Latino whites constitute more than 70% of the total U.S. population,⁹ the term “minority” disguises the fact that the proportion of non-white students in America’s public schools is rising and already represents the majority of students in many localities. As Figure 4 indicates, between 1972 and 1998, the proportion of minority students in public schools increased from 22% to 38%. For Latinos, the proportion more than

doubled from 6% to 15%. Enrollment varies according to regions and in the West and South minorities already constitute 47% and 45% of the student population. The increase in the proportion of “minority” youth means that the prosperity of the nation will be increasingly dependent on the knowledge and contributions of minority young people.

From speculations about our nation’s poor performance on international tests of knowledge to a real lack of skilled workers, it is increasingly apparent that every American counts. As the United States turns overseas to recruit more and more workers for highly skilled job openings, we abandon our own undereducated youth at our own peril.

Moreover, failure to deliver on the educational promise only alienates young people from schools and other social institutions. For example, as Kati Haycock, Director of Education Trust comments, “Many young people are totally undone by the gaps between high school and college. They do everything their high schools tell them to do to get a diploma. But when they show up at even the local

Fig. 4 - Percentage of public school students enrolled in grades K-12 who are minorities by region. October 1972-1999.



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. The Condition of Education 2001, Indicator 3, page 8, Tables 3-2, pp. 112-113. Washington, D.C. 2001.

community college, they do not have the knowledge and skills necessary to begin credit-bearing courses.”¹⁰

Over-represented among the poor, minority youth are often in schools with the fewest resources, the least qualified teachers, and the least challenging curricula. Low-level achievement leads to less prestigious employment, lower wages, and poorer housing conditions served by the poorest schools. This cycle, well known to many minority families, further contributes to a feeling that school has little promise for change.

New research is more hopeful that decreasing the educational gap between racial and ethnic minorities and white Americans will reduce economic gaps as well. In 1972, Christopher Jencks argued that reducing educational inequalities in America would not reduce economic inequalities. However, in 1998, the findings of Jencks and Meredith Phillips suggest that due to the progress America has made on other social reforms, particularly in the workplace, the effect of increasing minority academic achievement on earnings and other measures of social equality would be more substantial than in 1972. On the topic of the academic achievement of African Americans, they found that “the test score gap between blacks and whites turned out to play a much larger role in explaining racial disparities in educational attainment and income than many had realized.” If “racial equality is America’s goal,” the authors write, “reducing the black-white test score gap would probably do more to promote this goal than any other strategy . . .”¹¹ Other minorities would similarly benefit from reductions in the achievement gap.

Where have we documented the gap?

The focus on standards and accountability in educational reform has led to efforts to disaggregate data and share the results widely. Without this attention to detail, the public would know less about the width of the minority academic achievement gap. According to a report from North Carolina, “the facts about the ‘educational condition’ of minority children have been known by education leaders for years. Despite having the facts, there

has been a reluctance to tell parents, policymakers and the public the truth about how schools are doing in educating students of color.”¹²

Exposing the gap may force school districts to eliminate it. Daniel Domenech, Superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools, VA, has stated that an advantage of Virginia’s Standards of Learning (SOL’s) has been to pinpoint disparities between schools within his district and to help him advocate for resources targeted to the areas of greatest educational need.¹³ Also, the trend towards collecting, disaggregating and sharing data has given a new empowering tool to youth, parents and community members in demanding better school experiences and outcomes. For the first time, it is apparent *exactly* how much minority children are denied.

While some states have collected enrollment data by race/ethnicity for years, most are just beginning to grapple with the extent to which educational inequities remain. Texas was the first to report achievement data publicly and require that schools show achievement gains not only for the student population as a whole but also for each subgroup. In addition, 2000 was the first year in which the federal Title I compensatory education programs, designed to address the special needs of children in high poverty schools, required all states to collect and publicly report disaggregated achievement data by race and ethnicity.¹⁴ Individual Title I school administrators and teachers will be held accountable for ensuring that each racial/ethnic group as well as the school as a whole is making significant educational progress against some external standard (usually a standardized test based on state standards of learning).

As school districts continue to disaggregate and make public their achievement data, a complex picture of educational differences is emerging, wealthy well-resourced suburban communities have been “shocked” to discover that even in their comfortable middle and upper-middle class communities, with a measure of economic equality and high achievement on average for their youth, goals of academic achievement for *all* have not

been met. For instance, a suburban New York school district, with a reputation for diversity and tolerance, has recently released statistics disaggregated by race. The data led parents, African American and white, to accuse the school district of systemic segregation including steering

African American students away from honors courses and into special education, disciplining them at disproportionate rates, and allowing their test scores to lag far behind those of whites for a decade.¹⁵

Raising Academic Achievement vs. Reducing the “Achievement Gap”

Much of the discussion on raising the academic achievement of minority students focuses on reducing the “achievement gap” between white and Asian students, on one hand, and African American, Latino and Native American students, on the other. For non-Asian minority students, a policy that focuses solely on closing the achievement gap has several pitfalls:

First, gaps may close because the performance of higher achievers falls, and equity is achieved through the lowest common denominator.

Second, gaps may stay the same because the performance of *all* groups increases. Or, gaps may also increase, because even though all groups perform better, the program has a stronger impact on high achieving groups. For example, the *GE Fund College Bound* program was successful at raising the college enrollment of all students, but white students experienced *greater* gains. Though this was a positive outcome, it actually increased the college enrollment gap between white and African American participants.

Third, focusing on reducing the gap in one state may obscure pronounced academic achievement differences between states. For instance, using 2000 NAEP data, reducing the 25 point gap between Latino and white students in California would increase Latino scores to 227, only 3 points above Latino scores in Texas, yet still 19 points below white scores in Texas (see Table). Therefore, policymakers should work to decrease minority academic achievement gaps, while also setting high academic achievement goals for all youth.

Average scores of students in selected states at the 4th grade 2000 NAEP mathematics assessment

Race/Ethnicity	TX	CA
White	243	227
African American	220	191
Latino	224	202
Asian/Pacific Isl.	246	226
Average	233	214

Note: A ten point difference in the test corresponds roughly to one year of learning.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, The Nation’s Report Card. 2000 Mathematics Assessment, Grade 4 Public School Students. Percentage of Students and Average Mathematics Scale Score by Race/Ethnicity. Available at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata/>.

Fourth, gaps may appear to close because the focus has only been on the students still in school, with no regard for the youth who drop out of the system. Some educators are concerned that the use of “high stakes” tests as a graduation requirement may encourage less prepared youth to drop out of school, thereby removing them from the test-taking population.

Finally, the idea of raising academic achievement recognizes the need for changes, but says little about the overall quality of the education provided. The challenge is to define “quality” education and determine the benchmarks against which students’ performance will be evaluated. This discussion merits continued national attention but is beyond the scope of this report.

Chapter 2: Measuring Academic Achievement

This chapter addresses the question of “what is happening in programs and initiatives that aim to improve the achievement of minority youth?” We discuss the findings of the 38 evaluations chosen for this report, taking a journey through the school experience of minority youth, from early childhood to postsecondary education. The report relies on measures and indicators imposed by states, school districts or researchers. Their findings are based on different populations and varying program objectives and strategies. Recognizing these limitations, no attempt is made to create a common denominator to define “success” or to compare programs among themselves.

Early Childhood Programs

Overview

This report includes five summaries of four early childhood programs. *The Abecedarian Project* and *High/Scope Perry Preschool* were experimental preschools funded in the 1960s and 1970s to serve low-income, African American children. Both are no longer in operation, although the High/Scope curriculum is used in preschools around the country. *Child Parent Centers (CPC)* is an ongoing Title I-funded program with multiple sites in high-poverty Chicago neighborhoods that are not served by Head Start. *Head Start* is a federal program established in 1964 as part of the federal government’s “War on Poverty.” It provides matching funds to localities for comprehensive programs that offer low-income children, ages 3 to 5, with supports and stimuli to improve their chances of academic success.

All summaries describe longitudinal studies of participants. The evaluations of the *Abecedarian Project*, *High/Scope* and *CPC* compare program participants to matched control groups, following the two groups through more than 20 years. The small sample sizes (except for *CPC* with a sample

size of 1500), determined in part by the longitudinal nature of the studies, leave the conclusions open to questions. While it is difficult to identify precisely what factors influence an individual’s behavior over 20 years, the duration of these evaluations offers a rare view of the potential impact of early interventions on participants’ lives. The two *Head Start* evaluations review ten years of national databases. The 1995 evaluation compares the impact of the program for African American and white children, and the 1999 evaluation compares Latino and white children.

Analysis

Findings are quite similar in all five early childhood evaluations. When compared to control groups, children who attended childhood development programs are more likely to remain in school, complete more years of education, and are less likely to attend special education. Attending *Abecedarian*, for instance, cut in half the likelihood of participants receiving special education. Lower grade retention rates are cited in *CPC* and *Head Start*. The 1995 *Head Start* evaluation refers to a nearly 50% reduction in the likelihood that a program participant will repeat a grade in elementary school. Participation in *Head Start* was found to cut between one-quarter and one-third of the Latino-white score gap on the vocabulary, math and reading sections of the Peabody tests.

This improved schooling may partially explain the positive social and work outcomes for program participants. *High/Scope* and *CPC* evaluations report a decline in arrests for youth who attended early childhood programs, while *High/Scope* and *Abecedarian* report that participants, now in their twenties, have more skilled, better paid jobs. (*CPC* reports that men benefit more than women.) According to the *CPC* evaluation, longer attendance produces stronger results.

In contrast to long-term gains reported in the *High Scope* and *Abecedarian* studies, the 1995 *Head Start* evaluation found a decline in the academic gains of African American children after leaving the program. The benefits gained from *Head Start* were gradually lost and, by age ten, African American participants retained no gains, while white participants still retained an overall gain of five percentage points. The evaluators hypothesize that differences in the two sub-groups of children explain the loss of gains, since African American children in *Head Start* are more likely to be poor, live in poorer neighborhoods and attend schools with fewer resources than their white peers.

Critics contend that evaluations of early childhood programs have biased samples, since parents who take time and effort to enroll their children in these programs are already more involved than parents of children outside the programs. This may be true, although it is a leap to imagine that all children who are not in early childhood programs have uninvolved or uninterested parents. Many reasons affect a parent's decision not to use an early childhood program, from lack of programs near their neighborhoods to cultural tradition. As the 1999 *Head Start* evaluation found, Puerto Rican children who remained home did better in school than those who went to *Head Start* or other preschools. Remaining home in this case was not an indication of inadequate parental motivation or involvement with the child. True randomized control-treatment groups bypass this discussion, but such groups are difficult to define in real life. It is also true that early childhood programs can only do so much for an individual's life and that many other factors will contribute to one's success or failure 20 years later.

Even with such caveats, the evaluations of early childhood programs show a strong pattern: such programs increase the chances for low-income children, including minority children, to do well in school and in life. In education, as in the health care field, investing in prevention is a cost-effective strategy. However, as no health care system can rely solely on preventive care, no education system can be satisfied without good K-12 schools to

maintain and expand the educational gains of the early years.

Elementary Through Middle School Programs

Overview

The majority of evaluations focused on the early elementary years, with only a few presenting data for grades six to eight. After-school programs were included in the search for evaluations, but for most of them, academic achievement was only a minor focus of a broader social mission, mainly to offer children a safe and supportive environment. Two after-school programs had evaluations with enough data on academic achievement and strong enough methodology to justify their inclusion in this report: *Boys and Girls Clubs of America* (B&GCA) and *Sacramento START*.

B&GCA is a private, not-for-profit organization with clubs nationwide. The evaluation focused on an academic enrichment program offered to school-aged children who live in public housing projects. The program showed statistically significant increases on a variety of measures for program participants. During the 18-month evaluation, participants' school attendance rates nearly doubled and their average grades increased from three to six points in different subject areas, while the comparison groups showed a decline in both measures in the same period. *Sacramento START* is an after-school enrichment program for elementary school children in low-income neighborhoods financed by the City of Sacramento, CA. The evaluation used school district data and matched comparison groups. It showed some improvements for all students, with striking improvements in test scores for students who had started the program with the lowest grades.

Among the school programs included in this category, *Calvert* is a traditional, highly structured elementary school program transplanted from a predominantly white, middle-class private school into an all-African American low-income public school in Baltimore City. The evaluation uses a pre/post-treatment design with three cohorts. Before its

implementation, no first grade in the public school had scored above the second quartile on the Maryland state tests. Three years later, the percentage of students scoring above the second quartile was 42%. For third graders, only 6% had scored in the third quartile before the program; one year later, 38% of the students had reached this quartile. The program's 97% attendance rate was among the highest in the city.

The *Chicago Arts Partnership in Education (CAPE)* proposes an innovative approach to learning that involves arts in all subjects, taught by teams of teachers and artists. The program targets low-income K-12 schools with large numbers of African American and Latino students. The evaluators found a 50% increase in sixth grade scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and nearly a two-year increase in the reading level of ninth graders, as measured by the Test of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP) for CAPE students between 1992-1998.

KIPP Academies are charter schools that serve low-income African American and Latino students from grades five to nine. The academies offer a curriculum that focuses on "high standards" and college preparation. Within two years, the passing rates on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) for *KIPP* students in Houston, TX, increased from 33% in mathematics and 63% in reading to approximately 100%. The *KIPP Academy* in the Bronx, New York, has been frequently rated the highest performing middle school in the area in terms of average attendance, reading and mathematics.

Success for All is a reading program that has become one of the largest elementary education initiatives in the country. It uses small reading groups based on skill level rather than age, one-on-one tutoring, and a structured school day. Of the many evaluations of *Success for All*, this report includes a recent review of the TAAS database. *Project GRAD* is a comprehensive K-12 school-wide reform that uses a mix of strategies, including *Success for All* and others. The evaluation focuses on Texas schools and compares test scores for

Project GRAD students with students in matched schools. *Urban Elementary Schools* reports on nine schools across the country that are increasing the scores or passing rates of minority students on different tests, including the TAAS.

All three evaluations show increases in the percentage of students passing the TAAS. *Success for All* students show higher rates of improvement in comparison to students statewide, and a three-fourths reduction (from 25% to 6%) in the TAAS score gap between African American and white students from 1995 to 1998 (statewide, the gap was reduced from 25% to 14%). *Project GRAD* doubled the TAAS passing rates, particularly in math. In addition, it reduced disciplinary referrals by 74%. *Urban Elementary Schools* describes a school in San Antonio (Baskin Elementary) that eliminated the gap in passing rates for African Americans and Latinos within four years. Another school in Houston (Lora B. Peck Elementary) raised passing rates for Latino students on the writing section of TAAS from zero to 90% in the same period.

Analysis

Unlike the early childhood programs that follow students to the next level of schooling, the elementary through middle school evaluations appear more compartmentalized, providing information only within the elementary through middle school boundaries. The school adopting the *Calvert Program* is showing incremental improvements in the Maryland state test, although scores are still below the state's satisfactory levels in all grades and subjects.¹⁶ No research on *Success for All* was found that follows students beyond elementary school grades. Therefore, it cannot be determined whether improvement in these test scores is reflected in better performance at the high school level.

In most cases, improvements appear quite modest while the disparities in achievement are striking. Texas is probably the only place where achievement gaps between minorities and white students are halved or cut even deeper, but these students are being measured on passing rates on a *minimum* competency test.

As the report indicates, many schools are working hard to improve achievement indicators for all students and not only a privileged few. The schools that are improving their students' academic performance are starting from extremely low levels and through incremental gains are approaching a point closer to the middle. How these programs affect minority students who are already beyond the middle point is not clear. This observation is not a criticism of those schools or their districts and states. On the contrary, these schools deserve kudos and support for making a concerted effort to raise the achievement of their students. Moving the students from unsatisfactory levels to basic is a good start. However, the ultimate objective must be to bring all students, including minority students to much higher levels of knowledge.

District or State Initiatives (K-12)

Overview

Among the large initiatives covered in this report are three statewide projects on reduced class sizes (*Project STAR* in Tennessee, *Project SAGE* in Wisconsin and *Class Size Reduction* in California); the evaluation of three citywide experiments with vouchers (*Voucher Schools*); a statewide initiative for Eskimo and Native American students in *Alaska Onward to Excellence/Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative*; a review of the statewide accountability reform in Texas, focusing on four school districts (*Texas School Reform*); a compilation of data on 48 urban public school systems nationwide (*City Schools*); and a district wide initiative to improve the academic achievement of African American students in North Carolina (*Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools*).

Project STAR was a groundbreaking study on the impact of reduced class size on academic achievement, mandated by the Tennessee legislature in 1985. The evaluation involved 7,500 children in grades 1 to 3 and compared children taught in classes of 17 students per teacher with children in larger classes with and without a teacher's aide. Evaluators found that students in small classes did

better than both control groups on all tests. The effect size of small classes on African American students was double that of white students. A follow-up study of *Project STAR* followed participants from grades 4 through 6 and reported ongoing, albeit small gains (effect sizes of 0.2 or less) for students who were taught in small classes. (See *Glossary* for an explanation of "effect size.")

A decade later, Wisconsin implemented the *SAGE* project, a pilot study involving more than 3,000 kindergartners and first graders statewide. In addition to using a control group in regular classrooms (30 students), the evaluation also compared different strategies to reduce student-to-teacher ratio, small classes being one of them. As with the *Project STAR*, evaluators found increases in test scores for all students, particularly African American students in the first year of the project. In the second year though, the score gap between African American and white students had increased again. Different from *Project STAR*, the *SAGE* evaluation found that score gains were not limited to small classes. Other strategies that reduced student-to-teacher ratio, such as team teaching or floating teachers, were equally effective.

Unlike Wisconsin and Tennessee, California decided to forgo a pilot program; instead, launching a massive, statewide *Class Size Reduction (CSR)* initiative that affected approximately 1.8 million students by its third school year of implementation in 1998-99. The state funded the initiative on a per pupil basis only after small classes had been implemented. Therefore, in the first years of implementation, schools that did not have the facilities to create small classes—often high-poverty schools with large populations of minority students—received an average of \$100 less per student than wealthier, predominantly white schools. When these schools did create new classrooms, they often did so at the expense of existing facilities used for special education, child-care, music, art, computers and libraries. After three years, the evaluators noted small (but statistically significant) achievement gains, with no differential impact for minorities.

School Vouchers analyzes three privately funded experiments to test the impact of vouchers on students in urban school districts with high percentages of minority youth (Dayton, OH, New York City and Washington, D.C.). The vouchers, awarded by a lottery system, covered only part of the private school tuition with the recipients' families paying for the remaining tuition costs. African Americans constituted about 70% of the approximately 3000 students who received vouchers in the three experiments. Using the California Achievement Test (CAT) as the measure of student performance, the evaluators found a reduction for voucher recipients of approximately one-third of the test score gap between African American and white students. There was no positive or negative effect of statistical significance for any other ethnic group in the study. When controlling for family background, the overall difference between voucher and non-voucher students was not significant in Dayton and New York City,¹⁷ but was significant at the .01 level in D.C.

The *Alaska Onward to Excellence/Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative* began a decade ago through a partnership between public schools, universities, and Eskimo and Native American communities in rural Alaska. Most participant districts involve small fishing villages with difficult access. The project incorporated the cultural traditions of the native population with an academically demanding curriculum. One of the evaluations compares the scores of students in a single project district on a number of standardized tests (ITBS, CAT, ACT) to scores statewide, where white students are the majority. A ten-year trend analysis verified a steady increase in all standardized test scores for participating students. In the ACT test, for instance, the district experienced an increase in the number of seniors taking the test and a reduction of about 14% in the score gap between local seniors and the state average. The percentage of project students attending college rose from 10% in 1988-89 to 50% in 1996-97.

Texas requires that a specific percentage of students in each school pass the state assessment in reading,

writing and mathematics skills. Schools that do not attain this percentage risk losing their state accreditation. As part of the state reform, an emphasis has been given to monitoring the performance of minority students. The *Texas School Reform* summary covers four school districts with diverse populations. TAAS passing rates increased for all students in the four districts, but the increase for African Americans and Latinos was steeper. For instance, in the Aldine district, with 83% minority students, between 1994 and 1999, passing rates for African Americans almost doubled (from 36% to 73%) and the rate for Latinos increased by 63% (from 49% to 80%). In the same period, white students' passing rates increased by 29%, from 68% to 88%. Similar findings are shown for the other districts. Evaluators did not highlight strategies developed by the districts, emphasizing the role of the state accountability system as the catalyst for change.

The *City Schools* compilation cites a number of urban school districts in Texas and elsewhere that have improved academic indicators for minority students. These indicators range from moving students up to basic levels of performance (such as passing the TAAS), to earning higher-level diplomas, to reading at or above grade level. El Paso cut by half the gap in TAAS passing rates between African American and white students and Fort Worth reduced the passing rate gap between Latino and white students by 42%. The El Paso school did not adopt any special policy, while the Fort Worth school adopted a series of strategies with emphasis on professional development and support. Memphis schools doubled the number of African American students earning honors diplomas after the district eliminated lower level courses in the curricula. Boston schools increased the percentage of African American students scoring at the basic levels in the Stanford-9 tests after raising academic standards became a priority for the district in every subject and every grade. Charlotte schools also increased the percentage of African American students reading at or above grade level after the district adopted achievement goals to reduce disparities in academic achievement.

Recognizing that their African American students were lagging academically, *Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools (CHCCS)* formed a “Blue Ribbon Panel” to analyze the problem and propose recommendations. Composed of school administrators, teachers, parents, and students, the panel presented a multifaceted plan that incorporated nationally known programs like Reading Recovery and AVID, and homegrown solutions like “Sister-to-Sister” (a mentoring program that pairs minority women in the nearby medical school with African American female high school students). The results for the African American students were mixed, with large increases in the mathematics scores, but lower increases, and even some decreases, in the writing assessments. After one year, the academic gap between African American and white students was still noteworthy. For instance, 93% of the white tenth graders achieved proficient reading scores on the state test, compared to only 43% of their African American peers. However, the reform promoted a four-fold increase in the percentage of African American students in Gifted and Talented programs (from 2% to 8%).

Analysis

As was found in the previous category, the data indicate that minority students start from a position of serious academic disadvantage and must walk a long path before they can reach basic levels of competency. The accountability movement has pushed these differences to the front stage. The condition of public schools, particularly funding differentials that lead to large class sizes, low teacher pay, lack of support or unprepared teachers may explain some of the large gaps between students at the high end (generally white middle class) and the low end (generally low-income minority) of the achievement spectrum.

It is also possible that even at very early ages, society creates stereotypes about students who can succeed and those who cannot, and future interactions in school will be based upon these

stereotypes. As indicated in *Chicanos in Higher Education*, which reports on interviews with 50 Mexican American professionals with MD, PhD or JD degrees, poor minority students do not fit the idealized image of the successful, college-bound student. Teachers and counselors often tell these students that they cannot succeed and should not take challenging courses or apply to challenging schools. It took a highly focused and publicized reform for Chapel Hill teachers to find a “new group” of African American students able to attend Gifted and Talented classes, when these students had probably been ready for such a program for many years. Teacher preparatory schools should seriously examine their role in helping teachers to overcome such stereotyping behavior.

The fact that schools across the country are raising the scores of students, including minority students, on different tests is commendable. It brings the hope that someday achievement gaps based on race or ethnicity will be only a memory. However, in fairness to the children, a note of caution must be sounded. By relying solely on test scores, these evaluations and reports miss other indicators that provide important information on academic achievement, including: dropout, expulsion and retention rates; referral to special education; and curriculum changes that may be occurring due to an emphasis on tests, such as the elimination of “non-testable” subjects (like music and art), or an emphasis on “testable” subjects at the expense of broader content. Moreover, since no follow-up of graduates is included (except for the Alaska reform), nothing is known about what happens with students from these districts or states after they leave K-12 schools. Texas, for instance, despite its success with TAAS, ranks 34th among 50 states and the District of Columbia for the percentage of graduates who go immediately on to two- or four-year colleges, and 45th on the percentage of graduates who enroll in college within four years of graduation.¹⁸ The debate on how to measure student achievement and the type of education that the country needs are essential components of the discussion on improving the academic achievement of minority youth.

High School/Transition Programs

Overview

This category reflects a mix of whole school programs and add-on interventions that propose to facilitate college access for students under-represented in postsecondary institutions, that is, low-income, minority students and students with “average” academic performance. Three are four-year, school-based programs geared toward students with a grade point average of C or better and who are motivated to pursue postsecondary education. All three programs have large proportions (80% or more) of minority students and require students to enroll in academically demanding courses.

AVID is a nationwide program that targets C-average students who would be the first in their families to attend college. *AVID* offers one-on-one tutoring by college students, workshop classes on study skills and other supports. *High School Puente* aims to increase Latino participation in higher education by raising student skills and aspirations through critical thinking and writing assignments, college counseling and mentoring. *Gateway to Higher Education* is a New York City program with an emphasis on careers in science, medicine, and technology serving 95% minority students. To enter *Gateway*, students must score at least at the 50th percentile on New York City’s math and reading tests, have regular attendance, and GPA’s of 80 or better (on a 100-point scale). Summer and Saturday enrichment programs, tutoring and internships are some of *Gateway*’s strategies.

Three other evaluations describe high school programs with a college focus but do not mention selection criteria: *Dare to Dream*, *Equity 2000* and *GE Fund College Bound*. *Dare to Dream* includes projects that propose a greater role for school counselors in keeping postsecondary options open for all students, including those who are considered at high-risk for school failure. The schools involved in the project were located in poor neighborhoods, with large proportions of minority students, and low levels of academic achievement. *Equity 2000* is a whole school reform that requires all students to

take advanced mathematics courses while in high school. The program provides extra support to students through voluntary Saturday math academies and summer math programs. Minorities make up 72% of *Equity 2000* participants. Like *Equity 2000*, the *GE Fund College Bound* provides block grants to schools and communities to institute programs that increase college access. Unlike *Equity 2000*, however, the *GE Fund College Bound* allows for greater flexibility in the strategies used by the grantee schools.

Career Academies is the only representative in this report of high school programs dedicated to preparing students for fulfilling careers that are not necessarily dependent on a college degree. *Career Academies* are schools-within-schools that offer students an integrated academic and occupational curriculum and work-based learning experiences. More than 50% of the students in the *Academies* studied were Latinos and 84% had GPAs of 2.1 and above.

The evaluation of *I Have a Dream (IHAD)* includes two Chicago programs, one predominantly Latino and another 100% African American. *IHAD* connects low-income, inner city public school sixth graders with wealthy sponsors who provide mentorship and supports to help the youth pursue postsecondary education. The program offers long-term relationships from sixth grade until high school graduation, or even longer. Like *IHAD*, Philadelphia’s *Sponsor-A-Scholar* program provides academic supports to economically or academically disadvantaged high school students with B or C average grades who want to attend college. In this evaluation, 93% of participants were minorities of whom 76% were African American. The program matches these youth with trained mentors who accompany them from ninth grade through the freshman college year. Both *IHAD* and *Sponsor-A-Scholar* offer financial help to participants to defray tuition costs.

Upward Bound operates parallel to the regular four-year high school, with students participating in after-school and Saturday classes often on college campuses. *Upward Bound* is the oldest of a set of

TRIO initiatives established by the Higher Education Act of 1965. TRIO programs aim at helping low-income and first generation college students enter and successfully complete postsecondary education. This national evaluation covers 67 sites with approximately 1,500 participants. Nationwide, half of the *Upward Bound* participants are African American, 22% are Latino and 21% white.

Analysis

Unlike the elementary school program evaluations, and despite the increasing numbers of high schools requiring standardized tests for graduation, the high school evaluations had little emphasis on test scores.¹⁹ The broader range of academic achievement measures examined offers a better perspective of what is actually happening with students. Most documents include data on high school graduation and credits taken. A few have data on college entrance tests, such as the SAT and AP, and dropout rates. Follow-up is mostly limited to college enrollment, but *GE Fund College Bound* has data on college retention and *Gateway for Higher Education* collects college graduation information.

All three programs that indicate some type of selection criteria for admission show good results, suggesting that a large group of C average students are ready to move up the academic ladder if provided adequate supports. *AVID* students maintain an average GPA of 2.94 and a 95% college enrollment rate. African American, Asian and Latino *AVID* students have disproportionately high enrollment rates in the California State and the University of California systems. *High School Puente* students, in relation to a matched comparison group, were more likely to take college entrance tests (SAT, ACT), complete more high school credits, and attend college, particularly four-year colleges, although no statistical differences were found in dropout rates and grade point average (GPA). The lack of difference in grades may reflect the fact that Puente students attend more academically demanding courses than the control group. African American students in *Gateway* are more likely to take chemistry and physics in high

school than African American high school graduates nationwide. They are also more likely to have higher SAT scores. A 1996 survey with 330 *Gateway* alumni revealed that 74% had graduated or would graduate from four-year colleges or universities within five years and 59% had remained in a science-related major or profession.

The majority of programs featured in this report did not include cost data, but cost information was available for these three programs. The annual cost per student for *Gateway* in 1997 was \$1,600 above the mean per pupil expenditure in New York City. The state's annual per pupil expenditure for *High School Puente* was \$480, but training costs were partially subsidized by the University of California. The average cost of *AVID* for schools and districts in Year One per student per year outside of California is \$540 (about \$3 per day). By year three, the cost drops, on average, to under a dollar per student per day. In California, where *AVID* is a state-supported program with 11 regional centers, the average cost of *AVID* for schools and districts is about \$180 per student per year.

Of the programs that do not indicate admission criteria, most *Dare to Dream* high schools doubled the enrollment of African American and/or Latino students in Advanced Placement and college preparatory courses (the report did not publish passing rates). Districts adopting the *Equity 2000* program also showed increased enrollment of minority students in college gateway courses. However, passing rates in these courses did not increase accordingly. The number of students taking college entrance exams (SAT, ACT) increased in all *GE Fund College Bound* schools after five years, but the program had little impact on test scores, high school graduation rates, or dropout rates. When compared to a national database, *GE Fund* students, particularly Latino students, had higher college enrollment and retention rates. The evaluation of *Career Academies* found statistically significant improvements for students who had entered the program with high risk of school failure but not for those in the middle and low risk categories (see the summary's methodology for an explanation of the risk categories).

Evaluators of *I Have a Dream* used a matched group of students taken from other sixth grade classes in the same schools as *IHAD* participants. Participants were twice as likely to graduate from high school and three times more likely to enroll in college than the comparison group. The *Sponsor-A-Scholar* evaluation examines a sample of high school graduates from 1993 through 1997. The sample was divided into matched sub-groups of program participants and non-participants and compared in terms of GPAs and college enrollment one year and two years after high school graduation. In general, program students had statistically significant higher GPA and enrollment rates than non-participants. Gains were higher for students who started the programs with lower grades, stayed in the program longer, and met more frequently with their mentors.

For *Upward Bound*, program participants were compared to a matched control group. Differences between the two groups were not statistically significant for average GPA and enrollment in postsecondary institutions (including vocational/technical schools). Latino and white participants earned two more high school credits than peers in the control group while African Americans earned more Advanced Placement credits. Results were correlated to time in the program and expectation about attending college at the onset of the program. The longer the student remained in the program and the lower the initial expectation, the stronger the results. However, more than 55% of the participants left the program before high school graduation, a finding evaluators attributed to students' needs for paid employment competing with Upward Bound's after-school and Saturday classes.

Overall, programs that provide extra attention and supports to high school students, particularly those who average C or better, are succeeding in moving them to postsecondary education. The majority of the evaluations do not describe what happens when the students get to the next level. However, a few do: *GE Fund College Bound* students have higher college retention rates; a small group of *Gateway* students show high college graduation rates; and

Upward Bound students are less likely to need remedial classes while in college.

Postsecondary School Programs

Despite the intensive search for evaluations of postsecondary programs that serve minority students and disaggregated the data, few studies were found and most of them were not evaluations, but descriptive reports. At the beginning of the search, we contacted a large number of organizations that provide college scholarships for minority youth. None had evaluations. We received suggestions and indications about "great studies" being done in one state or another, only to find that these studies would not meet the acceptance criteria for rigorous evaluations disaggregated by race or ethnicity. The landscape of evaluations of postsecondary interventions for minority students with disaggregated data is as arid as the programs are numerous.²⁰

The six postsecondary reports are examples of the variety of programs that are being implemented at the postsecondary level to help minority students break the barrier of the K-12 years and enter higher education. Three summaries describe programs that support minority students at different points along the journey through college and graduate school: the *Emerging Scholars Program (ESP)* helps undergraduates to remain in college; the *Puerto Rico Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (PR-LSAMP)* offers support for women and minorities pursuing graduate degrees; and *Compact for Faculty Diversity* provides a bridge for minority students as they complete their doctorates and enter college or university teaching positions. While *Compact* does not emphasize a particular specialization or field, both *ESP* and *PR-LSAMP* focus on the fields of mathematics, sciences and engineering, where minorities have been traditionally under-represented. Two studies focusing on *Historically Black Colleges and Universities* and *Tribal Colleges* offer descriptive data on the role of these institutions in the lives of African Americans and Native Americans. *Chicanos in Higher Education* is an example of a number of qualitative studies that provide a voice to minority individuals and shed

some light on factors that influence their professional success.

The *Emerging Scholars Program (ESP)* was initially developed at the University of California, in the 1970s, to improve the retention and success of minority students who enter mathematics-related majors. Currently operating under several different names in over 100 universities across the country, the basic *ESP* model utilizes extended discussion seminars and small study groups to help students succeed in the calculus course sequence at the beginning of their majors. With additional professor and peer support, these students form small learning communities that work as teams. Evaluations in Texas and Wisconsin revealed that *ESP* students were two to five times more likely to get As and Bs in calculus than their peers outside the program. A study at the California Polytechnic Institute showed that only 15% of *ESP* students had changed majors or left college within three years, compared with 52% of the students in a control group. They were also more likely to complete their mathematics requirement one academic quarter earlier than the control group.

The *Puerto Rico Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (PR-LSAMP)*, funded by the National Science Foundation and the federal government, has a dual goal: to foster the involvement of women and minorities in the fields of mathematics, science, and engineering; and to promote innovative teaching strategies that improve students' performance in those fields. According to the report, of all bachelor's degrees in science, math and engineering earned by Latinos in the U.S. in 1997, 25% went to *PR-LSAMP* students. From 1993 to 1998, *PR-LSAMP* students earned 11% of engineering PhDs and 17% of natural science PhDs received by Latinos nationwide.

Compact for Faculty Diversity is a consortium of regional education organizations and universities that provides financial support and a peer network for minority graduate students. The *Compact's* annual Institute for Teaching and Mentoring brings together minority graduate students and professors from across the country to discuss possibilities and pitfalls

in the world of higher education. Of the 435 scholars served by the program, 92% had completed or were continuing their degrees. Of the *Compact* alumni who had earned a PhD, 70% were in tenure-track faculty positions and 18% were in post-doctoral positions. As with the *ESP* model, *Compact* promotes a small supportive community of peers and professionals that guides the graduate students into careers in higher education.

Historically minority-serving institutions continue to play a crucial role in minority higher education, and this report includes studies of *Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)* and *Tribal Colleges*.²¹ The study of *HBCUs* shows that *HBCUs* graduate more African American students than other institutions. In the mid-1990s, 21% of all African American undergraduates attended *HBCUs*, but 28% of African American graduates got their degrees from *HBCUs* and 33% of the African American college students taking the Graduate Record Examination came from *HBCUs*.

Tribal Colleges' original purpose was to facilitate access to higher education for Native Americans living on reservations and to provide educational opportunities without forcing assimilation into mainstream white culture. Today, there are 33 *Tribal Colleges* serving more than 10,000 Native American students. *Tribal Colleges* have an important role in diversifying faculty composition. Compared to other institutions of higher education that employ on average less than 1% Native American faculty and staff, 30% of the faculty and 70% of the staff at *Tribal Colleges* are Native Americans.

Chicanos in Higher Education reports on interviews with 50 Mexican American professionals with MD, PhD or JD degrees. All came from low-income, immigrant families, composed mostly of farm workers and other unskilled laborers. Most began school with Spanish as their primary language, yet all completed a doctoral-level education from the country's most prestigious institutions. The interviewees stressed the importance of supportive parents and a family environment that was conducive to learning. At

least half cited the presence of a caring adult outside the family who functioned as a mentor, encouraging and prodding them toward academic success. Though most of them eventually got into college preparatory programs in high school, they had to fight a system that insisted on tracking them into less demanding curricula. Latino recruitment programs, scholarships for high-achieving scholars, stipends for low-income students, and a lot of hard work complete the list of factors that, according to the interviewees, contributed to their success.

Conclusion

All the selected evaluations of early childhood programs included follow-up, and some of them for substantial time periods. They also provided a variety of data to indicate that these programs are attaining their objectives of providing low-income children, including minority children, with more resources to succeed in later years. The evaluations of K-8 programs and district or statewide school initiatives have a limited focus on test scores. They tell us that many schools and states are raising the scores of minority students on different tests or are raising their passing rates in these tests. What this represents for the children's future is not clear.

However, it must be emphasized that, *at least* the programs and initiatives are raising these children's scores and passing rates. Doing nothing would be much worse. Rather than being a criticism of the existing data, this comment represents a longing for more data.

The evaluations of the high school programs diversify their measures. Although little is said about students' test scores, the information indicates that minority students in those programs are, in general, graduating from high school and going to college in greater numbers. The summaries on postsecondary education end this chapter with a message of hope, showing minorities who are succeeding in demanding careers, such as those related to sciences, mathematics and technology, and attaining faculty positions in universities. This message cannot be missed, because, as the summary on *Chicanos in Higher Education* suggests, many of those successful youth start their school years in the "high risk" category. On the whole, the summaries in this report highlight the fact that no student should be discounted as a lost cause. The opportunities and supports necessary to achieve success at the highest levels of our educational system must be available to all.

Chapter 3: The Search for the “Magic Bullet”

What makes programs successful? What do they offer so that young people challenge themselves and succeed? These questions are at the core of this report as they were in AYPF’s two previous compendia and of a more recent AYPF report, *Raising Academic Achievement: A Study of 20 Successful Programs*.²² That report identified five overarching strategies shared by programs that raised academic achievement:

- ◆ *High standards* for participants, programs and staff, including strategies that ensured the quality of implementation, and demanded high performance from youth and staff alike.
- ◆ *Personalized attention*, that is, strategies that enable the staff to know the program participants as individuals, with unique needs, strengths and weaknesses.
- ◆ *Innovative structures* where the needs of the students, rather than tradition or bureaucracy, guide the teaching/learning process.
- ◆ *Experiential learning*, bridging school and society.
- ◆ *Long-term support* that gave youth time to create trust and develop stable relationships and supports.

For this report, the same analytical process was used. A matrix was created with the program components and “contributing factors” as cited in the evaluations and program literature. Through a process of coding, the differences and similarities among components were highlighted and/or aggregated into categories, until a group of ten strategies remained that were shared by nine or more of the programs. In contrast to the previous

reports that focused solely on “successful” programs, this report includes programs that have both positive and negative findings. We include all evaluations in the analysis, regardless of findings, in an attempt to understand whether good results can be attributed to specific components, to a specific mix of components, or to some other variable that merits further investigation. In the case of reports describing different programs, the shared strategies cited in the documents were also included.

The overarching strategies found in *Raising Academic Achievement* are again reflected in this report except for “Experiential Learning,” which is cited only once in connection with the *Career Academies* summary. “High Standards” is represented here by the three most frequent components: program quality, academically demanding curricula and professional development. “Personalized Attention” is discussed in two contexts: school strategies to reduce the student-to-teacher ratio and strategies to provide youth with extra, individualized supports. The two remaining overarching strategies, “Innovative Structures” and “Long-term Supports,” are also represented.

This chapter discusses the strategies used by programs whose evaluations we have summarized. However, a few words of caution must be shared. First, *no “magic bullet” was found, that is, no one strategy is common to all programs that have good findings*. Second, the sample is limited to 38 reports, several of which have less than stellar evaluations. Therefore, *these findings should be considered as guidelines for further inquiry rather than prescriptions for success*.

The ten most frequent strategies identified in this report are listed below from most to least frequently cited in the program evaluations:

- ◆ Program quality
- ◆ Academically demanding curriculum
- ◆ Professional development
- ◆ Family involvement
- ◆ Reduced student-to-teacher ratios
- ◆ Individualized supports
- ◆ Extended learning time
- ◆ Community involvement
- ◆ Long-term supports for youth
- ◆ Scholarships and/or financial support

Program Quality

“High standards” is a catch phrase in today’s education policy debates. Virtually all programs affirm their commitment to “high standards” without defining the concept. AYPF’s perspective is that high standards must include a concern with the quality of the program and its staff before demands are made from participants. Quality of implementation, leadership and accountability are three essential strategies that help ensure high program standards.

Quality of implementation

The quality of implementation is demonstrated through careful planning and timely and efficient resources that are targeted to specific goals. For a school to receive certification as an *AVID* center, it must fulfill a series of requisites, including training for the site administrator, program coordinator, teachers and tutors; identification of resources for implementation and sustainability; selection of students; and integration between the program and the regular school day. When the *Calvert Program* was introduced at the Woodson School, a full-time coordinator was hired to oversee implementation of the program and its daily operations. *GE Fund College Bound* stresses the substantial size and long-term support of its GE Fund grants—at least \$250,000 for five years—as giving adequate time and resources to plan and implement the reforms necessary to improve school-wide academic achievement. Evaluators note that one reason that *Class Size Reduction* in California may not have shown minority academic achievement gains was that the program did not include timely and

sufficient resources for successful implementation in high-poverty, predominantly-minority schools.

Leadership

Leadership is essential to ensure program quality and sustainability. As charter school principals, the directors of *KIPP Academies* have complete control over budget and personnel decisions, thus allowing them to be better leaders at the school level. *KIPP* principals lead by example. In addition to being administrators, they are teachers who do not hesitate to step out of their offices and into the classroom to do the nitty gritty work of education. With the help of Gap, Inc., they have also started a fellowship program that will train a corps of educational leaders to found their own charter schools across the country serving disadvantaged youth. *Gateway for Higher Education* has had the same co-directors since its founding in 1986 and, according to the evaluators, this continuity has contributed to the program’s strong sense of purpose. *Dare to Dream* and the *Alaska Onward to Excellence/Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative* are based on the concept of shared leadership. In the projects described in *Dare to Dream*, school administrators, teachers, school staff, outside expert teams and students work together to find solutions for existing problems or to propose new options. The Alaska project relies on a sense of shared ownership between program staff and community. *GE Fund College Bound* describes some of their program efforts as being enhanced by strong leadership exhibited by the schools and their GE partners, while others were hampered by frequent leadership turnover or weak support from principals and school administrators.

Accountability

Public school “accountability” is a growing concern of local, state and federal governments. Tests, particularly state-developed tests and school report cards, are tools commonly used to provide stakeholders with feedback about the performance of their schools and students. In many states, schools that do not attain some pre-established benchmark on the state tests are threatened with sanctions. The accountability movement has been

particularly well documented in Texas. The Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) is a criterion-referenced test administered annually that measures student achievement in reading and math (for grades 3-8 and 12), in writing (for grades 4, 8, and 12), and in science and social studies (grade 8). Texas students must pass the TAAS to graduate from high school. The evaluations of programs using TAAS data show schools increasing the percentage of minority students passing the TAAS by 40% or more, while in many other states, test score improvements for minorities are incremental. Yet successful school programs in Texas are quite varied. In fact, the evaluation of four school districts (*Texas District Wide Initiatives*) attributes their success to the politically-imposed accountability system rather than to specific strategies.

It appears that the political climate favoring accountability has positive facets that must be considered. As states begin to require all children to perform, even those labeled “at risk,” educators must pay attention to all children, defining clear expectations for all, and find ways to help those who are failing to achieve academically. It is important to observe that accountability should not be confused with high standards, since many states, including Texas, still rely on minimum competency tests. How to fairly and equitably use the advantages of accountability for minority academic achievement gains is still an open question.

Academically Demanding Curricula

All early childhood programs included in this report provide pre-school aged children with challenging educational activities that are also developmentally appropriate. *Abecedarian’s* curriculum includes arts, language, and literacy, in addition to fine motor skills development. The *Child-Parent Center* curricula emphasize language and mathematics through a variety of learning experiences. *Head Start* programs have incorporated academic activities with their full-service mission. *High/Scope Perry Preschool* offers a well-structured curriculum with emphasis on language, literacy, music and mathematics.

Concern with challenging curricula was equally apparent in K-12 programs. The *Calvert Program* emphasizes reading comprehension and required weekly compositions even for first graders. Since Memphis City Schools (described in the *City Schools* report) eliminated lower level courses in high schools, the percentage of African Americans graduating with an honors diploma doubled. The *Alaska Onward to Excellence/Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative* is based on a dual commitment to equity and excellence. Eskimo and Native American children from rural villages are taking college-entrance tests and going to college in higher numbers since the introduction of the program. All *Gateway for Higher Education* students are expected to complete a minimum of three Advanced Placement courses.

However, the requirement to attend academically demanding courses must be accompanied by appropriate supports. The low algebra passing rates for students in *Equity 2000* may have been due to the limited supports for students enrolled in algebra and lack of support relating to other types of high school coursework or college attendance. The persistent gap between minority and white students in *High Schools That Work*, which eliminates general education and sets high standards for all, indicates a need for additional supports geared toward these students.

Professional Development

To maintain the quality of any program, it is not enough to create mechanisms for quality control. Staff must be prepared to respond to the challenge. *Gateway*, which creates a school-within-a-school for academically talented students, carefully selects its teachers based on their background, experience, and dedication. For other programs, particularly those with less ability to select staff, professional development and training is an important program component.

AVID and *High/Scope* require staff training before implementation. *Success for All* provides a three-day summer training session and continued on-site

staff training during the year. *Project GRAD* offers training and ongoing support for teachers to reduce turnover. According to the evaluator, as the facilitators operate outside the teachers' assessment process, teachers feel comfortable asking for help with classroom problems. The schools described in *Urban Elementary Schools* introduce professional development activities at the time when changes in curriculum or school structure are implemented. Programs that rely on tutors or mentors, such as *High School Puente*, *I Have a Dream* and *Sponsor-A-Scholar*, offer them training and supervision. At the *Boys and Girls Clubs of America*, trained staff provides support to volunteers.

However, as the *CAPE* evaluators observed, offering professional development does not necessarily ensure that teachers will profit from it. *CAPE* offered extensive professional development to teachers and artists, including nearly a dozen workshops throughout the year. Yet, most participants attended no more than three workshops due to lack of time.

Family Involvement

Approximately 40% of the selected evaluations report activities geared toward improving communication with families, or increasing family involvement with the programs. Although such efforts are concentrated on initiatives for young children, at least two high school programs also include activities to promote greater involvement of families.

Early childhood programs focus on helping parents provide adequate support for their child's development. Therefore, these programs offer a range of activities that include family education, advocacy and support. Information on childhood development, health and nutrition is provided in all the programs, either through workshops or home visits. In *High/Scope*, families and staff met monthly to discuss developmental issues. Program staff also made weekly home visits to families, meeting with the child and the family to model classroom activities. *Abecedarian* and *Head Start* used home visits with the objective of information and support and involve families on advisory boards

and committees with planning and managerial functions.

The two after-school programs in this report, *Boys & Girls Clubs of America* and *Sacramento START*, include families in their activities, generally as volunteers, although *START* hires participants' families to staff the program. Among the K-12 programs, *AVID*, *Alaska Onward to Excellence/Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative*, *Calvert Program*, *Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools*, *High School Puente* and *Project GRAD* have family involvement components. Of these, *AVID* and *High School Puente* are exclusively for high school-aged youth, and *Calvert* is an elementary school program. The remaining initiatives serve K-12 students.

AVID emphasizes communication between families and the program, offers workshops on the college application process, and includes families on its advisory board. Local families and community members are also part of advisory boards in the schools involved with the Alaska reforms that encompass grades K to 12. Another K-12 initiative in the *Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools* includes families as volunteers and members of the Blue Ribbon panel that designed the reform. Teachers and administrators are encouraged to set up meetings in families' homes or workplaces to facilitate participation. In addition, the schools offer assistance for students who are parents with a Young Parent Institute and the Adolescent Parenting Program that provide monthly support groups and infant health education. *Project GRAD* implements a comprehensive family outreach program that includes activities to recruit students and their parents. During its community-wide Walk for Success, alumni, teachers, staff, mentors, university volunteers, and community leaders go door to door to over 1,600 families per year to raise awareness of the program. *Project GRAD* also has Parent Universities to improve parental literacy and involvement. In addition, alongside teachers, principals and other community members, *Project GRAD* families participate in decision-making committees that manage the project's feeder schools (elementary and junior high schools).

Reduced Student-to-Teacher Ratios

Many selected programs that show academic gains for minority students include strategies to reduce student-to-teacher ratios. Tennessee's *Project STAR* and Wisconsin's *SAGE* are statewide experiments with reduced class sizes for grades one through three. *STAR* used classes with 17 students per teacher and *SAGE*'s classes averaged 15 students per teacher, compared with traditional classes of 20 to 25 students. Participants in the small classes, particularly African Americans, had higher average test scores than students in the larger classes. *STAR* did not find gains when two teachers or a teacher and teacher's aide were in the classroom, but *SAGE* found similar gains in strategies that reduced student-to-teacher ratio by increasing the number of teachers in regular classrooms, including team teaching and floating teachers. In California, as described in *Class Size Reduction*, classes were reduced from 30 to 20 students or less. Different from *STAR* and *SAGE*, two carefully designed and implemented reforms that began as pilots, the Californian project was imposed statewide and, particularly in those in low-income areas, the class reduction occurred at the expense of other resources, such as music instruction and school libraries.

Rather than reducing the number of children per classroom, *Child-Parent Centers* increase the number of staff, placing two teachers for each classroom of 17 toddlers or 25 kindergarteners. The *Chicago Arts Partnership in Education* uses the co-teaching system, with a teacher and an artist working together to integrate arts into the academic curriculum. *Career Academies* are schools-within-schools that provide self-contained environments within larger institutions where students have closer interaction with staff. *KIPP Academies* are small charter schools with no more than 300 to 400 students. *High School Puente* selects about 30 students per cohort. *Success for All* uses small reading groups divided by literacy level, rather than age; this program is also a component of *Project GRAD*. The *Urban Elementary Schools* report indicates that some schools also reduced the number of students per class.

Cost is an issue in projects that demand expansion in buildings and/or personnel, but only one of the studies (*Child-Parent Centers*) included a cost benefit analysis. It is important to observe that other programs such as those described in *Texas District Wide Initiatives* and *City Schools* that show significant academic gains, particularly for minority students, do not report the use of smaller classes or small learning environments.

Individualized Supports

For students who are struggling academically, individualized support may be the difference between falling behind and moving ahead. In addition to the involvement of the students' families, many programs utilize community members, college students, employers and other groups as tutors and mentors to address the academic needs of specific students, or offer support, feedback and encouragement. Tutors or mentors can also function as role models, guiding the youth through difficult transitions and into a college and/or career path.

Tutors and mentors are found at all levels of the educational ladder. For instance, *Success for All*, a program for elementary school children, uses trained tutors to help students in need. Minority students from the University of North Carolina provide tutoring for elementary, middle, and high school youth at *Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools*. Their "Sister to Sister" program pairs African American females in medical school with ninth grade "sisters" for support and role modeling. At the undergraduate level, *Emerging Scholars* pairs a teaching assistant with one to two undergraduate students to tutor calculus. *Compact for Faculty Diversity* organizes an annual institute where university and college professors share their experiences with PhD candidates and mentor them through the process of moving from graduate students to faculty members.

The use of tutors and mentors is frequent among high school programs as well. *AVID* uses college students to provide one-on-one tutoring to C-

average high school students who dream of entering college. Employers are actively involved in *Career Academies*, sitting on boards, helping with curriculum planning, and also mentoring students in work-based experiences. *Gateway to Higher Education* offers after-school tutoring programs. At *High School Puente*, “peer partners” help the students to transition from middle to high school. In addition, adult mentors work with the students throughout high school. A Community Mentor Liaison (CML) is dedicated to recruiting, training and matching the mentors with the students. GE employees tutor students at *GE Fund College Bound* schools, offering homework assistance and other supports. Tutors are also procured among community volunteers. *I Have a Dream*, *Sponsor-A-Scholar* and *Upward Bound* all use mentors. The mentors in *I Have a Dream* and *Sponsor-A-Scholar* are intensely involved with the students, monitoring their academic performance, providing opportunities for recreational activities, and internships, and offering financial support through college.

Using tutors and mentors is a less expensive strategy to reduce the student-to-adult ratio than using certified teachers, but it is also a riskier strategy. Unqualified, untrained and unsupervised tutors or mentors can sometimes do more harm than good.

Extended Learning Time

Some programs use longer school hours, extra school days, Saturdays and summer courses to provide students with more learning time. For preschool aged children, any formal instruction time may be considered extra time, and that is offered by all early childhood programs in this report.

Abecedarian functioned 8 hours a day, 5 days a week for 50 weeks. *Child-Parent Center* preschool programs are offered for 3 hours in the morning or in the afternoon, and kindergarten programs are either half day or full day. *High/Scope Perry Preschool* had 12 ½ hours of instruction per week.

Boys and Girls Clubs of America (B&GCA) and *Sacramento START* are after-school programs that provide low-income, mostly minority children with

extra educational supports. *B&GCAs* are open 5 to 6 days a week, 6 to 7 hours a day. In addition to recreational and social activities, some clubs offer an educational program that includes homework support, structured discussions on educational topics, 1 to 2 hours a week of writing, 4 to 5 hours per week of reading, and additional time for educational games, such as word and math games. For middle to high school students, the clubs also offer technology training and career exploration programs. *Sacramento START* functions 9 hours a week and also includes homework assistance, literacy training and other educational activities. The program staff maintains ongoing communication with the schools to align curricula and learning goals for their participants. Children in both programs show academic gains.

Among the school programs that offer extra-time, *Gateway* functions for 11 months a year and *Project GRAD* offers after-school programs. *Emerging Scholars* and *Equity 2000* have Saturday and summer activities, although attendance is voluntary in *Equity 2000*. The activities in *I Have a Dream*, *Sponsor-A-Scholar* and *Upward Bound* are all an added value to the regular school day. The *KIPP* motto is that “there are no shortcuts,” and the time commitment of students and teachers exemplifies this philosophy. Students attend class from 7:30 AM until 5:00 PM Monday through Thursday and until 4:00 PM on Fridays. They spend four hours at the school on most Saturdays and attend additional courses four weeks every summer.

Community Involvement

Alaska Onward to Excellence/Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative and *Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools (CHCCS)* highlight the power of communities to promote and support school changes. The Alaska reform was guided by community members upset with the state of their schools. Community participation is essential to the program, reinforcing cultural traditions and knowledge that are interwoven with the more traditional curricula. In North Carolina, community representatives sat on the Blue Ribbon panel that proposed the *CHCCS* strategies to improve the

academic achievement of African American students in the school district.

CAPE represents an innovative way to involve artists and community organizations in schools to enhance education through arts. *Career Academies* involve the business community in planning and supporting the program, in addition to offering work-based opportunities for the students. Some of the *Urban Elementary Schools* also report business involvement, while *Gateway* has partnerships with museums and research centers to provide students with educational and internship opportunities.

Long-Term Supports for Youth

Several programs encourage long-term, stable relationships between participants and knowledgeable adults. *Abecedarian*, *Child-Parent Centers* and *High/Scope* are all five-year programs with long follow-up. *Abecedarian* also includes a summer program to help participants in their transition to public school. The mentor-youth relationship in *I Have a Dream* and *Sponsor-A-Scholar* remains for more than five years, and helps youth transition into postsecondary education. Evaluations of *Sponsor-A-Scholar* and *Upward Bound* found that the longer youth stay in the programs, the greater their academic gains. Since transitions are important periods in any person's life, particularly for youth who have weak social supports, it is puzzling that so few of the programs reviewed offer extra supports during transition, particularly from middle to high school.

Scholarships and/or Financial Support

Several K-12 programs offer financial help to students who demonstrate high academic performance. *CHCCS* offers scholarships to African American students who enroll in two- or four-year colleges. Scholarships are also provided in some *GE Fund* programs. *I Have a Dream* and *Sponsor-A-Scholar* supplement the costs of college that are not covered through other scholarships or loans. The voucher movement proposes scholarships to defray the costs of private school tuition for families whose children are in failing

public schools. The summary of *School Vouchers* describes a three-city experiment. The report indicates that the scholarships did not cover the full tuition but does not explain how low-income families were able to cover the remaining costs, a requirement that may hamper the use of vouchers for families in the lowest income brackets.

Among the postsecondary programs, only *Emerging Scholars* does not report financial aid. *Chicanos in Higher Education*, which interviewed Latinos who excelled professionally, cites the importance of minority recruitment programs, scholarships for high-achieving students, and stipends for low-income students as tools to break the cycle of poverty for low-income minority students who aspire to a college education. *Compact for Faculty Diversity* works with states and graduate institutions to ensure continuity of funding and supports for minority students as they complete their doctoral degrees and enter academic life. The *Puerto Rico Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation* offers stipends for low-income students who excel academically and pays travel costs of students who participate in conferences.

Conclusion

These evaluations highlight programs that are succeeding in improving the academic achievement of African American, Latino and Native American students. Most programs are bringing minority students at the lowest level of academic performance to the minimum required level of competency for their grades, such as those described in *Texas District Wide Initiatives*. A few, like *AVID*, are helping students already at the middle to attain higher levels of achievement, while programs like *Gateway* improve the performance of students who are close to becoming high achievers. Evaluations such as those for the *GE Fund* and *Upward Bound* reinforce the value of investing in low achieving students, proving that they can profit from supportive interventions.

What can be learned from this chapter? The first lesson is to intervene preventively, even before the child enters school, to avoid the gap between high

and low achievers. A concern with early intervention does not imply abandoning youth who are struggling academically in the remaining school years. The evaluation of *Head Start* shows a decline in academic gains as the child moves through grades, and so does the evaluation of *Project STAR*. Indeed, learning is a dynamic process that must be supported throughout the school years.

The second lesson learned is that no one approach guarantees academic success, although a few strategies carry more promise than others. Highly structured programs, such as *Calvert* or *Success for All*, have successful outcomes, but so does a creative, flexible program such as *CAPE*. Overall, the summaries suggest that demanding high performance from programs, staff and students is essential for a successful program. Most programs that show positive results implement mechanisms to ensure program quality, maintain well-trained teachers and support staff, and provide academically demanding courses.

A lesson from the less successful programs is that pushing youth who are already struggling academically into demanding courses without the necessary supports may simply create a wave of failures and frustration that will eventually drive the youth out of schools, rather than toward graduation. This finding, far from leading to the defeatist conclusion that these youth have no hope, should guide us to the question of “what needs to be done that these programs are not doing?” Strategies to support students are varied and many successful programs mix strategies to reduce the student-to-teacher ratio (such as reduced class sizes, small schools and team-teaching) with the presence of

volunteers, tutors or mentors to ensure more individualized attention for all students. In addition, good programs provide high quality professional development for staff, tutors, and mentors.

Financial support is essential for low-income students who dream of pursuing postsecondary education. Programs that encourage the participation of families and community representatives increase the support network and create a culture of academic achievement around the student.

The evaluations summarized here also teach about the power of persistence. The Texas accountability system and the Alaska reforms are a decade old. Changes in education do not occur in a short period of time. Unfortunately, many reforms come and go abruptly, leaving educators without time to implement them adequately, and students without time to profit from them.

One common denominator among the selected programs is a heightened level of attention toward all students in an attempt to reach benchmarks that were established by the school, district or state. Interviews with successful Mexican American professionals (*Chicanos in Higher Education*) suggest that educators tend to give up on low-income, minority students who do not fit their idealized image of the successful, college-bound student. By disaggregating their data, school districts highlight inequalities within their system, a necessary step toward correcting them. A final lesson that may be taken from these evaluations is that ***commitment to all students, more than specific strategies, appears to prevail as the main contributing factor of success.***

Chapter 4: Moving Forward

Summary of Findings

In this report, a detailed picture is presented of the available research on programs that have been found to improve minority academic achievement. Despite continuing achievement gaps, the youth programs and school initiatives included in this report provide concrete examples of efforts to increase achievement for minority youth.

- ◆ Evaluation findings were particularly strong and positive at the early childhood level. When compared to control groups, minority children who attend early childhood development programs are more likely to remain in school, complete more years of education, and require less special education. These evaluations show a pattern of improvement that cannot be denied. The message from this body of evidence is that early childhood programs increase the chances for minority children to do well in school and in later life. However, no education system can be satisfied with good early intervention programs without strong K-12 schools that will maintain and expand the educational gains of the early years.
- ◆ The elementary through middle school evaluations were almost exclusively focused on test scores. In most cases, improvements were incremental and even where minority academic achievement increased, the disparities in achievement between minority and white youth were highly apparent. Texas is probably the only state where achievement gaps between minorities and white students are being halved or cut even more. However, Texas students are measured on passing rates on only a *minimum* competency test. The question of whether higher levels of achievement are reached remains unanswered.
- ◆ Because they focus on more than test scores, the high school/transition programs offer a better perspective of what is actually happening with their minority students. Among the

positive findings of some of these programs were one or more of the following: increased high school graduation, more high school credits earned, higher GPAs earned or maintained, more college prep and Advanced Placement courses taken, increased enrollment in higher level mathematics and science classes, more college entrance exam-taking and higher scores, less need for remediation in college, higher levels of college enrollment at two- and four-year colleges, higher levels of college retention and graduation, and continuation in science-related majors or professions.

- ◆ Fewer quality evaluations were available at the postsecondary level with data disaggregated by race or ethnicity. The postsecondary programs included in the report show African American, Latino and Native American youth succeeding in demanding careers and entering universities not just as students, but as professors as well. However, their numbers are still quite small.

Recommendations

Based on AYPF's reflections on the reported evaluations, following are actions policymakers, practitioners, researchers, parents and community members can take to improve minority academic achievement.

1. **Focus on Improved Academic Achievement and Outcomes for All.**
 - ◆ *National leaders should continue to build consensus around acceptable achievement gains* and require that these gains be shown for all student groups. National attention should focus on achievement differences among the states and ways to eliminate these differences.
 - ◆ *States should create benchmarks for improving academic achievement for all student groups* and provide resources for school districts to attain those benchmarks.

- ◆ ***States and school districts should support and maintain high quality leadership*** and ensure the adequate implementation of programs to enhance minority academic achievement.
 - ◆ ***School districts and schools should expect high achievement from all students*** and provide academically demanding curricula that are meaningful and available across schools and grade levels to bring all students to higher levels of knowledge and achievement.
 - ◆ ***States and localities should develop a multi-layered “check” of achievement*** using a variety of test measures, such as NAEP, state-mandated tests, Stanford-9 or ITBS; and also use indicators that provide a broad perspective about students, such as classroom-based assessments, attendance, behavior (disciplinary incidents), course enrollment and passing rates, types of courses completed and graduation rates, among other measures.
 - ◆ ***School districts and schools should provide professional development and support*** to ensure that teachers (and other involved adults, as appropriate) have a deep understanding of curriculum, are familiar with innovative instructional methods, and have knowledge and interpersonal competence with cultures other than their own.
 - ◆ ***Schools should provide students, families and communities with specific information on what constitutes high academic standards*** and support their expectations for excellence in the educational system.
 - ◆ ***Families, youth advocates and communities should hold schools accountable*** for high levels of achievement for all students, reinforce academic skills learned both at home and at school, and ensure that every child has an advocate outside of the school system or program.
2. **States and Localities Should Provide the Necessary Supports to Ensure Student Success, including:**
- ◆ ***Reduced student-to-teacher ratios.*** A range of strategies should be employed by schools and programs to provide more personal teaching and learning environments to foster higher levels of academic achievement. These strategies may include smaller classes, small learning communities, teacher’s aides, team teaching, tutoring, mentoring and ancillary supports.
 - ◆ ***Extended learning time.*** To accelerate and reinforce student learning, programs should encourage or require additional time and opportunities (such as longer days, weekends and summer courses).
 - ◆ ***Long-term supports.*** Programs should encourage student participation over an extended time (two years or more) to create and sustain stable relationships between participants and knowledgeable adults, and to help youth make successful transitions as they progress up the educational ladder.
 - ◆ ***Scholarships and/or financial support.*** Programs should provide financial support to youth as needed to motivate participation and persistence in quality educational experiences. Programs should also provide continual guidance to youth and monitor the impact of the funds on student achievement, retention and graduation.
3. **Start Early, Don’t Stop.**
- ◆ ***National leaders, states and school districts should prevent minority students from falling behind*** by expanding early childhood programs and providing continuous guidance and supports through the elementary and high school years.
 - ◆ ***National leaders, states and school districts should boost efforts to increase minority students’ entry into and graduation from postsecondary education.***

At almost every educational level, schools and community-based programs across the country are reporting good news about the academic achievement of the minority students they are serving. Although gaps overall are still large, and most reported achievement gains are small, these programs have proven there is every possibility of succeeding in raising achievement for all. Implementing the recommendations above could

help the nation move beyond a feeling of helplessness regarding achievement gaps by providing specific information on program design and strategies about “what works” to enhance academic achievement. The larger challenge is creating the ***national will*** to set in place mechanisms that will eliminate differences in academic achievement among students correlated with race or ethnicity.

Endnotes

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2. *Do You Know the Good News about American Education*, Washington, DC: Center on Education Policy and American Youth Policy Forum, 2000.
3. Benno C. Schmidt, Jr., Chairman of the Board of Directors of Edison Schools, Inc. and former President of Yale University said, "Education is the only current opportunity. The Civil Rights struggle is in the classroom. This is the most challenging of all issues." At the same conference, Robert Slavin, creator of the Success for All program, stated that the achievement gap "is one of the most important educational and social problems in the country." The Brookings Institution, Brown Center on Education Policy and Edison Schools. "*Closing the Gap: Promising Approaches to Reducing the Achievement Gap*." Washington, DC. February 2, 2001.
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5. For a succinct explanation of the NAEP test, see *Glossary*.
6. U.S. Department of Education, op. cit, indicator 38, p. 56.
7. The College Board, *College-Bound Seniors National Report*. Washington, D.C., 2000.
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9. U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau. *Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin. Census 2000 Brief*. Washington, D.C., March 2001.
10. Quoted in the New York Times, Education Life, Section 4A, pages 37-38, Sunday, April 9, 2000. According to the Department of Education, 29% of first time freshmen were enrolled in remedial courses in 1995 (the latest data available). Kelly, Karen. "Seeking a Cure for Senior-Year Slump." *Harvard Education Letter*. Research Online. July/August 2001. <http://www.edletter.org/current/>.
11. Jencks, Christopher and Meredith Phillips (Eds). *The Black-White Test Score Gap*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1998, p. 4-7.
12. *Exposing the Gap: Why Minority Students Are Being Left Behind in North Carolina's Educational System*. Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Justice and Community Development Center and the North Carolina Education and Law Project, 2000.
13. A dinner discussion with Daniel Domenech, Superintendent of Fairfax (VA)," American Youth Policy Forum, June 15, 1999 available at www.aypf.org/forumbriefs/1999/db061599.htm.
14. Section 1111(b) (3) (I) of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1994 reads, "State assessments shall – Enable results to be disaggregated within each State, local educational agency, and school by gender, by each major racial and ethnic group, by English proficiency status, by migrant status, by students with disabilities as compared to nondisabled students, and by economically disadvantaged students as compared to students who are not economically disadvantaged" and suggests disaggregating data if no less than ten students are in a single group.
15. Zernike, Kate. "Racial Gap in Schools Splits a Town Proud of Diversity." *New York Times*, August 4, 2000.
16. Maryland Department of Education, Maryland School Performance Report, available at <http://msp.msde.state.md.us>; see Baltimore city schools, Dr. Carter Goodwin Woodson Elementary School.
17. Although the authors consider New York City differences significant at the 10% level, educational research tends to limit significance to the 95% confidence level (or 5% level of significance).

18. Jerald, Craig D. *Real Results, Remaining Challenges: The Story of Texas Education Reform*. Washington, D.C.: The Business Roundtable, 2001, p.32.
19. We speculate that there must be some lag time between the implementation of so many high school testing requirements and the use of these test scores in the evaluation of high school programs.
20. The lack of evaluations for the many postsecondary programs that target underrepresented minority students is also reported in Gándara, Patricia. *Priming the Pump: Strategies for Increasing the Achievement of Underrepresented Minority Undergraduates*. New York: The College Board. 1999.
21. Though there has been no formal evaluation conducted on Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) of higher learning, data on the 203 HSIs can be found at www.ed.gov/offices/OIIA/Hispanic/hsi/.
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