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ABSTRACT

The Urban Development Component at Research for Better Schools, Inc., attempted to attack problems facing urban secondary schools in Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania by using the "natural channels" of educational and civic associations to disseminate research and development information and to work collaboratively toward improving schools. The first section of this final report presents the project rationale and discusses the status of the region's "small cities" and research on educational change and school effectiveness. The next section describes the project goals. The role played by professional and civic associations as collaborators in school improvement is discussed next, and the effects and impact of the project on the associations, school districts and participating schools are then described. The final section concludes that associations make important contributions to school improvement by: increasing participation activities; improving the utilization quality of R & D information and products; identifying opportunities for successful implementation of projects; providing training, technical assistance, and follow-up support; and contributing to a climate of acceptance and cooperation. Critical characteristics of associations and their relationship to involvement in improvement activities are explored. Finally, implications of the "natural channels" approach for State and local policymakers are examined. Appendix A lists the cooperating organizations. Appendix B lists Urban Development products and publications. (CG)

Using Natural Channels for School Improvement: A Report on Four Years of the Urban Development Program

by

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A Report for the
National Institute of Education

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Final Report Abstract

In late 1980, the Urban Development Component at Research for Better Schools, Inc. (RBS) was determined to try a different strategy for attacking the stubborn problem of improving the effectiveness of urban secondary schools in Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. At the heart of Urban Development's approach was a concentrated and collaborative effort to focus the capabilities of the region's educational and civic associations on urban school improvement. The component's objective was to use the "natural channels" provided by associations to disseminate R & D information and to stimulate urban school improvements either directly -- through actions taken by Urban Development -- or indirectly -- through activities carried out by the associations as a result of their collaborations with Urban Development.

These joint ventures had mixed success but their overall impact was significant. Evidence of this is provided in the results of several projects and activities undertaken by the associations as well as in numerous products developed by Urban Development staff to support these collaborations.

Throughout the five-year project, many lessons were learned from the various experiences with associations. These lessons, which have implications for the future conduct of regional laboratories, federal grant-giving agencies, state departments of education, universities, and other agents of school improvement, can serve as a guide for others who attempt to navigate the "natural channels" by working with professional associations.

Although Urban Development's track record was mixed, most of the activities achieved some success, and for a few, that success was quite considerable. Overall, the experience gained through the Urban Development project confirmed that educational associations can play a powerful role in promoting and implementing school improvement and reform. That is the central theme of the Urban Development final report.

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Introduction: The Context for Improvement

There is reason to believe that urban school districts are beginning to find paths to resolve some of the educational and social problems that have threatened to engulf and destroy them. Although many factors contribute to this growing optimism about the possibilities for school improvement and school reform in our cities, major contributing factors are the direction and the motivation provided by the research on effective schools and teaching. Research is beginning to influence practice, particularly in the large cities of the nation where many of the "effective schools" programs are being designed and implemented.

Statewide professional associations and citizens groups provide "natural channels" for carrying the findings of educational research and development into urban districts. At every level of educational decision making and practice, educators are members of statewide professional organizations. Other influential groups such as board members and parents also belong to such organizations. These associations have high credibility with their members whose support is essential to successful school improvement. And, most associations have some capability to deliver information and training programs to their members.

Yet, associations have generally played only minor roles in school improvement efforts. Few have histories of preparing their members to initiate school-based programs or of working with school districts toward school improvement. Although most associations do sponsor workshops and conferences, the presentations at these meetings usually are not research-based and typically do not deal with problems of implementation. There is seldom continuity from one workshop to the next and even less follow up

after training. Associations are, in effect, a potentially powerful but under-utilized and under-developed resource for school improvement.

In late 1980, the Urban Development Component at Research for Better Schools, Inc. (RBS) determined to try a fresh approach to attacking some of the particularly stubborn problems challenging urban secondary schools in Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. Based on surveys of urban board members, superintendents, and high school principals completed in 1981-82, the most pressing problems included: improving basic skills instruction, inadequate administrative leadership, student absenteeism, ineffective or inappropriate board leadership, curriculum design and implementation, poor student discipline, low teacher expectations, poor student motivation, in-school truancy, and a lack of parent involvement.[1] Association staff, however, also felt that budget constraints, staff morale, working conditions in schools, and the quality of staff development were serious problems in urban secondary schools.

At the heart of Urban Development's approach was a concentrated and collaborative effort to develop the capability of the region's educational and civic associations to serve as critical resources for urban school improvement. It was Urban Development's thesis that if these associations worked together and focused their efforts on urban school problems and priorities, they would constitute a powerful new force for improving schools in the tri-state region.

Included in the project were major educational associations such as NEA teacher associations, principals and administrators organizations,

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[1]See Joseph J. D'Amico, Results of the Urban High School Needs Survey: A Discussion. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

parents groups, and state school boards associations (see Appendix A for a description of the organizations that collaborated with Urban Development). Urban Development staff members served as catalysts for initiation of school improvement programs, technical assistance resources for collaborating associations, and links between the associations and the research and development network. They negotiated joint projects, synthesized relevant research, prepared papers, designed training materials, conducted training programs, constructed feedback procedures, provided technical assistance, and performed other related tasks in order to facilitate collaboration and provide focus to joint activities. Anticipated outcomes of these collaborations were: (1) clearer understanding of urban school problems and needs; (2) creation of coalitions of educators and citizens to address the problems of urban schools; (3) increased use of research information by the associations and school districts; (4) more supportive environments within school districts for bringing about school change; (5) implementation of building-level improvement programs; and (6) enhanced understanding of school improvement processes. This final report to the National Institute of Education (NIE) traces the evolution and accomplishments of that effort.

Urban Development's purpose, from the start, was to conduct an action project based upon what was known in educational research and development about urban school improvement and organizational change. The component's objective was to use the "natural channels" or association approach to stimulate urban school improvement in two ways: either directly, through actions taken by Urban Development or the allocation of Urban Development resources, or indirectly, through activities carried out by the associations as a result of their collaboration with Urban Development.

For this report, information on those activities was drawn from sources such as project documents (reports to the NIE, correspondences, and staff memoranda), recollections of project participants, both within and outside RBS, on what transpired during the course of the project, results of a formal documentation of two school improvement programs, and evaluations of workshops, presentations, and products by project participants. This document, then, is the result of informed observation and analysis rather than a systematic study of project activities and outcomes. It is not intended as a formal evaluation of the project. Rather, its contribution is in clarifying problems, providing new perspectives, suggesting additional strategies for improvement of schools, and verifying other knowledge about improving urban schools.

This report is organized into five sections. The first section introduces the rationale behind this collaborative approach to urban school improvement. It is divided into discussions of the status of the region's "small cities," and two areas of research that are providing some cause for optimism among urban educators: educational change and school effectiveness. The second section briefly presents, in table form, the goals of the Urban Development project. Next, there is a discussion of the role professional and civic associations played as collaborators in school improvement, including their commitment to urban school improvement, the negotiation process, the constraints in collaborative relationships, and how the project changed as a result of their involvement. The next section describes the effects the project had on the associations, the school districts, and the schools that participated in the project, along with a discussion of project impact. The final section analyzes the usefulness of the "natural channels" approach in light of project outcomes.

Needs and Opportunities: The Project Rationale

This section presents two topics that taken together comprise the rationale for the Urban Development project. The first is the special dilemma of the urban districts in the RBS region, and the second the new research findings that offer optimism to urban educators.

The Special Dilemmas of the Region's Urban Districts

Within the tri-state region served by RBS, there were, in 1980 53 school districts categorized as "urban" either by statute or by self description. Although it would be a serious mistake to equate "urban" with "ineffective," the fact remains that many of the schools in these urban districts were characterized by low achievement, disorder, poor attendance, violence and vandalism, high dropout rates, and a general sense of despair and powerlessness on the part of students and faculty alike.

Of these 53 urban districts, 32 were in New Jersey, the most urbanized state in the nation and home to 4 of the poorest 25 cities in the country (Bradbury, Downs, and Small, 1982). Another 18 urban districts were in Pennsylvania and 3 were in Delaware. Together, the schools in these urban districts enrolled nearly a quarter of the public school students in the region (over 40 percent of the enrollment in New Jersey). A high percentage of these students came from minority and low-income families.

Unlike New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and other "great cities" one naturally thinks of as urban, many of the cities in the tri-state region are small. With the exception of Philadelphia, which has a population of 1,815,800, they are more apt to resemble Camden (population 84,900), Trenton (population 92,100), or Reading (population 78,700). Even Asbury Park, with only 14,700 inhabitants, is, for all practical purposes, an

urban area facing the same frustrating social and economic forces that distress its larger neighbors. The size of the urban municipalities in northeastern New Jersey is particularly misleading because they are all part of one large urban complex.

Insufficient resources, and most notably the lack of money, is one vexing problem that all urban school districts have in common, no matter what their size. When compared to state averages or to the budgets of surrounding suburban districts, urban districts have considerably fewer educational dollars at their disposal and have to compete harder for what they do have against other demands for services by the young, the old, the sick, and the unemployed. For example, in 1983-84 Camden, NJ spent $3,958 per pupil while neighboring Cherry Hill spent $4,262. This disparity existed in spite of higher local tax rates in Camden. In Reading, PA, in the same year, the expenditure per pupil was $3,328 while the suburb of Muhlenberg had $4,499 to spend per pupil. Similar comparisons can be made across the region. In general, urban districts per pupil expenditures were below state averages in 1980 and this situation has continued. If the higher costs of providing mandated services to special needs students and paying for building maintenance, insurance, and security are taken into account, the actual disparities in resources available for instruction are much greater.

Compounding the problem for many of the region's urban schools is that their plight has been largely neglected. Unlike "great city" schools that receive national attention and are often able to tap a variety of human and fiscal resources in their surroundings, including business and industry and private foundations, schools in smaller cities have almost nowhere to turn.

The once thriving manufacturing economies in their cities have all but disappeared. Attempts to attract new businesses commonly succomb to competition from more spacious, less expensive, and safer suburbs. Parents and other citizens who continue to reside in their impoverished and deteriorating neighborhoods usually are not well educated themselves, and are unprepared, or lack the self-confidence, to become meaningfully involved in school improvement. While state educational agencies are making increasing demands on these districts, they are unable to provide much direct assistance.[2]

Resource constraints put the region's urban schools in a position where they have had to reduce programs for those students who need special help. At the same time, they substantially increased staff work loads. The result is that district offices, which should be spending their time on staff development, improvement planning, and program evaluation, are overwhelmed by community relations, budgeting, staff evaluation, endless paperwork, and a continuous saga of small and large crises. Under such conditions, school improvement activities are frequently relegated to the pile of work to be put off until tomorrow or are planned and implemented hastily with predictable results.

Organizations traditionally responsible for helping urban districts foster and support improvements -- state agencies, intermediate units, and colleges and universities -- have, at various times, tried to ameliorate some of these conditions, but with minimum success. For the most part, these organizations also face resource constraints and often have different

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[2]One exception to this general neglect is the Urban Initiative in New Jersey, a comprehensive effort to foster improvement in three urban districts (Trenton, East Orange, and Neptune) by the state education department that was launched in 1984.

priorities than local school officials. Typically they provide information and one-shot training activities with little follow up and then go on their way. Not surprisingly, such circumstances make well-planned improvements in either instruction or school organization difficult, if not impossible, to initiate and sustain.

There exists, however, another type of organization that hold promise for delivering technical assistance to urban schools. This is the state-wide professional association. Several school observers have noted that while teachers and administrators may be wary of experts and external consultants, they are more open to assistance from their peers (Roberts & Kenney, 1984). There is also evidence to suggest that while one-time presentations and workshops do little good, assistance provided in a collaborative manner and over time might be effective (Crandall, Loucks, and Eisenman, 1983; Louis, Rosenblum, and Molitor, 1981). Professional associations have high credibility, good informal contacts, and do not arouse the same suspicions that "outsiders" do. They are also excellent communicators, providing natural channels for the dissemination of research and development findings through their meetings, training programs, and publications. As stated above, the underlying thesis of the project was that cooperation with these associations to address a common set of urban school problems and priorities would mobilize and focus their resources and make them a powerful new force for improving schools in the tri-state region.

New Optimism Based on Research

The conceptual foundation for the subsequent work of Urban Development and collaborating professional associations came primarily from research on

effective schools (supplemented by other work on organizational effectiveness) and school improvement and change. The effective schools research was particularly significant for both what it found and for the renewed interest and optimism it created about urban school improvement. Up until then, there was a widespread sense, buoyed by research by Coleman and Jencks, that urban schools could not do better and that they were powerless in the face of overwhelming economic and social deprivation. Many city schools were, in effect, written off as hopeless. The effective schools research demonstrated that urban schools could be made to "work," and that urban schools did exist that consistently performed beyond the statistical expectations associated with the class and/or race of their students. Research directed by Edmonds (1979), Brookover (1979), and Rutter (1979), further demonstrated that "effective schools" had some policies and practices in common that seemed to reduce the effects of socio-economic background on student achievement. Although these findings were elaborated and subjected to varying interpretations by subsequent researchers -- as was the definition of effectiveness itself -- it nevertheless appeared reasonable at the time to use them as a framework for planning urban school improvements.

One of the more interesting features of the effective schools research is the attention it pays to the school as an organization. Instead of focusing exclusively on matters of curriculum and instruction, the subjects of traditional school improvement efforts, the effective schools research addresses issues of leadership, priorities, climate, expectations, standards, and assessment of progress.

There are good reasons for taking such an organizational perspective. The school is the basic organizational unit for the delivery of

instruction. Although most learning takes place in the classroom, what students and teacher do is influenced by the policies, procedures, and climate of the entire school. While similar arguments may be made about the influence of the school district, the reality is that schools often have considerable independence in deciding how to organize their programs. Moreover, the climate of a given school is determined more by the school's administration than by district policies and procedures.

It is also the school that is the focal point of public attention. Both parents and children tend to identify more with the school than with the school district it is in or with specific programs within the school. Parents who are able to choose their residence, an option not always open to urban families, often make their selection according to the school their children will attend. When state test data are released, it is school data, not district data, that interests them most.

Although organizational improvements have been tried in schools for years, these changes often have been piecemeal and generally attempted to alter the instructional approach of the school rather than its social, cultural, or organizational characteristics. Yet, research revealed that the level of effort put into school improvement was directly related to the school's environment and organizational structure. Organizational effectiveness is determined by the people who work there, how hard they work, and how well they work together.

Application of Effective Schools Research to Secondary Schools

It should be pointed out that most of the effective schools research was conducted in elementary schools. Systematic knowledge of how secondary schools function, what factors are critical to their effectiveness, and

what change strategies are most applicable to them is limited. When the focus is placed on urban secondary schools, relevant evidence is scarce. Moreover, only a handful of studies have been conducted on intermediate schools and junior high schools (Corcoran, 1985).

Most of the reviewers of these studies have expressed some skepticism about the application of the emergent "theory" of school effectiveness to secondary schools (D'Amico, 1982; Firestone and Herriott, 1982; Rutter, 1983). Among their concerns are the limited number of studies of secondary schools, the use of a narrow range of learning outcomes, the differences in the populations served, and significant organizational differences between elementary and secondary schools. Only two major studies, the study of London secondary schools by Michael Rutter and his colleagues and the comparative analysis of public and private secondary schools in the United States by James Coleman and his associates, have attempted a systematic analysis of school variables contributing to student outcomes. Their findings, however, have been interpreted as being strikingly similar to those from elementary school studies (MacKenzie, 1983). The same factors appear to be related to effectiveness in both types of schools.

Their meaning in practice is likely to be different, however, because of differences in structure and organization in the two levels of schooling. Comparing elementary and high schools, Firestone and Herriot (1982) found high schools had:

- less consensus about goals;
- fewer formal rules (except for non-instructional activities);
- greater teacher autonomy;
- less influence by principals over policy;
- less communication among staff members; and
- more administration-teacher conflict.

They concluded that high schools were more loosely coupled, less bureaucratic, and had less centralized authority over curriculum and policy.

There are other critical organizational differences. High schools tend to be larger institutions in which administrators are faced with greater spans of control. Teachers are content specialists and more strongly influenced by peers in their disciplines than by administrators. Students in high schools are older and do not accede automatically to the wishes of adults. Order and work demands must be negotiated in secondary schools. Student interests are strongly influenced by the social and economic environment in which they attend school. Secondary students also have more freedom, more mobility, and more options. In sum, motivation to perform school tasks is likely to be even more problematic and varying than it is among younger students (Corcoran, 1985).

These factors influence organizational effectiveness directly or indirectly, and they suggest that the research findings on elementary schools be applied to secondary schools only with caution. Even if the core propositions apply, their expression in practice is likely to be different.

Nevertheless, Urban Development decided to use the effective schools research, with its limitations, as the basis upon which to design a secondary school improvement program. The findings were consistent with those in the school improvement literature and studies of organizational effectiveness in the private sector (Clark, Astuto, and Lotto, 1984). And they were accepted as a valid framework for action by most practitioners. Hence, it appeared that the effective school findings were likely to fit, with some adaptation, any school, regardless of grade level, size, or other characteristics.

Improvement of Secondary Schools

Research has demonstrated that urban public secondary schools can be improved. Such results are not attained, however, by adopting technical gimmicks or incremental curriculum reforms. Significant improvement requires a reexamination of organizational basics: work norms, management, staff competence, standards, and so on. A decade of studies on improvement efforts and the diffusion of innovations provides some "do's and don'ts" for improvement programs. The major obstructions to urban school improvement cited in the literature are:

1. The assumption that the problems of effectiveness are primarily technical and can be solved with new curricula or instructional techniques (Berman, 1981).

2. The lack of consensus about goals, poor internal communications, and weak incentives for cooperation that are typical of public secondary schools. The larger the school or school district, the more severe these problems will be, which is why improvements often are easier to implement in small schools and small districts (Crandall, Loucks, and Eisenman, 1983;) (Miles, 1981).

3. The assumption that improvements can be attained by training individual teachers or administrators who then will implement the new ideas in their schools with little or no support (Miles, 1981).

4. The use of top-down approaches to decision-making and planning that fail to involve the individuals who are closest to the problems, and fail to develop understanding or commitment among those who must implement the changes (Berman, 1981; Bassin, Gross, and Jordan, 1979; Louis, Rosenblum, and Molitor, 1981).

5. Political interference during the implementation process from interest groups or board members or an abandonment of the program because a leader departs (Pincus and Williams, 1979).

6. The lack of external assistance to school staff who must implement the program or the failure to provide such assistance for a long enough time period (Crandall, Loucks, and Eisenman, 1983; Louis, Rosenblum, and Molitor, 1981).

These are some of the negative lessons from the research on school improvement. There are some positive findings as well. For example, it is now generally accepted that the individual school is the proper site for planning improvements. That is the place where the work of education is conducted and any changes in the work must be implemented by the staff of the school. Thus, it is not surprising that a number of studies have concluded that planning and problem-solving at the building level are associated with successful implementation (Crandall, Loucks, and Eisenman, 1983; Louis and Rosenblum, 1981).

A second lesson drawn from the same research has to do with the importance of participation. Full implementation of a new educational practice is more likely when teaching staff have been involved in the problem-solving and planning process (Louis, Rosenblum, and Molitor, 1981). This is especially important for educators who have developed a healthy skepticism about new improvement efforts -- and are still wondering what happened to last year's initiatives. These educators must be convinced there will be practical payoffs before they will invest their time and energy in new initiatives. They also must be convinced that the district or building leaders are serious about school improvement and not merely using rhetoric about improvement to enhance their public image.

Trust is a critical ingredient. The quality of the relationships in the school, between the principal and the teachers and among the teachers themselves, shapes the course of an improvement program. No new approach can work if people are unwilling to take risks and be responsible for its success or failure. But, risking requires trust. If people make an honest effort to try something new and are punished if their innovation fails to produce the desired results, the capability of the school and district to improve may be permanently damaged.

Organizational development offers an approach to school improvement that explicitly seeks to build commitment and overcome cynicism. At the same time, organizational development focuses attention on the examination of organizational culture (work norms, for example) and improvement of the systems and procedures used by the organization. Applied behavioral science and management science are combined to develop strategies to improve communication, build trust and cooperation, enhance an organization's problem-solving and decision-making capabilities, strengthen its planning processes, and establish collaborative working environments. A recent review of the use of organizational developments in schools found it was effective in the limited number of known applications. The review concluded that organizational development strategies have great potential for use in schools (Fullan, Miles, and Taylor, 1980). Organizational development can help restore a sense of communication within a school, overcome the isolation of staff, and create the conditions associated with effective schools (Schmuck, Francisco, and Bell, 1979). This approach may be particularly suited for use in high schools where organizational complexity, strong content orientation, disagreement about goals, and traditional patterns of thinking make change particularly difficult.

A fourth essential condition for school improvement is support from groups external to the school. Successful implementation appears to be much more likely when central office staff provide active support but are not overly directive (Berman, 1981; Fullan, 1982). Active approval by the district leadership and support from the community are needed for any program that takes time and resources and proposes to alter the experiences provided to students.

Urban Development attempted to avoid the pitfalls described above and to build on the positive findings. The effective schools research was incorporated as a diagnostic framework within an organizational development model. Participation was designed into the program and emphasis was placed on developing commitment and trust among all parties. The emphasis was initially placed on the school as a unit (although it was soon discovered that the district had a critical role to play) and support from several external sources was planned.

The rationale for the project thus rested on a solid research base and a clear understanding of the needs of the region's urban areas. The strategy, however, was novel, perhaps even risky. For it assumed that the limited resources of Urban Development could be used to mobilize and focus the larger resources of statewide organizations and that they would be willing and able to serve as vehicles for research-based programs designed to meet the needs of urban districts.

The Project Goals

The Urban Development project pursued the thesis that existing organizations can have a significant impact on the improvement of urban secondary schools if they work together, if they make greater use of research on school effectiveness and the information and products generated by the research and development community, and if they make long term commitments to projects designed to improve the quality of urban education. The task of the component staff was to stimulate and support collaboration. This was to be accomplished through the pursuit of six project goals outlined in Table One.

The six goals overlap and complement one another. Most project activities contributed to the attainment of multiple goals. While the goals were a useful framework for reporting progress to the National Institute of Education, they are not used as the basis for this report because of their interactive character and because this report focuses on the larger thesis that shaped the setting of these goals. However, the goals must be understood in order to appreciate decisions that were made about collaborative projects. They provided some criteria for selecting associations and activities. Table One displays some of the activities undertaken to achieve the six goals. Any given collaborative project with an association or civic organization involved multiple goals and, hence, a variety of activities. A complete list of products and publications resulting from the project is found in Appendix B.

Table One

Goals of the Urban Development Project

Goal 1	Project Activities
Developing Coalitions for School Improvement	• establishing relationships with statewide professional associations, parent and community groups, state agencies, and urban school districts • linking collaborating organizations to each other • developing an urban school improvement focus among collaborating organizations
Goal 2:	
Advocating Increased Utilization Research	• bringing pertinent research on of school effectiveness and organizational change to the attention of collaborating organizations • using research to clarify urban school issues, suggest options for improvement, and put theories into practice • developing research topics into training materials, programs, or publications for collaborating organizations
Goal 3:	
Clarifying Improvement Priorities for Urban Secondary Schools	• developing a clear understanding of urban secondary school problems and needs among collaborating organizations • designing suitable approaches to school improvement for collaborating organizations
Goal 4:	
Training to Focus and Support School Improvement Initiatives	• developing training materials for collaborating organizations

- conducting training programs for collaborating organizations
- developing capability of collaborating organizations to design and conduct their own training programs
- suggesting directions for state and local school improvement policies

Goal 5:

Supporting Building-Level Improvement Efforts

- developing and implementing programs of teacher-administrator, labor-management cooperation in school improvement
- training schools in critical thinking skills

Goal 6:

Increasing Understanding of School Improvement Processes

- conducting forums and conferences conferences on school improvement issues

  documenting portions of Urbar Development's school improvement experience
- publishing research syntheses and articles on school improvement

The Role of Professional and Civic Associations

This section describes the roles professional and civic associations played as collaborators in school improvement and includes discussions of their commitment to urban school improvement, the negotiation process, constraints on collaborative relationships, and the changes in strategies that resulted from their involvement.[3]

Commitment to Urban School Improvement

Several factors weighed in Urban Development's decision to approach a given association for collaborative work. First, and foremost, was an association's commitment to urban school improvement. Some associations such as the Urban Schools Superintendents of New Jersey (USSNJ) and the Pennsylvania League of Urban Superintendents (PLUS) had an urban focus and thus were logical groups to enlist in the project. Other associations drew a large portion of their membership from urban districts and it was believed that they might be willing to collaborate in joint ventures as a way of serving their urban members. It was also important that the members and staff of collaborative associations held views about urban school improvement that were compatible with the main premises of Urban Development's research-based school improvement approach -- that is, that associations could have a significant impact on the improvement of urban schools if they worked together, if they made use of research on school change and organizational effectiveness, and if they were willing to make long-term commitments of resources.

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[3] A description of the professional and civic association that collaborated with Urban Development is provided in Appendix A.

Training and Dissemination Capacity

Urban Development also hoped to collaborate with those associations in the region that already had some training and dissemination capability, or at least had the resources to develop them. The component's plan was to train the trainers and then work in an advisory or technical assistance capacity while association trainers trained their members. The New Jersey Parent-Teachers Association (NJPTA), for example, which eventually played a significant role in training parents and community groups to use school effectiveness research in policy analysis, was known for its fairly sophisticated dissemination structure.[4] This dissemination structure had the potential of gaining a high degree of statewide visibility for Urban Development activities and programs. An additional benefit of working with this group was, of course, its non-educator perspective on urban school problems and improvement strategies.

As negotiations with associations progressed, however, it became apparent that although training capability was important, other considerations such as the scope of members' influence on the implementation, testing, and dissemination of school improvement approaches in urban districts, was equally important. USSNJ was a case in point. The goals of this group were primarily to influence state policy, with financial problems and policies receiving most of their attention. Yet, members of this group led school districts accounting for nearly half of New Jersey's students and virtually all of the state's urban districts. Their support of

[4]Urban Development worked with the NJPTA to design a series of information and skill development seminars to help NJPTA leaders develop and manage groups and strengthen the PTA's influence in educational policy making. Out of this project came The New Jersey PTA Leadership Training Guide, a self-instructional handbook that helps PTA leaders conduct leadership training seminars.

improvement programs, then, was essential. Conversely, their opposition could signal the death knell for proposed improvements.

In the end, the training and dissemination capabilities of the 11 associations that collaborated with Urban Development varied widely. For most, training and staff development were not major priorities. Their principal purpose was to protect their members' interests through lobbying and collective bargaining. Inservice activities were important but clearly a secondary function.

Large associations had a greater capability to initiate and sustain training programs than smaller ones because they tended to have the financial and staff resources to support them. The New Jersey Education Association (NJEA), for example, had its own Instruction and Training Division staffed by nearly a dozen professionals.[5] In addition, many NJEA field representatives had training experience. There were also adjunct trainers on the NJEA payroll -- teachers who provided training services as needed. Nonetheless, prior to its experience with the development and implementation of School Effectiveness Training (SET), the association had no history in training its members for school-based programs or working directly with school administrators in school improvement. The New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA) similarly had a strong inservice staff and a tradition of intensive training for its members. Yet, here again,

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[5]NJEA designed SET as a way to put the effective schools research into practice. The program brings elementary school staff together in producing and following an action plan for improving those school conditions associated with effective schooling. Urban Development helped NJEA refine the program, disseminate it, plan and conduct SET training institutes, provide follow-up assistance at participating schools, repackage training materials, and document development activities. Urban Development also developed and piloted a secondary school version of the program and documented its implementation in four sites.

less emphasis was placed on school improvement than on issues of bargaining, budgeting, board conduct, and the like.

The availability of such training resources was rare, however. Most of the associations were more akin to the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association (NJPSA), which stretched its limited dollar and person power to hold an annual statewide conference and three or four regional conferences a year.[6] A few associations, the Pennsylvania Associations of Elementary and Secondary School Principals (PAESSP) being one, had no inservice experience at all prior to its collaboration with Urban Development.[7] Although individual association leaders had training and staff development experience (for example, most members of NJPSA, PAESSP, and USSNJ had significant staff development experience at their schools), staff development was not these individuals' role in the

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[6]The New Jersey Center for Principals and Supervisors established by NJPSA offers a series of seminars on effective school management. The center has five major goals: (1) to help building administrators become more effective educational leaders; (2) to identify and exchange information about effective school policies and practices; (3) to create networks of building administrators who can help one another; (4) to provide a forum for discussing educational policy issues; and (5) to recognize building administrators whose skills and effectiveness have enabled them to improve public schools. The center began operation in 1982-83 and continues to function. Since its inception NJPSA has received two foundation grants to design and implement training programs in the areas of strategic planning and clinical supervision. Additionally, NJPSA has added one full-time professional trainer to its staff.

[7]PAESSP represents two separate associations, one for elementary and one for secondary principals, that share a common executive director and small staff. PAESSP worked with Urban Development to design and deliver a series of leadership seminars for teams of principals from 10 small cities. These teams were selected by the districts in cooperation with the associations. Seminar topics included improving school climate, leadership style, time management, and improving communications and public relations. The second set of seminars was attended by new teams and covered some new topics, such as diagnosing your school as an organization, problem-solving and managing change. PAESSP is now seeking funds to continue and extend this activity.

association. Most association staff themselves had little or no experience in training. Also, because few associations had any regular contact with the research and development network, staff development activities that did exist were only randomly related to the growing knowledge base of effective teaching and effective schools. Training topics were usually selected to please individual members or because they were the latest fad, not because they were the subject of new and pertinent research findings that could contribute to school improvement. In most cases, staff development targeted at school improvement consisted of providing information about techniques used in other schools or districts, or about how one school solved a particular problem.

Selecting Associations As Partners

The Director of the Urban Development project was a former state education department official who had worked closely with the major education groups in New Jersey. These previous contacts provided not only a working knowledge of the organizations and personal relationships with their staff but a basis for trust. Other Urban Development staff members had similar although less well-developed relationships with associations in Pennsylvania. The New Jersey origins of the project, however, shaped it from its inception. The first project activities were launched in New Jersey and these commitments, and their initial success, built in a bias toward that state that the project never entirely eliminated.

Staff of New Jersey associations did help introduce the Urban Development approach to affiliated associates in neighboring states. NJEA, for example, was instrumental in introducing SET to the Pennsylvania State Education Association (PEA). Likewise, PLUS was introduced to the Urban

Development approach when it was invited to attend a conference of the USSNJ. When the director of Urban Development approached the director of PAESSP, he used the director of NJPSA as a reference. These introductions and referrals by peers appeared to give Urban Development some credibility among those groups with which it had not previous contact.

In the final analysis, a combination of factors influenced Urban Development's decisions about which associations to work with. Initially, there was pressure to get started because the project had been delayed several months due to negotiations over project's workscope. So personal contacts in New Jersey combined with association interest and capability determined the initial decisions. Subsequently, more consideration was given to the association's willingness to undertake long-term projects and to make substantial resource commitments. In addition, after the first year, considerable effort was made to expand the activity into Pennsylvania and Delaware. Success in Pennsylvania was limited by geography, lack of previous contacts with associations, and association apathy on urban issues. No activity was initiated in Delaware because of the small size of statewide associations and the dominant roles of the state education agencies and local superintendents.

Negotiating Projects

The Urban Development project was not merely another research and development program training trainers and producing training materials. It was an action project which required negotiation, adaptation, customized production, and entrepreneurship. To be successful, component staff had to respond quickly to new opportunities that furthered the achievement of the

program's goals and to balance the needs of schools with those of collaborating associations.

The impact of Urban Development's work was tied directly to the relevance collaborative activities had to achieving the goals of the associations, as well as, of course, participating school districts and schools. Different goals created different training needs, provided different opportunities for improvement, and required different implementation and dissemination strategies. For this reason, Urban Development staff took great care in the negotiation process to understand the goals and organizational environment of each association and to place these goals in a school improvement context.

In a number of instances, initial contacts were facilitated by already-formed relationships between Urban Development and association staff. This was the case with the Philadelphia Home-School Council (PHSC), whose former president had worked with Urban Development staff on another project and served as a reference when Urban Development staff introduced themselves to the new president.[8] The fact that, by this time, the NJPTA leadership program was available and the incoming PHSC president was interested in using it, along with an endorsement of the project by Philadelphia's superintendent of schools, helped get collaboration underway as well.

The negotiation of collaborative projects was usually carried out by the director of Urban Development and the executive director and/or a committee of association members. Some associations already had committees

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[8]Urban Development designed a series of seminars to help the PHSC deal with specific leadership issues such as money management and membership recruitment. It also helped the association identify presentors for its seminars, obtain resources, and produce materials for seminar participants.

with responsibility for determining staff development programs in place. Typically, in these cases, initial discussions took place between the two directors, and Urban Development staff worked with the committees to focus and plan specific work. Priorities and programs were selected depending on a number of factors, among them, the needs of the membership, the capabilities and resources of the association, and even the geography of the state. NJPSA's decision to create a principals' center is an example.

At the onset of the principals' center project, Urban Development staff worked with an inservice committee of high school principals. This task force reviewed the effective schools literature and the work that was then emerging on the role of the principal. It also identified the competencies needed by high school principals and set the association's inservice priorities accordingly. The result of this joint work was a decision to design a management development program for high school principals. Before the program was completed, however, a more ambitious decision was made, partly in response to material obtained at an NIE-sponsored meeting on the principalship. This was to create a Center for Principals and Supervisors modeled after the Harvard Principals Center. Urban Development's role was to develop a prospectus for the center and help it get organized. Once underway, topics for training were decided by association leadership, who then appointed a seven-member leadership training committee, including one Urban Development staff member, to work out the details of content, processes, and delivery.

Lacking the resources and staff to undertake an effort as ambitious as a principals center, PAESSP took a different tack to principal training. This association established a committee of principals from Pennsylvania's small cities -- communities such as Allentown, Reading, Harrisburg,

Scranton, Erie, and Lancaster -- to work with Urban Development staff in designing a leadership training program. Unlike the NJPSA, which made the hprincipals center open to all administrators willing to pay a cost recovery fee, with preference and a special discount given to association members, PAESSP asked district superintendents to review its program and then negotiated with them to select a team of four principals to attend a series of five seminars, with meals and other expenses paid by the districts.

Geography was another problem for Pennsylvania associations. Long distances between cities prevented many members from actively participating in their professional associations. This, in turn, affected the capacity of some associations to deliver programs to their members. Such was the problem with PLUS, which had a difficult time attracting its members to meetings and conferences. In addition, the lack of monetary resources and staff seriously limited the services the association could offer its members.

In only one instance were training topics submitted to the association's entire membership for approval. The USSNJ executive committee presented its members, between 45 and 50 in number, with a listing of training topics, all of which were approved. Later on, Urban Development staff worked with the superintendents to conduct an Urban High School Needs Survey which helpe set priorities for future inservice.

In two cases, associations already had ongoing projects that fit into their collaboration with Urban Development. NJEA had begun developing SET and had piloted it in one school when Urban Development became involved with the program. Similarly, NJSBA already had an Urban Education Study Committee looking into problems of school finance and developing an

association agenda for improving the quality of urban education when it was approached to join forces with Urban Development.[9]

Those associations that decided to collaborate with Urban Development did so for a variety of reasons. For virtually all of the associations, Urban Development represented access to a vast pool of research and development knowledge and resources usually out of their reach. Joining in the Urban Development project was one way of gaining access to those resources, as well as to other kinds of cost-free technical assistance. USSNJ, for example, looked to Urban Development for help in increasing its members' ability to use statistical data and research in influencing state policy decisions. PAESSP, on the other hand, saw alignment with Urban Development as a way of acquiring research-based staff development programs that it did not have the resources to design and deliver itself.

It was not unusual to find associations using the project as a political or public relations vehicle. This was especially true of those associations consciously trying to enhance their image and visibility as knowledgeable and active advocates of quality education. NJEA, for example, which was trying to establish itself as being more than a collective bargaining organization developed SET as a way of demonstrating its concern for

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[9]Working with NJSBA's Urban Education Study Committee, Urban Development staff designed seven seminars, each around one key issue in school improvement. Each seminar consisted of readings and a presentation that reviewed relevant research, social indicators, and effective policy and practice. The presentation was followed by a discussion of the implications of the research findings for urban school boards and for NJSBA. The results of these seminars were reviewed and debated, and then presented to the Delegate Assembly in the form of recommendations for urban school improvement. Thirty-four recommendations were adopted. Out of this project, three other activities grew: converting the report into a more general publication, planning and conducting workshops on urban school effectiveness and improvement, and developing an audit on school district effectiveness.

improving school effectiveness while also improving working conditions for its members. Similarly, the NJPTA, which had steadily been losing members because of its image as a group of "cookie bakers" was in the midst of creating a real set of issue-oriented projects around which its members could rally. Collaboration with Urban Development emphasized the association's seriousness and sincerity in this new focus.

A third reason that some associations agreed to participate in the project had to do with what they perceived as prestige in working on a school improvement program with staff from RBS. Widely known throughout the region for its work with state education agencies, RBS was viewed as a prestigious organization and collaborating with it enhanced the associations' credibility among present and potential members.

Occasionally, associations saw Urban Development as a neutral dissemination vehicle for spreading their points of view, programs, and products to others. This was certainly the case with SET, when district administrators were sometimes more willing to accept the program because Urban Development's involvement made it seem less threatening than if it had been proposed by a teacher's union working alone.

Finally, associations joined the project because one association leader had personal interest and enthusiasm about it. The involvement of PSEA in the implementation of SET in Pennsylvania was due not so much to the commitment of the association as it was to the fact that one person championed the program and made it his own project. In each association, champions emerged who guided the projects and often expanded the collaboration into new areas.

Not all contacts were successful in drawing professional associations into collaboration. Despite several attempts, Urban Development was unable

to cultivate a relationship with PLUS until four years into the project. Earlier efforts had all been stymied by internal communication problems within the association and by uncertainties surrounding the support to be provided by the Pennsylvania State Department of Education. All attempts to involve professional associations in Delaware in the Urban Development project ended in failure. One reason is that Delaware is an essentially rural state and, although not unsympathetic to the project's goals and means, its associations were reluctant to put their time, energy, and resources into urban education.

There were also other reasons that mitigated against Delaware's associations taking part in the project. One is that its statewide associations are small and have few or no full-time staff. Another is that because the state is so small, the Department of Public Instruction is able to service all of Delaware's school districts itself. Since the state so dominates staff development activities, associations have no history of engaging in any kind of training. Nor do they play a strong role in the state's educational or political structure.

Constraints on Collaborative Relationships

Just as each collaborating association made a unique contribution to the urban school improvement effort, each also presented its own constraints. These usually stemmed from the type and structure of the association. Expansion of SET, for example, was limited to districts with NEA affiliates as the local bargaining unit. This stipulation prevented the program from being introduced in major cities such as Newark, Philadelphia, or Pittsburgh, all three of which are American Federation of Teachers (AFT) affiliates. Moreover, according to the agreement with NJEA, Urban Development would not use the program in schools without NJEA's involvement.

Varying degrees of constraint were also imposed by the policies and priorities of the state association's national organization. The original plan was to operate the New Jersey Assessment and Development Center (NJADC) under the auspices of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, but to administer it through a committee made up of representatives from Urban Development, NJSBA, and NJPSA.[10] This scheme was rejected by the NASSP, which agreed to participate only if the president of the NJPSA agreed to serve alone as center director. The original plan also was for NJADC to provide diagnosis and training to principals but NASSP's policies restricted its functions to serving those seeking principalships.

In a couple of collaborations, specifically with the PHSC and PSEA, potential problems could have arisen fr . Urban Devel ment staff working primarily with one association leader. In such situations, issues are difficult to assess objectively and problems are difficult to identify because only one association staff's views are known. This makes it difficult to tell if the issues being discussed are on the association's agenda or the individual's agenda. And, continuity under such circumstances would most likely not be maintained if during the course of the project, that individual is succeeded by someone else. This was, in

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[10]The New Jersey Assessment and Development Center was designed to help school districts assess the abilities of candidates for principalships in 12 key skill areas and to provide professional development programs in these areas for both candidates and incumbents. Educators who are assessed are then able to use the results to plan their own professional training. The 12 skill areas addressed by the center are: problem analysis, judgment, organizational ability, decisiveness, leadership, sensitivity, stress tolerance, oral communication skill, written communication, range of interests, personal motivation, and educational values. The center is supported by NJPSA, NJSBA, RBS, six urban school districts, and, most recently the New Jersey State Department of Education. Negotiations are underway to place the center at Kean College which would provide additional support for its activities.

fact, a problem with PLUS, which ceased collaboration when both the president and the executive director moved on to other jobs. The problem also arose with PHSC, which discontinued its workshops after its executive director resigned and a new executive director with different interests and priorities took the helm.

Time was a constraint for everyone. Collaborative projects had to fit into other ongoing activities of the associations and staff work schedules. Decision-making processes were sometimes slow, particularly in associations such as NJPSA, which had several levels of decision makers and planners who had to approve actions. In general, reports and products had to be reviewed by association staff to assure that they did not infringe upon collective bargaining contracts or association policy decisions. These reviews and the subsequent revisions sometimes held up progress longer than Urban Development anticipated.

Time was a major constraint in working with NJPTA also. As in volunteer organizations generally, NJPTA's most active members were people who held leadership positions in a number of other organizations as well. Consequently, they were often hard pressed for meeting, development, and delivery time. This problem, for much the same reasons, was also a problem for those people receiving NJPTA training.

Another problem that arose with the NJPTA was that trainees were relatively unsophisticated in the training process itself, that is, in how to be trained. The goal of the association was to train a group of parent and community leaders who could influence the course of school improvement. It appeared, at times, that some trainees were participating in the training experience for entertainment rather than for the serious acquisition of new skills and information. To some extent, this problem may have reflected

the lack of widespread support for the association's school improvement activities. Although a few state-level association leaders treated urban school improvement as an important association goal, this was not always the case at the country or local level. County and local leadership tended to consider the teaching of group leadership and management skills to local leaders a more important goal than improving urban schools. The problem here appeared to be a lack of consensus on goals and priorities between decision makers and the local members whose responsibility it was to carry out those decisions.

The lack of money and other resources continued to be constraints throughout the project. Most associations, however, were able to tailor their school improvement projects around whatever funds and other resources were available. Only two associations, NJEA and NJSBA had sufficient budgets for large-scale and sustained training activities. PAESSP had essentially no resources for training whatsoever. The association arranged for facilities and recruited participants for its training programs, but was able to do little else.

Other constraints occurred simply because of the lack of research knowledge in a particular area. The notable example is in the development of Joining Forces (JF), the secondary school development program.[11] SET was a program designed for elementary and middle schools. Initially, it

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[11] Collaborating with NJEA and PSEA, Urban Development designed an approach to secondary school improvement that encourages all school staff to develop a commitment to school renewal through participation, sharing, and work toward a common purpose. Specifically, Urban Development collaborated with individual secondary schools to guide them in collecting data on critical dimensions of school life, including climate, curriculum, and instruction; developing problem-solving processes; collectively creating plans for improvement and institutional development; implementing those plans; and evaluating their progress.

was assumed that a parallel program could be developed for secondary schools by replicating the approach taken in SET; that is, by identifying from the research the major factors related to high school effectiveness and using them as a framework for organizational analysis. The results of the analysis would, then, shape an improvement plan for the school. Before long, weaknesses in this line of thinking surfaced. Initial analyses showed that school effectiveness research done in elementary schools was not that easily applied to high schools. One of the chief reasons for this was the difference in how elementary schools and secondary schools were organized (Corcoran, 1985; Firestone & Herriott, 1982). Furthermore, even if it could be demonstrated that basic findings were applicable, there was reason to believe that research conducted in elementary schools may not have much credibility with high school staffs. Compounding the situation was the fact that the most well-known and best-designed study of secondary school effectiveness had been conducted in Great Britain (Rutter, Maughen, Mortimore, & Ousten, 1979).

It was, finally, reviews of research and extensive discussions with practitioners that identified the underlying problems: elementary schools had clear goals imposed upon them by the "back to basics" movement, as well as a simple, more adaptable organizational structure. High schools, on the other hand, lacked both. Not only did they not have goal consensus, but most often they were without a coherent mission, curriculum, accountability structure, and feedback system. Moreover, their departmentalized structure diffused authority, limited communication, and limited the leadership role of the principal. On the basis of this information, Urban Development decided to combine the effective schools research with an organizational development strategy as a basis for the program. Using data collected

through a variety of means, data feedback techniques were used with a small council which set priorities and recruited other staff into the improvement process.

Changing Strategies

Over the course of the Urban Development project, each collaborative activity changed from its initial conception. Some, like NJEA's SET, were significantly refined and, as they matured, came to involve additional school faculty and other staff and larger numbers of districts. The SET program probably demonstrates the most significant changes that took place in any of the association projects. Part of the reason for this was the scope of the project itself. The development, testing, and dissemination of SET (and Joining Forces) was the largest collaborative project conducted in the Urban Development effort. Another reason was that the combined resources of Urban Development and NJEA made successive revisions of the program possible. The evolution of this program is discussed fully in a documentation study conducted by RBS.[12] Nonetheless, a brief review of the changes that took place may be of interest. The revisions in the SET included the following:

- Materials were reviewed and improved to reflect additional research on school effectiveness and improvement as well as to put the research findings in a more usable form.
- The emphasis shifted from the research content of the program to implementation issues such as participatory management, group decision making, and planning technique as the program's focus on organizational effectiveness grew.

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[12] See Dawson, J. (1985). School improvement programs in thirteen urban schools: A report of a four-year documentation study. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

- The School Assessment Survey was added as a diagnostic tool to help identify areas in school climate and other factors that need improvement in the school.

- Training was reduced from two and one half to one and one half days to accommodate participants' time constraints and also reduce program costs.

- Follow-up procedures were established to supplement participants' initial training.

- School districts were asked to assume greater responsibility for follow-up and inservice support.

- The focus shifted from the school as implementor to the district as implementor in response to recognition that although school improvement takes place at the building level, active support from the district is essential for projects to succeed.

- Finally, and most importantly, the focus of the program shifted from school effectiveness to management-labor cooperation for school improvement.

Other projects were modified, too, in response to changing needs of the associations and their ability to carry out their collaborative functions. As the NJPSA principals center became more established, Urban Development assumed less responsibility for it and the NJPSA assumed more. The program was eventually integrated into the association's normal inservice structure and Urban Development's role became strictly advisory in nature. In response to user evaluations, the NJPTA leadership training workshops, initially composed of six one-day workshops, were revised to two one-day workshops. Although workshop topics and activities were well received by pilot users and the delivery strategy was deemed effective, the association's leadership decided that in order to retain participants' interest in the project, program content should change every year. Rather than attempt major content revisions, however, the NJPTA steering committee decided to use the existing leadership development package as a model for a training package that would help local leaders develop their own programs

according to local needs. Similarly, the PAESSP, in 1984, changed its delivery system from monthly seminars to a week-long summer leadership institute. The reason for this change was to accommodate trainees, work schedules and time constraints as well as to reduce the need for frequent travel. The PHSC, after experiencing problems in obtaining workshop leaders and scheduling workshop sessions that a large number of its members could attend, reduced the number of workshops it offered. In the second year of the project, the entire workshop delivery system was taken over by PHSC and, Urban Development's role became an advisory one.

The Effects and Impact of the Project

How effective was the Urban Development project? How sound was its primary thesis that associations could be a new force for school improvement? Which of its diverse collaborative ventures were the most effective? What was the overall impact of the project? These questions have come up repeatedly in discussions of the project with its sponsors NIE and with colleagues at other regional laboratories. They are natural and important questions to raise, but they are not easily answered. Answers require some common understandings about the nature of the project, the meaning and scope of impact, and the criteria to be used to determine its effectiveness. In this section, these issues will be briefly addressed and then the impact of the project will be examined from three perspectives: the associations themselves, the urban schools and school districts that were the targets of the joint ventures, and the overall climate for school improvement.

What kind of project was Urban Development? It has been described on various occasions with reference to terms such as knowledge utilization, school improvement, technical assistance, human resource development, and dissemination. Any or all of these concepts might be appropriately applied to the program, but it is better understood as a social action program and as a technical support system for a diverse set of programs initiated with collaborating organizations. Sometimes Urban Development staff determined the activity to be undertaken and went looking for a collaborating organization. In other cases, Urban Development staff adapted to an initiative of another organization. In all cases, however, the activities were collaboratively planned and implemented. This partnership approach muddles the assessment of impact. The linkages are complex and sometimes indirect.

The attribution of causes and effects is difficult. Why was an action taken? Who was responsible? Why did it succeed or fail? Who was responsible? These are not easily answered questions.

Urban Development was not a narrowly conceived R&D project in pursuit of internally determined goals. Nor was it simply a service project responding to the requests and needs of other organizations. It stood at the heart of a network of organizations concerned with urban schools; a network it attempted to expand, shape, and influence based on staff analysis of the conditions in urban schools, the opportunities for action provided by the network, and an action agenda shaped by research on school effectiveness and improvement.

How then should its impact be assessed? What range of impacts should be considered? What impacts can be attributed to Urban Development's actions when almost all activities taken involved multiple parties? Like organizational effectiveness, impact is a construct, an abstraction. Unlike concepts, constructs cannot be specified exactly; their boundaries cannot be precisely drawn. For this reason, the impact of the Urban Development project must be viewed from multiple perspectives. Three will be discussed here; these are the impact of project activities on:

1. the collaborating associations,
2. urban schools and districts, and
3. the overall climate for urban school reform and improvement.

It must be understood that not all of the outcomes described below can be credited solely to the work of the Urban Development project staff. Many were indirect rather then direct results of Urban Development activities. A direct effect for example, would occur when a change took place in a participating organization as a direct result of action on the

part of Urban Development. Indirect effects are those that resulted from the activities of its partners, activities that would have been unlikely without assistance from the project.

The project intentionally sought to push its collaborating organizations into the lead and to strengthen their sense of ownership over projects and products that were developed jointly. This strategy was intended to encourage project development and continuation. Over time, however, it also diminished Urban Development's role in the activity and the amount of credit that it could claim for success (or conversely, the amount of responsibility held for failure). It should not be inferred that the indirect effects were unintentional, mere serendipity. They were the primary results sought by the project. While indirect effects could not be controlled by Urban Development or achieved solely through its activities, they would not have occurred without stimulation, persuasion, and support from the program.

There was no single or comprehensive evaluation of the Urban Development project. Resources were set aside to document the two building and district programs, SET and Joining Forces, undertaken with NJEA and PSEA. The results of this effort were reported annually to NIE and are summarized in a report on 13 of the sites (Dawson, 1985). But there was no formal data collection to assess the degree of attainment of other goals including the impact of the project on the associations. Nor was data collected to determine the effectiveness of other project activities. The evidence assembled in the discussion of impact, therefore, is largely qualitative and anecdotal and draws heavily from project reports and interviews with association and district staff.

Impact on the Associations

Collaboration with Urban Development had a significant impact on the associations. The effects of the project can be found in:

- their commitment to urban school improvement,
- the content and distribution of training programs,
- their interaction and cooperation with urban districts,
- their use of R&D information,
- the creation of coalitions of associations to support school improvement activities, and
- their interest in continuing and expanding school improvement activities and undertaking new initiatives.

These topics are discussed below.

Commitment. The Urban Development Component worked with 11 professional and civic organizations in the tri-state region. One outcome of this collaboration has been a new commitment to improving education in the region's urban centers. Although three of the organizations (USSNJ, PLUS, and the PHSC) had a focus on urban education and drew their members from solely urban school districts, the others did not. Recognition of the severity of the problems in urban schools and school districts had led some associations, however, (i.e. NJSBA, NJEA, and PAESP) to create committees or task forces dealing specifically with the issues of urban education. These committees and task forces provided a useful entry vehicle for Urban Development and often served as internal champions of the joint endeavors.

Table Two presents the evidence of association commitment to the improvement of urban schools for six of the general membership associations collaborating with Urban Development. New energy, additional funds, and new programs were directed at urban schools by these associations. Clearly the impact of the project was stronger in New Jersey than in Pennsylvania --

Table Two

Evidence of Commitment to Urban Education

NJEA	Staff time, materials, publicity, consultants, training expenses, and strong organizational endorsement. Funds also provided for SET filmstrip, training of trainers, training of school council members, and follow-up consultants	SET and SSDP introduced in seven urban districts with three to four new districts to be added in 1985-86	• 5-year commitment support for SET • Support for school effectiveness legislation • National dissemination of SET materials
NJSBA	Staff time, materials, printing, training costs. Funds provided for district audit task force, operations of NJADC, and workshop staff	• Dissemination of The Quest for Excellence • Board workshops on school improvement • NJADC • Information bank on exemplary practices	• 34 recommendations on urban education adopted by Delegate Assembly • Joined consortuim to from NJADC
NJPSA	Staff time, materials and training costs. Funds provided for subsidy to Principals and Supervisors Center and NJADC. Foundation grants obtained for development of training programs	• Principals and Supervisors Center • NJADC	• More intense inservice • New unified inservice program • Creation of a foundation to support professional improvement
NJPTA	Volunteers, materials and training costs	PTA Leadership Program	National dissemination of program
PAESSP	Staff time and costs of facilities for inservice	Principals Leadership Program	Seeking funds for continued inservice program

PSEA	Staff time and materials	Moderate support for SET in Reading: Dissemination to four other sites (one urban, three rural)	Endorsement of SET/Joining Forces

an imbalance noted earlier in this report. Clearly the actual level of effort and commitment varies among the six associations listed. Some like NJEA and NJSBA have devoted significant amounts of staff time and association funds to the joint projects and related activities. Others like PAESSP contributed less, but proportionate to their total resources, made as great an effort. Clearly also the scope and scale of activities varies depending on the association's priorities. Thus, PSEA was slower to commit resources to the implementation of SET in urban districts because it has fewer urban members than NJEA and must spread its services across a large, and predominately, rural state. It is important to note that teachers in the two largest cities in Pennsylvania are represented by the PSEA's rival, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). Other associations such as NJSPA and NJSBA were willing to actively recruit urban members to participate in joint activities but refused to offer them exclusively for this audience for fear of offending other members.

Training. Another result of the component's work with associations are training programs on school improvement strategies, effective schools practices, and related topics. Training programs to support and stimulate urban school improvement have been developed for principals, board members, teachers, and parent leaders. These programs help participants define their roles in school improvement, identify ways they can support improvement, and enhance their skills as leaders in school improvement activities. In most cases, early programs, developed with heavy involvement by Urban Development, were refined and now serve as models for the associations to follow in developing and delivering further training programs with little or no assistance from Urban Development. For example, NJSPA has developed and offered training programs for principals on problem-solving, planning

techniques, human resources development, supervision, and evaluation in the past two years. All of these programs have been modeled after the initial programs conducted by Urban Development. These new association programs are more likely to be research-based, to be intensive (two or more days), and to have built-in follow up. They make greater use of case studies and simulations and they provide for practical applications to the participant's settings. In addition, this emphasis on developing the associations' capability to prepare and manage their own professional development programs has strengthened the associations' cadre of trainers.

Cooperation with urban districts. Prior to 1980, the associations seldom worked with urban school districts in any programmatic fashion. Their contact with district staff focused on their members in those districts and on information, grievances, collective bargaining, and short-term training for individuals. The development and dissemination of SET and Joining Forces with NJEA were thus significant in a number of ways. First, traditionally, it has not been the domain of professional associations to design school improvement programs. The fact that NJEA and Urban Development were able to collaborate in the development of these programs and implement them in 11 districts across two states is indicative of the power of associations to instigate school change. Second, the effort brought NJEA and its local affiliates, into a new relationship with the participating school districts. This experience demonstrated that labor and management can work together on behalf of school improvement. This success has generated interest in the whole concept of managment-labor cooperation and the relationship between quality of worklife in schools and their effectiveness. It also has raised questions within NJEA about the

influence of management-labor cooperation on the association in the long-run and its possible conflict with larger union interests. This emerging debate, not yet resolved, may determine the future of NJEA's involvement.

Equally significant was the recruitment of six urban districts by NJSBA and NJPSA into a consortium to create the NJADC. This was a departure for both organizations in several ways. First, they agreed to concentrate the activity on urban districts, ignoring the demands and needs of other members. This is difficult for a general membership organization. Second, they were willing to pool resources and sacrifice exclusive control over the project. This also was difficult and, in practice, did not always work well. Since the activity affected NJPSA's members directly, its leaders felt a need to maintain a controlling interest in it. Maintaining the consortium spirit required constant attention and considerable diplomacy. This problem illustrates a more generic issue, the need for associations to be visible, to take credit, to demonstrate to their members that they are doing valuable things, worthy of the dues they pay.

Use of R&D information. A third outcome of the collaborative relationship between Urban Development and the associations are stronger links between the research and development network and the associations. Urban Development stressed the use of findings from the research on effective schools and organizational development in virtually all of its work. Research findings guided the design of programs and training materials, as well as the analysis of both organizational and state policies. This knowledge was shared with the associations.

Associations clearly have found these linkages to the R&D community and its products valuable. They have published research syntheses and information on exemplary practices in their newsletters and journals

Several have established ongoing relationships with the RBS Resource Center. NJSBA has developed a data bank on effective practices and is considering a proposal to create its own policy analyses and research unit. All have expressed their desire for continued collaboration with the regional laboratory.

Coalitions and mutual support. A fourth effect for the asociations has been that coalitions of organizations, many working together for the first time, have combined their resources in the pursuit of the common goal of inproving urban education. The development of these coalitions has provided opportunities for both individuals and groups to share information; develop and strengthen their support networks; and generate agendas, policies, and projects for urban school improvement.

The coalitions resulting in whole or part from Urban Development's activities include:

- the creation of NJADC by NJSBA, NJPSA, RBS, six districts and the NJ State Department of Education;
- the creation of the Urban Advocates, a loose coalition of community groups, that sponsors conferences on urban education in NJ;
- the development of the Public Education Institute at Rutgers University, an effort that brought legislators, business leaders, and civic organizations together with RBS and the university;
- NJEA/PSEA collaboration on the SET and Joining Forces programs;
- joint conferences on urban issues sponsored by USSNJ and PLUS;
- active school improvement partnerships among districts and state and local teacher organizations in 10 districts in New Jersey and Pennsylvania; and
- the creation of the Urban Coalition Task Force, an informal coalition of seven New Jersey associations, formed to review initiatives in terms of their impact on urban youth and urban schools.

Some efforts at coalitions fell short of initial expectations. For example, efforts to bring NJEA and NJPTA together to use the Principals and Supervisors Center for principals in SET schools never came to fruition. Similarly an effort to bring PSEA and the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) together to support SET died due to other political conflicts.

Additional modest examples of mutual support also can be cited. NJSBA spread information about NJEA's SET Program and NJPSA's center in its journals. Presentations on SET were given at NJSBA, USSNJ, and NJPSA conferences as were presentations on the Principal and Superivsors Center, NJADC, the PTA Leadership Program, and many substantive topics related to Urban Development's work.

Continued interest and support. All of the projects initiated by Urban Development, with two exceptions, are being continued by the collaborating agencies without any assurances of further RBS support. The two exceptions are the leadership program of the PHSC where priorities have changed and PAESSP where financial and staff limitations force the organization to seek external support if it is to continue its principals leadership program. This continued interest is perhaps the best evidence of Urban Development's success.

Impact on Urban School Districts and Schools

School districts create the environment in which school improvement takes place, so Urban Development directed much of its effort to working with both urban school boards and urban superintendents. Not only can these leaders create a climate conducive to improvement, but they are also in a position to help or hinder change. Collaboration with school boards'

and urban superintendents' associations has focused on training, policy analysis, and information on exemplary practices, all based on the literature on school effectiveness and school improvement. Urban Development and NJSBA have collaborated on developing two training programs for association members. One of these programs was "Creating Effective Schools: The Role and Responsibilities of School Board Members," a one-day leadership workshop. Participants explored the implications of the effective schools research, research on school improvement programs, and studies of effective school principals, and applied the research to the review of school improvement plans. This program has been so successful that it is now repeated annually as a regular part of NJSBA's inservice program. A second NJSBA inservice program developed with Urban Development that will be conducted annually is "The Effective District: Policies and Practices," a program that helps participants assess their districts capacities for school improvement. This program also will become a regular part of NJSBA's inservice program.

Another collaborative project of NJSBA and Urban Development resulted in the development of an audit process for school districts. This audit, based on research literature on district and school effectiveness, allows district leaders to examine their operations in seven areas: goals, curriculum, quality assurance, work climate, allocation, planning improvements, and community relations. The findings are intended to point out strengths and weaknesses and give school districts a direction for planning improvements in their central office operations. The audit is designed to be used as a self-study guide or by an external team. NJSBA

intends to train its field staff in the use of the audit and to make this service available to its member districts. It also plans to share the process with sister organizations in other states.

Working with urban superintendents in New Jersey, Urban Development staff compiled a Guide of Exemplary Practices, Policies, and Programs in Urban Districts in New Jersey. This resource guide contains descriptions of exemplary practices, policies, and programs that are effective in meeting state standards in the nine areas being monitored by the state department of education. Guides were distributed through PLUS and NJSBA, as well as to members of USSNJ. The guide has resulted in exchanges of information, cross-district visits, and adoption of new policies and programs in NJ districts. The concept of information exchange was so enthusiastically received that USSNJ now devotes one third of each monthly meeting to presentations on programs or policies of potential interest to its membership. The experience has helped legitimate craft knowledge, built the confidence of district leaders, and generally helped upgrade policies and practices in urban schools. The NJ State Department of Education, working with RBS's Regional Exchange, produced an extended version of the guide for its Urban Initiative that included much of the material contained in the first version.

In addition, Urban Development helped USSNJ prepare six position papers on major issues confronting urban district leaders. Three papers were produced in 1983. These were State Testing in the Basic Skills, Grassroots Dissemination, and New Jersey High School Graduation Standards. The following year, three more position papers were developed: Reassessing Urban Secondary Education: How Can We Renew Our High Schools?, Influencing

Legislation, Policy, and Funding to Benefit Urban Schools, and Testing and Standards of Promotion and Their Impact on Students, Schools, and School Districts. These latter papers were outgrowths of a joint conference of urban superintendents from New Jersey and Pennsylvania organized by Urban Development in the spring of 1984. They, too, were distributed throughout the region. The position papers have helped USSNJ become the most effective advocate for urban youth in the state. The association has become more sensitive to research findings, more assertive in its analysis of state policies and their impact on urban children, and more visible and effective with state policy makers.

Collaboration with NJEA in the development and implementation of SET and Joining Forces has had an impact on school districts as well, primarily through the establishment of district-level school development councils in three of the schools districts implementing SET and Joining Forces. These councils, which include district and school representatives, were established to support and coordinate building-level improvement activities and improve communication between building and district leadership. Among the problems councils have addressed have been establishing business/education partnerships, strengthening district communications, improving staff morale, improving curriculum, and creating consistent discipline policies. The activities of one district's council are being supported by a grant from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service as well as school district funds. This council is the first school district group in the country to receive federal funds to support labor-management cooperation in public education.

The SET and Joining Forces programs also have had direct impact on the participating schools. Among the many positive changes schools have undergone as a result of SET and Joining Forces, the following were listed in an RBS documentation study of the program (Dawson & D'Amico, 1984):

- Councils and task groups have been established in most schools. Some are functioning more effectively than others, but all remain alive and potentially effective.
- Teachers have more opportunities to provide input into decisions and to become involved in the development of new policies and programs.
- Communication among teachers and between teachers and administrators has increased, in some cases increasing trust.
- Staff confidence that their school can be improved has been renewed.
- Administrators have become more willing to provide time, financial assistance, and other forms of support for school improvement.
- Councils and task groups have introduced improvements in their schools, such as:
  - Discipline policies and procedures have been revised. These also include new or revised drug and alcohol abuse policies and requirements for student participation in extracurricular activities.
  - Remedial classes/programs are being considered or have been introduced on a pilot basis. One school has established a remedial writing skills center.
  - Physical plant improvements have been made, including long needed repairs, construction of a wall between two disciplinary classrooms, and remodeling of a faculty room.
  - Procedures for recognizing student achievement have been instituted. Schools have established systems for rewarding academic performance through a merit award systems and bulletin boards and other displays that acknowledge student accomplishments.
  - Three junior highs have introduced half-day orientation sessions for incoming students during which teachers help new seventh graders "learn the ropes."

- Handbooks have been written, or updated, in order to communicate school regulations more effectively to students and staff.

In addition, the SET and Joining Forces programs have unleashed an extra effort by staff to improve conditions in their schools. Teachers have given time on lunch hours, before and after school, weekends, and in the summer to work on improvement projects. These efforts, however, have been sporadic in some sites and have not always been sustained after the initial burst of enthusiasm. This is particularly true in those schools in which there was little or no district support for the program after the initial institute. In the four districts where there is strong support for the programs, this increase in discretionary effort is being recognized and rewarded in the hope that it will set new norms for professional behavior. While no clear relationships can be established between this release of energy and student achievement, over the long run, greater staff effort (and cooperation) have to pay off for students.

Overall, there were three levels of program effects: the establishment of structures for collaborative decision making and planning for school improvement (councils and task groups); the introduction of school changes by those structures; and the impacts of the structures and changes on schools. Councils and task groups were established in all 42 sites, although five councils have become inactive. All councils introduced school improvements. They included: school pride activities, motivational activities, discipline procedures, academic opportunities and standards, physical plant improvements, information distribution/communication programs, and staff development programs. However, as many of the initial changes were minor and not all increased students' opportunities to learn,

it is unclear that the councils will be able to permanently alter basic school conditions such as school climate, staff morale, and student learning. Data on the impacts of the program structures and school changes inconclusive, due primarily to their sparsity and to difficulties of interpreting them. Improvements in variables such as student achievement and teacher attendance may not be attributable to SET/JF because these program effects cannot be distinguished from the effects of other local and statewide improvement efforts. The data do indicate that some improvement has occurred. Also, there are no signs of continuing decline. In the four case studies conducted by RBS, there is evidence that staff morale, relationships between staff and administrators, and teachers' perceptions of involvement in decision making improved in two sites. However, these factors actually declined in a third site, and no significant program impacts were observed in the fourth site (Dawson, 1985).

In sum, the impact of SET and JF was significant and sustained in those schools in which the programs received strong and continued district support. This support took the form of symbolic leadership, reinforcement through coordination of SET and other administrative routines, technical assistance, funds for school councils, review of school plans, and recognition of achievements. In those sites lacking district support, the efforts were sporadic and were not sustained over time.

Summation of Urban Development's Impact

The impact of the diverse activities undertaken by Urban Development varied. Taking into account the assessment of the staffs of the collaborating organizations, the nature of the projects (knowledge utilization, human resource development, or school improvement) the likelihood of project continuation, and the evidence (anecdotal or other) of real effects

on school or district practices or policies, the activities have been catergorized into low, moderate, and high impact groupings. Tables 3, 4, and 5 array the project activities into these three categories.

Table 3 shows that long-term, labor intensive projects predictablely had more impact. It also reveals that the greatest impact occurred in New Jersey where the associations had the greatest stakes in the urban areas and where their relationships with RBS were the strongest. The other common characteristic of the activities was the prescence of a powerful champion within the association. Table 4 presents activities judged to be of moderate benefit. These are largely training or information dissemination activities which in all but one case (NJSBA) were undertaken in cooperation with associations with extremely limited resources. Hence, the potential for building on success was limited. The one exception, the NJSBA workshops, have been successful and are being continued. They fall in this category because they each reach only a small number (79-100) of board members annually.

Low impact activities include aborted efforts to launch the SET program in three New Jersey districts. These three districts are resource-poor, suffer from chronic management-labor conflict, and have had serious leadership problems (e.g., board-superintendent conflicts, turnover of superintendents, and autocratic management). In retrospect, none offered good perspectives for the SET but the severity of their problems and pressure from local association leaders on NJEA for assistance led to poor decisions to implement. The Philadelphia Home-School Council changed leadership and that killed a promising start. And the occasional papers were never disseminated effectively and probably had little effect on educational policy or practice.

Table Three
High-Impact Activities

Knowledge Dissemination	Human Resource Development	School Improvements Programs
• NJSBA/RBS publication of The Quest for Excellence (three printings)	• NJPSA/RBS initiation of the NJ Principals and Supervisors Center	• Districtwide adoption of the SET Program in Atlantic City, Asbury Park, and Jersey City, NJ and Reading, PA
• NJEA/PSEA dissemination of the SET research syntheses	• NJPSA, NJSBA, RBS collaboration with six urban districts, the NJSDE, Kean College, and NASSP to develop and implement NJADC	• Successful implementation of the SET Program in 37 of 42 sites initiated prior to June 1985
• NSSNJ and PLUS dissemination of exemplary practice information		• Implementation of Joining Forces in four pilot high schools
• Urban Development Forum on "at-risk" youth		

Table Four
Moderate-Impact Activities

Knowledge Dissemination	Human Resource Development	School Improvements Programs
• USSNJ/PLUS dissemination of policy papers	• NJSBA/RBS design and delivery of two successful workshops for school board members	• Assistance with "Thinking Skills" curriculum in Philadelphia and Baltimore
	• NJPTA/RBS design and delivery of a program for parent leaders	
• UD Forums	• PAESSP Leadership Seminar for urban principals	

Table Five
Examples of Low-Impact Activities

Knowledge Dissemination	Human Resource Development	School Improvements Programs
• UD occasional papers	• Failure to repeat the Philadelphia Home-School Council Leadership Program	Failure to obtain district support for the SET concept in Camden, Plainfield, and Paterson, NJ after initial sites were developed

Some activities are difficult to assess at this time as their full impact is not yet clear. For example, the district audit process developed with NJSBA will not be disseminated until after the project has ended and the Public Education Institute begins its work in the fall of 1985. Yet these activities may have significant long-range impact on public education.

In the next section, some of the factors affecting the degree of success of the projects undertaken with associations will be discussed.

Natural Channels: The Implications of Working Through Associations

A major premise of the Urban Development project was that statewide education associations, such as teachers organizations and parents groups might provide, "natural channels" for the dissemination of information and products from the research and development community. What is a "natural channel?" It refers to well-established, accepted lines of communication and influence. The meaning of the metaphor may become clearer if one considers the current fascination with "building networks" and "designing delivery systems for technical assistance." The connections between education associations and their members are "natural" in the sense that no government agency or external party has to build or design them. Nor are they artificial or temporary in the sense that publically funded communication systems often are. Associations have been created voluntarily (although membership is not always voluntary) and their communications with their membership are ultimately controlled by, and responsive to, the needs and interests of their members.

The central thesis of the project was that education associations can play a powerful role in promoting and implementing school improvement and reform. It is also the central message of this report. Although the track record of Urban Development was mixed, most of the activities brought some success, and a few had considerable (and continuing) success and impact. Clearly associations can make important contributions to school improvement, not only because of their capacity to bring R&D information to the attention of their members, but because they can enhance the utilization quality of the information and, through their members, increase the likely of successful implementation. The experience gained through the Urban Development

13. failure to create a zone of tolerance for the change effort (Berman, 1981, Fullan, 1982; and Pincus and Williams, 1979)

It is contended here that cooperation with education associations can contribute to the avoidance or resolution of many of these problems.

How can associations contribute to school improvement? The experience of the Urban Development suggests that associations can:

(1) increase participation in improvement activities by local members.

Teachers in schools involved in a joint Urban Development-New Jersey Education Association project, School Effectiveness Training, attended 12-18 hours of training without compensation and gave thousands of hours of their overtime to planning and implementing improvement projects.

Urban Superintendents involved with their association and Urban Development in the identification of exemplary practices provided information, released staff to visit or train in other districts, and hosted visitors from other districts.

(2) improve the utilization quality of R & D information and products.

NJSBA staff worked with Urban Development staff to identify the implications of research of effective schools and school improvement for board members. This effort resulted in two workshops that were regarded by participants as highly practical and having high fit with local realities.

Leaders of the NJCPT and the Philadelphia Home and School Council also reviewed research findings with staff of Urban Development to identify implications for their local leaders. This material was packaged in workshops that also met immediate organizational needs of local leadership.

All cooperating associations assisted with the development of readable, jargon-free materials that could be, and were, used by their membership.

(3) provide additional incentives for participating in school improvement.

NJPSA and PAESSP used their publications and conferences to reorganize principals who participated in leadership training.

NJEA and PSEA held ceremonies to recognize local leaders who had assisted in their school improvement efforts and convened statewide meetings of teachers participating in school councils.

All associations drew upon members who took leaderhips roles to serve as trainers or spokespersons for the activity. Members who participated often advanced their standing within the association.

(4) identify opportunities for successful implementation of projects.

NJEA and PSEA were able to tap sources of information about local conditions that helped determine the readiness for improvement and assess the possibilities for successful implementation.

NJPSA and PAESSP reached out to recruit members to attend leadership programs by persuading districts to send teams rather than individuals. By focusing on district rather than individual needs, they reduced the threat and got positive responses from participants.

(5) provide training, technical assistance, and follow-up support for school improvement

Almost all of the participating associations demonstrated their ability to design and conduct effective training sessions. Sessions were always well-attended and generally well-received.

NJEA and PSEA used field staff to do follow-up and provide support for the SET program.

(6) contribute to a climate of acceptance and cooperation.

Associations demonstrated their capacity to bring the work of Urban Development to the attention of their membership with enhanced credibility.

Associations demonstrated a willingness to support each other's projects both formally and informally through publicity, information exchange, reaching out to local influentials to build support, and joining in cooperative ventures such as the New Jersey Assessment and Development Center, School Effectiveness Training, and the development of the Public Education Institute.

Part of the rationale for working with associations was the recognition that R & D staff cannot simply package research findings, diagnose school problems, prescribe remedies, and help school people implement the solutions. Attractive as this popular paradigm might seem, it ignores the gaps between the work cultures of most practitioners and the culture of the R&D community. The track record of planned change and school improvement is replete with tales of failure to implement (Berman, 1981). Many factors influence implementation but the central problem often is a failure to recognize that school improvement is not merely a technical process

requiring knowledge and skill, it is also a political process requiring persuasion, bargaining, credibility, and understanding of the local context.

Too many improvement programs treat teachers and school administrators as mere pawns to be moved, as receivers of knowledge created by social scientists (and their field agents); or as low-level technicians whose skills need to be up-graded. Yet social science is only one source of knowledge. Much social problem-solving draws more heavily upon experience, craft knowledge, and commonsense than upon the systematic analysis favored by social scientists (Lindblom and Cohen, 1979). Social scientists assume that research is essential to problem-solving and they underestimate the value of ordinary knowledge. Social science, in fact, is primarily a complement to ordinary knowledge. It is seldom a unique source of information and it is most valued when it verifies ordinary knowledge (for example, consider the research on time on task or studies of effective schools). Problems have the best chance of being solved when the two forms knowledge can be brought together in a manner that permits integration and a new synthesis to emerge, e.g. new theories of practice.

Education associations provide vehicles for the integration needed to develop new theories of practice. Associations staff understand and respect the craft knowledge of their members and can assist developers with the integration of research and craft knowledge. As their credibility with their members tends to be high, they are able to obtain their participation in activities that expose them to research findings and to new theories of practice. They also provide safe settings in which people can consider the implications of research and they can help improve the utilization quality and acceptance of research-based problems and products.[13]

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[13]Utilization quality refers to clarity, complexity, practicality, and fit with local needs and realities (Firestone and Corbett, 1985).

Improving utilization quality requires understanding and appreciation of ordinary knowledge. Furthermore, association staff are likely to know the local context and can suggest adaptations to avoid the minefields of local politics or overcome the resistance created as a backlash to previous change efforts.

Critical Characteristics of Associations

Urban Development sought to expand the involvement of statewide associations in activities to improve urban schools, particularly secondary schools. These associations represented diverse interests--teachers, principals, superintendents, board members, parents, and community organizations (See Appendix A for descriptions of the participating organizations). Yet they shared common characteristics that provided a basis for their participation in collaborative improvement projects with RBS. These included:

- a stake in public education and a commitment to its improvement;
- communication systems including publications, conferences, and local structures;
- a "loosely coupled" relationship with the formal governance structure of the public school system which enables them to respond quickly and, perhaps more objectively, to problems and needs;
- a desire to improve the image of public education;
- understanding of the practical issues confronting their members and, therefore, the capacity to adapt R & D information and products to this reality;
- a state-wide orientation that allowed them to assess common needs and respond efficiently; and
- high credibility with their membership which in all but one case is voluntary.

Their differences, however, also were significant. The groups varied in membership, resources, training experience and capacity, state and local influence, their relationships to the schools, internal cohesiveness, the coherence of their agendas, and their willingness to take risks. In some cases, these differences affected their ability and willingness to undertake school improvement projects or influenced the nature of the projects that were of interest to them and could be effectively implemented.

How much influence did these variable characteristics of the associations have on the design, implementation, and ultimate success of the collaborations with Urban Development? Table 6 presents the assessment of the influence of some key variables identified by Urban Development staff. This list is not exhaustive but it does suggest some of the critical factors to be taken into account when entering collaborative work with associations.

Stability of leadership. Associations in which there were frequent turnovers in leadership during the project period (NJPSA, Philadelphia Home and School Council, and PLUS) experienced more difficulty with implementing and continuing project activities. This was especially true when the outgoing leaders were also the project champions. The exceptions were those cases in which the new leadership had been involved in the project activity prior to the changes (NJPTA).

Size of membership. Large associations generally have more capability to initiate and sustain programs. They have the resources and power, other things being equal, needed to be effective. Smaller organizations may have great impact if their members play significant roles in the system. The

Table Six
Influence of Association Characteristics
on Stages of Project Development

Association Characteristics	Initiation	Level of Support	Evaluation/ Revision	Continuation
Stability of Leadership	Low	Moderate	High	High
Size of Membership	Moderate	Low	Low	High
Basis of Membership	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Level of Funding	Moderate	High	Moderate	High
Initial Training Capacity	Low	Moderate	High	Low
Proportion of Urban Members	High	High	Low	Moderate
Influence of Training Staff	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate

USSNJ is one example. Size of an association appears to be a prerequisite for success only if raw political power is required to initiate or sustain the project, large expenses are entailed, or sustained external support is necessary. The smaller organizations usually lack the clout, resources, staff or experience needed to conduct such programs.

Basis of membership. The basis of association is also important. School board members belong to the state association in New Jersey because their boards are required to join not because they chose to join as individuals. Membership is not voluntary. Participation, however, is voluntary. Therefore, the association invests heavily in information and in-service programs to attract and hold the interest of its members. Their

continued support is essential to maintain the association's funding base and the high quality of its programs helps overcome some member skepticism generated by the involuntary nature of their membership.

Teachers join local associations that represent them at the collective bargaining table. These locals are aggregated into state and national organizations that receive substantial parts of members' dues. Membership is voluntary but non-members pay a substantial part of the dues to local associations that represent them. The basis of membership is largely economic, concerned with terms and conditions of employment and job rights, and this emphasis shapes association goals and programs. Resources must be directed largely to strengthening collective bargaining positions and the energy available for professional development is thus limited.

However, the desire to maintain an image as a professional organization and the need to help teachers respond to new policy demands requires teacher organizations to provide regular programs of professional development. Moreover, the history of the National Education Association as a professional organization has created a tradition of such activities and there are many members and staff who feel that they are as important as collective bargaining or lobbying.

The negative effects of the union image hung on the teachers association by employer groups also generates pressure for more professional development. However, state-wide teachers organizations face high risks in undertaking such activities. They are concerned about the reactions of members, local leaders, other education groups, and the public. Since success or the appearance of success is so important, they calculate the

risks very carefully. As a result, negotiation of projects is more difficult; the association must feel in control of the situation and must receive credit for the activity--since image-building is a primary motive. However, their members' interest in children and in services to children also makes them very sensitive to the goals of projects. They are likely to be more concerned about the impact on students and staff then they are about the impact on the system itself.

Organizations of urban superintendents, in contrast, are voluntary associations with informal origins. They have come together to cope with the problems created for urban districts by accountability laws, federal programs, and fiscal undercertainty. Interested primarily in fiscal and accountability policies, they have become more interested in improvement of practice as they have become aware that the image of urban districts as inefficient and ineffective has blocked their other policy objectives.

Level of funding. The resources available to associations generally correlates with the size of their membership. However, even large associations vary in the level of discretionary funds for improvement activities and the willingness of their members to provide support for such projects. Collaboration is not really possible if only one party can provide significant resources. This leaves the other party dependent and this can undermine an otherwise successful collaboration. Resource scarcity also makes continuation much less likely.

Most associations could cover staff time for planning, printing, travel expenses, and expenses related to training. Only the largest organizations could provide funds for consultants, follow-up technical

assistance, or product development. Unlike many school districts, the associations expected to contribute to the effort and generally took the initiative to pay for their share of project costs.

The associations involved in this project had almost no experience seeking external funds from public or private sources. Furthermore, funding agencies seemed to have some bias about funding legitmate school improvement or professional development activities if they were sponsored by associations. They assumed associations would pursue narrow self-interests and also assumed that they had sufficient discretionary resources at their disposal. Neither of these assumptions proved to true to the degree believed by those outside of association life.

Nevertheless, during the course of the project, six of the cooperating agencies sought funds to continue or expand the scope of projects initiated with Urban Development. Three of them were successful; two others still hope to be. One association, NJPSA, has received several grants and has created a foundation to pursue such activities.

Training capacity and influence of training staff. Most state-level education associations have grown rapidly during the past decade, matching the growth of state government, and the expanded role of state legislatures in education. Their primary interests have been to protect and enhance their members rights and status through lobbying, the provision of legal services and information, and public relations and image-building. These activities are the "bread and butter" of association life. However, professional development services also have played an important role in recruiting and keeping their membership. These service help legitmate the associations' claim that they are concerned about kids and about qulaity.

These services are vehi les for disseminating the association's message and positions. And they build the skills and understanding of the membership, simutlaneously enhancing the status of the members and the power of the association. By providing these services, associations also limit the interests of others in entering this field of activity and possibly weakening the loyalty of their members. Thus, all of the major associations provide in-service programs for their members although these programs vary in quality and intensity. This experience provides a foundation for the development of more comprehensive school improvement projects.

Proportion of urban members. Associations exist to serve the needs of the members. The loyalty of their membership is their lifeblood. Hence, the highest the proportion of the membership who potentially will benefit from a project, the more likely it will be undertaken. Associations with strong and well organized urban constituencies (NJEA, USSNJ, and NJSBA, for example) were quick to respond to Urban Development's offer of collaboration and the most willing to remain focused on urban issues. Other organizations with smaller or less influential urban memberships (PSEA, NJPSA, and NJPTA) were eager to broaden the scope of the activities to reach more members and resisted efforts by Urban Development to keep the projects focused on urban needs. Compromises proved necessary to serve the agendas of both parties.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The general conclusion arising from the experience of the Urban Development program is that collaboration with associations can be a cost effective complement to other school improvement activities of state and

federal agencies. It is simply silly to try to duplicate their communications systems and a waste of a critical resource to ignore their ability to convene, persuade, and mobilize their members.

Yet the "natural channels" approach also presents its own problems and dilemmas. First, choices must be made. A laboratory cannot easily work simultaneously with competing associations such as NEA and AFT affiliates. Second, conflicts between associations or between associations and government agencies on unrelated issues can jeopardize the work, perhaps destroy it. Third, associations must be able to take credit for the work if they are to convince their membership and leaders that the activity is worthy of support. This raises questions about ownership over programs and materials. Fourth, most of the associations involved in the Urban Development project had highly democratic governance structures. The membership make policy and staff are very responsive to what they see as the desires of the elected leadership. This can create instability for improvement projects. Finally, associations have little experience with R & D work. Their staffs do not always look at the world through the lens of social science or always adhere to the norms of improvement and evaluation advocated by the R & D community.

These are serious obstacles but they can be overcome through good communications and negotiations. The R & D agency must establish trust, work in good faith, and be willing to bend to maintain the relationship and protect the project. The overriding interests of the associations must be understood and respected.

The Urban Development program has implications for the future conduct of regional laboratories, federal grant-giving agencies, state departments of education, universities, and other agents of school improvement. If

associations do provide "natural channels" for dissemination of research and research-based products then these agencies must seek and gain their support and take advantage of their potential. Associations can influence the acceptance and integration of new knowledge by practitioners. They clearly are willing and able to engage in such work. Developing this potential resource for school improvement has implications for discetionery funding and for allocation of technical assistance services.

Working together with associations and encouraging associations to work together moves education closer to development of a common professional language and a common professional culture with stronger norms of improvement, evaluation, and respect for craft knowledge. A new paradigm for improvement of education could emerge that relies less on rules and regulations, less on fads and public relations, and more on the development of a profession that encompasses both research and practice like medicine and like medicine, moves forward by using research to incrementally raise the level of craft knowledge. Associations can contribute to this goal if they are brought into partnerships that help bridge the current gulf between research and practice.

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Appendix A

Appendix A

Cooperating Associations

A. New Jersey

New Jersey Education Association

The New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) works to protect the professional and employment interests of 83,000 teachers and special services staff, and 22,000 school support staff in New Jersey. Although primarily a collective bargaining unit affiliated with the National Education Association, the association sponsors training and other professional activities for its members as well. It employs 80 professional staff and 100 suppport staff, including 37 field staff in regional offices around the state and a 9 member instruction and training division. There are also approximately 90 training consultants, members who work part-time for the association in various training activities. NJEA publishes a newspaper, the NJEA Reporter 10 times a year and a magazine, the NJEA Review (circulation 125,000), 9 times a year. The former covers association business and the latter larger issues facing schools.

New Jersey Parent-Teacher Association

The New Jersey Parent-Teacher Association (NJPTA) consists of 210,000 teachers, parents, and other interested citizens throughout New Jersey. Its objectives are to promote the welfare of children and youth through activities aimed at raising standards of home life, securing protective laws, and creating a closer relationship between home and school. The association has five paid staff, with most of its activities, including

training, conducted by volunteers. NJPTA publishes the New Jersey Parent-Teacher (circulation 5,000) eight times a year and a legislative bulletin (circulation 1,500), also eight times a year.

New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association

The New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association (NJPSA) has 4,800 K-12 members, including principals, vice-principals, curriculum coordinators, department heads, and other supervisors/administrators. The association provides a forum for discussion of mutual concerns and training activities, and tracks legislative issues dealing with education in the state. NJPSA employs seven professional staff but none whose primary responsibility is training. It publishes and distributes to members the NJPSA Newsletter, Capitol Update, and special topical bulletins as issues arise.

New Jersey School Boards Association

The New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA) involves every school board in the state, or about 5,000 school board members. The organization has 85 people on staff, approximately 55 of whom are professional staff. The Inservice Education Department employs six staff whose primary responsibility is training. According to law, "The association is charged to investigate such subjects relating to education in its various branches as it may think proper, and to encourage all movements for the improvement of educational affairs in the state." NJSBA publishes a weekly newsletter, School Board Notes, and a monthly journal, School Leader, both with circulations of approximately 10,000.

Schoolwatch

Schoolwatch is a coalition of business, civic, and religious organizations which monitors the implementation of the education laws by the New Jersey Department of Education. It is funded entirely by grants from foundations and corporations

Schoolwatch has published a report assessing the department's performance during the first five years of the Public School Education Act of 1975 (the T & E law), and it developed the Public Policy and Public Schools course for parents in urban districts. The course, which is approved by the American Council on Education to grant six credits through Thomas A Edison State College, is being offered in 1985-86 to citizens in 13 urban districts.

Urban School Superintendents of New Jersey

Urban School Superintendents of New Jersey (USSNJ) is an organization of 65 active members. It includes school superintendents in all of the cities in the state designated as "urban" by the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, along with representatives from the urban divisions of Rutgers University, William Paterson College, and Jersey City State College. USSNJ's purpose is to bring urban superintendents together for the solution of common problems and the exchange of information on innovative programs. Gradually, the association is becoming a political force in the state as well.

USSNJ has no paid staff. It is directed by a seven-member executive committee. Meetings take place monthly and include presentations on effective practices by volunteers from the membership.

B. Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania Association of Elementary and Secondary Principals

The Pennsylvania Association of Elementary and Secondary Principals (PAESP) has 2,500 members and 5 paid staff -- an executive director, an administrative assistant, a secretary, and two membership clerks. Its purposes are (1) to improve educational programs for children in the commonwealth; (2) to participate in the formation and approval of educational policies; (3) to foster development, acceptance, and application of ideals among professional workers in education; (4) to promote activities of city, county, and regional organizations of administrators and supervisors; (5) to promote the welfare of members, and (6) to affiliate with other organizations of similar purpose. PAESP publishes four regular publications: Principals Profile and The Perspective for elementary school members, and Keystone School Master and Pennsylvania School Master for secondary school members.

Pennsylvania State Education Association

The Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA) is an affiliate of the National Education Association. It has 100,000 members composed of teachers, special services staff, and school support staff. The organization's purpose's are: (1) to promote the general educational welfare of the state; (2) to protect and advance the interests of its members; and (3) to foster professional zeal and to advance educational standards in Pennsylvania. PSEA employs 100 professional staff, including an instructional and staff development unit with three professionals, and

100 support staff. PSEA publishes a monthly newspaper, PSEA Voice, that is distributed to members, legislators, and the media, and Leader Notes, a newsletter for local PSEA presidents.

Pennsylvania League of Urban Schools (PLUS)

The Pennsylvania League of Urban Schools (PLUS) was formed by a number of urban superintendents for the purpose of presenting an united front in dealing with the state legislature and state department of education. Twenty-five districts are members and the organization has a half time director who acts as a lobbyist in Harrisburg. Information exchange and review of policy options are of interest to PLUS but are secondary to the major interests of improving funding for urban schools and avoiding or influencing at state regulation to protect the interests of urban districts and urban children.

Philadelphia Home and School Council

The Philadelphia Home and school Council (PHSC) is the only parents' association in the city of Philadelphia. There are chapters of the Home and School Council in 277 public schools representing the interests of parents of school age children K-12 in all six of the city's sub-districts. In addition to providing resource and financial assistance to schools, the PHSC works actively to promote children's welfare, enhance home/school communications, and boost public awareness and political activities in support of quality public education.

Appendix B

Products and Publications

Products

1. Buttram, J., Corcoran, T. B., & Hansen, R. J. (1985). The district effectiveness audit. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

2. Corcoran, T. B. (1983). Urban position paper (#1): State testing in basic skills. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

3. Corcoran, T. B. (1983). Urban position paper (#2): Grassroots dissemination. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

4. Corcoran, T. B. (1983). Urban position paper (#3): High school graduation requirements. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

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6. Corcoran, T. B. (1985). Competency testing and "at-risk" youth Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

7. Corcoran, T. B. (1985). The school as a workplace. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

8. Corcoran, T. B., & Miller, R. (1985). Improving school climate. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

9. Corcoran, T. B., & Presseisen, B. Z. (1983). Using time productively: School effectiveness training program. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

10. D'Amico, J. J. (1981). The effective schools movement: Studies, issues, and approaches. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

11. D'Amico, J. J., & Corcoran, T. B. (1982). Prospectus for a center for principals and supervisors for the New Jersey principals and Supervisors association. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

12. D'Amico, J. J. (1983). School academic mission: School effectiveness. training program. Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Education Association.

13. D'Amico, J. J., Rouk, U., & Corcoran, T. B. (1984). Guide of exemplary practices, policies, and programs in urban districts in New Jersey. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

14. D'Amico, J. J., Fitchett, L., & Gundell, C. (1984). New Jersey parent-teacher association leadership training guide. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

15. D'Amico, J. J., & Baines, J. (1984). School academic mission: School effectiveness training program. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

16. D'Amico, J. J., & Corcoran, T. B. (1985). Urban position paper (#4): Influencing legislation, policy, and funding to benefit urban schools and students. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

17. D'Amico, J. J., & Corcoran, T. B. (1985). Urban position paper (#5): Reassessing urban secondary education: How can we renew our high schools? Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

18. D'Amico, J. J., & Corcoran, T. B. (1985). Urban position paper (#6): The impact of tests and promotion standards on urban schools and students. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

19. Davies, D. (1985). Parent involvement in the public schools in the 1980's: Proposals, issues, opportunities. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

20. Dawson, J. A. (1982). A study of the school effectiveness training (SET) program in seven urban schools. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

21. Dawson, J. A. (1983). A report of the school effectiveness training/ /high school development program. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

22. Dawson, J. A., D'Amico, J. J. (1984). Secondary school development in five urban schools: A documentation report. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

23. Glatthorn, A. A. (1985). Curriculum reform and "at-risk" youth. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

24. Hill, J. P. (1983). Participatory education and youth development in secondary schools. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

25. Miller, R. (1983). Your leadership style. A management development module for educational leaders. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

26. Miller, R. (1984). What's a plan without a process. A training handbook for staff work groups. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

27. Miller, R., & Corcoran, T. B. (1985). Joining forces: A team approach to secondary school development. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

28. Presseisen, B. Z. (1981). Understanding adolescence: Issues and implications for effective schools. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

29. Presseisen, B. Z. (Ed.). (1983). The development of adolescent thinking: Some views for effective schools. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

30. Presseisen, B. Z. (1984). Comparing reform reports: Current and historic lessons for school improvement. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

31. Presseisen, B. Z. (1985). Thinking skills throughout the curriculum: A conceptual design. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

32. Sternberg, R. (1983). How can we teach intelligence? Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

33. Valdivieso, R. (1985). The education reform movement: Impact on Hispanic youth in the mid-atlantic region. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

34. Wilson, B. L., Miller, R., & Rossman, G. B. (1985). Models for uses of data in school improvement: From fast-food to five-star restaurant. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

35. Woods, M. A. (1985). Secondary school recognition program: Directory of program and practices. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

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1. Corcoran, T. B. (1982). The center for principals and supervisors: A new approach to professional development. Educational Viewpoint, 3(1), 39-48.

2. Corcoran, T. B. (1985). Effective secondary schools. In R. M. J. Kyle (Ed.), Reaching for excellence: An effective schools sourcebook. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

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6. Corcoran, T. B., & Wilson, B. L. (1985). Insights gained from the secondary school recognition program: An analysis of 200 high schools. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.

7. D'Amico, J. J. (1982). New Jersey PTA program aims at strengthening leadership. PTA Today, 8(1), 32-33.

8. D'Amico, J. J. (1982). Parent involvement: From educational folklore to educational fact. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools.

9. D'Amico, J. J. (1982). Using effective schools studies to create effective schools: No recipes yet. Educational Leadership, 40(3), 60-62.

10. D'Amico, J. J. (1983). High school reform (Why you ain't seen nothin' yet). Educational Horizons, 61(4), 169-174.

11. D'Amico, J. J., & Dawson, J. A. (1985). Finding the evaluation philosopher's stone, or how an evaluation study is actually helping program improvement. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.

12. Dawson, J. A. (1982). Increasing evaluation use while reducing resource requirements. Paper presented at the joint meeting of Evaluation Network and Evaluation Society, Baltimore, MD.

13. Dawson, J. A. (1984). The principal's role in facilitating teacher participation: Mediating the influence of school context. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

14. Dawson, J. A., & D'Amico, J. J. (1985). Involving program staff in evaluation studies: A strategy for increasing information use and enriching the data base. Evaluation Review, 9(2), 173-188.

15. Miller, R., & Wilson, B. L. (1984). Organizational analysis and productivity improvement: Working with schools. In C. A. Siegfried & M. L. Branchini (Eds.), Organizational development. Integrating people, systems, and technology. Washington, DC: American Society for Training and Development.

16. Miller, R., & Wilson, B. L. ('985). The night the lights went out in Georgia. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools (in press).

17. Presseisen, B. Z. (Ed.). (1983). Adolescents: Promise of the future. Educational Horizons, 61(4), 151-155.

18. Presseisen, B. Z. (1985). Review article on Thinking and learning skills (Vol. 1), by J. W. Segal, S. F. Chipman, & R. Glaser (Eds.), in Educational Leadership. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (in press).

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20. Presseisen, B. Z. (1985). Thinking skills: Meanings and models in A. Costa (Ed.), Developing minds: A resourcebook on teaching thinking. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

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