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## ABSTRACT

The Urban Education Network is comprised of the largest school districts in 14 states. In December 1985 the Network hosted a conference for its members on efforts to improve teaching and learning in urban schools. The following papers presented at the conference are included: (1) "Thinking about the Undoable: Dropout Programs" (Dale Mann), which identifies the four Cs--cash, care/concern, computers, and coalitions--in successful dropout programs; and (2) "Human Realities: A Comprehensive Approach to Children at Risk" (James B. Boyer), which calls for low-threat, high-quality instructional delivery to reduce the anxiety that at risk children feel. Also included are summaries of the following study reports delivered at the conference: (1) Instructional Risk (Patricia Milazzo); (2) The Milwaukee Study of Children at Risk (John F. Witte); (3) The Cincinnati Study of Children at Risk (Joseph Castright, John H. Grate); and (4) The Learning to Learn Program (Ellen Racioppi). Information on how to get copies of materials covered during the conference is provided. An appendix provides the conference agenda. (BJV)

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*AEL Occasional Paper 023*

**CHILDREN AT RISK:**  
***An Urban Education Network  
Conference Proceedings***

*Edited by Patricia Penn*

*November 1986*

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The Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) is located in Charleston, West Virginia. Its mission is to work with the Region's educators in an ongoing R & D-based effort to improve education and educational opportunity. To accomplish this mission AEL will work toward:

- the improvement of professional quality,
- the improvement of curriculum and instruction,
- the improvement of community support, and
- the improvement of opportunity for access to quality education by all children.

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**AEL Occasional Paper 023**

**CHILDREN AT RISK:**

**An Urban Education Network Conference Proceedings**

## **Abstract**

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

*Ron Edmonds*

The Urban Education Network involves the largest school districts of 14 states in efforts to improve teaching and learning in urban schools. Three regional laboratories—AEL, McREL, and NCREL—coordinate Network activities including regional and national conferences, technical assistance, and preparation and dissemination of research and information reports.

In December 1985, the laboratories hosted, in Louisville, Kentucky, an OERI-funded conference to hear about and look at efforts in the member states to address the needs of children at risk. Conferees paid special attention to the dropout problem.

Member states are Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin (NCREL); Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia (AEL); and Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska (McREL).

This publication includes edited transcripts of presentations by Dale Mann and James Boyer, and summary reports of other selected sessions with information on how to get copies of materials covered during the conference.

The editor is grateful to the presenters for a wealth of content; to Betty James, AEL's Regional Liaison Center Director, for her support; and to Kim Cowley, for her patience and flying fingers.

*Patricia Penn*

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## Thinking About the Undoable: Dropout Programs

Dale Mann, Professor, Chairman, Department of Educational Administration, Columbia University, New York

I'D LIKE TO TALK ABOUT dropouts. About what it must feel like to be a dropout, and to be without even the minimum credential that comes from high school graduation. In 1980 I did a study of youth employment in New York State. I spent as much time listening to kids and talking with young people as I did looking at the numbers.

I came across a young man who was originally from Appalachia. When I found him, he was washing dishes in a delicatessen in a neighborhood that New York City realtors call "pre-emergent." That means "poor." This kid was down in the basement of this delicatessen 11 hours a day washing dishes. He had dropped out of high school, but he wasn't dead. He was trying to make something out of his life. He was trying to make a break like lots of others have done. At the point that he dropped out of high school, he had about \$100 and as he said to me, he bought a ticket "on the dog." He rode the bus to New York, got off, and at that point he had about \$60 left. He needed a job. He didn't know anybody; he didn't have any place to stay. He didn't have any connections so he had to take the first job he could get by

walking in the door. He was grateful for that and he worked hard.

By the way, he was working "off the books." No social security, no taxes, no health insurance. In 1980 it turns out that one-half of the Black young people in this society are already working at less than the minimum wage. And so if you introduce a discount minimum wage, as some have proposed, among other things you're going to increase the exploitation of an already exploited group. You will also take jobs away from mothers and fathers and give them to children.

Anyway, this kid was washing dishes and he saw other jobs; he knew they were out there. But remember he's working 11 hours a day, six days a week; he's got no time to run down leads. He figured he needed credentials. Remember he dropped out. He doesn't have a diploma. He figured he needed connections; he doesn't have those. He figured he needed to dress in clothes he's never owned. He needs somebody to be at home, to answer the telephone so that he can go back for a second interview. He saw other jobs but he knew if he

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**The National Center for Educational Statistics estimates 25 percent of every fifth grade class, for 25 years, has not graduated from high school.**

**The question is, do we really care?**

took time off to interview for those jobs, that he was going to get fired from the one he had. What was he going to do? He's getting gouged on rent, ripped off on groceries; he's trapped in an economy that has changed. He's trying to use what he learned in a school that hasn't served him very well, and the question is, what's he going to do? I talked to that young man in 1980. I don't know where he is now. Maybe he is in the same basement.

The point is that that kid was chasing the American dream. He was doing precisely what generations of upwardly mobile young people in this society have done as they try to make a break with their circumstances and as they try to parlay guts and determination into something else. And he wasn't making it. The economy has changed, the entry level characteristics of what it takes to get a job have changed, and what schooling he did get wasn't very helpful.

Dropouts are a hot topic. Everybody is having conferences and lots of people are concerned and there seems to be an amount of action. But remember the Great Depression? The Depression is an event that is indelibly stamped on the conscience of generations of

people in this country. It was a certifiable national tragedy, but total unemployment rates never exceeded 20 percent. What are the unemployment rates of Black kids in Cincinnati? What are the unemployment rates of Latino kids in San Antonio, Texas?

The National Center for Educational Statistics estimates 25 percent of every fifth grade class, for 25 years, has not graduated from high school. Twenty-five percent for 25 years! Now if an indicator is that sticky, if it's stayed that stable for that long, then the question is, do we really care? And what are we likely to do about it? I worry a lot about our ability in education to get the resources to do things. The whole bill for the National Institute of Education for next year, the Administration's request, was \$48 million. Forty-eight million will buy the first 20 feet of one B1-B bomber. Basically, if you cut off the nose cone of a B1-B bomber (they're \$235 million dollars each) and have a garage sale you could double the amount of money that the Feds are putting into the National Institute of Education. Federal support for local education agencies, which has been about eight percent since the middle 60's, is now 3.2 percent for the average LEA in this country.

There's some terrible competition going on out there. One of the competitions has to do with the young and the old, the "junior class" and the "senior class." The fastest growing segment of the American population is not yuppies; it is children in poverty. Every fourth child in the United States now lives in poverty. Fifteen years ago, every fourth senior citizen in the United States lived in



poverty. There is terrible competition going on between old people and young people for the resources of the society. At the federal level, federal spending for every senior citizen in the country averages \$7,700 a year. Federal spending for each young person in the United States averages \$700 a year. \$7,700 compared to \$700. I think we're in some races and we're losing almost all of them.

But there's also some pretty severe internal competition going on. One of the things that concerns me most is the "across-the-street school system." As you know, the schools of the United States are not constitutionally protected. And not only is there no reason to believe that we have to have a public school system of the same scope and of the same agenda that we currently try to maintain in this country, there is real reason to doubt whether or not it will survive to the year 2000. The Reagan administration is now trying to voucher Chapter I. Vouchers are going to affect not so much the big cities of the country, but they may gut suburban and exurban school districts. Because those are the districts that have the family income, where the parents have the discretionary bucks to buy a solution to the problem of the public school. Remember what Aristotle said: "Parental over-fondness is the root of all evil?" And what parents try to do is to protect my kids from going to school with—.... How do people in your community define "them?" "Poor kids," "Black kids," or "the undeserving poor?"

The competition is beginning to be fratricidal. If I were running a

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high school in New York I think I'd be running scared, because in New York, community college presidents have been saying to the state legislature: "Look, those kids voted with their feet. When they dropped out, they repudiated the high school. The high school failed. The meaning of a dropout is that the high school is no good and we ought not put more precious public resources into an institution that has failed."

"And therefore," say community college presidents, "we have a better solution. It's called the middle college school." The middle college school is a neat device, especially if you're a community college president. "I'll take the tenth grade kids out and put them on my campus and I'll keep them there from the 10th grade to the 14th grade. I can offer more and better courses plus the lure and prestige of a college campus, and I don't have the same union problems that high schools do. We don't have the bureaucracy; we can put together a curriculum quicker and cheaper. Please give us the money, the staff, and the social mission that is now vested in the high school."

If we are to do something about dropouts, and if we are to turn these kinds of situations around—situations that I think

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fundamentally call into question the continuation of the public schools—how will that happen? How can we again get help centered on the kids who are most at risk? First, we have to prove to politicians that it's important and second, we have to prove to ourselves that it's doable. Please remember that when we're talking about dropouts, we're not talking about the captain of the cheerleading squad, or next year's Westinghouse semifinalist, or the children of the school board; we're talking about what some people describe as the "undeserving poor." Some Washington policymakers call young people who cannot find jobs "the industrial reserve of America." I think that ignores the social and personal costs of our circumstances.

Right now, the United States is a four trillion a year economy. But where are we buying our basic steel? Our automobiles? Textiles? Shoes? All the things that the United States used to dominate, we no longer dominate. In 1950, 80 percent of the world's cars were produced in this country. In 1980, 30 percent of the world's cars were produced in this country. The old America dominated production markets originally; textiles, basic steel went to the Japanese, but they are now out of those markets. The Japanese are also out of even basic electronic assembly; electronic assembly is now being done in ten hi-tech countries such as Korea, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Mexico. The people who think about what it's going to take for this country not only to survive but to flourish in the year 2000 believe that we're going to have to get into precision manufacturing, custom

engineering, and flexibly produced production processes. But what kind of workers are we going to need for precision manufacturing, custom engineering, and flexible production? Every year from now to the year 2000, 36 million new young people will enter the world labor force. Try that in your high school: get a guidance counselor to hang up a sign, "Congratulations, you're in line and this year, 36 million kids are in front of you." And 85 percent of those potential new hires are going to come from less developed countries.

About 20 percent of American high school students now take a year of French or German. But we now do more trade with the Pacific Rim countries than we do with the ten countries of the European Economic Community combined. And by 1990, the trade with the Pacific Rim will be double the trade with the countries that speak French and German. Try getting your language department to offer some basic Urdu or Malay I, Malay II, Advanced Malay, or even Mandarin.

Somebody needs to do something about high schools and somebody needs to ensure that all kids learn, but what does that mean to the guys in Rotary? Among Black kids 20 percent are going to drop out. So what? Let's look at retirement. When my grandfather retired, his social security income was guaranteed by 17 employed workers paying into the Social Security Trust Fund. If I were able to retire in the year 2000, my social security check would be guaranteed by three workers and one of those three workers is going to be Black or Brown. How much dropping

out can I afford? How much hemorrhaging of young people can we take in this country?

The Appalachian Regional Commission estimates that dropouts are going to earn \$240 billion less over their lifetimes than will high school graduates. That means that state and local governments are going to collect \$71 billion less in taxes than they would otherwise. We could mount a \$71 billion program for dropouts and break even. But we won't. We know that the majority of kids in the county jail lack high school diplomas and are illiterate. And we know that it costs less to send a youngster to Penn State than it does to keep one in the state pen—about one-third less. If the question has to do with political leadership, if the question has to do with convincing the downtown realtors' association that there's a reason to pay attention to dropouts, then we have to have some facts. We've got to convince them that the United States is a country that simply can't afford to waste a generation. It costs too much in productivity, in taxes, in lost profits.

What do we actually do about dropouts? Answering the question assumes that we know who's dropping out and why. We have some estimates including the basic "25/25" relationship—25 percent of the fifth grade class lost for each of the past 25 years. That's equivalent to losing the whole pupil population of the state of Minnesota—every year! The exact numbers are going to vary in communities, but it makes less difference what the number is than how you feel about the number. I know a lot of places

in which four percent is too high. Anyway, we know that about 13 percent of white kids will drop out, 19 percent of Black kids will drop out. The figures for Hispanics are someplace between 32 percent and 45 percent, although even 45 percent seems an undercount. Black rates are 40 percent greater than white rates. Hispanic rates are 250 percent greater than those for white kids.

Most people agree there are four reasons that kids drop out of high school. The first is school or school-related. Second, things about work, things about the economics of young people's lives. Third, family responsibilities, and fourth is "other," which includes relocation and health. New York City just went through an interesting experience in which the media discovered that the Board of Education was running a high school reserved for homosexuals. The media began to have a field day until, to their credit, the Chancellor and the Mayor both went back to the public and said, "Of course we are. Those kids are at risk; those kids are getting savaged in their schools. We have an obligation not only to protect them, we have an obligation to school them. We are a public school system and we provide schools for everyone." Working with dropouts gives you a chance to figure out what you believe in and what your commitments are.

About half of the dropouts are school-related, what we do and don't do in school. In everybody's list, school-related factors count for the most. But what are we looking at? Kids that fail to learn or schools that fail to teach? The first are

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called dropouts; the second are called pushouts. And there are pushouts. Eighty percent of the criticism is directed at 20 percent of the kids: "Joe Bob, I told you yesterday no gum chewing." That's first period. Second period is: "Don't tell me you didn't bring your book again, Joe Bob." And third period: "Joe Bob, no sleeping in my class." By fifth period Joe Bob is outside the assistant principal's office. Now Joe Bob may have bad grades, but he's no fool. What's he going to conclude about the school that offers him only criticism? What would you conclude in a situation that is overdemanding and underrewarding (hint: retreat can be rational)?

About half of the boys drop out of school for school-related reasons; only a third of the girls go for school-related reasons. And most kids don't blame schools. When you ask, "Why did you drop out?" about a third of the boys say,

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"Because I had bad grades. Because I didn't like school." They take it on themselves. Only one in five is kicked out for disciplinary reasons. There's a lot less pushing out than our critics would have the public believe. Most of the pushing out happens in referrals to special education. Some teachers interpret behavior problems as kids who should be in special education rather than in their classrooms. I know of one district in which the superintendent unilaterally suspended all special education referrals, because at their current rates within five years the entire population of the district would have been in special education. There is pushing out.

But in the understandable hunt to make the diploma mean something, we're about to increase the dropout rate, and as we raise that standard, we're going to cut a lot of kids right across the neck. The business community is saying: "We need tough standards in schools to send kids a message about what's acceptable in the work place. Don't mislead kids that if you're late to work it doesn't make much difference. Don't mislead kids that if you punch the foreman, you're going to be suspended for a couple of days. Don't mislead about what is acceptable in schools because that misleads them about what's acceptable in the economy." So we are supposed to raise standards and hold the non-performers back. What they omitted to say is if you retain a child one grade, you just increased the probability that that child will drop out by 40 to 50 percent. If you retain a kid twice, you increased the probability they're going to drop out by 100 percent. Thirty-five



states have raised graduation standards. No state has passed the funding necessary to help the kids put at risk by these graduation standards. Twenty-nine states have passed laws and they funded programs about enrichment and about gifted and talented, and no state has passed laws and appropriated money for the kids put at risk by the standards. As I read the scoreboard, it's 35 to zero, 29 to nothing.

The second most frequently cited reason for dropping out has to do with economics and this one's a push-pull. Kids are pulled by the lure of money but some are pushed by family necessity. Every fourth kid who drops out of school, drops out to go to work, and 14 percent of those drop out to support their mothers and their siblings. In fact, we know that one of the early warning signs of dropping out is paid employment while in school. The more hours you work in paid employment, the less successful you'll be in school. We have some fairly precise data on that. Up to about 14 hours a week in paid employment, no effect. A kid can bag groceries about 14 hours a week and that's fine. Between 15 and 21 hours a week of paid employment increases the risk by 50 percent. And more than 22 hours a week, more than half time in paid employment, increases the risk of dropping out by 100 percent. One of the really tragic things about kids and paid employment is that the jobs that they're taking are not career ladder jobs; they're not going any place. They're the jobs that have been what's called "deskilled," "dumbed down." Next time you're in Burger King take a look at the keyboard on the cash

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Next time you're in Burger King take a look at the keyboard on the cash register. You won't find decimals. General Foods knows that kids don't understand decimals.

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register. You won't find decimals. General Foods knows that kids don't understand decimals and they've given up on our ability to teach kids decimals, so a Burger King cash register has pictures of hamburgers, pictures of french fries, pictures of big, medium, and small drinks. It's been dumbed down. It's been deskilled. Those jobs are not the fast track to the corporate suite.

Kids need to understand what is happening to them. You can say, "Joe Bob, hey, buddy; dropouts will earn one-third less in terms of lifetime discounted income than those who stay in school." But Joe Bob's not thinking lifetime, he's thinking Friday night. On the other hand, Peng estimates that between having a diploma and not having a diploma, the difference for girls is \$55 a week and the difference for boys is \$60 a week. Now what that means to a guidance counselor is, if you're lucky, Joe Bob will come in to say, "Hey, I'm bagging this place. I'm going to be gone." You keep a candy jar on the desk and say, "Okay, leave Friday. But between now and Friday, I want you to come and put \$12 into the candy jar. That's what you're going to cost yourself. Twelve bucks a day for the rest of your life because of the decision you're making now about this school."

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Only one in five dropouts is kicked out for disciplinary reasons.

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Dropout programs are not the most desired teaching slots in the system. And yet, there isn't any substitute for all the adults in the building knowing all the kids by name and believing that all these kids can learn.

The third leading cause for dropping out is family reasons. That has to do with sibling care, child care, because mothers and fathers are working. A lot of it is getting married or having babies--babies having babies. We need to create, we need to maintain high schools for those kids whose family circumstances contribute to their dropping out. If a child comes from a broken home you just doubled the prospects the child will drop out. More than a million new children each year are added to the circumstances of divorce. By 1990 the modal child in a public school is going to have had the privilege of living in a single-parent home, and that doubles the risk of dropping out. We're talking about the interaction between what's happened to families and what we ought to do in schools. You know what a Norman Rockwell family is? It's father in paid employment, a mother at home, two kids, a cocker spaniel, and a white picket fence. In 1955, 60 percent of American households were Norman Rockwell families. In 1985, that number is seven percent. From 60 percent to seven percent of such nurturing, nuclear, intact families.

When I talk about dropouts somebody usually says, "Gee,

chronic truancy is related to dropping out and I can do something about that." How about if I buy a message machine, one of these telephone dialers that I can program to call the family and say, "Mrs. Lafelle, Joe Bob did not show up at school today." Fine, but before you buy it, rent it and make 100 test calls. Too often the school's message machine is going to get the family's answering machine. There isn't anybody at home. Families have changed, but our image of social policy, our image of the family on which the school is built, has not changed.

Now, that's who's dropping out, and that's why. What do we do? First, if there are lots of causes, and there are, there are going to be a lot of cures. A lot of program people believe passionately in their programs, and in the efficacy of what they do. Anybody who tells you that any single thing works for dropouts, that there's a kind of magic feather that you can just wave and it's going to turn potential dropouts into National Merit finalists, those people believe that break-dancing cures arthritis. I want to talk about everybody's responsibilities. I want to talk about schools, about youth employment, about civic agencies, and parents and communities and kids. I think we need to start with schools, because half of dropouts go for reasons that have to do with schools. Much of the answer to the problem of kids dropping out of middle schools and high schools is in the elementary schools. And it's in early childhood education. Weickhart and others show that when you front-load the system, there are enormous returns to social policy and to the quality of

individual lives. The "effective schools improvement," where I spend most of my time, has a lot to do with minimizing school failure, with maximizing school success, providing the foundations from basic skills on which you can then build a strong secondary program.

When I look at the programs that are believed to work, they seem to me to have what I call the "four C's": cash, care, computers, and coalitions. The first is cash. There's got to be a relationship between learning and earning. Work experience alone is not enough. OJT alone is not enough. Basic skills acquisition alone is not enough. You have to have both schooling and experience with paid employment and that's one of the things we should have learned from CETA, from JTPA, from Job Corps, and the whole "second chance school system." The first of the C's is cash.

The second is care or concern. By trade I am a public policy analyst; I spend a lot of time looking at figures and data. It sounds hokey to me to talk about care and concern—especially if you look at the way we staff a lot of dropout programs, because they are not the most desired teaching slots in the system. It seems to ask an awful lot of some folks that they care about kids, and yet there isn't any substitute for all the adults in the building knowing all the kids by name and believing that all these kids can learn. Look at Atlanta. Atlanta has the "Community of Believers." In this approach, Atlanta identified the 400 kids at the bottom of the barrel, the kids most at risk. Then they went out and identified 400 leaders of the business community. But they

didn't just have wine and cheese and introduce them to the kids at risk; they trained those people and nurtured their interaction. They monitored it, systematized it, and guaranteed it. Atlanta kept those 400 kids and their mentors together in what's called the Community of Concern. And it works. It's turned around the dropout rates of the kids most at risk in Atlanta. Care and concern is what, if you look at the future's literature, is called "hi-touch." I couple hi-touch with hi-tech and that means to me computers.

Computers, the third C, are used not only for instruction and the CAI application, but also to identify kids as they become increasingly at risk. Most districts know how to do this but don't. If I were to ask you what are the signs of a kid dropping out, I'm pretty sure that you'd be able to list them. In Jacksonville, Florida (the Duval County Schools), they have a computer-driven, early warning system. There's a little bell that goes off if Mary Ellen Jefferson has poor grades. Mary Ellen is truant, ding. Mary Ellen has a police encounter, ding. Mary Ellen has a health problem, ding. Mary Ellen's father just left the family, ding. And the question in Jacksonville is: how many little bells can go off in Mary Ellen's 13-year-old life before

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**Computers are used to identify kids as they become increasingly at risk. In Jacksonville, Florida (the Duval County Schools), they have a computer-driven, early warning system.**

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she's gone? The computer keeps track of those things on a per-child basis and has a profile so they know for a 13-year-old girl who's Black, how many dings she can survive; for a 15-year-old boy who's white, how many dings he can survive. They've got a custom-made profile and when enough flags are attached for the kid truly to be at risk, then they deploy people who go out on the street to find Mary Ellen, hanging out at the recreation hall, standing around in the back of the 7-11, wherever she is. And they bring her back and they get the services that are necessary to make a difference. What I'm saying about programs isn't much different from what Gary Wehlage at the University of Wisconsin says. He is a major resource in working with marginal high school students. He says you have to have small class size, lots of eyeball contact, lots of autonomy and concern, a wide range of teaching styles, high expectations, a lot of challenge, initiative, and responsibility.

The last C is coalitions. I don't believe that in an area like kids at risk, like early school-leaving, schools can do it alone. In New York, less than half of the youth budget of the City is spent by the public schools. Forty-nine cents of

every child-serving dollar is spent by the public schools and the rest of it is spent by all kinds of other youth agencies. That suggests to me that we need some really outrageous service coordination strategies like, for example, "Cities-in-Schools." You get your parks and recreation department together with juvenile justice, with family courts, with social workers, with youth employment, and you try and bring all of the pieces together with the schools. We ought also to pay a lot more attention than we are now paying to what's called the "second-chance school system." The second-chance school system is where kids go to after they leave us. Basically, it is youth employment training. Those are basically remediation programs, and in this country for the last 20 years we have been running a megabuck, long-term, experimental analysis of how to do the basic skills employability mission. Only it isn't happening in schools, it's happening in the second-chance school system and it's pretty clear that there are successes there that aren't very widely represented in public schools.

I think the four C's are doable—cash, care/concern, computers, and coalitions—but we need to start. If you have responsibility for a small city—say 60,000 kids in schools—at existing rates, 20 kids a week will leave your schools. If you say, "You know, I want to do something about this. I think I'm going to do a needs assessment," you will write an instrument. It takes a week, another week is spent in getting it approved, then you have to distribute it, then you have to get it back. So you burn up a month, and now you know what your city is

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**Gary Wehlage says you have to have small class size, lots of eyeball contact, lots of autonomy and concern, a wide range of teaching styles, high expectations, a lot of challenge, initiative, and responsibility.**

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doing. You just spent a month and that's 80 kids. So the next thing is, "We had better do a careful survey of what kinds of programs are available, and we'd better mount our own program and that has to go in and out of the Bureau of Planning. That's got to be signed off by Curriculum." School board approval is another three months and then you have to get the money to do the approved plan. Basically, you're going to spend about 500 kids between the time you decide to do something and the time you put the first thing into place. Helping youth at risk is doable, but we need to start, now.

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We ought also to pay a lot more attention than we are now paying to what's called the "second-chance school system."

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Note: The analysis on which these remarks were based is available by Dale Mann in "Can We Help Dropouts? Thinking About the Undoable" in a special issue of the *Teachers College Record*. Spring 1986. Available from the *Teachers College Record*, 525 West 120 Street, New York, NY 10027.

# Four Innovative Studies

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## Instructional Risk

Patricia Milazzo, Deputy Director, Southwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Los Alamitos, California

"IF IT ISN'T ON THE PAGE, IT isn't on the stage." Patricia Milazzo, a specialist in curriculum alignment, characterized the emphasis her research institution puts on curriculum materials with those words. Having described the work of her organization as trying to improve technology out of the universities and apply it in the schools, she said:

We start with the curriculum materials and align them with objectives and test results. After 20 years of doing research we have found that if you don't have a materials base, all the objective writing in the world won't work. And if the tests don't align with what teachers are teaching, or the schools think they are teaching, then performance won't go up.... When we start looking at the way things are taught in textbooks, what we see is that it is less the children that are at risk than the instruction.

Milazzo stressed the importance

of insuring that teachers take full advantage of picking up what she called running room in the first four grades to guarantee that children master the basics of reading the arithmetic. "In all our curriculum alignment work," she said, "what we have found is that there are some critical things that need to be taught in [the first four grades] that will almost guarantee that your performances will go up in fifth, sixth and seventh grades--sometimes dramatically."

She pointed out that in most textbooks for the early grades a few key skills are introduced that teachers will build on for the next three or four years. She encouraged using as much as possible of the instructional material provided early instead of expecting the next grade teacher to teach more when the amount of material available is less. "The world turns upside down between third and fourth grades," she said. "In the same amount of time you teach more skills and they're harder." To

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We can create guides. We rarely create lessons...It's real tough to create 180 lessons a year for six years.

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**Retention-in-grade is a serious matter. Only 20 percent of retained second graders go on to graduate from high school. It behooves us to look for alternatives.**

overcome the problem, she suggested such things as getting to the five or six lessons on subtraction at the end of the second grade math text.

Large parts of what we see in terms of objectives listings and curriculum guides aren't realistic in terms of the materials base, and teachers can't use them without the materials. They've got to have 160 to 180 lessons a year, and those lessons should relate to what came before and what's coming after. It's very difficult for school districts to create those; I've never seen one do it. We can create guides. We rarely create lessons.

It's easy to create guides; that's the easiest thing to do. And we can change the objectives every month. It's next easiest to write a test and change it a little, although that's getting a little tough. It's real tough to create curriculum materials—180 lessons a year for six years—that are integrated and consistent... Our suggestion is always to start with the materials base that you have and use it more wisely.

Milazzo made a strong case that paying more attention to the materials base and making better use of instructional time in the first four grades can go a long way

toward insuring achievement at grade level or better for virtually all children by the time they enter fifth grade.

### Highlights From Small Group Session

What works in curriculum alignment:

- "Teach these lessons by this date" gets results and doesn't cost anything.
- A list of 10 or 11 skills in grades two and three has power for later learning. The hard things are apt to get left off the list unless it's short and includes those skills that are needed in future learning.
- Some most-needed skills don't get covered because of their placement in the text (last), or position on list of objectives. Move them up on the list.
- Retention-in-grade is a serious matter. Only 20 percent of retained second graders go on to graduate from high school. It behooves us to look for alternatives.
- We have to make the best possible use of textbooks; they're all we've got. If we want teachers to teach something else (e.g., estimation), we had better hand them the lessons and say "Here; teach this."

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## The Milwaukee Study of Children at Risk

John F. Witte, Associate Director, LaFollette Institute, University of Wisconsin, Madison

**T**O STUDY THE QUALITY AND equity of Milwaukee public schools and those of 21 surrounding suburban districts was the charge from the Wisconsin governor and the state superintendent of public instruction to a 27-member commission they appointed in May 1984.

Dr. John F. Witte, a political scientist specializing in public policy and organizational theory, was executive director of the one-year study group, whose area included 155,000 students and 260 schools. They looked at both district and school levels with an emphasis on describing the differences in performance between schools.

"The intent of the commission was to study both quality and equity," Dr. Witte said. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills was administered to approximately 12,000 suburban students to match the 90,000-student Milwaukee Public School district. The data base included test results for grades two, five, seven, and ten in 15 districts for about 40,000 students, with results coded by race, income, and gender.

Ten-page surveys went to 10,000 teachers, and 5,500 were returned. Return rate for a 12-page principal survey was 333 of 450; 2,600 students completed questionnaires;

and 1,600 parents were surveyed by telephone. The group also interviewed all district superintendents and school board presidents in depth, and conducted month-long case studies in 12 elementary, middle, and high schools.

Dropout, suspension, attendance, and grade data were collected and the dropout data were analyzed in a special report, one of 11 research reports prepared by the commission.

"We expected differences by race and by urban v. suburban," Dr. Witte said, "but what we found was shocking—two worlds of education." He observed that although there is no good measure of the dropout rate in Milwaukee, just as every other location, the district "admits to losing 2,000 kids a year, with a reported annual dropout rate between 11 and 12 percent." Suburban districts vary from zero to four percent, with most less than two percent. The state average is less than four percent.

In Milwaukee, Hispanics have the highest rate, closely followed by Blacks; the rate is approximately the same for girls and boys. Dropouts are more frequent in lower grades there. The commission found strong relationships between dropping out and low income, poor

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What we found was shocking--two worlds of education.

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grades, and few credits earned.

Recommendations focused on early prevention. Among them: **Preschool through fifth grade**—in low-income, low-achieving schools an intensified academic curriculum, maximum class size of 25, kindergarten for four-year-olds, and early education centers for three- and four-year-olds and their parents; and **Elementary and middle schools**—monitoring for at-risk students, developmental counselors, and multi-team approaches including teachers, counselors, and principals.

The group also recommended a target goal of one percent per year reduction of dropouts for MPS and development of a system of monetary rewards for schools achieving improvement in reducing dropouts.

Copies of the reports are available from the Milwaukee Department of Public Instruction, Suite 730, 735 N. Water Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202, 608/262-5713. Mention the Study Commission on the Quality of Education in the Metropolitan Milwaukee Schools.

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## The Cincinnati Study of Children at Risk

Joseph Gastright and John H. Grate, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Cincinnati Public Schools, Ohio

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**It would be useful for lower grade teachers to know how their students fare in the higher grades.**

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**T**HE CINCINNATI BOARD OF Education's commitment to improving academic achievement and challenges while reducing pupil failure is being operationalized through a plan based on the philosophy that students at risk need special attention from the school district. John Grate briefly described the plan and made copies available to the audience. Highlights of the plan follow.

Goals are to develop and use systematic procedures to identify students at risk, and to improve delivery of instructional, remedial, and support services to those students and to gifted/talented students.

Measurable student outcomes related to interventions proposed in the plan include increased competence in higher order thinking skills and creative thinking, reduced failure, improved attendance, reduced dropout rate, and more positive attitudes toward learning and schools.

Both prevention and remediation measures are delineated according to whether they require new expenditures or not. Among the no-new-cost methods are the use of a diagnostic instrument to identify students at risk early in the first grade. Diagnostic Prescriptive Reading System tests that provide

information about pupils' perceptual, behavioral, academic, and physical deficits will be used for that purpose.

One instructional strategy to be used preventively is essential skills tests in grades one through eight. Essential Skills Contracts to clarify student, teacher, parent, and principal responsibilities will be executed. Similar procedures are to be implemented at the secondary level in subject areas.

Among interventions requiring new expenditures are the expansion of all-day kindergarten and preschool programs, the addition of CAI labs to all secondary schools with large numbers of students at risk, and the reduction of class size in K-3 at low achieving schools.

The plan includes a number of interventions. Copies of what Grate called "a statement of our intentions" are available from the Resource, Planning, and Development Branch, Cincinnati Public Schools, 230 East Ninth Street, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202.

Joseph Gastright, director of the Cincinnati schools' evaluation branch, said that dropout rates have not changed significantly since the mid-60s, when a great deal of study centered on the problem, but the rate's visibility has gone "way down."

"Differences Between Passing and Failing Students at Grades Nine and Ten. Do They Predict Student Failure?" is the title of a paper he wrote on the findings of a failure study conducted in the face of high and sharply increasing

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"Students at risk" is a term fraught with ambiguity. The Urban Network could do a lot by coming up with desperately needed common definitions. In the absence of those definitions it will be difficult to show results and, later, to justify funding for dropout interventions.

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failure rates. A survey completed by 2,424 students revealed evidence that the failures differ in many ways from students who pass; despite those group differences, Gastright said, failures cannot be accurately identified in advance using variables on the survey.

Performance in place, not file data, will be a better predictor of potential failure than any data presently available," he pointed out. "Simply failing more students obviously has not improved student motivation or learning."

A sizable majority of surveyed students reported passing in all previous grades, which supported the researchers' estimate that a majority of ninth and tenth grade failures are failing for the first time. (They found a higher failure rate in ninth grade when it is part of high school.) Gastright said that grades four, five, and six had virtually no failures, and that primary grade failure is strongly associated with achievement test scores. Information is fed forward so that sixth grade teachers, for example, do not hear what happens to their students in seventh grade. Cum-



ulative records go forward and help 7-12 teachers justify their decisions. Gastright suggested that it would be useful for lower grade teachers to know how their students fare in the higher grades.

The 21-item "reasons for failure" section found high support for "doesn't care," "involvement with drugs and alcohol," "high absence," "not studying," "not paying attention in class," and "not taking school seriously" as reasons for failure by both failing and non-failing students. English teachers who were asked to identify those students in the sample who were likely to fail their course for the year also rated the seriousness of ten causes of failure. They ranked

highest "not completing assignments," "frequent absence," and "lack of preparation for class." Unlike students, teachers saw drugs and alcohol as a trivial contributor to student failure.

"Students at risk is a term fraught with ambiguity," Gastright concluded. If the dropout rate has continued to be 25 percent for the past 25 years, as reported, all the 1960 dollars made no difference. He said the Urban Network could do a lot by coming up with "desperately needed common definitions. In the absence of those definitions it will be difficult to show results and, later, to justify funding" for dropout interventions.

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## The Learning to Learn Program

Ellen Racioppi, Director, College Bound Program, Winchester High School, Winchester, Massachusetts

In Learning to Learn, the cycle is one of behaviors, not skills, according to Ellen Racioppi. The curriculum in LTL mirrors the four learning styles in whole-brained learning. No one style guarantees success, and teachers don't need to know who has what style by testing students. They do need to account for all styles in their teaching.

Marcia Heiman, who directs the Learning to Learn program at Boston College, adapted it from the findings of a research group she worked with at the University of

Michigan that looked at the learning behaviors of successful students. The researcher-clinicians found that good learners:

- "program" their learning for content courses,
- ask questions about new materials,
- devise feedback mechanisms to assess their own progress, and
- focus on instructional objectives.

Heiman and Joshua Slomianko put the skills into the framework of a cohesive system and found applications to make up a combination of skills and instructional materials that constitute LTL. Heiman's overview of the program is included on page 20.

As a result of work done with educationally disadvantaged college students reading as low as the fifth grade level, the Department of Education's Joint Dissemination Review Board approved LTL for national dissemination. Data from controlled studies show that the program has significant, long-term effects on students' grade point averages and the number of academic credits they complete per semester. According to an article in the September 1985 *Educational Leadership*, "Three semesters after treatment was completed, 70 percent of the LTL students were still in college or had graduated, as compared with 40 percent of the non-LTL students."

Racioppi said data are now being collected at the high school level. She teaches LTL in high school, where students get credit for taking the course three times a week. It is not a remedial program; students elect to take it, and are graded on whether they try to perform the prescribed behaviors in an overt way. She stressed that for many students it's the first time that they can be on a level with their peers because they attempted a certain behavior change, not because of a competitive performance level.

Another way that LTL is used in high school is to train teachers who are working with at-risk

populations in how to use it and have them devote one period a day to applying it with those students in all content areas.

Racioppi used most of the small group time block to explain and illustrate question generating, which she calls the basic heart of the program. "Assessment Supplement for Teachers," her summary handout, is included on page 21.

In response to a question about whether LTL achieves similar results with high school sophomores to those achieved with college students, Racioppi said she could provide only subjective information: students seem pleased with it, and teachers report that LTL students are much more methodical, more active, and participate more in class. Research findings on the high school experience are to be published in 1986.

For additional information contact Dr. Marcia Heiman, Learning to Learn, Box 493, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138, 617/547-2377.

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**Three semesters after treatment was completed, 70 percent of the LTL students were still in college or had graduated, as compared with 40 percent of the non-LTL students.**

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**Figure 1. Overview of Learning to Learn**

	<b>General Skills</b>	<b>Subject-Specific Skills</b>
<b>Input Stage</b>	<p>Generating questions from books, lectures, notes, and handouts</p> <p>Reading for examples</p> <p>Reading graphs, tables, and diagrams</p> <p>Developing editing checklists for math and grammatical composition</p>	<p>Reading to solve problems in chemistry</p> <p>Reading diagrams in biology</p>
<b>Organization Stage</b>	<p>Constructing information maps and flowcharts</p> <p>Using a tasks/skills checklist</p>	<p>Constructing an information map comparing the cultures of two countries, using student-generated questions derived from class discussion</p> <p>Constructing flowcharts to improve the structure of written assignments</p>
<b>Output Stage</b>	<p>Writing to answer questions</p> <p>Systematic problem solving</p> <p>Constructing mock exams</p> <p>Writing key-word diagrams</p>	<p>Using a student-constructed information map to study for an objective exam in geography</p> <p>Using a five-step approach to solving word problems in geometry</p>

# Assessment Supplement for Teachers

*This supplement to CAPTRENDS is designed for easy reproduction and distribution to teachers. PLEASE SHARE IT!*

## Thinking Skills: Measuring More Than Recall

When you write test items, do you ask students to do more than just recall facts? Increasingly, educators and the public agree that we want students to do far more than regurgitate knowledge; we want them to use their knowledge productively. So it's a little discouraging to learn that in a recent study of over 300 teacher-developed paper and pencil tests (conducted within the Cleveland Public Schools), 90% of the test items measured recall.

Admittedly, getting beyond recall can be tough. How do we define higher level thinking skills and how do we pose questions or write test items to measure those skills once defined? Here are some simple suggestions that can make it easier.

One popular way to categorize higher order thinking skills involves six levels.\* After presenting students with new information, we can assess their ability to deal with that information in various ways:

First, we can ask if students can *recall* the information presented.

Second, we can ask if they comprehended or *understood the information*. If they can recount it in their own words, they probably understood it.

Third, we might ask if students can *apply* the information to a new problem situation. If they solve the problem successfully, they can use the information at their disposal.

Fourth, we can ask them to *analyze* or examine components of the information.

Fifth, students might be asked to combine, *synthesize* or assemble the information from two or more sources to draw a conclusion.

And finally, we might have students make some *evaluative judgment* about the information, expressing their opinions.

There are two possible ways to measure students' skill at each level: Teachers can make questions up, or they can rely on questions provided in instructional materials. Let's explore the second option first.

## Analyzing Textbook Assessments

Do the textbooks you use include questions that take students beyond recall? What percentage of the questions posed represent each of the levels specified above? The only way to find out is to analyze the study questions posed in the text. Pick a random sample of three or four chapters of a social studies book, for example, and analyze the study questions. Here's an easy way to find the classification of any particular question.

<b>If you can identify:</b>	<b>The question is testing:</b>	<b>Example</b>
What students must <i>remember</i>	Recall	What is the electoral college?
What students must <i>restate</i> in other words	Comprehension	How does the electoral college work?
What information is to be <i>used</i> to solve the problem	Application	Predict what would happen if the electoral college were eliminated.
What is <i>broken down</i> into what parts	Analysis	Differentiate the various roles of the electoral college.
What two pieces of information are to be <i>combined</i>	Synthesis	How can the electoral college and the popular vote produce different results?
What students are to express an <i>opinion</i> about	Evaluation	In your opinion, should the electoral college be retained or abolished? Defend your choice.

# Human Realities: A Comprehensive Approach to Children at Risk

James B. Boyer, Professor, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas

I COME TO YOU AS A PERSON vitally concerned with children from every level of academic pursuit. I feel so deeply the kinds of things that I'll be sharing that I almost get carried away when we begin to talk about the human realities of children at risk. I am particularly concerned about these children because I am an educator. I'm a teacher. I gave up the administrative role because I just didn't enjoy some of the fights that administrators have to go through. But secondly, I gave it up because I worked for three or four of my best years as vice-principal in charge of trouble. At that point I concluded that I saw children at their worst, and that classroom teachers saw them at their best. Consequently, I opted to go back to the classroom to function with people when I thought they were at their best. So I've come to the Urban Network Conference to share a few insights with people that I consider policymakers, policy implementors, program designers, staff development leaders, research designers, research implementors, board members, curriculum

leaders, university professors, supervisory personnel, people who are intimately involved in the education of children at risk.

Who are these children? Why are they at risk? What can public education do? Who is involved in leading the way? What is the comprehensive approach? Which kids matter and to whom do they matter? I come to you as a child advocate, someone vitally involved and concerned with children. A person who believes in the dignity of children. A person who believes in the value of humankind and the fragility of human emotions, at least 1986 style, and the power of the school curriculum to transform urban life. I am a curriculum person, who believes that the program of the American schools has the innate power to transform lives by instilling in people the best of all possible worlds. I believe that those of us in this room have staked our claims with possibilities for children.

This year, almost 40 million

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Which kids  
matter and to  
whom do  
they matter?

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kids entered school in America. Ninety percent of that 40 million attend public schools. Almost two-thirds of that ninety percent are located in and around our cities. When you say urban education, despite whether you have a county organizational pattern or a small district within a district pattern, you are talking about impacting the lives of two-thirds of America's prospective adult citizens. Only 27 percent of American adults have children in public schools. What we are discovering is that our own kids are growing up. I am particularly concerned, though, because our country is still growing. Despite the fact that only 27 percent of adults have children in school now, we are beginning to see a turnaround in the lack of a baby boom. We are having more and more babies born now than we did five years ago. So enrollments are going to come back up.

Let me share with you some data. Fifteen years from now, in the year 2000, America's population is expected to be about 290 million. About 33 million of that 290 million will be Black; about 30 million will be Hispanic. But in the year 2020, we'll be at about 360 million, so our growth pattern will continue. About 38 million will be Black; about 46 million Hispanic. Hispanics will surpass Black Americans somewhere between the year 2005 and 2015. There are implications in that for those of us who lead urban education.

Let me share another bit of information about the growth pattern of various groups in the American mosaic. In the last decade, the rate of growth for white Americans was 17 percent; for Black

Americans it was 40 percent. The rate of growth for Hispanic Americans was 50 percent and for native Americans, 71 percent. Los Angeles now has 51 percent Hispanic enrollment in the public schools. Let me share something from the American Council on Education. The median age for white Americans is 31.5; for Black Americans 24.5; for Mexican Americans 22.5; and for Puerto Ricans 20.5. When you think of the median age of a particular group, what you have to do is ask yourself: Guess who is coming to school? Childbearing years don't last and Americans tend to bear their children somewhere under the age of 30. We also have in America 31 million people for whom English is not the first language. Now given that scenario, given that profile of who is in our country, where are the children? What is happening to them?

What I would like to do is share with you some human realities, not just for children, but for all Americans, and then make an assessment of where we are in terms of what we must do as school people to offset some of these human realities. Our first concern is poverty. When I was a student at Ohio State and I wanted to do my research on impoverished children, some professor had the nerve to ask me why I wanted to do research on impoverished people. And I told him that I brought an authentic experience to that topic. I am one of eight kids. I have a mother and a father, but like most Americans of my generation who are Black, we experienced some extreme levels of poverty. I won't go into that except to say there is a human approach to elevating one's

self from the depths of poverty. Poverty today is described in terms of \$8,000 to \$10,000 for a family of four, but if you live in a farm community or if you live in rural America, that's a much lower amount to be categorized as economically poor by several government standards.

In yesterday's paper, there was a report on the homeless in America. The National Commission for the Homeless and HUD had listed the number of homeless by certain cities and I just picked out a few of these that I want to share with you. In New York alone, there are 60,000 people homeless. Nowhere to go, out the door. In Los Angeles, 50,000. In Chicago, 25,000. In St. Louis, 20,000. In Richmond, Virginia, 4,000. And then I thought about the people I met last night at this conference, and I thought about where they were from, so I picked out two or three more. In Charleston, West Virginia, 2,000 people are homeless as of yesterday. In Des Moines, 1,600. In Minneapolis, 900 people. In Cleveland, 1,000 people. In Nashville, 10,000 people. And in Baltimore, 15,000 people. Without homes. Without any place to sleep. Without the resources to sleep comfortably, without the wherewithal to have furniture and all the other things that you and I call home.

Another concern I have is with the mental health of America. At this moment, there are 29 million Americans with mental disorders, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. Only ten percent of these are clinically diagnosed as really needing institutional retention and care. That means

that 90 percent of that 29 million are out here with you and me. One report I read said that one out of every five people walking around America is in need of some kind of mental health care, some kind of therapeutic response. And so I say to groups like this: look around you, and if the other four people look all right, you know who should be on the couch. A very serious problem related to Americans' mental health and one that I work on in a course that I teach relates to teenage suicide, which at this point has reached epidemic proportions. It's highest between the ages of 15 and 24, but there are 13 suicides per day in the United States, almost 30,000 per year overall in America. More girls attempt suicide than boys, but more boys succeed. Suburban white males are most likely to be the victims of teenage suicide. And increasing numbers of kindergarteners are seeing their psychiatrists on a weekly basis in 1985. Ask any special educator who works with emotionally handicapped children about the tremendous impact of mental disorder and you will get a rundown of the day-to-day problems that they face. Will the day come when urban educators have to station a mental health specialist at every school building? Will the day come when every school district will have a cadre of social workers and mental health specialists and mental health counselors on their staff in order to operate schools?

Another concern that I have when I think of Americans at risk is what I call the devastating problem of child maltreatment. I teach a course at the University

called "The Teacher and Child Abuse." Some 1,000 children die annually in the United States because of deliberate maltreatment at the hands of adult caretakers, according to the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect. And frighteningly enough, mothers are more likely to kill their children than are fathers. Some 100,000 cases are reported annually, both confirmed and unconfirmed. And estimates are that at least one million cases go unreported. Child sexual abuse is perhaps the most damaging because it diminishes the self-esteem so directly. Emotional abuse is high; verbal abuse by American teachers is at an all-time high; child abduction by strangers and noncustodial parents has left us totally confused on many issues of child protection.

So in America, incest, alcohol, marital discord—all face us daily as we lead urban schools. Last year, working with secondary principals, one of the things I learned is that not one in the group had by December not had a high school student arrive at school drunk. Another concern when I think about the people at risk is teenage pregnancies. In 1983, more than one million teenagers bore children in the United States. Some of those mothers were as young as 12 years old. We know from the medical profession and from the nutritionists that a mother's body that young is unable to bear a strong child. And so, among teenage mothers we have a disproportionate number of babies being born with low birth weights that contribute to a whole series of additional problems at a later point in life, especially at the level that you and I expect them to function

upon entering school.

In terms of the other factors in risk, in many of our larger cities, an automobile is stolen every 30 minutes. A rape occurs every other hour in some cities and smaller communities. Occupational pilferage has become commonplace among white collar workers in America. Theft, burglary, dishonesty, and immorality are all becoming so commonplace today that our children's environment seems totally at risk. The American family is more mobile today than it has ever been in the history of this country. Most of us probably haven't realized that some 31 percent of all American families move every year, primarily from May until September. There are more single parents today than ever in the history of America. I do not imply that a child cannot be reared adequately by a single parent; I am simply saying that a single parent tends to be under more stress in the parental role than those of us who had two parents or who are functioning in two-parent families now. There are more latchkey children today than ever before. There's less togetherness, far less verbal interaction in the family, and some 42 cents of every family food dollar is spent on meals outside the home.

We are now also beginning to acknowledge our first generation of biracial children from biological families, not only those biological children, but those who are adopted across racial and ethnic lines. I am beginning to see an increasing number of Black children adopted by white people, white children adopted by Black people, and children of either race adopted by



families where either the wife may be Black and the husband white or vice versa. Those are new configurations that we are now having to deal with in terms of alleviating the risks to our children. And we have an increasing incidence of abandonment by parents of our children.

With regard to physical health, never before have we had so many new unknown life-threatening diseases that the American schools need to address in order to function. In addition to AIDS and Alzheimer's disease, we are now seeing a rash of diseases and ailments that we never knew before. Somehow in years past, we were able to conquer measles, diphtheria, and others through inoculations. However, today we are not seeing a quick fix for the kinds of diseases brought to the American schools. We are trying to respond with the shopping mall medical service but the same people who got the shaft at the major clinics will probably also get the shaft at the shopping mall medical centers.

Let me share what I consider some other human realities that compound the status of being at risk not only for our children, but for all of us. Much of my work is spent looking at the social fabric of America. And much of my work is spent looking at *where* are we in terms of *who* we are. I mentioned earlier that there are 31 million in this country for whom English is not the first language and there are many, many urban people who are still saying these kids have a language barrier. We must now begin to look at our language in

servicing diverse populations. We must be aware of, and when I say be aware of I mean the first grade teacher, the Head Start teacher, the fifth grade teacher, all of us have to be aware of some of these realities. Realities like what? Like the fact that women still earn 61 cents for every dollar that men earn. Like that fact that Black families earn about 59 cents for every dollar that white families earn. Like the fact that Mexican American families earn about 57 cents for every dollar that white families earn. Like the fact that we have 50 governors and that 48 of them are male. (I saw Martha Layne Collins this morning. I am so proud of her, and I don't even know her.)

But the fact is that we must finally get around to doing something in the modern age about that mentality, which I think the curriculum is in part responsible for in our society. We have 50 commissioners of education; all but two are male. We have 100 senators in Washington; only two are female. None are Black, none are Native Americans. The superintendent mentioned the problem of illiteracy; we've got major problems that impact the children at risk. It's not just these poor urban children, but it's our entire society that I think you and I have some stake in correcting. And

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There are 31 million in this country for whom English is not the first language and there are many urban people who are still saying these kids have a language barrier.

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the only way that I think we can begin that correction is somewhere in the minds of Americans.

Let me go a little bit further, because I feel so strongly about what is happening to the children at risk. I teach at the Urban Education Center in Kansas City and as I begin to look I see some things that bother me greatly, things that I also look at when I

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**I was in one city that had 10,000 children in special education, excluding the physically handicapped; 7,000 of those children were Black males. Ladies and gentlemen, that is not by accident.**

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travel to other cities. I have been in 35 states in the past 16 years and the pattern tends to be the same wherever I go. It goes like this: There appears a disproportionate number of Black children labeled slow, retarded, disabled, and disruptive. I was in one city that had 10,000 children in special education, excluding the physically handicapped; 7,000 of those children were Black males. Ladies and gentlemen, that is not by accident. The people who make decisions about who shall be in the retarded classes, who shall be in the learning disabled classes, who should be where, those people have the mentality and mind set that automatically predisposes them to place those children in those categories. Now, I appreciate the availability of those classes, but don't tell me that 7,000 out of 10,000

children in special education for the retarded must naturally be Black males. I can't buy that.

There's a disproportionate number of Black children being suspended, expelled, pushed out of school for trivial reasons. A disproportionate number of Black teens are unemployed each summer. A disproportionate number of Black people enter prison before the age of 20. One of the pieces of research that Janice Hall Benson has done indicates that most of the Black males who end up in prison by age 20 had their first encounter at about age eight through the school. I mention that because I think those of us in this room have the influence, the professional integrity, and the responsibility to influence the thinking of what happens to eight-year-old Black boys in American urban education. Some 51 percent of all Black children are likely to come from poverty level homes. Families without male heads of households are twice as likely to be economically poor by federal standards as those with male heads.

I was making a presentation in Wisconsin a few days ago on the plight of Blacks in recently desegregated school districts and I began to talk at length about the plight of the Black male child. Someone challenged me and said, "Why do you pick out the Black male child?" I just looked up and said: "I used to be one. I am also the father of one." I am particularly concerned because when I look around this room, in a conference devoted to urban education, the number of Black males here is critically small. What we know though, is that Black male children



are the least conforming children in school. And we also know that teachers reward conformity over everything else. Now that's a statement that has been true for 15 years and I regret that, but it's true. We have done studies on this in more than one city to find out who teachers considered to be the best child of all the children they teach, and the worst child. And what we find is that in most instances the best student, best child, is female and the worst child is always male. And when we begin to break it down, white females, Black females, white males, Black males—you know it just comes right down that list.

What we find in American urban education and rural education is that very often the more the student is like the teacher, the greater the opportunities in the reward system. Let me share this additional profile data. Forty percent of all white households in 1983 had school age children, despite the fact that the percentage of adults with school age children is small. But 60 percent of all Black households had school age children and 60 percent of all Hispanic households. As recently as 1982, 79 percent of all white Americans 19 years old and above had a high school diploma. But only 63 percent of all Black Americans and only 52 percent of all Hispanic Americans had diplomas. One of the reasons that those data are as they are is that the data are consistent; as of early 1985 these figures have not changed. A Black child is 2.5 times more likely than a white child to be suspended from school, even in cities. A male child is 2.2 times more likely to be suspended than a female child. An

economically poor child is 3.3 times more likely to be suspended than a child from a middle income or high income family. A lower achieving student is 28 times more likely to be suspended than a high achieving student. A student with a weak sense of identity is not likely to reach her potential. And a disproportionate number of different children still get the shaft when it comes to who shall be in

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the class play, who shall be on the receiving end of the reward system, who shall get the visibility, who shall get in the honor society, who shall get the opportunity to represent the school in a number of ways.

I am particularly concerned with the prison population in America. I was reading a book by Jaranga Kunjufu\* entitled *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys*. Kunjufu delineates in that paperback a major problem as it concerns Black children. And in my work looking at who is in prison, how they get there, what happens to them after they get there, what I find is that as of June 1985, 490,000 prisoners were in the United States. Of that 490,000, two-thirds of them are minority males. Do you know

\*Afro American Press, 1983, \$3.50 paper.

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**A lower achieving student is 28 times more likely to be suspended than a high achieving student.**

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what I think? All of them went to school somewhere. All of them sat in somebody's second grade, in somebody's kindergarten or first grade. And how did they end up in the Kentucky State Prison? How did they end up in the Cook County Jail? How did they end up in the Wisconsin State Prison or the Kansas State Penitentiary? If 90 percent of the prisoners in America are male, what does that mean? Can we analyze this in terms of SAT scores? Can we analyze this in terms of SAT percentiles?

Maybe we ought to take another look at boys in the first grade or boys in the eighth grade. Maybe in terms of talking about sexism, an exclusionary term, we should be understanding what some people are referring to as the stress of masculinity. Our society assigns the chief breadwinning role to males. Should we rethink this? We may have to lead schools in new ways that reduce the size of our prison population. As of September 1985, this is what has happened over the last year in terms of that prison population. Kansas increased its prison population by 7.3 percent, Missouri by 7.8, Ohio by 8.1, Tennessee by 4.0, Virginia by 5.7, and West Virginia

by 6.1. Wisconsin increased its prison population by 1.6 percent, Michigan by 10.

I am frightened, I am very concerned, because the trend continues. The people who come to first grade in many of our schools end up in prison. Is there something you and I can do? Is there some policy that can be changed? Is there some instructional approach that we could examine? Is there some way of counteracting that by interacting with parents at a different level? Some of our urban children at risk will spend their lives trying to find a cure for cancer but others will spend their lives trying to find their way out of prison. Let me say that no one ever forgets their schooling experience, no matter how far back it may have been. We remember that instructional impact. Given all these problems, given all these 1986 realities, what can I do? What can you and I do? Where do we stand? What is it that we can do upon leaving this conference that will make a difference, so we can begin to clean up the human profiles that I just shared?

The comprehensive approach is what I call a way of looking at urban education so that we

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**The comprehensive approach includes a social reconstruction of urban education that makes people first, things second. I don't want to talk about excellent schools. I want to talk about people who not only survive, but people who grow, develop, produce, contribute.**

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I'm calling for what I refer to as a low threat, high quality instructional delivery to reduce the anxiety that kids feel who are already at risk.

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reconstruct the system to decrease some of the problems I just described. The first of these I call a social reconstruction of urban education that makes people first, things second. Let me repeat that. *A social reconstruction of urban education that makes people first and things second.* I don't want to talk about excellent schools. I want to talk about people who not only survive, but people who grow, develop, produce, contribute. I want to talk about what happened [to the 28 percent who don't graduate]. I want to talk about how they feel about school. Despite the fact that we are now graduating 72 percent of all Americans, I am equally as concerned about those who graduate with the feeling that nobody cares, that schooling didn't really mean that much to me, that some teacher mistreated me.

As an undergraduate, I was, as they say, an economically high risk student. In my quest to try to gather tuition, the business manager of that school gave me a very hard time. If I ran late, my brother and I working together to generate two sets of tuition, I got the tongue-lashing of my life. And the last thing that I remember so vividly is he said, "If you don't have money in three weeks, don't even come by to tell me you're going, just leave." That thing stuck with me for ten years. It took me ten years to pay my alumni dues,

because I remembered the business manager saying, "Just leave, if you don't have the money." Not, "Come back and let us try to work out something else." Not, "Come and let's talk about it." Just, "Leave. I would prefer that you not be here if you can't pay your way." Urban education is still telling kids, "Just leave." Some teachers are saying, "I'd really rather not have you here." Some suburban teachers are still saying, "Why do I have to teach these kids who are woefully different, who speak a different language, who come from homes where the income is less than \$8,000; why do I?" I am saying to the Urban Education Conference: You have to help do something about that kind of mentality. When I talk about socially reconstructing urban education, I'm talking about recreating a mentality so the people who are teaching those students don't arrive assuming that all of them—the children they teach—will look like them, have the family income of them, speak like them, and a whole series of other things.

The second thing that I would like in my comprehensive approach is a staff development program that serves children at risk by continuing the education of teachers in a way that helps them understand that our children are at risk. I'm talking about the ecology of the curriculum. I am a

If a child in the urban schools feels that the teacher doesn't believe in him or doesn't care about him, then he's not going to care about the spelling, the math, the reading, the language arts.

A lot of teachers don't understand that and don't relate to that. And we still have brand new teachers arriving in your districts asking for a job who come with the missionary zeal. It won't work.

curriculum person. That's the area I teach at the University. That's the area I spend most of my time with when I'm out all over these United States. I want to know about the programs. I want to know what is going on both in the curriculum, which is attacking the "what" of learning, and in the instruction, which is the "how" of learning. And so when I talk about the ecology of the curriculum I am talking about the climate, an old term that Harold Hodgkinson gave us 35 years ago. I am talking about images reflected in that curriculum. I am talking about the flexibility of instruction and the credibility of the instructor. I am talking about curriculum materials. I am talking about the eradication of scientific and institutional racism and academic evaluation. I am also talking about positive student visibility. Let me clarify what I mean by the ecology of the curriculum to embrace instruction.

I'm calling for what I refer to as a low threat, high quality instructional delivery—*low threat, high quality instructional delivery*—to reduce the anxiety

that kids feel who are already at risk. Have you ever tried to teach a hungry child? Some years ago now, I was with a research team in Cincinnati coming out of Ohio State, and the Head Start children, I believe, or Title I children, were being given these trips on Saturdays to the zoo or so forth, and there were people, I think it was an area called Western Hills, saying, "This is unfair; these kids get to do all that and then our kids don't get these free bus rides." I got so upset with them I almost turned white, because the very kids they were talking about were the kids that were going to be unable to experience those things because their family incomes did not allow it. Let me remind you that we buy experiences for our children, and if you don't have the money to buy these experiences then urban education needs to step in. Let me ask that you direct *the kind of staff development programs that reduce the victimization of children*. Most staff development programs spend much of their time on new teaching techniques, new basal readers, or this kit or this package. What I'm saying is all of it put

together doesn't amount to a hill of beans if the persons delivering the instruction do not understand that part of our task is to eliminate victimization of America's urban children.

So I am talking about spending a great deal of time with the heads of staff. How do you do this? You're better designers of that than I am. But let me suggest that you spend a lot more time on what people think, the possibilities they might envision, the creativity that lies within the elementary and secondary teachers, than you do in buying some things that may or may not be useful. Let me suggest that your staff development program work on employing and upgrading people who understand multiple value systems. One of the things I hope you'll do in dealing with learning styles [is to look at] the way people of color and people who have a different language attack a learning task. In America you get more rewards for being verbal than being nonverbal. If you can't master the oral English language, if you cannot talk and express yourself, what happens to you is you begin to boil and burn inside and you express that in different, sometimes more violent, volatile ways. I have all his life said to my child, "Don't be afraid to disagree with an idea."

If you know anything about my African heritage, you know that we are an oral people. We'd rather tell it to you than write it to you. The volume of Black America is always somewhat higher than the volume of white America. So white teachers teaching Black students for the first time, all have a problem

with "why they are so loud." We're loud because we are an oral people. That's a difference and I don't want you to change me into being white.

There's a theory that says when two or more parties engage in a relationship, the relationship will be terminated if one or more parties believe that they are being shortchanged. That theory is useful in evaluating the interactions of culture and learning and socializing and the full strata of interactions in the American school. If a child in the urban schools feels that the teacher is shortchanging him or doesn't believe in him or doesn't care about him, then he's not going to care about the spelling, the math, the reading, the language arts.

A lot of teachers don't understand that and don't relate to that. And we still have brand new teachers arriving in your districts asking for a job who come with the missionary zeal. It won't work. "You poor, hungry, different kids, I have come to save you." Kids know that and they react accordingly. Let me say that a staff development program that helps teachers is concerned with students' own ethnicity. Teachers must understand that they ought to operate classrooms in ways that validate ethnic groups' lifestyles. I am asking that you develop the kind of program that calls people to respect the students' right to be evaluated within a culturally appropriate normative framework. Most people view Black children as abnormal. Most people view white poor children as abnormal. Most people view people who are economically poor from any level



as abnormal. I am suggesting that you work on a staff development program that permits people to view individuals through multiple lenses.

Let me suggest that you watch this call for excellence. A number of states in the wake of *A Nation at Risk* have gotten on the excellence bandwagon. I'm suggesting that you please *do not let the call for excellence, quality, and higher standards become a smoke screen for a return to a racist, sexist, and elitist set of practices regarding schools*. This is very easy when resources are scarce. Let me ask that you operate schools for individual liberation. Liberation is a self-induced experience. You cannot believe what happened to me the day that I decided I was liberated. I do not have to do, believe in, buy into some of the things that America would like me to buy into. I'm an individual. I love America. But there's a lover's quarrel going on all the time. Freedom may be externally granted but liberation must be experienced, and the key to liberation is the American school curriculum.

So I ask you to design a culturally-rich urban curriculum appropriate to 1986. I ask you to work with the urban staffs so that

they remove themselves from a role of detachment to a role of involvement in the lives of children. The most competent urban teachers will be those who can inspire, who can intercede for learning, who know how to call on uncertain students in a nonthreatening way, who realize that praise for an academically uncertain student is invaluable.

I want you to leave here today believing that we can create a totally different environment, a totally different urban education experience for children. You can believe that only if you believe that what you are doing is important and good and that you are special. What I'm talking about cannot be done by an average, mediocre urban educator or administrator. I am talking to the urban educator who is not only excited about the possibilities of learning, not only excited about what can happen in America, not only excited about what we are able to do as urban educators, but who believes first in himself or herself, and then who believes in children, whether they are Head Start, eleventh graders, fourth graders, eighth graders, or vo-tech students. One of the things that happens to us is that we get so involved in the trenches of day-to-day operations that we begin to feel

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**Do not let the call for excellence, quality, and higher standards become a smoke screen for a return to a racist, sexist, and elitist set of practices regarding schools. Let me ask that you operate schools for individual liberation.**

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The most competent urban teachers will be those who can inspire, who can intercede for learning, who know how to call on uncertain students in a nonthreatening way.

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the pressures of our jobs. And so we almost become part of the job. One of the reasons for that is, we don't tell ourselves that we're good.

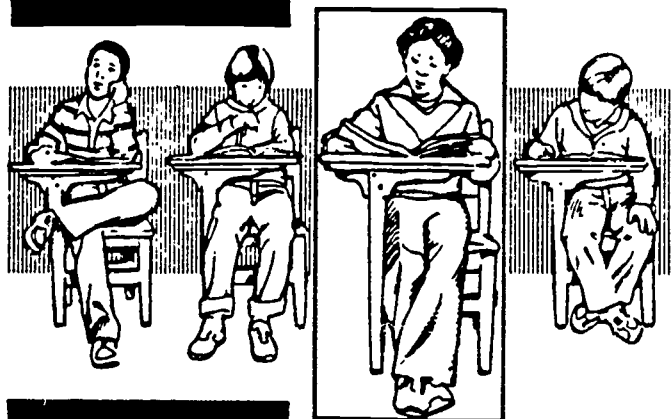
America is in dire trouble. But the kind of trouble that we are in is the kind that you and I can do something about. Between kindergarten and grade 12 a child reads somewhere between 50 and 60 textbooks and he has between 30 and 40 teachers. That makes a lot of impact. We have something to do, which no one can do except you and I, because we are the ones who control the curriculum of the American schools. We are the ones who have the greatest impact on these children.

Please go back and help the children at risk.

# Appendix



# Urban Education Network Conference



## CHILDREN AT RISK

### AGENDA

Galt House, Louisville, Kentucky  
December 15-17, 1985

#### Sunday, December 15

- 12:30 p.m.** Registration
- 1:30 p.m.** Court Room  
General Session
- Presiding**  
Allen F. Zondlak, Chairman, Urban Education Network (Detroit Public Schools)
- Welcome**  
Alice C. McDonald, Superintendent of Schools, Kentucky Department of Education  
Jack R. Sanders, Deputy Executive Director, Appalachia Educational Laboratory
- Network Status Report**  
Allen F. Zondlak
- Lab Updates**  
Tom Olson, Executive Director, North Central Regional Educational Laboratory  
Sharon Koenigs, Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory  
Jack R. Sanders
- 3:00 p.m.** Break

- 3:15 p.m.** Network Member Updates on "Children at Risk" Initiatives
- Presiding**  
Allen F. Zondlak
- 4:00 p.m.** Presentation on the Louisville-Jefferson County Public Schools Introduction by Reece Little, Coordinator, Curriculum Development, Jefferson County Public Schools  
Joan Shepler, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
- 5:00 p.m.** Adjournment
- 5:30 p.m.** Water Poet Room  
Reception—Cash Bar
- 6:30 p.m.** Water Poet Room  
Dinner
- Introduction**  
David Bennett, Superintendent, St. Paul Public Schools, Minnesota
- Keynote Address—"Thinking About the Undoable: Dropout Program"**  
Dale Mann, Professor, Chairman, Department of Educational Administration, Columbia University, New York
- 8:30 p.m.** Adjournment

#### Monday, December 16

- 8:00 a.m.** Dellquay Room  
Continental Breakfast
- 8:30 a.m.** Court Room  
General Session
- Presiding**  
Joyce Weddington, Director, Compensatory Education, Memphis City Schools, Tennessee
- "Children at Risk": Four Innovative Studies**  
Patricia Milazzo, Deputy Director, Southwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Los Alamitos, California  
Topic: "Instructional Risk"  
John F. Witte, Associate Director, LaFollette Institute, University of Wisconsin, Madison  
Topic: "The Milwaukee Study of Children at Risk"
- 10:00 a.m.** Break
- 10:20 a.m.** Ellen Racioppi, Director, College Bound Program, Winchester High School, Winchester, Massachusetts  
Topic: "The Learning to Learn Program"

Joseph Gastright and John H. Grate,  
Department of Curriculum and  
Instruction, Cincinnati Public  
Schools, Ohio  
Topic: "The Cincinnati Study of  
Children at Risk"

12:00 noon  
Water Poet Room

Lunch

1:30 p.m.

Concurrent Sessions on "Children  
at Risk": An In-depth Look at  
Current Studies

Lord Crewe Room  
Gothic Room  
Old River Room  
Queen Room

Joseph Gastright and John Grate  
Patricia Milezzo  
Ellen Racioppi  
John Witte

2:30 p.m.

Break

2:45 p.m.

Concurrent Sessions

Conference participants should attend  
another session of their choice.

3:45 p.m.

Break

4:00 p.m.  
Court Room

General Session

Reports on Concurrent Sessions and  
Discussions

Susan Donielson, Director of Curri-  
culum, Des Moines Public Schools  
Evelyn Luckey, Assistant Superin-  
tendent, Columbus Public Schools  
James Roleke, Research Coordinator,  
The School District of Kansas City  
Tom Stefonek, Director, Bureau of  
Assessment and Testing, Wisconsin  
Department of Public Instruction

5:00 p.m.

Adjournment

5:30-6:30 p.m.  
King's Head Room

Social Hour

Dinner on your own!

## Tuesday, December 17

8:00 a.m.  
Delkquay Room

Continental Breakfast

8:30 a.m.  
Court Room

General Session

Presiding

Allen F. Zondlak

Welcome

Introduction by Reece Little  
Donald Ingwerson, Superintendent,  
Jefferson County Public Schools,  
Louisville, Kentucky

Keynote Address

Introduction by Joan Solomon,  
Director of Urban Education,  
Missouri Department of Elementary  
and Secondary Education  
James B. Boyer, Professor, Kansas  
State University

Topic: "Human Realities:  
A Comprehensive Approach to  
Children at Risk"

10:00 a.m.

Break

10:15 a.m.

Presiding

Allen F. Zondlak

Urban Network Business Meeting

Special Interest Groups:

Higher Order Thinking

Effective Schools

Professional Development

11:45 a.m.  
Water Poet Room

Luncheon

Closing Remarks

Tom Olson, NCREL

Sharon Koenigs, McREL

Jack R. Sanders, AEL

Please complete the Conference Evaluation Form before you  
leave and turn it in at the Registration Desk.

This conference was hosted by Appalachia Educational  
Laboratory, Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory,  
and North Central Regional Educational Laboratory. It was  
funded by U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educa-  
tional Research and Improvement.