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ABSTRACT

The Accelerated School Program is designed to improve the education of disadvantaged students by using "acceleration" techniques used with gifted and talented students. The goal is to speed up the learning of at-risk students so they will be able to perform at grade level by the end of elementary school. Central to the strategy is the placement of curriculum and instructional decisions in the hands of the instructional staff, requiring a complete restructuring of the traditional school organization. The emphasis on local responsibility for educational outcomes requires an appropriate decision-structure built around the school's unity of purpose. The school must also develop the capacity to identify challenges, to understand these challenges, and to implement and evaluate solutions. Fifty schools nationwide have begun the six-year process needed to implement the accelerated school program. Cost estimates average about $1,000 per pupil per year. Although many issues regarding curriculum development, changing staff roles, and developing parent participation will require further exploration, the Accelerated Schools Model offers hope for closing the educational gap between America and other countries, and between the disadvantaged and the advantaged. Comments by T. P. Fitzgerald, Frances Kemmerer, and Steven D. Gold and a response by the presenter are included. (FMW)

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Accelerating the Progress of *All* Students

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Nelson A.
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of
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State University
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Special Report
Number 31

Accelerating the Progress of *All* Students

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T. P. Fitzgerald is the Bureau Chief for the School Improvement and Migrant Units in the New York State Education Department. He received his doctorate from State University of New York at Albany in reading and educational psychology. Dr. Fitzgerald has taught at the elementary, secondary, and college levels. His major research area is comprehension and school change.

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Introduction

The philosopher John Rawls, in his noted work, *A Theory of Justice* (1971), asserts that:

> . . . to treat all persons equally to provide a genuine equality of opportunity, society must give most attention to those with fewer native assets and to those born in the less favorable social positions.

American schools have been viewed as a major form of equalizing intervention on behalf of society to promote the social inclusion of society's disadvantaged members. Unfortunately, the results of schooling in this regard have fallen far short of the ideal. In fact, much of the literature of the last quarter-century has dealt with schooling's tendency to exaggerate rather than to ameliorate the gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged pupils.

This specific failure is only part of a more generic crisis in American education. The 1990s can expect to see a renewed interest in both the effectiveness and equity issues of schooling. To be meaningful, this renewed interest will have to be complemented by a greater political and administrative openness to new ways to solve these old problems. The need to improve the achievement of at-risk children in the cognitive, affective, and psycho-motor domains is critical; however, it is part of the larger need to enhance the achievement of all children. The paper entitled "Accelerating the Progress of *All* Students" by Professor Henry M. Levin provides an analysis of one innovative intervention that has the potential to achieve the goal of improving education for the whole student population.

Professor Levin is a professor of education and affiliated professor of economics at Stanford University. He also serves as Director of the Center for Educational Research at Stanford (CERAS) and was the founding Director of the Institute for Research on Educational Finance and Governance (IFG). He is a former Research Associate of the Brookings Institution and has been at Stanford University since 1968. He presently is the Editor of the *Review of Educational Research.*

Levin is a specialist in the economics of education and human resources. His work has focused specifically on cost-effectiveness, educational finance, educational requirements of high technologies, and investment strategies for educationally at-risk students. He has published 11 books and about 200 articles in scholarly journals. Much of his recent work addresses the establishment of Accelerated Schools to address the needs of disadvantaged students. These schools are designed to accelerate the learning of such youngsters in order to bring them into the educational mainstream by the end of elementary school. He is presently working with two pilot schools, two states, and a city school system on implementation as well as directing a program of research and dissemination on accelerated schools. It is upon these experiences that his Rockefeller Institute presentation was based.

Professor Levin's presentation was followed by three sets of comments. The discussants were Dr. Thomas P. Fitzgerald, Chief, Bureau of School Improvement, New York State Education Department; Dr. Steven D. Gold, Director, Center for the Study of the States, Rockefeller Institute; and Professor Frances Kemmerer, Department of Educational Administration and Policy Studies, University at Albany. The comments of the discussants are presented at the end of this volume along with Professor Levin's responses to the comments.

It has been a great honor and pleasure to work with Professor Levin and the discussants, as well as the excellent staff of the School of Education and the Rockefeller Institute in this activity.

Douglas M. Windham
Professor of Educational
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Accelerating the Progress of *All* Students

Henry M. Levin
Stanford University

Introduction

A national educational crisis looms before us in confronting the education of a particular group of students whom we will refer to as at-risk students. Such students lack the family and community resources to succeed in schools as they are currently constituted (Levin 1986). They enter schools unprepared to take advantage of the standard curriculum and fall farther and farther behind in academic achievement. Their test scores indicate that they are two years behind other students by grade six and four years behind at the end of grade twelve, if they reach that level. About half do not graduate from high school, which is a minimum requirement for productive entry into the U.S. labor force.

Such students are drawn heavily from poverty populations, minority groups, immigrant and non-English speaking populations, and single-parent families. They represent about one-third of all students in elementary and secondary schools (Levin 1986; Pallas, Natriello, and McDill 1989), a proportion that is rising rapidly because of the substantial immigrations from impoverished and rural areas of Asia and Latin America and because of high birth rates among these populations.

Unless we are able to intervene successfully, there are direct economic consequences for higher education, the labor force, and the cost of public services. Larger and larger numbers of educationally disadvantaged students will mean that public institutions of higher education will have to become more restrictive in their admissions criteria or more devoted to remedial academic work. Restrictive admissions will not only be politically contentious at a time of increasing population growth and political power of disadvantaged populations, but it may restrict the supply of college-educated workers below that needed by the economy. Alternatively, increasing numbers of remedial courses and students will raise costs substantially to both the colleges and universities and to the students who must forego earnings for a longer period to get a college education.

A further consequence of the expansion of disadvantaged student populations will be a serious deterioration of the future labor force. As their numbers grow and they continue to experience low achievement and high dropout rates, a larger and larger portion of the labor force will be unprepared for available jobs. Even clerical workers, cashiers, and salespeople

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Presented at the Eighth Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government Educational Policy Seminar, November 8, 1990. This represents an updated version of a chapter in the forthcoming volume, *Children in Poverty*, edited by Aletha C. Huston, to be published by Cambridge University Press in 1991.

need basic skills in oral and written communication, computation, and reasoning, skills that are not guaranteed among the educationally disadvantaged. A 1976 U.S. Government study found that while 13 percent of all 17 year olds were classified as functionally illiterate, the percentage of illiterates among educationally disadvantaged populations was about half (National Assessment of Educational Progress 1976). Without successful interventions to improve the plight of the educationally disadvantaged, employers and the economy will suffer lagging productivity, higher training costs, and competitive disadvantages as well as lost tax revenues. This will be especially so in those states, regions, and localities most impacted by disadvantaged labor forces, but there will be a national impact as well.

These economic losses will come at a time of rising costs of public services for populations that are disadvantaged by inadequate educational attainments. More and more citizens will need to rely upon public assistance for survival, and increasing numbers of undereducated teens and adults will pursue illegal activities to fill idle time and obtain the income that is not available through legal pursuits (Berlin and Sum 1988, pp. 28-30). A further point for consideration is that economic analyses of educational investments in behalf of at-risk students suggest that the financial value of the benefits to society far exceed the social costs (Levin 1989).

Are We on the Right Track?

What is clear is that we are not on the right track to meet the challenges of educationally at-risk students, despite recent educational reforms for the general population (e.g., National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983; U.S. Department of Education 1984). These reforms have not really addressed the specific needs of educationally at-risk students. The reforms stress raising standards at the secondary level, without providing additional resources or new strategies to assist the disadvantaged in meeting these higher standards (National Coalition of Advocates for Students 1985).

Thus, it is not surprising that the status of at-risk students has not been found to have improved under the latest reforms. Any strategy for improving the educational plight of at-risk children must begin at the elementary level and must be dedicated to preparing children for doing high-quality work in secondary school. Simply raising standards at the secondary level, without making it possible for at-risk students to meet the new standards, is more likely to increase their dropping out (McDill, Natriello, and Pallas 1985).

How to Produce Educational Failure

Disadvantaged students begin school with a learning gap in those areas valued by schools and mainstream economic and social institutions. The existing model of intervention assumes that they will not be able to maintain a normal instructional pace without prerequisite knowledge and learning skills. Thus, such youngsters are placed into less demanding instructional settings—either by being pulled out of their regular classrooms or by adapting the regular classroom to their "needs"—to provide remedial or compensatory educational services. This

approach appears to be both rational and compassionate, but it has exactly the opposite consequences.

First, this process reduces learning expectations on the parts of both the children and the educators who are assigned to teach them, and it stigmatizes both groups with a label of inferiority. Such a stigma undermines social support for the activity, denotes a low social status to the participants, and imparts negative self-images for the participants. The combination of low social status and low expectations is tantamount to treating such students as discards who are marginal to the mainstream educational agenda. Thus, the model creates the unhealthiest of all possible conditions under which to expect significant educational progress. In contrast, *an effective approach must focus on creating learning activities that are characterized by high expectations and high status for the participants.*

Second, the usual treatment of the educationally disadvantaged is not designed to bring students up to the point where they can benefit from mainstream instruction and perform at grade-level. There exist no time-tables for doing so, and there are rarely incentives or even provisions for students to move from remedial instruction into the mainstream. In fact, since students in compensatory or remedial situations are expected to progress at a slower than "normal" pace, a self-fulfilling prophecy is realized as they fall farther and farther behind their non-disadvantaged counterparts. The result is that once a disadvantaged student is relegated to remedial or compensatory interventions, that student will be expected to learn at a slower rate, and the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students will grow. *A successful program must set a deadline for closing the achievement gap so that, ultimately, educationally disadvantaged children will be able to benefit from mainstream instruction.*

Third, by deliberately slowing the pace of instruction to a crawl, a heavy emphasis is placed on endless repetition of material through drill and practice. The result is that the school experience of the disadvantaged lacks intrinsic vitality, omits crucial learning skills and reinforcement, and moves at a plodding pace that reinforces low expectations. Exposure to concepts, analysis, problem solving, and interesting applications is largely proscribed in favor of decoding skills in reading and arithmetic operations in mathematics in the primary grades, on the premise that these fundamentals must be learned before anything more challenging can be attempted. Mechanics are stressed over content. Such a joyless experience further negates the child's feelings about school and diminishes the possibility that the child will view the school as a positive environment in which learning progress can be made. *An effective curriculum for the disadvantaged must not only be faster paced and actively engage the interests of such children to enhance their motivation, but it must include concepts, analysis, problem-solving, and interesting applications.*

Most compensatory educational programs do not involve parents sufficiently or draw adequately upon available community resources. Parents are not viewed or utilized as a potentially positive influence for their children's learning. Furthermore, the professional staff at the school level are usually omitted from participating in the important educational decisions that they must ultimately implement. Such an omission means that teachers are expected to dedicate themselves to the implementation of programs that do not necessarily reflect their professional judgments, a condition that is not likely to spur great enthusiasm. *The design and implementation of successful educational programs to address the needs of the*

educationally disadvantaged will require the involvement of parents, the use of community resources, and the extensive participation of teachers in formulating the interventions that will be provided.

An effective approach to educating the disadvantaged must be characterized by high expectations, deadlines by which such children will be performing at grade-level range, stimulating instructional programs, planning by the educational staff who will offer the program, and the use of all available resources including the parents of the students. In addition, it should use instructional strategies that are particularly appropriate for the disadvantaged and make better use of time. Most important of all, the approach should incorporate a comprehensive set of strategies that mutually reinforce each other in creating an organizational push towards raising the achievement of students to grade level.

Accelerated Schools for At-risk Students

The Accelerated School Program at Stanford University was designed as an alternative to present practice by building on the knowledge base that argues in favor of a different set of assumptions for achieving school success for at-risk students (Edmonds 1979; Levin 1987 and 1988). At its heart is the notion of doing for at-risk students what we presently attempt to do for gifted and talented students, striving to accelerate their progress rather than slowing it down. The goal of the Accelerated Schools Program is to accelerate the learning of at-risk students so that they are able to *perform at grade level by the end of elementary school.* It is important to note that although this suggests the use of standardized tests to assess grade-level performance, we should not be constrained to the use of such tests. Rather, we should ask what is important for children to know at this level to be academically able and assess it accordingly. In the longer run we expect to develop new assessment instruments that are richer and more nearly valid than present multiple-choice format, standardized tests.

Acceleration is supported by recent approaches to the definition of intelligence and giftedness (Chase Forthcoming; Gardner and Hatch 1989) as well as experimental evidence supporting accelerated programs for at-risk students. Peterson (1989) randomly assigned low-achieving seventh graders who would have normally been given remedial instruction to three different instructional settings: remedial, average, and prealgebra for accelerated students. He found that the remedial students who had been assigned to the accelerated, prealgebra classes showed significantly greater achievement gains in all three areas that were tested, computation, problem solving, and mathematical concepts.

To systematically accomplish academic acceleration in all subjects for at-risk students, schools need to be restructured completely. Such schools are characterized by high expectations on the part of teachers, parents, and students; deadlines by which students are expected to meet particular educational requirements; stimulating instructional programs, planning by the educational staff who offer the programs, and the use of all available resources in the community including parents, senior citizens, and social agencies. Over the last two-and-one-half years, some 50 of these schools have been established, most of them within the last year.

Accelerated schools are designed to enable at-risk students to take advantage of mainstream or accelerated middle school or secondary school instruction (e.g., in seventh grade) by effectively closing the achievement gap in elementary school. The approach is also expected to reduce dropouts, drug use, and teenage pregnancies by creating a strong sense of self-worth and educational accomplishment for students who now feel rejected by schools and frustrated about their own abilities. Specific dimensions of the Accelerated School are outlined below.

Organization

The entire organization of the school focuses on the goal of having students achieve at or above grade level by the time they leave sixth grade. Central to the accelerated school strategy is the placement of curriculum and instructional decisions in the hands of the instructional staff of the school. Classroom teachers know the children best. They understand their learning needs, styles, and capabilities in ways most administrators and program specialists cannot. If desired changes in student achievement are to be realized, teachers must have the authority and responsibility to design curriculum and instructional programs in ways that are compatible with their unique classroom perspective.

To facilitate this process, each accelerated school has an overall steering committee and task forces composed of the principal, teachers, other staff, and parents. The principal serves a central function as instructional leader in coordinating and guiding this activity and in addressing the logistical needs for translating decisions into reality. School staff work together to set out a program that is consonant with student needs and the strengths of the district and school staff. Information, technical assistance, and training will be provided by district personnel. In this way, the reform is a "bottom-up" approach in which those who are providing the instruction make the decisions that they will implement and evaluate.

These broad features of the accelerated school are designed to make it a total institution for accelerating the educational progress of the disadvantaged, rather than just grafting on compensatory or remedial classes to schools with a conventional agenda.

We believe that this approach has a high probability of ultimate success because of its emphasis on the instrumental goal of bringing students to grade level or above by the completion of sixth grade; its stress on acceleration of learning, critical thinking, and high expectations; its reliance on a professional model of school governance, which is attractive to educators; its capacity to benefit from instructional strategies that have shown good results for the disadvantaged within existing models of compensatory education; and its ability to draw upon all of the resources available to the community including parents and senior citizens.

The stress is on the school as a whole rather than on a particular grade, curriculum, approach to teacher training, or other more limited strategy. Underlying the organizational approach are three major assumptions:

- the strategy enlists a unity of purpose among all of the participants;

- it "empowers" all of the major participants and raises their feelings of efficacy and responsibility for the outcomes of the school;

- it builds on the considerable strengths of the participants rather than decrying their weaknesses.

Unity of purpose refers to agreement among parents, teachers, and students on a common set of goals for the school that will be the focal point of everyone's efforts. Clearly, these should focus on bringing children into the educational mainstream so that they can fully benefit from their further schooling experiences and adult opportunities.

Empowerment refers to the ability of the key participants to make important decisions at the school level and in the home to improve the education of students. It is based upon breaking the present stalemate among administrators, teachers, parents, and students in which the participants tend to blame each other as well as other factors "beyond their control" for the p.. educational outcomes of disadvantaged students. Unless all of the major actors can be empowered to seek a common set of goals and influence the educational and social processes that can achieve those goals, it is unlikely that the desired improvements will take place or be sustained.

An accelerated school must build upon an expanded role for all groups to participate in and take responsibility for the educational process and educational results. Such an approach requires a shift to a school-based decision approach with heavy involvement of teachers and parents and new administrative roles.

Building on strengths refers to utilizing all of the learning resources that students, parents, school staff, and communities can bring to the educational endeavor. In the quest to place blame for the lack of efficacy of schools in improving the education of the disadvantaged, it is easy to exaggerate weaknesses of the various participants and ignore strengths. Parents have considerable strengths in serving as positive influences for the education of their children, not the least of which are a deep love for their children and a desire for their children to succeed. Teachers are capable of insights, intuition, and teaching and organizational acumen that are lost when schools exclude teachers from participating in the decisions they must implement. Both parents and teachers are largely underutilized sources of talent in the schools.

The strengths of disadvantaged students are often overlooked because they are perceived as lacking the learning behaviors associated with middle-class students rather than as having unique assets that can be used to accelerate their learning. These often include an interest and curiosity in oral and artistic expression, abilities to learn through the manipulation of appropriate learning materials, a capability for engrossment in intrinsically interesting tasks, and the ability to learn to write before attaining competence in decoding skills that are prerequisite to reading. In addi .., such students can serve as enthusiastic and effective learning resources for other students through peer tutoring and cooperative learning approaches (Slavin 1983).

School-based administrators are also underutilized by being placed in "command" roles to meet the directives and standard operating procedures of districts rather than to work creatively with parents, staff, and students. And communities have considerable resources, including youth organizations, senior citizens, businesses, and religious groups that should be viewed as major assets for the schools and the children of the community. The strengths of these participants can be viewed as a major set of resources for creating accelerated schools.

Curriculum and Instructional Strategies

The instructional program is based upon an accelerated curriculum that is designed to bring all children to grade level or higher in core curricular areas. Major curriculum aspects include a heavily language-based approach, even in mathematics. Language use is emphasized across the curriculum, with an early introduction to writing and reading for meaning and the development of critical literacy. Interesting applications of new tools to everyday problems and events also stress the usefulness of what is being taught and learned and introduce a problem-solving orientation. Active learning approaches based upon student discovery and testing of ideas represent a basis for responding to student curiosity and to benefit from the advantages of learning-by-doing rather than just learning-by-listening.

Other features include the implementation of an extended-day program in which rest periods, physical activities, the arts, and a time period for independent assignments or homework are provided. During this period, college students and senior citizen volunteers work with individual students to provide learning assistance. Since many of the students are "latch-key" children, the extension of the school day is attractive to parents. Instructional strategies also include peer tutoring and cooperative learning. Both have been shown to be especially effective with disadvantaged students (Slavin and Madden 1989).

Parent Involvement

Parent involvement is necessarily a central focus of the Accelerated School. Epstein (1987) has shown that research on parental and family involvement supports the important potential role that families can have in raising the educational accomplishments of their students. The Accelerated School builds on parental involvement in several ways.

Parents or guardians are expected to affirm an agreement that clarifies the goals of the Accelerated School and the obligations of parents, students, and school staff. The agreement is explained to parents and translated, if necessary. Parental obligations include such supportive roles as ensuring that their children go to bed at a reasonable hour and attend school regularly and punctually. They are asked to set high educational expectations for their children, to talk to them regularly about the importance of school, and to take an interest in their children's activities and the materials that the children bring home.

They are expected to encourage their children to read on a daily basis and to ensure that independent assignments are addressed. They are also expected to respond to queries from the school. The purpose is to emphasize the importance of the parental role through the dignity of an agreement that is affirmed by all parties. Students and school staff also have appropriate

obligations regarding their roles, with the understanding that the Accelerated School will only succeed if all three parties work together.

Parents participate in the governance structure of the school through membership on task forces and the steering committee. They are also given opportunities to interact with the school program and school staff through an "open door" policy and a parent lounge as well as to receive training for providing active assistance to their children. Such training includes not only the skills for working with a child, but also many of the academic skills necessary to understand what the child is doing. In this respect, it may be necessary to work closely with agencies offering adult basic education to provide the parental foundation. The parental dimension can improve the capacity and effort of the child as well as increase the time devoted to academic learning and provide additional instructional resources in the home.

Evaluation

Progress is evaluated by an assessment system that monitors student performance to assure that they are on the appropriate learning trajectory. Periodic evaluations on wide-spectrum, standardized achievement tests as well as on tailored assessments created by school staff for each strand of the curriculum are essential ingredients. These evaluations emphasize the students' acquisition of higher-order thinking and reasoning skills in core curricular areas. Unfortunately, assessment instruments that are presently available are not suitable for these purposes. Accordingly, this dimension is the focus of a major developmental effort.

Accelerated Schools in Action

At the heart of the accelerated school is the emphasis on site responsibility for the educational process and outcomes (Goodlad 1984). This implies that there must be an appropriate decision-structure built around the school's unity of purpose, and there must be an appropriate process to develop the capacity of the school to identify challenges, create an inquiry process to understand the challenges and potential solutions, and to implement and evaluate solutions.

Governance Structures

We have found that three levels of participation are necessary to encompass the range of issues that must be addressed in an a democratic, but productive way: the School as a Whole; the Steering Committee; and Task Forces or Policy Committees.

The School as a Whole (SAW) refers to the principal, teachers, teachers' aides, other instructional and noninstructional staff, and parent representatives as well as student representatives. The SAW is required to approve all major decisions on curriculum, instruction, and resource allocation that have implications for the entire school. At the opposite extreme in terms of group size are the task and policy committees. These represent small groups organized around particular areas of concern for the school such as subject areas, personnel, or particular school challenges. Where the concern is a continuing one, such as personnel selection and evaluation, assessment, or parent participation, a policy committee is formed. In the case

where the concern is episodic, such as the planning of new facilities, an ad hoc committee is formed for the duration of the task. The major guideline for forming committees is to create as few as possible, always looking for ways to combine related responsibilities and to dissolve committees that are no longer needed so as to avoid an overburden on staff.

The task and policy committees are the groups that do most of the analytic and preparatory work, such as defining specific problems that the school faces and searching for and implementing solutions. Before implementation begins the recommendations of task and policy committees must be approved by the Steering Committee, and in some cases the School as a Whole. The task and policy committees build on the comraderie, ease of communication, and motivations associated with small teams working together on a regular basis.

The Steering Committee consists of the principal and representative teachers, aides, other school staff, and parents. The purpose of the Steering Committee is to appoint the task and policy committees, to monitor their progress, and to develop a set of recommendations for consideration by the school as a whole. Steering committee members can be elected, or they can be composed of representatives of the committees with rotating membership over time to give all persons a chance to serve. Committees are expected to meet on a weekly basis, the steering committee on a biweekly basis, and the school as a whole on a quarterly basis or as needed. Meetings of all entities require a public display of agendas at least 24 hours in advance and minutes of meetings within 48 hours following the meeting.

Clearly, the principal in the school has a different role than in a traditional school. The principal is responsible for coordinating and facilitating the activities of decision bodies as well as for obtaining the logistical support that is necessary in such areas as information, staff development, assessment, implementation, and instructional resources. A good principal in the context of the accelerated school is one who is an active listener and participant; who can identify and cultivate talents among staff; who can keep the school focused on its mission; who can work effectively with parents and community; who is dedicated to the students and their success; who can motivate the various actors; who can marshal the resources that are necessary; and who is "the keeper of the dream." In the last role, the principal is the person who must always remind participants of the "dream," especially during periods of temporary disappointments or setbacks.

School districts need to play a greater service role for individual schools than they normally do. Instead of serving as regulators of schools with rules, mandates, and policies to ensure compliance of school activities with some centralized plan, the school district must provide support services to help the accelerated school succeed at its mission. Central office staff will assist task committees and the steering committee in identifying challenges, obtaining information on alternatives, implementation, staff development, and evaluation. They must also assist the schools to work with parents and to help families sponsor activities in the home that support educational progress of their children.

While schools for at-risk students need considerable additional resources (Levin 1989), the transformation to an accelerated school is one of qualitative change that can be done largely within existing resources. The major resource need is that of providing additional released time of staff for meetings, staff development, discussion, reflection, planning, and exploration of alternatives. Our pilot schools have been successful in using various school district resources,

grants from foundations, and changes in school organization to accommodate some of these time requirements. In addition, expertise is needed from the district central office or through outside consultants to assist the school in building capacity to accelerate the education of its students.

Building School Capacity

Existing schools can be transformed structurally through devolution of decision-making to school sites, but they will not function as accelerated schools without building the capacity of the schools to establish a unity of purpose, to make responsible decisions, and to build on strengths. Certainly, school staff have neither been trained to function in this way, nor have they been expected to function this way in traditional schools (Keith and Girling 1990). Much of the capability to become an accelerated school comes directly from practice or learning-by-doing. As school staff and community work at it, they become experts at the process. But, in order to get the process started, there are a number of steps that must be taken.

It is usually necessary to provide some training in making decisions within groups. Rarely do principals, teachers, and school staff have this experience. Meetings in traditional schools tend to be highly structured and run in a routine and often authoritarian fashion. Teachers, in particular, consider meetings a waste of time. School staff rarely view meetings as having the potential to be productive and to accomplish major goals in behalf of the school. Accordingly, school staff need experience in working together with special attention to group process and participation, sharing of information, and working towards decisions. In addition, they need exposure to inquiry-oriented processes that help to identify and define challenges, to look for alternative solutions, and to implement those solutions.

These needs can be met through special training in these areas. But, in addition, involvement in the accelerated school process itself is an important part of building capacity. This process is initiated in four steps. At the first phase, the school is asked to establish baseline information on itself. School staff are asked to assemble a report for discussion among all site participants that includes a history of the school; data on students, staff, and school facilities; information on the community and cultures of the parents; particular strengths of the school; data on attendance, test scores, and other measures of student performance; and the major challenges faced by the school. Some of this information will be quantitative, while much of it will be descriptive. The purpose of this exercise is to begin the accelerated school process through a self-examination and the preparation of a written record of its status at the start to compare later with progress. The process of collecting, reporting, and discussing the baseline information is done over several weeks.

The second part of the initial process is to establish a vision for the school that will be the focus of change. In a series of meetings of both the school as a whole and smaller components of staff, the participants focus on building a description of a school that will work for students, staff, and community. Since the accelerated school transitional process is expected to take about six years, that is the time period for which the participants project a new vision of their school. Out of this process emerges a vision for the future that will be the focus of accelerated

school implementation. This phase of the process can be carried out in a single day, if staff members prepare for it by discussing a vision and exploring possibilities on an informal basis in the days preceding this meeting.

The third phase involves the comparison of the vision with the baseline report. Clearly, there will be a large gap in almost every aspect between the vision and the existing situation. School staff are asked to work on setting out all of the things that must be done in order to move from the present situation to the future vision. Of course, they amass a very large number of changes that must be made, often 40-50 major alterations.

The fourth step takes the list of what needs to be accomplished and reduces it to a small number of initial priorities that will become the immediate focus of the school. No organization can work effectively on more than three or four major priorities at a time. The task facing the staff is to select those three or four priorities. This exercise can generate a very animated set of discussions that get to the heart of staff concerns. The dynamics of the discourse are themselves useful because they engage the staff in the realization that they are responsible for change and for choosing those areas where they must begin. The agreement on priorities is followed by the establishment of the first task committees—the small groups that will work on these priorities—and assignment of staff to each group, usually through self-selection. The final stage is that of deciding how to construct the steering committee and its functions.

At this point the school is ready to adopt the full accelerated process. However, this process must be supported by the principal, steering committee, and the school district as well as by training staff in an inquiry process. Task committees need training in how to take an overall challenge (such as poor mathematics performance of students) and to refine the focus to understand the specific concerns. They must be able to translate these concerns into specific hypotheses for further exploration. Once they narrow the problem to a specific cause or causes, they need to seek out alternatives for addressing it. Finally, they need to choose a solution or strategy, implement it, and evaluate the results. In this respect, it is necessary to provide training and guidance to all task groups on problem solving and implementation of decisions.

Present Status of Accelerated Schools

The accelerated school program at Stanford University began its implementation of the accelerated school process almost four years ago with the selection of two pilot schools in the San Francisco Bay Area in which to apply and develop the model. Since that time another 50 schools have begun the six year transition to accelerated schools, including a statewide network of 25 schools in Illinois and 9 schools in Missouri. The purpose of the two pilot schools is to translate and implement the principles of accelerated schooling while simultaneously providing a basis for building our knowledge on how to implement the changes on a collaborative basis with practitioners.

It is important to note that our estimate of the time required to make the transition from a conventional school to an accelerated one is about six years. This means that neither pilot school has implemented the full program at this time. Each school has set initial priorities and

is working to implement these while undertaking additional priorities as the initial ones are addressed.

Since only three years of the six year period required for a full transformation of our pilot schools have passed, we have not undertaken a summative evaluation. However, many obvious changes are observable. Parent participation in the two schools has increased dramatically. In one pilot school for which we have been able to obtain longitudinal data, parent attendance at back-to-school night increased from 17 persons prior to the intervention to about 450 persons at the beginning of the third year. Participation at parent conferences increased from about 30 to almost 95 percent in the same period. Student discipline problems have declined precipitously, and attendance patterns have improved. School staff report substantial improvements in the school environment.

New programs have been selected by school staff and have been introduced in language, mathematics, and student self-esteem. In the year following the establishment of mathematics as a priority area and the search for and implementation of school-based solutions, in one of the schools mathematics scores of sixth graders rose from the 10th to the 27th percentile on statewide norms of the California Assessment Program. The other pilot school had the largest standardized test gains among the 72 elementary schools in the City of San Francisco in 1989-90 in language and the second largest gain in mathematics. Schools in Missouri, Texas, and Illinois showed achievement gains in their first and second years that were greater than the average in their school districts. Finally, there is evidence of reduced grade repetition, resulting in the saving of considerable costs to school funding sources.

This is not the only approach to acceleration that shows promise. James Comer (1980) and his associates at Yale University have designed and implemented schools that draw upon strong parental involvement, the use of a problem-solving approach to school challenges, and mental health service teams to increase school capacity to address such challenges. The application of the Comer model to elementary schools in New Haven in the seventies showed powerful results in raising achievement of inner-city black students to grade level and maintaining that performance in subsequent years (Comer 1987).

The Success for All Program associated with Robert Slavin and his colleagues at the Johns Hopkins University uses a variety of integrated approaches to advance the progress of at-risk children (Madden, Slavin, Karweit, and Livermon 1989). It was first implemented in an inner-city black elementary school in Baltimore in 1987-88 and in other schools in Baltimore and Philadelphia in 1988-89. This approach places heavy emphasis on tutors, 90 minute reading periods each day with about 15 students in each class, a specially constructed reading program, family involvement, and changes in school governance. Improvements in achievement have been dramatic.

The program on Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) that has been developed by Stan Pogrow of the University of Arizona has reported extraordinary accomplishments for at-risk students (Pogrow 1990). The HOTS program is based upon a two-year curriculum in which children spend 35 minutes daily for four days a week in grades 4 through 7 in problem-solving discourse and activities. The content and instructional strategies in the program are highly sophisticated, and suggest that students can learn content more effectively through problem-

solving approaches than through the direct study of content. This type of program is highly compatible with a more fully accelerated curriculum.

The Reading Recovery Program, which is based upon the work of New Zealand educator Marie Clay (1979 and 1987), has also shown powerful results on raising the reading achievement of at-risk students in U.S. schools (Boehlein 1987). This program consists of intensive tutoring by specially trained tutors for 30 minutes daily for 15 to 20 weeks, or 30 to 40 hours of instruction. Research results from Columbus, Ohio shows that 90 percent of children whose pretest scores on reading were in the lowest 20 percent of their class are able to catch up to or exceed their class average, and it appears that they maintain this position in subsequent years. The program is now being replicated throughout Ohio and elsewhere, and it is also being tested in accelerated schools in the Illinois Accelerated School Network.

What Is the Cost?

The evidence suggests that we have the knowledge base to accelerate the education of at-risk students through the accelerated school program, even without major increases in funding. But there will be limits to our achievements unless we recognize that additional resources must be invested in the education of these children over the longer run. Although no formal cost analyses of HOTS or Success for All are presently available, my own estimates of their costs are in the $1,000 range for each year the student is in the program. Reading Recovery costs about $2,500 for the typical 15-week tutoring regimen, but not all at-risk students will require this intensive intervention. The difficulty of estimating a national price tag is due to the lack of a precise estimate of the number of at-risk students; of data on the cost of achieving success under the more promising models; and of agreement on an appropriate time frame to achieve success (Levin 1989). However, on the basis of certain assumptions, estimates of the cost can be made. If we assume that half again as much must be spent on at-risk students over their elementary and secondary careers as is presently being spent on average, this would amount to an additional $2,000 a year per at-risk student in 1988-89. With an estimate of about 13 million at-risk students (Levin 1986), the investment for 1988-89 would be about $26 billion. But, the combination of both Chapter I of ECIA, the major federal appropriation for at-risk students, and the various state support programs for such children are not likely to exceed $5 billion a year of which Chapter I accounts for about $4 billion. The result is that an additional $21 billion of funding would be needed, or a fourfold expansion in additional spending for at-risk students. The necessary increase would account for only about a ten-percent increase in overall elementary and secondary educational funding.

Such funds would need to come from all levels of government. The federal government should provide the bulk of the funding for several reasons. First, the failure to address the educational needs of at-risk students will have national repercussions for the nation's economy. Second, equality of opportunity has been a foremost commitment at the federal level. Third, the federal government will receive most of the additional tax revenues generated by the income created by educational investments. About 60 percent of all public revenues are collected at the federal level, but only about 6 percent of the cost of elementary and secondary education is paid for by the federal government. In contrast, over 90 percent of the cost of

education is paid by state and local governments, even though they receive only 40 percent of the tax revenues generated by educational investments.

Much of this spending could be reallocated from the billions of dollars in waste that characterizes the military and other government programs characterized by fraud and incompetence. For example, the federal "bail-out" of savings and loans is likely to cost about $500 billion over the next few years, and recent losses from fraud and political manipulation at the Department of Housing and Urban Development account for at least several billion dollars. Arguments that budgetary deficits and spending stringencies make it impossible to increase educational federal funding for at-risk students are simply statements of political and value priorities. Such assertions tend to pale alongside the possibilities for reallocations from weapons systems that don't work, taxpayer-insured savings and loan fraud, defaults from poorly monitored student loan programs, and bloated health care programs. Certainly, the demise of the cold war and the demilitarization of the Eastern Bloc suggest that we can reduce our major commitments in that part of the world. It is a matter of where we place priorities.

States must also expand their funding on the education of at-risk students. The states are both responsible for education and will benefit from increases in state tax revenues and improvements in their economies associated with raising the productivity and life chances of at-risk students. In addition, such investments should reduce state expenditures on public assistance and criminal justice.

Local jurisdictions are most likely to be handicapped in raising additional funding for the education of at-risk students. But, at the local level, greater accountability for obtaining results can be established as well as coordinating existing resources to focus more intensely on the needs of at-risk students. Both voluntary agencies, such as churches, scouts, and YMCAs, as well as public social service agencies need to coordinate their efforts to assist families in becoming self-sufficient and in contributing to the education of their children. Local communities also need to take greater advantage of local businesses and senior citizens in working towards better schools through financial assistance, tutoring, and other types of support.

Building a Political Coalition

Both the moral imperative and the economic, social, and political rationales for major investments in the education of at-risk students are compelling. Rising inequalities attributable to a growing at-risk population will threaten the ability of a democratic society to function effectively. The gains from such educational investments will be more than compensated for by increases in economic productivity and tax revenues. Moreover, the benefits of such a program are so diffuse that the following constituencies clearly have something to gain.

(1) *Businesses*—Businesses will gain from a more productive workforce, less crime, and lower taxes for criminal justice and public assistance.

(2) *Taxpayers*—Taxpayers will gain from higher tax revenues derived from a more productive population and lower taxes for noneducational services for at-risk students as well as lower costs for criminal justice and public assistance.

(3) *Parents*—Parents will gain from better schools, more orderly school environments in which there will be less disruption for discipline and for students who are lagging behind. Schools will be able to focus more on academic learning.

(4) *Cities*—Cities will become more attractive places to be with more productive schools and citizens.

(5) *Teachers*—Teachers have much to gain from the addition of resources and the setting of high priorities in educating at-risk students.

(6) *Families*—Both the formation and maintenance of families will gain from a more productive and orderly educational system that attends to the needs of at-risk students and provides them with the skills to gain employment and raise their own stable families.

This list could go on and on because there are so many constituencies that can benefit from an improvement in the status of at-risk students and few that would be undermined. Moreover, these are the major groups that dominate public policy, and especially educational policy. What is clear is that a coalition has not come together that melds these groups into a powerful force for change. Although some attention has been focussed on at-risk students in recent years, it has not been concentrated or sustained with the intensity that is needed. The major political challenge is to mobilize the diverse interests in improving the status of at-risk children into a unified political force that can marshal the public investments that are necessary. At the very least this will require a much wider awareness of what is at stake and what public investments and school restructuring can do to improve outcomes on behalf of both at-risk students and the entire society.

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Review of "Accelerating the Progress of *All* Students"

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Professor Levin's paper challenges the reader to rethink some commonly held notions of what is appropriate instruction, curriculum, and expectations for low-performing students. The author acknowledges that we are working within a complex social environment when we discuss the issue of restructuring schools, which would be necessary to achieve an accelerated school program described in this paper.

Some have criticized education for changing so slowly over the past two decades. This criticism reflects the rapidly changing job requirements and the rapid social evolution under way. However, many restructuring efforts presently exist in New York State and across our country under the labels of school improvement, outcomes-based education, excellence and accountability, school-based decision making, and strategic planning.

Dr. Levin's paper focuses on at-risk students and reviews present efforts with such students. Most programs focus on an effort to keep students in school, perpetuating the notion that learning occurs only within a school building. Such programs also perpetuate the notion that the programs are appropriate and relevant for students when new insights may be what is needed. Many of the drop-out prevention activities ignore students who have dropped out of the educational process but still attend school. A continuing concern is the emphasis placed on college-level education, overlooking the factors that most new job markets will require less than college training, but will require specific training in vocational and technical areas. Present programs also result in the labeling of students, further isolating those students. The numerous high school programs ignore the fact that dropout prevention should rightly begin during the elementary level. Finally, drop-out prevention programs frequently overlook the legitimate responsibility that students have for their own learning and the legitimate responsibilities of parents and communities to motivate and support learning.

The literature on at-risk students provides a consistent description of factors associated with potential drop-outs. These factors focus in three general areas of low achievement, low or erratic attendance and lower socioeconomic status. These factors focus on student performance but do not consider student nor teacher attitudes. At-risk students frequently criticize the educational system as being irrelevant and counterproductive to their needs. There may be some truth in this statement. For instance, we know a good deal about the importance of teachers' attitudes, decision making, and behavior as it impacts student learning. The literature on teachers portrays a change in behavior over the course of a career, moving from concern for survival to task orientation and, finally, to self-renewal. Each of these stages in a teacher's career requires different in-service to assist them in providing an educational environment to students who are potential drop-outs.

Restructuring efforts, such as those proposed by Dr. Levin, should be viewed as changes in human behavior as opposed to changes in the system. Descriptions of the change process, such as the Concerns-based Adoption Model, focus on different stages in the implementation of any change within an educational setting. A mentality of collaboration appears to be a cornerstone in the establishment of accelerated schools for at-risk students because it allows teachers and administrators time and resources to discuss the changes in educational program to meet the needs of students.

Dr. Levin's proposal presupposes that the staff is at the self-renewal stage, which frequently is not the case. School improvement efforts in New York State build towards a self-renewing staff. Collaborative planning, use of surveys, and ad-hoc teams provide a vehicle for establishing a "community of learners." To achieve the self-renewing stage, at least four conditions are necessary. First, time and resources to share, to learn, to build, and to refine together must be provided for staff. Second, changes in communication patterns and problem solving should occur as an impetus to have the staff focus on the instructional process. The staff needs to ask, "What is presently under our control?" "What do we want to accomplish?" and "What are our hopes for the future of this building?" Third, the staff must set about increasing the expectation of what the students and the staff can accomplish. Several districts are looking at the use of test data to monitor instructional performance and the perception of learning time as a means of altering expectations. Fourth, staff must be involved in defining their beliefs, mission, and goals. This involvement represents the collective strength and requires training in group process skills. Such training assists the staff members in determining what they believe, what they know from research, what they envision for the school and what their behavior reflects. Fifth, school culture should be analyzed to determine the way things are done within a building and how the building staff feels about their responsibilities The culture and climate are reflected in the purpose for schooling and a sense of belonging.

Dr. Levin's paper indicates that accelerated schooling has an objective of having at-risk students performing at grade level by the end of grade 6. To accomplish this, schools need to be restructured to set high expectations, establish deadlines for educational requirements, prepare stimulating instructional programs planned by the staff who teach them, use community resources, and identify challenges. The planning by a steering committee and a task force establishes a set of common goals to bring at-risk students into the mainstream. The strength of such a proposal for at-risk students is that it capitalizes on the interest and curiosity of the students' oral and artistic expression. It also highlights the use of manipulative-appropriate learning materials, engaging of students on tasks that are interesting, and the ability to learn to write before learning to read. Much of this is accomplished through peer tutoring and cooperative learning strategies. The 15 sites where these concepts are under development will provide useful information as to the amount of time, effort, and money necessary to create such a restructured environment.

New York State, under the leadership of Commissioner Thomas Sobol, has developed a discussion paper entitled "A New Compact for Learning."[1] Commissioner Sobol, in the "Com-

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1 Commissioner Thomas Sobol. "A New Compact for Learning: Improving Public Elementary-Middle-Secondary Education Results in the 1990s." New York. NYS Department of Education, 1990; revised 1991.

pact," suggests that the State Education Department's role should be in identifying broad-based outcomes and encouraging districts to identify desired outcomes. The program of Excellence and Accountability encourages districts to prepare standards of excellence and education plans for buildings. Emphasis is placed on quality and equity across instructional programs.

When considering any restructuring proposal, such as the one outlined in "Accelerating the Progress of *All* Students," we are certain that there are needs to be addressed. Can we design appropriate challenging curriculum? Can we organize an advocacy role for staff to support students? Can we provide an environment that energizes staff, bringing them into a self-renewal mode? Can we establish a home-school partnership to close the gap between the educational achievement levels? The activities surrounding school improvement over the past years have been able to close the gap between what we know about good schooling and what we do in schools, but the gap is closing too slowly. We may now need to look at efforts that accelerate the restructuring of schools to meet the needs of all students.

Comment on "Accelerating the Progress of *All* Students"

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The Accelerated School concept flies in the face of what passes for conventional wisdom. Remediation in terms of either our nation's catching up with other nations or disadvantaged children catching up with advantaged ones has generally become synonymous with more time. (See for example, Barrett 1990.) The so-called reform reports, which have become a minor industry in academe, advocate more scheduled school time—a longer compulsory school period, a longer school year, a longer school day, and more school time spent on the basic subjects. The knowledge that more is not always better but, in fact, is sometimes worse has apparently been temporarily forgotten.

If, however, it is conceded that more school time is not necessarily better, then it follows that tradeoffs may be possible between (a) the quantity and quality of time allocated *to* students and between (b) the time allocated to students and the time allocated *by* students to learning. The Accelerated School Model is apparently designed to take advantage of such tradeoffs and in so doing is reminiscent of the "kinder and gentler" Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) Programs. Since the demise of OEO, we have attempted to community- , teacher- , and parent-proof schooling. In fact, we have done everything but take the children from their homes. The Accelerated School Model, if nothing else, reminds us not to blame the victims; that communities, parents, and teachers need not be considered the "enemies" of meaningful reform. The question remains of whether existing research supports the tradeoffs the model attempts to take advantage of. And there the answer is a qualified yes; qualified since there is so much we still do not know about how children learn.

The Time Provided to Students

Studies supporting the proposition that more scheduled time, all else equal, makes a difference in terms of student achievement have proved inconclusive (Karweit and Slavin 1981; Stallings 1975; Frederick and Walberg 1980). The lack of a consistent relationship between the length of the school year and day and student achievement is not surprising, and results from the use of unidimensional proxies to measure multidimensional phenomenon. The lesson to be learned from such research is not that the amount of time provided to students does not make a difference but that the way time is used is of overwhelming significance. The issues that have proven salient are, in fact, related to the uses made of available time and, in particular, to the

choice and pacing of subject matter content and the pacing of school time over the school year. The issues of pacing and grouping are only separable on the most abstract theoretical level. Pacing, particularly teacher pacing, is obviously dictated by perceptions of the modal rate of learning in the classroom. Beginning with Barr and Dreeben's work (1983) and proceeding to Oakes' study of tracking (1985) and Peterson's study cited by Levin (1989), research has shown that group placement dictates subject matter coverage and coverage, not surprisingly, is directly related to student achievement. In short, if, for example, groups are formed on the basis of reading ability, a child mistakenly placed in a higher group will learn more than a child placed in the so-called correct group. That the deleterious effects in terms of exposure to content of being placed in a low group are compounded by pull-out programs is also well documented (Allington 1986). The pacing of allocated time across the academic year has received less attention. Heyns' work (1978) suggests, at least, that long vacation periods may not be optimal for disadvantaged students. How this should be or is reconciled with practitioners' claims that rest periods are a prerequisite for developmental leaps is not now known and, for that reason, it would be interesting to know how the Accelerated Schools schedule the academic year or, more importantly, the flow of learning-related resources to students throughout the year.

The Time Provided by Students

While the Accelerated School Model demands little change in the amount of time provided to students, it demands a significant change in the amount of time provided by students to learning. While the traditional academic day has apparently not been lengthened (and possibly, has been shortened by the time needed for staff capacity building and decision-making), the student day has been almost doubled. Students are provided with the quiet place for study, assistance with homework, and complementary learning activities on site or the luxuries that middle-class children have traditionally had at home. (That these services are now also required on site by middle class families is self-evident.) In addition, parents' contract to ensure regular attendance, time spent reading at home, and appropriate amounts of sleep. While testing the separate effects of items in this bundle on student achievement awaits summative evaluation of the pilot schools, the effect of parental and community involvement on student achievement has long been known (Medrich et al. 1982).

In sum, we stand to lose little but gain a great deal by supporting efforts like the Accelerated Schools. Make no mistake, however, the Accelerated Schools are not like the so-called "regular" public schools. They differ in organization and control. Their objectives are clear and the technologies to accomplish the objectives well specified. In many respects, they are more like "private" schools. The question is: Will the Accelerated Schools in some form become true lighthouse schools affecting the schooling of all children? Or are they just one more program? The choice, as it has always been, is ours. We can pay up front for schooling that works or pay later for schooling that has not worked.

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Comments on "Accelerating the Progress of *All* Students"

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This paper certainly addresses a serious problem and makes a plausible argument about how it might be attacked. It has numerous shortcomings, however. My comments are divided into two parts—(1) gaps in the general argument, and (2) specific comments about the financing of the programs advocated.

Gaps in the Argument

The article glosses over a number of important questions. Several issues relate to who is to be covered by these programs:

- Professor Levin assumes that at-risk students are clustered so that entire school buildings would be converted to accelerated schools. What is to be done about at-risk students who are scattered, representing a minority of their schools?

- How are at-risk students identified? Professor Levin says they are drawn heavily from certain populations—poverty, minorities, immigrants, and non-English speakers—but not all children in these groups are at risk. On the other hand, surely many are at risk who do not have one of these labels.

Several other questions relate to how these programs relate to other methods of combatting the problems of at-risk children:

- What about early childhood education? At-risk children benefit greatly from good prekindergarten programs, but nothing is said about such programs. Perhaps there is a greater payoff from those programs than the ones advocated in this paper.

- In this paper, Professor Levin ignores the need for health and social services that must be provided as part of a coordinated attack on the problems of at-riskness. A program focused solely on schools that is not integrated with other programs deals with only part of the problems faced by these students.

I also have two other questions:

- Would not many of the attributes of accelerated schools—such as setting high expectations and developing strong mechanism for parental involvement—be desirable for all schools? Why should they be limited to accelerated schools? Professor Levin says that schools need to be completely restructured. Isn't this generally true?

- Finally, the evidence cited here for the success of accelerated schools is certainly insufficient to draw a conclusion that a major financial commitment is warranted to use them as a national model. The initial experiments, while promising, are much too limited to draw sweeping conclusions. Few of the more than 50 schools using the accelerated model have provided the additional resources that Professor Levin says are needed. Besides, the promising results in the schools with the most experience with this approach may have been due to some extent to a Hawthorne effect.

These skeptical comments should not be interpreted as implying opposition to the accelerated schools idea. As I said initially, I find it plausible and hopeful. Because Professor Levin's paper is written from the viewpoint of an advocate, however, it fails to provide sufficient attention to the questions I have noted above.

Financing the Programs

Although it is not a major part of his argument, Professor Le· 's discussion of how these programs could be financed warrants comment. His rough estimate of the cost of national implementation is approximately $21 billion.

Contrary to his assertion, it is not realistic to believe that this program can be financed completely by cutting other spending. If it is going to happen, it will be largely financed by increasing federal, state, or local taxes.

It is demagogic to maintain that eliminating fraud and incompetence in federal programs could yield the needed $21 billion. The vast sums wasted in the S&L fiasco are largely sunk costs. It is incongruous that Professor Levin chastizes "bloated health care programs" and inefficiencies in other areas but does not mention the possibility of making better use of resources in the education sector. With annual spending of more than $200 billion and poor results that are legendary, the educational sector is as ripe for pruning and reform as most of the targets he mentions. Perhaps he omits it because of the political obstacles reform faces. The obstacles in the areas he attacks are also formidable.

I agree that it would be preferable for the federal government to pay for the bulk of the program, but that is unlikely in view of the federal deficit and opposition to federal tax increases. What if the cost is left up to state and local governments? Their budgets are already fiscally stressed and likely to remain that way through much of the 1990s.

- Medicaid and corrections spending are increasing rapidly, by 18 percent and 17 percent, respectively, in fiscal year 1990. Medicaid growth in 1991 is estimated to be 25 percent nationally.

- They are already raising their tax rates, and they are facing stronger opposition to tax increases. There was considerably tax revolt activity in 1990, and it will be even greater in 1992 if many states raise taxes in 1991, as I expect. Stagnant or falling real earnings, widespread distrust of public officials, and rising tax rates provide the ingredients for a significant tax revolt.

It would not be unprecedented for state and local governments to go on a tax raising spree. They did so in the 1960s. Between 1960 and 1971, their tax revenue rose from 9.24 percent to 11.41 percent of personal income. A comparable increase (23 percent) now would generate about $115 billion in today's dollars.

I am not enough of a dreamer to think that such a large increase will occur in the 1990s, but I am also not so pessimistic as to believe that nothing will be done along the lines that Professor Levin proposes.[1] Political support for increased spending for at-risk students will be much greater if clear and convincing evidence is produced to show that the large investment he urges is really worthwhile.

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1 I have written that increased efforts to improve schooling for at-risk students is one of the most likely areas where states will initiate new programs in the 1990s. See Steven D. Gold, *The State Fiscal Agenda for the 1990s.* (Denver: National Conference of State Legislatures, 1990).

Response

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I appreciate the thoughtful comments of Thomas Fitzgerald, Steven Gold, and Frances Kemmerer. The purpose of my response will be to agree with some of their comments, to provide clarification with regard to others, and to disagree respectfully with a few points. All of this is done in the spirit of constructive discourse.

Overall, I agree with the thrust of Thomas Fitzgerald's comments. He points out some of the directions that policy is being directed for at-risk students. I also agree with him that the paper prepared under Commissioner Sobol for New York State, "Compact for Learning" is a valuable design for establishing a productive division of labor between the state and local school districts. I have two slight qualms with his analysis. The first is his tendency to create lists of features rather than a conception of a holistic school. My own experience suggests that the tendency towards checklists for reform is exactly what ails most "restructuring." It is an entirely new vehicle that we need to address the needs of at-risk students and other students as well, not a new set of features that are grafted on to existing schools. As my colleague Larry Cuban has found, a long history of piecemeal reforms has created the impression of great change amidst great stability. The second-order changes that Cuban calls for require a transformation in the entire conception and implementation of what we think of as a school, and this is the purpose of the Accelerated School Program.

Finally, I worry a bit about the language in the final paragraph of Tom Fitzgerald's comments. As a state official, he seems to be raising questions about how the state can design challenging curriculum, create advocacy roles for staff to support students, create productive environments, and so on. I would maintain that the states cannot do these things. All that they can do is provide the support and leadership to stimulate and assist local school districts and schools to address such matters. That is, the states ought to be providing the leadership, financial support, incentives, and technical assistance to local districts to get the jobs done. They should also be spearheading changes in teacher and administrator training programs in state colleges and universities that will support healthy educational changes. This is also the vision in "Compact for Learning," so I trust that Fitzgerald is using the editorial "we" rather than the "we" of state government.

Steven Gold sees gaps in my argument that require a response. He sees the accelerated school program as one that only addresses the needs of schools with a high concentration of at-risk students and wonders what can be done in schools with only a smattering of such students. The answer is that what we have designed for at-risk students is what we should be doing for all students, creating approaches that are presently reserved only for gifted and talented students. Ultimately, schools attended by at-risk students should be good enough that parents of children who are not at risk would want to send their children to these schools. The

point is that schools that emphasize acceleration and enrichment through a unity of purpose among staff, parents, and students; school-site responsibilities for decisions and their consequences; and a pedagogy that is based upon building on the strengths of students, staff, and community are designed to be good schools for all students. When we create such schools, we will not have to separate students into at-risk types and those who are not at risk. Rather, we can just focus on learning needs.

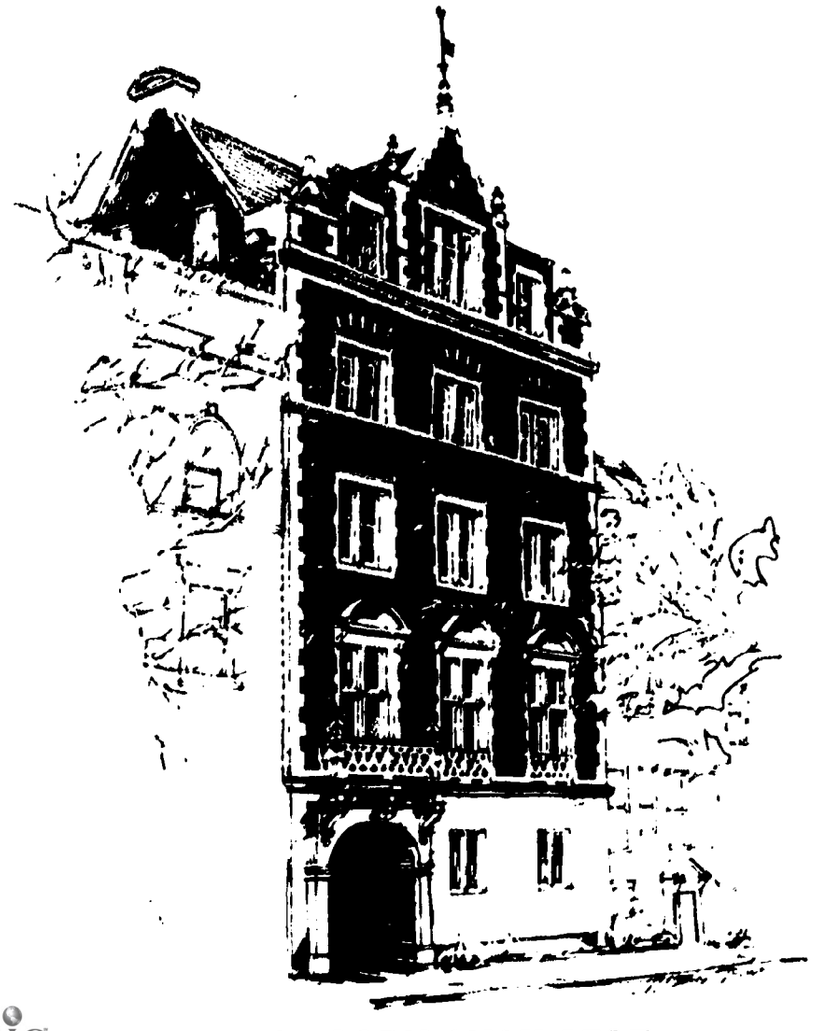
Gold questions why I do not address early childhood programs in this paper. I support early childhood programs, but am mindful of the fact that even the politically popular Head Start has places for only about one-fifth of eligible children. The prospective expansion advocated by the Bush administration would not even reach half of the eligible population. At the same time we capture all of the children in kindergarten and first grade. To foresake this opportunity—because we need to reach children even earlier—does not make any sense to me. There simply is no conflict between pushing for more high quality preschool services for at-risk students and transforming their elementary and middle schools. Further, it has long been known that many preschool academic gains are lost in existing elementary schools that fail to build on those gains. We must embrace a tandem approach in which accelerated schools work in conjunction with preschool. My own belief is that these are complementary strategies rather than substitutes, as Gold implies. The same is true with his point of coordinating health and social services with schools. In a limited space I devoted myself to the schools, but the coordination of the accelerated school with health and social services is absolutely compelling and is found at some of our accelerated school sites, such as Walbridge School in St Louis.

The evidence for raising investments in at-risk students does not come from evaluations of accelerated schools, but from evaluations of a variety of educational investments in at-risk students as summarized in Levin (1989; see citation on p. 16). I also agree with Gold that the possibility of making better use of existing educational resources is not only feasible, but is a driving force behind accelerated schools. The costs of providing the staff development and facilitation to transform a conventional school to an accelerated one have been shown to entail about 1-2 percent of the annual budget. Most schools have had to eke this out of existing resources. But, this relatively small investment provides great leverage by making it possible to reallocate existing resources to new uses and to more efficient processes as evidenced by the rather extraordinary improvements in schools. Still, there are many unmet needs in the instructional, health, and social service areas that are necessary for improving educational outcomes.

Finally, I do not think that it is frivolous to seek efficiencies in bloated programs or cuts in those that meet only a narrow set of special interests rather than broad social goals In a world in which the cold war is no longer a fact of life, we can work with the Soviets to reduce threats around the world (including in the Mideast) rather than both countries spending in a ruinous fashion on the military. It does not take dreaming to conjure a contribution of $15 billion annually from a $300 billion military budget that was premised on cold war thinking. I agree with Gold that the states should make up the rest—e.g., the other $6 billion—as we move out of the present recession. I also think that we should set future policy on what is just and desirable and can draw upon the long-term economic possibilities of our states and nation. Preoccupation with short-term economic conditions will limit that vision. We should be

planning for a future for our children and our nation rather than sulking about present circumstances.

Frances Kemmerer places special emphasis on the use of time in learning. She points out that changing the way we use time may have a far larger payoff than simply increasing time for students within existing processes. Certainly that is a central premise of accelerated schools. But to this I should add a concern about the availability and use of staff time. Teachers and other staff in accelerated schools need to have time to meet, plan, reflect, do research, design and implement programs, and to assess their activities. There is both a quality and quantity-of-time problem. Existing time in schools is used poorly. The lack of good planning and effective group processes makes many school meetings a waste of time. Staff development too often consists of activities that are piecemeal and that are neither integrated into school needs and instructional programs nor followed up with classroom observations, coaching, and other forms of support. Clearly, all available time outside of instruction must be used more effectively. Beyond this, there is a need for additional time that can only be satisfied by changing school organization and providing additional financial support. At present, accelerated schools have been getting this additional time through small grants from community foundations or businesses and through clever deployments of district personnel to cover classrooms during meetings. However, we need to do more in the long run to build these activities into the normal school schedule.



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