

FROM CAPITOL HILL

Effective Schools Improve The Overall Life of Blacks

By **Alfreda L. Madison**

Unemployment among Blacks remains in the double-digit figure, Black teenage pregnancy rates are high and school dropouts have become focus points of concern among Black leaders. While there are several factors that are responsible for these conditions, the schools are a primary source.

Representative Augustus Hawkins (D-Cal.), Chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, is the author of H.R. 5, The School Improvement Act, which has passed the House and contains Effective School language. A similar bill has passed the Senate Health and Human Relations subcommittee on Education and Art.

Studies show that there is great disparity by both the state and federal government in educating the poor. Around 14 million American children live in poverty today. One in every six White children and one in every two Black children are trapped into a life of struggle for survival. Representative Hawkins said, "The primary way to address the needs of children and families is for the federal government to lead the nation's business efforts in developing a sustained productive and profitable national economy."

Federal support must be maintained for programs that have proved to be very valuable in providing the disadvantaged with the tools necessary to become self-sustaining citizens. Some of these programs as reported by the House Education and Labor Committee are: Head Start, which shows that students who were enrolled in the program had an employment rate double those who did not and 50 percent more

were likely to graduate from high school.

Chapter One students made significant improvement in test scores. Research shows that students in the Job Corps program received necessary skills to obtain unsubsidized jobs, which gave them more education, higher earnings and longer employment than those who did not receive the Job Corps training.

Representative Hawkins places great emphasis on the Effective School programs. Factors included in the Effective School are strong leadership, high expectations, an orderly school atmosphere, emphasis on basic and higher order skills, and frequent evaluation of student progress.

In September 1987, under the auspices of the Education and Labor Committee, a cross section of organizations met to respond to five major issue areas, which impact on the education of Black children. These areas were: students, teachers, administrators, and policymakers.

A blueprint was drawn up for implementing these factors. Emphasis must be on students' school attendance for the purpose of becoming intellectually, socially and economically productive, and they have the right to the best possible education on a free and equitable basis. Students must be required to complete school assignments, exercise self discipline, develop confidence in their ability to succeed, and they must participate in school activities. Emphasis must be placed on acquiring and practicing effective study habits, learning to work independently, learning to think critically and to communicate effectively.

Students should be assisted in making appropriate choices for leisure time by participating in expanding talents and skills, and for developing appreciation for the culture of Black heritage.

Teachers must ensure that each Black child is provided the opportunity to attain the skills needed to achieve excellence in education. Effective teaching strategies must be used in all aspects of instruction. Teachers must develop relationships with peers, administrators, parents and communities. A parent system must be established for each class, which will assist with coordination of a tutorial program. Teachers must collaborate with administrators in the selection of instructional programs, develop partnerships with business, higher education, community organizations and with schools that have the Effective School programs.

Administrators have the authority to influence the actions of students, staff, faculty and parents. This influence must implement educational programs which shall effectuate the maximum academic growth of each Black child. The administrator is required to make regular classroom visits, hall and other site visits and non-scheduled visits. The administrator should help teachers upgrade their performance, improve the process for assigning principals to schools with high Black student population, require the principal to develop and implement effective school programs, and make principals accountable for knowing and providing an instructional program which teaches basic skills.

The Effective School program assists Black parents

in understanding their rights and responsibilities. It encourages parents to take responsibility for the education of their children. There must be frequent visitation by parents to the school. They must be aware of teenage pregnancy and drugs among the children. They must work to get school districts to provide transportation and other Effective School services.

Policymakers have the ultimate authority to plan and provide foreffective educational policies and programs, which should be directed to goals of achieving excellence for Black children. They must concentrate on building community resources and support.

The Education and Labor Committee reported on several Effective Schools. One of them was District 13 of Brooklyn, New York. Children in that district have around 80 percent performance either in the national norm or above. Dr. Jerome Haynes, Superintendent of the district, says, "If I'm in my office, I'm not doing my job. I must visit schools and see that teachers teach and children learn." Dr. Weldon Beverly, as principal of Hyde Park Career Academy in Chicago, inherited one of the worst schools in the city. Now with the Effective School program, it has become one of the city's best. A high number of its students go on to college and the dropout rate is almost nil.

Congressman Hawkins says, "The most effective way to improve the economic, health and social life of Blacks is through effective education which reaches children, parents and the community."

CAAR Establishes Hotline For the Hearing Impaired

Community Action Against Rape established Clark County's first hotline for deaf and hearing impaired victims of sexual assault. Deaf victims should call their TDD hotline, 366-1641, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, for immediate crisis intervention counseling. Any hearing impaired person desiring information on sexual assault is encouraged to call. A second TDD machine is available at their office. Call 385-2153. Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. for information and referral. CAAR hopes the deaf community utilizes this new service.

Crisis counselors receive special training in dealing with deaf and hearing impaired victims. Interpreters who can sign for volunteers are also on 24-hour call.

"No ready-made staff-development packages or teaching formulas exist to help schools and teachers move smoothly toward less tracking," notes Oakes, who also acknowledges the difficulty of mixing within traditional competitive classrooms students who have different knowledge levels.

But Oakes does offer some important new recommendations for overcoming the problems inherent in tracking. Schools, she argues, need to take a concept-based approach to curriculum and design active learning tasks rather than passive ones — team activities that require thinking, discussing, writing and visualizing.

"Classrooms will probably need to be organized far differently, providing a diversity of tasks and interactions with few 'public' comparisons of students' abilities," writes Oakes.

In these new classrooms, adds Oakes, teachers would "function like conductors, getting things started and keeping them moving along,

Counselors and interpreters meet victims at University Medical Center where a free medical exam is available to all sexual assault victims. Counselors offer comfort; explain medical and police procedures; and assist victims in the healing process. Their first task is helping victims identify themselves as survivors, not victims of sexual assault. Victims may experience tremendous relief as counselors help them identify, clarify, and validate their emotions.

CAAR's advocates aid victims in procuring needed services such as housing, food, job placement, etc. The center provides referrals to professionals therapists who know American Sign language. Office staff files

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providing information and resources." Grades would be based on improvement, progress toward a learning goal.

When tracking isn't immediately eliminated, Oakes recommends that new placement criteria be considered that ensure racial and ethnic balance at all track levels and in special programs for the gifted.

The present system "where the richer get richer and the poor get poorer" is usually vigorously defended by those few who benefit from it, says Oakes, but it can be altered if school staffs and communities work together.

"But unless teachers have the time and the professional autonomy to deliberate about, develop, and experiment with fundamental changes in school organization and classroom practices, alternatives to tracking are unlikely to be intelligently conceived, enthusiastically endorsed, or successfully implemented," she concludes.

Tracking Hurts Minority Students Most, But System Can Be Altered, Says Expert

WASHINGTON, D.C. — An increasing number of education professionals and parents oppose tracking as unfair to minority students, Jeannie Oakes writes in the premier edition of *Issues '88* a new publication of the National Education Association.

The annual magazine, with a circulation of over 1.9 million NEA members and education leaders, debuted in January.

Oakes, a social scientist

with the Rand Corporation of Santa Monica, California, says tracking—which segregates school children by perceived ability level—creates uneven classroom opportunities and unequal access to knowledge.

A disproportionate number of poor and minority students are put in "low-ability" classes early in their school careers, Oakes points out. These students develop low self-esteem, and the longer

they remain in such classes, the further behind they fall.

Students in lower tracks, Oakes explains, are taught mostly by workbooks, kits, and easy-to-read stories, while learning tasks usually consist of memorizing and repeating answers back to the teacher.

Students placed in high-ability groups have far richer schooling experiences than either low-ability or average-ability groups.

"They have access to different types of knowledge and intellectual experiences," writes Oakes. "They are expected to learn vocabulary that would eventually boost their scores on college entrance exams. . . . Their teachers tend to be more enthusiastic (and) use criticism and ridicule less frequently than teachers of low-ability classes."

What can be done to eliminate the inequities?

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