Chapter 7: Education Policy Analysis & Recommendations

It is no secret that education reform is considered one of the most pressing societal needs today. It is recognized as one of the key components for social justice, personal development, and regional health, and nearly everyone we interviewed for this report broached the issue: from preschool to adult education and from in-school curricular changes to systematic reforms at the regional level. There are hundreds of initiatives in place and in development at the federal, state and local levels, yet despite all of these efforts, the same educational issues we are facing today have plagued us for decades. We want education to be diverse, inclusive, equitable, excellent and productive, and we want all children to learn in a high-quality environment. Yet it seems that many efforts lack public support, are abandoned before they can succeed, are undermined by funding issues, or face retrenchment from other policies which directly impact education.

Although everyone in our society will state that they think public education should be equitable and excellent, opinions regarding how we should achieve it differ widely. Thus, while education is an issue nearly everyone agrees should be addressed, it is also a topic which is extremely polarizing and contentious. As societal resources and institutions have been largely constructed as a zero sum game, to many, educational equity activates a robin-hood scenario, where inner-city schools are seen as getting greater opportunities at the expense of better-resourced school districts and their students. And further, that even if this does occur, many still feel it will do relatively little to uplift those urban students of color.

A different model is possible. Excellent education for all students is not only attainable, but can be reconstructed in an equitable way that benefits all students in a region. There are a number of initiatives in place currently across the nation that have shown tremendous results that could bring sustainable, positive change in the Cleveland region, not only for suburban Whites, but also for inner-city populations and students of color. Targeted, deliberate reform is needed, coupled with a public communication agenda to inform parents, school officials and communities about what is being achieved. Ultimately, these strides towards equity and excellence in education will not only have a sustainable, positive impact for all students, but also communities, and eventually, the entire Cleveland region.

1. Goals of Education

Before discussing educational disparities and how they indicate greater structural issues, and exploring promising education reforms that lift everyone up, there is a need to first explicitly address the goals of public education. In asking any individual what we hope to achieve through public education, we would undoubtedly elicit a range of responses from job preparation to instilling civic capacity. Yet, examining what our policies are aligned to accomplish indicates another set of goals. So, what exactly are we attempting to achieve through public education, or put another way, what exactly is equity? If all of our students are performing the same on standardized tests, but have drastically different voting rates by race and class, is this equity? If two schools in a region are ranked the same according to No Child Left Behind, but the students from one school have drastically different college attendance rates, have we succeeded?
The purpose of first defining goals before beginning any reform is two-fold. First, it forces us to examine how we are conceptualizing the problem, and it forces a dialogue which explicitly calls out the constructs so that they can be shared. If we are all talking about educational success, but success looks different for everyone, how can we construct a meaningful, shared dialogue? Secondly, explicitly stating goals helps establish a benchmark from which to design reform, and against which we can measure progress. If we do not know what we are working towards, how do we know when we have arrived?

The three most common goals of education, as articulated in mission and vision statements in public schools across the country are: to instill democratic merit (i.e. to develop and encourage civic knowledge, participation and responsibility); to build human capacity; and to provide children with the skills necessary for life outside of the school, be it employment or higher education. Education also has implicit goals shared by many, including: acting as a leveler between the disparate expectations of rich children and poor children; reducing stereotypes; and providing students an integrated environment that will later help them succeed in a diverse society. This latter goal was most recently supported by the Supreme Court decision in Grutter v. Bollinger.¹

It seems that the goals of education, and subsequently the measures enacted to achieve these goals, are growing increasingly narrow in this era of increased assessments and standards-based reform. Thus, every initiative that is being pursued must somehow demonstrate a direct and causal link between that reform effort and an increase in test scores. While this is important, it is nevertheless limited, as testing only demonstrates aptitude in test proficiency. This climate and its constraints cannot be ignored, but it should not be the driving force behind pursuing effective, equitable education; there is a compelling need to think beyond these limitations. Eras such as these inevitably shift; some are even beginning to suggest that NCLB may not be nearly as sustainable as first thought. Therefore, we need to extend our gaze to the more distant horizon – we must collectively decide what exactly our goals of education are, and then adjust our institutions to achieve them.

2. Factors Affecting Educational Achievement

While we ultimately seek promising education reform initiatives, reform must include a discussion of the multitude of factors that affect educational achievement. To achieve equitable education for low-income children and students of color, we must examine the impediments a child faces, even before he or she first walks through the doors of the school. Our goal here is not to create a list that deflates our enthusiasm and overwhelms our hope for change, but rather to broaden the discussion and demonstrate that to reform education, we cannot limit the work to the education arena alone. As many intuitively know, every child is affected by a multitude of factors, which are inextricably linked to our policies and practices, including their living environment, health care, childcare, and particularly housing. Each child is situated within a web of opportunity that has a profound and lasting impact on their ability to succeed in life. If we are to in fact increase the life-chances of those children stranded in our urban and first-ring suburban areas, we must acknowledge those structures and institutions which constrain those chances, even
before birth. We will divide these factors into categories: institutional factors; instruction; out of school practices; and home environment.

2.1 Institutional Factors

Funding: Some of the most direct links made between inequity and education fall under this category, and this disparity is especially profound in the Cleveland region. Voices and Choices found the funding gap in Northeast Ohio to be double that of anywhere else in the state. Further, while the funding gap has narrowed across the rest of the state, in the Northeast region it has remained the same. The State of Ohio has recognized countless times the inequalities in education funding, and even brought the issue to the courts multiple times, but to little avail. This remains perhaps one of the most contentious issues in education today, and despite the public recognition that our funding paradigm is inherently unfair, there has been little movement towards actual change in this arena.

Economic Segregation and High Poverty Schools:

Economic segregation and high-poverty schools represent one of the most critical issues plaguing education today. The socioeconomic status of the school, after the influence of the family, remains the greatest predictor of student success and achievement. One researcher found that a middle-class school is twenty-two times more likely to be consistently high performing than a high-poverty school. It is important to note that measuring the poverty status of the school is not done by comparing spending per pupil, but rather by measuring the percentage of students who are classified as free and reduced lunch. This measure is correlated with a number of additional factors that are compounded to put students in high-poverty schools at a distinct disadvantage. These include high levels of student mobility, less qualified teachers, more crowded classrooms, and in particular- peer group effects. Put simply, students learn less when surrounded only by other low-income students. In part this can be attributed to the decreased goals and expectations set for and subsequently embraced by low-income students. When situated with middle-class peers, low-income students are not only exposed to a greater range of options for their future, but they are also surrounded by peers who have the necessary knowledge, skills and social capital to successfully navigate through necessary systematic tasks such as the college application process.

Since the Coleman report was released in 1966, numerous studies have demonstrated the profound impact that attending a middle-class school can have on a low-income student. Overall, The Century Foundation found that on average, low-income students attending a middle-class school perform higher than a middle-class student attending a low-income school. In many cases, the low-income students attending a middle-class school pass proficiency exams at rates more than twice those of their counterparts trapped in high-poverty schools. For example, when Raleigh economically desegregated their schools, test scores for Black students on proficiency exams increased from 40% performing at grade level to 80%. What is also key in this reform initiative is that educating students in an economically integrated environment has shown to have no deleterious academic effects on middle-class students, and has demonstrated numerous social, psychological, and civic benefits.

Racial Integration: If education funding is the most debated topic, then racial desegregation is certainly a close second. After the relative success of this initiative into
the eighties, then subsequent reversal in the courts, achieving a racially integrated environment appears to be a dream of which some in this country are growing tired. Nevertheless, racial integration has demonstrated profound and lasting impacts for all students, regardless of race or class. When coupled with a genuine curricular emphasis on diversity, racial integration has achieved higher levels of reasoning, reduced prejudice, wider perspectives, and a stronger commitment to multiculturalism and promotion of racial understanding. These same environmental characteristics have long-term positive impacts on students, including higher completion rates of college, greater overall college satisfaction, higher college GPA, and greater intellectual and social self-confidence.7

Teacher Quality: Numerous studies have demonstrated what many recognize intuitively – teachers have a profound impact on students. Some suggest that teachers have more influence on student achievement than any other characteristic of the school,8 and one study in Texas found that providing high quality teachers substantially closed the achievement gap.9 Despite this knowledge, low-income students and students of color are still less likely to have highly qualified and experienced teachers, have higher rates of teacher turnover, more uncertified teachers, and are more likely to have a new teacher who is teaching outside the subject they were trained in.10

Teacher/Staff/Administrative Diversity: The advantages of having a diverse school staff are many, providing psychological, social, and academic benefits. Nationally, however, the number of teachers, staff and administrators of color are not representative of student populations. For example, during the 2001-2002 school year, while 60% of public school students were White, 90% of teachers were White. While Black students comprised 17% of the population nationwide, only 5% of teachers were Black.11 In the Cleveland Municipal school district, where in the 2002-2003 school year 70.6% of the students were African American, only 36.3% of the teachers were African American.12 A diverse teaching staff provides role models, understands cultural differences, has higher expectations for their ethnic groups, encourages students to perform better, and can work towards breaking down all students’ stereotypes.13

2.2 In-school Practices

Curriculum/Pedagogy: Curriculum in impoverished schools has come under increased scrutiny for being diluted, non-engaging, and transmitting low expectations, which has shown a direct negative effect on students’ academic performance.14 The expectation that these students cannot succeed is creating a self-fulfilling prophecy; instead, we need to create a culture of high expectations, which requires a close examination of the practices that undermine that. This calls for scrutiny not only of the explicit curriculum, but also the hidden curriculum, or more broadly the pedagogy. Jonathan Kozol demonstrates in The shame of the nation: the restoration of apartheid schooling in America how not only the curriculum differs for low-income, primarily African American schools, but also the manner of teaching, the school environment, and the interactions between teacher and student. Ultimately, this curriculum and pedagogy has reinforced disadvantage through the creation of a binary education system which inscribes our racial and class hierarchies.

Tracking: One of the most common exemplars of the above is tracking, ability-grouping, or teaching through a differentiated curriculum. This practice may not be so contentious, were it not for the gross overrepresentation of African American and Hispanic students
in the lowest tracks, even after controlling for prior measured achievement.\textsuperscript{15} It is so inequitable that low-income students of color are seven times as likely to be in lower-track classes as middle-income White students,\textsuperscript{16} yet they are half as likely to be in a gifted class.\textsuperscript{17} Students are also inadvertently tracked based upon socioeconomic status as “a highly proficient student from a low socioeconomic background only has a 50-50 chance of being placed in a high-track class.”\textsuperscript{18} Although the argument is prevalent and oft-repeated that differentiated instruction is beneficial to students in all levels, in fact, one school district found the reverse to be true, with studies of both lower and higher tracks showing marked academic improvement from being in one, combined classroom.\textsuperscript{19} Further, effects of this practice on students are compounded when considering how tracking undermines any real efforts to racially integrate schools.

Special education/discipline: There are multiple other examples of practices which separate the Black from the White students in school, including special education and inequitable discipline. African Americans, particularly males, are overrepresented in special education categories and are over-diagnosed with mental retardation, specific learning disabilities, and are also more frequently categorized as having emotional disturbances.\textsuperscript{20} They are subsequently disciplined at much greater rates, and with greater severity than their White counterparts.\textsuperscript{21} Black males are two to five times more likely to be suspended than White males.\textsuperscript{22} This has profound implications on their quality and amount of education as each disciplinary action pulls that child out of the classroom, and away from opportunities to succeed in school.

2.3 Out of School Factors & Programs

These represent programs and issues that, although usually outside of the traditional scope of K-12 education, should nevertheless be taken into consideration as they have a sustained impact on what occurs inside the school.

Early Childhood Education: Although countless studies have been conducted regarding the importance of early childhood education including the physical, emotional and social health and growth of children, there are still not enough programs in place to provide every child with the necessary preschool education they need. Even those programs that are in place are perpetually underfunded: for example, Cleveland’s Head Start program owes the state $3.3 million ($2.3 million from 2004 alone), and must find a way to repay that debt by mid-2007.\textsuperscript{23} Early childhood education is critical because the developing brain of a child undergoes architectural and structural changes based on experiences, so that the more we learn early on, the more we are capable of learning in the future.\textsuperscript{24} As a result, by kindergarten, children who attended preschool are about four months ahead of those who did not.\textsuperscript{25} One study found that over 80% of the gap in fourth grade reading scores between low-income and middle-class children is already discernible early in kindergarten.\textsuperscript{26} Further, these benefits are long lasting. The High/Scope Perry Preschool Project demonstrates a number of long-lasting effects, including more than two-thirds graduating high school on time versus less than half of those who did not attend preschool, higher homeownership rates, higher incomes on average, lower rates of students in special education, and less likelihood of receiving welfare or being arrested for a crime.\textsuperscript{27} A report by the National Institute for Early Education Research shows that children who attend preschool make
about $143,000 more over their lifetime than those who do not.\textsuperscript{28} Thus, this research and others demonstrate that if we are seeking to make a lifelong impact on improving the lives of low-income children of color, it is not enough that we work within the walls of K-12 education alone.

\textbf{Community Engagement and Resources:} In the process of reforming education, we must also consider the role that communities play in supporting and nurturing children’s development and growth. These include support networks such as family, neighbors, community members, religious communities, and other caring adults in his or her life, which ultimately build a collective efficacy and a support system that will nurture and contribute to their development and growth. The communities should also have adequate resources such as parks, libraries and children’s programs, including after-school, weekend, and summer programs. All of these have been shown to impact a child’s motivation, attitude towards school, readiness to learn, and academic achievement.

\section*{2.4 Home Environment}

A child’s home environment is the most critical area in which student learning and achievement are affected, yet paradoxically, the furthest out of reach of education policy. Studies have found, for example, that the more positive environment of a high-income child, as compared to a low-income child, accounts for as much as half of the gap in test scores in pre-school children, and one-third of the achievement gap in school age children.\textsuperscript{29} Thus, it is crucial that we understand how factors influence the student on this level, in order to plan for sustainable change across multiple policy fronts, which can interrupt the cycle of poverty and disadvantage.

\textbf{Health:} To a certain extent, a child’s educational future is shaped in part before he or she is even born. Prenatal care is crucial, as during this time a number of factors have a lasting impact on the child’s development. Yet in the United States, both Black and Hispanic women are more than twice as likely to receive late or no prenatal care as White women.\textsuperscript{30} Further, low-income children have less access to quality health care, and thus can be impacted by a number of health-related issues that impact their education, such as dental and vision problems, poor nutrition, and high levels of lead in the blood.\textsuperscript{31} In high-poverty communities, for example, children are found with levels of lead in their blood that are nine times above the average of those found in low-poverty neighborhoods, which alters cognitive skills. One 2002 study reported that six million children have lost an average of more than 7 IQ points as a result of lead exposure.\textsuperscript{32} Asthma presents another example of such glaring health disparities, with African Americans being hospitalized three to four times more often than Whites.\textsuperscript{33} Factors such as vacant housing are associated with a 40\% increased risk of asthma over the age of two.\textsuperscript{34}

\textbf{Housing:} Housing policy is one arena that is inextricably linked to education policy, as where you live not only determines your environmental conditions and job opportunities, but also children’s educational opportunities. The growing housing affordability crisis is contributing to increased involuntary mobility; by kindergarten, over 48\% of low-income children have lived in at least three different homes.\textsuperscript{35} This trend continues into school-age, with Black students twice as likely to change schools frequently as White students.\textsuperscript{36} Student mobility is linked to decreased academic performance, but this also has a
negative effect on schools and fellow-students, as teachers are continually struggling to incorporate new arrivals into their classroom.

Parent Education & SES: A parent’s socioeconomic status (SES) is frequently cited as the leading indicator of student academic achievement, with the average achievement score for high-income students 60% higher than low-income students.\(^{37}\) Parental education also has a profound impact, with children of professionals already by the age of four having a vocabulary twice that of children whose parents are on welfare.\(^{38}\) Although none of this is surprising, it has tremendous implications for education interventions, as much of what occurs in the classroom starts with the parent’s SES. In order to achieve equity in education, we must also include targeted interventions designed to provide opportunities for parental employment.

Student Factors: Finally, we cannot ignore the student factors that impact his or her education. Surely, motivation to learn, effort put forth to achieve, and attitude towards school all play a role, as John Ogbu demonstrated through his research in Shaker Heights.\(^{39}\) However, given the multitude of aforementioned factors that both directly and indirectly affect the student’s attitudes, it is more important to address these first and foremost, and this will unavoidably have a profound impact on the student’s willingness to learn. For if that student recognizes all of these constraints (and most oppressed students do), it naturally has a quelling effect on their motivation to learn, and their perception about their ability to succeed.

2.5 Policy Effects on Education

Finally, as we have hopefully demonstrated throughout, education policy is inextricably linked to a multitude of other policies; from environment, to taxation, transportation, employment, land use and sprawl, zoning, and housing, just to name a few. No education intervention has the capacity to fully succeed without taking into consideration the compounding effects of nearly every other policy in place across the region. Thus, we advocate for not only the continued pursuit of equity along routes that have more traditionally been used, such as racial desegregation and funding, but to also consider non-traditional routes to educational reform that will intervene at a number of the intersections demonstrated in the above.

3. Initiatives & Recommendations

We recognize that speaking in such broad terms and demonstrating the intersectionality of these factors and policies runs the risk of overwhelming, deflating and discouraging efforts for change. Nevertheless, there have been numerous interventions across the country, ranging from those inside of the school to more region-wide initiatives which have demonstrated notable success. We will illustrate a number of these best practices, and discuss how they accomplish a broader goal of equity in education -- not only for low-income and students of color -- but for all students, regardless of race or class.

3.1 Detracking

“Detracking reforms are grounded in the established ideas that higher achievement follows from a more rigorous curriculum and that low-track classes with unchallenging curricula result in lower student achievement.”

- Carol Corbett Burris and Kevin G. Welner\(^{40}\)
As we saw, tracking is a major impediment to educational equity, both academically and socially. This is not only the case because of the watered-down curriculum in lower tracks, but also because of the decreased expectations that typically accompany them.

It continues to be practiced because of the dominant public belief that detracking actually harms high-achieving students.\textsuperscript{41} Two schools, by detracking their math curriculum, demonstrated that this was not the case and that in actuality, all students benefited from a heterogeneous class.

- **Detracking Middle School:** In Rockville Centre, New York, one school made the move to combine all math classes, with tremendous results. Although South Side Middle School has also worked towards detracking English and social studies since the 1980s, detracking math was given particular emphasis as this subject has the greatest impact on educational attainment. In fact, the Department of Education found advanced math in high school to be the strongest correlate with completion of college.\textsuperscript{42} This process was initiated in the middle school level because in high school, those who take high-level math classes are those students who took algebra in 8th grade.

  The detracking process took place over 5 years while the varying math levels were collapsed into heterogeneous classes. This was not done in the absence of assistance for those previously in the lower tracks -- support classes were established, teachers provided after-school help, and teachers were provided with any resources they needed. Ultimately, this school found that detracking benefited everyone, at every ability level. A greater number of students went on to take higher level math classes in high school from both the lower and higher tracks. For the initial high achieving students, those that received mathematics instruction in a detracked classroom not only took more high-level classes, but also scored significantly higher in advanced placement calculus than their non-detracked cohorts. Finally, combining the math classes made progress towards closing both the racial and economic achievement gap.

- **Detracking High School:** Detracking has also been accomplished at the high school level, again within the math courses. In Rockville Centre School District on Long Island, after noting the disparities between African American and Hispanic students, and those receiving free and reduced-price lunch, district officials decided to detrack their classes in an effort to increase the percentage of students receiving a Regents Diploma. The varying ability levels of math classes were collapsed, and all students were taught the accelerated math curriculum with support, including after-school sessions and support workshops. Again, the results were tremendous. The achievement gap narrowed, and the percentage of students who passed the algebra-based Regents exam increased drastically, from 25% to 75% for African American and Hispanics, and 54% to 98% for Whites.\textsuperscript{43}

  Ultimately, this school found that “when all students were taught the high-track curriculum, achievement rose for all groups of students – majority, minority, special education, low-SES, and high-SES.”\textsuperscript{44}

  The processes for both schools were not quick, easy, or without controversy, but through deliberate, targeted reform, both schools were able to achieve their goal
of successfully detracking the classrooms and realizing high achievement for all students, regardless of ‘ability’. Teachers were provided the resources necessary, students were given the support they needed, and parental concerns were addressed by sharing research that demonstrated the benefits detracking had for all students, regardless of ability level.

- **Readings/Resources:**

### 3.2 Building an Engaged Citizenry - Service Learning

Part of the goals and responsibilities of our public schools is to prepare students for civic engagement, and to be active, informed citizens in our democracy. It is becoming increasingly recognized that the development of engaged citizens will ultimately strengthen our capacity to address social issues and is imperative to our future as a democratic nation.45 We will examine service learning as a means to accomplish this oft-overlooked goal and its potential to more closely align our actions in schools with our goals. Although it certainly is not the only method to accomplish this (more are available through CIRCLE, listed under resources), it is one of the more frequently used programs; in 2004, 28% of K-12 schools nationwide incorporated it into the curriculum in some capacity.46

Although service learning has been interpreted in a variety of ways, it is generally defined as “sustained community service projects that are closely connected to formal instruction and curriculum.”47 Classroom lessons are linked up to the outside world through participation in community service activities; students then deconstruct these experiences to draw meaningful lessons from them. Service-learning programs are aimed at connecting formal education to the outside world, teaching students through demonstration how real community change occurs, and empowering them by demonstrating that it is possible. In essence, service learning seeks to accomplish that oft-overlooked goal of preparing students through education for participation in our democracy.

There are a number of organizations, including CIRCLE, Learning In Deed, and the National Commission on Service Learning that define the purposes of service learning, highlight different programs across the country, and produce and disseminate research that demonstrates the effect of the programs on students. For K-12 students, these effects include higher achievement test scores, increased grade point averages, increased attendance, lower drop-out rates, higher rates of homework completion, and fewer behavioral problems. Further, service learning also develops civic engagement with an increased knowledge of community needs, a more sophisticated understanding of politics, and greater commitment to community service. There are school and community benefits as well. Students and teachers report feeling more cohesive as a group, and students are
more connected to both the school and the community. Community perceptions also change as community members view students as important resources and contributors to community health.

- **Readings/Resources:**
  
  **CIRCLE:** [http://www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org)

  **Learning In Deed & The National Commission on Service Learning:** [http://learningindeed.org/](http://learningindeed.org/)

  **National Service Learning Partnership:** [http://www.service-learningspartnership.org](http://www.service-learningspartnership.org)

### 3.3 Discipline Reform:

As is well known, African American males are disproportionately targeted for disciplinary measures, even when controlling for class and misbehavior. In 1998-1999, 33% of the students across the nation that were expelled were African American. Almost 25% of all African American male students were suspended at least once over a four-year period. In Cleveland Municipal School District, in 2005 there were on average 23.1 disciplinary actions per 100 students. Black, non-Hispanic students experienced more disciplinary actions than the district average with 25.1 per 100 students, while White had only 19.6. African American males are also subjected to more harsh disciplinary measures, even when controlling for class and their behavior.

Our most prevalent model of discipline in education today is punitive and harsh. The strategies to curb disruptive behavior often remove the child from the classroom and school, and focus little on the causes and reinforcements of such behavior. It is frequently thought that this “get tough” model is necessary and most effective, when in fact it actually exacerbates violence. This punitive approach is easier and less time consuming, but it is creating obstacles to students’ success as they return to the classroom, academically behind because of missed class time, and further disinvested in their education.

It is clear that this model of punishment needs to be rethought, both for the benefit of the school as well as the student. Discipline should instead mirror our greater democratic missions, both of schools and society. Education policy researchers Miriam Rokeach and John Denvir outline five basic principles that should be present in school discipline which are (1) notice – specific rules must be explicitly communicated (2) equality – they must be reinforced equally (3) participation – students should be actively involved in the disciplinary process (4) proportionality – consequences must match the transgression, and (5) rationality – any disciplinary measures should be undertaken to achieve a goal. Likely this goal is not to remove students from school, yet that is precisely what is often occurring in the case of suspensions and expulsions. If the goal is to reduce delinquent behavior, keep the student in school, and create an environment in the school that promotes learning, then a devised intervention must work towards this.

In Grand Rapids, Michigan, Northview High School recognized the negative effects the punitive model of discipline was having on student learning, and responded by developing a more democratic, effective process. They eliminated both the in-school
suspension room and the after-school detention room and replaced them with student responsibility centers (SRC). When a student’s behavior is disruptive during a class, the teacher emphasizes that the student is making a choice and asks them the following three questions: “What are you doing? What are the rules? Are you willing to work with me?” If the student is not, the teacher responds by saying: “I see you have chosen to leave,” and contacts the SRC director. Students are then removed from the classroom and offered to co-construct a plan that will allow them to return. In the meantime, students are allowed to attend all other classes. Students then meet with the staff member to discuss the plan, which must be approved prior to the student’s return to class. For more serious transgressions, the student is referred directly to the administrator. Finally, if students are continually referred to the SRC, they are presented with the option of transferring to an alternative high school, with the understanding that they may return to their original high school with a positive recommendation from the principal. During the 1997-1998 school year, prior to the implementation of this process, there were 5,000 referrals to the office. During 2002-2003, following the implementation, 546 plans were constructed, only 29 students transferred to the alternative high school, and the school experienced an 89% overall reduction in discipline.53

This is just one example of a more effective, democratic discipline process. Others include involving students in the joint establishment of explicit rules, implementing student-run youth courts, and creating bullying prevention programs, conflict resolution, and peer mediation programs. Finally, teachers are a part of the equation as well, and it is imperative that they are trained and receive ongoing support for effective behavioral interventions and ways to maintain a proper disciplinary environment. K-12 institutions and universities must collaborate to ensure that teacher preparation programs are adequately teaching the development of these necessary skills.

• Readings/Resources:
  Safe & Responsive Schools: http://www.unl.edu/srs/ (See the extensive list of publications and school sites)

3.4 Collaborative Education

Education is absolutely considered a public institution, with stakeholders ranging from students and parents to the larger community, including businesses. A number of schools have found success in achieving a more collaborative environment, where those stakeholders are given a voice to shape the school. Although often it is difficult to bring people together around any issue, it is an imperative if we wish to truly keep education a public entity.

• Schools for a New Society: There are a number of current initiatives underway that seek to reengage the wide variety of stakeholders in public education. Schools for a New Society, a collaboration led by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and The Annenberg Foundation, is restructuring urban education across seven cities to reinvent the way education is delivered. These efforts involve the whole community including businesses, civic leaders, and grassroots
organizations and businesses to provide job and training programs, ESL support, programs to increase literacy, smaller learning communities, and more. Across the schools, they have seen a number of successes including detracking, higher graduation and college attendance rates, increased attendance rates, overall improvement on standardized testing measures, and increased engagement of former students, as they return to tutor other students.

- **Readings/Resources:**
  Website for Schools for a New Society: [http://www.carnegie.org/sns/](http://www.carnegie.org/sns/)

- **Hope for Urban Education: St. Louis, Detroit, Milwaukee**

  The Hope for Urban Education report released in 1999 provided an in-depth look at nine high-performing, high-poverty urban elementary schools to discover what made these schools some of the best performing in the state, despite the impediments they faced. While there was an extensive list of factors that contributed to their successes, one common element was the collaboration between the schools, parents, and the community. At Centerville Elementary School in St. Louis, with 87% African American students and 86% low-income, the school was able to achieve 97% parental involvement in the school. A focus was also placed on involving the community through such initiatives as establishing after-school programs, community partnerships, and participating in community service projects. Other schools achieved this collaboration in a variety of creative ways. Goodale Elementary School in Detroit held periodic brainstorming sessions, invited parents, community and business partners to participate, and developed a newsletter to maintain ongoing lines of communication. In Milwaukee, they recognized that parents were having difficulty getting home from work, preparing dinner, and making it to the parent teacher conferences, thus they started providing dinner at the conferences to increase parental participation. A variety of best practices emerged from these schools regarding parental and community involvement, including establishing an open dialogue with parents and the communities, and establishing flexible meeting times such as early morning and late evening for working parents. Overall, these schools have shown tremendous success against the impediments they face. They have done so in part because of their inclusion of parents and community, including valuing their perspectives, addressing their concerns, and empowering them to have a voice in school.

- **Readings/Resources:**
  The Charles A. Dana Center, The University of Texas at Austin. 1999. Hope for urban education: a study of nine high-performing, high-poverty, urban elementary schools.
3.5 Early Childhood Education

As we saw with the earlier research, and as one interviewee succinctly put it, “it all starts here [with education].” This is a critical time to intervene in a child’s life, and tremendous academic gains can be made if we establish preschool for every low-income student in the city. This will put these children on more equal footing in elementary and secondary school, and ultimately increase their chances to continue on to higher education. This initiative is supported by The National Education Association, which has recognized the value and necessity of early childhood education, and is working to expand the quality and availability of it nationwide. Availability varies by state, and funding is a critical component, although there are a number of court cases currently in Colorado, Georgia, Kentucky, Nebraska, New York, and Wyoming aimed at mandating states to cover the costs of high-quality, early education programs.

- **District-Wide Preschool, Washington, D.C.**

  While most preschool programs are established and funded at the state level, there are a few preschool programs being established within districts and cities as well. The Public School Pre-kindergarten Program in Washington, D.C. provides universal pre-kindergarten to all 3- and 4-year-old children residing in the District. This is one of only a few districts in the country that provides developmentally appropriate experience- and language-based instruction with regular all-day classes in every elementary school building.54

- **Universal Preschool, Cuyahoga County**

  Invest in Children in Cleveland is also beginning to work towards establishing universal preschool. They are hoping to launch a pilot program by January 2007 that will eventually expand to the county within a year.55 Families in Cuyahoga County currently utilize existing preschool programs ranging from Head Start to private schools, although Head Start is facing a growing deficit and the federal government has recently classified it as high risk and is only providing the funding to operate for the next three months (as opposed to a full year).56 Other preschool tuitions in Northeast Ohio range between $1,390 and $15,870.57 Unquestionably, the 37,000 preschoolers in Cuyahoga County would benefit from the establishment and expansion of affordable, high-quality preschool, but one unresolved component of this issue is how such a program would be funded.58 Currently, only 1.5% of Ohio’s funding is designated for youth from birth to age five.59 Other states with universal preschool, including Oklahoma, Georgia, Florida and Wisconsin, fund it largely with general revenue money, although some use lottery money and other tax revenue.60

Investment in early childhood education is not just a moral or educational imperative; it is an economic one as well. The Children’s Defense Fund found that every $1 invested in quality, early childhood care and education saves $7 by increasing the likelihood that children will be literate, employed, and enrolled in postsecondary education, and less likely to be school dropouts, dependent on welfare, or arrested for criminal activity or delinquency.61
Readings/Resources:
National Institute for Early Education Research  http://nieer.org/
National Education Association: http://www.nea.org/earlychildhood/index.html
Cuyahoga County Early Childhood Initiative

3.6 Linking P-12 Education to Postsecondary Education & Employment

As one of the purposes of education is to prepare children for their future, it is imperative that public schools establish connections and programs that will help students in these life transitions, be it to higher education or into the workforce. Below are examples of ways that low-income students and students of color can be linked to life-long opportunities, both in employment and higher education.

P-12/University Connections

The design of our American education system has to be one in which we have multiple silos instead of one continuous education pipeline. This is illustrated in the present disconnect between preschool, K-12 education and colleges and universities. This fragmentation is contributing to losing students, particularly students of color, at each educational level, which has profound implications for the future health of the region. Nationally, two-thirds of all jobs require some college education. In contrast, three fourths of the population ages 18 to 34 in Northeast Ohio do not have a college degree, while 84% of African Americans lack a college degree. By 2010, jobs requiring an associate’s degree are projected to grow by 32%, while those requiring a bachelor’s are expected to grow by 22%. In order to prepare for these changing trends, and get more low-income children and students of color into higher education, the fractured school system that students navigate must be aligned, and targeted programs must be developed to capture those students that frequently slip between the cracks. Collaboration between K-12 and higher education is a necessity so that ultimately our students are part of a seamless P-16 education system.

There are several states currently working on what is being called the P-16 initiative, including Georgia, Maryland and Oregon, and each has unique approaches to bridge the gap for students. Cleveland is also part of this movement to link secondary education to colleges and universities through the Early College Program founded by Barbara Byrd-Bennett in the Cleveland Municipal School District. In this program, students can take courses at Cleveland State University to earn college credits while in high school, and still graduate within three years. As expected, admission into Early College is highly competitive, with 300 students applying for 100 spots in the 2005-2006 school year. Although this currently serves a limited number of students within the district, we feel that this could serve as a model to create a regional, inclusive and diverse school, as will be discussed in the Regional Education section.
Through the establishment of seamless relationships between K-12 and postsecondary education, schools not only benefit, but universities and students do as well. Schools can benefit by partnering with universities to ensure that teacher training is high-quality and relevant to the issues schools are facing; to attract and incentivize high-quality teachers to work in low-income, urban schools; to learn about promising teaching techniques or initiatives that could be implemented in the schools; and to have a partner in researching the success of any initiatives implemented. Universities benefit by ensuring their teachers are fully prepared; by bridging that gap between academic and practitioner, through ensuring their research and work are relevant, and address real needs in education; by having environments in which to conduct research; and ultimately by having a more diverse student body. Finally, students benefit as admissions requirements, curriculum, and standards can be aligned to universities; by having opportunities to earn college credits in high schools; by having the opportunity to attend a more diverse college or university, and through collaborative efforts to close the achievement gap.

It is important to remember that colleges and universities have distinct public responsibilities. At the core of those is democratic merit, which requires a diverse, representative student body for an educated citizenry. There are a number of ways this can be achieved, from revised admissions policies (such as the Texas 10% plan), to guaranteed admissions programs for low-income, disadvantaged students. One exemplar of the latter is University Park Campus in Massachusetts where 100% of the high school graduates go on to college, despite 73% of the student body qualifying for free- or reduced-price lunch, and 78% of students speaking English as a second language. Financial support programs have demonstrated notable success as well, such as Indiana’s Twenty-first Century Scholars program, which effectively increased college attendance rates in Indiana from 40th in the nation to 9th, as of 2002. Collaborations between K-12 and higher education are possible to achieve diversity in postsecondary education through such means as challenging admissions policies, rethinking how we define merit, and establishing early relationships with elementary and secondary students. This responsibility to educate students for the common good compels postsecondary education to not only get diverse students to their door, but also to look beyond that and ensure they leave their institution fully prepared and empowered as future citizens and leaders.

As with all of the initiatives presented, there is no clear-cut program that can be adapted to Cleveland. Rather, collaboration between universities and K-12 public education must be creatively established, with awareness of the existing connections between the universities and public education. Cleveland has a rich base of higher education institutions, and even within them, groups such as the Center for Urban School Collaboration (Cleveland State University) and the Center for Urban Poverty and Social Change (Case Western Reserve University) that could be tremendous resources and partners in the process of education reform.
Readings/Resources:
Creating a P-16 System of Education:
Center for Urban School Collaboration, Cleveland State University
http://www.csuohio.edu/cusc/mission.html
Case Western Reserve University, Center for Urban Poverty and Social Change
http://povertycenter.cwru.edu

School-to-Career Programs

It is critical that all students have the opportunity to attend a college or university should that be the path they choose. However, it is also an imperative that those who do not wish to continue on to higher education have the opportunity for sustained, profitable employment opportunities. A report highlighted by Voices and Choices demonstrates that we are largely failing to achieve this; nationally, 39% of employers stated that high school graduates were unprepared for entry-level positions. Half of all employers stated that high school graduates lacked the critical thinking, problem solving, and reading skills necessary.

Vocational programs have had a contentious history, however, as many worked to reinscribe racial and economic hierarchy. Thus, it is crucial that such programs have an awareness of this history and all measures are taken to prevent the repetition of it. All students should be empowered with real choices and comprehensive information regarding the consequences of those choices; and their education should prepare them so that they have the full capacity to choose their own path. A school-to-career program is one approach to provide employment and career opportunities in a way that does not limit access to higher education or constrain students’ choices. Granted, there is still a risk these can be (and are) used to sort populations; however, research has demonstrated that some programs have successfully increased opportunities for students as opposed to limiting them.

School-to-career or school-to-work programs have as a primary goal to increase labor market skills, and to connect students to promising career paths. These career paths can include those which are entered immediately upon graduation from high school, but also those that require higher education. Programs can range from in-school, more limited initiatives to the more extensive, such as the restructuring of Grand Prairie High School in Texas into five separate career-academies. One study conducted by the Public Policy Institute of California demonstrated the overall effects of school-to-career programs on both educational and occupational outcomes. Overall, they found that more narrowly tailored programs have had limited success and even negative effects in some cases, while more broad initiatives have proven to increase both employment and higher education rates. For example, participation in a general school-to-career program increases college enrollment by 13%, while tech prep programs lower college enrollment by about 10%. Effects on postsecondary employment are positive as...
well; students that participated in co-op programs, internships and apprenticeships had increased rates of employment of 9% and 7%, respectively. Further, these programs were found to benefit all groups regardless of race, socioeconomic status, or academic performance.\textsuperscript{72} Students who participate in these programs also had increased attendance rates and are less likely to drop out.\textsuperscript{73} Finally, school-to-career initiatives are another way to establish connections between education and businesses in the community.

- **Readings/Resources:**
  

### 3.7 Regional Education

All of the aforementioned programs and initiatives are critically important, for positively impacting students’ academic achievement, increasing their opportunities to continue on to higher education, and for creating informed, empowered citizens in their region and country. Nevertheless, as important as they are, given the multitude of factors that constrain progress in this arena, they may ultimately lead to more tinkering in an already fractured system.

Thus, a more large-scale, comprehensive reform initiative is necessary -- one that will genuinely challenge the structures in place that keep students of color in failing schools; one that will dismantle that high wall which has been built between our suburban and urban schools; and one that will make progress towards approximating the educational equity we have been seeking for decades. We recognize that we are working against a tide of structures and constraints, but are optimistic that with careful planning, sustainable change is possible even within these constraints. There is evidence to indicate increasing support for a more regional system of education. The Gallup Organization, for example, recently released findings that show that individuals are overwhelmingly in favor of having a regional system of school funding, even when it comes at the expense of wealthier school districts. 63% of City of Cleveland residents support this, as well as 57% of the residents in the Cleveland MSA.\textsuperscript{74}

Regional education would broaden the impact of the aforementioned initiatives by producing racially, ethnically and economically integrated schools, while to the extent possible, limiting long-distance bussing. To achieve this given the geographically-inscribed racial and economic divisions in Cleveland, there is a need to attract students from wealthier suburbs into the city and also to provide the ways and means for inner-city students to attend schools in the suburbs. There are multiple components of this set of policy recommendations, as delineated below:

- **District Magnet/Charter Schools:** As we saw, students and their learning capacity and potential are profoundly impacted in a number of ways when they are segregated and isolated in homogenous schools. We feel that the creation of more integrated schools is possible, and ultimately will have the most substantial and sustainable effects on all students, privileged and underprivileged, White students and students of color. Schools in Wake County, NC sought such diversity within their schools, and given the increasing hostile legal climate around racial desegregation, they pursued economic integration as an alternative. Under this
plan, within any given school, low-income students compromise no more than 40% of the student population, and since the plan’s implementation in 2000, the schools have seen increases in test scores, particularly for Blacks and Hispanic students. It is important to note, however, that there are unique conditions which make this program difficult to replicate, one of which is their county-wide school district. Nevertheless, it provides an excellent example of the results that can be achieved through deconcentrating poverty in our public schools.

To achieve this diversity in Cleveland, there is a need to develop schools that can attract students from the wealthier suburbs, while maintaining a balance in the student body between neighborhood, inner-city, and suburban children. Currently, John Hay High in Cleveland (set to open in Fall 2006), has tremendous potential to achieve this goal by providing a high-quality school for inter-district students, while simultaneously attracting students from around the region. The school, which will house the School of Science and Medicine, the School of Architecture, Art and Design, and Early College, will reserve 15% of seats for children outside of the district, who will have to pay $3,110 annually in tuition. The district will financially support the John Hay programs for students within the district. This school has tremendous promise to serve as a model for greater educational change across the region, although there are potential areas of concern should this model be expanded. One concern is that depending on the admissions process, this school could serve to skim off the highest performing students in the urban district, both denying their ‘left behind’ peers the benefits gained from being educated together, and further reinforcing the “myth of meritocracy.” Instead, we encourage school officials to ensure the student body is comprised of a diverse mix of students of varying skill levels. To incentivize the enrollment of suburban students, resources such as the Cleveland Clinic and Case Western could be utilized. As both are within walking distance of the school, parents could benefit by having easier access to their children. This could also serve to increase parental participation in the school.

- **High-Performing Schools:** Opportunities for high-quality education need to broaden. Minneapolis provides an excellent example of the type of success that can be achieved through inter-district transfers with their *Choice is Yours* program. Established in 2000, research over the past six years has shown that the students involved in this program have benefited tremendously. Inner-city students who attended suburban schools outperformed their non-participating counterparts, with scores in reading and mathematics that were respectively 23 and 25 percentile points higher.

To achieve this success, funding was available for both academic support and transportation, which is critical to help students to make the transition successfully. Nevertheless, one of the long-term goals should be to ultimately limit the extensive transportation these children have to undergo to reach these opportunity-rich schools, such as bus rides up to an hour and a half each way. Thus, we strongly recommend that the housing reform be connected to regional housing policies. Minneapolis discovered that parents were not only connecting their children to suburban opportunities, but were also accessing the opportunity
themselves. Policymakers were initially concerned with what appeared to be an attrition rate in the *Choice is Yours* program, but it was later discovered that this was because parents have moved to these opportunity-rich districts where their child was attending school, and consequently no longer needed the program. In Minneapolis, this has led to the consideration of a deliberate policy linkage between education and affordable housing on a regional level; a practice that could have a tremendous impact on both students and their families in Cleveland.

There are a number of benefits to pursuing this model of educational reform. Perhaps most clearly, this model (in conjunction with the aforementioned in-school initiatives) addresses a number of the issues that impact academic achievement, particularly for low-income students of color. A regional approach would achieve racial and economic integration, and would connect the public school districts with colleges and universities. It not only provides a means for inner-city children to escape their neighborhoods of concentrated poverty, but also has the potential to lead to revitalization of some downtown areas. Further, it gives parents a choice as to where their child is educated; a luxury that has always been available to affluent parents, but one that has been denied to low-income families of color through both our housing and our education practices.

4. Strategies to Move Forward

4.1 Reframe the Issue

As mentioned, education is quite possibly one of the most divisive, contentious issues, but what is often overlooked is that it also has the power to unite and bring a region together. In part, it is such a difficult topic to discuss because it is intensely personal; education affects everyone, and perhaps more importantly it affects everyone's children. Yet the fault does not lie in those parents that want what is best for their children, as all parents do. The problem comes from how we are conceptualizing the issue.

Education, along with other public resources, has been framed as a zero sum game. Within this framework, it is thought that in order to provide privilege and opportunity to urban, inner-city schools it must be taken directly from more affluent suburban districts. Debates over funding and racial desegregation, articulated in this framework, have only further perpetuated these divisions. It is rational that parents would be hesitant to give up any privilege that they are able to provide to their children, especially within this dominant framework of competitiveness, limited resources, and individualism. However, ultimately it is not a reasonable framework given the interconnectedness and shared fate of a region.

- **Education for Regional Health**: We need a new dialogue and a new paradigm from which to consider the issue; one that more closely approximates the reality that education is a critical component to regional economic health. For example, if a region has a high-performing, integrated, equitable education system, the opportunity to attract businesses increases. Companies desire an educated, diverse workforce, which was expressed in the *amicus* briefs for *Grutter*, submitted by the military and several Fortune 500 companies. Corporations also need to be able to attract employees to the area, and high-quality schools are an important consideration of many who relocate. Thus, the current educational inequities are actually posing barriers to economic development. As one study found, business
leaders cited the school funding debate as an impediment to conducting business in the Cleveland region.\textsuperscript{80}

This is critical because the ability to attract businesses inherently affects education. As businesses move into the region, they contribute more money to schools. Further, with more businesses come more jobs, and consequently, increased opportunities for all the residents of a region. Thus, struggling to maintain separate, segregated and isolated schools, as suburbs often do, is actually harming the long-term health of a region and its residents. Parents that are fighting to maintain these schools think that they are doing what is best for their children, but in essence they are denying their children and themselves a rich variety of opportunities.

- **Maximizing Public Investments:** One way that pushback on educational equity is often manifested is through the refusal to approve levies that provide greater fiscal investments in education. Again, this is an issue that is immediately limited because of the manner in which it is framed. Individuals feel constrained by declining opportunities, and assert control over their financial health in any arena they can. Further, as taxes are framed as a burden and not a component of our membership as an American, nor as a contribution for our collective good, individuals are hesitant to sacrifice their immediate gains for these investments in public infrastructure. What is overlooked and problematic, however, is that these failures to invest ultimately manifest themselves into much greater economic burdens for the entire region, and subsequently its residents. Within our current system of inequitable education, low-income students and children of color face alarmingly high rates of dropping out and/or being pushed out of school. With this, they are less likely to find sustainable employment which confers benefits such as health care (50% of high school drop/push outs are unemployed), and more likely to be incarcerated (80% of prisoners did not complete high school).\textsuperscript{81} Thus, these individuals become dependent on services that are subsidized by taxpayers, at costs that are dramatically higher than the original investment in equitable education. This message needs to be communicated. Investment in education is not only for the benefit of the individual recipients, but ultimately a benefit to taxpayers across the region.

- **Equity as Excellence.** The benefits of integrated, equitable education are not limited to regional economics. As we saw earlier, economic and racial desegregation have a wide variety of benefits for children, from decreased prejudice to increased academic achievement. It is not that people do not value integration and educational equity; parents agree that integration is valuable in its own right in improving race relations and in teaching students to interact with diverse populations.\textsuperscript{82} However, as that same study demonstrates, the majority of parents, both Black and White, stated that they believed integrated schools make little difference in the education children receive, and that the push for diversity is coming at the expense of academic excellence. We argue that educational equity IS excellence.\textsuperscript{83} The two have long been placed in opposition to each other, which has limited the dialogue around the aforementioned research that demonstrates the multitude of ways that all children benefit from being educated in a diverse
environment. Further, we assert that this false construction of the tension between diversity and excellence is limiting the opportunity to build momentum around achieving equity in education.

Individuals understand and long for more equitable arrangements, but act in ways that they perceive to be in the best-interest of themselves and their children – behaviors which are often in opposition to each other. Thus, in order to truly get everyone on board, we need to demonstrate the linked fate of all residents of a region. Our dominant framing of education as a zero sum game is internalized and accepted as fact. In order to challenge that, we must deliberately engage parents, community members, school boards, educators and businesses; illuminate this tension between equity and education; and reframe the issues in a way that demonstrates shared benefits for all. With this open communication plan will come the understanding that equity is not only in their children’s best interest, but also their own and the entire region, and self-interest will be actualized in a whole new way.

4.2 Plan Big, Start Small

Granted, the above will not be easy, and it will take time to not only communicate this message, but also for it to be embraced. Thus, we are advocating for planning big but starting small. Begin by establishing a vision for public education in Cleveland, then develop actionable steps to accomplish it. Ensure that these steps are being dynamically developed so that you are always ready for the next step. Anticipate and plan for resistance. A variety of initiatives aimed at equity have underestimated the resistance they would face, and have fallen flat before they ever made it off the ground.

Remember, however, that while important, in isolation all of these are only transactional steps. In order to achieve lasting sustainable change, these steps need to be part of a larger transformative agenda. This requires a clear and articulated vision which ensures that every action, no matter how small, is one step closer to the goal. In the education arena, this includes planning for how these reforms could be extended across the region. Keep in mind the greater goal, but do not lose sight of the need for targeted action.

4.3 Build upon Strengths and Successes

In Cleveland, there are a number of success stories in education across the region, as well as programs in place that could help build an education reform movement, such as the John Hay School, Early College, the East End Neighborhood House, and countless others. Further, there are inevitably many more out there of which we are unaware. It is important to talk to schools, parents, communities and businesses, and find out what is working and what has shown promise in the Cleveland region. There is a tendency to discount what is currently being done and to reject it in pursuit of other objectives, but it is critical that we first examine where we have achieved measures of success, or we risk undermining them. Further, these successes can be used to energize and empower the movement and build the momentum that is necessary for sustainable change.

4.4 Ongoing Research

A critical component of this reform is that it is closely and frequently monitored. Study the students of these ‘test schools,’ figure out what it will take for them to succeed and
ensure that all efforts are made to achieve that. Partner with a local university to conduct ongoing research on these endeavors, measure how the students are doing and how they are progressing, not only academically but along other valuable indicators as well. Do not limit research to ‘disadvantaged’ students; it is imperative that impacts be captured for all students. Reform advocates have long communicated education equity as being for those who are poor or for students of color only, which perpetuates the understanding of reform being for the underserved. Educational equity is about every student in every school, regardless of background; it is designed to lift us all up. Study both these victories, but any setbacks as well, to understand how they occurred and what needs to be done to remedy them.

4.5 Public Communication

Although all components of the reform process are important, in order to build collective support for educational reform, it is critical that open communication is established between educators, policy makers, universities, parents, and communities. Share how those children in these initiatives are performing, how they have changed, and how they differ from their peers not involved in these programs. This process of sharing research and information will reframe the issues, build an informed public, create an impetus for sustainable change, and bring more stakeholders into the discussion, which will lead to greater collaboration and coalition building.

4.6 Collaboration & Coalition Building

As education is a public good, reform should be a public, collaborative process. While many reform initiatives have been presented in a top-down manner, for sustainable change, the input of parents, K-12 school districts, colleges and universities, community members, those in the business community, and students must be included. A successful, sustainable coalition must also bring racial, economic, geographic and religious groups to the table. Only through this open and ongoing communication and dialogue is it possible to connect with those most impacted by education reform. Also, only through this process can we truly be aware of initiatives in the region that have shown tremendous success, that may otherwise go unnoticed, and be undermined or be overridden in the reformation process. Giving a voice to these multiple stakeholders will ensure the educational changes are not only relevant, but also supported throughout the region.

Further, although discussion of and efforts in educational reform are traditionally limited to individuals within the field, as we have seen, it is far from an isolated institution. Education is affected by a number of other structures, and reform efforts should include them. Housing is perhaps the most natural partner, but there are a wide range of other non-traditional allies that can be included. Speak to these other stakeholders, establish open lines of communication and collaborate on initiatives that improve the Cleveland region; develop a common vision of the region and work towards it on multiple axes. Include not only school officials, teachers, parents and students, but also community stakeholders such as unions, college personnel, elected officials, business leaders, and leaders of community-based and youth development organizations. Ultimately, although remedying education is important, it will not be enough to keep the region vibrant and thriving, as equitably educating students will only be as good as the ability to later retain them.
5. Reflections on the Central Research Question

What kind of regional policies and cooperative efforts would best benefit Cleveland’s African American community, increase opportunity and fairness for all residents, and effectively grow the region as a whole?

Positioning is a critical issue for all components of regional equity; however, it is particularly poignant for education. As interview respondents identified it as potentially the most polarizing issue in regards to regionalism, it is critical that efforts to achieve greater racial and regional equity in education are pursued cautiously and collaboratively. This speaks to the need for the African American community to engage not only parents and community members in the inner city, but also throughout the region. Education must be framed in a manner that demonstrates how equity is for the benefit of all citizens of a region (urban and suburban, privileged and underprivileged) and all children, regardless of race, class or ethnicity.

The conditions that contribute to educational inequities are multiple and complex, thus there is no singular ‘silver bullet’ with the potential to equalize opportunities and outcomes for students. A multifaceted approach is necessary to address these conditions and institutions that are creating and contributing to the achievement gap. The policies recommended have shown notable measures of success in not only improving education performance, but in addressing those oft-overlooked goals of public education -- namely to create an educated, engaged citizenry and to develop psychologically and socially healthy individuals. The policies covered in this chapter include detracking; collaboration with parents, community members and businesses; focusing on early childhood education; implementing service learning to create an engaged citizenry; and reforming discipline policies.

Again, it is acknowledged that this is an extensive undertaking with great potential for pushback. Thus, policies to achieve educational equity must not stop with the measures themselves, but must also include a strategy for working within and around this resistance. One of the key components to such a strategy is to reframe the dominant message around education and integration, and to demonstrate that ultimately the proposed strategies to achieve equitable education are to the long-term benefit of not only the African American community, but the entire Cleveland region. Starting with a few key initiatives will enable the reform effort to gain momentum, and will provide evidence of its success and greater potential. Throughout, the progress of these policies must be monitored, and the results continuously communicated to the public. The larger vision should also be regularly revisited, and frequently communicated. Finally, no educational policy should be constructed in isolation; it is critical that the multiple stakeholders of public education are involved in the reform process, and that diverse coalitions be established and utilized.
5.1 Recommendations/Key Findings

- Educational achievement is impacted by a wide variety of factors from institutional factors, in-school practices, out of school conditions, and the home environment. These factors compound and intersect to limit the education of low-income, students of color.

- To address the multi-faceted issues, we recommend a variety of initiatives beginning in preschool and extending to the university. These range from in-school initiatives to larger-scale institutional reorganization.

5.1.1 Policy Recommendations

- **Detracking:** Ability grouping or tracking creates even further segregation within schools, as students of color are grossly represented in the lowest tracks. Detracking has demonstrated that it not only improves academic achievement for those previously in lower tracks, but for all students at every ability level. We recommend that courses be comprised of students at heterogeneous ability levels. Throughout this process, it is important that resource support be provided to teachers, and academic support is available for students.

- **Service Learning:** Despite the multiple roles of public education, the responsibility to create an engaged citizenry is often overlooked. Service learning is one method through which this can be accomplished. Research on service learning demonstrates its success for students in developing civic engagement, increasing awareness of community needs, promoting an understanding of politics, and fostering greater commitment to community service. Service learning is a very flexible practice and thus has potential to be customized and easily implemented without great structural rearrangement.

- **Collaborative Education:** Education is a public institution with a wide range of stakeholders including parents, businesses, civic leaders and grassroots organizations. There are a number of initiatives across the country that deliberately seek to incorporate the voice of these stakeholders through efforts that provide job training and after school programs, initiatives that facilitate parent involvement with the school, and the establishment of open, two-way communication lines between schools and the communities.

- **Early Childhood Education:** Intervening early in a child’s life is critical, and establishing universal preschool could produce tremendous academic gains for low-income students of color. Although these programs are typically established and funded at the state level, there has been some movement on the district and regional level. Currently, Invest in Children is working to establish universal preschool in Cleveland.

- **Linking P-12 to Universities & Employment:** Our current education pipeline is fragmented and disjointed. There is a movement underway to establish a K-16 education system, which seeks to ease students’ transition between secondary and post-secondary education. Multiple benefits of this alignment exist for students, teachers, schools and universities. Given the unique
dynamics of Cleveland and the rich base of higher education institutions, this relationship should be collectively and creatively established.

- **School-to-Career Programs:** In order to achieve greater racial and regional equity, students must be provided with real and sustainable employment and career opportunities. School-to-career programs have been shown to have positive effects on all students’ educational and occupational outcomes, including increasing college attendance rates and rates of employment. They also provide another means to establish connections to businesses, universities, and the community. It is critical that these programs be implemented with caution in order that they do not constrain students’ choices and are not used in a way that reinscribe hierarchy.

- **Regional Education:** Ultimately, the most important goal in achieving racial and regional equity in education is to create racially, ethnically and economically diverse schools. In order to accomplish this in a sustainable manner, a more regional approach to remediing education must be considered. Given the contentious history surrounding similar initiatives, we acknowledge that such an approach will likely be met with resistance, thus it is best to work towards a system of regional education incrementally. This requires assisting low-performing schools and facilitating access of inner-city students to high-performing schools.

- **High-performing, low-poverty schools throughout the region.** It is critical that low-income students of color be granted access to high-performing, low-poverty schools. Offer students more choice in where to attend school; provide affordable housing in job-rich, high-opportunity neighborhoods; and improve linkages that help students in failing schools attend low-poverty, high-performing schools.

- **District Magnet/Charter Schools:** It is also important that schools within the city be able to attract students from the wealthier suburbs. A school such as the John Hay High School, set to open in Fall 2006, provides a model of the type of school that could be instrumental in this effort. We recommend that the student body be racially, ethnically and economically balanced by including neighborhood students, inner-city students, and children from the suburbs. Downtown employees who live in the suburbs could be incentivized to place their children in these schools.

- In order to provide African American populations greater access to opportunity and increased life chances, the reform efforts must extend beyond education. One example of how this could be accomplished is through the alignment of housing and education policy. Minneapolis is considering just that, by connecting students who are utilizing the intra-district transfer program to housing near the school. This will not only provide increased opportunities to students and their families, but will also decrease the negative impact of long commute times for students.
5.1.2 Communication Strategies

- Although direct measures to achieve equitable education for students of color are important, they are only part of the larger equation for successful educational reform. An explicit vision must be established, and all strategies should work towards accomplishing that vision.

- Ongoing research must be conducted on any implemented initiative to measure progress and possible retrenchment, and to build a substantial base of support.

- It is also imperative that any reform have a public education and communication component. Education is in a particularly tenuous position because the current paradigm is framed in a way that places equity and excellence in tension with one another. It is critical that this message be reframed to express that these two go hand in hand.

- As each of these policies are aimed at not only improving conditions for all students, regardless of race, class or ethnicity, it is important that this message also be expressed to encourage collaboration and coalition building.

- Education is a public good with a vast array of stakeholders, thus reform should be a collaborative process. Establish coalitions with not only those directly interested in educational equity, but also build non-traditional alliances with other relevant organizations, such as housing groups.
Chapter 7: References and End Notes

2 Voices and Choices citing http://www.ode.state.oh.us/school_finance/foundation/reports/exrevrpt.asp.
3 eRolph v. State, 97 Ohio St.3d ___, 2002-Ohio-6750.
18 Ibid at 14, p. 595.
19 Ibid at 14.


26 Ibid.


36 Ibid at 30.

37 Ibid at 34.


40 Ibid at 14, p. 595.

41 Ibid at 14.


43 Ibid at 14, p. 598.

44 Id.


47 Definition provided by CIRCLE. Online at: [http://www.civicyouth.org/research/areas/serv_learn.htm](http://www.civicyouth.org/research/areas/serv_learn.htm)


56 Vinella, Susan. Head Start agency on short leash; Program must present plan to repay loan. (February 9, 2006). *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, p. B3.


58 Glaser, Susan. County campaign pushes free preschool for all; Many see early education as vital. (March 10, 2006). *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, P. A1.


http://factfinder.census.gov


Program puts high school students in college setting: Teens get head start on their education. Plain Dealer (Cleveland), May 27, 2005 Friday, Final Edition; All Editions, METRO; Pg. B1, 706 words, Janet Okoben


Available online at: http://www.postsecondary.org/home/default.asp


Available online at: http://www.edutopia.org/php/article.php?id=Art_1204&key=141


Id.

