REFERENCES

Educating the Whole Child: The Talent Quest Model for Educational Policy and Practice

Velma LaPoint   CRESPAR/Capstone Institute, Howard University
Constance M. Ellison CRESPAR/Capstone Institute, Howard University
A. Wade Boykin   CRESPAR/Capstone Institute, Howard University

This article reports on school reform interventions and outcomes of the Howard University Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk (CRESPAR)/Capstone Institute, which uses evidenced-based strategies to promote the academic achievement and social competence of Black children, especially Black children who are from low-income Black families. This article includes a description of the "participant action research" and the "whole child" approaches employed by CRESPAR/Capstone Institute and the Talent Quest Model (TQM) of school reform. Selected program components and empirical reports of Talent Quest research and development projects are discussed, along with challenges in conducting school reform interventions. Implications for policy and practice are also discussed.

In recent decades few topics have received more attention than the academic achievement of "minority group" children from low-income backgrounds (Boykin, 1994; Comer, 2004, 2005; Delpit, 2003; King, 2005). Yet, in spite of such concentrated attention, all too many such students continue to perform at unacceptably low levels in U.S. public schools. This is obviously a cause for concern and alarm. The communities from which these students come will be unable to reap the benefits of proportionately large numbers of well-educated citizens which also poses a substantial challenge for society at large. The bar is constantly being raised for the essential skills and knowledge needed even for entry-level positions into the workforce. Preparation for the labor markets of the 21st century will require competencies that many schools have only recently begun to acknowledge, appreciate, and address in meaningful ways. Yet, our society must rely on a talent pool increasingly comprised of people that this society has failed to educate successfully. If this challenge is not met soon, the future productivity and well-being of American society could be severely compromised. America cannot afford to have substantial numbers of low-income and minority group students functioning at the educational margins. In order to appreciably alter the educational fates of disenfranchised children in America, piecemeal, narrowly focused approaches will be of limited value.

Comprehensive school reform initiatives are needed that are supported by the best available research evidence (Darling-Hammond, 2005). Moreover, initiatives are needed that appreciate the educational value of cultural diversity and that strive to build upon the cultural assets that children from minority, low-income communities bring with them to school. Indeed, there is a particular need for a school reform approach that draws on the collective professional experiences and expertise of an interdisciplinary team of researchers and practitioners like those at Howard University's (CRESPAR)/Capstone Institute. This team has devoted its professional lives to addressing the educational concerns of underserved populations with a special appreciation for vantage points and voices born out of the lived experiences of these populations (Boykin & Bailey, 2000a, 2000b).

The purpose of this article is to report on school reform interventions and outcomes of CRESPAR/Capstone Institute—evidenced-based strategies that work to promote the academic achievement and social competence of Black children, especially Black children who are from low-income Black families. The authors cover several areas: (a) a description of the (CRESPAR)/Capstone Institute, (b) paradigms shifts where the "participant action research" and

the "whole child" approaches in educating Black children are used, (c) TQM of school reform and a brief description of selected program components, (d) empirical reports of Talent Quest research and development projects, (e) challenges and solutions in conducting school reform interventions, and (g) conclusions and implication of CRESPAR/Capstone Institute's work for policy and practice.

THE CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON THE EDUCATION OF STUDENTS PLACED AT RISK (CRESPAR)/CAPSTONE INSTITUTE

CRESPAR was established in 1994 at Howard University and Johns Hopkins University as a federally funded educational research and development center which was designed to formulate, implement, and evaluate models of comprehensive school reform. The Howard University CRESPAR staff established the Capstone Institute as an overarching organization in 1999 to fulfill two objectives: (a) broaden and increase the resource base available to conduct school reform research, development, and evaluation activities and (b) provide widely disseminated technical assistance to school personnel who were conducting comprehensive reform. The mission of Howard University's Capstone Institute is to research, develop, evaluate, refine, and disseminate our own TQM of school reform, and/or a set of its components, in schools that serve predominantly students with low-income, ethnic minority backgrounds, who underachieve academically, and show school-based social and behavioral challenges. These students represent one of the fastest growing groups of children in the U.S. and are placed at risk daily for educational failure.

General Approaches Guiding Research and Development: Participant Action Research and Educating the Whole Child

One of the guiding approaches used at CRESPAR/Capstone Institute is the participant action research approach (PAR) (Argyris & Schon, 1991). PAR is an empirically grounded model that views participants and researchers as partners in the investigation of events within real-life contexts of program development, implementation, and evaluation. There is a prevailing cultural deficit approach in much of the research, policy, and practice with racial and ethnic youth in the academic literature. Rather than adopting this approach, CRESPAR/Capstone staff assumed that there is coherence and purpose to the African American experience. This cultural integrity perspective seeks to illuminate and capitalize on an underutilized pool of authentic knowledge, preferences, skills, and abilities to enhance educational processes and outcomes for this population. Such an approach requires CRESPAR/Capstone Institute researchers and practitioners to develop collaborative partnerships with local stakeholders. These partnerships facilitated access to and appreciation of existing perspectives and competencies of students, families, school personnel, and community members. Moreover, genuine collaboration translates into a shared vision of realistic program goals and effective implementation processes.

Educating the whole child (EWC), in this case Black children, can be described as an approach where there is a focus on the proactive, interactive, and comprehensive cultivation of Black children's development within their natural developmental frame of reference as well as their historical and existing, functional cultural context. This is from a perspective that addresses Black children's physical, cognitive, emotional, social, spiritual, and moral interdependent dimensions of individual and collective experiences. EWC includes the notion that students experience transitions within the major developmental areas across several multi-contextual socialization settings, such as their families, schools, peer groups, neighborhoods, and others. Within the schooling experience, students experience transitions as they matriculate across and graduate from schooling levels from pre-K and elementary to middle school, middle school to high school, and from high school to postsecondary school opportunities such as college, technical training, military service, and the workplace, including entrepreneurship.

Children's developmental and academic transitions can and often present challenges to students themselves and to those who educate and provide for students' needs across multi-

contextual settings, such as their families, schools, and other socializing communal and community contexts. From this perspective, low-income African American children are often placed at cumulative risk given the ecological conditions of their lives where they continue to face challenges of racism, low socioeconomic status, including impoverished living conditions in all areas of life, and isolation from and unfamiliarity with various prerequisites of American culture. Note that we use the term "placed at risk" here as opposed to only "at-risk" to reflect the notion that children develop within ecological settings of their families, schools, communities, and the total society. Children's development interfaces with these ecological settings, which often influence children's development. This broader, ecological perspective goes beyond the usual "blame game" and "blame the victim" pejorative analysis and solutions—approaches so often used in educational and social reform, especially for ethnic minority groups, low-income persons, and other disenfranchised groups. It is more productive to use empowering and asset-based approaches with educational stakeholders—students, teachers, parents and family members, and community members.

The Talent Quest Model

The Talent Quest Model (TQM) that undergirds and guides school reform is faithful to the tenets of Talent Development (Boykin, 2000a, 2000b). The overarching philosophy is the belief that all students can learn to high standards if they are provided with appropriate supports and if all stakeholders are accountable to fulfilling the same schooling vision. TQM rests on four key principles—overdetermined success, integrity-based ethos, multiple expected outcomes, and co-construction. Firstly, the TQM seeks to *overdetermine* success for students through implementing multiple, evidence-based activities and programs, any of which could stand alone and lead to enhanced outcomes, but which together can have an even greater effect on student success. Evidenced-based activities and programs are implemented and evaluated in six major areas: (a) leadership support and support for the change process, (b) teacher professional development with classroom follow-up, (c) academic support involving tutorials, academic acceleration and enrichment, cultural enrichment, and social development, (d) student support services, (e) school-family-community partnerships, and (f) support of assessment and evaluation. The evidence-based overdetermination principle, as related to teaching and learning, leads to implementing constructivist-based activities with an emphasis on meta-cognition, critical thinking, problem posing and solving, strategic learning, integrated writing and speaking opportunities, active task engagement, and student preferences and interests.

Secondly, the TQM seeks to achieve coherency across and alignment among its various elements by being predicated on an *integrity-based* ethos that informs all components of interventions (Boykin & Bailey, 2000b). Integrity refers to the complexity, coherence and meaning contained in students' life experiences. These experiences are, thus, not simply characterized by deficits, inadequacies, pathologies among any group of persons, but especially persons from low-income, marginalized social backgrounds who are consistently maligned in academic publications as well as multimedia reports without balanced and asset-based assessments or characterizations. This integrity-based ethos posits that high expectations are held for students to reach rigorous, high standards, that there is emphasis placed *both* on individual and collective responsibility, and that all stakeholders have "voice and choice" in verbalizing and choosing their actions. Moreover, integrity-based ethos implies that we build on students' social and cultural assets, draw on their existing knowledge and prior experiences, and encourage continual striving for improvement through effort.

The third key feature of the TQM is *multiple expected outcomes* or barometers for success beyond just improved standardized test scores. These would include skills such as critical thinking skills, creative problem-solving, motivation, positive schooling attitudes, and reduced behavior problems. These researchers would also expect enhancements in the status and professional well-being of teachers, administrators, and other school staff members. The fourth key element is *co-construction* of the implementation at a school site. Co-construction refers to being attentive to the social and cultural dynamics at school sites that will affect implementation of the TQM

components and ensure that there is authentic practitioner input into how these components are tailored to the unique dynamics, social context, and organizational features of a given school. Co-construction underlies the approach to all facets of the school reform intervention, areas such as student learning, teacher professional development, and school-family-community partnerships (Carroll, LaPoint, & Tyler, 2001).

The challenges of conducting school reform interventions is patently clear as the TQM recognizes that all schools are significant sites of socialization, yet problematic agencies in the lives of students, teachers, administrators, staff, parents, family members, and community members of targeted schools. There is an implicit, if not explicit resistance to the schooling process and subsequent dampening of these stakeholders' educational prospects by virtue of the attitudes and expectations directed at them. Implementing an effective change process is as important as the content of the reform model's components themselves and, thus, important to establish mutual ownership of the change process by having informed buy-in of the TQM by school personnel. Authentic and sustained school reform entails changing the "core" of educational practice, enhancing administrative, instructional and human relations leadership, and establishing a sense of a professional community. Consequently, TQM activities incorporate these insights in order to promote enabling schooling contexts so that every situation is designed to enable student learners and educators to develop talent, reach high standards, and have constructive, growth-oriented experiences.

The TQM has seven activity components and are depicted in Figure 1. The seven areas are: (a) Teacher Professional Development, (b) Core Classroom Practices, (c) Academic Support Activities (in-class tutoring and after school programs), (d) Service Enhancement, (e) School, Family, and Community Partnerships, (f) Assessment and Evaluation, and (g) related CRESPAR/Capstone Institute initiatives.

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Teacher Professional Development involves CRESPAR/Capstone conducting summer institutes and planning sessions with an array of workshops that prepare and support teachers in their efforts to reach children through the TQM. Literature in the area of professional development acknowledges that professional development is not a "one-shot" process, but is best when sustained over time. CRESPAR/Capstone offers teachers a variety of opportunities to gather the data they need to reflect on their teaching practices as they endeavor to ensure that all students excel. This requires that teachers co-construct teaching activities. This co-construction process is fostered when teachers work collaboratively, as part of teacher learning teams, so that they can learn from and encourage each other.

Preparation for Teacher Professional Development: Classroom Cultural Ecology

The Classroom Ecology initiative is designed to provide rich, descriptive data on the practices, procedures, and dynamics that comprise the typical ecology of classrooms serving low-income African American elementary school students. Specific focus is placed on classroom routines, pedagogies, interpersonal dynamics, and cultural themes that operate in classrooms serving low-income African American students. The program utilizes a wide range of methods involving direct observations, interviews, and audio- and video-taping of focus groups and classroom sessions. CRESPAR/Capstone studies of classroom ecology evolved into the development of a professional development program focusing specifically on teacher reflective classroom practices and interactions with students and other teachers (Ellison, Boykin, Penn Towns, & Stokes, 2000).

Talent Development Professional Development Project

With Talent Development as the guiding philosophy and utilizing information obtained from the classroom ecology project, the purpose of the Talent Development Professional Development (TDPD) project is to improve student achievement and learning outcomes by providing opportunities for teachers and the existing learning community to engage in meaningful and

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sustained individualized and group professional growth and development activities. A variety of evidence-based content level strategy and skill workshops have been provided for teachers to be used in the classroom with the goal of enhancing student learning and achievement outcomes. In addition, the project provides professional development training to tutors conducting tutorial services to elementary school students in mathematics and language arts. These professional development activities have been successful in enhancing teachers' classroom strategies and skills. Most notable are the "make and take" sessions that teachers engage in periodically. These sessions provide teachers an opportunity to co-construct classroom activities with their peers. The sessions also allow teachers time to reflect on how constructing their own classroom instructional activities enhance their ability to provide meaningful classroom experiences for their students. Equally enlightening for teachers have been follow-up sessions provided by the TDPD program. The purpose of the follow-up sessions is to identify whether teachers integrate knowledge from workshops conducted by the TDPD into classroom instruction and curriculum (Ellison, 2004).

Building on Students' Assets: Core Classroom Practices and Academic Support Activities

CRESPAR/Capstone changes facilitators, in conjunction with site-based teacher/staff collaborators, and conducts follow-up activities on an array of workshops designed to stress the need for classroom teachers to develop children's academic and social competencies. This is done through constructive feedback, coaching, and classroom demonstrations. This "whole child" approach features the use of prosocial classroom management practices and language arts and mathematics pedagogy—all designed and delivered to yield increased constructivist-based student learning and academic engagement. There is also a focus on facilitating the social and emotional development of students as well as on helping students use their school-based knowledge to enhance their lives and the lives of others inside and outside of school. Talent development practices also include the strategic use of class meetings, individual and group problem-solving structures, and curriculum extension tools to enhance critical thinking skills, build on children's assets and create practical and proactive connections to children's lived experiences.

In the area of academic support activities, CRESPAR/Capstone-trained tutors use evidenced-based strategies to reinforce and extend the core classroom practices by providing remediation, academic enrichment activities, and homework assignments, as needed, to help students meet high expectations and standards. Students practice proven test-taking strategies as well as engage in opportunities for cultural and social development. Enrichment trips are planned to extend children's schooling experiences and further expand their social and cultural horizons.

Cultural Factors in Cognitive Performance Project

This project focuses on classroom instructional practices that are responsive to children's prevailing cultural experiences. Specifically, the project focuses on research documenting efforts to build on the cultural integrity in the experiences of African American children from low-income backgrounds. Enhanced learning and performance have been revealed for African American children across a range of conditions that are consistent with three Afrocultural themes (i.e., communalism, movement and verve, or physical stimulations). These effects have been demonstrated across cognitive outcomes, including academic problem-solving in spelling, math, vocabulary and picture-sequencing tasks, higher-order creative problem-solving using open-ended tasks, and direct factual recall of and higher-order inferential reasoning with orally presented and textbook reading material. Results also reveal that children prefer communal over individualistic or competitive learning contexts, high-movement/music over low-movement/no-music learning contexts, and high-variability over low-variability task presentation contexts. Moreover, home environment and cultural orientation factors were found to be generally related to enhanced performance and increased student motivation in contexts informed by the Afrocultural themes. These findings suggest that enhanced performance outcomes are functionally linked to the cultural contexts in which cognitive tasks are performed, as well as to children's expressed cultural orientations (Boykin, 2000b; Boykin & Allen, 2000; Boykin & Bailey, 2000a, 2000b).

ACADEMIC SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

OUTCOMES

In Class Tutoring

Assessment & Evaluation

After School Program

TIER 1

TIER 2

Central Reform Program

Organizational Development: Managing the change process

Professional Development Preparing to reach & teach all children

Core Classroom Practices:

Language Arts

Mathematics

Prosocial Classroom Management

Transformative Social & Emotional Development

School Family Community Partnership

Services Enhancement

School Climate

Staff Quality of Life

Family & Neighborhood Enhancement

Student Achievement

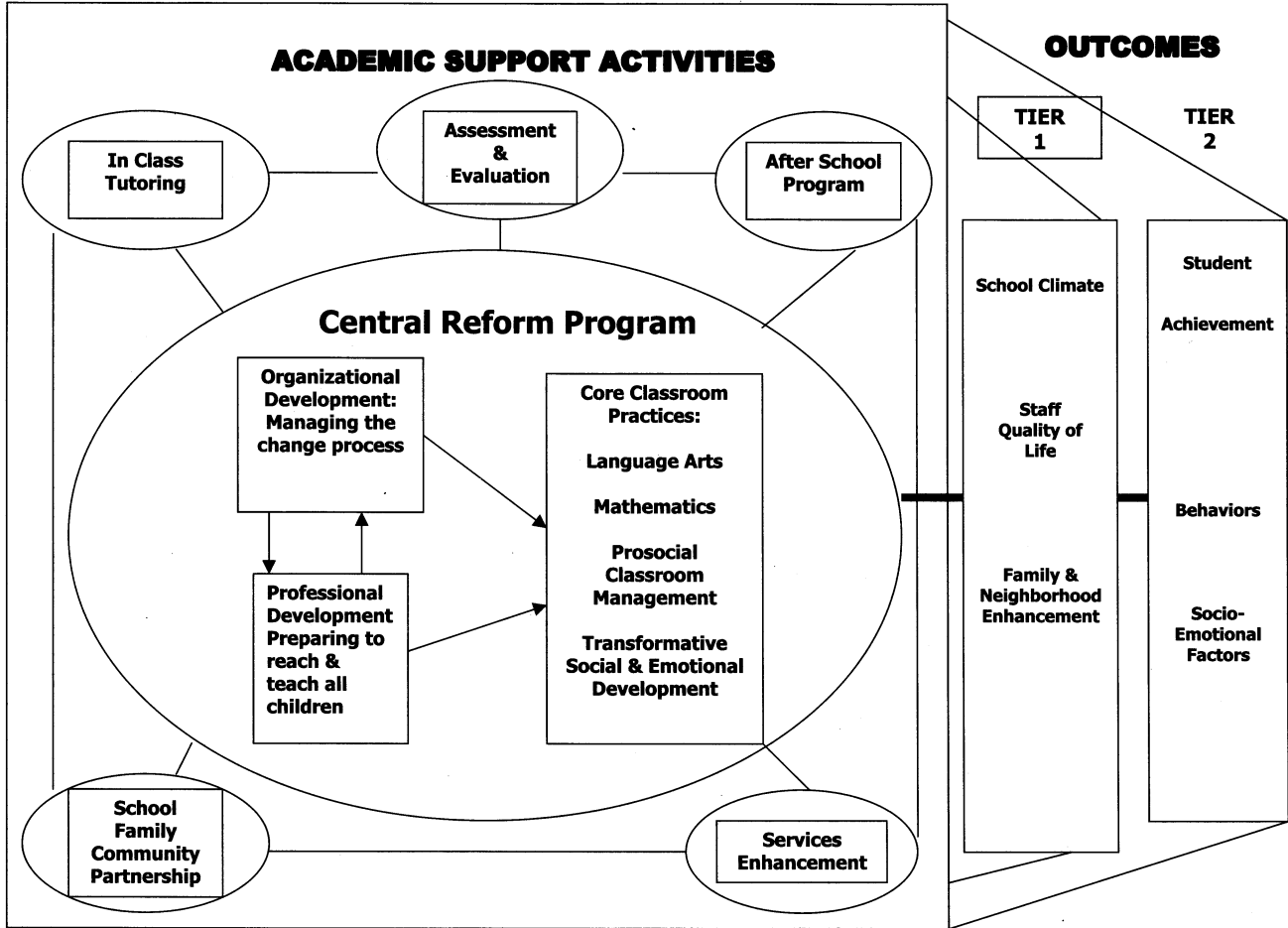Behaviors

Socio-Emotional Factors

Figure 1. Elements of the Talent Quest Model of School Reform.

The Talent Development Elementary School Asset-Based Education Project

Given CRESPAR/Capstone's experiences in creating and conducting research on Talent Development in middle and high schools, developing an elementary school Talent Development model allowed for a feeder-school system and its students to benefit from a continuous, coherent vision of schooling from kindergarten through the 12th grade. Drawing on its earlier research and experiences CRESPAR/Capstone extended the focus of the Talent Development model by placing greater emphasis on the cultural and personal assets of children and families in underserved communities, on co-construction of instructional approaches with school staffs, and on broadening the range of success indicators to include critical thinking, creative problem-solving, and affective/social outcomes as well as basic skills. In general, the purpose of the Talent Development Elementary School Project (TDES) is to formulate, plan, implement, test, and refine (at selected sites) an elementary-level, whole-school reform model that is fully faithful to the tenets of Talent Development. The impact of the TDES has been evaluated in terms of the measurable outcomes emanating from the implementation of a research-based, whole-school reform model, which promotes the enhancement of the school leadership style, teacher morale, instructional practices, and ultimately, the performance, motivation, and engagement of the students. With multiple evidence-based interventions, the Talent Development Elementary School Project seeks to hold all stakeholders accountable for the improvement of the academic, social, and professional milieu of the school.

The elementary school reform intervention consists of several specific initiatives, including in-school tutorials, an after-school academic support program, and service enhancement activities, such as home visits, individual and group counseling, and group conflict management workshops. This intervention also includes peer-based, academic activities for students, such as, cooperative and communal learning groups. In addition, the school reform intervention has engaged families and communities to participate through parent action teams and resource rooms. Curriculum and instruction innovations have been launched, such as constructivist and strategic learning, personally and culturally relevant pedagogy, and extensive writing opportunities, all of which are aligned with broad-based, growth-oriented assessments.

Research by CRESPAR/Capstone and others indicates that over a five-year period the Stanford Achievement Test-9 (SAT-9) scores of students participating in the TDES programs have increased an average of 14% in reading and 39% in mathematics. In addition, teachers receiving professional development have demonstrated improvement in their classroom management strategies and in their confidence to deliver high-quality instruction, both teachers and parents report positive differences in the attitudes and academic skills of children participating in the in-school tutorial and after-school academic support programs, students report measurably more supportive and favorable school climates, and, finally, meaningful parent involvement in school activities has increased noticeably (Boykin & Cunningham, 2001; Boykin, Watkins, Lewis, & Chou, 2000; Dill & Boykin, 2000).

Super Schools Project

The purpose of the Super Schools Project is to analyze schools, programs, practices, and procedures that produce extraordinary outcomes with students placed at risk. Specifically, the project set out to determine the critical characteristics of successful nonselective public schools serving low-income, African American students in urban school districts. This project was designed to address the core issues of school improvement. How do we improve the quality of education and the achievement levels of low-income, urban, minority learners, the most intransigent to most school reform efforts?

The work of the project indicates that the highly successful low-income urban schools agree in many respects on what they think is important and what they are doing in order to provide for all students a quality education: outstanding leadership, teacher quality and efficacy, staff development, governance, parent involvement, school mission, environment and school climate, school relationships, discipline and student behavior, cultural factors, socioemotional development

of students, high expectations, effective instructional arrangements and implementation, curriculum dimensions, monitoring of student progress, and a broad range of outcomes (Cole-Henderson, 2000; Towns & Serpell, 2004). The educators in the schools believe that they must address the needs of the whole child, as well as the family, and emphasize cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes and that many problems that are often attributed to low-income, urban schools are not major problems in the schools in low-income communities (Cole-Henderson, 2000; Towns & Serpell, 2004).

SERVICE ENHANCEMENTS

CRESPAR/Capstone social workers and counseling psychologists establish and participate in collaborative partnerships among parents, families, teachers, counselors, and principals in order to identify, develop, and implement services that are responsive to the specific social, family, and health needs of children and families. CRESPAR/Capstone staff members also work to build relationships with school staff in order to mobilize resources that nurture and support the resiliency of children and their families. Activities include group sessions for identified students in the areas of conflict resolution, decision-making, goal-setting behavior, and interpersonal relationships. CRESPAR/Capstone also works to increase the capacity of these children's families and teachers to support the children's social-emotional development and academic success.

Contextual Enhancements to Promote Children's Developmental Competencies Project

The Contextual Enhancement project (CE) includes a multi-component social and emotional competence enhancement program and has several phases: (a) conceptual modeling, (b) curriculum development and/or modification, (c) selection and/or adaptation of measures, (d) social marketing to obtain buy-in, and (e) piloting and refinement of materials. A major objective of the project is to develop a series of curriculum modules for use by teachers to foster African American children's social and emotional learning and development. Materials are adapted or created to address a range of competence areas, with an eye toward integrating the curriculum into language arts and/or social studies classes. This has prompted the inclusion of books, videos, and small group and individual activities which result in seven curriculum modules addressing: (a) attitudes and values, (b) communication, (c) problem-solving and decision-making, (d) relationships, (e) school and community partnerships, (f) self-enhancement skills, and (g) goal setting and task completion. Each module contains multiple lessons and related activities.

Classroom teachers, school guidance counselors, and project staff are used to implement the curriculum modules during the regular classroom day, in-school pull-out sessions, an after-school program, and a Saturday program. Family strengthening workshops are conducted to augment children's classroom experiences. Parenting workshops are provided to address issues such as personal well-being, including stress and time management, Black children's development, parenting and childrearing strategies, children's academic achievement, healthy lifestyles, and parent involvement and advocacy. Evidence based on a study of the CE project indicates that after controlling for baseline scores, children receiving the CE curriculum rated themselves higher on social skills than did children in the control condition. In addition, teachers rated CE curriculum students lower on internalizing behaviors than control group students. The CE curriculum helps to reduce discipline problems. In the after-school sites, suspensions decreased. Classes receiving the CE curriculum garnered 41% more notations for positive behavior than other classes at the same grade level. Also, only 3 of every 10 disciplinary reports were from teachers using the CE curriculum (Jagers, Bingham, & Hans, 1996).

SCHOOL, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

CRESPAR practitioners participate in co-constructive working relationships among school staff, parents, and community members. These efforts are to improve communications between schools and home, increase parent and community partner involvement in school-based activities, and increase parental and community support for enhanced academic achievement for children.

The Safe Start Violence Prevention Program

The Safe Start Violence Prevention Program goes beyond the traditional reliance on cognitive and conflict resolution skills to reduce the risk of children's involvement in violence. It adopts a more comprehensive model to address numerous risk factors by intervening in multiple areas with the objectives of (a) promoting protective factors, such as prosocial behavior and relationship building, (b) enhancing bonding to school, family, and community, and (c) promoting positive interpersonal and problem-solving skills. Safe Start builds on the cultural assets of African American youth, parents and family members, and community members to promote a positive value orientation and academic competence. The program includes a parent empowerment group which focuses on developing behavioral strategies in parenting, adult development issues, and violence prevention for parents, while getting parents and teachers more functionally involved in violence prevention initiatives and in their children's personal and academic development activities. An assessment of the effect Safe Starts' after-school program, coupled with family, community and school partnership programs, reveal increases in children's school-related social competence, reductions in classroom disruptive behaviors, and reductions in disciplinary referrals attributable to these programs.

Exposure to Violence and School Functioning of African American Children: Lessons from Resilient Children

CRESPAR/Capstone utilizes resilience as an organizing principle that gives schools a means of integrating school improvement, regular enhanced-curricula offerings, and processes which place emphasis on caring, high expectations, and opportunity. Resilience focuses on strengths of children in three ways: increasing protective factors, assessing children's strengths and their protective resources, and disseminating information. To increase protective factors, the school's faculty and staff along with CRESPAR researchers engage in mobilizing resources and community partners and parents to work with the students. Teachers and parents are encouraged to emphasize high expectations, support and caring, and opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities. In assessing children's strengths and their protective resources, four areas are addressed: self concept, motivation, a social support system, and stressors. Professional development workshops provide information to teachers on resilience, the findings from the assessments, and the use of risk and protective factors to motivate children.

Evaluation of the effects of these approaches to protective processes, primarily on children's competence in reading and mathematics, found significant increases from below basic to basic and above. To gauge the school's progress, changes in normal-curve equivalents (NCE) were examined for grades 2 through 6 on the SAT-9. First graders were given the fourth edition of the Stanford Early Achievement Test in the fall and the SAT-9 in spring. The reading gains from fall to spring in grades two through six were 11 to 21 NCEs. The mathematics gains in these grades ranged from 13 to 30. The reading NCE gain was 4.1 and the mathematics gain was 18 (Hill, Hawkins, Raposo, & Carr, 1995; Hill, Levermore, Twaite, & Jones, 1996; Hill & Madhere, 1996; Hill, Soriano, Chen, & LaFromboise, 1995).

After-School Enrichment for Middle School Students

The After School Enrichment program seeks to "overdetermine" academic success and sustain the social-emotional development of students. The fundamental principles of this model include a sound curriculum, method of instruction that has sociocultural relevance, and a correct understanding of each learner's motivation. Activities for this program included professional development for teachers, a parent Handbook of Active Affirmation, interest assessment and career fair for students, intensive reading comprehension, after-school tutoring programs, multimedia software in the sciences, cultural literacy, metacognitive skill-building in mathematics, and a grading system fostering growth and development. Practitioners were actively involved in the formulation and implementation of these components.

Prior to CRESPAR/Capstone Institute staff interventions, the standardized test scores for schools had regularly declined over a four-year period. Using the SAT-9, results indicated that NCE scores for seventh graders in mathematics moved from an average of 39 NCE to an average of 48.2 NCEs, a gain of 9.2 points. The eighth graders improved their average from 29.8 NCEs to 41.8 NCEs, a gain of 12 points (Madhere & MacIver, 1996; Madhere, 1998a, 1998b). Comparisons with the control group revealed that students at the intervention school outscored their counterparts at the other three junior high schools by 9.1 NCEs (among seventh graders) and by 5 NCEs (among eighth graders) during the same period. For reading, results indicated that NCE scores for seventh graders moved from an average of 29.9 NCEs to an average of 40.6 NCEs, a gain of 10.7 points. The eighth graders improved their average from 35.2 NCEs to 43.7 NCEs, a gain of 8.5 points (Madhere & MacIver, 1996; Madhere, 1998a, 1998b).

Promoting Student Attendance in High School

The CRESPAR/Capstone and high school stakeholders—students, teachers, parents, and community members—formed the School, Family, Community Partnership Program where parents and community representatives are involved in a variety of supportive ways in the school (e.g., teacher assistants, hall and bathroom monitors, attendance office assistants, and in assisting students at home to improve academic achievement and conduct). A smaller unit within this program is the High School Action Team (HSAT), specially sought to increase the number of parents and family members attending parent and teacher conferences and to develop an Attendance Summit and Enhancement Program. The Enhancement program included: (a) kicking-off with a conference for students, teachers, and parents, where speakers provided research-based information and materials on the importance of attendance and academic achievement, (b) introducing a computerized attendance monitoring system, (c) calling and directly talking with absent students and their parents to determine reasons for absenteeism, (d) implementing strategies to work with absentees, and (e) providing group incentive rewards for the best attendance by homerooms.

Prior to this intervention, the average number of parents and family members attending these events was about 20 per advisory period in school with about 300 students. At the advisory period, immediately after the intervention, 150 parents attended—a record number of parents and family members for the school. In addition, the student attendance rate improved as a result of interventions. Prior to the intervention, the average daily attendance rate was 77% of the student body. After implementing the interventions the attendance rate increased to 89% (LaPoint, Jordan, McPartland, & Towns, 1996).

The Career Breakfast Club Learning Community

Students in transition from middle to high school need information and skills for postsecondary options, such as college, technical training, and employment. In response, many school reform initiatives are focusing on the career development of students during middle school. The Career Breakfast Club Learning Community (CBCLC) sought to improve 9th grade junior high school students' knowledge, attitudes, and practices in school-to-career development. Prior to implementing this intervention, the CRESPAR/Capstone Institute conducted both qualitative studies (i.e., focus groups of students, family members, and teachers) and quantitative studies (i.e., surveys, self-assessments, pretests/posttests) to assess information about the career development status of African American youth.

Focus groups were conducted with students, family members, and teachers on topics of career knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, attainment, aspirations, and decision-making. Findings showed that while teachers and family members felt it was very important to foster career development and exploration at school and home, they believed there could be more collaboration between both groups in this area. Students expressed barriers such as examination scores, scholarship access, and low peer support to attaining their career goals. Profiles of students' vocational personality types using the Holland Self-Directed Search assessment show that students from low-income,

urban schools scored as being more people-oriented and social rather than thing/item oriented and practical (Holland, Powell, & Fritzsche, 1994). These results are consistent with the extant research findings that African American youth and adults seem to prefer more socially oriented occupations characterized by interdependence, communalism, and mutuality (LaPoint, Manswell Butty, Thomas, & Reid, in press; Manswell Butty, Reid, & LaPoint, 2004).

The CBCLC consisted of eight culturally responsive and student asset-based learning activities that included sessions on future career interests, kinds of careers in the world of work, employment applications, college searches and applications, resume-writing, and interview skills. Findings from the career development interventions revealed improvements from pretest to posttest in their career knowledge, skills, and applications. Students engaged in these interactive learning activities rated the activities very positively—useful, meaningful, and fun. Students were highly receptive to learning activities that were directly linked to their personal lives and reflected their assets (LaPoint, Manswell Butty, Thomas, & Reid, in press; Manswell Butty, Reid, & LaPoint, 2004).

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

CRESPAR research staff members conducted a range of research activities that assessed school-based needs, discerned the best available practices for a school, and evaluated the quality of the interventions and the impact of the interventions on schooling outcomes.

Broadening the Scope of the Assessment Project

This project evolved as CRESPAR/Capstone Institute researchers considered the impact of the unit's school reform efforts on teachers and examined the increasing usage of performance assessments in state and national testing programs. An attempt was made to play an active role in building the efficacy of teachers with regard to preparing the students who would be taking these assessments. Specific emphasis was on developing and evaluating a program to encourage the use of authentic performance assessments, focusing on higher-order instructional goals in schools serving students placed at risk. Focus was placed on middle school mathematics teachers located in urban school districts who were in the process of transitioning to new and performance-based curriculum with its corresponding forms of assessment.

Mathematics teachers were given a survey entitled, Teaching Effectiveness in a Climate of Reform, which assessed teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and classroom practices and climate. Findings indicate that most of the teachers felt confident in having the necessary skills to implement change in teaching methods (96%) and classroom assessments (92%). Approximately two-thirds (66%) indicated that difficulties in setting up a learning center in the classroom would probably be due to lack of appropriate materials, rather than the teacher not having spent enough preparation time. Teachers indicated preferences for instructional activities daily that involved small group problem-solving (64%) and working and discussing math problems reflecting real-life situations (75%). In a focus group interview of math teachers, they expressed some concerns regarding the alignment between the curriculum and current assessments. They were enthusiastic about the new curriculum, but also concerned about their responsibilities for developing literacy given the limited amount of time for teaching mathematics (Johnson, 1994, 1995).

Assessment and Evaluation Innovation Project

This project discerned effective means for creating better alignment among teacher-made tests, instructional strategies, and student performance outcomes. It centered on how assessment and evaluation can be used in the Talent Development Model to maximally serve students placed at risk. Developing sound and replicable analytic methods and evaluation approaches, plus utilizing evaluation findings to increase knowledge of strategies for enhancing student achievement, are both key components of this research. Greater understanding of the role of assessment and evaluation by all stakeholders should make these procedures less "mystical" and more effective. A

variety of methodologies were used to gather evidence about teaching mathematics, in particular, and assessing learning, in general, from a variety of sources. The evidence was both descriptive and prescriptive in that the researchers were able to describe teachers' attitudes, beliefs, desires, and wants based on their responses to questions asked and observations made. Then, the information was used prescriptively to design custom interventions for professional development in teaching and assessment in schools in the greater Washington metropolitan area.

Findings indicated that teachers' wants, needs, and uses of assessment literacy differ across the content domains of reading and mathematics. There was a greater prevalence of the use of student reflection in classroom assessment in mathematics than in reading, and a greater tendency to model teacher-constructed instruments after commercially developed ones in reading than in mathematics. Teachers also reported a greater need for professional development in constructing teacher-made assessments in mathematics than in reading. In another area, the content of state-mandated standardized tests has more influence on what teachers teach in their classrooms than the state's curriculum frameworks or content standards, national educational standards, students' special needs, or their own professional development. Approximately two-thirds (67.6%) of the teachers said that the state-mandated test had a "strong positive influence" on what they teach. Interestingly, 36% of teachers said parents/community have "little to no influence," which was the largest response rate for that factor. The more teachers know about the characteristics of an assessment that will be used for accountability, the more equipped they are to make practical instructional decisions for their students and align their instruction accordingly.

Finally, approximately 40% of the items on the state assessment addressed the content standard "number and operations." The "measurement" standard ranked second with approximately 30% of the items. About 82% of the items have either one or two simple sentences and at least two or more compound sentences that make up the stem of the item, indicating a strong reading load for the assessment overall (Hughes, 1999; Johnson, Thompson, Wallace, Hughes, & Manswell Butty, 1998; Johnson, Wallace, & Thompson, 1999; Wallace, Thompson, & Hughes, 1998).

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

Research and interventions by CRESPAR/Capstone Institute, which focus on producing evidenced-based solutions to educate Black children based on the TQM tenets, have several implications for policy and practice. Regarding policy: first, student success should be an integral theme of educational policy. Policymakers must keep in mind that the intended goal of educational reform is that all children should be placed at promise for academic success and not placed at risk for academic failure. Educational practice must ensure that this promise for all children is realized and obtained. As such, educational policies should be directed at providing schools with resources that foster student success. Second, legislators and policymakers should be working collaboratively with educators and professionally recognized educational experts to provide authentic, research-based and practical guidance for assisting with students' classroom learning and academic success. Accountability models for school practitioners and administrators must also be created.

Third, policymakers should understand that a learning community consists of all educational stakeholders, those people who have a meaningful and significant interaction with children. Educational policies must support school, family, and community partnerships. They must provide for an infrastructure that continuously promotes, sustains, and facilitates the formulation of the partnership. Fourth, educational policy language must be flexible enough to accommodate diversity among all educational stakeholders. Such language should not create arbitrarily contextual and cultural barriers. Fifth, policymakers must ensure that reform comprehensive initiatives must make available to educators financial and non-financial support and resources. Funds do not operate alone. Time to plan, time to meet, and time to engage in professional development activities are all essential for an educational system to operate effectively and efficiently. Therefore, time allotted for continuous and sustained professional development must not be seen as a challenge but as an integral part of the system.

There are also implications for practice. Firstly, there is a need for recognition of contextual cues and cultural diversity of educational stakeholders. Representing valuable resources that have many strengths and talents, there is a need for their infusion in research and development activities. Secondly, there is a need to establish support systems to overcome challenges. Thirdly, there is a need to plan to evaluate the impact of educational reform efforts early and often. This can lead to continuous improvements in the implementation of reform initiatives which ultimately lead to greater student and teacher success. Finally, there is a need to incorporate evidence-based reform efforts. This will ensure that such reform initiatives will be successful in enhancing student achievement and teacher quality.

CONCLUSIONS

In general, what has CRESPAR/Capstone Institute accomplished? To date, encouraging results have been obtained as an outcome of interventions reported earlier. CRESPAR/Capstone Institute researchers are keenly aware of the challenges attendant to school reform. The researchers have come to appreciate that the school is a significant socialization agency in the lives of our targeted children. There can be implicit, if not explicit, resistance to this schooling process and subsequent dampening of the children's educational prospects by virtue of the attitudes and expectations directed at them. They have also come to appreciate how implementing an effective change process is at least as important as the content of the reform model's components themselves. The researchers recognize the importance of mutual ownership of the change process, and the informed acceptance and cooperation of the Talent Quest Model by school personnel. The researchers appreciate that authentic and sustained school reform entails changing the "core" of educational practice, enhancing administrative, instructional and human relations leadership, and establishing a sense of professional community. The efforts have incorporated these insights. The researchers have designed situations to enable learners and educators to develop talent, reach higher standards, and to have constructive growth-oriented experiences.

CRESPAR/Capstone Institute researchers believe that to appreciably alter the educational fates of disenfranchised children in U.S. public schools, piecemeal, narrowly focused approaches will be of limited value. Comprehensive school reform initiatives are needed that are supported with the best available research evidence. Moreover, initiatives are needed that appreciate the educational value of cultural diversity and that strive to build upon the cultural assets that children from minority, low-income communities bring with them to school. Indeed, there is a particular need for a school reform approach that draws on the collective professional experiences and expertise of an interdisciplinary team of researchers and practitioners like those at Howard University, who have devoted their professional lives to addressing the educational concerns of underserved populations with a special appreciation for vantage points and voices born out of the lived experiences of these populations.

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AUTHORS

VELMA LAPOINT is Professor of Human Development in the School of Education, Department of Human Development and Psychoeducational Studies, and a Senior Research Associate at CRESPAR/Capstone Institute at Howard University.

CONSTANCE M. ELLISON is Associate Professor of Educational Psychology in the School of Education, Department of Human Development and Psychoeducational Studies, and a Senior Research Associate at CRESPAR/Capstone Institute at Howard University.
A. WADE BOYKIN is Professor of Psychology in the College of Arts and Sciences and Director of the CRESPAR/Capstone Institute at Howard University.

All queries and comments regarding this article should be addressed to cellison@howard.edu