About the Author

Dr. David E. Kapel is Dean of Rowan's School of Education and Related Professional Studies and holds the rank of Professor in Secondary Education/Foundations. He has a B.S., an M.Ed., and an Ed.D. from Temple University and was a U.S. Office of Education Research Post-Doctoral Fellow at the American Institutes for Research in the Behavioral Sciences in 1966 and 1967.

Dean Kapel taught junior and senior high school mathematics and social studies for ten years in the Philadelphia Public Schools. He has held administrative and professional positions at Rowan, at Temple University, and at the Universities of Nebraska–Omaha, Louisville, and New Orleans.

He has published extensively in the areas of education, teacher education, and educational research and is the co-author of two books. The American Educators' Encyclopedia is in its second edition.
I believe there is no such thing as urban education; rather, there is education in urban communities. Urban communities are unique environments, different from those found in rural or suburban America; however, dividing education into urban, suburban, and rural implies variant educational goals for students taught in these communities. Different styles of learning must be addressed (some may be culturally imbedded), and teachers must face significantly different challenges in the urban environment. Yet I reject the concept that children in urban schools, at least in terms of ultimate educational goals, must be treated differently. Parenthetically, it's interesting to note that many of the issues facing urban America are also found in rural and suburban areas—drugs, social problems, violence, diversity, non-English-speaking students. Our country is changing rapidly and drastically.

In his first speech as President of the Council of Great City Schools, former New York City School Chief Joe Fernandez described the state of urban education: "Nowhere does the national resolve to strengthen our children's education face a tougher test than in our inner cities." He went on to say,
“Every problem is more pronounced there.” To support these statements, Dr. Fernandez cited the following:

- Of the nation’s 15,000 school districts, the largest 50 educate about 38 percent of the country’s limited-English-proficient students, a quarter of the nation’s poor children, and about 14 percent of its disabled children.
- About 40 percent of the nation’s black, Hispanic and Asian children attend urban schools.
- Nearly 60 percent of urban school districts assess children’s school readiness with a combination of measures of cognitive development, immunization and social development, as well as weight and age. And about half of urban first-graders had full-day kindergarten in the same school where they are in first grade. Yet, about 20 percent of urban districts still use only a birth certificate to assess readiness.
- Dropout rates in urban schools are about twice as high as the national average. And dropout rates, particularly of Hispanic students, are not budging. If the urban graduation rate equalled the national average,... urban schools would have graduated 295,500 students in the 1990–91 school year instead of 214,000.
- Only a third of urban students have finished first-year algebra by the end of the tenth grade. And only 10 percent of black students score in the top quartile in mathematics by tenth grade, even though a quarter had in second grade.
- Urban schools have not been able to pay teachers much more than the national average, cutting their ability to attract professionals willing to work under difficult conditions.
- While violence has hit urban schools hardest, inner city students are safer in school than almost anywhere else, including home. (Report on Education Research, September 29, 1993, p. 4).

The last statement is a major indictment of the urban community as a whole.
In spite of all the problems facing urban schools, some of the best and most exciting teaching occurs in the urban community. One needs only to enter the schools to observe excellent teachers working under extremely difficult conditions. Some of these conditions could be altered through a better redistribution of resources and additional resources (even though some critics claim that money will not do the job). I will talk more about funding later.

In this country, we must commit ourselves to the intention of the African proverb, "It takes a whole village to raise a child." I would make a minor revision by stating that "It takes all of the community to raise and educate a child and create a positive learning community." All refers to parents, extended family, the neighborhood, and all the social, medical, and business institutions that create the environment of the community, such as health, business and industry, state and city governments, recreation, and social service agencies. Anyone can list most of the organizations, but it takes all of us working together in collaboration to create a positive environment. We must extend the learning community to include all of the community—not just the classroom or the school building.

Society must recognize that, whether we like it or not, the large and small cities in the United States are the real pillars of our country. Once these cities are weakened or destroyed, the rest of the country will go down with them.

The 1985 avant-garde film Brazil had tremendous impact because it prophesied the dim future of urban America. The city in Brazil is surrounded by a wall. Soldiers keep the inhabitants inside, and outsiders have limited access. The film emphasizes the city's decay, poverty, and violence, and viewers sense the despair.

The question to be asked is: Do we have walls around our cities? The answer is yes. They may not be physical walls like the Berlin Wall. Rather, ribbons of highways and interstates keep communities separated. We don't go through a city anymore; we use the interstates to go around them so that we don't have to see or enter the city. Thus we have "contained"
those living in the cities; since many who live in cities are poor and/or members of minorities, we have de facto social/racial separation.

As the 1968 Kerner Commission stated, “We will be a nation of Black and White.” I would like to extend that to say that we are a nation not only of Black and White or a nation of Brown, Black and White, but are now a nation of have-nots and haves. The have-nots tend to be in the cities; the haves in the suburbs. Is this the kind of community that we really want our children to live in and become adults in?

If one agrees that our cities are as I have described them, then one must admit that it is very difficult to educate children who live in an economically depressed environment, who are taught in a contrived environment called the school, and who live in a violent community. National goals for the next century have very little meaning for children who are victims of violence, who are on drugs, or whose parents are on drugs, who may be children with their own children, who live in poor housing, or, in some cases, are homeless, whose parents are unemployed, and who are sick, cold, and hungry. National goals have little meaning to children who do not have the nurturing and support they need, and who are able to see on television the “haves,” and know that they are the “have-nots.” Regardless, we must recognize that the national goals for the twenty-first century have to be appropriate for urban children too. We must create a learning community that makes Goals 2000—Educate America obtainable for all children, including those living in our cities.

In August 1993, at the National Governors’ Conference in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley stated, “It is time for America to get serious about our children.” He went on to say, “Education is and must also be a national priority. That is why the National Education Goals are so important. America’s future is dependent on a well-educated citizenry. It is both an economic necessity and a moral imperative to provide a high quality and effective education for all children in America. We don’t have a single
person to waste” (Community Update, No. 6, September, 1993, U.S. Department of Education). Riley is correct: we don’t have a single person to waste—whether he or she lives in Camden, Newark, Morristown, or Moorestown.

Reorganizing School Districts

If the State Legislature does not find a broad-based state tax to support education—most particularly to support the 30 urban special needs districts—then we must move quickly to reduce the number of school districts to recover needed funds for education. Even if funds become available, I still recommend reducing the number of school districts. It is unconscionable for a state the size of New Jersey to have 613 school districts. The amount of money expended for the administrative structure of these school districts is astronomical.

I advocate reorganizing the 613 districts into county school districts, as Kentucky, Virginia, Maryland, and Louisiana have done. We should reduce the 613 districts to 21 districts: the number of counties in New Jersey. If one assumes the average school superintendent makes $80,000 a year, the 613 school districts cost $49 million in wages for superintendents alone. Can you imagine how much more is spent for assistant and associate superintendents, maintaining school boards, and various other directors? Maintaining a school board (not counting secretarial support) runs about $36,000 per year. The estimated cost of the 613 districts is $22 million. The same number of business managers (or board secretaries) at $40,000 per district costs $24,520,000. The cost of the two positions and of maintaining school boards for the 613 is $115,628,000. Twenty-one school districts, at even $100,000 per superintendent, would cost only $2.1 million. School board support at $36,000 would cost $756,000, and business managers would cost $840,000. The cost of the two positions and of school board support for the 21 school districts would be $3,696,000—a savings of $111,932,000. Moreover, the number of administrative units or departments in the current 613 districts is considerable. Most have offices for personnel, transportation,
and special services, as well as a staff of curriculum coordinators and directors and various business departments. These add up in costs and complexities—well above the $450 million needed by the urban districts, as projected by State Superior Court Judge Levy in his August 31, 1993, decision concerning New Jersey funding for the 30 urban school districts.

Another advantage to 21 county districts would be a breakdown of the isolation between school districts, most particularly, the urban school districts and the suburban school districts. This is crucial in terms of integration. In addition, county districts would tend to equalize the tax base, thus partially meeting the Supreme Court mandate.

One might argue that the bureaucracy developed by these larger districts would be cumbersome. I suggest that the number of bureaucracies that exist within the 613 makes that argument ludicrous. If we can’t reduce the number to 21 county districts, then we should at least consolidate the number of districts to 150. Such a reduction would go far in equalizing the tax base, if we consolidate urban and suburban school districts.

**Infrastructure of Urban Schools**

Even if we create county districts or reduce the number of districts by consolidation, we need to look at the structure of the urban school districts. It’s not enough to bring in new funds or a new superintendent and expect major changes to occur in large urban school districts. The infrastructure of urban school districts is such that, even with a major infusion of funds or the hiring of the most dynamic and farsighted urban school superintendent, it is the people in the infrastructure who actually run the district on a day-to-day basis, the ones who implement the policies, the “old boy” and “old girl” network, the ones who distribute the books, the paper, the equipment, the monies that make or break change. One only needs to look at Chicago or New York to see the influence of infrastructure. In order to make changes in the urban school districts, we have to make changes in that structure.
If you think that’s not a problem, take a look at what’s happening in Russia and the trouble that Yeltsin is having with the infrastructure left by the Communist regime. We have the same problem in the large urban school districts. We need to restructure or redesign urban school districts so that site-based management and other reforms become institutionalized. We need to place decision-making in the hands of school building principals and teachers. We need to enable parents to be heavily involved in the education provided their children. We must recognize that the schools belong to the community, not to the school administrators or the school boards.

In 1978, an article written by Kapel and Pink described a proposal to democratize urban school districts (“The School Board: Participatory Democracy Revisited,” The Urban Review, Volume 10, No. 1, 1978, pp. 20–34). This article was written as a result of massive busing across town and the need to empower parents to have a say in their children’s schools. To some degree, the model is used in Chicago, with individual school buildings having much more independence. But Kapel and Pink argued that parents must be heavily involved in the decision-making process at the school level. They suggested that each building have its own “school board” populated by parents of the children attending the school. Two parents were to be randomly selected by grade level to serve on the school’s board. This enabled parents to be part of the decision-making process without going through all of the politics involved in school board elections. Of course, this would require fewer restrictions from the state, the mayor’s office, and the city-wide school board.

Accountability and Professional Development Schools

One of the major arguments against increased funding for urban education has been accountability. I’ve heard from school superintendents, state legislators, local politicians, and average citizens that money spent on urban schools goes down a rat hole. There is no accountability.
Since there is no accountability, how do we establish it in urban schools? This is a problem that’s been facing urban schools for many years. We read in the newspapers that urban children are not functioning properly; they can’t read or write. The fact that this occurs in some suburban and rural schools as well is irrelevant. The fact is, in many urban communities, children live in an environment that is depressed and violent. Many urban children are not English-speaking and are in a school system that is predominantly verbal and uses English as the means of instruction. Such an environment makes traditional accountability procedures (or models) inappropriate for urban schools.

One accountability approach is to designate a school or schools to demonstrate how funding can positively alter student learning and outcomes. Such a school could be designed as a “collaborative.” Much has been written about collaboratives (collaboration between public schools and institutions of higher education, social institutions, and businesses and industry). These collaboratives have different names. They may be titled “family schools” or “community schools”; whatever you call them, the design maximizes cooperation between and among the various individuals and social, business, or higher education institutions involved. The basic function of such collaboratives is to improve education for the children attending a particular school or schools. Why not use collaboratives as a demonstration of accountability?

One collaborative that contributes to the improvement of K–12 education and the preparation of future teachers is known as a professional development school. Professional Development Schools (PDSs) are analogous to the lab schools of the ’30s and ’40s. The major difference between PDSs and lab schools is that PDSs in urban districts use a naturalistic urban setting with the children from that urban community in attendance. In some urban PDSs, the teachers are selected; in others, they are not. It may be a school that is not restructured from the start to emulate ideal conditions, but rather a school that evolves into an ideal learning community.
Cooper's Poynt Professional Development School

We at Rowan College of New Jersey have developed several Professional Development School relationships. I would like to address briefly our Cooper's Poynt Professional Development School in North Camden, where we are now in our third year of working with Ms. Annie Rubin and her staff at Cooper's Poynt Elementary School, a K-8 Family School.

The first year was a planning year. We held a retreat funded by the Department of Higher Education. We brought experts from around the country to talk about varied PDS models. We ultimately adopted a Michigan State model to meet the particular conditions of the Cooper's Poynt Elementary School. The first year we implemented the PDS was 1992-93, and it was an interesting and fascinating year of growth.

We established Professional Development School principles modeled after the Holmes Group: 1) Creating a Learning Community; 2) Teaching and Learning for Understanding for All Children; 3) Continued Learning by Teachers, Teacher Educators, and Administrators; 4) Thoughtful, Long-Term Inquiry into Teaching and Learning; and 5) Inventing a New Institution. The Cooper's Poynt PDS incorporates action research, alternative assessment models, and collaboration across the curriculum in grade levels into the instructional program. There are two major components: a preservice component and an inservice component.

The preservice component includes college student visitations to the PDS, Professional Development staff visitations to the College, practicum courses delivered at the PDS, students participating in classroom observations and tutoring, and student teacher placements at the School. The inservice component includes graduate courses for school district staff in the school, "success clinics" for school district staff, professional seminars for school district and College staff, and workshops and inservices. These workshops cover such topics as peer coaching, effective instructional practices, cooperative learning, computer-assisted instruction, integration of technology, and mentoring techniques.
For example, Teaching for Understanding includes the following topics: effective instruction, building on prior learning, focusing on concepts and their relationships, teacher reflection on delivery of instruction, and student development of critical thinking skills. All learners are valued for their contributions to the classroom experience, and all learners are encouraged to make learning a lifelong pursuit.

Inventing a New Instructional School Structure includes shaping new teacher roles and assignments, designing different ways of organizing resources, developing strong parent and community organizations, exploring new ways of evaluating student growth, and creating a network for communicating standards and expectations and shared responsibility and leadership roles.

Similar types of activities were set for the other goals as well, such as promoting cooperative planning and learning, acknowledging multiple intelligence and learning styles, respecting and incorporating cultural diversity in all instruction, building on the strengths of all learners, and developing new and innovative curricula. We are concerned about teaching parents and teachers as well as children. Inservice is part of teaching adults. This list is not exhaustive.

Our collaboration has other significant goals and objectives. For instance, one of our faculty is working with Cooper's Poynt students on an oral history of the community and developing a "dig" for artifacts surrounding the Cooper's Poynt building. Another member of the Rowan faculty worked with students and faculty in developing computer skills. One of our instructors has created a tutoring project titled MERIT. In that project, high school students from Woodrow Wilson High School tutor children at Cooper's Poynt. These high school students work closely with Rowan preservice teacher candidates to develop procedures and approaches to use in the tutoring.

"Success Clinics," held for both Cooper's Poynt faculty and instructional aides, were designed so that teachers of the early grades work together in one clinic and those in the upper
elementary work together in another. Each teacher integrates what is learned into his or her teaching. The topics in the clinic come directly from classroom needs. Thus, the clinics provide a highly integrated program.

Our faculty have been involved with Cooper’s Poynt on Saturdays and in the evenings. From 8:30 to 1:00 on Saturday, October 2, 1993, parents of children attending Cooper’s Poynt, as well as the entire staff of the school and all of the Rowan faculty assigned to the school, met for Parents’ Day.

Rowan involvement includes faculty from the Elementary, Secondary and Special Education Departments. The strides we’ve made and the accomplishments achieved are a function of the commitment of our faculty to improve education and provide an exciting and dynamic experience for our preservice teachers. Cooper’s Poynt would not exist without the commitment of our faculty and the faculty and administration in Camden.

The first full year of operation was facilitated by a $25,000 grant from the Camden Public Schools. This enabled us to provide faculty for the Cooper’s Poynt PDS on a released time basis. This year, the College is contributing released time (24 semester hours of load time, about $48,000) to the Cooper’s Poynt Project. Money is still a major problem; PDSs require a considerable amount of up-front funding. Again, if it had not been for the commitment on the part of the teachers at Cooper’s Poynt, the faculty at Rowan College, the preservice students who went to Cooper’s Poynt last year and who are attending this year, and the initial generous grant of $25,000 from Camden, we would not have a PDS in Camden. The PDS has been firmly established, and there are many exciting activities we’re planning to initiate in the future. We are looking forward to expanding the PDS to include Woodrow Wilson High School. Where we will get the funds is another issue. We hope the State will recognize the value of PDSs, particularly as tools of fiscal accountability.

One might ask, Well, what do we know about our effectiveness? Obviously, one year does not allow for proper and in-
depth assessment. However, we do know that there were fewer discipline referrals to the principal this past year, there were improved teacher attitudes, and there was much better student attendance. These effects were all in the affective area. The proof in the pudding will be academic school improvement, that is, improvement as evaluated by standardized tests and other means.

I suggest the State allocate a million dollars to each of the thirty urban school districts to develop Professional Development Schools as well as other district collaboratives. The million dollars must be allocated with the understanding that there will be improvements in instruction, learning, attitudes towards education, and academic/cognitive outcomes. The State can and should use the PDS as an example of how urban education can be improved. It should use the PDS as an accountability measure. With collaborative PDSs, we will be able to demonstrate that urban schools can and should be equal to any schools in the State of New Jersey.

We are cognizant of the problems, issues, and concerns facing children attending schools in urban environments. Because of these problems, it takes the entire community to raise and educate a child—not just the parents. I have great hopes for urban America. I believe we can begin to solve urban problems once we, as a State and as citizens, make a commitment to equal education for all children.

—From a presentation at the Urban Education Consortium at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, October 26, 1993.