Opening Unlocked Doors

A National Agenda for Ensuring Quality Education for Children and Youth in Low-income Public Housing and Other Low-income Residential Communities

Prepared by the Quality Education for Minorities (QEM) Network
May 1993
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

"Opening Unlocked Doors"

The title of this report was taken from a presentation by Dr. Gloria Jackson-Bacon, Director of the Clinic at the Altgeld in Chicago, during the Quality Education for Minorities Network’s Working Conference on Developing a National Agenda for Ensuring Quality Education for Children and Youth in Housing Developments and Low-income Residential Communities, held on August 28-30, 1992.

The intent of the title is to convey the phenomenon that, although many historical barriers to full minority participation in this society have been removed, many minorities remain outside the mainstream because they perceive the “doors” to success to be still “locked.” Our challenge is to make clear through our actions and our deeds that, though closed, the doors, for many minorities, are no longer locked.

The QEM Network would like to thank all of the individuals and organizations who assisted in the development of this report. Special thanks go to Gladys Gary-Vaughn, American Home Economics Association; Jay Tashiro, Northern Arizona University; and each of the participants in the 1992 Working Conference (see inside back cover).

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This material is based upon work supported by the AT&T Foundation, the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services under Purchase Order HRSA 92-460(P), and the National Science Foundation under Grant No. ESI-9255853. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the AT&T Foundation, the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, or the National Science Foundation.
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Quality Education for Minorities (QEM) Network
May 1993

QEM Network • 1818 N Street, NW • Suite 350 • Washington, D.C. 20036
Major Elements of the Approach

☐ Community Resource Centers in each low-income housing development that provide residents access to a suite of health, education, and social services, as well as employment training opportunities.

☐ Community Service Centers at nearby Historically Black Colleges and Universities and other predominantly minority institutions as a formal mechanism for involving students, faculty, and staff

☐ Leadership development and empowerment of residents and teachers

☐ Research and systematic evaluation of student achievement and program activities in order to identify necessary modifications and to serve as a basis for replication of successful programs

☐ Ongoing assessment of community needs through continuous input from, and participation by, residents
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INTRODUCTION

The United States is facing a major challenge. It is an economic as well as a moral challenge, and our response to it will shape our future as a nation well into the 21st century. This nation is still the largest producer of goods and services in the world. However, even as the prospect of diminished market leadership and competitiveness in a highly technical global economy becomes a reality in America, the country is wasting the potential productive capacity of millions of Americans who are undereducated, unskilled, and have little opportunity to enter and succeed in the workforce. We are by far the wealthiest nation in the world, and yet over 32 million Americans are poor and millions more are “near-poor” with incomes that are barely above the official poverty level. In a country with one of the highest standards of living in the world, millions of Americans are living in conditions most often associated with Third World countries.

Many Americans have been virtually excluded from contributing to the nation’s social and economic well-being because, to a large extent, they have been systematically denied a quality education. These Americans’ hopes of rising out of poverty have been dashed, creating frustration and a sense of helplessness that is pervasive in many urban communities. Disproportionately, these Americans are African Americans, Alaska Natives, American Indians, Mexican Americans, and Puerto Ricans.

A significant number of the nation’s low-income minority population is concentrated in low-income public housing and in other clearly defined low-income communities across the country. Many of these Americans live in communities that are characterized by high rates of joblessness, deteriorating housing conditions, crime, violence, substance abuse, and a lack of access to adequate health and social services. These are conditions that produce the frustration, hopelessness, and despair that is characteristic of so much of the nation’s public housing.

As is the case for all other Americans, a quality education for residents of public housing is a ticket to becoming full participants in our society. However, many of the children and youth who reside in low-income public housing have been denied such an education.

Ensuring quality education for the children and youth in low-income public housing will require the fundamental restructuring of schools they attend and the additional resources these schools need to provide quality instruction. However, education reform must be a part of a much broader effort to influence the total environment of the student. This requires that educational and health and social services be made available to children, youth, and their families in a coherent, integrated, and comprehensive manner.
Opening Unlocked Doors is the result of the efforts of over 85 representatives of predominantly minority colleges and universities located near public housing, local housing authorities, teachers, residents of public housing, federal agencies, and national community organizations that were initially convened by the Quality Education for Minorities (QEM) Network at a Working Conference held August 28-30, 1992. It sets forth a vision, goals, and a national strategy to ensure that children and youth in low-income public housing and other low-income residential communities receive a quality education.

The objectives proposed in this national agenda are to significantly increase: 1) the number of pre-school children from low-income housing developments and low-income residential areas who enter school healthy and ready to learn; 2) the capabilities of parents and families as first teachers of their children; 3) the capability of schools and of teachers, especially mathematics and science teachers, to provide a rigorous academic curriculum that meets the needs of students from low-income public housing; and 4) the number of students from low-income public housing who remain in school, complete a high school degree, and have the knowledge, skills, and motivation to enter and succeed in college or the workforce.

The approach proposed is a holistic service delivery model that covers a range of in-school and out-of-school factors that affect the education of children and youth from low-income housing developments. It addresses the needs of children and youth and their families from pre-natal care through high school and enhances the delivery of existing services available to these communities by focusing and coordinating resources and support services. It involves the entire community in the educational process (residents, colleges and universities, government agencies, community-based organizations, business, private foundations, schools, and churches). It places colleges and universities in a leadership role and proposes to link communities to each other through the QEM Network.

Opening Unlocked Doors also addresses the cross-cutting issues of: 1) the empowerment of parents, teachers, and youth; 2) increased services to residents; 3) the image of public housing; and 4) the need to establish linkages to the broader community. It includes a detailed description of the issues, needs, priorities, goals, and strategies proposed in five areas: Quality Education for Children and Youth in Low-Income Public Housing; Enhancement of Mathematics and Science Teachers in Schools near in Low-income Public Housing; Leadership Development and Empowerment of Residents and Teachers; Health, Social Services, and Employment Training; and Public Policy and Legislation.

Among the major strategies proposed to meet the educational needs of children and youth in low-income public housing are the following: 1) the establishment of
Community Resource Centers within each housing development as a central location where a variety of educational programs for children and youth are implemented and where parents can obtain, or be referred to, the health and social services they require; and 2) the establishment of Community Service Centers at predominantly minority institutions located near low-income public housing that would serve as a major mechanism for linking the institutions to the neighboring communities and for promoting community service among students, faculty, and staff to these communities; and 3) the development/enhancement of partnerships among colleges and universities; residents' groups; schools; community-based organizations; health and human services agencies at the federal, state, and local levels; and the private sector.

This national agenda is proposed as a guide for action by public and private institutions, housing residents' organizations, and other groups across the country. It is an instrument to help promote quality education for children and youth in low-income communities and to provide a framework for developing comprehensive local action plans to meet the specific needs of local communities. With common goals and objectives, and a strong commitment by service providers, parents, students, teachers and community leaders, we can OPEN UNLOCKED DOORS for all of America's children and youth.
Background

Key Developments in the History of Public Housing

A brief history of public housing is appended to this document. Key historical points are the following:

- The first national housing program was implemented during World War I to address the need to house defense workers.
- The first housing act to be passed was the National Housing Act of 1937. It authorized loans to develop public housing projects.
- It was not until the Housing Act of 1949 that a national commitment was made to address housing shortages and poor living conditions.
- During the 1950s and the 1960s, new projects were built in the inner cities as a result of the availability of property due to urban renewal and the resistance in suburban communities to the construction of low-income public housing.
- The 1960s saw a deepening commitment to “a decent home and suitable environment” for all Americans. During this same period, there was a change in the composition of the tenant population in public housing.
- The late 1960s and early 1970s represented a period of deficit funding by the government to address the growing financial crisis in public housing. In January 1973, a moratorium was placed on housing assistance programs in the Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- During the 1970s, there was a shift in policy toward the decentralization of the federal government’s domestic functions, placing more responsibilities on state and local governments.
- As a result of the shift in housing and community development policy in the late 1970s and early 1980s, there was a dramatic decrease in the number of public housing units built and a dramatic increase in the number of other types of housing units receiving federal subsidies.
- The policies of the late 1980s continued to focus on efforts to limit federal government involvement in housing and to stimulate the private sector. Federal assistance for cities was in the form of “enterprise zones” that focused on tax incentives for private development.

In summary, federal government involvement in public housing is relatively new and a long-term, comprehensive plan to seriously address the housing needs of the poor does not exist. Although a housing problem among the poor existed and was recognized, early intentions of public housing were primarily to create jobs or to house defense workers. Aiding low-income families was secondary. Even when a paper commitment was made in 1949 to “a decent home and suitable environment for every American,” it was not backed by financial commitment or the planning and foresight to effectively address the issue. Furthermore, the level of commitment and extent of efforts by the federal government have shifted with the changing political climate.
The Impact of Poverty

Over 32 million Americans are poor and millions more are near-poor with incomes that are barely above the official poverty level. In 1990, the poverty line was $10,419 for a family of three, and $13,359 for a family of four. The poverty rate for children under six living in urban areas was 32 percent, 26 percent for those in rural areas, and 16 percent for those living in suburban areas. Of the 5.3 million children under age six living in poverty, 3.1 million (58 percent) were minorities.³

In 1990, 50 percent of all African American children, 40 percent of all Hispanic children, and over a third of all Native American children in this age group were poor. The number of poor children is increasing at an alarming rate. By the year 2000, one child in four will be poor.³

Children born in poverty are at higher risk of suffering from developmental problems, having less support from their parents, being exposed to drugs and physical abuse, dropping out of school, and being poor when they reach adulthood. Children are more likely to have difficulty learning if they are not adequately nourished or healthy. The problem is compounded if their schools lack the resources to provide quality instruction or if the environment in which they live is dominated by fear, despair, violence, or neglect.

A significant proportion of the nation’s low-income population is concentrated in public housing (69 percent of those residing there in live households below the poverty level). Of the more than 3.2 million Americans who live in public housing developments, almost 2.5 million, or 77 percent, are minorities.⁴

Various documents prepared by the Department of Housing and Urban Development report that, in 1988:

- There were 1.36 million public housing rental units in over 10,000 housing developments in America
- Sixty-nine percent of public housing residents lived in households with incomes under the poverty line
- Almost 70 percent of public housing units were concentrated in major urban areas; 74 percent were concentrated in the Northeast and in the South
- Sixty-five percent (882,000) of the households in public housing units were minority households
- Of the 563,000 households with children in public housing, 480,000 (89 percent) were minority households
• Although more than 86 percent of public housing was built before 1980, 69 percent (606,000) of the minority householders moved into public housing after 1980.

• Over 75 percent of public housing households were headed by females, and 67 percent of these households were headed by minority females.

• Over 77 percent (679,000) of minority households were headed by females.

• Fifty-two percent (466,000) of minority families in public housing depended on welfare and social security as their main sources of income.

• Over one-half of a million minority families in public housing received food stamps, representing 76 percent of the public housing families that received this assistance and 57 percent of all minority public housing households.

• More than 768,000 of minority public housing households (87 percent) had no savings, and 440,000 spent between 25 percent and 49 percent of their monthly income on housing.5

• The annual average income in public housing was $7,314.6

High rates of joblessness, deteriorating physical conditions, and lack of access to adequate social and health services combine to produce the debilitating conditions characteristic of so many of the nation's public housing developments. These conditions are often exacerbated by crime, violence, and substance abuse. For the majority of residents, conditions are not improving; they are getting worse. There are, of course, notable exceptions. In several public housing developments, residents have taken it upon themselves to produce change. In this document, we will highlight several community-based initiatives.
As is the case for all other Americans, a quality education for residents of low-income public housing is the means for becoming full participants in our society. Many children and youth in low-income public housing have been denied such an education. As is the case with their more affluent peers, these children need an education that begins early, at home with their parents. It must continue in school with competent and caring teachers in an environment with high expectations and the necessary resources to deliver quality instruction. Parents must be full partners in their children’s education, and this education must be provided in an environment that is safe and conducive to success. For the thousands of children and youth living in low-income public housing developments and other low-income communities, this is not the case. THIS DOES NOT HAVE TO BE!

What is Needed: An Environment for Success

To provide quality education for children and youth in low-income public housing, the schools they attend must be restructured, and health and social services must be made available to their families in a coherent, comprehensive manner. However, restructuring and coordinating services alone will not create the conditions necessary for sustained academic success. Burdens placed on many minority students by their out-of-school environment also deeply affect academic performance and contribute to the exceedingly high drop-out rates and failures that characterize many inner-city schools.

No doubt, significant efforts and resources must be directed at reforming schools and school systems in the urban areas. However, while there is a need to improve school curricula, enhance teacher preparation, further involve parents and other family members, and provide out-of-school enrichment activities, education reform and coordinated services must be part of a broader effort to influence the total environment of the student.

Most education reform strategies have been directed merely at improving schools, leaving government and private social agencies alone to provide other social services to families and children. Few of these strategies view education as a process that occurs within the total community environment, and few seek to improve education by helping to coordinate the various educational and social services within the community. To compound the problem, social service agencies tend to provide very specific services, often in isolation from other services and from the schools.
A related problem is that most educational and social programs are directed merely at specific segments of the education pipeline, in part because of a lack of resources or because of their mission. They are aimed at particular age groups or grades. Few programs provide services to children throughout their development. Different agencies may offer programs for children of all ages, but the lack of coordination of these into a comprehensive program in a given community results in services being provided in a piecemeal fashion.

There are many institutions and organizations with extensive resources in the nation’s cities that could significantly enhance education and the social environment in nearby low-income communities. Colleges and universities, for example, have resources in their faculty, staff, students, facilities, and laboratories that could supplement those available in housing developments and low-income residential areas. Most universities include community service as part of their stated missions, but few have developed mechanisms to provide resources to nearby communities. If effectively solicited and coordinated, these resources and services can be important elements in developing the kind of environment that will lead to success for children and youth in low-income communities.

The National Agenda

By the year 2000, minorities will represent close to 30 percent of new entrants into the workforce. Therefore, if America is to remain competitive, it is essential that minorities be prepared to enter and succeed in the workforce. By denying a large proportion of the nation’s minority children and youth the opportunity to obtain a quality education, America is placing its economic future at risk. More importantly, America is creating a society that is increasingly racially divided and economically unequal.

The concentration of minority families, particularly African American families, in low-income public housing is clear evidence of the inequality and lack of opportunity that exists in our society. Ironically, however, this concentration provides unique opportunities. By focusing efforts on the social and economic problems that plague families in low-income public housing and other low-income residential communities, we can make significant progress in meeting the needs of a major portion of the poor minority population.
The national agenda presented here is the result of the efforts of over 85 representatives of predominantly minority colleges and universities, local housing authorities, teachers, residents of public housing, federal agencies, and national community organizations that were convened by the Quality Education for Minorities (QEM) Network at an August 28-30, 1992 Working Conference. The participants in this conference were organized into a steering committee and five topic committees: education; mathematics and science teachers; leadership development; health, social services, and employment training; and public policy and legislation.

This agenda sets forth a vision, goals, and a national strategy to ensure that children and youth in low-income public housing and other low-income residential communities receive a quality education so they can be prepared to lead productive lives. The issues, needs, priorities, and strategies proposed are intended to provide information and serve as a guide for action for public and private institutions, housing residents’ organizations, and other groups across the country. It is offered as an instrument to help promote quality education for children and youth in these communities and to provide a framework for developing comprehensive action plans to meet the specific needs of communities. It is directed at residents of low-income public housing and other low-income communities; education, housing, labor, commerce, agriculture, and social and health services agencies at all levels of government; public school systems; colleges and universities; businesses; professional and civic groups; private foundations; and community-based organizations.

*Opening Unlocked Doors* is divided into seven sections:

- Background
- The Vision: An Environment for Success
- Crosscutting Issues and Strategies
- The Proposed Approach
- Assessment and Evaluation
- Estimated Costs
- Next Steps

In addressing the needs of young people through a comprehensive and integrated approach, it is often hard to separate issues, needs, and strategies into discrete areas. Therefore, in this agenda, many crosscutting issues and strategies appear in more than one section. It should be noted as well that while much of the discussion focuses on low-income public housing, this plan, with some modification, can be adapted to meet the educational needs of children and youth living in any clearly-defined low-income community.
THE VISION: AN ENVIRONMENT FOR SUCCESS

The vision is clear and achievable. We need to ensure quality education for minority children and youth from low-income public housing and other geographically defined low-income communities. Surely, human faces and earnest efforts will open the hearts and minds of those capable of seeing and caring. We have the means within our grasp to make a difference in the lives of these children. The key to success is to rethink and restructure the environments in which these children develop and learn. Environments for success can be created if we accomplish the five goals outlined below.

Goals

(1) Provide quality education in low-income public housing by integrating outreach and enrichment programs with formal educational programs to significantly increase:

✦ the number of pre-school children from low-income public housing and other low-income residential areas who enter school healthy and ready to learn; and

✦ the number of students from low-income public housing and other low-income residential areas who remain in school, complete a high school education, and have the knowledge, skills, and motivation to enter and succeed in college or the workforce.

(2) Provide enhancement programs for the science and mathematics teachers of students from low-income public housing and other low-income residential communities.

(3) Provide leadership development programs for students, parents, and teachers—with special attention to the capabilities of parents and families as the first teachers of their children and to the capabilities of teachers in schools that serve low-income communities.

(4) Provide a suite of health, social services, and employment training opportunities for residents of low-income communities.

(5) Provide a new perspective on, and an appreciation for, low-income communities by developing a comprehensive assessment and restructuring of public policy and legislation at the national, state, and local levels.

Each of these five goals could be justified in and of itself, but we argue for a systemic approach that goes beyond piecemeal treatment of the most critical social issue in America. During the past three decades, numerous student, parent, teacher, school, and community
outreach projects have been developed and tested throughout the United States. However, there has not been an integrated restructuring that brings together articulated projects serving children and youth, their parents, their teachers, and the schools they attend. And nowhere have such articulated projects been coupled to programs that enhance transitions along educational and career pipelines; promote economic development within the community and for the community; coordinate health and social services outreach; and address the larger issues of policy and legislative action aimed at addressing the needs of minorities in low-income communities.

Major Elements of the Approach

The major elements of the approach include:

- Community Resource Centers in each low-income housing development that provide residents access to a suite of health, education, and social services, as well as employment training opportunities. Examples include:
  - Pre-natal and post-natal health care
  - Pre-school programs
  - In-school and out-of-school educational enrichment, including after-school, Saturday, and summer enrichment activities
  - Health and social services to families
  - Literacy projects, job training and referral

- Community Service Centers at nearby Historically Black Colleges and Universities and other predominantly minority institutions as a formal mechanism for involving students, faculty, and staff

- Leadership development and empowerment of residents and teachers

- Research and systematic evaluation of student achievement and program activities in order to identify necessary modifications and to serve as a basis for replication of successful programs

- Ongoing assessment of community needs through continuous input from, and participation by, residents
Characteristics of the Approach

Unique characteristics of the approach are the following:

- It is a holistic service delivery model, focusing on the total environment, including a range of in-school and out-of-school factors that affect the education of children and youth from housing developments.

- It targets and concentrates its services in communities with specific needs.

- It addresses the needs of children and youth from pre-natal care through high school, as well as the needs of their families.

- It enhances the delivery of a suite of health and social services and employment training services within these communities by focusing and coordinating resources and support services.

- It involves the entire community (residents, colleges and universities, government agencies, community-based organizations, businesses, private foundations, schools, and churches) in the education process and in leadership development.

- It gives colleges and universities a significant leadership role.

- It highlights professional development for mathematics and science teachers.

- It links communities to one another.
CROSSCUTTING ISSUES AND STRATEGIES

It should come as no surprise that concentrating low-income families in public housing poses vast problems. Accident, circumstance, and blatant neglect created the mind-numbing conditions under which many low-income families must live. We can identify the pieces of the puzzle, but can we put them together for a permanent solution? This national strategy purports to provide such a solution. Let us begin, however, with several issues and strategies that cut across our plan, providing a strong underpinning for the holistic, integrated approach we propose.

Crosscutting Issues

Empowerment of Parents, Teachers, and Youth

The dream of quality education for all must be rekindled. Empowering parents, teachers, and youth is the most critical step in making this dream a reality. In any community, who, better than parents, teachers, and students can identify the changes in services required to meet their needs? Therefore, we must encourage and empower them to assume leadership roles in their communities to bring about the necessary changes.

A comprehensive approach to enhancing educational opportunities for children and youth in low-income public housing and other low-income communities must also involve broader coordination among schools, colleges and universities, government agencies, and businesses. Most importantly, continuous and effective involvement and leadership is required. Parents, teachers, and students must determine their own needs, establish their own priorities, and play a major role in planning, developing, and implementing programs to address these needs. No strategy to improve conditions in low-income public housing and low-income communities can work without the empowerment of those who reside in, and work with, these communities.

Empowerment requires the development of leadership within each of these groups as well as a fundamental change in how decisions are made. We propose that parent leaders, teacher leaders, and youth leaders be developed for each low-income housing development respectively, and organized into a Parent/Family Leadership Corps, a Teacher Leadership Corps, and a Youth Leadership Corps.

In addition, we propose that each community, under the leadership of a broad-based community coalition team of government agencies, colleges and universities, schools, residents' groups, community organizations, and businesses, develop mechanisms that will guarantee the full participation of residents in the planning and implementation process.
Increased Services to Residents

The educational programs and social services available to children and youth who reside in low-income public housing are inadequate. Since these young people are among those most needy, failure to make the necessary investments now will prove costly in the future. The investments needed in schools within these communities are small compared to future investments that will otherwise have to be made in the future in the form of educational alternatives for school dropouts and in expanded health and social programs. The investments are small indeed compared with the potential loss to our country’s economy of people who might otherwise contribute to America’s productivity.

Increased resources must be coupled with enhanced delivery systems. Better coordination of existing services can improve the effectiveness of existing programs. Educational, health, social, and other services can be enhanced significantly through greater communication and coordination. Effective interagency mechanisms that focus specifically on services to these communities can bring together government agencies and community groups to provide quality services to residents.

Image of Low-income Public Housing

We must initiate a campaign to enhance the image of public housing by urging the media to report the “good news” at least as often as it reports the “bad news.” The image of low-income public housing held by the general public is that of run-down housing characterized by high crime, unemployment, and welfare dependency. The stereotype is, in most cases, far from the reality. This distorted image can lead to poor self-esteem among residents, especially among children and youth, and to a sense of frustration and hopelessness. In fact, many low-income public housing residents are employed, and most are caring parents. They are as concerned about the future of their children as other Americans. In several sites across the country, public housing residents are leading the way for a better environment for their children and for themselves.

A deeper understanding is required of the history of public housing; its purpose, its importance to low-income families, and its accomplishments in spite of the odds.

Linkages to the Broader Community

Government agencies alone cannot solve the problems of residents of low-income public housing. In each community, as well as on the national level, addressing the needs of residents of low-income public housing and other low-income communities will require the commitment and the collaboration of a wide range of public and private agencies, individuals, and groups. Effective partnerships must be formed between public and
private organizations and groups in each community and on the national level. Partners must look specifically at the issue of education as a central theme of their efforts and the target of their initiatives. If we fortify communities that need it the most, we do no more nor less than strengthen and repair ourselves.

Crosscutting Strategies

Community Resource Centers in Low-income Public Housing

Enhanced coordination and delivery of educational, health, social, and other services, and greater communication among the agencies providing such services, can best be achieved through a central site. The site should be readily accessible to residents and should provide the necessary services and information on availability and access.

As a national strategy, we propose that a Community Resource Center (CRC) be established in each low-income public housing development, centrally located within the development. The CRC would be a place where children and youth could participate in educational activities such as tutoring and mentoring programs, educational enrichment, and cultural activities (e.g., after-school, Saturday, and summer enrichment programs). It could serve as a reading room for young people. It would be a place where teachers and tutors could interact with parents and students, where parents could participate in the educational experiences of their children, and where parents could be counseled and referred for job training in occupations that meet the community’s needs. Social services would also be available, or referrals made to social service agencies. The center should, at the very least, include a Primary Health Care Center and offer health education and intervention programs. It would facilitate the coordination of services of federal, state, and local agencies and of neighboring colleges and universities.

Community Service Centers on College and University Campuses

Predominantly minority colleges and universities can play a leadership role in enhancing the education of children and youth in nearby low-income public housing or other low-income communities. Community service is a major part of the mission of these institutions. A commitment to community service on the part of students, faculty, and campus organizations is growing.

As a national strategy for enhancing the education of children and youth in these communities, we propose the establishment of Community Service Centers at predominantly minority institutions that are located near low-income public housing or other low-income residential communities. These centers would serve as a vehicle for
linking the institutions to the neighboring communities; gathering information about the needs for services; identifying students, faculty, and campus organizations and groups to provide these services; promoting community service among students and faculty; disseminating information in the community regarding the university's community service programs; and networking with similar centers across the country to obtain information on successful strategies and programs. Although the emphasis here is on advancing minority participation and leadership in this initiative, clearly, non-minority institutions located near public housing or other well-defined low-income communities could and should play similar roles.

With a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation to the QEM Network, planning is underway for community service centers on the campuses of eight predominantly minority colleges and universities that are located near low-income public housing. These institutions are in six states (Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, New York, and Virginia). The long-term goal is to establish a network of at least 25 such campus-based centers across the country as a vehicle for linking the educational needs of residents in low-income public housing to the educational resources at the institutions.
THE PROPOSED APPROACH

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The proposed approach is based on the following principles:

• Ensuring quality education for children and youth in low-income public housing and other low-income residential communities requires a comprehensive, coordinated approach that addresses not only their educational needs but also their health and human service needs and those of their families.

• Restructuring education in schools, providing out-of-school academic enrichment, and coordinating and expanding existing social and human services are all necessary. This is a joint responsibility of the residents; the school system; social and human services agencies at the federal, state, and local levels; colleges and universities; community-based organizations; and businesses.

• The full participation of residents in all phases is essential to its success.

• Predominantly minority, and non-minority, colleges and universities can play a leadership role in bringing together residents, schools, and social service providers to develop a coordinated strategy to address the needs of children and youth in low-income public housing.

• Efforts on the local level can benefit greatly from those underway in other communities across the country. Communities can interact through a national information exchange network of education initiatives in low-income public housing.

QUALITY EDUCATION IN LOW-INCOME PUBLIC HOUSING: WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH, THEIR PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AS WELL AS WITH HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Issues In Ensuring Quality Education

The major issues, needs, and priorities for ensuring a quality education for children and youth in low-income public housing are fundamentally the same as for other low-income populations. They involve significant enhancement and expansion of pre-school educational experiences, restructuring of schools to focus on student achievement, professional development of teachers and school administrators, and involvement of parents. However, the confluence of a variety of problems in public housing makes the situation particularly urgent.
The proposed plan for restructuring education for children and youth in low-income public housing and other geographically defined low-income communities calls for the following:

- Quality pre-school experiences and health care for all children from these communities to ensure that they enter school ready to learn

- Schools that are safe and organized in ways that are fundamentally different from the ways they are currently structured

- Schools that are staffed by teachers, counselors, and administrators who are highly competent, caring, and sensitive to the needs and living conditions of students and their families, and who will work cooperatively with parents, students, and others in the community to create a supportive learning environment

- Schools that are part of a comprehensive and integrated educational and human service delivery system that creates partnerships among university, community, government, and private sector service providers

Ensuring quality education for students residing in public housing requires working with children and youth, their parents, teachers, and school administrators, as well as with higher education institutions. Success can be achieved through specific objectives for each group.
### Objectives for Quality Education

#### Children and Youth
- To ensure that children of low-income families receive quality pre-natal and post-natal health care and educational experiences at home and in formal pre-school programs that will increase their chances of entering school ready to learn.
- To ensure that schools attended by children residing in low-income public housing are safe and that there is a caring environment that promotes discipline and high expectations of all students.
- To ensure that schools serving students from low-income communities are enhanced through new and effective pedagogy; timely curriculum reviews, revisions, and updates; the acquisition of state-of-the-art instructional materials; and the appropriate use of technology.
- To ensure that students from low-income communities are provided with enriched educational and cultural experiences in and out of school that enable them to succeed in school, higher education, and the workplace.

#### Parents
- To ensure that parents have the knowledge and skills to enable them to better assume their role as their children’s first teachers and to participate more fully and effectively in the educational development of their children.
- To ensure that families are better prepared and motivated to become increasingly involved in the education of their children and in efforts to make schools more responsive to the needs of their children.

#### Teachers
- To ensure that teachers who work in schools serving students from low-income communities are better prepared to do so through restructured pre-service and in-service programs.

#### School Administrators
- To ensure that administrators of schools serving students from low-income communities are supportive of students, teachers, and parents and are committed to educational and school management reform that addresses student needs.

#### Higher Education
- To encourage colleges and universities to establish campus-based community service centers to link students, faculty, staff, and other institutional resources to the needs of nearby low-income public housing or low-income communities.
Strategies for Quality Education

Children and Youth

Pre-school Experiences in the Home and in Pre-school Programs

The education of all children begins at home. However, many parents in low-income families often lack the resources needed to be effective first teachers of their children. They often lack access to information regarding the importance of pre-school education and to strategies they can use at home to teach their children effectively.

To address this need, a specific program should be established that would:

- Teach parenting skills and stress to parents the value of education beginning at the pre-school stage so they can be more effective as the first teachers of their children

- Develop home-based education programs for children that include training and assistance to parents by other parents who have been trained to teach educational activities that parents can use at home

A significant proportion of children and youth in low-income public housing participate in some kind of day care or are placed in the care of relatives or neighbors while parents work. While day care can provide valuable learning experiences, few programs systematically teach day care staff, or relatives who care for children, how to provide intellectually stimulating and enriching experiences to children under their care.

A partnership program should be established between neighboring universities and residents’ associations to specifically prepare residents as child care providers for children in housing developments. The purpose of this program would be to ensure that providers have the skills to offer effective educational experiences to children as an integral part of their care and to assist parents in providing educational experiences at home.

The effectiveness of structured, formal pre-school programs, such as Head Start, in preparing children for school has been demonstrated. However, only slightly more than a third of eligible children participate in Head Start because of inadequate funding, even though federal funding for Head Start has increased in recent years. Full funding for the Head Start program is essential to ensuring access to quality pre-school experiences for all children from low-income families.
Other pre-school programs should be established in low-income public housing, in partnership with residents, by colleges and universities, churches, community-based organizations, and businesses, using Head Start as a model. These programs can provide educational experiences that are developmentally appropriate and based on individual assessments of children. They can also offer structured in-school experiences as well as cultural and educational experiences outside the immediate environment in which the children live.

Restructuring of Schools Attended by Children and Youth from Low-income Public Housing and Other Low-income Communities

Fundamental changes are needed in our nation’s school system to ensure a quality education for all students. Many of the changes needed in schools attended by children and youth from low-income public housing and other geographically defined low-income communities are similar to those required in other schools. However, the nature of the environment in which many of these students live and the lack of resources in the schools they attend make the need for change more urgent.

As with other students, children and youth from low-income public housing require a school environment that is safe, supportive, and disciplined. They, too, require an environment that is caring, holds high expectations for them, and provides the most effective pedagogy, curricula, educational materials, technologies, and assessment tools to develop their potential. This kind of environment is fundamental to any student’s success. It nurtures; it inspires; and it empowers.

The following strategies are proposed for schools attended by these students:

• **Improve the assessment of the individual needs of students** and prepare individualized curriculum plans that are developmentally appropriate. In particular, we propose that forms of assessments be developed and implemented to ensure that these students are assessed regularly and fairly and that teaching strategies are tailored to their needs.

• **Incorporate skill-building opportunities** for students within the academic curriculum that include problem-solving and critical thinking skills, and that build on successful learning experiences of individual students.

• **Review and revise the academic curriculum** to ensure that it is rigorous at all grade levels, and that
- All students complete a course in algebra by the eighth grade as well as complete at least three rigorous courses in mathematics and three in science during their high school years
- All students participate in an internship/apprenticeship outside of school
- All students learn to speak, read, and write a second language
- There is a strong emphasis on multicultural education at all levels and in all subjects
- Community service is integrated into and is a major component of schoolwork

- **Eliminate the practice of tracking** and integrate cooperative learning as a major strategy in the classroom and in extra-class experiences.

- **Provide students with training in non-violent conflict resolution** and develop youth leadership programs in which students are trained to mediate differences among peers and to mentor younger students.

- **Provide tutoring to students who require special assistance**, including peer tutoring programs in school and cross-age tutoring by college and high school students in the Community Resource Centers.

- **Continually and adequately assess needs of students with limited English proficiency** and provide bilingual education to all students who require it.

- **Introduce students early to the world of work** through summer or after-school job experiences, cooperative education, internships, and apprenticeships in business. Sustain these efforts with mentoring programs involving community professionals and college students, and through workplace skills development as part of the curriculum for all students.

- **Institute a school utilization plan for each local school** to ensure expanded use of the school facility to meet community social, cultural, educational, and health needs.

- **Develop a comprehensive strategy for publicizing the accomplishments of local schools** to increase awareness of the effectiveness of public education.

- **Establish partnerships** among schools, businesses, community-based organizations, and government agencies to address the varied educational and social service needs of students.
Out-of-School Enrichment Experiences

Enrichment experiences outside the school setting have proven highly effective in enhancing motivation and academic preparation among students, particularly students from low-income families who have limited access to such experiences.

Students from low-income communities should be provided an array of academic, cultural, and recreational experiences outside their schools and communities. We propose the following strategies:

- **Develop Saturday and summer enrichment programs**, especially in mathematics and science, on campuses of predominantly minority colleges and universities

- **Provide mentoring and tutoring programs on college campuses** and in the Community Resource Centers with college and high school students as mentors and tutors

- **Provide research experiences** for selected high school students on college campuses or in industry to expose these students to research environments

- **Develop culturally enriching programs** for students with state and local service agencies, community-based organizations (e.g., sororities, fraternities, churches, and national organizations with local chapters or affiliates), and businesses

- **Develop comprehensive recreational programs** for students with local agencies and groups (e.g., parks and recreation departments, professional and community-based sports organizations, scouts, and the YMCA/YWCA)

Parents

Parents play a fundamental role as the first teachers of their children and the initial motivators for children to succeed in school. They can also assist their children with their schoolwork. Through their participation in school activities, parents can be a major factor in ensuring that schools are responsive to the needs of their children. However, many parents lack the skills needed to provide the education, health care, and psychological support their children need to succeed.

Many parents are unaware of strategies that can be effective in teaching basic skills and in transmitting the importance of academic achievement to their children. Many lack the skills and knowledge necessary to help their children with schoolwork. In many instances, schools themselves are intimidating environments for parents. Some parents feel powerless at affecting change to make schools more responsive.
Such factors often limit the participation of parents in parents’ groups, and their ability to serve as strong advocates for quality education for their children. *Every child needs an advocate, and the first advocate ought to be a parent or family member.* In addition, parental participation is essential to improving schools. However, for parents to become advocates and to increase their participation in school activities, they must understand the school environment and their rights and responsibilities as parents.

*Every low-income public housing development and low-income community should have a comprehensive parental training and involvement program* to help parents in their role as first teachers and motivators of their children and to empower parents to help produce change in the schools their children attend. Strategies to achieve this goal include the following:

- **Establish parenting skills programs** through the Community Resource Center, with special attention to parents of young children and to single parents.

- **Develop “peer-mentor” programs** that pair prospective and young parents with trained, experienced parents.

- **Expose parents, through structured training programs, to strategies they can use at home to initiate the education process,** to help their children with schoolwork, and to inspire in their children a desire to learn.

- **Develop family mathematics and science programs and family life-skills programs** that involve parents in these aspects of their children’s education.

- **Develop literacy and English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) classes** as needed for parents and families in the Community Resource Center in collaboration with schools, businesses, and colleges and universities.

- **Implement a public education campaign that promotes a positive image of residents** in public housing as individuals who care about and value education, and who are concerned for the welfare of their families and communities.

- **Develop a Parent/Family Leadership Corps** to create a cadre of trained parent/family leaders for each community who can serve as advocates of good health, sound nutrition, family life, and quality education for the community’s children and as trainers and motivators of other parents to increase their involvement in schools. This leadership development program should include:
- Information on the structure, policies, and procedures of the school system
- Information on rights and responsibilities of parents in the school system
- Information on the major national, state, and local issues in education, especially those that directly affect the community (e.g., site-based management, public school choice, and educational vouchers)
- Negotiation, public speaking, and media access skills
- Community organization skills

Access to pre-natal and postpartum health care, including health, dental, and nutrition education for expectant and new parents, is essential if low-income children are to have an “even start” in health and education. A large proportion of expectant low-income parents, especially teenage parents, do not receive adequate pre-natal care or health education. The result, in many cases, is low-birth weight babies and children with a series of health and developmental problems that later affect their ability to achieve.

Several strategies are proposed to address pre-natal and postpartum health care as well as health and nutrition education. One strategy is the establishment of a Primary Health Care and Education Center in each low-income public housing development, to be located in or near the Community Resource Center, that offers the following services:

- Health education outreach programs to identify prospective parents and to encourage them to seek pre-natal care
- Primary medical care for expectant mothers and referral to health centers for secondary and tertiary care
- Counseling for prospective parents on pre-natal and infant health and nutrition
- Postpartum care, including health screenings, primary pediatric services, and referrals
- Family planning information and counseling for teenage mothers and fathers

Primary Health Care Centers can be established through:

- An expansion of the current Community and Migrant Health Centers and Health Centers in Public Housing funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- Collaborations among local and state health agencies, community-based organizations, and businesses, together with college and university schools of medicine and/or allied health departments

It is also necessary to expand and coordinate nutritional programs, such as the Food Stamps Program and Aid to Families with Dependent Children. A detailed discussion of these strategies is included under Health, Social Services, and Employment Training Opportunities.
Teachers

Continued professional development is essential if teachers are to help provide the educational experiences and learning environment required for children to succeed. Teachers from schools attended by children and youth from low-income public housing often lack the opportunities for professional development that are available to other teachers. Moreover, many of these teachers may require special professional development experiences that will enable them to implement activities to counter negative environmental conditions in which many of these students live.

The following strategies are proposed to provide teachers with the professional development they may require to ensure that their students have a greater chance to succeed in school as well as in college and the workforce:

- **Revise teacher preparation programs** to include educational experiences that will prepare future teachers to work with children and youth from disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly students from low-income communities.
- **Require community service** as part of the teacher education curriculum.
- **Target student teacher internships** in schools attended by students from low-income public housing.
- **Require all teacher preparation programs to include issues and strategies related to multicultural education, bilingual education, or language acquisition, and to provide information that will enable prospective teachers to better understand issues related to social class and poverty in the United States.**
- **Establish technology utilization training centers** at participating colleges and universities to provide hands-on experiences for student teachers and in-service teachers.
- **Establish mentoring relationships** among student teachers, university education faculty, and teachers from schools attended by students from low-income public housing.
- **Create learning laboratories** where pre-service and in-service teachers explore and discuss issues, trends, curriculum content, pedagogy, standards, and needs of students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- **Create a clearinghouse of materials and information** on effective teaching and mentoring strategies within the Community Service Center of each participating college or university.
- **Create collaborations** among teachers, schools, school districts, colleges and universities, and professional and honorary societies to design and implement teacher professional development activities and to identify possible sources of funding for those activities.
- Establish relationships with professional, honorary, and trade societies; and negotiate for time at their annual conventions to expand professional development opportunities for teachers including training in content and pedagogy.

School Administrators

Administrators play a critical role in establishing a school environment that is caring, supportive of teaching and learning, and encouraging of team work among students, teachers, and administrators. We propose the following strategies to enable administrators in schools attended predominantly by students from low-income families to better respond to the challenges they face.

- **Expand professional development opportunities** for administrators at schools attended by children and youth from low-income public housing through participating colleges and universities and professional organizations. Training should focus on school restructuring and reform issues and strategies; school-based management; parental involvement in schools; multicultural education; and social and health service needs of students.

- **Create collaborations and enhance dialogue among administrators at all levels of schools** attended by students from low-income public housing or other low-income communities.

- **Develop collaborations among school administrators and social and health service providers** to offer more comprehensive services in the schools.

- **Enhance collaboration among school administrators, teachers’ associations, parent and student groups, community organizations, and businesses.**

Higher Education

Our nation's college and university students and faculty represent an important and largely untapped reservoir of goodwill and energy. *Opening Unlocked Doors* calls for channeling this energy and expertise to address the myriad of barriers to quality education for children and youth in low-income public housing. Community service
centers on the campuses of predominantly minority colleges and universities, and other campuses with significant minority student enrollments, would serve as a formal and visible mechanism through which these institutions could:

- help meet the needs of the local community
- reinforce in their students the importance of being of service to others
- meet the community service obligations in their mission statements
- send a strong message that public service is an important component of education and an important institutional goal
- improve access to information about opportunities for service
- provide a consistent quality of leadership that transcends the year to year fluctuations of individual students' interests and energy levels
- strengthen existing relationships and develop new ties with residents and the local community

An excellent example of university leadership in meeting the needs of residents in neighboring public housing can be found in Atlanta, Georgia. The faculty, student body, and administration at Clark Atlanta University have joined forces with the residents of the neighboring John Hope and University Homes and the Atlanta Housing Authority to create an environment for the success of children and youth residing in the Homes. Their “Partners in a Planned Community” plan was developed under the leadership of the University's School of Social Work and is a comprehensive, integrated service delivery model. Students and faculty from the University’s School of Education and the School of Business as well as community groups and agencies are also involved in making this multifaceted approach an effective one.

ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMS FOR THE MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE TEACHERS OF STUDENTS FROM LOW-INCOME PUBLIC HOUSING AND OTHER LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES

Issues Regarding Mathematics and Science Teachers

Advances in science and technology have produced significant changes in workplace requirements. More and more, scientific and technological knowledge is needed to succeed and advance in the U.S. workforce. It is imperative, therefore, that all students receive high-quality science and mathematics education at all levels. It is also imperative that we convey expectations of high achievement in mathematics and science among students from low-income families, hence our special focus on mathematics and science teachers in this plan.
However, a large number of children and youth who reside in public housing developments and other low-income communities are not receiving quality instruction in mathematics and science. These students are less likely than students from more affluent backgrounds to be taught by teachers who are certified to teach in these fields or to have access to state-of-the-art instruction and technology.

Furthermore, mathematics and science teachers in schools in these communities are less likely to have opportunities to participate in professional development activities. Lack of financial resources and school support for release-time work against the professional development of these teachers.

Ensuring access to quality mathematics and science education for students of low-income families requires initiatives that:

- Provide for high-quality preparation of mathematics and science teachers, with an emphasis on acquiring the knowledge, skills, and hands-on experiences to effectively teach students from disadvantaged backgrounds

- Substantially increase the number of minority mathematics and science teachers in schools serving low-income public housing and other low-income communities

- Provide these teachers with continual professional development opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills so that they may better serve their students

- Make certain that schools attended by children from low-income public housing are attractive and safe places to learn and study, and that they provide a structured, disciplined environment and the resources, equipment, and facilities required for the rigorous study of mathematics and science

- Provide incentives for the best mathematics and science teachers to remain in schools serving low-income public housing and other low-income communities (for example, by empowering them to become part of the decision making process to affect school change).

Special Professional Development Needs

As with other teachers, mathematics and science teachers of students from low-income, minority families need broader preparation to meet the challenges they face. These teachers need to be knowledgeable not only about their subject but also about historical
and multicultural contributions to their disciplines. Mathematics and science teachers need to be fully aware of major reforms and issues in their disciplines, and they must understand how these may affect their students. Proficiency in the use of a variety of teaching methodologies and techniques is required, as is the understanding, insight, and confidence to make decisions about the appropriateness of strategies for students. To make such decisions, teachers must be fully trained and experienced in teaching diverse groups, particularly students from low-income families and students with limited English language proficiency.

As with other teachers, these teachers must be knowledgeable of learning theory, cognitive development, and language acquisition and how these relate to the learning of mathematics and science and to their students more generally. Teachers also need to be aware of a variety of classroom management techniques; they need to know when, where, and how to ensure a positive, disciplined, task-oriented learning environment that is so crucial to the learning of mathematics and science.

The use and integration of technology in mathematics and science is imperative for quality instruction in a technological age. The ability to use technology to enhance instruction as well as to provide for skill mastery and individualized instruction is needed, as is the knowledge and confidence to make decisions about when, where, and how to use these powerful tools to maximize student learning.

Finally, teachers need to be knowledgeable about cultural and socioeconomic issues when interacting with students, parents, and the community. This is especially true for mathematics and science teachers who must relay the importance of their subjects to parents and the community so that they, too, can encourage children and youth to succeed in these areas. Teachers, parents, and the community must hold high expectations of all children in the community.

The Need for Minority Mathematics and Science Teachers

Although minorities are an increasingly larger proportion of the school age population, the percentage of minority teachers is decreasing with no projected reversal of this trend. Current minority enrollment in teacher education programs is too small to replace the minority teachers who are leaving the profession, let alone to address the need for a substantial increase in the number of minority teachers for all students and in particular for minority students.

To make significant progress in reversing this trend, schools, colleges, and universities must make an increased effort to attract more minorities into the teaching profession,
particularly in the areas of mathematics and science. Community and junior colleges, with their large populations of minority students, represent a major target for recruiting minority teachers as does the large pool of talented adults residing in low-income public housing who might be motivated to pursue teaching as a career. Special efforts are needed to ensure that children and youth from low-income public housing have access to well-prepared mathematics and science teachers who can inspire them to achieve and who are models of what can happen when adversity is turned into opportunity.

**Quality of School Environment and Resources**

Efforts to make high-quality mathematics and science teachers available to students who live in low-income public housing will not be effective without major changes in the school environment. Schools must be safe, drug-free, disciplined environments where quality education, high expectations, and hard work are embraced by all students, parents, teachers, administrators, counselors, and the community.

Success in mathematics and science requires hard work and self-discipline. Students must be encouraged in school and at home to put forth this level of effort, and they must be recognized when they succeed. The school culture and home environment must reinforce and support these values. Likewise, teacher preparation in the use of computers, calculators, manipulatives, laboratory equipment, and other hands-on materials is for naught if these materials are not available in the schools where these teachers work. Inadequate resources detract quality teachers from seeking employment in such schools and deprive students of valuable, reinforcing tools.

**Status of Mathematics and Science Teachers**

Recruiting high-quality mathematics and science teachers to schools attended by students residing in low-income public housing is only part of the challenge. Equally important are strategies to ensure that they stay. Teachers work closely with students and are able to identify students’ educational needs and problems and to offer solutions. Yet, many teachers find their recommendations undervalued and often disregarded when decisions are made. In society at large, this lack of power and disregard for teachers’ views is reflected in the low status accorded to the teaching profession in this country. In order to retain the best teachers, society must respect and value teachers more by enabling them to participate fully in the educational decision-making process at the local, state, and national levels. Avenues for meaningful participation of teachers in decision making must be opened. Doing so requires a sound knowledge base on the part of teachers in the areas of curriculum, methodology, policy, issues, and reform, as well as the skills and training to use this knowledge effectively and competently.
Objectives for Enhancing the Quality of Mathematics and Science Teachers

The overall objectives for enhancing the quality of mathematics and science teachers of students who reside in low-income public housing and other low-income communities are to ensure that:

- Mathematics and science teachers are fully prepared and certified to teach effectively in schools attended by children and youth from low-income public housing

- All mathematics and science teachers in schools attended by children and youth from low-income public housing receive ongoing professional development in curriculum, instruction, and content training so that they can better meet the needs of their students

- The number of certified minority mathematics and science teachers working in schools attended by children and youth residing in low-income public housing doubles by the year 2000

- The school environment, including the availability of resources, offers an attractive employment option for high-quality mathematics and science teachers

- Mathematics and science teachers in schools attended by students from low-income public housing will understand the national, state, and local issues in education, so that they are better able to bring about change in their schools as well as in school policies at the local, state, and national levels

Strategies for Achieving Quality Mathematics and Science Teachers

Preparation and Professional Development of Mathematics and Science Teachers

Schools and departments of education at colleges and universities need to institute a curriculum that ensures that future teachers will graduate with an in-depth knowledge of: mathematics and science content and curriculum standards; issues, trends, and reforms in mathematics and science education, and an understanding of their impact on students from low-income families; and historical and multicultural contributions to mathematics and science.
Graduates from teacher preparation programs must also have the following:

- Knowledge of, and experience in, appropriate uses of technology in mathematics and science instruction as well as the effective use of hands-on instructional techniques and materials
- Knowledge of, and proficiency in, mathematics and science instructional methods and classroom management techniques that have proven effective with students from a variety of economic and cultural backgrounds
- Knowledge of issues operative in bilingual education and the skills necessary for teaching mathematics and science to students with limited English language proficiency
- Knowledge of issues relating to poverty in the United States and of the relationships between home and family life and academic achievement
- Preservice experience that includes teaching in schools serving students from low-income public housing
- Skills in community/human relations to communicate effectively with low-income parents and communities

Strategies to develop these skills, knowledge, and experiences should be developed through stronger collaboration among departments of education, mathematics, and science. These strategies should include the following:

- Require at least the equivalent of a bachelor’s degree in science or mathematics for certification of secondary mathematics and science teachers
- Restructure course requirements and course content to bring them more in line with national curriculum standards in specific mathematics and science disciplines
- Increase science and mathematics requirements for elementary school teachers
- Provide teachers with hands-on experience with a variety of instructional technologies
- Incorporate multicultural education in all teacher preparation courses
- Provide instruction in the use of out-of-class student enrichment programs
- Provide student teacher practicums in schools attended by students from low-income public housing

Mathematics and science teachers in schools attended by students from low-income public housing should receive ongoing professional development. This can occur through regular in-service workshops and seminars; professional mathematics, science, or technology weekends; summer academies; attendance and participation in mathematics or science education conferences and conferences related to such issues as school/family relationships and child poverty; in-school and after-school mathematics and science peer observation and mentoring; and programs to facilitate enrollment in graduate-level courses and advanced degree programs.
Increasing the Number of Minority Mathematics and Science Teachers

Another objective is to increase the number of minority mathematics and science teachers. The following are examples of strategies to achieve this objective:

- Teacher cadet programs for middle school and high school students interested in teaching careers
- Career days emphasizing mathematics and science teaching at high schools with predominantly minority student populations
- Mathematics and science tutoring programs at predominantly minority high schools, pairing high school students with elementary and middle school students who reside in low-income public housing
- Saturday or summer academies for potential mathematics or science teachers, with an emphasis on teaching students from low-income families
- Tuition reimbursement programs for minority mathematics and science college students who agree to teach for specified periods in schools serving students from low-income families
- Seminars to inform high school counselors of programs and opportunities available to minorities in mathematics and science education
- Collaboration among two- and four-year colleges and universities to increase the number of students who transfer into teacher preparation programs

Schools attended by students from low-income public housing and other low-income communities should provide safe working and learning environments for teachers and students. This should attract a large number of quality teachers, including certified mathematics and science teachers. Teacher recruitment and retention can be aided by:

- Ensuring that schools offer a safe, disciplined environment for teaching and learning, with the major goal being quality education
- Ensuring that the schools have the necessary equipment, supplies, and facilities to offer quality mathematics and science education
- Offering special incentives, including salary supplements, to certified mathematics and science teachers who are committed to ensuring quality education for students from low-income families
Empowerment of Mathematics and Science Teachers

Another objective is to empower mathematics and science teachers. Strategies to achieve this objective include:

- **Creating formalized avenues for teacher involvement** in the decision making process at the school level, such as by membership on academic councils and policymaking committees
- **Enhancing teachers’ knowledge of policies and issues** as well as of trends and reforms in their content area, with an emphasis on their impact on students from low-income families
- **Providing access to networks that disseminate information** pertinent to mathematics and science teachers
- **Developing a Teacher Leadership Corps** that prepares teachers to address educational reform issues and policies in mathematics and science at the local, state, and national levels

**Leadership development among students, parents, and teachers**

Issues in Leadership Development

In discussing leaders and leadership enhancement, it is necessary to have a basic definition of a leader. A leader is someone who has the ability to recognize, organize, energize, and mobilize individual talents and resources to achieve collective results and ultimately to empower the group.

Improving education for children and youth in low-income public housing and other low-income communities requires a concerted effort to develop leadership skills among students, parents, and teachers. Opportunities are needed to enable large numbers of youth, parents, and teachers in low-income public housing and other low-income residential communities to promote quality education and home and school environments conducive to success. For example, parents and families must be full participants in the decisions that affect the education of their children. Providing leadership development opportunities is one means of empowering parents and allowing them to become effective spokespersons and advocates for quality education. Leadership development activities must include peer training and provide in-depth experiences for students, parents, and teachers if an effective leadership infrastructure is to be developed.
The GAMES Project
Tallahassee, FL

In Tallahassee, GAMES (Growing and Maximizing Every Skill) addresses the unique needs of residents of the North Macomb public housing complex.

* GAMES staff in collaboration with the Tallahassee Housing Authority, DISC Village Substance Abuse Treatment Program, and Bethel Missionary Baptist Church work to keep children in school and free from drug involvement through programs that instill discipline and a sense of responsibility.

* GAMES staff meet with students at school during the day and offer tutoring and enrichment activities after school at the housing complex. This is done to strengthen families and increase school interests and attendance. Counselors help children develop a positive self-image and increase positive classroom behavior.

* GAMES offer participants wilderness experience trips designed to challenge children and test their physical skills. The project also includes a 14-week cultural enrichment program.

Parents, staff, and participants are excited about the program and the children’s self-esteem has increased as well as their participation in school.

To design a comprehensive, crosscutting leadership program, several issues must be addressed. These include the need for 1) opportunities and options for developing and using leadership skills; 2) incentives that stimulate leadership development and that help refocus or rechannel negative acts of leadership into positive behaviors; 3) positive role models; 4) healthy and secure environments; 5) greater acknowledgment and recognition of the skills already possessed by students, teachers, and parents; and 6) increased emphasis on partnerships among students, parents, and teachers that enhance learning.

Strategies for Leadership Development

With these issues in mind, we propose that a cadre of youth, parent/family, and teacher leaders be created in low-income public housing. Specifically, we propose the establishment of a Youth Leader Corps, a Parent/Family Leadership Corps, and a Teacher Leadership Corps for each low-income public housing or low-income residential community.

Youth Leadership Corps

The Youth Leadership Corps (YLC) would focus on minority students, grades four through twelve, who reside in low-income public housing or other low-income residential communities; however, minority and non-minority students from other communities would also be included. The YLC would offer year-long leadership training, cross-cultural enrichment activities, academic programs, and community service experiences for its members.

The intent of the YLC is to promote family and community responsibility and service among youth by providing opportunities for them to: engage in community service; broaden cultural understanding, including an understanding of environments outside of low-income public housing; teach youth leaders how to work effectively in groups; help students think through problems and explore alternative solutions; and develop youth leaders as positive role models for their peers.

Other objectives of the YLC are to:

- Prepare students residing in low-income public housing for advocacy roles in educational reform and community empowerment
- Improve academic achievement and leadership skills, thereby increasing postsecondary and work force preparedness
- Improve communication, mediation, computer, time management, and decision making skills
- Help students formulate long-term goals
- Expand students’ knowledge of health education issues
- Expand students’ awareness of college and career opportunities
The following multiple strategies should be employed to achieve these objectives for the Youth Leadership Corps:

- **Require participation in community service projects.** Workshops and training should be provided concerning proper selection of, and participation in, community service activities before the initial service experience begins.

- **Establish a communication link to the community.** Opportunities should be provided for YLC participants to communicate with local, state, and national leaders on education and community issues. In addition, peer discussion groups should be hosted to address education and community issues of interest.

- **Increase appreciation of the arts and humanities and of multicultural contributions.** Formal and informal cultural experiences should be provided, including field trips to science centers, museums, galleries, exhibits, dramas, and musicals. Cultural differences, commonalities, and contributions to various fields by different groups should be explored through presentations, case studies, panel discussions, role-playing, and small-group activities.

- **Strengthen academic and leadership skills.** Tutoring and workshops focused on study, technical writing, research, and leadership skills should be provided.

- **Enhance self-esteem.** Personal development workshops and activities that foster self-worth should be offered as well as opportunities for positive reinforcement among participants.

- **Increase communications and computer skills.** Opportunities for presentations, group projects, cooperative interaction, and debates should be provided, as well as experiences that increase familiarity with different computer applications.

- **Enhance time management skills and the ability to formulate long-term goals.** Development workshops that focus on scheduling, prioritizing, and summarizing goals should be provided, as well as activities such as role playing, role modeling, and mock job interviews. Areas to be emphasized include career requirements, money management, consumer affairs, and financing a college education.

- **Increase knowledge of health education and available health services.** Informational seminars and workshops on health-related issues such as AIDS, sex education, physical fitness, dental care, teenage pregnancy prevention, parenting, and nutrition should be offered. By increasing awareness of available health services among YLC participants, they may encourage other youth to use such services.
Everyday Theater Youth Ensemble
Washington, DC

Creating original musical dramas based upon the lives of Washington, DC youth is the aim of the Everyday Theater Youth Ensemble. Founded in 1978, the ensemble is a professional theater training group for unemployed, inner-city youth between the ages of 16 and 24. In addition to receiving training in all aspects of theater (acting, theater history, music, dance, stage management, and sound and lighting design), the company writes and performs its own plays that concern issues relevant to their lives. Two examples are 'Til Death Do Us Part,' a drama about AIDS that combines rap music and dance to present the issues of peer pressure, drug abuse, sex and AIDS, and 'No Prisoners,' which focuses on youth violence and drugs. Through harsh scenes, the drama is meant to shock, sadden, and deter youth from drug dealing. The group performs in area schools, community organizations and on local television. 'Art imitating life' is a familiar saying at this theater organization, which takes disadvantaged youngsters and turns them into professional performers.

- **Provide information on college and career options.** YLC participants should be encouraged to enroll in college preparatory courses. Also, information about financial assistance should be offered and visits to college and university campuses arranged. Career development workshops, guest speakers focusing on career development, field trips to work sites, job-shadowing, and mentoring experiences for participants should be provided.

The development of leadership skills should begin as early as age nine or by grade four. Examples of the possible focus of YLC activities for different grade levels are as follows:

- **Fourth through seventh grade** - The activities should focus on developing positive life skills such as self-esteem, effective communication, assertiveness, cooperation, conflict resolution, understanding one's role in the family, and understanding the community and the groups that make up the community. There should also be an emphasis on academic development, including computer skills.

- **Eighth grade** - The focus should be on training for family life and community involvement through volunteering, cross-age tutoring, mentoring, and community service projects. Knowledge of different cultures, the community, and the environment external to the community should be increasingly emphasized during this year.

- **Ninth grade** - The focus should be on developing career and learning goals such as study skills, effective writing, workplace and social values, and career awareness. Community service projects should begin this year and continue during the student's participation in the YLC.

- **Tenth grade** - Tenth graders should continue to develop an understanding of the options they will have upon graduation. Their focus should begin to narrow, and the skills they develop should include organization and time management, leadership, decision making, and dependability. Tenth graders should be expected to assume positions of responsibility within the YLC.

- **Eleventh grade** - The focus should be on community responsibility and service and on learning about college. Eleventh graders should participate in meetings and town forums discussing education and community issues. Orientation to and preparation for standardized testing should be provided along with other college preparatory activities.

- **Twelfth grade** - The focus should be on continued community involvement, increased knowledge of college and career options through internships and apprenticeships, and continued service as positive role models in the community.
Parent/Family Leadership Corps

The proposed Parent/Family Leadership Corps (PLC) is a means of addressing the lack of a large number of vocal and effective minority parent and family spokespersons for quality education for their children.

Three objectives stand out:

- To provide parents and families with broad-based education, leadership skills, and media training to serve as effective advocates for their children, their communities, and themselves;

- To provide training and forums to enable parents to speak out effectively on education reform issues at the local level and address the implications of reform proposals for the quality of education received by minority youth in low-income public housing and other low-income residential communities; and

- To promote ongoing training to enable PLC participants to be supporters and trainers of other parents and families, with special emphasis on the connections between health, nutrition, and children's readiness to learn.

The PLC would also focus on promoting and enhancing leadership roles of community-based organizations in education reform in schools serving children and youth from low-income public housing and other low-income residential communities. National educational issues to be addressed by the PLC include the national education goals; school choice; national standards for mathematics, science, and other disciplines; multicultural education; changes in national and local demographics; and job market requirements. Local and state educational issues should also be discussed, including opportunities for parents to become more involved in schools, the use of technology in the classroom, and local and state funding for education.

Participating parents and family members should receive training that will enable them to be effective spokespersons on education reform as well as to support and train other parents and families in their communities. Potential roles include leading community forums and town meetings and participating in meetings of the local school board or council. The PLC would also enhance the leadership roles that community-based organizations play in education reform through such activities as fostering parent and family networks, producing education-focused newsletters, developing community resource centers, and conceptualizing and implementing other community outreach projects.
Teacher Leadership Corps

The Teacher Leadership Corps (TLC) would provide teachers in schools near public housing with the broad-based education and skills they need to serve as credible spokespersons on the national, state, and local levels on behalf of education reform, particularly in mathematics and science education. Within the TLC, there should be a special focus on ensuring that those involved in reform efforts are aware of, and responsive to, the implications of such efforts for the education of minority youth in low-income public housing and other low-income residential communities.

The TLC would address the absence of a significant number of mathematics and science teacher spokespersons who are able to:

- Develop strategies for translating educational reform into school-based changes in curriculum and pedagogy while calling attention to the implications of such changes for the education of minority youth from low-income families

- Develop and sustain a suite of professional guild activities that keep teachers in leadership roles

The TLC would address educational issues on the national and state level such as national standards in mathematics and science, effective mathematics and science strategies in kindergarten through twelfth grade, multicultural education and inclusive curricula, national professional teaching standards, school choice, and equitable allocation of resources. At the district, school, or classroom level, the TLC would address such educational issues as content enhancement and curriculum development in mathematics and science, ability grouping and tracking, use of advanced technologies in the classroom, and the use of teachers as peer mentors.

The initial strategy is to expand the QEM Teacher Leadership Corps supported by the Annenberg/CPB Math and Science Project that currently exists in five states (Arizona, Maryland, New Mexico, North Carolina, and Virginia) to include the remainder of the 19 states in which minorities represent at least 25 percent of their state's high school graduates. Expansion should also include several urban areas outside of these states, including the seven cities that have predominantly minority school populations and are among the 25 largest school districts in the country. Large low-income public housing developments exist in each of these cities.

With the broad-based education and skills that they would receive, the participating teachers would be able to work with university faculties and other experts to develop effective school-based improvements and to focus on the implications of reform strategies
for minority youth in low-income public housing or low-income residential communities. Such knowledge and skills also would enable them to lead workshops for other teachers in their communities, thereby extending the reform effort.

Collaboration among the YLC, PLC, and TLC

Although the three leadership corps could be independent of one another, a collaboration or partnership among them would allow for issues to be addressed through collective action and for their respective strategies to be mutually reinforcing. One such collaboration might be the creation of a community mentoring corps for youth in the community. The corps would consist of mentoring teams composed of representatives from the community, parents, teachers, and students who would mentor community youth and train others to serve as mentors.

Health, Social Services, and Employment Training Opportunities

Issues

To ensure a quality education for children living in low-income public housing and other low-income communities, the health status of the children must be assessed and improved as necessary. Most often, social and health services are not accessible to or used by residents of low-income public housing. These services, in most cases, are offered by several different entities, usually on an individual basis. Thus, the services tend to be fragmented, and consequently are ineffective in improving the overall quality of life within low-income public housing. A comprehensive plan is recommended that identifies the issues and offers a set of strategies for improving social and health services to families in low-income public housing and other low-income residential communities.

Health Services

Low-income families suffer more health and dental problems than families with higher incomes, and they have less access to social and health services. Low-income and public housing communities are frequently plagued with environmental and occupational risks such as lead poisoning, drugs, and violence. The geographic locations of health facilities and the lack of transportation to them are often impediments to quality health care. In some instances, language barriers and cultural beliefs about illness have prevented many families from gaining access to care. As a result, low-income families are twice as likely to suffer poorer health (e.g., reduced life expectancy, increased death rates, high infant mortality rates, and high rates of easily preventable diseases) as people living above the poverty level. Low-income families are usually uninsured and dependent on social
services programs such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the Women, Infants, and Children’s Supplemental Food Program (WIC), the Food Stamps Programs, and public sources of health insurance, such as Medicare and Medicaid. Children in these families are more likely to receive insufficient immunizations and to suffer from childhood illnesses and disabilities.

In terms of health service utilization, low-income families have less private insurance coverage and are more likely to use government sources of health and dental care, including Medicare and Medicaid. Within the past 25 years, low-income families have experienced some gains in access to, and use of, health services through the availability of Medicaid and Medicare programs, the development of neighborhood health centers, and the recruitment and placement of minority and other health care providers in underserved communities. These programs have made significant contributions to improving the health status of families living in these communities.

Medicaid was designed to assist states in improving access to mainstream medical care for the poor and disabled. Medicaid is a joint federal/state program administered by each state. The state determines its own eligibility, benefits, and reimbursement policies within broad federal guidelines. As a result, Medicaid programs vary widely among states. Current concerns regarding Medicaid include limitations in the extent of coverage for the poor, limited participation in the program by physicians, and the quality of care received by beneficiaries. Other problems include the following:

- Low-income populations are increasing while Medicaid enrollments have been stable or declining
- Medicaid eligibility restrictions need to be examined
- State income standards are inadequate
- There is limited participation by physicians (one in four won’t accept Medicaid, citing problems of low reimbursement rates, payment delays, administrative paperwork, and personal opposition to government involvement in medicine)
- There is a lack of quality and adequate care (minority and low-income populations are more likely to use emergency rooms and outpatient departments as their primary source of care)
Medicare was instituted to finance health care for the aged and disabled. Although Medicare has improved access to care, its policies are generally inadequate, offering limited coverage, exempting pre-existing conditions, and rarely covering nursing home care in the event of infirmity or senility. Studies show that persons entering Medicaid through Medicare are older, sicker, and more likely to be minorities. For them, Medicaid serves as a supplement to Medicare by paying deductibles and copayments and by providing coverage for additional services, notably prescription drugs, dental care, and nursing home services.

Few primary health care facilities were available to low-income families prior to the 1960s, and providers were not committed to serving low-income communities. These conditions have improved with the emergence of several federal programs administered through the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). These programs were enacted to improve health services in low-income communities that were designated as underserved areas. They include neighborhood health centers; migrant health centers; and maternal, infant care, child, and youth programs. Another initiative to increase the number of physicians available to underserved areas is the National Health Service Corps (NHSC). As a continuum of provider services, the NHSC scholarship program was established to support medical education in exchange for service time in underserved areas.

Studies have documented that community/migrant health centers are effective in improving the health of the populations they serve. However, these programs have had to struggle to maintain funding and, in some cases, their budgets have been reduced. In Fiscal Year 1992, the Health Services to Residents in Public Housing Program was instituted to offer primary health services to residents in public housing. While this program provides total access to primary care for residents in public housing, where such services are available, funding has been limited, thus affecting the number of sites and reducing the potential impact of the program.

Other Social Programs

Social programs such as AFDC, WIC, and Head Start have been effective in improving the health and social status of low-income families, but funding limitations have significantly reduced access. Other social programs that have been effective include nutrition counseling and youth services. These programs need to be expanded to improve the quality of life of residents in low-income public housing and other low-income residential communities.
Legal Services, Social Work, and Counseling

Low-income community residents are in desperate need of legal services. The Legal Services Corporation was created to provide legal services in civil cases to low-income families and has been highly effective in providing free services to residents of low-income public housing. However, these services are not always accessible, because of funding restraints, which has created an overload of civil cases for the Legal Services Corporation. In addition, many residents of public housing are caught in the lengthy procedures of the criminal justice system. Like the Legal Services Corporation, public defenders' offices lack resources to provide adequate services to this population.

In many instances, family needs involve both the social and legal systems. For example, child support, juvenile offenses, and foster care cut across both systems. They involve not only legal services but also the counseling services of social workers and counselors. The high caseloads of social workers, juvenile counselors, and other caseworkers in public housing make it virtually impossible for them to provide adequate services to all who need them.

Recreation and Sports

Access to recreational facilities and to recreational and sports activities has been a major issue in most low-income public housing. Federal, state, and local government programs exist to develop sports and recreational facilities and activities in public housing. However, recreational facilities in many, if not most, low-income public housing developments have deteriorated or do not exist at all, requiring major investments in remodeling, replacement, or construction. In addition, resources must be allocated to provide children and youth from low-income public housing with a range of structured recreational and sports activities to enhance their self-esteem, create a sense of community, and enable them to learn how to organize, resolve conflicts peacefully, and take advantage of leisure time.
Employment Training

Unemployment is one of the greatest problems low-income residents face. They need assistance in obtaining meaningful job training and access to real employment opportunities. From the early manpower development programs of the 1960s through the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) of the 1970s to the current Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), the U.S. Department of Labor has been one of the main sources of funds for job training. The Job Training Partnership Act, which is administered through the states, includes a variety of employment and training programs for both youth and adults. It provides, among other things, opportunities for on-the-job-training and retraining, employability skills training (such as completing job applications, giving effective job interviews, and assuming responsibility on the job), summer youth employment programs, Job Corps, and in-school educational experiences for youth. Many of these programs are administered through local Private Industry Councils (PICs), state agencies, and education systems.

These programs, combined with state-funded initiatives that exist in every state, can provide meaningful job experiences to youth as well as train adults who reside in low-income public housing. In spite of efforts to increase funding for these programs through collaborations with the private sector, funding is still inadequate. In addition, many eligible youth and adults in low-income public housing do not participate in these programs. In spite of outreach efforts, many residents do not have access to information on these programs and their eligibility requirements. Therefore, many simply do not apply. More outreach programs are needed to inform residents of the job training and job placement opportunities available to them.

It is also important to understand that many youth and adults do not apply because participation in these programs, which is usually of short duration, most often results in jobs that provide only small increases in family income. Participating often leads to a loss of previously held benefits that were dependent on the lower income. This is especially true of the summer youth programs. Although it is possible to obtain waivers, too often the modest income that youth receive during the summer is included as part of the family annual income for eligibility purposes for a host of social programs, thereby reducing the payments or services families receive from these programs over the year. In many cases, especially in those where families are most dependent on the other programs, youth choose not to work. Changes are required in regulations to create incentives, rather than disincentives, for people to work. A discussion of the various disincentives for youth and adults from low-income public housing to prepare for and seek jobs is included in the section on Policy and Legislation. Finally, employment training ought to be linked to community needs. Public housing developments need plumbers, electricians, maintenance workers, security personnel, trained daycare providers, and small service-oriented businesses.

"Changes are required in regulations to create incentives, rather than disincentives, for people to work."
Facilities

Most of the nation's urban public housing developments are old and in need of renovation. Eighty-six percent of all public housing in the United States was built before 1970. Run-down buildings and deteriorating surroundings create a host of serious health and environmental hazards, such as lead poisoning and unsanitary conditions, that can lead to an array of illnesses. They also create an environment in which pride in the community suffers and self-esteem among residents is diminished. In spite of the millions of dollars spent each year to renovate public housing, the overall situation has improved very little. New housing units must be built to accommodate the thousands of families that qualify for public housing but cannot obtain it, as well as the thousands who are now homeless. In addition, a large investment must be made to renovate existing facilities and to replace housing units that are beyond repair.7

Security

Another major concern in public housing is security. Many public housing developments, especially those in major urban areas, are plagued by crime, substance abuse, and vandalism. Residents in such communities live in an environment of fear. Students cannot be expected to succeed in school if they are afraid to walk to school or to venture outside their apartments. Parents cannot be expected to participate effectively in schools if their environment is not safe. Security must be enhanced through a combination of increased law enforcement and educational programs in and outside of schools to reduce substance abuse and crime. Programs that place police officers and their families to reside in low-income public housing as community members need to be given serious consideration.

Drugs

Substance abuse and drug dealing among youth and adults in low-income public housing, especially in large urban areas, are a major concern to law enforcement agencies, public health and public housing officials, residents, and the general public. Substance abuse is a health problem as well as a law enforcement problem. However, it is no less an educational issue. Drug dealing and related crimes threaten security and often terrorize residents. Children cannot go out to play or walk to school without fear of being harmed. As a result of pervasive crime, many low-income public housing developments have a large number of vacant units, while hundreds of people remain on waiting lists for admission to more secure housing facilities.8 The control and eventual eradication of substance abuse and drug dealing in low-income public housing will require a comprehensive and coordinated effort on the part of public housing authorities, public housing residents, law enforcement agencies, and health and social services agencies. It will also require concerted and effective educational initiatives in schools and churches in these communities.
Priorities in Service Delivery

Low-income and minority groups have greater unmet needs for health and social services, employment training, and security and housing than ever before. Just as the size of the population living in poverty has grown, so have the health and social problems associated with poverty. Many studies have shown that poor health is directly linked to low socioeconomic status. It is also tied to unemployment and underemployment, lack of job skills, poor physical living conditions, and crime and violence. An improvement in health service delivery, education, job training, housing, and provision of other social services is essential.

The following is a list of issues and priorities that need to be addressed:

- Inadequate funding for existing government programs and other resources
- Lack of adequate support from the private sector
- Lack of knowledge on the part of providers and of potential users of social and health services
- Barriers to service delivery (e.g., limited resources, lack of transportation, geographic barriers, cultural and language differences, and appointment scheduling)
- Lack of trust in the delivery systems for educational, medical, social, and other services
- Legal and bureaucratic constraints to service delivery (e.g., policies and regulations that limit access or discourage residents from seeking services)
- Lack of an integrated continuum of services, including aggressive prevention strategies; clinical and medical services, with an emphasis on primary care; social support services; employment services; security services; and an integrated information system and referral network
- An inadequate physical and social environment to support sound health and nutritional practices and education and social services delivery

Given the existing social and health conditions of low-income families, and their frequent lack of access to quality health care and other social services, it is clear that we need to design a comprehensive health and social services delivery system that improves the overall quality of life of residents and produces healthy and functional families in these communities.
Objectives in Service Delivery

The following objectives call for community action; federal, state, and local government support; and private sector involvement in the establishment of a comprehensive health and social services program.

- To obtain adequate funding for Medicaid, WIC, and nutrition education so that all eligible residents of public housing can participate in these programs

- To establish an integrated, comprehensive, health and social service delivery system that is accessible to all residents in low-income public housing and other low-income communities

- To increase the number of health centers and providers in underserved areas proportionate to need and to increase the number of users of existing health centers so that all residents of public housing have access to these services

- To educate and train providers and potential users of social and health services

- To increase community awareness of environmental issues and community responsibility for the environment

Strategies in Service Delivery

The following strategies are proposed to increase and enhance health, social, and employment services to residents of low-income public housing and other low-income communities:

- Present a coherent case and plan to public officials that will lead to full participation in Medicaid, WIC, and nutrition education programs by all who are eligible. This strategy includes implementing aggressive community planning and outreach to families who are eligible for Medicaid, and identifying and providing WIC and nutrition education benefits to those who are eligible.

- Develop a comprehensive health and social services program plan that requires networking with state government programs and other institutions to integrate programs in a specific setting, such as the Community Resource Centers based in low-income public housing. The plan should include primary and preventive health services, health education, parenting programs, nutrition education, substance abuse programs, employment services, legal services, job training, and other social service programs.
• **Integrate services on-site** through the proposed Community Resource Centers and provide transportation to residents so they can reach programs not provided on-site. For example, colleges and universities could provide social work and referral services; local clinics could provide direct primary and preventive health services, health education, and referral services for specialized care; health and social service agencies could provide social services, nutritional counseling, and other on-site services to community residents; colleges and universities, through their Community Service Centers, could provide sports and recreational activities for children and youth.

• **Recruit and train residents to help conduct outreach and education activities,** emphasizing preventive health services, such as pre-natal care, health screenings, immunizations, prompt treatment of illnesses and infections, accident prevention, and parenting skills.

• **Recruit residents and college students to help ensure safe home environments** by helping residents to identify environmental hazards, pesticides, hazardous waste, and potentially detrimental conditions in the home environment.

• **Develop outreach programs** to identify youth and adults for summer employment, job training, or employment opportunities and encourage them to participate in existing programs.

• **Provide on-site or referral** to employment training opportunities through the Community Resource Centers that can develop job skills with a special effort to link job training to the needs of the public housing communities.

• **Create mechanisms that coordinate employment training programs** available through federal, state, and local agencies, and direct them toward youth and adults in low-income public housing.

• **Increase training among local health care providers** to improve access to such care. This training should include cultural awareness and emphasize cultivating provider-client relationships.

• **Provide integrated service training** so that health care providers understand other social services programs and can make referrals to services outside their specialty.

• **Increase training on how to access the social welfare system** and help users identify what services are available to them.
Community Service Required for Graduation
Baton Rouge, LA

Southern University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, is unique among public Historically Black Colleges and Universities in that it has a sixty (60) clock-hour community service requirement for graduation. Students are given the opportunity to render service in the areas related to their respective majors. Hence, community service becomes a laboratory extension of their respective courses of study. The East Baton Rouge Housing Authority in collaboration with Southern University provides daily after-school tutoring, seminars (e.g., urban gardening, home care, routine maintenance, clothing for children, family life, interior decoration, energy conservation, and family economics), adult literacy classes in reading, math, writing, and geography, and education field trips. The Clarksdale housing site is one of many sites where students from Southern University fulfill the required 60 hours of volunteerism prior to graduation.

- **Train health and social services providers about service delivery** and provide information to them on the client population. This training should include developing family, cultural, and language sensitivity as well as assessing other environmental conditions that affect service delivery.

- **Establish an environmental safety program** in coordination with environmental agency representatives and appropriate college or university staff, and develop an environmental impact initiative for the local community.

- **Recruit and train residents to provide basic services required in the community** such as maintenance, repair, child care, and security services.

- **Develop health education programs** for children, youth, and parents in areas such as substance abuse and conflict mediation and resolution.

- **Develop technical assistance programs,** in collaboration with colleges and universities, that focus on leadership development and expand the training and technical assistance offered to resident management corporations and tenants' associations in all aspects of resident management and health and social services delivery.

**ASSESSMENT AND RESTRUCTURING OF PUBLIC POLICY AND LEGISLATION**

**Issues in Public Policy**

Aggressive intervention within low-income public housing and other low-income residential communities is required if children and youth who reside there are to receive the wholesome, supportive enrichment they need to mature into healthy, productive adults. Among the major public policy issues are the following:

- Ingrained public policies and practices that contribute to pervasive and persistent poverty in public housing. These policies and practices have transformed public housing from a transitional solution into a permanent situation.

- The lack of adequate funding and other resources for pre-natal and post-natal care and nutrition and for pre-school programs, especially Head Start.

- The lack of a national policy, adequate funding, and resources for urban schools, particularly those attended by children and youth from low-income public housing and other low-income communities.
• The lack of a coherent, comprehensive model for the integration of existing educational and human services for children, youth, and their families in these communities.

• The lack of adequate funding and resources for health and social support services targeted specifically at children, youth, and families in low-income public housing.

• The lack of resources to renovate existing public housing and to build new housing, and the lack of policies to create partnerships with the private sector in order to generate additional resources for renovation and construction.

• Barriers or disincentives to success in education and the world of work created by overregulation or conflicting policies and regulations among educational and human services programs.

• National policies and regulations that do not allow the necessary flexibility to address local needs.

An array of policies and legislation on the national, state, and local levels significantly affect the quality of education received by children and youth who reside in public housing. These include policies and legislation regarding education, health care and health education, vocational education, social services, employment and training, housing, law enforcement, and economic development. However, there is currently no comprehensive assessment of public policy and legislation on the national, state, and local levels to determine whether these policies and laws, alone or in combination, hinder or promote quality education in these communities.

The main focus of reports on public housing, particularly those developed by the Department of Housing and Urban Development and national organizations representing housing authority officials and residents, has been on economic development issues, construction and renovation of facilities, crime and drug abuse, and alternatives for public housing management.

There is an urgent need for an assessment of the education of children and youth in these communities.

One of the main reasons such an assessment has not been conducted is the lack of information on the public housing population and the services provided to residents of low-income public housing. Clearly, we need to develop a national data collection system that focuses specifically on the demographics, including the educational status, of children and youth in public housing developments. This new information could be
integrated with information already obtained by the various federal, state, and local agencies and organizations.

In recent years, national, state, and local agencies and organizations have begun to turn their attention to education, social and health service delivery issues, and the need for comprehensive, integrated service delivery systems. It is imperative that a comprehensive assessment of the impact of policies and legislation in all of these areas be conducted. Such an assessment would form the basis for identifying ways existing policies could be changed and new policies and legislation developed.

Objectives in Public Policy

- To develop mechanisms that continually assess and evaluate the impact of public policy and legislation on the education of children and youth in low-income public housing and other low-income communities, and that generate recommendations to inform and influence national discussion on the enhancement of educational opportunities

- To stimulate the development of local networks to obtain and disseminate information on the condition of education in these communities and to monitor progress toward meeting the goals and objectives set forth in this national agenda

- To develop a national policy and appropriate legislation that create a coherent and comprehensive model for the integration of services to residents of low-income public housing, with a particular focus on education

- To develop national policy and appropriate legislation that promote the involvement and leadership of predominantly minority colleges and universities in enhancing educational opportunities for children and youth in low-income public housing and other low-income communities, in collaboration with residents’ organizations and public and private agencies and organizations

Strategies in Public Policy

To meet these objectives, the following strategies are proposed:

- Create a national action coalition composed of representatives of federal agencies that provide services and funding to residents of public housing; national organizations with local affiliates; consortia of predominantly minority colleges and universities; and other science-oriented groups in order to:

  - Design a national system for the ongoing collection of information on the educational status of children and youth residing in low-income public housing
- Develop a comprehensive assessment of existing public policy and legislation that affects education in these communities, focusing specifically on conflicting policies and regulations; policies and regulations that limit flexibility; policies and regulations that represent barriers to enhanced educational opportunities in these communities; and policies and regulations that are disincentives to improving the condition of education.

- Provide increased funding for primary care in public housing with a special emphasis on the goals established in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services report “Healthy Start 2000”

- Provide full funding for Head Start by 1996

- Increase funding and technical assistance to schools attended by children and youth from low-income public housing, including targeting Chapter 1 funding for “comprehensive school improvement” in these schools

- Develop a national educational policy specifically focusing on the education of children and youth from low-income public housing

- Create an interagency committee on the federal level, and similar mechanisms at the state and local levels, to develop policies for a comprehensive, integrated education and human service delivery system that specifically targets children, youth, and families residing in low-income public housing and other low-income communities

- Increase funding for the renovation of public housing facilities and create mechanisms for empowering residents to manage, renovate, and maintain these facilities, in collaboration with appropriate government agencies and the private sector (e.g., workshops by home economics cooperative extension agents on simple home repair and maintenance)

- Eliminate already identified barriers to success among children and youth residing in low-income public housing, such as conflicting regulations. In particular, revise policies regarding eligibility requirements for different federal assistance programs so that employment and short-term income do not affect eligibility for assistance

- Develop a national public relations campaign to enhance the image of public housing and residents of these communities, promote quality education in these communities, and disseminate information on and draw attention to exemplary programs and strategies being implemented in housing developments and low-income communities
The Clinic in Altgeld, Inc.
Chicago, IL

"The Clinic" was established in 1970 in response to a severe shortage of comprehensive medical care for the 10,000 residents of the Altgeld Gardens-Murray Homes public housing development in Chicago. At that time, the infant mortality rate in the area was 50.2 deaths per thousand live births, more than twice the national rate of 20.6. The Clinic has played a vital role in the reduction of the Chicago area rate to 14.0 infant deaths per thousand live births, a decrease of 66%. The Clinic also has programs to train community residents to deliver health education to other residents and to support grandparents who have had to become full-time caregivers to their grandchildren because the parents are unable or unwilling to care for them.

Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA)
"A Great Place to Live"
Cleveland, OH

The Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority's goal is to provide safe, decent and sanitary housing for eligible residents. One of CMHA's mission is to foster optimum total community support systems such as a community based health care program designed to provide comprehensive health care services to residents of public housing.

CMHA Health Services is a unique partnership of organizations that have joined to meet the residents' individual, family and community health needs and to empower residents to make decisions that positively affect their health. Primary health care services include: adult medicine, pediatric/adolescent medicine, immunizations, pregnancy care, family planning, dental care, health education, on-site laboratory services and referral. In addition to these services, the program offers prenatal and AIDS outreach, counseling programs for teens, and program for children and adults regarding substance abuse, problem solving, coping skills, and wellness.
Systematic Evaluation

Systematic evaluation is an essential component of the national agenda. Plans and programs without assessment and evaluation are equivalent to “talking in the wind.” It is critical that formative evaluation be thoroughly integrated in the agenda’s implementation so that modifications can be made when necessary. It is also important so that the nation’s progress toward meeting the goals and objectives set forth in this plan can be monitored and documented. We need to know what works and why it works. We need to study the process of implementing enriching, educational, and leadership activities, and we need summative evaluations to study the outcomes of implementation.

As is evident, the national agenda has a comprehensive vision and five major goals. Each goal has a suite of objectives and a set of specific strategies to achieve these objectives. For each strategy, there are programs and activities that can be developed and implemented. For each activity, we argue for formative evaluations to study the process of implementation and to provide feedback. We also argue for sophisticated and serious summative evaluation to find out what works.

Unlike earlier periods of educational reform, we now have a much richer variety of evaluation instruments and analytical frameworks (both qualitative and quantitative) that can be applied to studies of the national agenda’s process of implementation and its outcomes. Evaluation designs must, therefore, be developed and implemented for each strategy used. These designs must include both formative and summative evaluation criteria as well as quantitative and qualitative measures.

Formative Evaluation

Formative evaluation can serve as a monitoring system for the programs developed for each intervention strategy. It can assess the effectiveness of the process utilized to reach the stated objectives of the program. Conclusions drawn from the formative evaluation can help identify program weaknesses and strengths and indicate where program modifications are necessary. Formative evaluation can form the basis for a “continuous improvement loop.”

Certain baseline information must be collected if we are to assess the effectiveness of the recommended strategies. A comprehensive database must be developed and should include the following critical information on size and needs of the population to be served:
Opening Unlocked Doors

Reading Is Fundamental, Inc. (RIF)

RIF is a national nonprofit organization that works for literacy where it begins— with America's children and families. Founded in 1966 by Mrs. Robert McNamara, RIF is now the nation's largest children's literacy organization, serving more than 3,000,000 children annually through a variety of programs and initiatives. RIF has two new initiatives that have grown out of the RIF program to create or augment family literacy services.

**Shared Beginnings** was developed to meet the needs of teen parents and their young children. In addition to the book distribution and motivational activities for the children, the program offers teen parents simple techniques to nurture their children while they take an active role developing their children's pre-literacy skills. The program was field tested in several cities across the country.

**Family of Readers** is a program for low-literate adults and their children. Along with the book distribution and motivational activities, the Family of Readers program provides guidelines and techniques to involve adult learners/parents in running RIF programs for their children. Taking an active role in conducting RIF involves parents in their children's reading and learning. It also builds parents' confidence in themselves as their children's first and most important teachers.

- Educational attainment of family members
- Educational needs of family members
- Educational achievement of students
- Educational needs of students
- Cultural background
- Language
- Family structure
- Family size
- Family issues and needs
- Health issues and needs
- Social service issues and needs
- Employment status, training, and referral needs
- Degree of parental awareness, involvement, and concern with educational issues
- Neighborhood issues, problems, and needs
- Barriers to program participation
- Community outreach issues and needs

This database must be maintained and expanded to facilitate longitudinal tracking of students, parents, and other participants. In addition, formative evaluation results must be folded in throughout the program to ensure continuous improvement. Hence, it will be critical to determine the degree to which each of the following exists:

- Program objectives are specific and measurable.
- Program objectives are meeting the needs and priorities of the community being served.
- Participating institutions and organizations are appropriate and adequate to deliver the expected services.
- There is evidence of commitment to the national agenda by the community and all participating institutions.
- There is collaboration and coordination of the roles and functions of the institutions involved.
- The services provided are comprehensive, holistic, and centralized.
- Other key people, institutions, and organizations are identified and contacted for assistance, input, and for resources.
- There is coordination of the roles and functions of personnel involved in service delivery.
- There is training of the personnel involved.
- There is effective communication/outreach on program services.
- Program logistics are conducive to full participation.
- There are sufficient resources to effectively implement the program (e.g., financial, human, and facilities).
- The target population has significant input in the needs assessment, program development, implementation, and management of the project.
Summative Evaluation

Summative evaluation is needed to assess the outcomes of each activity. It can identify the extent to which the goals and objectives of the program have been realized. Conclusions drawn from the summative evaluation can help identify which strategies are most successful in reaching the goals of the agenda so that they can be scaled up, replicated, adapted, or adopted in other locations around the country.

Criteria for summative evaluations should focus on students, parents, schools, and the community. They should include the degree to which there is an increase in:

- integrated health, social, and employment training services rendered to families residing in low-income communities
- leadership development programs for students, parents, and teachers of students from low-income communities
- parental interest and involvement in their children’s education and their capabilities as first teachers of their children
- the number of pre-schoolers residing in the targeted communities entering school healthy and ready to learn
- enhancement programs for science and mathematics teachers of students from low-income communities
- the preparation and skill development of teachers and administrators of students residing in low-income communities
- the expectations these teachers and administrators have of their students
- the capabilities of teachers, administrators, and schools to provide rigorous academic
- the number of students from the targeted communities who remain in school, complete a high school degree, and enter college or the workforce
- the achievement level of students from low-income public housing throughout the educational pipeline
- the skills, knowledge, discipline, and motivation of these students to succeed in college or the workplace
- comprehensive assessment and restructuring of public policy and legislation at the national, state, and local levels
ESTIMATED COSTS

The overriding goal of Opening Unlocked Doors is to create and sustain an environment for success for children and youth in low-income public housing and other low-income communities. That environment must encompass home, school, and community, if children residing there are to start school ready and anxious to learn, and if youth there are to have a realistic opportunity to “be all they can be.”

Those who make decisions and judgments that affect these communities must understand that an environment of success in low-income public housing requires the same basic constructs for success as any other community: opportunity and freedom to pursue one’s dreams and beliefs; a safe and supportive climate in which to live, learn, and work; a set of values on which one’s actions are predicated and judged; respect for and a sense of duty to others; and viable educational, health, and social services delivery systems. If we accept this reality for low-income families as we do for ourselves, and for those we care about, much of what is envisioned in this document could be achieved by a mere shift in priorities.

If we truly valued these children and their families, there could be an immediate shift in priorities. Instead, we tolerate conditions and circumstances that cause children to go to school hungry, to be grossly undereducated, to live in fear, or to be killed at an early age. Clearly, we do not care enough about these children or their families.

Care aside, the continued neglect of these communities is not in America’s economic, global, or long-term interest. Hence, for a variety of reasons, we must act now to restructure the environments in which these children live, study, and play so that they can be successful. Life in low-income public housing does not have to be as we “know” it. It can be as we and the residents “make” it.

Fortunately, many of the recommendations outlined in Opening Unlocked Doors for achieving an environment of success in low-income public housing do not require new funding or new programs. Instead, many depend upon securing support through existing programs, and upon better articulation and coordination of existing programs and resources. Most importantly, they depend upon the willingness of policy makers, agencies, institutions, and organizations responsible for funding or administering these programs to put the interests of the residents before politics, before power, and before turf.

It is also encouraging to find several of the recommendations in Opening Unlocked Doors among the new administration’s priorities in education, health, housing, and labor (e.g., full funding of Head Start and of the Women, Infants, and Children Supplemental Food Program; immunization for all children; accessible and affordable health care; an
increase in funding for Chapter 1 programs for disadvantaged youth; employment training; national service; and advanced instructional technologies in public schools). Champions of these initiatives within the administration and the Congress will press for the necessary funding and implementations.

However, key features of the agenda in Opening Unlocked Doors do require new resources and mechanisms for implementation. Cost estimates provided below focus only on these key strategies. For ease of understanding and a feasible scale of effort, estimates are provided for 25 sites and for a five-year period.

Basic Assumptions
These estimates only include those features of the agenda that require new support and do not include those elements that can be supported through existing programs or are among the administration’s priorities in education, health, housing, and labor. The following assumptions are made for estimation purposes only and are not intended to limit the number of sites to 25, the number of years to five, or the number of groups involved at a site.

- Each site will involve (1) one low-income public housing development; (2) one neighboring predominantly minority college or university, or other institution with a significant minority student enrollment; and (3) three elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school attended by a large percentage of students from the participating public housing development
- The proposed Youth Leadership Corps, Parent/Family Leadership Corps, and Teacher Leadership Corps will be city-wide; however, approximately 70 percent of the student and parent participants will reside in the participating public housing development and approximately 70 percent of the teachers will come from the participating schools
- Each site’s Youth Leadership Corps will involve 900 youth per site (100 in each of the grades 4 - 12)
- Each site’s Parent/Family Leadership Corps will involve 100 parents
- Each site’s Teacher Leadership Corps will involve 100 teachers
- Each site will create a College and Community Mentoring Corps of 10 teams of mentors representing faculty, community professionals, parents, and students. These teams will train 300 mentors for community youth per year
- Each site will recruit 200 prospective minority teachers, for service in low-income communities, from among college or university students or other adults who are enrolled, or are qualified to enroll, in at least the junior year in college
- Each recruit will receive “scholarship” support over three years:* junior and senior years** @ $5,000; one graduate year for certification @ $12,000.

* These “scholarships” revert to loans in proportion to the years, less than three, that the recruit does not teach in a low-income community
** This portion could be provided through the President’s national service plan, if the recruitment of minority teachers to low-income communities becomes a priority
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NEXT STEPS

*Opening Unlocked Doors* has identified several **crosscutting issues** to help reach its goal of ensuring quality education for youth and children from public housing developments and other low-income communities. The crosscutting issues of empowering parents, teachers, and youth; increasing services to residents; improving the image of public housing developments; and establishing linkages to the broader community will help to relieve the burdens placed on many minority students by their out-of-school environments. Minority students will be able to improve their school attendance, academic performance, and rate of promotion and graduation when these crosscutting issues are addressed.

*Opening Unlocked Doors* also identified major **crosscutting strategies** to help reach its goal of ensuring quality education for youth and children from low-income public housing and other geographically defined low-income communities. They are: Community Resource Centers (CRCs) located within low-income public housing; Community Service Centers (CSCs) located at nearby colleges or universities; leadership development among students, parents, and teachers; and partnerships among colleges, residents’ groups, schools, community-based organizations, federal/state/local health and human services agencies, and the private sector. The establishment of the CRCs and the CSCs will provide a comprehensive coordinated approach that addresses not only the educational needs of students, but the health and human services needs of the children and youth as well as of their families.

For these crosscutting strategies to be effective, **local action plans must be developed**. Coordination and commitment at the local level is imperative to reaching the goals set forth in this agenda. At each site, broad-based, local coalitions must be established. As a starting point, coalitions could be established at 25 sites, including the cities represented at the August 1992 QEM Working Conference from which *Opening Unlocked Doors* evolved.

The **work of these coalitions is key**. Partners should include representatives from local businesses and industries; local governments; local public housing authorities and tenant groups; law enforcement agencies; church, community, and youth organizations; social service agencies; hospitals and clinics; schools; and colleges and universities. They should serve as the catalyst to set the national agenda in motion by assessing and prioritizing local needs, developing and implementing specific strategies at the local level within the framework of the national agenda, acquiring funds, monitoring progress, and evaluating results.
Funding and public policy needs are comprehensive and urgent. Funds must be increased for primary health care in low-income public housing and for renovation of public housing facilities. Programs are needed to empower residents to manage, renovate, and maintain these facilities. A national public relations campaign should be mounted to enhance the image of public housing and residents of these communities; promote quality education in these communities; and support the dissemination of information that highlights and draws attention to exemplary programs and strategies underway in low-income public housing and other low-income communities.

Local governments must have the commitment and support of federal agencies and other national organizations. A strong commitment and coordination of efforts by the Departments of Housing and Urban Development, Education, Health and Human Services, Agriculture, Commerce, Labor and the National Science Foundation, can help to ensure that the specific needs of residents in low-income public housing and other low-income communities are met.

We recommend the establishment of a council (to be called the Human Resources Development Council) at the national level to coordinate the efforts of federal agencies and other organizations with a role to play in achieving the vision of Opening Unlocked Doors. The Council should be composed of representatives of the federal organizations named above; other agencies with the potential to provide services and funding to residents of public housing; and national educational and service organizations with local affiliates.
To be effective, this Council must have the power and authority to make decisions with regard to the allocation of funds, the coordination and implementation of programs and service delivery systems, the monitoring of progress, and the collection of required data for formative and summative evaluations. The Council should serve as an umbrella organization to ensure that relevant programs in federal agencies and other organizational efforts are well coordinated, holistic, comprehensive, centralized, and effective.

The Council should also establish a commission, to be called the **National Action Coalition**, to review and recommend changes in federal policies that limit local flexibility; to offer technical assistance, monitor, and evaluate efforts; and to disseminate relevant findings and information at both the national and local levels. The National Action Coalition should include representatives of local public housing authorities, tenants’ associations, national educational and service organizations with local affiliates, and organizations representing predominantly minority colleges and universities. The National Action Coalition would serve to identify, endorse, link, and expand exemplary efforts within low-income public housing and other low-income communities. It will safeguard the vision and monitor progress toward reaching the goals set forth in this agenda.

The QEM Network will work in a collaborative mode with the Human Resources Development Council, the National Action Coalition, and individuals, groups, organizations, and institutions across the country on behalf of quality education for children and youth residing in low-income public housing. It will also provide technical assistance in forming coalitions and in establishing Community Service Centers and Community Resource Centers and in creating a national information exchange network of education initiatives in low-income public housing.

Federal, state, and local agencies, residents of public housing, schools, colleges and universities, community and national organizations, and the private sector all have a role to play in ensuring quality education for children and youth residing in low-income public housing and other low-income residential communities. The QEM Network firmly believes that with common goals and objectives, and with strong commitment and collaboration, we can indeed OPEN UNLOCKED DOORS for all of America’s children and youth!
FOOTNOTES


3 Ibid.

4 The Council of Large Public Housing Authorities (CLAPHA) issued a report in 1992 that indicated that 70 percent of all public housing residents in 1992 were minorities. This figure covered rental and nonrental units. “Public Housing: Open Your Eyes, Open Your Mind,” Council of Large Public Housing Authorities, 1992.


6 CLAPHA, op. cit. The CLAPHA report indicated that the annual average income in public housing is $7,314.

7 The median age of public housing is 29 years old. Of the 1.3 million rental units in the country, 96 percent were built before 1980. Only 47,000 (3.4 percent) of the units have been built since 1980.


9 Several national reports have pointed to the lack of demographic and other types of data (e.g., epidemiological data, information on education, and data on social and health care services delivery) on the populations residing in public housing developments and other low-income communities. See, for example, The Final Report, National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing, Washington, D.C., August 1992.

PHOTO CREDITS

Cover Photos --- U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

APPENDIX

A Brief History of Public Housing

The first national housing program was implemented during World War I to address the need to house defense workers. After the war, all housing produced by the federal government for this purpose was either sold or abolished.

It was not until the Great Depression that the federal government re-entered the housing arena, this time as a result of the high rate of mortgage foreclosures on single-family homes and the depressed home building industry. President Hoover’s Conference on Homebuilding and Home Ownership [1931] had recognized that the housing needs of lower-income households had not been met by the private home building industry and that the interrelated problems of poverty and slum housing might need to be addressed by public subsidy. However, the main purpose of initiatives during the depression was to create jobs. The National Recovery Act of 1933 established the Public Works Administration (PWA) which in part provided jobs through the construction of low-income housing projects. The PWA was responsible for acquiring land, awarding building contracts, and owning and managing the units once they were built. In total, the PWA built 50 housing projects in 37 cities.

The first housing act to be passed by the Congress was the National Housing Act of 1937. It established the U.S. Housing Authority and authorized it to make loans to public housing authorities for development costs of housing projects. Again, the primary purpose of the act was to create jobs. The federal government did not plan to have responsibility for solving the housing needs of the poor. So as not to increase the housing supply or compete with the private housing market, the “equivalent elimination” rule of the act ensured that the number of units built would not exceed the number of units demolished through slum clearance. Furthermore, the development and management of the units was the responsibility of local agencies, unlike earlier PWA initiatives. In 1940, the National Defense and Shipbuilding Act authorized the construction of public housing, again, for defense workers.

It was not until the Housing Act of 1949 that a national commitment was made to address housing needs. This act recognized that the general welfare and security of the nation, and the health and living standards of its people, required housing production and community development to alleviate the serious housing shortage and the poor living conditions in
blighted areas. Its goal was “a decent home and suitable environment for every American family.” To reach its goal, the act authorized 810,000 units to be built over a six-year period. However, by 1955 only 204,091 units were built.

In 1956, the Elderly Housing Program broadened the government’s commitment to eligible for public housing. Between 1956 and 1967, 57 percent of all housing starts were for the elderly. These units received less community resistance than did family units.

The 1960s saw a deepening commitment to “a decent home and suitable environment” for all Americans. This period realized a dramatic increase in the construction of public housing as well as the concentrated and coordinated use of federal aid for comprehensive rebuilding or restoring of blighted areas of cities. However, funding for public housing developments was in the form of government subsidies for initial capital and development costs, with the cost of maintenance, management, and tenant services the responsibility of local Public Housing Authorities (PHAs). During this same period, public housing experienced a change in the composition of its tenant population as well as mounting operational costs, these two factors together creating financial crisis.

The change in the tenant composition of public housing from predominantly white, working class households to elderly persons, non-white, and very poor households was a result of several factors. After World War II, working class families began to move out of public housing as their incomes exceeded eligibility limits and as they took advantage of expanded veteran housing programs. A significant post-WWII increase in real household income accompanied by an increase in the housing supply and housing credit also made home ownership a viable option for families at the upper levels of public housing income eligibility. Another contributing factor was change in location. During the 1930s and 1940s many housing projects were located in suburban communities. Tenants were selected by PHAs with one criterion being their ability to pay higher rent.

During the 1950s as well as the 1960s, new housing projects were built in the inner cities as a result of the availability of property due to urban renewal and the resistance in suburban communities to the construction of low-income public housing. Urban renewal took place in predominantly poor, deteriorating neighborhoods, and those who were displaced were given priority in tenant selection. At the same time, poor Black rural families migrated to the inner cities. With little housing available, migrants sought low-income public housing. Also, prior to the 1960s, non-whites were admitted to public housing on a segregated basis. PHAs maintained racially segregated projects. Because segregation was declared unconstitutional in the 1960s, this practice, as well as the practice of tenant selection on the basis of income or other social characteristics, had to change. Further contributing to the shift in population was the elderly housing program. By 1969, 36 percent of public housing units were occupied by the elderly, who tended to be very poor.
The mounting operating costs of PHAs during the 1960s were the result of many factors, including high inflation of goods, services, and PHA employee wages; an increase in maintenance required as a result of aging buildings and as a result of cheaper, densely-packed, high rise buildings constructed in the 1950s; and an increase in the provision of social services by the PHAs as a result of pressure from civil rights leaders and national tenants organizations in the late 1960s. Because of increasingly poorer households in public housing, the increase in operational costs could not be offset by rent increases. The Housing and Urban Development Acts of 1964 and 1968 extended special subsidies to unusually poor or large families, however, these could not adequately address rising operational costs of PHAs. Further reductions in housing authority rental income resulted from the Brooke Amendments, a series of provisions from 1969 to 1970 aimed at halting rising rental charges to tenants.

As a result of the ever increasing gap between rental income and operating costs, public housing went into financial crisis and decay. The idea that the financial structure of public housing programs could operate on the same principles as private housing was feasible only during the early years of public housing when inflation rates were low, housing units were new, and tenants were predominantly working class and able to pay rent increases. This was not the case in the 1960s. The problems and support needs of poverty level households were given to a public housing program that was not designed, equipped, or financed to handle them effectively.

The late 1960s and early 1970s represented a period of deficit funding by the government to address the growing financial crisis. The process of subsidy distribution consisted of an unsound budget review process, unsystematic methods of distribution, and inconsistent treatment of PHAs, all of which contributed to growing inefficiency and mismanagement of some PHAs. In January 1973, a moratorium was placed on Housing and Urban Development (HUD) housing assistance programs. The freeze was resolved in 1974 with Congressional authorization of Section 8, a lower-income rental assistance program with a construction/rehabilitation and leasing component. In 1975, HUD established the Performance Funding System (PFS) in which the allocation of operating subsidies was tied to management performance. However, performance was based on subjective judgments of PHA tenant and management satisfaction, not on absolute standards, making it impossible to distinguish between high performance authorities plagued by problems beyond their control and low performance agencies with few difficulties to overcome. Furthermore, although operating subsidies increased with annual inflation factors prescribed by HUD, the high cost of utilities, security, maintenance, and insurance left little money for major repairs, improvements, or modernization.

During the 1970s, there was a shift in policy toward the decentralization of the federal government's domestic functions, placing more responsibilities on state and local governments. Urban renewal, which involved slum clearance through "acquisition and clearance," was replaced by Community Development Block Grants (CDBGs) through which federal funds were allocated on a formula basis to local governments. The 1974
Housing and Community Development Act created block grants as well as Section 8. The act authorized federal assistance contracts to sponsors, including local and state public agencies, for the development or rehabilitation of housing, or the leasing of existing housing for low-income families. Although quite popular, these measures required a minimal level of federal commitment to housing and urban development with limited funds spread out to serve broader, less targeted purposes. Federal funds specifically focusing on city slums or decaying city infrastructures were nonexistent, while a considerable portion of the CDBG funds was used for housing rehabilitation, public facilities, and economic development, not for comprehensive, long-term housing improvements.

The Housing and Community Development Act of 1977 authorized federal Urban Development Action Grants (UDAGs) to severely distressed cities through coordination with private investment and reinvestment opportunities. These grants focused more on commercial and industrial development than on housing. Housing that did result from these grants consisted of mixed-use projects with set-asides for lower-income households. About 25 percent of projects approved during UDAGs first four years involved either the construction of new housing or the upgrading of existing units, with about 50 percent of the units occupied by low and moderate-income households. In 1983, the Housing and Urban-Rural Recovery Act established new federal assistance programs for housing development and rehabilitation, including Housing Development Action Grants (HODAGs) and Rental Housing Rehabilitation Grants. Only twenty percent of rental units produced by HODAGs were required to be affordable to low-income households. In sum, these highly discretionary block grants provided federal assistance in broad, rather than specific, areas with no assurance that the housing needs of low-income families were being met.

As a result of the shift in housing and community development policy in the late 1970s and early 1980s, there was a dramatic decrease in the number of public housing units built and a dramatic increase in the number of other types of housing units receiving federal subsidies. By 1986, there were twice as many units under other housing assistance programs (Section 236, Section 8, rent supplements, and vouchers) as there were units in public housing, with subsidy costs for these programs over three times the subsidy costs for public housing. Conditions in existing public housing continued to deteriorate. In 1981, modernization capital was provided by HUD under the Comprehensive Improvement Assistance Program (CIAP) to address the growing need for modernization and rehabilitation of public housing. However, activities funded through CIAP were for selected projects and were directed toward emergency situations or energy efficiency, and tended not to be comprehensive. During that same year, the passage of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act increased tenant rent contribution from 25 percent to 30 percent of income. These measures were insufficient to address the problems and needs
of severely distressed public housing (approximately 7 percent of public housing developments).

The policies of the late 1980s continued to focus on efforts to limit federal government involvement in housing and to stimulate the private sector. Federal assistance for cities was in the form of "enterprise zones" that focused on tax incentives for private development. A voucher system and the sale of public housing units to existing tenants were advocated as the only forms of federal low-income housing assistance. Existing public housing continued to be underfunded while the development of new public housing continued to decline. The current waiting list for public housing units is estimated to be in excess of one million families.

In summary, federal government involvement in public housing is relatively recent and a long-term, comprehensive plan to seriously address the housing needs of the poor does not seem to exist. Although a housing problem among the poor existed and was recognized, early intentions of public housing were primarily to create jobs or to house defense workers. Aiding low-income families was secondary. Even when a paper commitment was made in 1949 to "a decent home and suitable environment for every American," it was not backed by financial commitment or the planning and foresight to effectively address the issue. Furthermore, the level of commitment and extent of efforts by the federal government have shifted with the changing political climate.
Location of Public Housing

WEST
6.99% (95,000)

SOUTH
33.82% (460,000)

NORTHEAST
40.51% (551,000)

MIDWEST
18.68% (254,000)

Metropolitan and Non-Metropolitan Areas

SUBURBS
16.62% (226,000)

OTHER AREAS
13.97% (190,000)

CENTRAL CITIES
69.41% (944,000)

Households in Public Housing by Race and Origin

AFRICAN AMERICAN
53% (720,000)

HISPANIC
10% (132,000)

WHITE
34% (466,000)

OTHER
3% (43,000)

Total Number of Housing Units/Households - 1.36 million

ABOUT THE QEM NETWORK

The Quality Education for Minorities (QEM) Network was established in July 1990, as a non-profit organization in Washington, D.C., dedicated to improving education for minorities throughout the nation. Operating with an initial grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the QEM Network began where the MIT-based QEM Project left off. It is a focal point for the implementation of strategies to help realize the vision and goals set forth in the QEM Project's report: Education That Works: An Action Plan for the Education of Minorities.

The QEM Network serves as a national resource and catalyst to help unite and strengthen educational restructuring efforts to the benefit of minority children, youth, and adults. While advancing minority participation and leadership in the national debate on how best to insure access to a quality education for all citizens. It seeks to put into practice the recommendations in the QEM Action Plan by working with minority and non-minority individuals, organizations, and government around the country, to help coordinate and energize efforts to improve the education of minorities.

Based on the “Goals for the Year 2000” set forth in the report Education That Works, the QEM Network aims to:

- Serve as a national information and communications network that will collect and widely disseminate information on issues, policies, programs, and resources related to the education of minorities;

- Assist communities across the country in building state and local alliances to meet the educational needs of minority students;

- Monitor and evaluate legislation, policies, and practices as they affect the education of minority students;

- Promote and disseminate information on promising research results on the education of minorities, and serve as a resource in evaluating educational programs and projects;

- Stimulate and assist in the development of programs to increase the number of minorities in science and engineering fields; and

- Implement a series of projects in areas of special interest to develop model approaches for improving education for minorities.

The QEM Network employs an extensive networking and coalition building approach. One level of effort is focused on the national education scene. The other is directed towards helping local groups, organizations, and institutions to develop the capacity to mobilize their communities around needed educational improvements.
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