

**Program:**

Urban Education Think Tank (UETT)

**The Issue:**

The 1980's, 90's, 2000's have been characterized by intense national concern about our educational system. Spurred by the 1983 report, "A Nation at Risk," well over 200 educational reform reports has been issued and education has risen to the top of national and state legislative agendas. Typically, those school districts which are of most concern are those that are the most urban. Schools in these districts which are of most concern are those that are the most urban. Schools in these districts customarily house the majority of the nation's least well-served students—those who are poor, those from diverse ethnic groups , those who live in neighborhoods where violence and drugs are prevalent, those who are from single-parent households or are a part of the foster care system, those who suffer from inadequate health care, those whose first language us not English, or those who, for whatever reasons, do not conform to the "mainstream" model child our school systems were designed to educate.

**Background**

Atlanta's urban environment is not substantially different from those across the nation. The ethnic breakdown in Atlanta schools is approximately 92% African American. 6.5% white, 1% Hispanic, and .5% Asian. Over 57% of school-aged children in Atlanta live in single-parent homes. More than 40% of single-family households with children are living at or below the federal poverty level. Approximately 53% of the students attending the Atlanta Public Schools (APS) fail to graduate from high school at the expected time. The average score of APS students who stay in school and take the SAT lags approximately 150 points below the Georgia average, and Georgia ranks 48<sup>th</sup> among 50 states.

**The Need**

These dire figures do not have to remain a reality. We know from recent research that educational excellence is possible in urban setting, despite low family income levels or difficult community problems. However, such excellence has only existed in small, isolated,

and unpublicized pockets of the country. Much work must yet be done to insure excellence in all schools in inner-city urban areas.

The time is opportune in Atlanta to create a city-wide laboratory of students for the development of excellence in urban education to inform urban educational setting throughout the country, and, indeed, throughout the world. Georgia State University, situated in the heart of Atlanta's inner city, has the unique ability and responsibility to apply its diverse resources toward the solution of the urban educational problems. Furthermore, without active involvement with the urban arena, the university cannot hope to develop a national voice on pressing educational concerns, nor can it continue to be a viable academic option for students increasingly interested in learning about and addressing urban issues.

Through the collection and implementation of the best research-based strategies from around the world, and the development and careful research of new educational practices and policies, the Center of Urban Educational Excellence (CUEE) will compile and analyze the data, and develop, and implement, and assess the models necessary to establish excellence in urban settings. Because the challenge requires the expertise of many disciplines, the CUEE will coordinate related university-wide efforts and seek collaboration with the larger community.

### **A Solution**

The creation of a multidisciplinary, "Urban Education," research think tank, aimed at supporting and cultivating scholarship related to excellence in urban education. The Urban Education Think Tank (UETT) is a research-based, self-contained academic community whose membership is reflective of several disciplines. Scholarship in this context focuses on questions and solutions related to "Urban Education." Those researchers who become members of the Urban Education Think Tank will be considered Alonzo A. Crim Research Fellows. The UETT will serve as an interdisciplinary venue for the discussion of each person's interests and the cross fertilization of ideas. The UETT promotes and facilitates scholarship, leadership and empowerment through critical research that focuses on "Urban Education."

### **Activities/ Methodology**

Graduate researchers would meet with faculty members one or twice a month in order to focus on research aimed at supporting and cultivating scholarship related to excellence in urban education. Students will form a cohort of progressive "Urban Education" scholars who offer multiple perspectives and critical feedback with the purposes of strengthening research. Monies are also provided to support necessary travel expense for the presentation of research at a national/ international conference. Finally, researchers will have the opportunity to present at the annual Sources Conference.

### **Objectives**

- Graduate researchers would support one another in the development of dissertations, particularly areas that deal with urban education
- Present interdisciplinary scholarship on Urban Education

- Culminating presentation at a symposium

**Timetable**

Annual, August- July

**Site**

GSU/ Alonzo A. Crim Center