Urban Perspectives

A PUBLICATION OF THE URBAN SPECIAL EDUCATION LEADERSHIP COLLABORATIVE

Report to Congress Highlights Challenges of Special Education in Inner Cities

*I*n its *Eighteenth Annual Report to Congress* on the implementation of IDEA, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), the United States Department of Education has outlined the challenges and the national importance of meeting the needs of students with disabilities in the inner cities. As part of its summary presentation of data from OSEP, the Office of Civil Rights (OCR), and other sources, the Report states that planning for and delivering special education programs and services in cities are made complex by such factors as

- the increase in poor and minority children as a percentage of total student growth;
- escalating unemployment, poverty and abuse while the incidence of conditions such as AIDS and drug abuse, whose rapid growth is associated with poverty, are also on the rise; and,

- student turnover — as high as 75 percent in a given academic year in some urban districts.

Other key points of the Report's chapter include:

Disability rates differ by income and race. The Report states that, despite decades of investigation, the reason why this occurs remains unclear. See *Figure 1* below.

Students with disabilities in inner cities are more likely than students with disabilities in non-inner-cities to be placed in more restrictive learning environments. See *Table A* (page 6).

Data from the National Longitudinal Transitional Study of Special Education Students (NLTS) suggest that urban youth with disabilities have a particularly difficult time adjusting to postsecondary roles. High dropout rates, low levels of post-secondary enrollment, and high rates of unemployment are indicative of the kinds of problems experienced by many of these youth.

In this Issue:

Figure 1 *Parental Reports of Disability Prevalence Rate Differences by Race/Ethnicity and Income for Children Ages 5-17, 1992*

Mutually exclusive categories
- White
- African American
- Hispanic

Percent with a Disability*
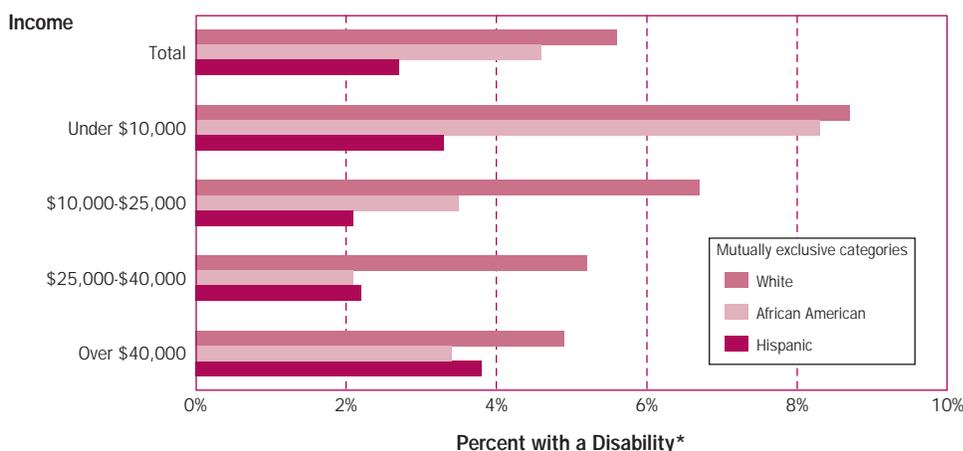
*Any physical, mental, or other health condition adversely affecting the child's ability to learn.

Source: The 1992 Office for Civil Rights Elementary School Survey and the 1992 Common Core of Data Public School Universe File.

Dr. Ingrid Draper Joins USELC in Leadership Role as Co-Director

Dr. Ingrid Draper recently retired from the Detroit Public Schools after 31 years of service, will join John Verre and David Riley as co-director of the Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative.

As Executive Director of Detroit's Office of Specialized Student Services, Dr. Draper has been a leading force for the unification of special and regular education. The systems change experience in Detroit is a continuing progressive reality due to Dr. Draper's planned and deliberate activities initiated over ten years ago, through consultation and support from Dr. Asa Hilliard of Georgia State University. During the past decade, she has developed and led the process of system unification and, through that process, enabled general and special education administrators and teachers, parents and community agencies to come together to create a dialogue and a shared vision of change. Dr. Draper has also taught in colleges and universities in the metropolitan Detroit area for over 25 years, and has actively participated in summer institutes held at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education on Critical Issues in Urban Special Education.

As president of the Draper Consulting Group, Dr. Draper provides consultation to school districts, human services agencies, and private and public enterprises throughout the United States. Her consulting revolves around the areas of training leaders in transformational leadership and systems change strategies. Her work helps others develop a shared vision of special education re-direction, aimed at aligning services with district-wide school improvement planning, and other system change initiatives. Dr. Draper is a firm believer in the importance of building system change alliances between educators, parents and the community to develop shared visions, common goals, and strategic planning actions. Her new role as co-director of USELC will undoubtedly enhance the strength of the Collaborative. ■

NCIP: Join the Online Community

The **National Center to Improve Practice (NCIP)** is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. The goal over five years (1992-7) is to promote the effective use of technology to enhance educational outcomes for students (preschool to grade 12) with sensory, cognitive, physical, and social/emotional disabilities.

NCIP's award-winning Web site (**http://www.edc.org/FSC/NCIP/**) integrates valuable resources with lively discussion forums. Selected as Pick o' the Month by the U.S. Department of Education and Classroom Connect, and recognized by Closing The Gap, NEA, and others, NCIP's Web site proudly announces its newest features:

• **READY! SETT! GO!**, This four-week online workshop is facilitated by Joy Zabala, of Region IV Education Service Center in Houston, TX. Joy is the nationally-recognized developer of SETT (Student, Environment, Tasks, and Tools), a framework for selecting assistive technology. The online workshop is structured as a Virtual Team Meeting, during which participants take on the roles of teachers, clinicians, specialists, and parents to collaboratively make decisions about assistive technology. Our HyperNews conferencing systems allows participants to review, discuss, and analyze a hypothetical case study and use the SETT Framework to make recommendations. NCIP encourages non-registrants to visit the workshop, access materials, and follow the discussion. Let us know online if you are interested in joining future workshops such as this.

• **Early Childhood Guided Tours.** Participants can "tour" two classrooms to see how teachers integrate high and low-tech tools to ensure that students with severe disabilities have full access to the curriculum. The tour includes descriptions of classroom activities, photographs, and video clips of students using technology; comments by the teachers about the features of their classrooms; a "Visitor's Center" filled with additional resources (e.g., research summaries, product reviews, and descriptions of classroom tools); and an online discussion forum where tour participants can reflect on the tour and share ideas with colleagues.

• *TEC* **Author Online.** Readers of CEC's *TEACHING Exceptional Children* now have a chance to discuss selected articles with their authors. The authors of the first TEC Author Online (November 4-22) event are Pam Campbell, a professor at the University of Connecticut and Jack Tierney, Executive Director of Educational Technologies, Inc. Their article, "How Teachers Can Use Technology to Collaborate on Teaching Effectively," is published in the November issue of

Announcing the USELC Listserv!

Beginning on November 1, 1996, members and associates of the Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative have been able to communicate easily with one another via their own listserv. This date also marked the end of the private mailbox USELC has had on NCIPnet's FirstClass network.

A "listserv" is simply a compilation of all members' email addresses, maintained and updated at USELC, which will enable each member to send a message to the entire USELC membership list. All replies to messages are automatically sent to the entire list as well. Members may still communicate privately with one another via regular email. The listserv is simply a way to facilitate communication among the entire membership on topics of general interest.

If you are a member of USELC and have already submitted your personal (non-USELC/NCIP) email address, you have automatically been added to the listserv. If we don't have your personal email address, please send it ASAP to CarrieC@edc.org so that your name may be added.

We hope that this new method will prove to be a useful and easy way for USELC members to communicate. If you have questions about any of these procedures, contact Carrie Campbell at 617-969-7100, ext. 2486. ■

Focus of Spring '96 Meeting
IDEA Reauthorization, Medicaid, and Social Marketing for Special Education
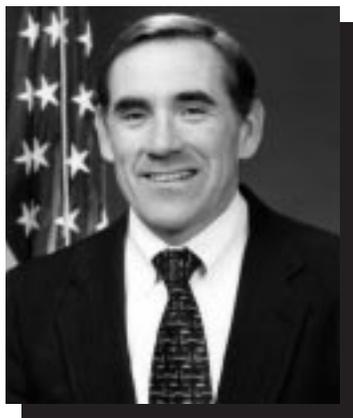
▲ Thomas Hehir, OSEP Director

Judith Heumann, Assistant Secretary ▼

U.S. Department of Education Assistant Secretary Judith Heumann and Office of Special Education Programs Director Thomas Hehir participated in the Collaborative's Spring 1996 Meeting at the Washington Vista Hotel, Washington, D.C. Topics discussed with the national leaders included reauthorization of I.D.E.A. and the Congressionally-proposed changes to medicaid. Joining Assistant Secretary Heumann and Dr. Hehir on a panel to discuss these two critical issues with participants were Dr. Theta Zawaiza and Mrs. Connie Gardner, Special Assistants to Ms. Heumann.

The May Meeting began with an informal discussion, led by Raymond Healey, Director of Special Education for Fairfax County, Virginia, on the issue of decentralization and special education. An informative and spirited exchange was had regarding Members' experiences with decentralization of special education and related services, policies, oversight procedures.

Of particular interest were the comments of Audrey Potter, Director of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Public Schools. Heralded as the "most decentralized public school system in America" in an *Education Week* article, Ms. Potter described in some detail how special education leadership and management styles adapted to the mandated delegation of programmatic and fiscal authority to school principals.

The remainder of the meeting was spent with Chris Kurtenbach of A+ Communications of Washington, D.C., in discussing the application of social marketing concepts and strategies to special education and to the education of children and youth with disabilities. Chris and her colleagues have been involved in a number of social marketing campaigns — teen pregnancy, safety belts and Attention Deficit Disorders to name a few. Ms. Kurtenbach shared design and execution considerations, as well as learnings, from these efforts and worked with participants to apply them to a campaign directed at improving the "cost/benefit image" of special education. Spring meeting participants received information and worksheets which they could utilize in working with their leadership personnel in designing their own proactive social marketing initiatives. ■

Harvard Institute, Conferences, and Technical Assistance Link Members

1996 Harvard Institute. More than 50 professionals from 25 Collaborative member school districts participated in the 1996 Summer Institute on Critical Issues in Urban Special Education at Harvard University. Taking advantage of the Collaborative's discounted registration fee benefit and enjoying the traditional Collaborative dinner meeting at the Harvard Faculty Club were members from Albuquerque, NM, Ann Arbor, MI; Fitchburg, MA; Texas City, TX; Elgin, IL; Roosevelt School District, Phoenix, AZ; Detroit, MI; Humble, TX; Seattle, WA; Madison, WI; Fairfax, VA; District #75, New York City, NY; South Bend, IN; San Diego Unified, CA; Tucson, AZ; Aurora, CO; Cambridge, MA; Milwaukee, WI; Springfield, MA; and Montclair, NJ.

   Joined by 100 general and special education colleagues from throughout the country, Collaborative members spent the week discussing school building-level implications of adopting a systems unification approach to program organization and management. Collaborative members who presented at the Institute included David Yamamoto of Ann Arbor, Michigan and David Wood of Aurora, Colorado. Additionally, a team of educators from Member District Albuquerque, New Mexico, shared their experiences and achievements in improving coordination and interdisciplinary problem-solving in schools. All three Collaborative Co-Directors — Ingrid Draper, David Riley, and John Verre — also made Institute presentations.

Systems Unification Conferences. The Collaborative has sponsored a series of conferences on systems unification during the year. These leadership development conferences are compressed versions of the 1995 and 1996 Harvard Institutes on Critical Issues in Urban Special Education. Faculty from the Institutes re-grouped in Seattle, Washington, Newton, Massachusetts, and Houston, Texas, to present and discuss policy, legal, contractual, and service delivery issues related to systems unification. To date, more than 250 professional staff from Collaborative and non-Collaborative member school districts have participated in the three and six-day conferences.

Technical Assistance. Several members have contracted with the Collaborative to provide consultation and technical assistance services. The focus of these services have ranged from Office of Civil Rights Resolution Agreements to the development of policy and procedures for the participation of students with disabilities in newly adopted curriculum and assessment initiatives; from administrative reorganization to procedures manual upgrading; from inclusive campus planning to systems unification; from program evaluation to strategic planning.

(Members who would like to discuss the Collaborative's participation in conference planning or technical assistance agreements during the coming year, should contact Co-Directors David Riley or John Verre.)

NCIP

   TEACHING Exceptional Children (and is available online).

   These new features join the Web site's regular components:

- **NCIP Views.** This general discussion area welcomes conversation on any and all topics related to technology and/or special education.
- **NCIP Bulletin Board.** This is where announcements, job listings, conference info, etc. are posted.
- **NCIP Library.** A vast online library of information related to technology and students with disabilities. Explore this extensive library, read, print out, and disseminate the many resources.
- **Video Profiles.** View video clips online that illustrate how students with disabilities use a range of assistive and instructional technologies to improve their learning.
- **Links.** More than 100 links to other Web sites dealing with technology and/or students with disabilities.

   NCIP also produces a series of five videos which make excellent additions to trainings, workshops, and courses. Each focuses on how students with a different type of disability use technology in the classroom:

- Multimedia and More: Help for Students with Learning Disabilities
- "Write" Tools for Angie: Technology for Students Who are Visually Impaired
- Telling Tales in ASL and English: Reading, Writing, and Videotapes
- Jeff with Expression: Writing with Word Prediction Software
- Welcome to My Preschool: Communicating with Technology

   The videos can be ordered separately or as a series for a nominal price by calling (800) 793-5076. ■

1997 Harvard Institute on Critical Issues in Urban Special Education, July 21 - 25.
Topic: Race, Class, Language/Culture and Special Education.

For more information contact Catherine Rosseel, Programs in Professional Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 339 Gutman Library, Cambridge, MA 02138. Tel: 617-495-3657. Fax: 617-496-8051.

Systems Unification: Lessons Learned

by Dr. David Yamamoto, Director of Special Services, Ann Arbor Public Schools, Ann Arbor, MI

With a year's experience in attempting to implement a systems unification approach to service delivery for students with disabilities or who are at risk of school failure, many lessons have emerged. Among these are

1. Labels are a mixed blessing. Whenever any initiative has a term there is an immediate tendency to consider it a new program. A "new program" connotes procedures, parameters, funding and a system of control. This school year the term systems unification is still used but down played. Rather, the focus is on how can student achievement be improved with a strategy which allows for all of the key characteristics of an effective school to be implemented.

2. In order to overcome the natural resistance to change, one has to focus on the notion of 1) continuous improvement — i.e., never be satisfied with your results; 2) the DVF>R = C model — that is, there must be three, and all three components in place to overcome the natural resistance (R) to change (C): D = Dissatisfaction, V = Vision, F=First steps in a plan of action.

3. Systems unification requires all categorical programs/services to be integrated with the overall education delivery system of the school district: special education, Title One, Able Learner (gifted and talented), ESL, at-risk funds, professional development, and site based funds.

4. The change of role definition for some is extremely difficult. The cry, "I wasn't trained to do this", or, "this isn't why I went into education" are not unusual comments. For some, the process of change is slow and difficult. For others, it is an absolute struggle.

5. Implementation requires strong leadership. One cannot overestimate the value and necessity to clearly articulate the vision. It also requires leaders — administrators and teachers to persevere in the face of opposition, sometimes well organized and intense.

6. Systems unification in the early stages can be a lightening rod around which people with any number of concerns — "Too much on the plate", increased workload, disruptive behaviors, large class size, etc. — will rally. It is wise administrators who can distinguish between systems unification concerns and generalized concerns — because it FEELS the same.

7. In the beginning, systems unification requires at least one champion who will have the vision, courage, and persistence to encourage the system to change.

8. Planning is essential. Systems unification doesn't just occur. Time spent in the planning phase means patience, an understanding of the change process, and a grasp of knowing the dynamics of the school and/or district.

9. Systems unification must be part of a) the school improvement process; b) an overall district/school strategy to improve student achievement; c) the reform movement; and d) founded on sound pedagogical principles.

10. Staff is on a continuum of readiness to change. Some will be quick to embrace change; others will be cautious but interested, still more will be resistant. Each must be acknowledged as valid. It must be understood that the process of change will take time, require strong leadership, and healthy dialogue about the validity for changing the status quo.

11. It is important to assure the staff and community that systems unification was not a district initiative to cut costs in special education. Staff was very fearful they would lose their jobs.

12. Structured professional development activities facilitate the change process. For example the sponsoring of workshops where teams can attend and work together has allowed the principal to generate interest and enthusiasm in the school community.

Many other valuable lessons were learned in the first year. It is clear, as the second year begins, that systems unification is establishing a firm foundation in the Ann Arbor Public Schools. It is, however, too early to document with hard data the results in improved student achievement. Evaluation is a major focus the district will be addressing this year.

In summary, systems unification is another step in the evolutionary process. The paradigm of separateness is being replaced with a sense of community and belonging. Students are more viewed as the responsibility of the entire school community, not simply by a designated few.

The question is often asked, "How do we know this is not just another fad?" To wit: look within for the answer. ∎

OSEP Highlights Urban Challenges

The Report concludes that such factors are common to all inner cities and affect the needs of students with disabilities, as well as the ability of schools to meet those needs. "Analysis of available data results in a complex picture of students with disabilities in inner cities. The interrelationships among urbanicity, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status and their impact on placement in special education are difficult to untangle."

To help focus attention on the much-needed area of urban special education, OSEP recently established a priority to train scholars in historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and other minority institutions to conduct research in special education and urban issues. The University of Virginia won this award. Joining UVA in this endeavor will be the Alliance 2000 Project, Project SUCCESS at the University of New Mexico, and the Bueno Center at the University of Colorado. Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative will collaborate with this newly-funded initiative and will also serve as a dissemination vehicle for its research findings.

Complete copies of the *Eighteenth Annual Report to Congress* on IDEA may be obtained by writing the Office of Special Education Programs, 330 C Street SW, Washington, D.C. 20202, ATTN: Office of the Director. Reprints of the chapter dealing with special education in inner cities have been distributed to Collaborative members as a Fall '96 *Research Brief*. ∎

Table A *Estimated Percentage of Students with Disabilities in Full-Time and Part-Time Special Education Placements for Inner-City and Non-Inner-City Districts, 1992-93 School Year*

Disability	Inner-City		Non-inner-city	
	Part-Time	Full-Time	Part-Time	Full-Time
Specific Learning disabilities	64.3%	36.4%	81.2%	19.0%
Speech or language impairments	86.2	13.8	93.9	6.2
Mental retardation	19.9	81.5	39.0	60.9
Serious emotional disturbance	33.0	67.7	57.9	42.1
Multiple impairments	40.0	60.0	32.9	67.2
Hearing impairments	48.2	51.8	71.5	28.5
Orthopedic impairments	43.2	57.1	66.1	33.9
Other health impairments	66.3	33.7	73.4	26.6
Visual impairments	57.4	42.5	81.0	19.0
Autism	18.1	82.0	25.9	74.2
Deaf-blindness	27.6	72.4	49.5	50.5
Traumatic brain injury	40.7	58.9	58.1	42.1
All disabilities	58.7%	41.3&	76.6%	23.4%

Source: The 1992 Office for Civil Rights Elementary School Survey and the 1992 Common Core of Data Public School Universe File.

USELC Disseminates "Learning to Read/ Reading to Learn" Research Package

*N*ational longitudinal studies report that more than one in six young children encounter problems learning to read during their first three years of school. These reading problems cut across virtually every social, geographic, and cultural boundary. Thus, every school in the country has a number of children who are failing the task of learning to read.

The Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative proudly joined with twenty-three partner organizations, including the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, the Council for Exceptional Children, the International Reading Association, the National School Boards Association, and others to disseminate an important package of research findings from the National Center to Improve the Tools of Educators (NCITE), an OSEP-funded program based at the University of Oregon.

"Learning to Read, Reading to Learn" is the result of NCITE research on how to improve children's reading, specifically children with learning disabilities. The materials are applicable for use with all children, with our without identified disabilities, who are experiencing "normal" difficulties with reading. Materials are meant to be photocopied and used by parents and educators, and represent the most contemporary thinking on the topic of teaching reading and reading research in general. The packet contains the following materials:

- tips for teachers on teaching reading to children with learning disabilities
- tips for parents on how to strengthen reading skills at home
- principles for learning to read
- reading: the first chapter in education
- listing of "Researchers as Resources" on reading network
- bibliography on early reading instruction
- resource guide for '96/'97 on helping children with learning disabilities to succeed
- reprints of recent articles on learning to read from *American Educator* and *Teaching Exceptional Children*

As part of its commitment to keep members abreast of the latest and best research of interest to urban special education directors, USELC disseminated "Learnng to Read/Reading to Learn" to its members and associates as part of its August 1996 *Research Briefs*. ∎

USELC Membership Update – 45 District Members and Growing

*T*wo new members per month! That is the rate of growth the Collaborative has experienced during the last few months. In the first two months of this school year, the special education leadership of the following school districts have enrolled: Boston, Springfield and Newton, Massachusetts; Great Fall, Montana; Highline (Burien), Washington; Perth Amboy and Patterson, New Jersey; and Broward County (Fort Lauderdale), Florida. We welcome the new member districts and look forward to their contributions to building the Collaborative network.

The map below represents the Collaborative's membership as of October 31, 1996.

ARIZONA
Phoenix
Tucson

CALIFORNIA
San Diego

COLORADO
Aurora

FLORIDA
Broward County

GEORGIA
Clark County

ILLINOIS
Chicago
Elgin

INDIANA
Gary
South Bend

MASSACHUSETTS
Boston
Brockton
Cambridge
Fall River
Fitchburg
Lawrence
Lynn
New Bedford
Newton
Springfield
Worcester

MICHIGAN
Ann Arbor
Kalamazoo
Detroit
Flint

MONTANA
Great Falls

NEW JERSEY
Jersey City
Montclair
Paterson
Perth Amboy

NEW MEXICO
Albuquerque

NEW YORK
Binghamton
NYC District 75
Yonkers

RHODE ISLAND
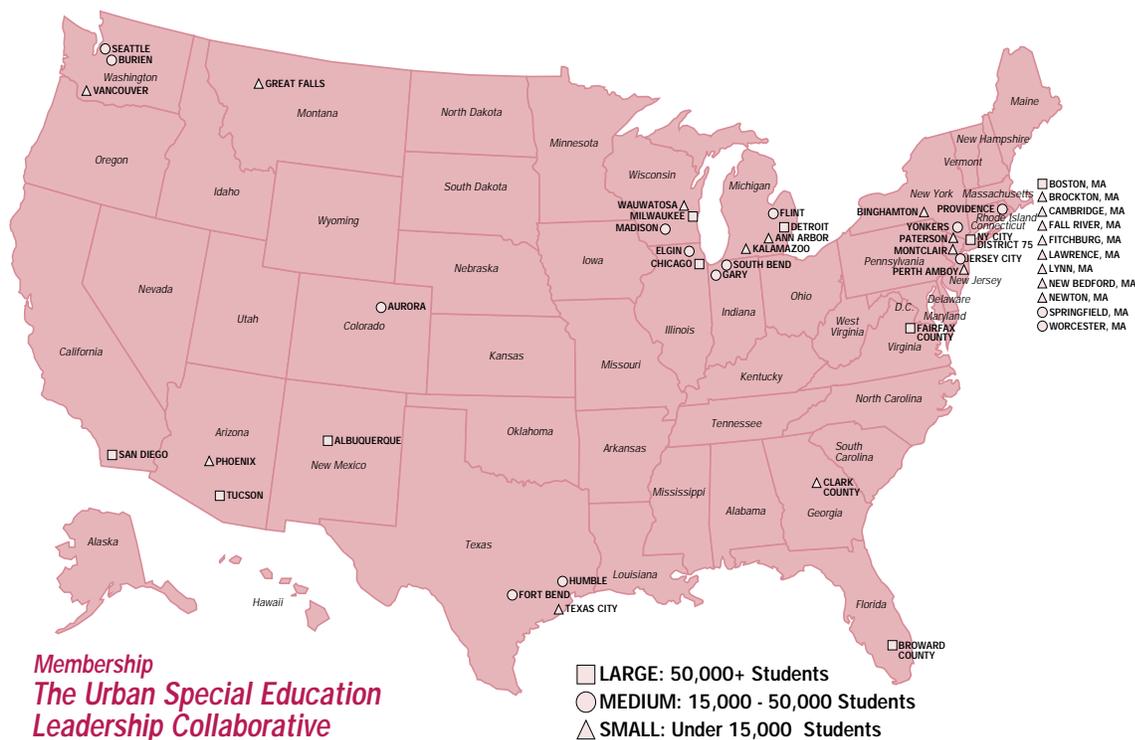Providence

TEXAS
Fort Bend
Humble
Texas City

VIRGINIA
Fairfax County

WASHINGTON
Burien
Seattle
Vancouver

WISCONSIN
Madison
Milwaukee
Wauwatosa

Membership
The Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative

☐ **LARGE: 50,000+ Students**
◯ **MEDIUM: 15,000 - 50,000 Students**
△ **SMALL: Under 15,000 Students**

Sponsored by EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT CENTER, INC.

Fax Back Form

If you are the special education director in a city and you are not now a member of the Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative, please consider joining us.

☐ **I want to enroll now. Please send me an enrollment form!**

☐ **I am interested in knowing more about the Collaborative. Please send me materials and call me.**

Name _____

Address _____

_____

Phone _____

Fax _____

We need your input concerning future activities of the Collaborative.
Please share your opinions and give us your advice.

The Collaborative publishes *Research Briefs* for distribution to our members, summarizing findings from the best and latest research in special education and related fields. What issues or topics would you like to see addressed in upcoming *Research Briefs?*

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

In each issue of *Urban Perspectives,* we highlight promising practices in schools and programs around the country. If you know of an exemplary program or service, please share with us a brief description and the name, address, and phone number of a contact person. We will follow up and consider including the information in an upcoming issue of the newsletter.

_____

_____

_____

General Comments and Suggestions:

_____

_____

Please fax your response to **617/969-3440** or mail it to *The Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative, EDC, 55 Chapel Street, Newton, MA 02158.*

Fax Us At 617-969-3440

*The Urban Special Education
   Leadership Collaborative*

c/o EDC

(Education Development Center, Inc.)

55 Chapel Street

Newton, MA 02158-1060