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EBONICS

HEARING

BEFORE A

SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED FIFTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

SPECIAL HEARING

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EBONICS

THURSDAY, JANUARY 23, 1997

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, AND EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES,
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met at 9:35 a.m., in room SD–216, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Arlen Specter (chairman) presiding.

Present: Senators Specter, Faircloth, and Craig.

NONDEPARTMENTAL WITNESSES

STATEMENTS OF:

MAXINE WATERS, U.S. CONGRESSWOMAN, CHAIRPERSON, BLACK CAUCUS

CAROLYN M. GETRIDGE, SUPERINTENDENT, OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

TONI COOK, ELECTED MEMBER, OAKLAND BOARD OF EDUCATION

MICHAEL LAMPKINS, STUDENT DIRECTOR, OAKLAND BOARD OF EDUCATION

ACCOMPANIED BY:

JEAN QUAN, BOARD PRESIDENT, OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

NABEEHAH SHAKIR, TEACHER, COORDINATOR FOR THE STANDARD ENGLISH PROFICIENCY PROGRAM, OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

OPENING REMARKS OF SENATOR ARLEN SPECTER

Senator SPECTER. The hearing of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, will now proceed.

This morning's hearing, in our capacity as appropriating subcommittee for the Department of Education, relates to the subject of ebonics, which is a term derived from ebony, black, and phonics, sound, coined in 1973 by Dr. Robert Williams who will be testifying at today's hearing and refers to an African-American speech pattern where linguistics experts have long debated whether ebonics constitutes a dialect, a language, or vernacular speech.

There has been considerable discussion, really controversy and concern, as to whether ebonics is a separate language, and as such undesirable or whether it is a teaching skill and a bridge for some to perfect and learn language skills. There is a very considerable Federal appropriations involvement because of very substantial

Federal funds which are available on education and related matters.

Illustratively, title I, education for the disadvantaged, provides funding of up to $7.7 billion, some of which could conceivably be used in this line, and the bilingual education program for limited English proficient students has funding of $156.7 million. The Office of Education Research, which studies and evaluates innovative educational techniques has a funding of $598.4 million. And the school improvement program, which addresses the particular needs of each school district and innovative methods of learning has funding of $1.426 billion.

Representative Peter King in the House of Representatives has introduced a resolution, H. Res. 28, expressing the sense of the House that ebonics should not have Federal funding. The current controversy arose on December 18, 1996, when the Board of Education of the Oakland Unified School District unanimously approved a resolution to devise a program to, "improve the English language skill of African-American students." The resolution generated controversy around three issues: First, whether ebonics is a language or a dialect of English; second, whether Federal funds earmarked for bilingual education should be made available for ebonics-based programs; and third, whether ebonics was to be bought in classes.

The board further stated that they, "approved a policy affirming standard American English language development for all students," and further that, "language development for African-American students, who comprise 53 percent of the students in the Oakland schools, will be enhanced with a recognition and understanding of the language structures unique to African-American students." When this policy generated a considerable amount of concern, the board at Oakland revised its resolution on January 15, and the newer version removed the statement that African-American students should be taught in their native language of ebonics, and instead the emphasis to be on the implementation of a full program featuring African language systems principles to move students from language patterns they bring to school to English proficiency.

The Secretary of Education, Richard Riley, issued a statement on December 24, 1996, as follows: "elevating black English to the status of a language is not our way to raise standards of achievement in our schools for our students. It has been determined by the United States Department of Education and the Clinton administration that the use of Federal bilingual educational funds for what has been called black English for ebonics is not permitted. The administration's policy is that ebonics is a nonstandard form of English and not a formal language."

The issue generated one very important lawsuit back in 1979 when in Ann Arbor, MI, a group of African-American mothers sued the local school board in the Federal courts for failing to recognize that their elementary school aged children used, "black vernacular, thus denying them equal educational opportunity, and the Federal court found in their favor, and without ordering any specific remedy said that there ought to be something done about that process."

In approaching this subject, I think it is important to note the emotional level on the matter generally. I relate to that very di-

rectly, recalling Yiddish being spoken in my house when I was a youngster, both of my parents being immigrants. And it was spoken a lot more when my brother was growing up—he was 10 years older than I—because he knew a lot more Yiddish than I did. And I can recall the difference of my father's accent, and it was different. And in our melting pot society, we all like to fit in and be similar and not stick out or be unusual. But at the same time, we all have pride in our own backgrounds, a great deal of ethnic pride.

And so it is a complex issue, and there is no doubt about the fact that education is, if not the highest priority in our society today, it is a priority second to none. And it is a matter for State and local control beyond any question, and the Federal education budget of $28 million is in the 5- to 6-percent range of the total education budget.

But we do have a considerable sum of money. The programs that I itemized total up to approximately $10 billion, which could touch on this subject, and we want to be sure that all Americans have the best educational opportunity possible to present themselves in the best light in a very, very highly competitive society we have, competing with other Americans and in a world competition competing with other countries. So it is a matter of very considerable importance.

We have a very balanced witness list. After the hearing was announced we had requests from many, many more people to testify, and we will have another hearing or hearings, depending upon what today's hearing discloses and what the interest is, and yesterday afternoon I received word from Congresswoman Waters about her interest in testifying, and she is the chairperson of the Black Caucus, and we have rearranged the schedule. She and I had a lengthy discussion yesterday. She said she could boil it down into 5 minutes. That is quite a challenge, but we do welcome her here, and I would like to yield now to my distinguished colleague, Senator Faircloth.

OPENING REMARKS OF SENATOR LAUCH FAIRCLOTH

Senator FAIRCLOTH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I thank you for holding the hearing, and I thank you for letting me join you this morning. I have just a very brief statement and thought on it, and I did want to express it this morning.

The issue, Mr. Chairman, has received a lot of attention all over the United States, particularly since the Oakland School Board announced the program. And I simply want to say that I think ebonics is absurd. This is a political correctness that simply has gone out of control. As Rev. Jesse Jackson said, it was teaching down to people, and that is the last thing we need to be doing.

Now, I am very much aware that teaching children in schools in the inner cities and in poor neighborhoods all over the country, rural or inner city, has never been easy, and it never will be. But rather than trying to lower the academic standards, we should try some of the old fashioned remedies that I think would still work. Nobody should be passed from grade to grade unless they can master the basic three R's of reading, writing, and arithmetic, and I think we have left that.

I think we need greater teacher control in the classroom. We should allow the teachers to discipline the children. That did work at one time, and I do not mean physical punishment, but they should have the right to discipline the children, to expel troublemakers immediately.

We should try school uniforms to raise the self esteem of the students, so families do not have to spend hundreds of dollars on clothes for school children. These ideas have worked. They worked long ago, and I think they produced a generation of people who had the basic reading and writing skills all over the Nation, cities and rural areas.

I simply do not think we need to go searching for a new form of English to solve the problems of the schools.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for letting me be heard.

Senator SPECTER. Well, thank you very much, Senator Faircloth.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF HON. MAXINE WATERS

We now turn to our first witness, the Honorable Maxine Waters, U.S. Congresswoman and chairperson of the Black Caucus. Welcome, Congresswoman Waters.

Ms. WATERS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I am extremely appreciative for the fact that you rearranged this hearing somewhat today to allow me to come over and share my comments with you, and I know that you were bombarded with requests by many people to come and speak, and the fact that you have allowed me to do this is indeed very much appreciated.

I have a prepared statement, and perhaps I will have an opportunity to go through some of the points of it, but I cannot start where I thought I would start because I want to be a part of setting the record straight. And I want to do that in a way that will help to educate and instruct so that we will not have Members of Congress and others who are policymakers continuing to mischaracterize what has been attempted by the Oakland School District and to give new definitions to words that have been used in an effort to help our children learn standard English.

I do not understand when it is said ebonics is absurd. I think it is somewhat misleading. It is not important to focus on words that attempt to describe the problem, but what is rather very much important is that we understand the issue. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Chairman and members, too many African-American children have been entering school year in and year out speaking different language patterns, something other than standard English. It persists, and when this happens it obstructs their ability to learn in ways that teachers would have them learn. They really cannot learn the sciences and math and other subjects that are being taught because they are not proficient in the English language.

We should not continue to pretend that this situation does not exist. It does exist. The different language patterns are real. Children continue to come to school day in and day out with these different language patterns, and it is a problem. We should commend the Oakland School District for finally saying to everybody: Let us recognize that this is happening, no matter what caused it, no matter why it has happened.

There are those who will attempt to explain it and talk about the roots of it, but the fact of the matter is we have children with different language patterns. Not only does it get in the way of their ability to learn oftentimes, if they continue with these language patterns as they enter the world of work, people will not listen to what they are saying. They will only listen to the fact that they sound different.

Oftentimes people are said to have said they do not understand what is being said by many of the folks who are using these different language patterns. And so the Oakland School District adopted a resolution, and this resolution basically said we are going to recognize that there are these language patterns and we are going to do something about it. We want all of our students to speak standard English, and we are going to have to teach our teachers and involve ourselves in the community in ways that will help everybody not only to recognize that these language patterns exist, but we must all work together to correct them so that in the final analysis the students will speak standard English.

So if we are clear about what is being attempted here, we will stop the misdefinitions and the incorrect descriptions about what is being attempted. Nobody is saying we want to change English, we want to teach black English, nobody is saying that. What we are saying is, and what they said is, we want to recognize that it is a fact of life. What can we do about it? How can we help students learn standard English? That is the goal.

And so let us not talk about ebonics being absurd or ridiculous. The fact of the matter is I think we all want the same thing. We want our students to speak standard English. So again, Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank you for allowing me the opportunity to appear today.

Reiterating, several weeks ago the Oakland Board of Education passed a resolution affirming its goal to teach standard American English to all of its students, including its African-American students. It adopted a strategy which recognizes that many African-American students use different language patterns. After years of trying to teach children with little or no experience using standard English, Oakland courageously faced directly that problem that it is, and many other school districts across the country face in teaching its students.

Millions of students enter school each year with a language structure unique to many African-Americans. Whether we like it or not, this is the reality. What the Oakland School Board has done is to acknowledge this and adopt a strategy for teachers and parents that will enhance their ability to achieve the goal of teaching proficient standard English to every one of its students. For this, Oakland should be commended. Often misunderstood, this action was a bold step, based on months of research and experience from many different school districts, community involvement, and yes, determination.

Let us not allow the debate over words, whether it is ebonics, pan-African communication behavior, or any other description, to obscure the fundamental point of the Oakland School Board's action. It does not matter what we call the language or dialect of our children. What matters is how we can teach them standard Eng-

lish. School districts around the country have been facing the problem of young children entering the classroom year after year without a basic understanding of standard English. Against the persistence of this problem, many jurisdictions have employed language development programs like that which Oakland has just adopted systemwide that have shown great promise.

We have an educational crisis in many quarters of America. According to the California State Department of Education, African-American students have a dropout rate of 7.6 percent, compared to 2.7 percent for whites. In the Oakland Unified School District, African-American students have an average grade point average [GPA] of 1.8, the lowest of any racial or ethnic group. The poor academic achievement level of African-American children in Oakland, and indeed in many American communities, requires parents, educators, and policymakers, to address this reality in a forthright matter. The status quo is not working. Many linguists have stated that Oakland's decision is credible, it is rational, and a potentially effective way to improve the academic standards of its students.

At a conference in Chicago, IL, this month, the Linguistic Society of America concluded that the Oakland School Board decision is linguistically sound and a proper teaching method. These conclusions underscore the basic point of this entire discussion, whether this language starting point, whatever this language starting point, we need to help children bridge the gap between the language patterns they know and standard English. We must find new ways to help these young men and women achieve their full potential. This is no simple task, and it will require the best creative minds. We must be open to new alternatives for bringing all of our children into the educational and professional mainstream, instead of ignoring language structures that have prevented our children from learning math, science, communications, and other subject which enhance their future prospects.

The Oakland School District has confronted the challenge head on. The Oakland Unified School District is not the first, nor will it be the last, to utilize the most primary teaching tool of all, take children where they are, and prepare them for the future.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I hope you will agree that the education of our children is one of if not the top priority. If we fail to prepare our children for the future, we will reap the whirlwind of their frustrated dreams. We just understand and incorporate the full context of the educational crisis in America to fully appreciate the recent actions of the Oakland School Board, as well as their strength and resolve. I believe with this perspective we can all move forward together, striving to attain the goal of equal educational opportunity for all American children.

I thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity to share my views, and I hope that following the information you will receive today you will have a better understanding of what is being done and what was said, and not allow the media hype to guide and direct the actions of the Senate or the Congress or policymakers of our Nation.

Senator SPECTER. Well, thank you very much, Congresswoman Waters. The object is to provide the best possible education to all Americans, everybody who lives in this country. That is what we

want to do. And when you make the comment that the people sound different, there is no doubt about that. And the way a person sounds makes a tremendous impact on that person's opportunity to get a job or to move ahead. And a lot of conclusions are drawn when you hear somebody over the telephone, and as I said in the brief opening comment, very meaningful to me as a child growing up, because my father sounded very different. And some of us sound different by way of our own accents. I still carry a Kansas accent, been trying to get rid of it forever, but I cannot do it. I really do not want to do it.

But we very much appreciate your coming here, we appreciate your leadership on the caucus, and we thank you for sharing your words with us.

Ms. WATERS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Senator SPECTER. Thank you.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF CAROLYN GETRIDGE

We will now turn to the next panel, Ms. Carolyn Getridge, Ms. Toni Cook and Mr. Michael Lampkins. At the witness table with them will be Jean Quan, board president of the Oakland Unified School District, and Nabeehah Shakir, teacher-coordinator for the Standard English Proficiency Program of the Oakland Unified School District. We very much appreciate your being here.

We have set very limited time standards because we do have so many witnesses. But we will understand if you deviate just a bit from them.

Our first witness is Ms. Carolyn Getridge, who was appointed superintendent of the Oakland Unified School District in 1994. A career educator, Ms. Getridge has worked in the Oakland schools in a number of positions, including teacher, principal, and administrator of management and development. Thank you very much for joining us here.

Ms. GETRIDGE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I certainly appreciate this opportunity to appear before the subcommittee, and I believe the experiences of the Oakland Unified School District will provide helpful insight into effective strategies to address the underachievement of African-American and other minority students in our public schools.

The single guiding goal in our district is to guarantee that conditions exist for all students to achieve academic success. This is our promise in Oakland. We are reinventing public schooling in a most fundamental way, moving beyond the right of students to attend school to a much more profound promise that students have the right to academic achievement in schools. The children of Oakland deserve this right.

They include 94 percent children of color; 53 percent are African-American children; 60 percent qualify for free or reduced lunch; and 48 percent come from households which receive aid to families with dependent children. Almost 30 percent have a home language other than English. Our students speak over 80 different languages, of which we formally track 61.

Oakland is the sixth-largest school district in the State of California, with over 52,000 students enrolled in our K–12 educational program. Almost 4,000 more children are enrolled in our early

childhood education centers, and still another 26,000 adults enroll in adult education courses.

The recent actions by the Oakland Unified School District have sparked a national debate concerning the failure of our public schools to effectively serve the educational needs of African-American children and other minority students. The media, however, has diverted attention away from our intent and goal of providing English language development and the more fundamental issue of student achievement in urban school systems. The action of the board is a bold response to a chronic and growing gap between those who are successful in our public schools and those who are not.

In our district, for example, the grade point average of African-American students is 1.8 on a 4 point scale, a D plus, while white and Asian students average over 3.0, or a B. The SAT scores show an equally widening gap. African-American students in Oakland score 97 points below the national average in verbal skills, and 110 points below the national average in mathematics.

Let me be very clear about the key factor determining success in our public schools. It is not race, it is not innate ability. Rather, it is a combination of factors such as creating an engaging learning environment that is language based and using instructional strategies which enable students to achieve success through effective effort and quality instruction. While there are exceptions, this data clearly paints a picture of an educational system in Oakland which fails a large percentage of students, and unfortunately this pattern of failure is the norm for our Nation's urban school districts. Our current educational practices will not prepare many African-American and other minority students to perform at high levels of achievement in or out of the classroom. In Oakland, we have taken a stand, and stated that this achievement gap is no longer acceptable.

What is at issue here is not whether ebonics is a language. This is a scholarly debate for linguists. What is at issue are the steps we as parents, Government leaders, and educational leaders are willing to take to address the chronic underachievement of these students. What are we doing to address these alarming statistics? We have engaged in districtwide reform in our school system. We have established high standards and a rigorous academic curriculum, algebra for all students by the ninth grade, laboratory science in middle schools and high schools, technology and computer classes, and a full 4 years of English for high school students.

We have put in place an accountability system from the boardroom to the classroom, and this fall we will widely publish our first school-by-school report card on key academic indicators. But that is not all. In order to achieve these high standards we have had to institute new practices, new ways of teaching. These new ways include a clear recognition of the connection between language, literacy, and learning. Math and science are no longer the gatekeepers determining postsecondary enrollment and success. Language is. Without a mastery of standard English, students are not able to succeed in mathematics and science.

This is why we have taken the action we have, and emphasized the linkage between language, literacy, and learning. The Standard

English Proficiency Program, or SEP, is one such strategy. SEP represents the application of the principles of English language development for students who bring from home language patterns other than standard English. Does this program work? We think so. At Prescott Elementary School, for example, which has been an early leader in providing SEP strategies in the classroom, students' reading scores are consistently above the district average.

Much has been made also of the issue of funding. We are fully committed to the reallocation of our current resources to fund a comprehensive array of strategies to implement districtwide reforms which guarantee all of our students the opportunity for academic success. We have not requested State or Federal funds for this purpose.

We do, however, believe that the Federal Government can play a role to support the efforts of urban school districts. First and foremost, expand early childhood education programs for all children aged 3 and 4. Preschool is a proven and cost-effective strategy to improve the education and the life circumstances of children. Second, fund a longer school day and school year to support educational achievement needs of urban youth, and youths throughout this country. Third, expand funding for professional development opportunities, so that we can continue to retool the teacher work force.

Senator SPECTER. Ms. Getridge, you are substantially beyond your time. Can you summarize?

PREPARED STATEMENT

Ms. GETRIDGE. Yes; I can. I firmly believe we are on the verge of becoming a land of new promise and opportunity. Our educational system is the guarantee for that opportunity. Our moral obligation is to act on the data we have, and take bold steps that we may cross the bridge together into the 21st century.

Senator SPECTER. Thank you very much, Ms. Getridge.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CAROLYN M. GETRIDGE

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee: I am grateful for this opportunity to appear before the Subcommittee, which is broadly examining important questions regarding what role the Federal government should play in helping underachieving African-American students improve their academic standing, and exploring effective approaches to teach English language skills.

Hopefully, my background as a career educator of thirty years, and now as a Superintendent of an urban school district, the Oakland Unified School District, will provide helpful insight into effective strategies to address the underachievement of African-American and other minority students in our public schools.

The recent actions by the Oakland Unified School District have sparked a national debate concerning the failure of our public schools to effectively serve the educational needs of African-American and other minority students. The media focus on "ebonics" diverts our attention from the more substantive concerns of English language development, and the more fundamental issue of minority student achievement in urban schools systems.

The central issue is the underachievement of African-American and other minority children, and what we are doing to address this dismal record. Current achievement data demonstrate that no urban school district is effectively educating minority students. After thorough research, the Oakland Unified School District has determined a bold plan of action in order to turnaround a situation which for far too long has been tacitly accepted. This testimony is intended to clarify the actions of the Oakland Unified School District and advocate for additional reforms which are

required if the educational success of African-American and minority students is to be improved.

Although Oakland is the focus of attention, the issues we have surfaced are national in their scope. You cannot talk about issues of educational achievement of African-American children in urban America without also addressing issues of race, class, poverty, language, and immigration. Unfortunately, it is clear from the rhetoric surrounding this issue that we have not yet learned how to deal with the real issues of urban education in a respectful, coherent and logical way. Even in Oakland, which is known as the most integrated city in the United States, we struggle for ways to have this conversation.

We have, however, created a teachable moment of national proportion on issues of national urgency. Consequently, we also intend this testimony to add our perspective to solutions which address the underachievement of African-American and other minority children. Our reforms attempt to reform educational processes based on a system of "sorting", to a system of "achieving". We have fundamentally shifted our thinking from the right of students to attend school, to the right of students to achieve in school.

While many of the issues confronting urban American are not of our making, it seems all too often that we, as an urban school district, are the front line for dealing with these issues.

We will be better able to deal effectively with these issues if we are afforded the following supports:

—First, expand early childhood education programs for all children aged three and four. Preschool is a proven and cost effective strategy to improve the education and life circumstances of children. The expansion will also lead directly to jobs and support systems for the very people impacted by recently enacted welfare reforms;

—Second, include funding for schools as part of the various State and Federal urban initiatives and empowerment strategies. For example, urban schools are typically not in a position to fund the physical infrastructure improvements and school building additions required as city demographics shift in response to urban initiatives;

—Third, expand funding for professional development opportunities so that we can continue to retool the teacher workforce and address the needs of an influx of new teachers into our schools; and

—Finally, fund a longer school day and school year to support the educational achievement needs of urban youth.

In return, we will be better able to dedicate our efforts to:

—Establish clear and measurable academic standards and public accountability for progress toward those standards;

—Institute professional standards for teachers and administrators such as those developed by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards; and

—Develop City-Schools partnerships to mobilize and align resources dedicated to youth initiatives.

Furthermore, we can link local strategies together to improve urban education in the following ways:

—Establish a National Commission on Urban Education to:

—Identify key barriers to improving the quality of urban education, building on recent policy reports; and

—Develop strategies to overcome these barriers that take a systemic approach to school reform and build on corporate experiences re-engineering large organizations.

—Convene high visibility conferences of urban educators sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, creating the same dynamic as did the U.S. Department of Labor's "National Labor-Management Conference" which defined and elevated the best practice and made those practices acceptable to the mainstream.

—Hold focused conversations between national and state participants around key areas such as standards so that there is a meshing of state and national standards.

—Build a strong strand in the United States Conference of Mayors which links educational leaders of urban education with the work of cities.

—Create networks of this nation's proven reform networks, together with the educational leaders who are ultimately responsible for introducing and implementing those reforms into their districts.

The Oakland School Board's new policy has touched a nerve across the country. Talk show lines have been jammed and commentators have offered virtually nonstop opinion about the policy. Unfortunately, the reaction is based almost entirely

on very basic misinterpretations of the meaning and intent of the policy. In the education that America's public schools provide to minority children, there are many reasons to despair—but this policy is not one of them. Our testimony before this Senate subcommittee is an opportunity to set the record straight, answer specific questions which have been raised, and explore strategies to address the failure of our public schools to educate African-American and other minority students.

BACKGROUND

On December 18, 1996 the Oakland Unified School District's Board of Education approved a policy affirming Standard American English language development for all students. This policy mandates that effective instructional strategies be utilized to ensure that every child has the opportunity to achieve English language proficiency and academic success.

This policy is the result of over eighteen months of thorough research, analysis, and community involvement intended to systematically address the historical underachievement of African-American students in the Oakland Unified School District.

Committed to seeking strategies to address this dire situation, the Superintendent of Schools formed The Task Force on the Education of African-American Students to review district-wide achievement data and make recommendations for proven practices that would enhance the opportunity for all students to access and to successfully achieve the core curriculum.

The research-based recommendations of this Task Force focus on the direct connection of English language proficiency to student achievement, the unique language needs of many African-American pupils, and the opportunities for parents and the community to support improved academic achievement.

The Task Force's research identified the major role language development plays as the primary gatekeeper for academic success. Without English language proficiency students are unable to access or master advanced level course work in the areas of mathematics and science which have traditionally been viewed as the gatekeepers to enrollment in post-secondary education.

Language development for African-American students, who comprise 53 percent of students in the Oakland schools, will be enhanced with the recognition and understanding of the language structures unique to many African-American students. This language has been studied by scholars for decades and is referred to as "Ebonics," or "Pan-African Communication Behaviors," or "African Language Systems." The issues of language definition are the domain of linguists, and we did not take a position on whether these language structures are a dialect or a language.

Our interest is in guaranteeing that conditions exist for high achievement and research indicates that an awareness of these language patterns by educators helps students build a bridge to Standard American English. A variety of strategies will be employed to support language development and achieve our goal of high academic performance for all students.

This focus on English language development is the central recommendation among a framework of recommendations including recommendations for expanding Early Childhood Education programs, strengthening parent and community involvement, improving minority teacher recruitment, and revising district policies and procedures which contribute to increased numbers of students in Gifted and Talented programs and fewer students placed in Special Education.

What began as an attempt to bring about important improvements addressing the educational needs of African-American children became lost in a debate about words. Less than a month after the headline in the San Francisco Chronicle exclaimed "Oakland Schools OK Black English: Ebonics to be regarded as different, not wrong", it was clear that words had gotten in the way of action.

The Task Force was equally clear that the education of children is what matters most, and unanimously amended its resolution to embed the legislative intent into the language of the resolution. This amended resolution was unanimously adopted by the Board of Education at its January 15 meeting.

The Task Force recognized that parts of its original work required clarification:

—Replaced the term "genetically based" with its definition of "have origins in";

—The definition of "primary language" was clarified to mean the language a child brings from home; and

—The term "instruction in their primary language" was replaced with the intended meaning "to move students from the language pattern they bring to school to English proficiency".

These changes should reinforce the legislative intent of the Board of Education which is as follows:

First, Oakland Unified School District is not replacing the teaching of Standard American English with any other language. The District is not teaching Ebonics. Nothing could be further from the intent of this policy. Our District emphasizes teaching Standard American English and has set a high standard of excellence for all of its students.

Second, Oakland is providing its teachers and parents with the tools to address the diverse language needs that children bring into the classroom. This is not new. For over a decade our District has instituted the Standard English Proficiency Program (S.E.P.), a State of California model program, which promotes English-language development for African-American students. The S.E.P. training enables teachers to build on the history, culture, and language skills that many African-American students bring to school. The new Board policy takes these and other proven practices to all schools throughout our District.

Third, this policy is not an attempt to reallocate bilingual education funding. We are fully committed to incorporating this training into the professional development of our teachers and, if necessary, redirecting present funds to this end. We have not requested any State or Federal funds for this purpose.

The policy does:

—Set high standards for English language proficiency and link together effective instructional practices in a comprehensive program;

—Enhance and broaden early childhood education programs which have a nationally demonstrated positive educational return for the dollars invested;

—Actively recruit minority teachers and strengthen the professional development for teachers;

—Organize parents and the community in ways that support high levels of student achievement; and

—Revise District procedures and services to reduce the number of African-American students in our Special Education classes, and increase the number of our Gifted and Talented classes.

The directions set forth in this policy hold the promise for the positive, sound changes we must make in our nation's schools which historically have failed African-American students. This is Oakland's strategy to improve, not only students' English proficiency, but their overall academic achievement so that they can earn a place in higher education and the world of work.

THE CITY OF OAKLAND AND THE OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

The City of Oakland is situated on the east shore of San Francisco Bay in the northwest area of Alameda County. The Oakland Unified School District serves the educational needs of the City of Oakland and its boundaries are coterminous with the City. The San Francisco Bay Area, the fourth largest metropolitan area in the nation, enjoys a Mediterranean climate. The San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge connects the two major cities.

It has been said that "Oakland is the most integrated city anywhere". According to the 1990 census, the population of Oakland is 372,242 and is composed of at least eighty two languages and eight major ethnic groups. The 1995 California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS) reported an enrollment of 52,269 for the Oakland Unified School District, making it the sixth largest district in California. The number and percent of the populations of both the city of Oakland and the student enrollment of OUSD by ethnic group are shown in the chart below (See also Appendix 1).

Ethnic Group	City of Oakland		Oakland Unified School District	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
African-American	163,526	43.9	27,265	52
Asian	45,879	12.3	9,638	18
Caucasian	69,138	18.6	3,549	7
Filipino	7,327	2.0	512	1
Hispanic	51,711	13.9	10,622	20
Native American/American Indian	2,371	0.6	248	1
Pacific Island	1,725	0.5	435	1
Other	30,756	8.3		
Total	372,242	100	52,269	100

At any given time the Oakland Unified School District provides educational services to approximately 15,600 Limited English Proficient students (30 percent of our student population) who bring with them over sixty different home languages. The major language groups include: Cambodian, Cantonese, Laotian, Mien, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese (Appendix 2). A full breakdown of the student population by Limited English Proficient and Fluent English Proficient is provided in Appendix 3.

During the 1995–1996 school year, the school district operated 99 school sites including: two K–3 schools, one K–4 school, six K–5 schools, one 4–8 school, four K–8 schools, forty-seven regularly scheduled elementary schools, twelve elementary schools on year-round schedules, one 7–8 middle school, one 5–8 middle school, four 6–8 middle schools, nine 7–9 junior high schools, six comprehensive senior high schools, one alternative high school, four continuation high schools, three temporary alternative programs, one high school independent study center, one Cyesis center for teenage mothers, and three Exceptional Children's Centers. The language distribution by school and grade is presented in Appendix 4.

In addition, four adult education schools serve approximately 26,000 students, twenty five preschools serve approximately 900 students, and forty child development centers plus one elementary school which has "latch-key" (before and after school) program that serves approximately 26 students.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The findings on student achievement in Oakland are evidence that the current system is not working for most African-American children (Appendix 5). While 52 percent of the students in the Oakland Unified School District are African-American, only 37 percent of the students enrolled in our Gifted and Talented classes are African-American, and yet 71 percent of the students enrolled in Special Education are African-American. Other findings include the following:

—The average grade-point average of African-American students is 1.80 compared to the District average of 2.12, and over 3.0 for white and Chinese students (Appendix 6);

—80 percent of all suspended students are African-American (Appendix 7, column 3);

—64 percent of students who repeat the same grade are African-American (Appendix 7, column 3);

—67 percent of students classified as truant are African-American; and

—only 81 percent of the African-American students who make it to 12th grade actually graduate.

The achievement test scores for African-American and Hispanic students are the lowest in our District. At our benchmark grade levels, the African-American students score at least 47 percentile points below white students in reading (Appendix 8). While white students have exhibited an upward trend in their scores over the past three years, scores for minority students have remained flat or declined (Appendix 9).

THE STRATEGIC DIRECTION OF THE OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

The work of the Task Force on the Education of African-American Students is part of a larger strategic effort by the Oakland Unified School District designed to build a system of excellent schools. If we are to move from a system based on "sorting" students, to a system based on achievement for all students, our reforms must be district-wide in nature, impacting all schools. We have set out to accomplish this by developing clear and measurable standards benchmarked to worldclass levels of performance, establishing systems of accountability based on objective data, and providing schools and offices with the training, resources, and decision making authority required to achieve this result.

This strategic effort builds purposefully on the District's efforts to establish powerful models for whole school change, create strategies to address the life circumstances of our students, and put in place the core curriculum which defines the essential academic standards for student success.

The work has been undertaken within a context of enormous demands on, and challenges to the viability of the District. During this period the District successfully emerged from Advisory Trusteeship, resolved a bitter strike without long-term negative consequences to the financial health of the District, and involved parents and community members and organizations in unprecedented numbers and ways. Future and unexpected demands will, no doubt, emerge and challenge us to remain focused on our priority to build a system of excellent schools which work for all students.

At this point in time we have established a District which is making positive strides in turning about years of chronic underfunding. We have focused staff, parents, students, and the community on an effective educational program meeting the needs of all children, and we are beginning to see promising signs of improved performance.

The primary goal of the school district is to "Guarantee that conditions exist for student achievement," is supported by five additional goals. Our mandate is to build an opportunity structure which enables all students to access the core curriculum and achieve at high levels of performance.

Equity of opportunity and high achievement by all students require the establishment of high standards and the uniform implementation of a rigorous academic core curriculum and support programs. In partnership with the Clorox Company Foundation we have embarked upon a district-wide initiative which embodies the principles of the Efficacy Institute as a process for the development of high standards benchmarked to national and State standards and reinforced through Efficacy. We have continued to implement the Core Curriculum adopted by the Board of Education in 1993. The Core Curriculum alignment to achieve these standards is an ongoing process.

The 1995 Mathematics textbook adoption resulted in an upgraded Mathematics Curriculum and the publishing of "Nuts and Bolts," a highly acclaimed resource guide for teachers of Mathematics. The English-Language Arts adoption, currently underway has similarly resulted in an enrichment of that curriculum (as evidenced by the standards), and has, for the first time, led to the integration of English Language Development and Bilingual Education. Our focus on early literacy is supported by programs such as Reading Recovery, the Early Literacy Inservice Course, and Standard English Proficiency (SEP) which serve the diverse learning needs of our students and are essential strategies for achieving the goal of all students reading by 3rd grade.

The Science Curriculum has also been enhanced through our partnerships with the Bay Area Science and Technology Educational Consortium (BASTEC), and the Leadership Institute for Teaching Elementary Science (LITES). Course requirements have been expanded with a full year of science for 7th grade, and the linking of a semester of science with the TechLab 2000 in 8th grade. This course structure further illustrates the integration of our academic curriculum with a career preparation curriculum.

During the past two years academic offerings lost to previous budget reductions have been re-established. These additions include our Music program and our Foreign Language program. We are currently experimenting with a Distance Learning Program for Foreign Language, which, if successful, will enable us to offer language at all schools and achieve our goal of all students being fluent in two or more languages.

The Curriculum is supported by the use of technology in instruction and as a tool for learning. All schools are being wired for internet access and two successful NetDays have resulted in a significant number of classrooms connected to computer networks. Recognizing the need for ongoing staff development in this area we have dedicated significant training resources, including the renovation of our training facilities, to prepare staff to use and teach technology.

Student success in school is directly related to preschool preparation. We continue to expand our Child Development Centers and the curriculum of these Centers is integrated with our K–12 Curriculum. Our collaborative effort with the City—Oakland 2000—will ensure that preschool children have the intellectual and social skills for success in school. This foundation establishes the essential preparation required if we are to realize our goal of literacy at 3rd grade.

Through District and State resources we were able to successfully implement class size reduction of 20:1 in kindergarten and 1st grade. Class size reduction of 20:1 will be expanded to grades kindergarten, two, and three in September, 1997. We also extended the length of the kindergarten school day by 40 minutes to the State maximum. Teacher effectiveness in these reduced size classrooms is being supported by a grant of $280,000 from the State for professional development in literacy.

This past school year marked a significant milestone in the District as the Board unanimously passed a resolution for the reconfiguration of grade-levels in our schools to K–5 Elementary Schools, 6–8 Middle Schools, and 9–12 High Schools. This reconfiguration assures parents that their children will receive the same high quality education, no matter which school they attend.

Oakland's High Schools are recognized nationally for their Career Academies and we have continued to add programs (most recently the Biotechnology Academy at Fremont High School, and the Shell Program at Castlemont High School. Recognition of our success is evidenced by the awarding of a $650,000 grant from the U.S.

Departments of Labor and Education to support the continued expansion of our Academies in the Castlemont attendance area. The Board recently approved a 5-year School-To-Career plan which establishes the strategies to achieve a full integration of career and college preparation in all high schools. The curriculum is bolstered by a continuing expansion of the number and variety of Advanced Placement courses at every high school.

Alternative Education programs are provided for students with special circumstances and learning needs. This year the programs have been restructured to better deliver a sound and rigorous educational program. They range from opportunity classes in elementary schools, to independent study. Programs are provided in alternative settings on community college campuses and in collaboration with community agencies such as the East Oakland Youth Development Corporation (EOYDC), the Bay Area Urban League, and Wildcat Camp Ranch House. We also support student success by utilizing our in-district student-run television studio, Channel 13, KDOL, to provide the highly successful homework hotline.

The Adult Education Program serves over 26,000 students who are pursuing their high school equivalency, or continuing their education to further their learning or career opportunities.

The District's goals define a set of strategic priorities which form the basis of our work in 1997. These priorities include the following:

—Finalize Content Standards and Performance Standards in the Spring of 1997.
—Adopt Increased High School Graduation Standards in the Spring of 1997.
—Implement class size reduction in grades K–3 by Fall of 1997.
—Continue to implement the Reconfiguration Plan during 1996–1997 working with local school communities to develop solutions to overcrowding caused by a combination of increased enrollment and greater than planned for class size reductions.
—Implement the Middle Grades Program in Fall of 1997.
—Expand School-To-Career Academies.
—Open and staff the Technology Resource Center.
—Establish coursework standards for professional development progression for certificated and classified staff.
—Publish the District and Schools Report Card in October of 1997.
—Expand the Foreign Language and Music Programs.
—Develop a new Special Education Plan.
—Develop uniform course descriptions for all Secondary schools.
—Implement the newly adopted standardized assessment.
—Adopt English Language Arts Instructional Materials.
—Implement Summer School Programs and Summer Bridge programs.
—Expand the Technology and Career Exploration Course to all High Schools.
—Complete of Internet access in 30 remaining elementary schools.
—Organize March NetDay.

Building a system of excellent schools requires the development of a system of support and services which provide schools and staff with the direction, resources, and solutions they need to deliver high quality instruction in an environment conducive to teaching and learning.

The District's organizational structure has been reorganized to focus all activities of the Central Office on service to schools. This means directly connecting the work of central services to results in student achievement. The Curriculum and Instruction functions have been integrated with the line support for schools, and that line support is now based on a model of service. Business Services are aligned to the financial needs of the schools and Facilities Planning has been established to effectively manage the massive increase in facilities resources, both through local bond funds (Measure C) and State Modernization funds. Human Resources has integrated Labor Relations and Personnel functions into a comprehensive strategy.

Each Division has engaged in significant redesign work and Departments have worked collectively through the Organizational Improvement Audit to establish performance standards. Purchasing has achieved a level of 98 percent delivery of materials ordered and this department has moved to a computerized system of ordering.

Custodial services have been restructured and are now based on standards of service, and accountability to the school. Furthermore, special services have been developed to provide deep cleaning for the year round schools.

A system of accountability is being developed, tied to measures of success at the school site. This ensures the alignment of our support services to the requirements of our schools. Accountability is also supported by the establishment of a District Hotline to handle complaints not resolved during the normal operation of our Divisions.

There has been an ongoing reallocation of resources from the Central Office to school sites, with the reduction of $1.5 million dollars in administrative costs this past year. Efficiencies have been gained through an aggressive contract management process highlighted by the negotiation of a new telecommunications contract saving $200,000 annually, and the purchase of natural gas through SPURR, a consortium of school districts collectively purchasing natural gas and other fuels.

District priorities in the area of organizational effectiveness and efficiency include the following:

—Refine measures of customer satisfaction and develop processes to routinely collect that data.
—Establish the Accountability Commission.
—Assemble and report to the community the District and School report card on performance in October of 1997.
—Continue the work of establishing systems of accountability and the monitoring tools necessary to validate results.
—Develop school improvement system including school improvement indicators and standards.
—Develop and score School Improvement Portfolios based on grade-level rubrics.
—Fully implement the School Improvement System initiative by September, 1997.
—Develop a strong monitoring plan for site and District office accountability.
—Present regular, public reports of the Organizational Improvement Audit.
—Expand administration of customer satisfaction surveys (of students/parents) before the end of the year.
—Commit to staff training in targeted areas on customer satisfaction.
—Develop specific positive recognition programs for spring.

LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

In 1993 the Oakland Unified School District adopted a rigorous academic core curriculum in the areas of Language Arts, Social Studies, Mathematics, and Science. This was the first step in a continuous process of raising academic standards within our District.

The Language Arts Curriculum and Instruction must address the learning needs of all 52,000 students who bring 60 languages to our schools and include components of English language development and bilingual education.

The Oakland Unified School District is completing work on a comprehensive program that aligns high standards, quality teaching, and assessment in order to meet the diverse learning requirements of every student. Students who bring to the classroom African-American language patterns, students who have special learning needs, students who are bilingual, students eligible for advanced placement, and English only students will be successful learners as a result of the District's well-aligned core curriculum program.

The process to develop the District's core language arts program is broad-based and inclusive. Teachers who represent all of Oakland's diverse classrooms, administrators, parents, students and community members form committees to establish Content and Performance Standards. The Standards are then used as criteria to select textbooks and materials and to focus on effective teaching practices. Based on the ability to measure achievement of the Standards, assessment tools—standardized tests and performance assessments—are selected or realigned. All instructional staff are trained on the Standards and their linkages to textbooks and materials, support programs and assessment. This comprehensive alignment of the components of effective instruction closes gaps through which students—particularly African-American students—have fallen over the years. The alignment also assures that every student is provided a strong, quality program of instruction that addresses their diverse learning requirements.

Content and performance standards, which form the basis for the design of this comprehensive curricular program, are based on the National Council of Teachers of English/International Reading Association (NCTE/IRA) standards, the work of the New Standards Project, and the California Challenge Standards. Oakland's drafts of the Content and Performance standards reflect the range of language diversity in Oakland and are applicable to all students. The Standards (see Appendix 10 for examples of the Standards) are organized into the following categories: Reading; Literature, Public, and Functional Documents; Writing; Speaking, Listening, and Viewing; Media Literacy; and Student/Teacher Collaborative Assessment.

The comprehensive Language Arts textbook and instructional materials adoption process, scheduled for completion in April, will result in textbooks and materials for the following curricular strands (see Appendix 11 for a summary of the textbook and materials process and selection criteria): English/Language Arts (ELA); English

Language Development (ELD); Spanish Bilingual (grades K–5); and Advanced Placement English (grade 12).

The new language arts textbooks and materials are designed to enable students to master the reading, writing and speaking standards with greater proficiency and success than in past years. Briefly, the materials focus on:

—*Phonics.*—The explicit learning of phonics, sound-symbol correspondence, letter patterns, semantic cues and grammar in the context of language derived from the readings.

—*Vocabulary and Comprehension.*—Instruction in a variety of comprehension and critical thinking strategies that expand vocabulary and develop reading depth.

—*Writing.*—Lessons that stress writing as a process and offer opportunities for writing for different audiences and purposes.

—*Speaking and Listening.*—Lessons that help students deliver formal and informal speeches and oratorical events, and teach them to listen responsively and observe the customs of courteous discussion.

—*Literature.*—Richly multicultural and diverse materials address social issues, and cultivate, positive human value, and provide good role models.

—*Study of Language Diversity.*—Materials that stress the study of, and respect for, diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions and social roles, and are able to adapt to language use for audience and purpose.

Support programs, integrated with the adopted textbooks and instructional materials include, but are not limited to, the following:

—*Standard English Proficiency Program (S.E.P.).*—S.E.P. is a cultural-linguistic program that empowers African-American students with knowledge and understanding of African-American culture and languages. Classroom instruction demonstrates the differences in language spoken in the student's home and standard English. The language students bring into the classroom is embraced and a bridge is constructed to standard English.

—*Bilingual: Sheltered and SDAIE.*—Students receive, based on diagnosed needs, English language development instruction in the core language arts program through primary language (Spanish, Chinese, Cambodian, and Vietnamese), sheltered instruction, or Specifically Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) and instruction which promotes the student's self-esteem and cross-cultural understanding.

—*Strategies for Special Needs Students.*—Through the Individual Educational Program (IEP) process, students receive adapted materials (such as large print materials, interpreters for the deaf, specialized computer keyboards, etc.), pull-out instruction, assistance in the regular classroom, special day classes, non-public schools, etc.

—*Early Literacy Inservice Course (ELIC).*—ELIC provides staff training which includes topics such as: diagnosis of reading deficiencies, structure of the English language, research on how deficient readers read, planning and delivery of appropriate reading instruction based on assessment and evaluation, relationships between reading, writing, and spelling, and means of improving reading comprehension.

—*Advanced Placement.*—Beginning in 9th grade, teachers are provided training and students are provided support in order to increase the number of students, particularly students who are historically underrepresented in intensive, advanced placement courses.

The content and performance standards also formed the criteria for the selection of a new standardized assessment program. The adopted test, TerraNova, more accurately assesses the extent to which all students are successfully achieving the standards.

Performance assessments will also be designed and/or acquired to measure student progress toward, and the achievement of, the standards. These assessments are an important component of an integrated system of assessments which provide the teacher and student with valuable feedback to improve teaching and learning. Student work is collected in portfolios, performances, and projects, and assessed through the use of rubric-based criteria.

The implementation of the Language Arts core curriculum, textbooks and instructional materials, support programs, and assessments requires intensive and ongoing staff development. Generally, the staff development will focus on the following:

—The implementation of the new textbooks and instructional materials;

—The diverse language requirements of all of Oakland's students and unique support strategies to meet those requirements (e.g. S.E.P., bilingual, sheltered instruction, SDAIE, ELIC, and special needs);

—The linkages between standards, assessment, textbooks and materials, support programs, and staff development;
—Oral language development;
—Goals 2000: Early Literacy Requirements;
—Literacy integrated through all subjects;
—Reading development at the middle and high school levels;
—Assessment: implementation of the new standardized assessment and the development of performance assessments.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The research and recommendations of the Task Force on the Education of African-American Students are to be integrated into the strategic direction and Curriculum and Instruction plans of the Oakland Unified School District (Appendix 13). The resolution and implementation plan require the Oakland Unified School District to develop and implement an education program which supports high academic achievement by African-American students. Central to this program shall be the utilization of effective instructional strategies to ensure that every child has the opportunity to achieve English language proficiency.

The development and implementation of this program be monitored by the Task Force for the Education of African-American Students. The task force will also participate in the development of a communications strategy supporting the implementation of the recommendations.

Subcommittees, consisting of Task Force members, as well as teachers, parents, students, community members, and staff assigned by the Superintendent, will be convened to specify the programs, practices, professional development, parent and community involvement, and other activities which shall constitute the recommended education program.

One subcommittee will be convened to address the following components of the Educational Program:

—Establishment of a comprehensive program for English language development, building on and incorporating Standard English Proficiency (S.E.P.), and including assessments, materials, instructional strategies, staff development plan for the phased-in training of certificated and classified staff, and the parent, family, and community education required to implement that program.
—Enhancement of a comprehensive program for Early Childhood Education to strengthen linkages with, and broaden, existing effective programs and practices, such as Project 2000.
—Review of existing procedures and instructional strategies for GATE and Special Education and recommend revisions which address the disproportionate over or under representation by African-American students.
—Establishment of strategies to strengthen school-to-career preparation, workplace learning opportunities, and placement through career, job, and college fairs.
—Identification of a recruitment plan to increase the number of African-American teachers and counselors employed, and increase the number of African-American students enrolled in teacher certification programs.

A second subcommittee will be convened to recommend a comprehensive plan for parent and community involvement in the education of African-American students and the strategies required to implement that plan. This subcommittee will include in this plan the establishment of a speakers bureau, community sponsored educational programs, and linkages with community service agencies and existing effective programs and practices.

A third subcommittee will be convened to review existing support services and recommend a comprehensive structure for support services, and psychological and social services. These recommendations will include linkages with existing effective programs and practices provided by the City of Oakland, Alameda County, and Community-Based Organizations. This review will also include existing District services such as, Food Services, and make recommendations, if needed, for improvements in those services.

Based on the work of these subcommittees, the Task Force will make funding recommendations which will be considered as part of the annual budget development process. The District will also develop a process to annually evaluate instructional practices and support services to determine their effectiveness in increasing the academic achievement of African-American students.

ROLE OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Our efforts to guarantee that conditions exist for student achievement will be enhanced by a strong and coordinated support strategy linking state and federal resources with our local initiatives. Within existing resources we have the capacity to develop and implement innovative and promising practices. What we do not have the capacity to do is to unilaterally expand services to groups of children not currently served by the funding allocations provided to our District. Nor do we have the capacity to serve as a conveyor or clearinghouse linking together resources from across the country. Federal support enables us to move from pilot programs and small-scale projects to system-wide initiatives which move best practice to scale.

If we are to achieve our goal of high achievement by all students, we must implement our reforms system-wide. Several enhancements to the current educational system will support our efforts.

First, early childhood education programs should be expanded for all children aged three and four. Preschool is a proven and cost effective strategy to improve the education and life circumstances of children. The expansion will also lead directly to jobs and support systems for the very people impacted by recently enacted welfare reforms.

Second, funding for various State and Federal urban initiatives and empowerment strategies should include funding for new schools. For example, urban schools are typically not in a position to fund the physical infrastructure improvements and school building additions required as city demographics shift in response to urban initiatives.

Third, funding for professional development opportunities is essential so that we can continue to retool the teacher workforce and address the needs of an influx of new teachers into our schools. These funds are typically above and beyond the base funding for direct instructional services to students.

Finally, funding a longer school day and school year will support the educational achievement needs of urban youth. At present we link together on a piecemeal basis various city and community-based projects to service some of our youth in after-school, weekend, and summer programs. The systematic expansion of instructional time will ensure that all children have access to opportunities for higher achievement.

Furthermore, the Federal government can link local strategies together to improve urban education. We have identified several ways to achieve this linkage.

First, establish a National Commission on Urban Education to identify key barriers to improving the quality of urban education, building on recent policy reports; and develop strategies to overcome these barriers that take a systemic approach to school reform and build on corporate experiences re-engineering large organizations.

Second, convene high visibility conferences of urban educators sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, creating the same dynamic as did the U.S. Department of Labor's "National Labor-Management Conference" which defined and elevated best practice and made those practices acceptable to the mainstream.

Third, hold focused conversations between national and state participants around key areas such as standards so that there is a meshing of state and national standards.

Fourth, build a strong strand in the United States Conference of Mayors which links educational leaders of urban education with the work of cities.

And finally, create networks of this nation's proven reform networks, together with the educational leaders who are ultimately responsible for introducing and implementing those reforms into their districts.

CONCLUSION

The low level of African-American student achievement is well documented and represents a national crisis. Solutions which reverse the educational, social, and economic fortunes of African-American youth will require a concerted effort between our nation's communities, our school systems, and our governmental agencies at the city, state, and national level. In our efforts to address these serious issues, we stumbled briefly over a choice of words used to convey the intent of our direction, and we have corrected these flaws in our original resolution. If anything, however, this national debate does, indeed, signal the importance of words and language.

Even as we move beyond words, however, there is something deeply disturbing about the tone and tenor of the "ebonics" debate which has gripped the newspapers and airwaves of this country. More ink has been spilled in twenty five days debating this issue than has been spent in the entire thirteen years since the publication of the landmark report, A Nation At Risk, addressing the failure of our public schools to educate minority children.

This is not an Oakland problem. It is a national problem. The actions of the Oakland Board of Education have elevated the level of the debate on the education of African-American children. I welcome this debate and I am confident that, as a result, we will move Oakland and the nation to an open discussion of the connection between language and literacy. We must confront this issue head on.

The New York Times reported this past week on the growing gap in achievement between white and minority students. These statistics are both mind-numbing and a cause for moral outrage. Katie Haycock, Executive Director of the Education Trust, which produced the report, stated that, "There are schools that are able to overcome the problems of urban life and get terrific results. The question is when are we going to make them the rule and not the exceptions. We think kids are achieving at low levels not because of poverty or because their parents are less well educated, but because we're systematically teaching them less."

The question is not, whether or not we must act; rather we are confronted by questions about how best to act, and how quickly can we act? The answers to these questions are not simple and they are not comforting. Quite to the contrary, the answers to these questions challenge some of the fundamental assumptions we have about the purpose and design of education.

The strategies set forth by the Task Force on the Education of African-American Students provide us with the tools to instill high standards, institute a rigorous academic curriculum, and improve. instruction. The recommendations establish English language proficiency as the foundation for competency in all academic areas. Passage of this policy is a clear demonstration that the Oakland Unified School District is committed to take actions to turn around the educational achievement of its African-American students.

Our focus on African-American student achievement is all the more compelling because of the fact that if we find ways to help the least successful students, we will benefit all of our students. Every moment lost is a child lost. In the midst of this debate, our community has stood together and proclaimed that the loss of a single child is no longer acceptable. I leave it to the conscience of America to move our country beyond this debate and focus on issues of educational improvement.

Appendix 1.—Oakland Unified School District—grades served K–12

Division of Planning, Research, Evaluation, and Policy Development, 1995–96

African American	27,265
Pacific Islander	435
Asian	9,638
Caucasian	3,549
Filipino	512
Hispanic	10,622
Native American	248
Total enrollment	52,269

Student enrollment by ethnicity

	Percent
Native American	1
African American	52
Pacific Islander	1
Asian	18
Caucasian	7
Filipino	1
Hispanic	20

APPENDIX 2.—SELECTED MAJOR LANGUAGE GROUPS—LEP STUDENTS AS A PERCENT OF TOTAL DISTRICT ENROLLMENT [1]

[1995–96]

Language	Number	Percent
Cambodian	1,173	2.3
Cantonese	2,660	5.1
Laotian	268	0.51
Mien	837	1.6

APPENDIX 2.—SELECTED MAJOR LANGUAGE GROUPS—LEP STUDENTS AS A PERCENT OF TOTAL DISTRICT ENROLLMENT [1]—Continued

[1995–96]

Language	Number	Percent
Spanish	8,059	15.6
Tagalog	172	0.33
Vietnamese	1,449	2.8

[1] Total district enrollment 51661.

Data source: 1995–96 Language Census (R–30).

Appendix 3

OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Division of Planning, Research, Evaluation and Policy Development

Number of Limited English Proficient (LEP) and Fluent English Proficient Student (FEP) students by Language, March 8, 1996

Data Source: R-30

Code	Language	LEP	FEP
30	African (unspecified)	22	9
38	Amharic (Ethiopia)	26	5
31	Arabic (Egypt, Yemen)	190	27
44	Bengali (Bengal, Bangladesh)	0	2
09	Bulgarian (Bulgaria)	0	0
68	Burmese (Burma)	6	0
57	Cambodian (Cambodia)	1,173	238
52	Cantonese (China)	2,660	1,198
48	Chew Choa (China)	27	24
51	Chinese (China)	55	47
47	Chung Shan (China)	5	3
18	Czech (Czech Republic)	0	1
80	Dari (Afghanistan)	0	0
50	East Asian (unspecified)	0	1
10	European (unspecified)	5	7
73	Fijian (Fiji)	3	1
63	Filipino (unspecified))	17	25
12	French (France)	17	11
46	Fukienese (China)	1	2
7	German (Germany)	1	3
35	Greabo (Liberia)	1	0
22	Greek (Greece)	2	10
23	Hebrew (Israel)	0	2
42	Hindi (India)	40	23
59	Hmong (Laos)	2	0
34	Ibo (Africa)	5	11
65	Ilocano (Philippines)	2	5
67	Indonesian (Indonesia)	8	3
15	Italian (Italy)	2	3
90	Jamaican (Jamaica)	1	4
54	Japanese (Japan)	4	6

Code	Language	LEP	FEP
55	Korean (Korea)	28	29
36	Krio (Sierra Leone, Africa)	2	0
58	Lao (Laos)	268	64
33	Lingula (Zaire)	1	0
53	Mandarin (China)	44	23
20	Middle Eastern (unspecified)	1	4
60	Mien (Laos)	877	170
91	Native American (U.S.A.)	1	5
4	Norwegian (Norway)	0	1
21	Persian/Farsi (Iran)	1	9
17	Polish (Poland)	0	7
79	Polynesian (unspecified)	3	1
14	Portuguese (Portugal, Brazil)	8	5
45	Punjab (India)	4	4
05	Romany (Gypsy)	0	2
19	Romanian (Romania)	3	0
41	Russian (Russia)	15	14
72	Samoan (Samoa)	27	10
16	Serbo-Croatian	2	1
99	Sign Language	1	0
13	Spanish (Spain, Latin America)	8,059	1,360
64	Tagalog (Philippines)	172	122
61	Thai (Thailand)	9	3
32	Tigrinyan (Ethiopia)	61	39
71	Tongan (Tonga)	253	61
49	Tay san (China)	24	16
43	Urdu (India)	1	5
56	Vietnamese (Vietnam)	1,449	349
66	Visayan (Philippines)	1	0
40	West Asia (unspecified)	7	2
37	Yoruba (Guinea, Nigeria)	8	13

a. Total number of LEP Languages	53
b. Total Number of FEP Languages	51
c. Total Number LEP & FEP Lang.	61
d. Total number of LEP students	15,605
e. Total Number of FEP students	3,986
f. Total Number LEP & FEP students	61
g. Total Number of Student Enrolled	

Appendix 4

OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Division of Planning, Research, Evaluation and Policy Development

R30 Language Census: March 1996

Number of LEP and FEP Students by School and Grade Unit

SCHOOL	LEP	FEP	SCHOOL	LEP	FEP	SCHOOL	LEP	FEP
Arts School (K-8)	4	9	Lincoln (K-6)	606	89	Bunche	10	1
Allendale Y.R. (K-6)	348	46	Lockwood Y.R. (K-6)	284	21	Edna Brewer Jr. (7-9)	277	238
Bella Vista Y.R. (K-6)	548	59	Longfellow (K-6)	25	3	Carter Middle (6-8)	21	19
Brookfield (K-5)	95	20	Horace Mann Y.R. (K-6)	206	18	Claremont Middle (6-8)	57	48
Burbank (K-6)	14	5	Manzanita Y.R. (K-6)	472	32	Elmhurst Middle (6-8)	172	33
Burckhalter (K-6)	22	5	Markham (K-6)	104	12	Foster Middle (5-8)	70	17
Chabot (K-6)	14	12	Marshall (K-6)	24	4	Frick Jr. (7-9)	80	26
Cleveland (K-6)	180	111	Maxwell Park (K-6)	69	17	Bret Harte Jr. (7-9)	186	209
Cole (4-8)	32	13	Melrose (K-6)	375	28	Havenscourt Jr. (7-9)	252	65
Cox (K-5)	306	20	Joaquin Miller (K-6)	3	11	King Estates Jr. (7-9)	22	10
Crocker Hts. (K-6)	16	23	Montclair (K-6)	9	18	Lowell Middle (7-8)	56	14
Emerson (K-5)	60	12	Carl Munck (K-6)	35	50	Madison Middle (6-8)	119	34
Franklin Y.R. (K-6)	660	53	Parker (K-6)	36	4	Montera Jr. (7-9)	31	110
Fruitvale (K-6)	306	47	Peralta Y.R. (K-5)	3	2	Roosevelt Jr. (7-9)	547	205
Garfield Y.R. (K-6)	857	55	Piedmont Ave. (K-6)	37	22	Simmons Jr. (7-9)	535	184
Glenview (K-6)	108	31	Prescott (K-6)	176	17	Westlake Jr. (7-9)	191	103
Golden Gate (K-6)	37	8	Redwood Hgts. (K-6)	11	15	*Middle/Junior High*	2,626	1,316
Grass Valley (K-6)	2	6	Santa Fe (K-6)	21	5			
Hawthorne Y.R. (K-6)	945	50	Sequoia (K-6)	88	32			
Highland Y.R. (K-6)	400	14	Sherman (K-6)	17	5	*SCHOOL*	LEP	FEP
Hillcrest (K-8)	2	11	Sobrante Park (K-5)	120	9	Bunche Center (9-12)	1	1
Hoover (K-4)	109	10	Stonehurst (K-5)	337	20	Castlemont (9-12)	254	72
Howard (K-6)	2	1	John Swett (K-8)	19	14	Dewey (9-12)	44	16
Jefferson Y.R. (K-6)	773	73	Thornhill (K-6)	16	16	East Side Center (9-12)	1	0
Kaiser (K-8)	11	15	Toler Heights (K-3)	2	0	Far West (9-12)	7	10
M.L. King, Jr. (K-3)	71	10	Washington (K-6)	27	15	Fremont (10-12)	636	197
La Escuelita (K-6)	242	43	Webster Academy (K-6)	235	19	Independent Study	16	13
Lafayette (K-6)	159	11	Whittier Y.R. (K-6)	365	29	Laney Middle College	4	5
Lakeview (K-6)	59	14	Tilden	5	0	McClymonds (9-12)	76	18
Laurel (K-6)	221	54	Whitton	1	1	Merritt Middle College	3	2
Lazear (K-6)	392	39	*SUBTOTAL*	3,728	528	Oakland (10-12)	689	411
SUBTOTAL	6,995	880	*ELEM. TOTAL*	10,723	1,408	Oakland Technical (9-12)	257	233
						Skyline (10-12)	250	276
						Street Academy (9-12)	18	9
						S.H. TOTAL	2,256	1,263
						DISTRICT TOTAL	*LEP 15,605*	*FEP 3,987*

LEP = Limited English Proficient

FEP = Fluent English Proficient

Appendix 5

OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Division of Planning, Research, Evaluation, and Policy Development

AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Enrollment		
District: 52,269	African American: 27,265	% African American: 52%

Stability Rate of African American Students (% remaining at same school site for one year)	District	African American
Elementary	89%	86%
Middle/Junior High	82%	80%
Senior High	79%	75%

Behavioral Characteristics	District	African American
Dropout Rate	8.0%	8.2%
Retention Rate	3.9%	4.7%*
Suspension Rate	9.0%	14.0%

District Information Summary, p. 38, 40

*African Americans are 64% of all students retained

Program Enrollment of African American Students		
GATE: 37.2%	Title I: 54.5%	Special Education: 71.1%

Actual Attendance Rates of African American Students	District	African American
Elementary	92.6%	90.7%
Middle/Junior High	84.3%	81.6%
Senior High	77.0%	73.2%

Average GPA's of African American Students	District	African American
1992-93	2.11	1.79
1993-94	2.08	1.75
1994-95	2.12	1.80

District Information Summary, p. 28

Appendix 6

OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Division of Planning, Research, Evaluation, and Policy Development

ACADEMIC* GRADE POINT AVERAGE BY ETHNICITY
District Middle/Junior High Schools
1994-95

ETHNIC GROUP	Number Enrolled	GPA
African American	4883	1.78
Hispanic	1697	2.15
Filipino	113	2.57
Other Asian	1092	2.85
White	579	3.09
Chinese	930	3.15
TOTAL/AVERAGE	9,438	2.16

ACADEMIC* GRADE POINT AVERAGE BY ETHNICITY
District High Schools
1994-95

ETHNIC GROUP	Number Enrolled	GPA
African American	4869	1.60
Pacific Islander	79	1.82
Hispanic	1382	1.90
Native American	30	1.94
Filipino	113	2.22
Other Asian	856	2.46
White	324	2.65
Chinese	924	2.77
TOTAL/AVERAGE	8577	2.17

* Academic GPA includes grades earned in mathematics, science, foreign language, English, and social science. 4.0 = A, 3.0= B, 2.0 = C, 1.0 = D

Appendix 7

OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Division of Planning, Research, Evaluation, and Policy Development

SUSPENSION RATE BY ETHNICITY
(Unduplicated Count*)
1995-96

ETHNIC GROUP	Number Enrolled	Number Suspended	Suspension Rate
African American	27,265	3,712	14%
Hispanic	10,622	510	5%
White	3,549	114	3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	9,638	279	3%
TOTAL	51,074	4,633	9%

*Unduplicated Count is the "head count" of individual students who were suspended one or more times.

RETENTION RATE BY ETHNICITY
1994-95

ETHNIC GROUP	Number Enrolled	Number Retained	Retention Rate
African American	27,410	1,288	4.7%
Hispanic	10,011	403	4.0%
White	3,467	70	2.0%
Asian	9,533	214	2.2%
TOTAL	50,421	2,022*	3.9%*

*This figure includes retentions of Filipino, Native American, and Pacific Islanders.

Appendix 8

OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Division of Planning, Research, Evaluation, and Policy Development

CTBS/4 Median National Percentile Rank
May 1994, 1995, 1996 - by Ethnicity
GRADE 3

Ethnicity	Reading			Language			Mathematics		
	1994	1995	1996	1994	1995	1996	1994	1995	1996
African American	24	23	21	18	19	17	19	17	15
Asian	28	25	27	30	28	28	43	38	42
Hispanic	20	14	16	16	11	10	22	19	16
White	73	76	78	66	69	66	69	70	70

CTBS/4 Median National Percentile Rank
May 1994, 1995, 1996 - by Ethnicity
GRADE 6

Ethnicity	Reading			Language			Mathematics		
	1994	1995	1996	1994	1995	1996	1994	1995	1996
African American	24	24	22	28	28	24	24	24	22
Asian	24	24	25	42	43	40	55	54	49
Hispanic	14	15	15	19	18	17	20	21	18
White	78	78	83	74	70	76	72	75	72

CTBS/4 Median National Percentile Rank
May 1994, 1995, 1996 - by Ethnicity
GRADE 9

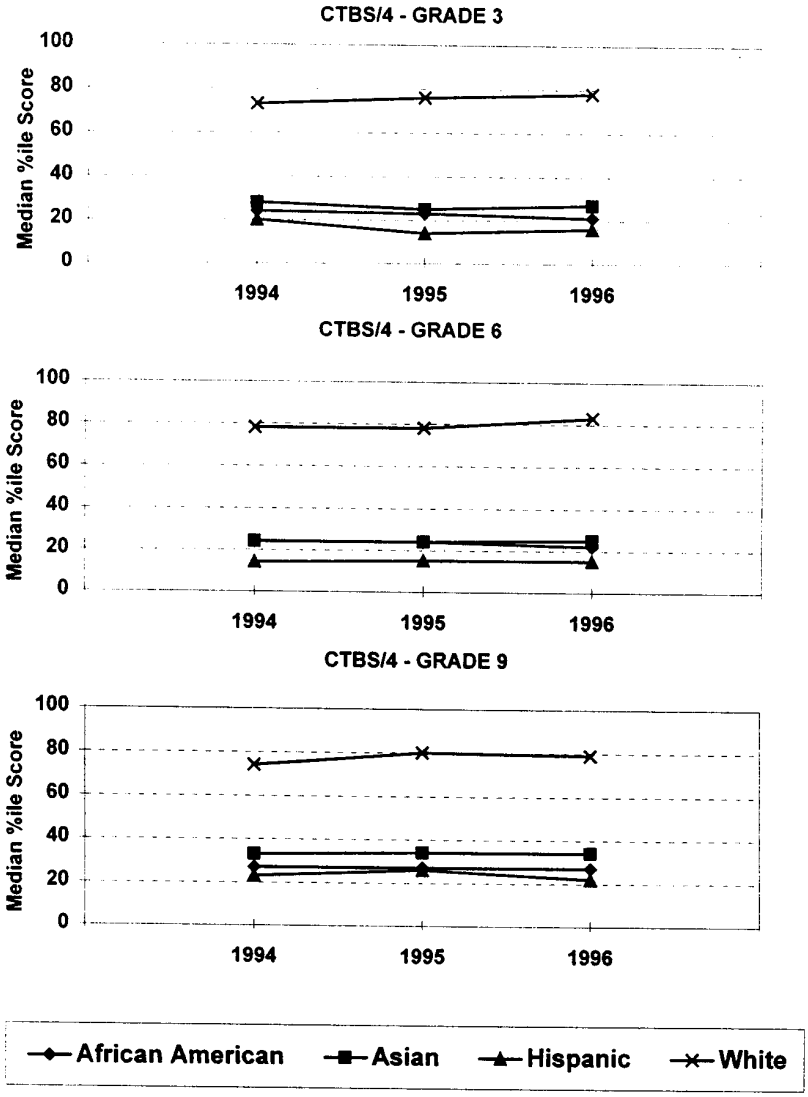
Ethnicity	Reading			Language			Mathematics		
	1994	1995	1996	1994	1995	1996	1994	1995	1996
African American	27	27	27	26	25	25	29	28	27
Asian	33	34	34	49	47	50	79	69	71
Hispanic	23	26	22	25	22	25	29	29	32
White	74	80	79	71	77	70	70	77	78

Appendix 9

OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Division of Planning, Research, Evaluation and Policy Development

TRENDS IN READING SCORES



APPENDIX 10

LANGUAGE ARTS CONTENT STANDARDS

SUMMARY AND EXAMPLES

Content standards.—Describe: What students should know and be able to do.

Performance standards.—Address the question: How good is good enough?

Performance standards are described in terms of three coordinating features: Performance criteria, examplars, and commentaries which explain how the exemplars meet the standard.

PREVIEW

OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS CONTENT STANDARDS—GRADE 6–12

Content Standard No. 1. Reading

Students read extensively and comprehend a wide range of materials of quality and complexity illustrated in California's recommended reading lists as well as district-adopted reading lists. Students read in depth and progress steadily in reading skills and fluency.

1A. Reading range.—Students read and comprehend a wide range of materials of quality and complexity illustrated in California's recommended reading lists as well as district-adopted reading lists.

1B. Reading depth.—Students read in depth about single issues, themes, or subjects, study multiple works by a single writer, and study the features of different literary genre.

1C. Reading skills and fluency.—Students use a wide range of strategies to read, understand, and evaluate increasingly challenging texts of many kinds, developing speed and skill.

Content Standards No. 2. Literature, Public and Functional Documents

Students read, critique, evaluate, and respond to a wide range of literature as well as public and functional documents from a diversity of time periods, genres, and cultures. Students read for a variety of purposes: communication, information, entertainment, aesthetics.

2A. Literature.—Students read a wide range of literature from a diversity of time periods, genres, and cultures to build an understanding of the many dimensions of human experience.

2B. Diversity in literature.—Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts that reflect the diversity of Oakland's community, California, the United States, and the world to develop an understanding of the multiplicity of American cultures; students study their own cultures and explore self-identity.

2C. Public documents.—Students read, critique, and respond to a range of public documents such as speeches, editorials, magazine articles, and campaign literature.

2D. Functional documents.—Students read, critique, and respond to a range of functional documents such as manuals, contracts, applications, and handbooks.

Content Standard No. 3. Writing

Students use a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements to communicate for different audiences and purposes. Students apply language conventions appropriately and respect language diversity.

3A. Writing as a process.—Students treat writing as a process in which they organizer thoughts and information, develop drafts, analyze, revise, and edit texts as appropriate for audience, context, and purpose.

3B. Writing for variety.—Students write to communicate effectively for a variety of audiences and purposes, developing style and voice.

—*Narration and narrative accounts*.—Students write narratives which are fictional, biographical, or autobiographical in stylistically effective ways to appeal to reader interest as well as narrate procedures.

—*Reports and research*.—Students conduct research and use a wide variety of resources to gather, evaluate, and synthesize information to create and communicate knowledge.

—*Persuasive writing*.—Students write persuasively, supporting positions with sound reasoning and strong evidence.

—*Reflective writing*.—Students write a variety of reflections in which they might analyze a situation, develop a personal observation into a larger significance, or create deeper insights.

—*Response to literature*.—Students respond to literature using a variety of forms such as suggesting interpretations, comparing and contrasting works, evaluating groups of selections, adapting language for different audiences.

—*Creative/expressive writing*.—Students write creatively, tapping the wellspring of personal experiences to re-cast them, for example, as fantasy, poetry, or drama.

—*Public documents*.—Students respond to and create a range of public documents such as speeches, editorials, magazine articles, and campaign literature.

—*Functional documents*.—Students respond to and create a wide range of functional documents such as manuals, contracts, applications, handbooks, letters, notes, resumes, and instructions.

—*Study of language diversity*.—Students study and respect diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions and social roles, and are able to adapt to language use for audience and purpose.

3C. Writing conventions.—Students apply knowledge of language structure and conventions: spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, word usage, sentence structure, and paragraphing for different audiences and purposes. Students show a command of standard English.

Content Standard No. 4. Speaking, Listening, and Viewing

Students listen, understand, view, evaluate, and speak effectively in both formal and informal situations using the appropriate conventions of language, for different audiences and purposes, to communicate ideas.

4A. Presenting information.—Students present information in a variety of spoken or recorded forms such as drama, oratory, recitation, reader's theatre, discussion, story telling, and multi-media presentations.

4B. Exchanging and responding to information.—Students respond as attentive, courteous, and critical listeners to oral and media presentations.

Content Standard No. 5. Media Literacy

Students use a variety of media, technological, and informational resources such as libraries, databases, computer networks, and video resources to gather and synthesize information and to evaluate and communicate knowledge.

5A. Media as resource.—Students use an array of media resources to access information and expand learning.

5B. Media as communication.—Students use media and technology to communicate and express knowledge and ideas.

Content Standard No. 6. Student/Teacher Collaborative Assessment

Students and teachers in collaboration engage in a wide range of assessment strategies which are used to plan, evaluate, and carry out instruction.

6A. Performance-based assessments.

6B. Portfolio collections and assessments.

6C. On-demand assessments.

6D. Anecdotal records and student/teacher conferences.

6E. Standardized assessments.

Standard 1: Reading *Range*

Students read extensively and comprehend a wide range of materials of quality and complexity illustrated in California's recommended reading lists as well as district-adopted reading lists.

Description and Rationale	Performance Criteria	Examples of Evidence
Reading is a recursive process in which students make meaning from a large and wide range of texts of quality and complexity. Students use a wide range of strategies to: • *demonstrate comprehension;* • *analyze and interpret print and nonprint texts;* • *make connections between parts of a text (such as character and plot), among several texts (such as a poem and a short story on the same theme), and between texts and other experiences in and out of school;* • *extend and apply a text (figure out how it can be used in another context) exploring the philosophical, ethical, and aesthetic realms of human experience;* • *evaluate and appreciate texts;* • *generalize beyond the text to a broader sample or concept such as understanding of self, U.S., or world cultures, or responding to the needs of society, the workplace, or self-fulfillment;* • *identify the structure and/or the emotional and logical impact of a text.*	**Students read and comprehend material of appropriate quality and complexity. Students read 25 books* each year or the equivalent in poems, short stories, essays, magazines, newspapers, textbooks, and media. The materials should include literature from a variety of time periods and cultures, spanning at least 3 literary genres and at least 5 different writers. Through reading a variety of texts, the student:** • **demonstrates a thorough understanding of the text as a whole;** • **identifies complexities presented in the text, such as ideas, information, levels of meaning;** • **reads for information ;** • **paraphrases wisely and well;** • **selects and reads books recreationally.** ***SEE ALSO: Diversity in Literature and Literature Standards.*** **NOTE: This* **includes** *cross-curricular reading for other classes and* **includes** *extended and recreational reading in addition to the core.*	To show evidence of reading widely, the student might: ⇒ maintain annotated lists of works read; ⇒ generate reading logs or journals; ⇒ participate in formal and informal book talks and discussions; ⇒ create an annotated book list for a reading group; ⇒ create performances based on readings; ⇒ create exhibits or graphics based on readings;

Standard 2: Literature, Public & Functional Documents
Diversity in Literature

Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts that reflect the diversity of Oakland's community, California, the United States, and the world to develop an understanding of the multiplicity of American cultures; students study their own cultures and explore self-identity.

Description and Rationale	Performance Criteria	Examples of Evidence

• *Students need to read and recognize literature which reflects the diversity of U.S. and world populations in terms of ethnicity, gender, age, social class, religion, and sexual orientation.*
• *Students gain a more inclusive view of American and world culture through the study of diverse literature.*
	• **Students read and view a wide range of diverse literature and nonprint text to develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in society;**
	• **Students develop skills and vocabulary needed to experience and appreciate diversity of literature.**
	• **Students use literature as a springboard to explore in depth these features of diverse cultures:**
	  • **ways of knowing the world,**
	  • **relationships of dominant and subgroup values,**
	  • **stereotyping,**
	  • **multiple perspectives within groups;**
	• **Students use literature to explore the similarities and differences of experience between diverse cultures;**
	• **Students read, discuss, and write about how dominant values and culture impact subgroup identity;**
	• **Students explore group to group relationships;**
	• **Students view literature in context of culture, history , and geography;**
	• **Students devise personal plans to take an active role in shaping society.**
		To show evidence of diversity in literature, students might:
		⇒ write a comparison of selections by and about divergent groups (such as, African-American, Chinese, Native American, Vietnamese, Latino/a, etc.);
		⇒ analyze cultural misunderstandings in divergent stories, essays, poems;
		⇒ debate issues of gender gap or class warfare after reading short selections;
		⇒ produce exhibit on religious tolerance based on graphics made in response to selected readings;
		⇒ respond to a variety of poetry on issues of sexual orientation by finding common ground;
		⇒ respond with questions and discussion to gay tolerance speakers and readings;
		⇒ evaluate the impact of the dominant group on characters from diverse plays or videos;
		⇒ create and implement a plan for direct personal commitment to social action as a response to literature about diverse groups;
		⇒ develop a proposal for the school to address inter-group tensions;
		⇒ create a display of stereotyping based on graphics and quotes from diverse groups based on media and literature.

Standard 3: Writing
Study of Language Diversity

Students study and respect diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles, and are able to adapt to language use for audience and purpose.

Description and Rationale	Performance Criteria	Examples of Evidence
• *The capacity to hear and respect different perspectives and to communicate with people whose lives and cultures are different from our own is a vital element of American society. Language is a powerful medium through which we develop cultural understanding, and the need to foster this understanding is increasingly urgent as our society becomes more diverse.* • *Students should discover that language use, dialect, and accent are cues for other kinds of differences and that different cultures' diverse ways of knowing the world are embodied in their languages.* • *Students should be aware of the connections between language and culture and of the variations in language use.* • *Students should recognize that ethnic or racial bias is often embedded in language and metaphor and be aware of the power of figurative language to shape perception.* • *Students should know how to share and construct meaning with peers across racial and cultural boundaries.*	**Students study and respect diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles. Students:** • **explore the social reality of the varieties of English in time, geography, culture, class, and ethnicity including attitudes toward the varieties of English;** • **switch varieties of English appropriately for audience and purpose;** • **explore connections between language, identity, culture, and stereotypes;** • **understand that language is dynamic, changing through time;** • **respect language differences.**	To show evidence of respect for language diversity, students might: ⇒ make personal dictionaries of the language of a specific group such as Vietnamese teens, rap musicians, etc.; ⇒ create grammatical rules for variant dialects from interviews of native speakers; ⇒ update scenes from plays such as *Pygmalion* or *Romeo and Juliet* to contemporary English or to a variant form; ⇒ write an additional stanza, dialogue, etc. for a Bobby Burns poem, a scene from Shakespeare, etc. to fit into the language variant of the original work; ⇒ write a dialect poem; ⇒ read poems written in a variety of types of English and analyzes why the poets chose to use those dialects; ⇒ write and present bilingual creative pieces; ⇒ research, observe, and discuss when and where standard English should be used.

Standard 3: Writing
Response to Literature

Students respond to literature using a variety of forms such as suggesting interpretations, comparing and contrasting works, evaluating groups of selections, adapting language for different audiences.

Description and Rationale	Performance Criteria	Examples of Evidence
Writing is a process through which a writer: • *shapes language to communicate effectively for different purposes, audiences, and contexts;* • *applies knowledge of language structure and conventions (spelling, punctuation, grammar), media techniques, figurative language, and genre;* • *applies and reflects on strategies and process of writing;* • *uses the steps of writing process flexibly, going back or leaping forward in the process with anticipation and need;* • *frames expectations of a task by drawing on prior writing experience;* • *dares new approaches and revisions in using elements of writing flexibly and adaptively;* • *creates, critiques, and discuss print and nonprint texts.* • *writes for personal purposes such as learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information.*	**Student produces a response to literature in which the writer:** • **engages the reader with context, persona, scenario, or other method;** • **makes a judgment that is interpretive, analytic, evaluative, or reflective;** • **supports judgments through references to text, to other works, authors, or nonprint media, or through references to personal knowledge** • **demonstrates understanding of the literary work through suggesting an interpretation;** • **anticipates a reader's questions or objections;** • **recognizes possible ambiguities, nuances, and complexities;** • **adapts language to audience**	To show evidence of response to literature, a student might: ⇒ write a literary response paper; ⇒ create a literary analysis; ⇒ write a book, play, or movie review;. ⇒ evaluate a literary selection, or a group of selections; ⇒ compare a piece of literature with its media presentation; ⇒ write a response that personalizes the theme of a literary work; ⇒ analyze the significance of a section of a novel in terms of its significance to the novel as a whole; ⇒ create a graphic in response to literature, then a paper explaining the graphic response

Standard 3: Writing *Conventions*

Students apply knowledge of language structure and conventions: spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar,word usage, sentence structure, and paragraphing for different audiences and purposes. Students show a command of standard English.

Description and Rationale	Performance Criteria	Examples of Evidence

Students need a working knowledge of the systems and structures of language, as well as familiarity with accepted language conventions to:
• *help them read, write, speak, and listen effectively in standard English;*
• *assist them in language maturity;*
• *learn to talk and think about the vehicles of language;*
• *make the texts they create both more accessible and more effective for general audiences;*
Social reality dictates that students need to have standard English in their repertoire of language forms and they need to know when and where to use it.
SEE ALSO: Language Diversity
	Students independently and habitually, with increasing accuracy, use the appropriate: spelling, grammar, punctuation, language usage, capitalization, sentence structure, and paragraphing to communicate clearly.
	• **Students use the conventions of writing (syntax, punctuation, paragraphing) to improve the clarity of written communication.**
	• **Students show increasing control of standard spelling.**
	• **Students develop more complex, varied sentence patterns in their prose.**
	• **Students connect the study of grammar and language patterns to the wider purposes of communication and artistic development.**
	• **Students analyze and revise written work by:**
	  • **adding or deleting details**
	  • **rearranging words, sentences, and paragraphs to clarify meaning.**
	SEE ALSO: Writing is a Process
		To show evidence of using appropriate conventions, students might:
		⇒ demonstrate in a piece of writing the ability to manage the conventions, grammar, and usage of English so that they aid rather than interfere with reading;
		⇒ proofread independently and accurately the student's own writing or the writing of others, using dictionaries, thesauruses, computer spelling and grammar checkers, and other resources as appropriate;
		⇒ demonstrate the use of the conventions, grammar, and usage of English in formal oral presentations;
		⇒ read aloud with appropriate expression;
		⇒ use a variety of sentence patterns for stylistic effect;
		⇒ spell proficiently;
		⇒ produce an error-free writing sample;
		⇒ experiment with alternative spelling (G.B. Shaw) and punctuation (ee cummings);
		⇒ maintain spelling logs.

Standard 4: Speaking, Listening and Viewing

Students listen, understand, view, evaluate, and speak effectively in both formal and informal situations using the appropriate conventions of language, for different audiences and purposes, to communicate ideas.

Description and Rationale	Performance Criteria	Examples of Evidence
Students will require speaking skills for life. Speaking and listening skills provide an excellent foundation for writing skills and reading skills. • *Students access and exchange information using a variety of oral language forms (oratory, drama, and discussion, for example).* • *Students respond to oral presentations appropriately for setting and purpose.* • *Students are critical listeners* • *Students present information in a variety of spoken and recorded forms such as: drama, oratory, recitation, discussion, debate, readers' theater, storytelling.*	**Students access and exchange appropriate information. They also:** • **respond to the questions of others;** • **paraphrase and summarize to increase understanding;** • **listen actively and use a variety of note taking strategies;** • **listen responsively and observes the customs of courteous discussion;** • **use strategies that include others in discussion and show respect for differing points of view;** • **speak audibly and with language suited to audience and purpose;** • **use oral and body language persuasively and expressively, including eye contact;** • **prepare for audience and adjust to its reactions;** • **evaluate credibility of speakers and of media presentations;** • **analyze how visual images convey and evoke emotions** • **deliver formal and informal speeches and oratorical events;** • **speak effectively in impromptu situations;** • **use notes, scripts, and visual aids;** • **follow oral directions.**	To show effective speaking and listening, students might: ⇒ research, plan, and conduct interviews; ⇒ demonstrate responsiveness to the questions of others with a variety of supportive strategies; ⇒ analyze argumentation and types of appeals in public policy speeches; ⇒ evaluate the credibility and probability of evidence used in a presentation; ⇒ engage in debate, choral reading, impromptu speaking, poetry reading, oratorical contests; ⇒ engage in fishbowl discussion; ⇒ ask appropriate follow-up questions; ⇒ take dual response and other varieties of notes; ⇒ develop and use criteria for effective listening and for assessing media and speeches; ⇒ act out original or literary scenes for small groups or a wider audience; ⇒ act as storytellers for younger students; ⇒ present weekly briefings to a class; ⇒ deliver famous or original speeches to class or wider audience; ⇒ use evaluation form to assess classmates as speakers; ⇒ use visual imagery with a speech to convey and evoke emotions.

APPENDIX 11

TEXTBOOK AND MATERIALS: PROCESS AND SELECTION CRITERIA

OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT CRITERIA FOR ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES ADOPTION—GRADES 6–12

Criteria categories: (based on California State criteria)
—Literature and the teaching of reading.
—Composition and the teaching of writing.
—Speaking, listening, and viewing and the development of oral/aural literacy.
—Media literacy and technological supports: Integration of the language arts—teacher support and student support. Assessment and evaluation, and presentation of materials.

Literature and the Teaching of Reading **Score _____**

	Comments:
Quality & Diversity of Literature I: Materials that are richly multicultural and diverse (no tokenism) where different social and ethnic groups are presented "authentically" and "non-stereotypically."	
Quality & Diversity of Literature II: Literature that addresses social issues and cultivates positive human values and provides good role models.	
Reading Range I: Materials that promote reading for a variety of purposes: communication, information, entertainment, aesthetics, etc.	
Reading Range II: Literature that includes fiction and non-fiction, classic and contemporary works; inclusion of public and functional documents for analysis and reflection.	
Reading Range III: Literature that connects with social studies in the context of culture, history, and geography and is tied to the California Social Studies Framework..	
Reading Range V: Literature that encourages teacher conviction and enthusiasm.	

Reading Depth VI: Materials that make thematic connections among texts	
Reading Depth VII: Materials that attend to literary terms" and help students interpret the effects of literary devices.	
Reading Skills & Fluency I: Sections that offer a balance of both accessible and increasing challenging texts.	
Reading Skills & Fluency II: Materials that offer a wide range of reading strategies for different reading skills.	
Reading Skills & Fluency III: Vocabulary building with attention to personal vocabulary development, high frequency words, and words frequently found on college entrance exams	
Study of Language Diversity I: Materials that stress an appreciation of language and words: the "romance" of words in relationship to text; that stresses different linguistic and racial heritages and offer the "study of language" in the context linguistic diversity.	

Composition and the Teaching of Writing **Score _____**

	Comments:
Writing As a Process: • Lessons that stress writing as a process and offer opportunities for writing for different audiences and purposes	
Writing Variety I: Suggestions and guided lessons for good writing assignments (prompts) in these genre: • reports and research • responses to literature • narratives and narrative accounts • persuasive arguments • reflection • creative expression • public documents • functional documents • study of language diversity	
Writing Variety II: Materials that offer student and professional models of writing, both fiction and non-fiction, and that are "authentic" and not a matter of "tokenism".	

Writing Conventions I: • Grammar lessons that are integrated with reading, writing, and the study of literature • Lessons that encourage the application of mechanics in published work, for real-life situations • Lessons that offer "direct" grammar instruction for practice and reinforcement • Lessons that offer "direct" instruction in vocabulary building and spelling	
Writing Conventions II: Lessons that teach and cultivate an appreciation for the "craft" of writing of different audiences and purposes	

Speaking, Listening, and Viewing and the Development of Oral/Aural Literacy

Presenting Information: Students present information in a variety of spoken or recorded forms: • Deliver formal and informal speeches and oratorical events • Use notes, scripts, and visual aids to support presentations • Use oral and body language persuasively and expressively including eye contact • Prepare for an audience and adjust to its reactions	

Exchanging and Responding to Information: Students respond as attentive, courteous, and critical listeners:

- Listen responsively and observe the customs of courteous discussion
- Listen actively and use a variety of note-taking strategies to record information and reaction
- Include others in discussion and show respect for differing points of view
- Evaluate credibility of speakers and media presentations

Media Literacy and Technological Supports:

Media as Resource I: Materials should help students choose appropriate media as access to information including libraries, databases, computer networks, laser discs, and videos.

***Media as Resource II*:** To cultivate "thoughtful" use of media, materials should help students:

- understand media vocabulary
- identify intended message and audience of advertisers, entertainment and new programs
- identify how visual images convey and evoke emotions
- identify media stereotyping and socially significant portrayals

Media for Expression and Communication I: Materials that help students: • use computers to compose texts and graphics for themselves and others and to publish their own work • use computers to assist in drafts, revising and editing their writing	
Media for Expression and Communication II: Materials that help students produce multi-media presentations	

Integration of the Language Arts:

Learning the Core Curriculum I: • Teaching the Content through integration of reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing and assessment. • Special attention to oral components that merge with reading and writing lessons and objectives • Skills taught in context and not in isolation --unless as reinforcement • Cooperative learning/interactive discussion opportunities that build community	
Learning the Core Curriculum I: • Lessons that urge metacognitive thinking, that connect to the "big picture" and bring "closure" to integrated lessons	

• Real-life applications; lessons that suggest major projects, like tours and field-trips • Attention to world of work; school-to-work: industry, technology • Integration with subjects across the curriculum	

Teacher Support:

Learning the Core Curriculum: • Materials that support implementation of the *Core Curriculum* and *Oakland's New Content and Performance Standards*. • Challenging assignments that carry "high expectations" • Material that offer interventions for different reading and writing levels • Materials that assist teachers with ELD students in mainstream classrooms • Materials that assist teachers with Special Education students • Materials that offer continuity - how things fit together - scope and sequence • Materials that offer an "eclectic array" or resources: speakers, movies, recordings, (audio/video), art, transparencies, music, multi-media, (laser disc/CD	

ROM) that are "authentic" and "appropriate" and do not promote stereotypes • Limited reliance on "textbooks;" more hands-on experiences, and experiential learning **Producing Evidence of Learning the Core Curriculum:** • Material that suggest a variety of "projects" that integrate learning	

Student Support

Learning the Core Curriculum I: • Opportunities for students-directed leaning versus teacher-directed learning • Tapping students prior knowledge and interests as a way to connect with lessons and materials • "Contextualizing" reading -- providing historical, cultural, geographical, and social backgrounds • Materials that offer assistance for different reading levels • "Eclectic approaches" that address different learning styles • Activities accessible to students with special needs: Special Education, ELD, assistance for multilingual student populations in the mainstream	

Learning the Core Curriculum II: • Opportunities for student-generated problems or questions and decisions • Materials that help students make connections, personally, intrapersonally, and metacognitively • Lessons that validate a variety of student responses, and promote alternative interpretations • Materials that build classroom community	

Assessment and Evaluation

Teacher Assessment: • Materials that offer multiple ways to assess learning • Materials that help with "performance-based" and standardized test preparation	
Student/Teacher Collaborative Assessment: • Materials that offer "authentic Assessments" • Performances and product activities that showcase student achievement • Materials that offer student and professional models of reading and writing with articulated criteria that explicate features	

• Materials that help students "self-assess" work through use of criteria and rubrics and exemplars that serve as benchmarks • Materials that help students monitor their own work to set goals for improvement	

Presentation of Program and Materials

• Questions and activities should especially encourage reflective, evaluative, expressive, and interpretive thinking an limit factual and recall as means of supplemental support • There should be a reasonable balance between text and activities; not so many questions and assignments that they drag the learning process • The size and formatting of "text/print" should promote reading ease • The mix of text, art, illustration, activities, and questions should be balanced and not be "too busy" and/or "distracting!" • Accompanying art work, photography, and illustrations should not promote racial or cultural stereotypes	

APPENDIX 12

STANDARD ENGLISH PROGRAM—A BRIEF DESCRIPTION

WHAT IS S.E.P.?

The Standard English Proficiency Program (S.E.P.) is a cultural-linguistic program which empowers African-American students with knowledge and understanding of African and African-American culture and languages. Classroom instruction demonstrates the differences in the language spoken in the student's home and standard English. The teacher and school community embrace the language the students bring to the classroom and build a bridge to standard English. The teacher and school community acknowledge and understand the student's language. Students may cross the bridge from the language they speak to standard English with pride and dignity. The student understands and accepts the need to be able to communicate effectively in standard English in appropriate situations. The framework of the curriculum includes a variety of teaching methods and literary genre to prepare students for the global economy of the 21st century.

WHY SEP?

Many children, even before the age of five, learn an intricate system of language. They are able to construct sentences, ask questions, select appropriate pronouns and form negation using the structure (syntax, phonology, and grammar) of the language system to which they are born (Fromkin/Rodman, 1974). Basically, children are not taught language in the sense that they are taught arithmetic. They learn it by themselves and as long as it is spoken around them, they seem to mirror the language of their environment. Since language is learned by children whether or not it is taught to them, and since they model the language and dialects of their immediate environment as well as the values and behaviors fostered in that environment, all language, then, mirrors the environment in which it is used regardless of race or social status; and children, unless neurologically or physically handicapped, enter school with a language system that is reflective of their cultural milieu.

For many Black children, this system is euphemistically called Black English.[1] Because of the negative connotation often associated with the term "Black English," the State Department of Education elected to use the term "Black Language."

Succinctly, Black Language connotes a system that embodies communication styles, intonation, body language, structure, and grammar. In addition, various studies support the notion that Black Language derives from a bona fide language system with its own semantic grammatical and phonological structure. Yet, the origin of Black Language is as controversial today as the origin of language itself and no one theory seems to earn consensus in the field of linguistics.

Therefore, the concern of the Standard English Program is not with the language system, per se, or its origin; but rather, it is with the recognition of the system in helping Black children learn standard English.[2]

Standard American English is constantly enriched by words, phrases, and usages originating in Black language, whatever its origin, is one of the many dialects of English, influenced by the changes which go on in other dialects.

A key problem in understanding differences in American English and positively respond to them, is the adverse social attitudes associated with so called non-standard dialects. Unfortunately, many teachers tend not to evaluate or judge language on the basis of its efficiency as a unique means of communication. Typically, language is treated as good or bad, right or wrong, and is usually based on the social status which specific language patterns tend to enjoy among the high-status people in the communities (Goodman, 1971), (Williams and Whitehead, 1971). It is important for teachers involved with students who speak Black Language to have an awareness of the peculiarity of Black Language in their culture and recognize that their language is an integral part of the culture; any antagonistic or demeaning criticism of their language is a direct attack on the student, the culture, and the society (Cromack, 1971). In other words, the perception of the student's language as inferior is by implication the perception of the student and his culture as inferior.

Black Language and standard English share most lexical forms and rules; the systematic differences are easily understood and can be readily taught in the classroom setting. The major obstacles to language learning may be teacher attitude and ac-

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[1] Black English is generally used as an euphemism for nonstandard English, or vernacular English.

[2] Standard English refers to that pattern of English which is more culturally valued and therefore, has a higher level of prestige or status associated with it.

ceptance. Although a statement by Kochman may be somewhat limited, it undoubtedly rings of truth:

The inescapable social truth of the matter is that people's attitudes toward other people's speech are merely extensions of people's attitudes toward their culture and the people of that culture (88).

Perhaps more important than awareness of the sociopsychological aspects of language is an understanding of the linguistic merits of non-standard dialects.[3] No language is more superior than another; they exist to be meaningful, and are "equally adopted to the needs of those who use them" (Hymes, 46). Basically, the linguistic viewpoint if clear—all communities develop a language that is a well-ordered system with a predictable sound pattern, grammatical structure, and vocabulary. Further, in that the language fulfills the communication requirements of the community, it is structurally as good as any other language (Baratz, 1969).

Without question, language is the basis for communication, and in western society, communication plays an important role in the determination of an individual's educational, social and vocational success. To the extent that standard English is the language of commerce both here and abroad, and to the extent that the futures of black students are not confined to any one community by dint of their language, it is imperative that they also learn the standard English dialect. Toward this goal, the Standard English Program is designed to assist school-level administrators and classroom teachers and parents in expanding the language skills of speakers of Black Language.

ABOUT SEP

The Standard English Program (SEP) focus on language arts enhancement for speakers of Black Language:

—It is not a program to teach Black Language.

—It is not a program to develop curriculum materials on Black Language.

—It is not a program for teachers to learn to speak Black Language.

It is, however, a program that recognizes and utilizes existing strengths in oral language from the students' primary culture as a basis for new language learning. The program presumes that language and culture are learned. It can be further surmised that the relationship between language and culture is so intimate that while the student learns the language, the student also learns the culture, and that a familiarity with understanding the culture gives better command over the language. Because of this intimacy, the relationship between the dominant and subdominant language skills, we engage in a process of enculturation: we add to their language repertoire and tactfully say, "take this, develop it, and go yonder." It is crucial that they have a conscious knowledge of what is yonder and what they already culturally possess.

While in the past the Standard English Program has focused on oral language development the current statewide focus on early literacy development requires that SEP also address this area of critical concern for African-American students. The year to come will include new attention to the role of SEP in promoting and facilitating the development of high levels of literacy among African-American children.

SEP

The concerns that give shape to the Standard English Program gained social relevance in the mid-sixties (mid-60's) and throughout the seventies (70's). The proliferation of research on Black Language during the 70's focused, pretty much, on the theme that Black Language is neither inferior, deficient, illogical, or incomplete; however, there are systematic differences. Just as there are systematic differences between English spoken by Americans and English spoken by Australians, there are also systematic differences between English spoken by speakers of Black Language and English spoken by speakers of standard English. Notwithstanding, the need for standard English competency in speakers of Black Language has been echoed by parents and by employers who hire Black high school graduates. The need is also reflected in the 1981 State Proficiency Assessment results, namely, the 1981 Statewide Summary of Student Performance on School District Proficiency Assessment.[4]

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[3] Dialect is a descriptive term used by linguists in reference to language variety. In some parlance, dialect is defined as a "variety of a language generally and mutually intelligible with other varieties of that language but set off from them by a unique complex features of pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary."

[4] Thirty-five (35) percent of Black students were failing standard English proficiency tests as compared to 29 percent and 15 percent whites. (A report prepared for the California legislature in response to the requirements of Educations Code Section 51219).

Interest in a program to address this need was presented at the Summit on Educational and Social Concerns in June 1979. A paper was subsequently developed by the Equal Educational Opportunities Commission (EEOC) of the California State Board of Education and presented to the State Board in November 1980. Succinctly, the paper outlined the need for special efforts to develop proficiency in standard English for students who are speakers of Black Language.

Following the presentations from the EEOC, the State Department of Education and local school board representatives, the State Board of Education adopted a policy in February 1981, directing districts to address the linguistic needs of Black Language speakers. Therefore, to provide proficiency in English to California students who are speakers of Black Language and to provide equal educational opportunities for those students, the State Board of Education and the State Department of Education recognize:

—That oral language development is a key strategy which facilitates learning in reading and other academic areas.

—That structured oral language practice in standard English should be provided on an ongoing basis.

—That oral language development should be emphasized during the teaching of reading and writing.

—That special program strategies are required to address the needs of speakers of Black Language.

—That staff development should be provided for policymakers, administrators, instructional personnel, and other responsible persons.

—That parents and the general public should be informed of the implications of educational strategies to address the linguistic needs of Black students; and

—That this effort to improve proficiency in standard English for speakers of Black Language is not (1) a program for students to be taught to speak Black Language; (2) a program for teachers to learn to speak Black Language; or (3) a program requiring materials in textbooks to be written in Black Language.

The Language Symposium is designed to provide administrators, teachers, and parents with a paradigm for implementing a quality language development program, or to enhance an existing program where needed.

APPENDIX 13

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE ON THE EDUCATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS

Purpose

It is the policy of the Oakland Unified School District to develop and implement an education program which supports high academic achievement by African-American students. Central to this program shall be the utilization of effective instructional strategies to ensure that every child has the opportunity to achieve English language proficiency.

Role of Task Force

The development and implementation of this program shall be monitored by the Task Force for the Education of African-American Students. The task force shall also participate in the development of a communications strategy supporting the implementation of the recommendations. This Task Force shall report to the Board of Education on a monthly basis.

Subcommittees

Subcommittees, consisting of Task Force members, as well as teachers, parents, students, community members, and staff assigned by the Superintendent, shall be convened to specify the programs, practices, professional development, parent and community involvement, and other activities which shall constitute the recommended education program. These subcommittees shall present their recommendations to the Task Force. Based on Task Force consensus, recommendations shall be presented to the Superintendent.

Educational Program

A subcommittee shall be convened to address the following components of the Educational Program:

Establishment of a comprehensive program for English language development, building on and incorporating Standard English Proficiency (S.E.P.), and including assessments, materials, instructional strategies, staff development plan for the

phased-in training of certificated and classified staff, and the parent, family, and community education required to implement that program.

Enhancement of a comprehensive program for Early Childhood Education to strengthen linkages with, and broaden, existing effective programs and practices, such as Project 2000.

Review of existing procedures and instructional strategies for GATE and Special Education and recommend revisions which address the disproportionate over or under representation by African-American students.

Establishment of strategies to strengthen school-to-career preparation, workplace learning opportunities, and placement through career, job, and college fairs.

Identification of a recruitment plan to increase the number of African-American teachers and counselors employed, and increase the number of African-American students enrolled in teacher certification programs.

Parent and Community Involvement

A subcommittee shall be convened to recommend a comprehensive plan for parent and community involvement in the education of African-American students and the strategies required to implement that plan. This subcommittee shall include in this plan the establishment of a speakers bureau, community sponsored educational programs, and linkages with community service agencies and existing effective programs and practices.

Support Services

A subcommittee shall be convened to review existing support services and recommend a comprehensive structure for support services, and psychological and social services. These recommendations shall include linkages with existing effective programs and practices provided by the City of Oakland, Alameda County, and Community-Based Organizations.

This review shall also include existing District services such as, but not limited to Food Services, and make recommendations, if needed, for improvements in those services.

Recommendations for Funding

The Task Force shall, by March 15, present to the Superintendent a list of funding priorities to support the implementation of its recommendations. These funding recommendations will be considered as part of the annual budget development process.

Evaluation

The District shall develop a process to annually evaluate instructional practices and support services to determine their effectiveness in increasing the academic achievement of African-American students.

REMARKS OF SENATOR LARRY E. CRAIG

Senator SPECTER. Senator Harkin, who is ranking on the committee, cannot be here. He is attending the funeral of Senator Paul Tsongas. I had wanted to go there myself. Senator Tsongas and I were colleagues for the first 4 years that I was here. But with witnesses coming from so far, we decided that I should stay and proceed with the hearing.

We have been joined by distinguished colleague Senator Larry Craig. Senator Craig, would you care to make an opening statement?

PREPARED STATEMENT

Senator CRAIG. Mr. Chairman, I do have an opening statement. I would ask that it be submitted for the record.

Senator SPECTER. It will be made a part of the record in full.

Senator CRAIG. Why do we not get on with the witnesses? They have traveled far, and we are anxious to hear what they have to say.

Senator SPECTER. Thank you very much, Senator Craig.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR LARRY E. CRAIG

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I would first like to thank the Chair, Senator Specter, and the ranking member, Senator Harkin, for holding this hearing and giving the subcommittee the opportunity to investigate this important topic.

While we are here to discuss the effect of language on education, the impact of language goes well beyond our nation's schools. And while America has always celebrated our ethnic diversity, a common language has allowed us to define who we are as a coherent people.

During the 104th Congress, I cosponsored legislation to make English the official language of government. I did so in the hope that an unified language would help bring our nation's ethnic groups closer. Already plagued by violence and division, the last thing our schools need is more separation. On the other hand, by encouraging students to work together, in a common language, we foster growth and understanding.

Language can be a tool in the hands of educators in elevating their pupils' ideas and knowledge. It is my understanding, and this will be clarified by our first panel of witnesses, that the Oakland policy on Ebonics aims to teach standard English, despite early press reports to the contrary. It is clearly in the students' interest to learn English early on and to participate in all that our schools and nation have to offer.

I look forward to hearing more on this issue, not only from our witnesses from Oakland, but from all those before the subcommittee today. Ideally this hearing will help to clarify the national discussion on the use of language in our schools—a topic important to all of us.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF TONI COOK

Senator SPECTER. We will now turn to Ms. Toni Cook. Elected to the Oakland, CA, Board of Education in 1990, she serves on the mayor's educational cabinet and the city council's community policy task force, and has also served as associate dean at Howard University School of Architecture and Planning and on the faculty of Morgan State University in Baltimore. Welcome, Ms. Cook. The floor is yours.

Ms. COOK. Thank you, Senator Specter.

Mr. Chairman, I am excited about having this opportunity to affirm much of what Superintendent Getridge has already shared with you, but I think more importantly to move out of the way some of the myths. Because I think what Oakland did has excited this country to talk about urban education, and in particular the education of the African-American young people.

First, let me just give you a brief summary of the task force, because I think far too many people think it was 30-some-odd people who sat in a room and had nothing else to do but to devise a plan that, "speaks down to our children." The task force was comprised of scholars, one of which was from the University of California at Berkeley, Dr. Agbu, comprised of administrators who must manage our school sites, teachers who have the awesome job day-to-day of educating our children, parents who entrust their children to us, and community members who have a stake in whether or not our children are well educated. And, of course, myself as a board members.

This, in fact, was one of the few opportunities that the elected officials, the administrators who must put it into place, the researchers who gave us our framework, and community who as a guiding part of our school system comes together to look at an issue, to depend on research, and to get it through our board of education. This task force spent some 6 months examining the

issue. It was put together at my request to the superintendent. It was a simple board request. They looked at this issue over time, looked at research. What the task force concluded, that the key to achievement of any of our students, whether they be African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Latinos, Caucasians, it matters not, is how well we master the language of commerce, and in this country it is the English language.

Ours is a literacy goal. As the superintendent has indicated to you, we allow reference to several names in which the black language, ebonics, pan-African language systems, we allowed reference to that, but in neither statement, neither the original version or the amended version, will you read a reference where we called it ebonics. We made reference to what the scholars have referred to it. This was the intent of the task force, and they came forth with nine recommendations, not just one.

But we believe, as I have said before, that the key to any child learning, the key to African-Americans learning, is how well we master the language of commerce. And as the superintendent has indicated, our guiding force has not been whether or not you agree or disagree with ebonics. It is the reality of what is happening in the Oakland Unified School District. Seventy-one percent of the students enrolled in Special Education, of which there are about approximately 5,000 who are African-Americans. Thirty-seven percent of the students enrolled in the gifted and talented program classes are African-Americans. Sixty-four percent of the students retained are African-Americans. Sixty-seven percent of students classified as truant are African-Americans. Seventy-one percent of the African-American males attend school on a regular basis. Nineteen percent of the 12th grade students who are African-Americans do not graduate. Eighty percent of all suspended students are African-Americans. And yes, it is true, of those seniors who graduate, they graduate with an average of approximately 1.8.

If we continue in the way that we are going, there is no way in which we can make good to these young people the new promise of America. We have an obligation to these youngsters, both moral and ethically. I believe the Oakland Unified School District, the board to the parents, has indeed made a bold statement. And without the statement and the steps that we made, unfortunately, Mr. Senator, we would not be here in this dialog.

PREPARED STATEMENT

If we have contributed nothing else to the discussion, on some 1,000 days plus before we enter the 21st century, you and I are sitting here before America talking about the educational status of the African-American student, and I hope that we leave here with you and I and America coming up with more recommendations, more solutions. We owe these young people, as we owe all of our young people, the best public education that we can offer. And I believe that you and I together can give them that promise.

Thank you.

Senator SPECTER. Thank you, Ms. Cook.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF TONI COOK

Our goal in coming here today is to focus attention on the facts—in Oakland, as in other urban school districts, research points to the overwhelming need to implement educational policies and instructional methods that produce more learning in the classroom, more motivate African-American students, and ultimately better schools.

The public education system, as it currently exists, is failing urban minority children at an alarming rate. Rich schools are thriving at the expense of poor schools; and, it is urban classrooms that are filled with the poor.

The fallout from under-educating generation, after generation of urban children is destined to take its toll America. The promise of global competitiveness for these children is fast becoming a gloomy one.

It is our job, as educational policy makers, is to develop innovative ways to nurture the critical thinkers and visionaries who sit in our classrooms, not to scold and discourage them; or, to break their spirit them and contain them.

Our student's under-achievement is symptomic of a larger problem with America's public education system—Nationally, parents, teachers, educators, and students themselves want classrooms organized in a manner conducive to teaching and learning. To us that is what true education reform is about.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF MICHAEL LAMPKINS

Senator SPECTER. We now turn to Mr. Michael Lampkins, who is a 12th grade students in Oakland Technical High, where he is associated student body vice president. He is a student director on the board of education. For the past 4 years he has been a staff member of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Oakland, and was recognized as the 1995–96 Pacific Regional Youth of the Year.

Welcome, Mr. Lampkins.

Senator CRAIG. Mr. Chairman, I saw a lump in this young man's throat just now, and so while you are getting ready to make your statement, let me say that I was once a student body officer in a high school, and I think I would have been scared to death testifying before a congressional panel of this nature, so relax, take a deep breath. We are very anxious to hear from you.

Senator SPECTER. Mr. Lampkins, whatever side of the podium you are on, there is a lot of tension being at these hearings. Senator Craig and I even have some ourselves. So it is your turn.

Mr. LAMPKINS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and distinguished panel members. As we embark on the 21st century, I come to you today with a plea. I want to be part of the new promise. I want to be able to have a competitive education and advanced degree so that I can compete in the global work force. But in order to compete I need a solid education.

I want to learn. I want teachers and administrators who not only want to see me succeed, but who will help me to succeed. I want my fellow students to join me on that quest to success, so that we can take over the leadership of this country and this world.

Let me give you a little background information about myself. I am 17 years old, and I currently work at the Boys and Girls Clubs of Oakland. I interact with youth on a day-to-day basis. I have been recognized as the Pacific Region Youth of the Year for Boys and Girls Clubs of America due to my participation in community activities, as well as my participation within the school, home, and within the world. And, in fact, I have held an audience with President Clinton. But when I walk out the door, 9 times out of 10 I am perceived quite differently. If the teachers do not understand me, and in turn I do not understand the teachers, learning does not

take place. There must be common ground. There must be communication. There must be some type of understanding.

The Oakland public schools want to create this understanding. Just as a doctor must be trained to diagnose symptoms of disease, a teacher must be trained to recognize language patterns. And although those patterns may be different than standard English, they are not deficiency. And with proper tooling and proper education, a bridge will built so that the youth do meet the standard English skills, so that they can speak, write, and read proficiently.

I firmly believe that through communication and through understanding, learning does take place. And as I said before, if a teacher does not understand the student and the student does not understand the teacher, then learning does not take place. We have spent countless amount of time debating the issue of whether or not ebonics is a language. I am not a linguist. I am, however, a brother, a student, and someone who cares. It is important that not only African-American students, but students in general be literate.

The students must acquire the three L's before they can acquire the three R's, the three L's being learning, literacy, and language. Once they have the three L's, the three R's are then possible. Without the three L's, the three R's seem foreign. There has to be common ground. There have to be tools in place to help students achieve standard American English.

PREPARED STATEMENT

This board has recognized that the students do come into the classrooms with an established language pattern. As a child growing up in your household, you adopt the language patterns that you hear on a day-to-day basis, and that is what you provide and that is what you have to offer when you step to the classrooms. When the teacher is able to recognize those patterns and when the teacher embraces that child, that child feels welcome, that child feels nurtured, and that child will accept learning.

Again I plea, I want to be a part of the new promise. I want my fellow students to be a part of that new promise.

Thank you.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MICHAEL LAMPKINS

I am a 17 year-old high school senior. My grades put me at the top of my Class. I work part-time and volunteer my time to help kids. I care for my elderly Grandmother. I was elected "Youth of the Year" by the Boys and Girls Clubs of America. And, I have held audience with President Clinton. But when I walk out that door, nine times out of ten, I'm perceived quite differently.

I need a solid education. I want to learn. I want teachers and administrators who want me to succeed in my future. I want African-American student counterparts in my classrooms who want to learn. Therefore, I need instructors with the classroom strategies that are right to meet my unique needs growing up in a contemporary urban community.

Just as a doctor must be trained to diagnose the symptoms of disease—teachers must be trained to recognize the language patterns students bring into the classroom. And, while those language patterns are different than standard English, they are not deficient, and with the proper instructional methods a bridge is built to transition students to learn to speak, read and write standard English proficiently.

As America embarks on the 21st Century, I come before you with a plea: I want to be a part of the "new promise." I want to be prepared with a competitive edu-

cation, and advanced degrees, so that I may take my rightful place as a leader in tomorrow's global workforce.

COMPETITOR IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Senator SPECTER. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Lampkins. That is a very impressive statement for anyone, especially someone in the 12th grade. And as a product of the system, you speak very well and make a very, very good showing.

We are going to proceed now with 5-minute rounds for the members, and let me begin with your comments, Mr. Lampkins, and I certainly endorse what you say about being a competitor in the 21st century, both at home and abroad. You said that when you walk out the door you are perceived differently. What did you mean by that? Would you amplify that as to how you feel that you are perceived differently?

Mr. LAMPKINS. When I make the statement that I am perceived differently, it is that just as Superintendent Getridge and board member Cook have stated, 53 percent of African-American students make up the Oakland Unified School District, and of that 50 percent the average is a 1.8 GPA. I look at myself to be an exception, but I do represent those students. Those students are my counterparts. They are, I would say, my constituents, as it is part of my duty as a student board member, I have to work with the students so that they understand the board.

Senator SPECTER. When the students come to school, have you found that they have a need for a different kind of linguistic or language instruction?

Mr. LAMPKINS. I think I made the statement before, and I will say it again. When a student does not understand the teacher and the teacher does not understand the student, learning does not take place.

Senator SPECTER. Well, when the students come to you, have you found that from your own experience, that the students do not understand the teacher and the teacher does not understand the students?

Mr. LAMPKINS. It is definitely evident. You have teachers who have gone into the classrooms not having been able to understand the students and have classified those students as special education students.

Senator SPECTER. Did you have a situation from your own personal involvement in education?

Mr. LAMPKINS. Like I said, I consider myself to be an exception. I have had teachers who embraced me, who nurtured me, who understood, and who respected what I brought to the classroom. So I have been an exception, but there are not many exceptions. These numbers show that there are not many exceptions. We need to bring the numbers off those levels that they are currently in.

Senator SPECTER. Ms. Getridge, turning to the question that may not be the real question but it is on a lot of different people's minds as to whether ebonics is a different language, and more precisely what it is and how it would be defined, on the Oakland Board Resolution for January 15 of this year, after the controversy arose, the statement was made, "a program featuring African language system principles to move students from the language patterns they

bring to school to English proficiency." Now, what do you mean by African language systems principles, and how would you really answer the question which is on a lot of minds as to whether it is a separate language?

Ms. GETRIDGE. Senator Specter, the issue regarding African language systems, ebonics, pan-African communications, behaviors, being a language or not, is not the debate of the Oakland schools. There are linguists who will testify today who will probably give more indepth understanding of that than can I.

The position of the Oakland schools is very clear. We recognize that children who come to us, many of the children who come to us, have language systems that are not consistent with standard English. Teachers must be aware of those systems, and they must have tools to move the students from those systems to standard English. So we have not taken a position as to whether it is a language. We simply acknowledge that these systems exist.

Senator SPECTER. When the student does not speak the basic English, why is there a need to teach some intermediate language before you teach the student English?

Ms. GETRIDGE. No; there is not. But there is a need to know that the language pattern has a fundamental basis in a grammar, in a structure, in a syntax, and what tools are available to move that student to standard English. The language patterns, and I am sure that Dr. Labov and Dr. Williams and Dr. Taylor will talk about this in their comments, but the language system has an African language base that includes English language words transposed thereupon, and an understanding of these principles will allow teachers to more effectively engage with students.

Just one final point on that: Language is the mechanism for engaging in the learning process. If for any reason the teacher believes, as Michael indicated earlier, that because that language pattern is different, that the student may not have the academic capacity to learn the more challenging content, that is an assumption that can be made.

Further, when students have an opportunity to engage in learning and they are consistently told that what they say or how they express themselves is wrong with no explanation of the reason that it is not acceptable or standard English, then students begin to shut down and will at some point, either intellectually or physically, drop out of the process.

We went to change that reality for many of the students in Oakland by giving teachers the ability to address these issues in a more consistent, thoughtful, and respectful way.

Senator SPECTER. Thank you very much, Ms. Getridge. I would yield now to my colleague, Senator Craig.

Senator CRAIG. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

Ms. Cook, I think we all recognize the importance of a language for communicating and understanding what is communicated, and I sense that this is what this is all about. You had mentioned the panel and the work they did. Was it solely this work, recognizing that you focused on the problems of the school district and the statistics that we have here. The 71 percent of students enrolled in special education being African-American, the 37 percent of students enrolled in gifted and talented classes being African-Amer-

ican, was it the language issue, the communicative issue only, or were there other issues involved or other recommendations that came from that panel that the school board and the school district was looking at?

Ms. COOK. You are absolutely right. The task force made nine recommendations, in terms of a total plan. The language issue was just one of those recommendations seen as a key. And it was about literacy, not just reading or writing. It was a literacy function. And, in fact, in some of the materials that have been shared with you, the task force recommendations are included.

Senator CRAIG. I will look at those.

Ms. COOK. Please. And I believe that we are keeping our promise and acting on that.

And while I have the mike, I am sorry that the other Senator left, would you share with him that the Oakland Unified School District is the second district in the State of California to adopt a mandatory uniform policy. That is just one thing that we are doing in our rather holistic approach to improving student ability. We wanted our students to concentrate more on substance and style. If you will share that with him, I am sure he will be pleased.

Senator CRAIG. Thank you. I have no further questions.

Senator SPECTER. Thank you very much, Senator Craig.

Before turning to the next panel, Ms. Getridge, I would like to ask you just one more question about a bit of your testimony where you said that none of the Federal funds were used on this program. Do you segregate the funds? You do receive title I funds and other Federal funds in a variety of ways, do you not?

Ms. GETRIDGE. My comment was that we have not requested State or Federal funds for this purpose. The standard English proficiency program does include some use of title I funds on a schoolsite basis. Those decisions are made by the School Site Councils at the respective schools as a part of their overall planning process. The decision as to whether or not these resources are appropriate for those students is made at the local level.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF JEAN QUAN

Ms. QUAN. Senator Specter, may I just say one thing?

Senator SPECTER. Ms. Quan, you may.

Ms. QUAN. You can say as president of the board, I am very proud to be president of the Oakland Board this year, and for the last 4 years I was the president of the Asian Pacific Islander School Board Association.

When you spoke of Federal funds earlier and you raised the issue of bilingual funds, it was never the intent of this board to use bilingual funds. To be quite honest, as an Asian-American, I do not think the funds are adequate even for the currently defined population. However, many of our kids in Oakland, one-third of them, are immigrants, and their home language is something other than English. They sit in classrooms next to African-American children who also have an issue of English proficiency. So I think that is where this confusion came out. Parents sit, and they see that one group of children's teachers get special training and special help and materials, and another group of children who also do not speak

standard English, do not get special training for their teachers and special help.

Clearly, at many of our schools they have decided for the site decision process to use title I funds to develop a holistic training system for teachers, and it is not that we would not welcome the Federal program, looking at language development programs that would merge, ESL, bilingual education, SEP. The heart of it, though—and let me just say because of the media hype—is that we as an urban board are waging a war on a growing gap on poverty and achievement. We just use every tool, and one of the most important tools is that our children, whether their home language is Cambodian, and in Prescott School the other one-third of the students are Cambodian students, and, in fact, when they learn English they often learn African-American English or dialects in their school, and it becomes more complicated. Not only are we teaching them English, but we have to teach them the difference between what their classmates speak and standard English.

That is why in California we are really looking at a much more comprehensive system of language development training which—frankly, I am sorry Mr. Faircloth is not here. It has a lot of grammar, lots of phonetics, perhaps the only difference in what you and I may have had when we were in elementary school is it uses some wonderful African-American and Asian-American and Hispanic literature that may not have been in the system when we were growing up.

But it is important. I think the heart of our resolution is that we respect the home language of our children and we take them from that home language to standard English, and I will just point out yesterday's headlines of the business section talks about the wage gap. It talked about African-Americans who cannot get jobs because they do not speak standard English. We as school board members have to do everything to give our kids an equal chance.

We did not think this was controversial. We were not trying to be politically correct. We were just trying to do what sort of made sense to us that seems to be working with the kids and is showing improved test scores.

Senator SPECTER. Thank you very much, Ms. Quan, for those comments.

One final question, Ms. Getridge. If action were taken by Congress in line with the House resolution that has been introduced by Representative Peter King which would prohibit the use of Federal funds to support projects in schools based on ebonics, would that affect your program?

Ms. GETRIDGE. As currently constructed, it would. But I also believe that it would conflict with the basic principle of the title I funding, which is allowing local school sites the discretion to use their resources in ways that they believe benefit their students.

Senator SPECTER. All right. Thank you very much.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF NABEEHAH SHAKIR

Ms. Shakir, you have been at the panel. Do you care to add a word or two?

Ms. SHAKIR. Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would just like to speak for the teachers in Oakland who have volunteered to de-

velop, design, and implement this program for the last 4 years. We have 125 teachers coming from 26 school sites who are very excited about this methodology. We have teachers from every ethnic background. They use the principles, and these teachers, many of them, are veteran teachers that have been teaching in the district successfully for over 20, 25, 30, 35 years, and they are very happy at the end of their career to learn about this new strategy that we are giving them. And with this implementation, they are seeing greater successes in their classrooms, and just a joy to learn something new as a teacher.

So we thank you again for allowing us to be here today and to hear the voice of the teachers in Oakland, and I am sure around the State of California, from the standard English proficiency program.

Senator SPECTER. Well, thank you very much, Ms. Shakir and Ms. Quan, Ms. Getridge, Ms. Cook, and Mr. Lampkins. Thank you.

STATEMENTS OF:

AMOS C. BROWN, DOCTOR OF MINISTRY, CHAIRMAN, CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION OF THE NATIONAL BAPTIST CONVENTION, USA, INC., AND MEMBER, BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, SAN FRANCISCO

ARMSTRONG WILLIAMS, LOS ANGELES TIMES SYNDICATED COLUMNIST AND TV TALK SHOW HOST

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF REV. AMOS BROWN

Senator SPECTER. We will now turn to the second panel, the Reverend Amos Brown and Mr. Armstrong Williams, if you would come forward, please.

Rev. Amos Brown is the national chairman of the Commission on Civil Rights and Human Services of the National Baptists of the United States of America, Inc. Reverend Brown serves on the board of supervisors of the city and county of San Francisco, and since 1976 has been the pastor of the Black Baptist Church in San Francisco.

Reverend Brown, you are welcomed here, and the floor is yours.

Reverend BROWN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the panel.

Ladies and gentlemen, I come today not in isolation and not representing myself. I come representing the mind and spirit of the largest religious body of African-Americans in this Nation, the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., with a constituency of 8.2 million members and 36,000 churches. Yesterday, at our board meeting in Nashville, TN, we unanimously voted to not support the concept of ebonics as it is presently defined and constituted.

I have a prepared statement that I wish to read for your hearing.

Senator SPECTER. Your full statement, Reverend Brown, will be made a part of the record. To the extent you can summarize it within the 5-minute time limit, we would appreciate that.

Reverend BROWN. That I will do.

During the past month, the brouhaha about teaching ebonics in Oakland and elsewhere has produced, in my estimation, more heat than light. The focus on ebonics, a so-called language, oversimplifies a complex problem and acts as a red herring, distracting us from the hard questions. The key question is not whether African-Americans and other minorities can master standard English. The

question, and it is pertinent in every State, is how can these youngsters excel so they are prepared to embrace the vast opportunities America offers.

The answer does not lie in the reductionism of ebonics. It resides in the inadequately taped holism of America. Without a holistic approach which draws on multiple sources a significant percentage of our population will grow up ignorant and unskilled. They will lack the internal discipline for the 21st century, a discipline that comes from a positive cultural milieu and a vast, vibrant support system. That discipline, which becomes self discipline, is nurtured by a multipronged environment. We need to recreate that environment.

A recent article in the Washington Post pointed out the painful truth that parents, teachers, churches, and the broader community expect too little from African-American youngsters. Unfortunately, too few African-American youngsters expect enough of themselves. Too few of them, not to mention America in general, know about the endless chain of heroes and heroines, sung and unsung, who surmounted racist obstacles and survived crises because of their inner discipline and the strength and expectations of their communities that nurtured them.

Martin Luther King, Jr., once received a C grade in an English course at Moorehouse College, but he recovered and responded to the pressures of men like Benjamin Elijah Mays, the president of Moorehouse, who cajoled, encouraged, and pushed his students to excel. Walter Turnbull, founder of the Boys Choir of Harlem, scoured the community for young men who he would inspire to aspire to unsuspected heights by his vision, expectation, and discipline.

That is equally true of Lawrence Clifton Jones, who in 1909, in Braxton, MS, founded the Piney Woods School under a cedar tree. The first classroom for his students, who came from poor rural district backgrounds, and spoke broken English, just like the poor whites they lived among, was a log for them to sit on. That did not matter to Jones. He had clear expectations for the students. Two years ago at a reception at the Ambassador's home in Dakar, Senegal, West Africa, I heard students from Piney Woods School sing "Lift Every Voice and Sing," both in French and English, with impeccable diction and with tight harmony. These students had responded to expectations that were built into their curriculum.

This hearing, in conjunction with examples like those I have mentioned, will alert the American public that we must support President Clinton's thrust for educational programs. In particular, we need programs that will enable the church, the basic institution of African-Americans, to fulfill its noble role as a bastion of hope. Used wisely and responsibly, the funds for these programs under which communities and churches collaborate, can equip our youngsters to leap into the mainstream and make their contribution.

To do this, our young people must master standard English. They must gain mastery by continuous exposure to the masters, and that means that their parents, teachers, and communities must model for them, point them in the right direction, and spell out expectations. At this moment in history, too many of these youngsters are not conditioned to excel. Low achievement, however,

does not reside in their genes. It is in their conditioning, in their immediate culture. The need to be programmed for excellence.

Senator SPECTER. Reverend Brown, could you summarize the balance of your statement?

Reverend BROWN. The balance of the statement is that we need a holistic program that involves the home setting, turning the television off 3 hours a night to study, the church communities serving as a bastion and a support system, where after school our youngsters are brought into those churches, instead of hanging on corners, and really being loved into learning by their elders in the community; and we need teachers who will get their attitudes right. The issue is not per se ebonics.

In Oakland, unfortunately, you have 85 percent plus of the teachers are white. I am not impugning all white teachers, but God knows that the reason why many of these youngsters do not excel is because they are teachers who have attitudes. They are not a part of the community, and, therefore, they do not earn the right to discipline and challenge these youngsters to excel.

PREPARED STATEMENT

Our appeal is if there is a portion where there needs to be some ebonics, hallelujah, let them have it. But let us stop this simplistic reductionistic approach that only deals with a major problem in an isolated, half baked, half done manner. We need a holistic program to deal with the underachievement of black students all over this Nation, and it is not just in Oakland, it is in San Francisco, it is in Washington, DC, Chicago, IL, and New York, too. The question is are we able to assume the responsibility of facing the challenge and doing something collectively and not in isolation.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF REV. AMOS C. BROWN

During the past month, the brouhaha about teaching ebonics, in Oakland and elsewhere, has produced more heat than light. The focus on ebonics, a so-called language, oversimplifies a complex problem and acts as a red herring, distracting us from the hard questions.

The key question is not whether African-Americans and other minorities can master standard English. The question—and it's pertinent in every state—is how can these youngsters excel so they are prepared to embrace the vast opportunities America offers. The answer does not lie in the reductionism of ebonics; it resides in the inadequately tapped wholism of America. Without a wholistic approach, which draws on multiple sources, a significant percentage of our population will grow up ignorant and unskilled. They will lack the internal discipline for the 21st century, a discipline that comes from a positive cultural milieu and a vibrant support system.

That discipline, which becomes self-discipline, is nurtured by a multi-pronged environment that has expectations. We need to re-create that environment. A recent article in The Washington Post pointed out the painful truth that parents, teachers, church, and the broader community expect too little from African-American youngsters.

Unfortunately, too few African-American youngsters expect enough of themselves. Too few of them—not to mention Americans in general—know about the endless chain of heroes and heroines, sung and unsung, who surmounted racist obstacles and survived crises because of their inner discipline and the strength and expectations of their communities that nurtured it. Martin Luther King, Jr., once received a "C" grade in an English course at Morehouse College. But he recovered and responded to the pressures of men like Benjamin Mays, the president of Morehouse, who cajoled, encouraged, and pushed his students to excel.

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This hearing, in conjunction with examples like those I've mentioned, will alert the American public that we must support President Clinton's thrust for educational programs. In particular, we need programs that will enable the church, the basic institution of African-Americans, to fulfill its noble role as a bastion of hope. Used wisely and responsibly, the funds for these programs, under which communities and churches collaborate, can equip our youngsters to leap into the mainstream and make their contribution. To do this, our young people must master standard English. They must gain mastery by continuous exposure to the masters. And that means that their parents, teachers, and communities must model for them, point them in the right direction, and spell out expectations. At this moment in history, too many of these youngsters are not conditioned to excel. Low achievement, however, does not reside in their genes; it's in their conditioning, in their immediate culture. They need to be programmed for excellence.

The wholistic approach can turn students around. What worked for Professor Henry Higgins in "My Fair Lady" can work for the rest of us. When we apply this approach, we'll see that African-American children can turn the TV off, sit at the feet of masters, learn, live a good life, and pass on their wisdom.

Those who rely only on quick fixes like ebonics are myopic. Language is essential, of course. And we treasure much of our African heritage. But African-Americans are American! Schemes to return us to Africa failed because this is our country. We need to function here as Americans. Education programs that galvanize the whole community and strengthen our commitment to future generations will help us succeed, despite racism. High expectations from all segments of the community will rekindle that "in spite of" attitude that led to so many stellar achievement.

EBONICS IN OAKLAND

Senator SPECTER. Well, that is a powerful statement, Reverend Brown. Thank you very much.

You said in your last statement that if they need some ebonics in Oakland you would be prepared to let them have some ebonics in Oakland, did I understand you correctly?

Reverend BROWN. I am saying that there are always alternative measures, but I am concerned that we have focused the issue basically on language. There are other groups that do not master standard English, but because of the support systems and resources that are available in the home and the community, they do master science, they do master biology. The basic question is are we going to provide the support system for a holistic program. And I think this is what the Department of Education ought to be looking at, and not just concentrating on an issue of giving dignity and respect to a way that we talk about privately.

I do not need a teacher in the schoolhouse to validate me. We spoke that broken language at home. Martin Luther King spoke it at home and at Moorehouse. But whenever he went to Harvard or to Yale or to Princeton, you had better believe it, he talked so much that he could talk the horns off a billy goat with eloquence. He was able to communicate about Socrates, about Plato, Euripides, and all of these, because he had a bicultural educational program. And in the words of W.E.B. DeBoise, he was trained to see reality through two eyes, through our twoness, and I think that is what we have

got to enable our young people to do to function in this country, have the currency and the facility to function, and we need to do that in a holistic way.

Senator SPECTER. Well, that is a powerful message. I concur with you about turning off the television set, Reverend Brown, except for the part of C-SPAN to hear you. [Laughter.]

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF ARMSTRONG WILLIAMS

We now turn to Mr. Armstrong Williams, who is a syndicated columnist with the Los Angeles Times, and host of the TV show "The Right Side." Mr. Williams is no stranger to Capitol Hill, having worked for Senator Strom Thurmond and Congressman Carroll Campbell and Floyd Spence. He has a very distinguished record, and we welcome you here this morning, Mr. Williams.

Mr. WILLIAMS. What I have to say today will not take long. In fact, the issue of education in this country is quite a straightforward matter. First of all, I would like to pay my respects to all the hard-working, dedicated teachers and school board members in Oakland, CA, and all over this country. They are doing the best they can with resources they currently have available.

The controversy and the tumult surrounding the Oakland school board's proposal to use ebonics as a means of teaching standard English, though, deeply troubles me. I think that the words and sentiments conveyed in the media have been divisive rather than constructive. But even more troubling to me, Senator, is what I think is a misguided approach to education in this country.

From a personal perspective I am fully aware that as a country of many heritages there are many colloquial idioms spoken in this country. Where I come from in South Carolina there are dialects such as Gullah, which might be incomprehensible to everyone in this chamber. And I know that in casual conversation rules of grammar, syntax, and vocabulary are bent, broken, and inflected to convey friendship and familiarity.

I would deny no one the right to express themselves in the customary manner of their native culture or place of origin. But when we talk about teaching standard English to children, we are talking about investing them with the standard currency of this great Nation of ours. We are instilling in them the means to communicate in the marketplace of ideas as well as the marketplace of commerce and governance. We are saying to them, Senator, come into the fold. Plant your ideas and your strength in this land so that we may all be stronger.

I can remember my nieces and nephews in South Carolina who spoke in idiom, or slang if you will, that was not standard English. I remember teaching them using a phonics game which was fun, enjoyable to them and their parents. Within 2 months they were able to speak standard grammatical structure, and they were so proud to have learned and be able to take part in a whole new world.

I can also remember walking into my first French class at South Carolina State College, and initially being completely confused by all the teachers, because what the teacher spoke was totally French. She did not speak one word of English. Nevertheless, Sen-

ator, I learned, and I think it was what was best for me at that time.

And I have also here with me today my editorial assistant Amari West, who was born and raised a short distance from here in Southeast Washington. I remember him telling me that when he attended Ketchum Elementary School in Anacostia his mother constantly corrected his broken English, not allowing him or his brothers to make a habit out of speaking his neighborhood slang. In fact, she took her children, Senator, out of the public schools and taught them using phonics tapes. I can honestly say that this young man is one of the finest writers and thinkers that I have ever met at his young age of 23.

They did not achieve such levels of efficiency and expertise by someone talking down to them. No one ever accepted substandard speech and writing from them. They were not coddled into thinking that their culture dialects were a hindrance or that they were in any different situation. Rather, they were encouraged, Senator. They were encouraged, cajoled, loved, and above all, shown a higher standard. This is what makes them the men they are today.

What we are seeing with the ebonics issue is really about conflict in values in education. Let us be honest here. And on a broader level, Senator, conflict in philosophies about social understanding and equality. Proponents of ebonics feel that teachers should be able to relate to the students by showing that they, too, are able to speak the structure cultural student idiom. But I do not agree with this approach, and I will tell you why.

A teacher would not teach mathematics by trying to show that he or she could make mistakes in addition or subtraction. Must one, Senator, have to smoke marijuana to be able to relate to teenage drug addiction? Should they smoke marijuana in order to teach them a better way? Definitely not. And the same is true with language. I feel that teachers should be a model of what is just and proper in formal speech. They, in other words, should set the standard.

Schools should not be a feel-good session where whatever anyone wants to speak should be used. It should be a place for diverse experiences, background, and strength to meet a common goal, to learn from each other. And that means having a common language. The essence of equality, Senator, should be to create and maintain a level playing field.

Now in closing, I am aware that the issue of standard language versus cultural dialect is a value-laden issue. People feel devalued if what they do is not accepted as the norm. Yet I think everyone can see the value of having a norm. There will always be differences in speech, meaning, and pronunciation. But that does not mean that America has to become the Tower of Babel. We have a standard. Let us stick with it and help others to learn it.

And finally, let me specifically address the issue of black English in America. Since the early part of this century there has been a debate about the cultural saliency of black English. Cultural anthropologists such as Franklin Frazier and Melville Herkowitz had heated debates over whether the languages and customs of black Americans were vestiges of slavery or whether, in fact, they were patterns of speech and culture that originated in Africa.

The debate is still important today with respect to the ebonics controversy. Supporters say that speakers of ebonics are expressing something innately African. Thus, they say that it should be preserved as a cultural legacy. Detractors say that black speech arose from the lack of education.

Senator SPECTER. Mr. Williams, could you summarize the balance of your statement?

Mr. WILLIAMS. Sure. We are not here today to resolve the debate I just mentioned. In fact, the argument today, Senator, is quite an academic one. We know that there is a standard of English. We know that children would be better equipped if they spoke it. And we know that the only way to transmit the language effectively is for teachers to be a model for their students. So respectfully, then I must conclude that ebonics is bad policy for an already bad situation.

Senator SPECTER. Thank you very much, Mr. Williams.

When you talk about the conflict of education and the cultural dialect, I would ask you—you were here, of course, when Ms. Carolyn Getridge testified. Did you disagree with her approach as something that she said as to what is being done in the Oakland School District, something that you would disagree with?

Mr. WILLIAMS. I am trying to understand the ebonics debate every day.

Senator SPECTER. I ask you that question, Mr. Williams, because I am not sure that we are on different tracks, and I am trying to come to grips with the specifics as to what you disagree with as to what she said, if there is some area of concrete disagreement.

Mr. WILLIAMS. I think she has admitted ebonics is not a language, and I think she has also admitted, if I heard her correctly, that they have a problem with the kids who speak slang, and there needs to be a way for teachers to communicate with those kids to speak proper, standard English.

Senator SPECTER. Do you disagree with any of that?

Mr. WILLIAMS. I do not disagree with the spirit of it, but I would disagree if you would try to say to these students that the teacher must come down to where you are, to understand your dialect instead of saying the student needs to go where the teacher is, because the teacher should always be the model.

Senator SPECTER. Well, you heard Mr. Lampkins say, and the teachers and the students have to talk the same language and understand each other.

Mr. WILLIAMS. No; absolutely not. I took French. I did not understand a word of it. I had to learn to speak French. The teacher was the model, and because the teacher never changed her standards for me I was forced and was able to learn a language that I never thought I could.

Senator SPECTER. But did the teacher ever say what the English translation was of French?

Mr. WILLIAMS. She always spoke French. Always, from the beginning of the semester to the end. That is all she spoke was French. I had to learn it.

Senator SPECTER. Without any indication as to what in the French referred to English.

Mr. WILLIAMS. No; she spoke French. She had the book. We had little syllabuses we had to follow. Basically I had to learn it on my own and through study groups. I was forced to learn it. That may seem foreign, but many people can relate to that.

Senator SPECTER. All right, then you had books and you had study groups which gave you the bridge.

Mr. WILLIAMS. That is fine, but we are talking about the teacher. The teacher should always be the model. Teachers should not try to learn slang, that is my argument, and learn bad English.

Senator SPECTER. Reverend Brown, do you want to make a comment?

Reverend BROWN. Yes; very much so. I am sure, Mr. Specter, you heard Gardner Taylor deliver the prayer at the Inauguration. Gardner Taylor went to one of the struggling academies of the South, Leland College. Dr. Taylor shared with me the other day out of his childhood experiences that the teachers in his classroom had a standard. They did not speak broken English.

They came to class speaking broken English, but the teacher loved them into learning. It is a question of what the teacher is to the student, and if the teacher is there with an attitude condescending to the student, he will never be able to turn that student around.

I go back to my point that we need to have a program that deals with teacher attitudes and with the attitudes of parents in the home to be open also. My parents, who did not make it through high school, made it only to the eighth grade, they spoke broken English also, but they had an expectation of more coming from me and my other siblings.

It is a question, I repeat, as I stated earlier, of what we expect and what we see in the students and in Oakland, CA, and in San Francisco, whether the teacher is black, blue, green, yellow, or polka dot, that teacher must go to that classroom with the right attitude, and if a child does speak wrongly, correct that child and love.

Let me give you just one point. In my home church in Jackson, MS, I shall never forget one Sunday morning I was reading the Scripture, and I was reading the resurrection narrative, and I called sepulcher sepulcher. Brother T.S. Alexander, who worked with the State Teachers Association, pulled me aside and said after the service, young man, the word is sepulcher, not sepulcher.

I never forgot it, but I did not resent it, and I did not feel bad, and I think that if these teachers put their arms around these children and give them the standard, they will learn standard English and not feel threatened and still speak their broken language at home.

Senator SPECTER. Well, I am not sure that Ms. Getridge was talking about speaking broken English. This is a little irregular, but we are going to recall you, Ms. Getridge, to ask you—and we have to conclude the panel because we have to move on to the next one, but do you speak broken English to the students?

Ms. GETRIDGE. Absolutely not, and I want to say to Reverend Brown that I, too, am from Louisiana, was baptized in the church that Gardner C. Taylor pastored by Rev. T.J. Jemison, Mount Zion Baptist Church, so my experience, too, is one where standard Eng-

lish may not have been the most prevalent method of communication. I, too, had teachers and parents and friends who were excellent models of standard English.

Senator SPECTER. Do you disagree with the thrust of what Reverend Brown and Mr. Williams have said?

Ms. GETRIDGE. Absolutely not. I think that the thrust of the comments are the same, but I do want to point out that the language system students bring to school does not include slang. It is not about slang or the rap culture of the language of many students today. The linguists will certainly give you more information about that, but this is not slang. these are patterns of language development that students bring to school that must be corrected if students are to engage in literacy activities. It is the difference between what one hears and says in acquiring the language and being able to engage that language on a printed page.

Senator SPECTER. Thank you very much. I would like to go on, gentlemen. We really have to move on to the next panel.

Mr. WILLIAMS. Just 10 seconds, please. You asked the question, alternative approaches are desperately needed, and I would say absolutely, unequivocally yes, but the approaches to heal what ails American schools, Senator, should be rooted in a philosophy in which doctors treat the patients rather than contract the illness.

Senator SPECTER. All right. Thank you very much. We very much appreciate your testimony, Reverend Brown, Mr. Williams. Sometimes it is good to have the witnesses side by side. Occasionally even on the Senate debate we have debate instead of just speechmaking, but not very often.

STATEMENTS OF:

ORLANDO TAYLOR, Ph.D., DEAN, HOWARD UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

WILLIAM LABOV, Ph.D., UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA, LINGUISTICS, LABORATORY

ROBERT L. WILLIAMS, Ph.D., PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF PSYCHOLOGY IN AFRICAN AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDIES, WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY, ST. LOUIS, MO

MICHAEL CASSERLY, Ph.D., EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, COUNCIL OF GREAT CITY SCHOOLS

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF ORLANDO TAYLOR

Senator SPECTER. I would now like to move to the next and last panel, Dr. Orlando Taylor, Dr. Robert Williams, Dr. William Labov, and Dr. Michael Casserly.

Our first witness on the panel is Dr. Orlando Taylor, who is the dean of the Howard University Graduate School of Arts and Science, and a nationally known expert on ebonics.

Dr. Taylor, welcome, and the floor is yours.

All statements will be made a part of the record in full, and we would appreciate it if we could proceed in the 5-minute time limit on the summaries.

Mr. TAYLOR. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would like to congratulate you and the members of the subcommittee for having the foresight to convene this special hearing today to address issues pertaining to language and the underachievement of Afri-

can-American students, at least of many African-American students.

We live in a Nation that is characterized by rich diversity in language and communications, where numerous regional and social dialects are spoken, and we have had much testimony here today to characterize some of those regional and social dialects.

In many ways, the defining attribute of the United States is diversity, and like all cultural groups in America—indeed, the world—there is great diversity of language used in the African-American community, ranging from the King's English to what some refer to as ebonics.

The linguistic system referred to as ebonics, which is different from African-American slang—and I think it is very important to make that point here now—is spoken by some but by no means all African-Americans, and by many African-American children.

It is a stereotype, and it is incorrect, to think that this variety of English has nothing in common with standard English, or that its speakers do not understand standard English, or that its speakers speak it all the time. Many African-Americans are competent in several language systems and switch from one language system to another according to audience and situation.

I would like to highlight just three points from my written statement this morning, and they are as follows:

One, the current controversy surrounding ebonics has forced us once again to come face-to-face with one of the quintessential issues in American contemporary life. And that is how do we accommodate, indeed, celebrate cultural and linguistic diversity on the one hand, and on the other hand teach all of our students a language system, in this case standard English, that will facilitate academic achievement and career opportunities as well as cohesion and harmony within our Nation?

Two, it is important to remember that the most important point to remember about the ebonics debate is not whether it exists or whether it is valid, or where it came from and what to call it, or is it a language or a dialect; but rather that far too many African-American children have not acquired sufficient competence in standard English to enhance academic success and that traditional teaching methods for teaching standard English, which often dismiss or devalue the language systems that many African-American children bring to school, have been unsuccessful with too many African-American children.

The fact that we are having this hearing today provides clear testimony, in my opinion, to the failure of traditional teaching methods for far too many African-American children and, while I would not assert that the acquisition of standard English is a guarantee for academic success, I would state that academic achievement is severely compromised for youngsters who do not acquire competence in standard English for speaking, writing, and reading purposes.

We as a Nation should be open to other strategies to teaching standard English, strategies which use children's home or peer language systems as a bridge, as we have said so often today, a point of departure, if you will, to teach the school's language.

These pedagogical techniques are not new. They have been used in many California school districts, for example, for almost 15 years. Aside from Oakland, there are 16 other school districts in California alone, including Los Angeles, where more than 20,000 students in that district's 93,000 or so African-American students are enrolled in a Standard English Proficiency Program that is very similar to the program that you have heard described here this morning. Similar programs have been reported in such diverse jurisdictions as Atlanta, Seattle, Miami, and Dallas.

I think it is important for everyone here to remember and to understand that using ebonics or any other vernacular language system as a bridge to teaching standard English should never be equated to teaching ebonics or requiring teachers to speak it.

I do believe, in conclusion, there is a Federal role here. I think that the Federal Government can provide incentives and support to colleges and universities to produce a better corps of teachers for the next century, a teacher corps that knows more about cultural and linguistic diversity and how to use that diversity to enhance, widen, and expand the language and communication skills of their students.

It can also provide support for more research on the rich linguistic heritage of our Nation and to determine techniques for teaching standard English that are more effective than the ones we are using today.

PREPARED STATEMENT

In conclusion, I would simply say I think the challenge that we face today in our schools in this country is to make certain that we can produce students who can walk and talk with kings but not lose the common touch.

Senator SPECTER. Thank you very much, Dr. Taylor.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ORLANDO L. TAYLOR

Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Members of the Subcommittee: Let me begin by thanking you for having the foresight to schedule a special hearing on language issues and academic underachievement of many of our nation's African-American children. I am honored to have been invited to present testimony on this very important subject. To my knowledge, this hearing is the first that the Congress of the United States has ever called specifically to address this issue.

This special hearing comes in the wake of several weeks of controversy and debate in the nation's news media on the subject of Ebonics, a learned, social dialect that is at variance with standard American English and one that is spoken by many—but certainly by no means all—African-Americans. This sometimes emotionally laden controversy has been, in my view, divisive and frequently characterized by misinformation and misconceptions.

While the controversy has raged, one central fact remains and that is that far too many African-American children have not acquired sufficient proficiency in standard English to facilitate academic success and career mobility. Many of these children speak as their primary language system a rule governed, social dialect of English referred to variously as Ebonics, African-American English, Black English, Black English Vernacular, African-American Language Systems, etc. This variety of English, as other non-standard English dialects, has often been stigmatized by the mainstream society. Yet it often has currency among peers, family and community as an acceptable means of communication, especially in informal situations. Moreover, Ebonics, as well as elements of African-American urban slang (a different aspect of African-American communication), have been popularized—indeed glamorized—in the nation's popular culture through film, television and recorded music. It is indeed somewhat paradoxical that Ebonics and other aspects of African-Amer-

ican communication are devalued in some aspects of American life, but used as a legitimate vehicle for generating millions of dollars in other aspects. On the other hand, this phenomenon reinforces perhaps the commonly held sociolinguistic principle that there is a time and place for all language.

In any event, I believe that our challenge as a nation is to devise positive, sensitive and effective ways to teach African-American and other children standard English—the language of education and career mobility. In my opinion, such instruction should be delivered in an environment that (1) does not denigrate the student, (2) recognizes that all groups have a human right to retain culturally based language systems to communicate with family, peers and friends, and (3) utilizes the language systems that children bring to school as a vehicle for teaching them the school's language. After all, "taking students where they are to where they need to go" is an educational principal that is as American as apple pie.

The current Ebonics debate, while fueled by a resolution passed by the Oakland Unified School District, revolves around several long standing issues. However, the Oakland proposal to use students' language as a vehicle to teach standard English is neither new, nor limited to Oakland. Similar programs have been in existence, and often funded by local, state, or Federal (Title I) funds, for more than two decades. In California alone, similar programs are currently in operation in 17 school districts (see appended list). One in Los Angeles reportedly enrolls approximately 20,000 of the district's 93,000 African-American children. Similar programs have been initiate in such diverse locations as Atlanta, Georgia, Dallas, Texas, Miami, Florida and Seattle, Washington.

Many academic topics have been—and will continue to be—examined and debated by sociolinguistic scholars. These topics include such issues as the nature of language systems spoken in the African-American community, their origins, what to call them and whether to classify them as languages or as dialects. These healthy academic discussions should be encouraged and funded by the Federal government through its various research programs designed to understand the nature and history of the American people.

However, these academic pursuits should not—indeed must not—cause us to blur our sights on the larger goal of how to teach standard English to all of our nation's children and yet celebrate their diversity and their ability to communicate effectively in a variety of settings.

As our schools seek to achieve this goal, we must be ever mindful of certain generally accepted facts about the way English is spoken in the United States. Some of these facts are appended to this testimony. I would like, however, to highlight just five of the most salient of these facts:

1. Many African-American children come to school communicating in a language system that diverges from standard English. This language system has been well described as a rule governed system that is deeply rooted in a variety of complex social, political, economic, historical and educational factors. This language system may be spoken by children as well as adults and should not be confused with African America slang, although many users of these language systems may also speak African-American slang.

2. African-American children are not the only children that may come to school speaking a non-standard regional or social dialect. Thus, the current Ebonics issue is not solely an African-American issue, but rather one that probably typifies the language situation for many other groups of American children. It is reasonable to expect that these children are also at risk for low academic achievement.

3. There is difference between slang and dialect. While many media reports and public commentaries on the Oakland School Board's proposals have focused on contemporary African-American slang, the Oakland program focuses upon the finite set of pronunciation and grammatical dialect rules that govern the speech of many—again not all—working class African-Americans. Slang is rapidly changing vocabulary and idioms used by certain "in-groups" within a culture.

4. Using the language that children bring to the classroom as a bridge to teaching new language systems is a widely used technique in second language instruction.

5. Competence in more than one language or dialect makes one more effective in communicating with a variety of groups.

Mr. Chairman and distinguished subcommittee members, the current Ebonics controversy has brought us face to face with a quintessential American issue. That is, how can we as a nation accommodate, indeed celebrate, linguistic diversity, while at the same time teach children to speak, write, read and comprehend standard English—the language system that will facilitate cohesion among our nation's diverse groups and facilitate access to achievement and careers for all students.

I wish to respectfully suggest that this national question needs Federal direction and support. Specifically, I believe that the Federal government should:

—Provide incentives and support to the nation's colleges and universities to produce the next generation of teachers with a better knowledge of cultural and linguistic diversity, and the skills required to effectively teach standard English to increasingly diverse student bodies. Such instruction should be delivered in a positive environment that celebrates diversity and encourages communication that fits the audience and situation. In many ways, this may be one of the greatest imperatives for the United States. As our nation's population becomes increasingly diverse (already upwards of ⅓ of the population are members of racial and cultural minorities), it is absolutely essential for our schools to teach all students the language skills that are needed for access to further learning in mathematics, engineering, the humanities and the physical, biological, and social sciences. Indeed, I believe that our nation will have a difficult time retaining its status as a world power if it does not accomplish this goal.

—Provide funds and incentives for local school boards to upgrade the skills of the current teacher force to teach standard English to culturally and linguistically diverse learners.

—Provide funds to support research and dissemination on "best practices" to teach standard English to African-American and other children that do not speak standard English as their primary language system. Many individuals have doggedly insisted upon using traditional methods for teaching standard English to African-American children that devalue the language systems that many of them bring to school. Yet, the facts show that these approaches have simply failed in far too many instances. If they had been more successful, we would have no need for this current hearings.

—Many individuals, including myself, have argued for an approach to teaching standard English that utilizes the language brought to school by children as a bridge—a base if you will—to teach standard English. This approach is based upon the assumptions that there is a time and place for all language, that the role of schools is to extend, enhance and deepen language skills and that versatility in language usage is an asset.

—Federal support is needed to assess and document the effectiveness of this and other alternative strategies to teach English. I am confident that African-American children are fully capable of acquiring competence in standard English. However, they must be motivated to do so, believe (along with their teachers) that they can do so, and taught it in a positive environment free of ridicule and denigration.

—Provide support for our nation's colleges and universities to produce more research on the diverse language and communication systems used by African-Americans and other culturally diverse groups across the spectra of gender, age, education, region, and socioeconomic status. To date, most of the research on African-American communication has focused on the working classes, and the results of that research have been overgeneralized to the entire African-American community.

It has often been said that progress often evolves out of debate and controversy. I believe that the current Ebonics controversy has given our nation an opportunity to engage in thoughtful discourse, leading to the institution of new policies and practices to address one of our most challenging national issues. As I have said, it is clearly in the nation's best interest to produce children who can speak, read, write and comprehend standard English in order to be competitive in the information age, and yet at the same time preserve the rich cultural heritages of our people. I believe that we can, and that indeed that we must, do both.

Finally, we must do a better job in educating the public on language issues. The current Ebonics flap has been fueled by considerable misinformation. Too many stereotypes continue to exist about the language and communication of African-Americans and other culturally diverse groups of Americans. We need to inform our citizens about the true nature—and value—of linguistic diversity among our citizens, and that this diversity means, in no way, that we must lower our standards in teaching standard English. Indeed, through this recognition of diversity, we may come closer to achieving our goal of successfully teaching standard English to all of our children, and in so doing, provide them with the tools for greater academic achievement. Clearly our nation will win in such a situation. And, our children—all of them—will most certainly win as well.

SOME GENERALLY ACCEPTED SOCIOLINGUISTIC FACTS

1. Variations within English—or any language—are normal, learned phenomena that exist as regional and social dialects. These variations result from a complex mix of social, political, historical, and economical factors. These dialects have been

described by a number of distinguished scholars and such august professional societies as the Linguistics Society of America and the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. The linguistic system referred to by some linguists as Ebonics is a vernacular English variety. It may be spoken in a number of social situations by some African-Americans, but especially among the underclass, the undereducated, and the socially isolated.

2. Vernacular language systems are often devalued within societies, e.g., the Cockney of England, the English of the Appalachian mountains, Brooklyn-ese in New York City—and Ebonics!

3. All language systems are learned, not biologically based.

4. It is absurd for schools to teach Ebonics or any other vernacular language system. It is highly unlikely that any school system in the United States has ever made teaching Ebonics or any other vernacular dialect as a goal. Using the vernacular language system brought to school by children as a bridge to teaching the school's language cannot be equated with teaching the vernacular language.

5. Teachers don't have to speak Ebonics or any other vernacular language in order to teach standard English. However, it is desirable for them to understand the rules of these systems if they are to use them as bridges to teach standard English.

California school districts with standard English proficiency programs that address the language learning needs of African-American children: Center Unified School District, Compton Unified School District, Del Paso Heights Unified School District, Duarte Unified School District, Grant Unified School District, Los Angles Unified School District, Lynwood Unified School District, Oakland Unified School District, Pomona Unified School District, Ravenswood Unified School District, Richmond Unified School District, Sacramento Unified School District, San Bernardino Unified School District, San Francisco Unified School District, Stockton Unified School District, Vallejo City Unified School District, West Fresno Unified School District.

SOME SUGGESTED READINGS

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6. Taylor, Orlando L. (1986) "Teaching Standard English as a Second Dialect." In Orlando Taylor, Treatment of Communication Disorders in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Populations. Austin, Texas: Pro-Ed Publications.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF WILLIAM LABOV

Senator SPECTER. Our next witness is Dr. William Labov, professor in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Pennsylvania, author of numerous books and articles on linguistics, including many publications in the area of nonstandard English and its role in education especially for African-Americans.

Welcome, Dr. Labov. The floor is yours.

Dr. LABOV. Thank you, Senator Specter. I am testifying today as a representative of an approach to the study of language that is called sociolinguistics. It is a scientific study based upon the recording and measurement of language as it is used in America today, and I am now completing research supported by NSF and NEH that is mapping changes in the English language throughout North America for both mainstream and minority communities.

Since 1966 I have done a number of studies in the African-American community, beginning with work in South Harlem for the office of education, that was aimed at answering the question, are the language differences between black and white children responsible for reading failure in the inner cities?

The term ebonics that is our main focus here has been used to suggest that there is a language or features of language that is common to all people of African ancestry whether they live in Africa, Brazil, or the United States. Linguists who have published studies of the African-American community do not use this term, but they refer instead to African-American vernacular English, a dialect spoken by most residents of the inner cities.

Now, this African-American vernacular English shares most of its grammar and vocabulary with other dialects of English, but it is distinct in many ways. It is more different from standard English than any other dialect spoken in continental North America. It is not simply slang, or grammatical mistakes, as has been pointed out several times here, but a well-formed set of rules of pronunciation and grammar that is capable of conveying complex logic and reasoning.

Research in New York, Philadelphia, Washington, Florida, Chicago, Texas, Los Angeles, and San Francisco shows a remarkably uniform grammar spoken by African-Americans who live and work primarily with other African-Americans. Repeated studies by teams of black and white researchers show that about 60 percent of the African-American residents of the inner city speak this dialect in its purest form at home and with intimate friends.

Passive exposure to standard English through the mass media or in school has little effect upon the home language of children from highly segregated inner city areas. However, those African-Americans who have had extensive face-to-face dealings with speakers of other dialects show a marked modification of their grammar.

In the first two decades of research, linguists were divided in their views of the origin of African-American English, whether it was a southern regional dialect descended from nonstandard English and Irish dialects, or the descendent of a Creole grammar similar to that spoken in the Caribbean.

By 1980, a consensus seemed to have been reached, as expressed in the verdict of Judge Charles Joyner in the King trial which you mentioned I testified in myself. This variety of language showed the influence of the entire history of the African-American people from slavery to modern times, and was gradually converging with other dialects.

However, research in the years that followed found that in many of its important features, African-American vernacular English is becoming not less but more different from other dialects.

Research on the language of ex-slaves showed that some of the most prominent features of the modern dialect were not present in the 19th Century. It appears that the present-day form of African-American English is not the inheritance of the period of slavery, but the creation of the second half of the 20th century as a result of increasing racial segregation.

An important aspect of the current situation is the strong social reaction against suggestions that the home language of African-American children be used in the first steps of learning to read and write.

Now, the Oakland controversy is the fourth major reaction that I know of to proposals of this kind. Plans for programs to make the transition to standard English have been misunderstood as plans

to teach the children to speak African-American English, or ebonics, and to prevent them from learning standard English.

As a result, only one such program has been thoroughly tested in the schools, and even that program, though very successful in improving reading, was terminated because of objections to the use of any African-American English in the classroom.

At the heart of the controversy I think there are two major points of view taken by educators. One is that any recognition of a nonstandard language as a legitimate means of expression will only confuse children and reinforce their tendency to use it instead of standard English, a point of view we just heard. The other is that children learn most rapidly in their home language, and they can benefit in both motivation and achievement by getting a head start in learning to read and write in this way.

Both of these views are honestly held and deserve a fair hearing, but until now, only the first has been tried in the American public school system extensively. The essence of the Oakland School Board resolution as I see it is that the first method has not succeeded and the second deserves a trial.

Research on reading shows that an essential step in learning to read is the mastery of the relation of sound to spelling. As linguists, we know that for most inner city African-American children this relation is different and more complicated than for speakers of other dialects.

PREPARED STATEMENT

We have not yet been able to apply this knowledge to large-scale programs for the teaching of reading, but we hope that with the interest aroused by the Oakland School Board resolution this will become possible in the near future, and I have appended an article I wrote last year, published last year, called, Can Reading Failure be Reversed, which attempts to describe this dialect in more detail and gives suggestions for how that knowledge can be used.

Senator SPECTER. Thank you very much, Dr. Labov.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WILLIAM LABOV

I am testifying today as a representative of an approach to the study of language that is called "sociolinguistics," a scientific study based on the recording and measurement of language used in every day life. My general interest is in the language changes that are taking place today, and I'm now completing research supported by NSF and NEH that is mapping changes in the English language through all of North America, for both the mainstream and minority communities. Since 1966, I have done a number of studies of language in the African-American community, beginning with work in South Harlem for the Office of Education that aimed at the question, "Are the language differences between black and white children responsible for reading failure in the inner city schools?"

The term "Ebonics", which is our main focus here, has been used to suggest that there is a language, or features of language, that are common to all people of African ancestry, whether they live in Africa, Brazil or the United States. Linguists who have published studies of the African-American community have not used this term, but refer instead to African-American English, or Black English, meaning all the ways that the English language is used by African-Americans in this country. This covers a very wide range, from a standard English almost identical with the standard English spoken by others, to the African-American Vernacular English spoken by most residents of the inner city. This African-American Vernacular English is a dialect of English, which shares most of the grammar and vocabulary with other dialects of English. But it is distinctly different in many ways, and more different

from standard English than any other dialect spoken in continental North America. It is not a set of slang words, or a random set of grammatical mistakes, but a well-formed set of rules of grammar and pronunciation that is capable of conveying complex logic and reasoning.

As the result of the research of the past 30 years by teams of African-American and Euro-American linguists, we now know more about this dialect of English than any other non-standard dialect in any language. Research in New York, Philadelphia, Washington, Chicago, Texas, Los Angeles, San Francisco and other cities shows a remarkably uniform grammar throughout the country, spoken by African-Americans who live and work primarily with other African-Americans. Repeated studies in city after city show that about 60 percent of the African-American residents of the inner city speak this dialect at home and with intimate friends. Exposure to standard English on the mass media, or from teachers in schools, has little effect upon the home language. Those African-Americans who have extensive face-to-face dealings with speakers of other dialects show a shift of their grammar in the direction of these other dialects. African-Americans who are raised in a standard English environment, or who acquire standard English in later life, share a great deal of knowledge, conscious and unconscious, with the inner city African-American community, and often can speak in a way that is accepted by inner city residents, but the actual grammar they use is quite different.

In the first two decades of research, linguists were divided in their views of the origin of African-American English: whether it was a Southern regional dialect descended from nonstandard English and Irish dialects, or the descendant of a Creole grammar similar to that spoke in the Caribbean. By 1980, a consensus seemed to have been reached, as expressed in the verdict of Judge Charles Joyner in the King trial in Ann Arbor: this variety of language showed the influence of the entire history of the African-American people and was gradually converging with other dialects through the process of decreolization.

However, research in the years that followed uncovered a surprising new tendency in the opposite direction. In many of its important features, African-American Vernacular English was becoming more different from other dialects. Furthermore, research in the language of ex-slaves born in the 19th century, and the letters of freed slaves, showed that some of the most prominent features of the modern dialect were not present then. It appears that the present-day form of African-American English is not the inheritance of the period of slavery, but the creation of the second half of the 20th century. Research in rural and urban areas shows that the modern dialect was formed as the result of the Great Migration of southern rural blacks to large cities, primarily in the North. The increasing difference between the language of African-Americans in the inner city and other dialects is correlated with increasing residential segregation.

Although many of the features of African-American Vernacular English are new, they may indirectly reflect the African heritage of black Americans, since they are in the direction of the type of grammatical features that are found in West African languages.

An important aspect of the current situation is the strong social reaction to suggestions that the home language of African-American children be used as a basis for learning to read and write. The Oakland controversy is the fourth major reaction that I know of to proposals to introduce children to reading and writing in a language closer to their home language than standard English, and move them gradually to the reading and writing of standard English. Many leaders of the African-American community believe that there is no distinctive African-American English, and that the dialect described by linguists is simply the same "bad English" that is spoken by uneducated people anywhere. The suggestions for transitional programs have been regularly reported to the public as plans to teach the children to speak African-American English, or Ebonics, and to prevent them from learning standard English. As a result, only one such program has been thoroughly tested in the schools, and even that program, though very successful, was terminated because of objections to the use of African-American English in the classroom.

At the heart of the controversy, there are two major points of view taken by educators. One view is that any recognition of a nonstandard language as a legitimate means of expression will only confuse children, and reinforce their tendency to use it instead of standard English. The other is that children learn most rapidly in their home language, and that they can benefit in both motivation and achievement by getting a head start in learning to read and write in this way. Both of these are honestly held and deserve a fair hearing. But until now, only the first has been tried in the American public school system. The essence of the Oakland school board resolution is that the second deserves a fair trial as well.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF ROBERT WILLIAMS

Senator SPECTER. We will turn now to Dr. Robert Williams, professor emeritus of psychology in Africa and African-American studies at Washington University in St. Louis, and Dr. Williams coined the phrase "ebonics," and is the author of several books, including: "Ebonics: The True Language of Black Folks."

Welcome, Dr. Williams. We look forward to your testimony.

Dr. WILLIAMS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am indeed honored to be invited to this panel this morning.

On January 26, 1973, almost 24 years ago, I coined the term ebonics at a conference that I chaired in St. Louis, MO. A group of black scholars and myself argued that we needed to define the language spoken by many blacks rather than let others define it for us. At that conference, I combined two terms, ebony, meaning black, and phonics, meaning the science of speech sounds, to form the term ebonics.

In 1975, I published this book, entitled "Ebonics: The True Language of Black Folks."

Now, ebonics has two major dimensions as a language: (1) a lexicon, or the vocabulary of the language, and (2) morphology, or the study of the structure and the form of the language that includes its grammatical rules.

Ebonics may be defined as the linguistic and paralinguistic features which, on a concentric continuum, represent the communicative competence of the West African, Caribbean, and U.S. slave descendent of African origin. It includes the grammar, various idioms, patois, argots, ideolects, and social dialects of black people.

Now, we all certainly agree that standard English is the lingua franca, or the common language spoken by the people of the United States of America. It is certainly the language of the business, commerce, and industrial world. Our goal is to develop methods that will enable African-American children to master standard English. I think the basic question that concerns us is, what are the best methods for achieving this goal?

To answer this question I will discuss a brief personal history and three pieces of research that strongly support the use of ebonics as a legitimate approach to teaching standard English and reading.

In a Little Rock high school I tested in the lower average intelligence range by earning an IQ of 82. I barely missed being placed in the special education classes by three IQ points. My counselor placed me in a vocational trade curriculum because she said I did not have college ability. She told me that I did not talk right and that I did not have college ability. She told me that my grammar was poor. I spoke ebonics.

Through a fluke, however, I went to a junior college and then on to Philander Smith College, a small historically black college in Little Rock, AR. It was there that I learned the rules of standard English from an English teacher and a French instructor. I graduated with honors in 1953, cum laude—lawdy lawdy, and thank you, lawdy. [Laughter.]

I went on to Wayne State University and received a master's in psychology in 1955. In 1961, I earned a doctorate in clinical psy-

chology at Washington University, St. Louis, MO. I was a full professor for 22 years before retiring in 1992.

The first study is one that I conducted in 1970 that led me in the direction of the ebonics hypothesis. I developed the black intelligence test of cultural homogeneity to show that African-Americans performed better on a test that contained items from their cultural pool rather than from an unfamiliar cultural pool. The results supported my argument.

The second study conducted in 1972 set out to determine the effect of language on test scores of African-American children. I switched codes or translated the test items from standard English into ebonics. This method provided a standard English version of the test and a nonstandard version, or ebonics. Nine hundred and ninety kindergarten, first grade, and second grade children were included in the study.

The results were striking. The children scored significantly higher on the ebonics version than on the standard English version.

The following two examples are given here to show the method of code-switching or translation:

One, standard English: Mark the toy that is behind the sofa. Ebonics version: Mark the toy that is in back of the couch.

Two, the standard English version: Point to the squirrel that is beginning to climb the tree. The ebonics version: Point to the squirrel that is fixing to climb the tree.

What I discovered in the first example, the words "behind" and "sofa" were blocking agents. I translated both words to "in back of" and "couch." In the second example, I translated the word "beginning" to "fixing to." These changes produced dramatic changes in the children's test scores.

Dr. Gary Simpkins is the author of the third study. Using ebonics, his BRIDGE Program places emphasis on language skills already in the students' repertoires using material representative of their cultural experiences. BRIDGE is a reading program in which students proceed from the familiar ebonics to the less familiar standard English in a series of transitional steps.

The BRIDGE Program emphasizes the axiom, start where the child is. Over a 4-month period the BRIDGE group showed significantly higher reading achievement test scores than the non-BRIDGE group. The BRIDGE group progressed in reading scores by 6.2 months, whereas the non-BRIDGE group increased only 1.2 months. Teachers who were initially opposed to the BRIDGE Program changed from negative to positive after using the program.

PREPARED STATEMENT

I close, Senator, with these two thoughts:

One, you cannot appreciate or value what you do not understand, and you cannot understand what you do not know.

Two, how do you know where I'm at if you ain't been where I've been? Understand where I'm coming from.

Thank you.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ROBERT L. WILLIAMS, PH.D.

On January 26, 1973, almost twenty-four years ago, I coined the term Ebonics at a conference that I chaired in St. Louis, Missouri. A group of Black scholars and myself argued that we needed to define the language spoken by many Blacks rather than let others define it for us. At that conference, I combined two terms: (1) Ebony, meaning black and (2) PHONICS, meaning the science of speech sounds to form the term Ebonics. In 1975, I published a book entitled: Ebonics: The True Language of Black Folks.

Ebonics has two major dimensions as a language: (1) A lexicon or the vocabulary of the language, (2) Morphology or the study of the structure and form of the language that include its grammatical rules.

Ebonics may be defined as the linguistic and paralinguistic features which on a concentric continuum represent the communicative competence of the West African, Caribbean, and United States slave descendent of African origin. It includes the grammar, various idioms, patois, argots, ideolects, and social dialects of Black people. (Williams, 1973, p. VI)

Now, we all agree that Standard English is the "lingua franca", or the common language spoken by the people of the United States of America. It is certainly the language of the business, commerce and industrial world. Our goal is to develop methods that will enable African-American children to master Standard English. The question that concerns us is: "What are the best methods of achieving this goal?"

To answer this question I will discuss a brief personal story and three pieces of research that strongly support the use of Ebonics as a legitimate approach in teaching Standard English and reading. In a Little Rock, Arkansas High School, I tested in the Low Average intelligence range by earning an I.Q. of 82. I barely missed being placed in the Special Education Classes by three I.Q. points. My counselor placed me in a vocational trade curriculum because she said I did not have college ability. She told me that I did not talk right and that my grammar was poor (I spoke Ebonics). Through a fluke, I went to a Junior College and then onto Philander Smith College, a small Historically Black College in Little Rock, Arkansas. It was there that I learned the rules of Standard English from an English teacher and a French instructor. I graduated with honors in 1953—Cum Laude, Lawdy Lawdy and Thank you Lawdy.

I went on to Wayne State University and received a Masters in Psychology in 1955. In 1961 I earned a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology at Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri. I was a full Professor for 22 years before retiring in 1992.

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(1) Standard English: Mark the toy that is behind the sofa.

Ebonics: Mark the toy that is in back of the couch.

(2) Standard English: Point to the squirrel that is beginning to climb the tree.

Ebonics: Point to the squirrel that is fixing to climb the tree.

What I discovered was that, in the first example, the words "beginning" and "sofa" were blocking agents. I translated both words to "in back of" and "couch". In the second example, I translated the term "beginning" to "fixing to". These changes produced dramatic positive changes in the children's test scores.

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months. Teachers who were initially opposed to the BRIDGE program changed from negative to positive after using the program.

I close with these two thoughts:

(1) "You can't appreciate or value what you don't understand, and You cannot understand what you do not know."

(2) "How do you know where I'm at if you ain't been where I've been? Understand where I'm coming from".

Thank you.

BRIDGE LANGUAGE

Senator SPECTER. Dr. Williams, before going on, Dr. Casserly, do you end up in the same place? That is, if you have the BRIDGE language and you use the ebonics at the end of the course do the students communicate in standard English?

Dr. WILLIAMS. Yes; they know that there is home talk and there is school talk, and they learn standard English. I still speak ebonics every day I play golf. We get down.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF MICHAEL CASSERLY

Senator SPECTER. We will pick up some more questions after we turn to Dr. Casserly.

Dr. Michael Casserly is executive director for the Council of the Great City Schools, the national organization that exclusively represents large urban public districts. For nearly 20 years, Dr. Casserly has dedicated his career to improving the education of the Nation's 5.8 million inner city schoolchildren. Dr. Casserly, welcome, and the floor is yours.

Dr. CASSERLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to associate myself first of all with the serious academic work that the gentlemen on this panel have done, and I congratulate them on their statement.

I am Michael Casserly. I am executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, a coalition of the Nation's largest urban school systems, and I am pleased to testify before this critical subcommittee this morning.

I would like to devote my brief comments this morning to the achievement of African-American and other children in urban schools nationally. I hope this will give additional context to the issues being discussed here this morning.

But before I do, I do want to publicly acknowledge and applaud your leadership and advocacy last fall for increasing Federal title I appropriations, and the appropriations for the Individuals With Disabilities Act and other programs. We will do everything in our power to make sure that those additional appropriations in elementary and secondary education are spent effectively.

In preparation for this hearing, the Council of the Great City Schools conducted a brief survey of its membership asking for information on the use of programs such as the one in Oakland. We received survey returns from some 25 or so major urban school districts across the country. So far about 23 urban public school systems across the country have indicated that they do not use an approach similar to the Oakland approach as a formal policy or program districtwide.

Several urban public school systems, however, do use such an approach similar to Oakland. One is San Diego and one is Los Ange-

les, as you have heard. San Diego has a program called the Mainstream Academic English Program that provides professional development for teachers to help African-American and English-speaking Latino students achieve mastery in standard English. The program is used in 16 of the districts, approximately 150 schools, and with some 43 of the district's 5,300 teachers.

Los Angeles has a program called the Language Development Program for African-American Students. Its focus is on professional development of teachers and staff. The program is used in approximately 31 of the districts, some 775 schools. Evaluations of all of these programs, including the one in Oakland, indicate higher achievement scores in all three cases.

A number of other urban school districts across California use a similar approach, partially in response to the California Standard English Proficiency Program, as you heard from Carolyn Getridge. Schools in Chicago and Dallas have also used the same approach in the past.

Most urban public school systems across the country do not have a formalized policy or program similar to Oakland's however. Several districts, however, do offer workshops to teachers and staff on how to improve proficiency in standard English for African-American students, and we assume that some teachers use these approaches on an ad hoc basis in their classrooms.

Each of these programs, whether formal or informal, have a number of things in common: (1) they work to improve the ability of students to speak standard English; (2) they do not attempt to teach students how to speak or improve their efficiency in ebonics; (3) they attempt to improve proficiency in standard English by respecting the language that students bring to school, rather than characterizing it as a deficit; and (4) they provide techniques for students and staff in helping students move from one dialect to standard English.

The main challenge that programs such as the one in Oakland, Los Angeles, and San Diego try to address involves the achievement levels of African-American and other students. The goal is to teach children to world class standards in the core subjects and to prepare them for the workplace, and for full participation in democracy and the economy.

So far, the Nation's schools have had a fairly mixed track record in the achievement of African-American students, particularly in the inner cities. We have good news in terms of the gaps being closed over a 20- to 25-year period for African-American students, but if you were to take a snapshot of the achievement of African-American students, particularly in urban school districts, you will still find them considerably behind many other students, and it is programs like the one in Oakland and in San Diego and Los Angeles that are attempting to address these achievement gaps, and I have attached data from a variety of studies throughout the country.

The Federal Government has an important role, in conclusion, Mr. Chairman, to play that is entirely consistent with the historic mission in education of improving opportunity. Within its current authorizations, Congress could insist on targeting more of the Fed-

eral Goals 2000 money on urban schools. It could pump more money into the title I concentration program.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to suggest one thing that the Congress and the Federal Government resist doing. I hope the political leaders everywhere will resist turning issues raised by the Oakland schools into political rhetoric. There is a disquieting rush to judgment on this issue when that issue reached national visibility. The issue has the potential to divide us.

PREPARED STATEMENT

This debate should not be about good versus bad, low versus high, excellent versus superior. It should be about how it is we move our urban school systems and the achievement of African-American students in our urban centers to excellence.

Thank you for this opportunity. I appreciate the time this morning.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MICHAEL CASSERLY

Mr. chairman, my name is Michael Casserly and I am the Executive Director of the Council of the Great City Schools. I am pleased to testify before this critical Subcommittee on the important issue of educating African-American children in urban school systems nationally.

Currently in its 40th year, the Council of the Great City Schools is a national organization composed of some 50 of the nation's largest urban public school systems. Our Board of Directors is composed of the Superintendent and one Board of Education member from each city, making the Council the only education group so constituted and the only one whose membership and purposes are solely urban.

The urban school districts comprising the Council serve some 6.0 million inner-city children or about 13 percent of the nation's public school enrollment. Some 36 percent of the nation's African-American children, 30 percent of its Hispanic children, and 21 percent of the nation's Asian-American students are educated in our schools each day. In addition, these urban school systems educate about 30 percent of the country's poor children and 36 percent of its limited English proficient students. Over 60 percent of our students are eligible for a free or reduced-price federal meal subsidy.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to devote my brief comments this morning to the achievement of African-American and other children in urban public schools nationally. I hope this will help give additional context to the issues being discussed here this morning and to some of the decisions faced by the Oakland Board of Education and other urban school systems across the country.

Before I begin, however, I want to take this opportunity and applaud your leadership and advocacy last Fall for increasing the federal appropriations for such vital programs as Title I (and particularly its Concentration Grant component), the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, and other programs. We will do everything in our power to ensure those dollars are spent effectively.

The immediate issue before this Subcommittee involves Ebonics and the context of its use such as in the Oakland Public Schools. The Council also assumes that the Subcommittee is interested in the use of Ebonics by other school systems, particularly urban schools, and why it is being used by some.

In preparation for this hearing, the Council of the Great City Schools conducted a quick survey of its membership asking for information on the use of programs such as the one Oakland has been using for several years. We are still receiving survey returns, but twenty-three (23) major urban school districts, so far, have indicated that they did not use a language or curriculum approach like Oakland's. They include the public school systems in Broward County (Ft. Lauderdale), Buffalo, Cleveland, Dade County (Miami), Dallas, Dayton, Denver, Detroit, El Paso, Fresno, Houston, Las Vegas, Louisville, Memphis, Milwaukee, New York City, Norfolk, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Portland, San Antonio, Seattle and St. Louis. Most also had no immediate plans to adopt the approach.

Several urban school districts, however, do use an approach similar to Oakland's. They include:

—*San Diego*—has a program called the Mainstream Academic English Program which provides professional development for teachers to help African-American and English speaking Latino students achieve mastery in standard English. The main goals of the program are to develop student mastery of standard English, improve teacher understanding of cultural and linguistic variations, and to promote parental involvement. The program is used in 16 of the district's approximately 150 schools with some 43 of the district's 5,300 teachers.

—*Los Angeles*—has a program called the language Development Program for African-American Students. Its goal is to remove barriers to students in learning mainstream English and to ensure that students have an equal opportunity to benefit from the curriculum. Its focus is on professional development of teachers and staff. The program is used in 31 of the district's some 775 schools.

A number of other non-urban school districts in California use a similar approach partially in response to California's "Standard English Proficiency Program (S.E.P.)". Schools in Chicago and Dallas have also used the approach on a limited basis. Most urban school districts do not have a formalized policy or program similar to Oakland's. Several districts, however, do offer workshops to teachers and staff on how to improve proficiency in standard English for African-American students. And we assume that some teachers use these approaches on and ad hoc basis in their classrooms. Each of these programs, formal and informal, have a number of things in common:

1. They attempt to improve the ability of students to speak standard English;
2. They do not attempt to teach students how to speak or improve their proficiency in Ebonics;
3. They attempt to improve proficiency in standard English by respecting the language that students bring to school rather than characterizing it solely as deficits; and
4. They provide techniques for teachers and staff in helping students move from one dialect or another to standard English.

The main challenge that program's such as the ones used in Oakland, Los Angles and San Diego try to address involves the achievement levels of African-American and other students. The goal is to teach children to "world class" standards in the core subjects, and to prepare them for the workplace and for full participation in our democracy and economy. So far, the nation's schools have a mixed track record in meeting this challenge, particularly for African-American students.

There is both good news and bad news. On the positive side, the nation's schools and society have seen progress on a number of important indicators:

—The Census Bureau reported in 1996 that young Black adults (ages 24–29) had pulled abreast of white young adults in their high school completion rates.

—The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) shows that African-American children have made the largest percentage gains in reading and math since 1971.

—The College Board reports that African-American students continue to improve on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) at a rate of one or two points per year while increasing their participation rates.

—The Council of the Great City Schools reports that the percentage of African-American students in urban schools successfully completing a first year course in algebra by the end of the 10th grade has also increased significantly.

—The National Research Council indicates that the number of African-Americans earning a doctoral degree was at an all-time high in 1995 (the latest year for which data are available).

—The National Science foundation reports that college graduation rates among African-American students have increased in science and engineering.

On the negative side, other indicators point to how much the nation's schools still need to achieve for African-American students:

—Data from NAEP and recently reanalyzed by the Education Trust indicate that progress in closing the achievement gaps between African-American and white students has nearly stopped since about 1988.

—The absolute achievement gap between African-American students and white students is significant on NAEP, the SAT and on standardized tests given in individual local school systems.

—African-American students continue to lag behind several other groups in course taking and advanced placement rates.

We have attached data compiled by the Council of the Great City Schools on 1992–93 indicators of achievement by race in the major cities. These data and data from other sources generally point to substantial—if not profound—improvements in the achievement of African-American students for which the nation, its schools and its students can be justifiably proud.

At the same time, it is clear not only that significant gaps remain but that the positive trend lines we have seen since the early 1970's have now leveled off if not declined in recent years. It is the concern for the remaining gaps and the recent stagnation that drive discussions about how school systems, particularly in cities, can keep trend lines moving in the right directions.

Urban school systems across the nation use a variety of approaches to improve the achievement of African-American students and to close achievement gaps. Some of those approaches include:

—The development and implementation in urban school systems of new, high standards for all student achievement;
—Professional development for teachers and staff in multicultural settings;
—Development of assessment systems that are culturally-fair as well as aligned with high standards;
—The use of Afro-centric curricula;
—Mentoring programs; and
—Parent involvement strategies.

The federal government has an important role to play that is entirely consistent with its historic mission in education of improving opportunity. Within its current authorizations, the congress could insist on targeting more of the federal Goals 2000 program on urban school systems and other very poor communities. Most urban school systems receive disproportionately small grants under this program to help them improve standards, reform the curricula or develop new assessment systems.

Second, the federal government can continue to improve and expand the federal Title I program and its Concentration grant provision. The program, historically, has been one of the main engines for improving achievement in urban public school systems.

Third, the federal government might consider authorizing special assistance to urban school systems across the country to assist them in addressing the problems that reforms in the welfare system are likely to cause in the next few years.

Finally, I would like to suggest one thing that congress and the federal government resist doing. I hope that political leaders resist turning issues raised by the Oakland schools into sources of political rhetoric. There was a disquieting rush to judgement on the merits and motives of Ebonics when it reached national visibility. The issue has the potential to divide us once more. This debate should not be about good versus bad, low versus high, excellent versus inferior. It should be about how we move our schools from a place where they are not succeeding with African-American and other children to the extent they should to a place where the schools equip all students with a common language that is the coin of the realm for future success in American society.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to testify. I would be happy to try and answer any questions you may have.

NONSTANDARD LANGUAGE

Senator SPECTER. Well, thank you very much, Dr. Casserly. The testimony which this panel has given is obviously very erudite, and very complicated.

Dr. Labov, you, I think, crystallized it when you say the two major points of view are, one, any recognition of a nonstandard language as a legitimate means of expression will only confuse children and create or force the use of it instead of English, and the other is that children learn most rapidly in their home language. Where do you come out on it?

Dr. Labov, you have recited your statistics, but I do not sense a conclusion in your testimony.

Dr. LABOV. Well, I myself am not an educator, but the results of research on effective teaching throughout the world come down on the second side. Some of the most effective work has been done by the psychologists testing the emersion programs in Canada and examining second language learning programs throughout the world.

Wallace Lambert in particular has shown that whether we are dealing with the French learning English in Maine, or Latino speakers learning English, that reinforcing the home language in

the first stages and respecting it leads to more rapid advance in both languages, so that the consensus of research is that the children do learn most rapidly when they are given—when the teaching proceeds on the basis of what they know when they come to school, a point of view that has been expressed a number of times here.

Senator SPECTER. Well, I can see that they would learn most rapidly if you use the language that they have used before coming to school, but that raises the question as to whether that is the best way to get them to use standard English.

Dr. Williams, I am impressed by your definition, concentric continuum represents the communicative competence, et cetera. That would challenge Dr. Henry Higgins for where the rain is, as I read it, and I am obviously impressed by your achievements, and when you talk about using a second language, I can understand how you can handle it on the golf course and handle a different form of speech and maybe interchange it in a Senate hearing room, but how about the students in school? Are they able to handle the use of ebonics interchangeably with the use of standard English and still keep up?

Dr. WILLIAMS. One thing that I think we all must understand is that African-Americans are very creative and very flexible. They are able to code-switch very easily. They can translate if they are taught how to do this, what the equivalents are.

For example, in the studies that we have done, the children already have information into their repertoire of experience, but if you are asking them questions which do not match up with what they have, then they do not really understand what you are saying. Code-switching is very easy to do, or translating what is being said into another language.

Senator SPECTER. Well, I can see that if you are asking somebody a question and the use of the word fixing is the one they understand, as contrasted with another, that you ask them a question in a language that they can understand so they can give you an answer that is competent, but how long do you use that, their starting language? How fast do you change it over into standard English so that they use standard English?

Dr. WILLIAMS. I think as soon as they enter kindergarten, or wherever they enter the school, and they are using nonstandard English or ebonics, you teach them how to translate by simply presenting to them the model language, and the children quickly pick that up. You do not teach them ebonics. They already have mastered ebonics.

Senator SPECTER. Dr. Casserly, I focused on your testimony about attempting to improve proficiency by respecting their ebonics language rather than by characterizing it solely as deficits, but do you share Dr. Williams' sense that the students at these tender ages, without Dr. Williams' IQ, can move back and forth?

He said he was tested at 82, only 3 points above the other category. I am not going to ask if he was retested after that. [Laughter.]

Dr. Casserly, do you share Dr. Williams' view that these students can move back and forth?

Dr. CASSERLY. Well, first of all I am not an instructional expert like most of the panel is here. I generally think that Dr. Williams is probably correct about the necessary code-switching that goes on, but this is one of those areas where I think it is important to leave instructional approaches like this to local school and instructional officials who can make an adequate judgment about the instructional needs of the individual students.

Senator SPECTER. Dr. Taylor, by the time the students reach your level, as dean of the School of Arts and Sciences, this problem is all behind them?

Dr. TAYLOR. I think that we find that the issue of competence in standard English is seen throughout the entire educational system. From time to time you see students graduating from high schools in our country who go on to college who might have mastered the academic content of subject area but who still need support to enhance their language skills.

We have some of the legislation already. Special services for students, student special services in Trio Program, title IV, and these programs often provide tutorial support for students who need further enhancement in the acquisition of standard English.

Just a comment, Mr. Chairman, if I might, with regard to really trying to determine which teaching strategies are most effective.

Dr. Casserly pointed out that there were a number of school districts that are engaged in rather ad hoc sort of arrangements with regard to examining these approaches. We need an opportunity and some encouragement and some incentives to systematically examine other approaches to teaching standard English to all of our students at all levels of the educational system. We need more support for researchers and scholars who can really come back to us with data which would inform us on the strategies that are most effective in doing this.

Right now, we are operating somewhat in an environment where there is speculation and hypothesis-making. We need to have more definitive information.

Dr. CASSERLY. Mr. Chairman, I would like to agree with that wholeheartedly. In the current climate with the current polemics it is very hard to do very systematic studies, but it is absolutely necessary to do that.

So far, I think you really cannot answer the question, what is the best? We do know that the approach that Oakland is using is raising the achievement scores of African-American students in that school. What we have not done is a whole lot of serious academic comparisons about what the best way is to do that.

Senator SPECTER. Dr. Williams.

Dr. WILLIAMS. Yes; I would like to make what I think is one significant correction. It has been stated that using ebonics as a transitional method is teaching down to students. I do not think that it is teaching down to students. It is simply matching the teaching method to where the student is so that that student can make a connection and move on to another level.

If you do not connect with the student, the student is left behind, and the teacher is moving on leaving the student back there, so it is not teaching down, it is really plugging in to where the student

is and making the connection with that student in order to lead the student on.

Senator SPECTER. Dr. Labov.

Dr. LABOV. To connect with what Dr. Casserly was saying, I am a member of a committee of the National Research Council putting together a report on the prevention of reading difficulties among young children, and my colleagues, who are psychologists and experts in reading, have asked me what is the scientific evidence for the cultural effect on reading?

My answer so far has been that we do not have the kind of evidence that would be comparable to the massive studies of the Head Start and the early intervention programs for the reasons that we have seen here. The strong emotional reactions against the introduction or even the tolerance of the language of the children have terminated the testing of programs and interfered with the knowledge we would like to have, so one result I feel of this controversy is that people will see the need for us to pursue these alternatives and develop that kind of information.

Senator SPECTER. Well, thank you very much. I think there is a large body of agreement coming out of the hearing today, as I hear it. No doubt about everybody's objective, to see to it that the students are educated in the best way possible so that they can compete in America and compete in the world, and the end product we want to have is students who understand standard English and who speak standard English.

The issue is in some stage of difference of opinion as to whether it is a bridge that is helpful or whether it is a distraction, but I would commend the written statements of this panel to those who focus on this issue, because it takes a lot more analysis and a lot more reflective thought than you can get by just hearing it once, or by having the questions raised.

I thank you, Dr. Casserly, for your compliment about the funding which we have made out of this committee. We consider it very, very important. There is a real battle among the priorities which we have on the $1,600 billion, and our subcommittee has fought hard to make education a very, very high priority to see to it that these funds are available, and basically we prevailed last year. It was a real battle.

PREPARED STATEMENTS

Statements for the record have been submitted by Rev. Jesse Jackson, who wanted to be here but his plane had not arrived by the end of the hearing, and by the Hon. Ronald Dellums of the House of Representatives. Other statements for the record will also be inserted at this time.

[The statements follow:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF REV. JESSE L. JACKSON, PRESIDENT, RAINBOW/PUSH COALITION

Last month, Oakland schools and ebonics—the name scholars have given to the black language pattern of the ghetto streets—suddenly became front page news. Oakland school officials were reported as planning to teach ebonics—the black slang of the ghetto—in the classroom. That has been denounced—as it should—by black leaders and educators across the country, including myself. The conservative claque will add it to their litany against affirmative action, poverty programs, aid to edu-

cation: "These people want to use your tax dollars to teach black slang as a separate language," they will rant.

An easy cheap shot—but it turns out it is not true. We'd do better to learn from Oakland than to spurn it. I oppose any suggestion of teaching an ungrammatical language pattern or of elevating it into a language, because it implies that African-Americans are incapable of learning standard American English. But the Oakland's school officials have made it clear that isn't what they intend. Unlike their critics, they are less focused on ebonics as a term than on at risk children as a reality.

Over half of Oakland's children are black; most from the poorest, most isolated of black inner city neighborhoods. These are children of broken homes, raised on hard streets. They grow up so segregated from the rest of America that they come to school speaking a distinct language pattern that they learn on the streets, on the radio, in the music, even from the pulpits.

These kids are failing. They are channeled to jail as surely as the sons and daughters of the affluent are channeled to Yale. Seventy-one percent are in special education programs, with learning disabilities worsened by malnutrition, inadequate medical care, unsafe housing. Many will leave the schools functionally illiterate.

America's primary response is to lock them up. One half of all black babies are born to poverty. Some make it out. But one-third of all African-American men between the ages of 20 and 29 are now in prison, jail, parole or probation. Of those in jail, 90 percent are high school drop outs; 92 percent are functionally illiterate; there is a 75 percent recidivist rate. And the pain is being recycled; there are 700,000 black men in jail with children at home under the age of 8.

Oakland school officials and teachers are on the front lines. They can't pontificate about education from editorial suites or preach morals from suburban sanctuaries. They have to find a way to save as many of these kids as they can.

Their goal—clearly stated in their controversial program—is to make the children proficient in reading and writing standard American English. Study after study shows that the language pattern that the kids bring to the school—the language of the streets—makes learning standard English more difficult. The Oakland strategy is to teach teachers how to detect that language pattern, correct it and redirect it. Oakland officials have no intention of teaching slang to kids as a separate language. But they would like to get the added resources that come for those teaching children with special language deficiencies.

Once that was clarified, the jive talk around the Oakland programs has come mostly from pundits well versed in the King's English. Mary Magrory, esteemed columnist of the Washington Post, called for an "emergency" performance of "My Fair Lady" in Oakland, so Henry Higgins can save the kids. George Will fulminated against teaching these kids the self esteem that was no doubt taught to his own children. Oakland's strategy may or may not work; but it makes a lot more sense than most of the pundits.

If educators and parents on the scene in a local school system want to experiment with this strategy of teaching—with the objective of helping students master proper English—surely that is an experiment that we can allow, a judgment that we encourage local school systems to make. That is, as your conservative colleagues will surely tell you, exactly what local control of schools is all about.

I am for national standards for all children; the conservative majority in this Congress opposes them. But even those of us who are for national standards support the local control of schools, and support the idea that local school boards, parents and teachers should be making decisions about how best to teach the children that they are responsible for. Conservatives may not approve of the Oakland strategy, but surely they support the right of the Oakland schools to experiment with that strategy.

The burlesque of the Oakland school board is not surprising. This country remains in a state of denial about poverty in America. Few want to admit that segregation is so entrenched that inner city communities literally have developed their own patois, as divorced from standard English as cockney was from the court in royal Britain. Few want to admit what Jonathan Kozol called the "savage inequality" of schools in this country, with local financing insuring that the kids with the most needs go to schools with fewest resources.

We need to turn the heat on this issue into light. Oakland is not a joke and it is not alone. Grammar is important—but not just the grammar of language but the grammar of life. These children, in Oakland and cities across the nation, have trouble conjugating verbs. But this committee must understand that that difficulty relates to their trouble in conjugating nutrition, their challenge of conjugating mean streets, their burden of conjugating inadequate medical care. They have trouble with sentence construction; but the real sentences being constructed for them are three

or two strikes and out, rather than four balls and on. They are sentenced to jail, just as surely as other children are channeled to Yale.

In cities across this country, children are failing, unable to overcome odds that are just too great. A recent study showed that where schools have adequate funding, classes are small, teachers decently paid, and standards high, poor black children do as well or better as any. But too many impoverished kids go to impoverished schools.

Rather than devoting the resources, time and attention needed to save the children, the current response is to apply the lock them up strategy sooner and longer: prosecute kids as adults, two or three strikes and out. Investing on the front side of life—pre-natal care, head start, day care, small classes, tutors, modern schools—makes more sense. It is the right thing to do, and it costs less than jailcare and welfare on the backside.

If you care about the grammar taught these children, you must care about the grammar of their lives, not simply the grammar of their language. We need a national crusade to save the children. The president who has set out to make his mark in education must decide whether he will start with the children who have the greatest needs. Conservatives who claim to be for choice must decide if they offer children a chance from the start, not simply bad choices after the options are foreclosed. A wealthy country can choose to lift these children up or continue to cast them out, to invest in creating hope or suffer the far higher costs of despair. That is the real choice that Oakland poses to the country.

LETTER FROM CONGRESSMAN RONALD V. DELLUMS

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, January 22, 1997.

Senator ARLEN SPECTER,
Chair, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR SPECTER: I understand that your subcommittee will conduct a hearing tomorrow on the issue of Oakland's recently adopted program to enhance the language skills of its African-American students.

Obviously much controversy has swirled around the program's characterization—much of it uninformed. I understand that your subcommittee is attempting to gather information and will hear testimony from both the Oakland superintendent of schools and from a representative member of its Board of Trustees. I am certain that they will be able to share with the subcommittee their views on what they believe will be the efficacy of this approach to improving language and standard English skills of our students, and will be able to show the pedagogical precedents and the linguistic basis of their approach. (A recent meeting of the key U.S. professional society of linguists supported both the linguistic and pedagogical approach taken by Oakland, an approach previously adopted in other districts.)

As the Congress takes up this issue, it would be my hope that the House and Senate will be able to focus in on how we can provide desperately needed resources to all school districts. This should be one of our highest national priorities—and may even be properly seen as one of our highest national security priorities. For, without educated and inspired youth, our society will face serious problems in the next century.

Sincerely,

RONALD V. DELLUMS,
Member of Congress.

LETTER FROM J. ALFRED SMITH, SR.

BAPTIST MINISTERS' UNIONS,
Oakland, CA, January 21, 1997.

Senator ARLEN SPECTER,
Chair, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies, U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR SPECTER: We, the members of the Baptist Ministers' Union of Oakland and the East Bay, are highly supportive of Superintendent Carolyn Getridge and the trustees of Oakland Public Schools in having the courage to address the low performance of African-American students by using Ebonics. Before

Ebonics became an issue, no one used the media to address low test scores in English, and no political leader attempted to gain political mileage by addressing the plight of African-American students.

America cannot afford to be in denial about the existence of a large African-American underclass that is struggling to overcome the barriers in communication which prevent them from fully participating in the competitive race of main stream society. The Ebonics program is a bold attempt to address this issue. Ebonics is successfully used in Los Angeles.

We need your support of the Ebonics program in Oakland. We are asking you and the Appropriations Committee to provide Superintendent Getridge with the funding that she is requesting for the establishment of Ebonics in the Oakland Public Schools.

Cordially yours,

J. ALFRED SMITH, SR.,
President.

LETTER FROM DEBORAH WRIGHT

Oakland, CA, January 22, 1997.

Senator ARLEN SPECTER,
Chairman, Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR SPECTER: I am writing regarding the appearance of the Oakland School Board before your committee. I was the Republican Congressional Nominee in 1994 and 1996 for the Oakland, California area. I strongly oppose Ebonics. It is a racist policy that blames the parents and children for the failure of the public schools.

There is an enormous amount of evidence that Black children can be successful, if they are placed in competent and aggressive academic programs. When I was a child attending segregated black schools the solution to English proficiency was an emphasis on grammar and vocabulary. In those days black leaders were fighting against black English and the inferiority perceptions and stereotypes that Ebonics promotes.

The Oakland Unified School District commissioned a group called the African-American Task Force to develop solutions to the low achievement of Black students in the district. Unfortunately there was little discussion with the community at large and physical threats were made by members of the task force against anyone even school board members who opposed Ebonics. Because of this hostile atmosphere, I am certain that you have not seen the level of opposition that actually exists in Oakland.

I am opposed to any policy that is created for "those people". If the policy is not good enough for my child, then it is not good enough for any child. I am offended by the excuse that Black children are limited English proficient when they come to school. Many Black students from two parent college educated homes like my son are not graduating from high school because of the dangerous, undisciplined and poor academic environment in the schools.

The issue in Oakland is not money it is management who fails to hire competent teachers and fire incompetent teachers. The influence of the unions places the teachers first and the students dead last. Oakland has done a terrible job with the black students. Ebonics is an attempt to blame the parents and students for the failure of the schools.

Some of the policies or practices that contribute to the problem:

—Parents are not notified when their children are suspended.
—Parents are not notified when their children skip class.
—Parents are not notified when their children are sent to the office or disciplined in any way at school.
—When parents report serious deficiencies with teachers and classrooms they are told that they are wrong.
—The schools are maintained improperly with no heating, leaky roofs and dirty restrooms.
—Playgrounds are lacking.
—The schools are dangerous because they are undisciplined and out of control.
—The schools do not teach grammar according to Superintendent Carolyn Getridge.
—The schools do not teach phonics.
—They do not teach vocabulary.

—Good teachers are not as effective as they could be, because there are administrators who do not support the competent caring teachers.
—Over 50 percent of the teachers are deficient in one or more of the following ways and race is not a factor. The most competent and caring teacher that my son had in high school was of Japanese decent.
—There are non-native English speaking teachers who do not understand the students and cannot relate to the student.
—There are teachers who cannot gain respect nor control their classes.
—There are teachers who do not know their subject matter.
—There are teachers who just don't care. You can find them saying that they are just trying to get through the year.

SOLUTIONS

1. Implement commonsense solutions that have proven to work in other schools. Stop education experiments using Black children as guinea pigs. Ebonics is just another educrat experiment that has not been proven.
2. Develop objective measures of teacher accountability and fire the incompetent.
—Public for parents and teachers what should be learned each year.
—Test students in September to obtain what the student knows.
—Test again in May to determine what the student has learned.
—If the majority of the students in a class do not progress at least one academic year, the teacher should be terminated.
—If the majority of the students in a school do not progress at least one academic year, fire the principal also.
3. Start teaching grammar, phonics and vocabulary.
4. Expand the pool of eligible teachers and increase the likelihood of finding teachers who can gain the respect and control of classrooms.
—Continue to require the CBEST test for teachers.
—Allow professionals to substitute 5 years professional experience and a BA degree.
—Schools can take advantage of downsizing by hiring scientist, engineers and other experienced professionals who know and can teach a subject matter.
—Provide students with teachers who can demonstrate practical usage of material being taught and expose students to the world of work with professionals as teachers.

Ebonics is a more money ploy. Teachers want to be paid extra for teaching Black children English. Black Americans everywhere are fed-up with the low academic performance. If the educators do not believe that they can teach Black children without Ebonics, they should find another job and allow competent people who have experience and success to take control of Oakland public school system.

Please help us stop Ebonics. I predict that Ebonics will increase the drop out rate in Oakland because the Black students are embarrassed. They have become the laughingstock. Racism is racism regardless of who proposes it. Ebonics is a racist policy that is hurting our children. Ebonics must be stopped. A teenage girl approached me after I spoke in opposition to Ebonics at the January 15, 1997 school board meeting, to thank me for my presenting her view. I told her that someone has to stand-up for the children. She replied, "Please do." The children of Oakland are pleading for your assistance.

Please call me, if I can be of assistance. I will continue to speak out against the racist policy of Ebonics. I am working with other parents to organize opposition to Ebonics and support for commonsense reforms that actually put the children first.

Sincerely,

DEBORAH WRIGHT.

LETTER FROM ALAN F. CLAYTON

LOS ANGELES COUNTY CHICANO
EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION,
Alhambra, CA, February 3, 1997.

Hon. ARLEN SPECTER,
Chairperson, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies, U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR SPECTER: The Los Angeles County Chicano Employees Association is very concerned about the lack of balance in your subcommittee hearing on ebonics. The vast majority of your invited speakers spoke in favor of ebonics. It was evident that there was not adequate representation of organizations and individuals

that have concerns about the credibility of the ebonics proposal. There was no representation from Latino organizations that have expressed opposition to ebonics proposals so the committee members were not able to listen to their concerns about the impact that this program could have on English speaking Latino students who speak nonstandard English.

In the Los Angeles Unified School District, 25 percent of the district's 667,000 students are English-speaking Latinos, some of whom speak a dialect of English, while 14 of the district's 667,000 students are Afro-American, some of whom speak a dialect of English. These students need to move from nonstandard English to English as quickly as possible.

Enclosed is a position paper for publication in the record of your hearing that shows our organization's concern with ebonics.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

ALAN F. CLAYTON,
Director of Equal Employment Opportunity.

EBONICS PROPOSAL IGNORES THE TRUE CAUSES OF EDUCATIONAL FAILURE

Ebonics has suddenly emerged as a divisive issue this past month. Many persons, including blacks, felt then as they do now: That the ebonics/black English proposal may perpetuate the myth that blacks are unable to learn standard English. Also, I believe that there is no substantial and convincing evidence to support the proposal's fundamental premise that it will help black children learn standard English more easily.

There are three significant problems with the proposal. First, the current Los Angeles Unified School District proposal seeks to equate ebonics as a separate language such as French, Japanese, or Spanish. The absurdity of this notion becomes clear when we see that the LAUSD proposal could require us to recognize such "dialects" as Appalachian, Brooklynese, Southern English and "Spanglish" as languages. Each is different from standard English in vocabulary, phrases, pronunciation, and syntax. Should we have specially paid teachers to "educate" the speech of the underachieving surfer who proclaims, the words of the Beattie cartoon, "Hey, dude! When do I get this, like totally tubular ebonics credit for being bilingual?"

It is instructive that in the court system, where the need to clearly understand what is being said by lawyers, witnesses, and the judge, individuals who speak a language other than English and cannot understand English, by law, are provided with a translator so that they can fully understand the proceedings. However, there are no ebonics translators for Afro-Americans because they speak English even if some of them speak in a non-standard fashion. Also Latinos and Asians and Anglos who speak English, but in a non-standard form, are not provided with translators. It is clear that ebonics is not a language but a dialect.

More importantly, the ebonics proposal is extremely divisive. Our schools are failing most poor children—of all colors and backgrounds. In Los Angeles City Schools, many native born Latino and Asian children speak English "dialects" that reflect the mix of English and their native languages. For example, in LAUSD, approximately 25 percent of the students are Latinos who speak English and 14 percent of the students are Afro-Americans who speak English. If all children were to be treated equally, then the ebonics proposal would require the schools to, legally, follow the same logic and make absurd decisions about the "first dialect" of each such student—a mindless proposition, without any educational, fiscal or social merit. The original proposal presumes to create a special privileged class primarily within the African-American community and seeks to potentially spend $34 million for a special program almost exclusively for that group alone, excluding almost all Asian, Latino, Anglo and other children who also speak "dialects".

In fact, in a report issued by the LAUSD Board in March 1989 ("The Children Can No Longer Wait") the board set up a different criteria and curriculum for the Afro-American children who speak and write non-standard English in comparison to other ethnic children who speak and write non-standard English. The report said that all ethnic groups should be taught standard English skills if they were speakers of non-standard English. However, for Afro-American children only the policy statement put forth two additional controversial and educationally unsound statements as policy: "(1) recognize and value African-American language (Black Language) as a viable language with its own system of rules, sounds and meanings, and (2) help students learn to switch from African-American language to standard English, when appropriate." It is clear that these are ideological and political statements that are designed to treat Afro-American children who speak non-standard

English as fundamentally different from Latino, Asian, American Indian and White children who speak non-standard English. It is a race-based decision and not a need based solution to a complex problem. Unfortunately, the current motion on ebonics that has been presented to the LAUSD School Board asks for full implementation of this policy and its educational practices listed above.

The Oakland, Los Angeles, and Compton school districts that are debating this issue have some of the worst records for student achievement for students of all ethnic backgrounds. It is instructive that discussions of the ebonics proposal have revealed that one reason for its enactment is to create economic opportunities for mainly the black educated class to potentially earn extra money and potentially to create "reserved" job slots that mostly blacks can fill. The original proposal calls for potentially $34 million annually to be spent in large part to train or hire classroom aides, teachers, counselors, coordinators, and administrators as well as the trainers with "expertise" in ebonics/black English.

Just as importantly, the discussions have revealed the power of "political correctness" in the public arena on this issue. State Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin noted this when she suggested that if the Hoover Institution, or another conservative institution, had made the proposal, the negative reaction would have been strong. Jesse Jackson, for example, after first denouncing the ebonics proposal in harsh terms, has done a total turn around. Jackson's reconsideration on this issue is especially sad. As the leader of the Rainbow Coalition, he should support programs that help all poor children and not ignore native-born poor Latino and Asian and Anglo children who also face difficulties succeeding in school. Another example of "political correctness" came from university linguists who proclaimed ebonics/black English as a separate language. Will they next endorse surfers who want their own teacher, especially trained in surfer-speak (Venice sub-dialect) by specialists in surfer-speak language and culture?

A final example of "political correctness" on this issue is the role of the Los Angeles Times. The opinion pieces it prints are overwhelming in support of ebonics. Also, the Los Angeles Times ignored two major press conferences by Latino organizations on this issue. The Los Angeles Times is failing to adequately point out that the original proposal did not treat equally with district resources the Asian, Latino and Anglo children who also speak dialects of English.

Lastly, the ebonics/black English proposal reveals the bankruptcy of some of the large urban school districts in managing instructional programs that are supposed to enable children to succeed. Black children are just as likely to succeed in school as any other children, provided they are given an opportunity to learn in well-maintained schools with enough seats, books and materials, as well as trained teachers and administrators who will not sabotage the learning process by their greater concern for their pocketbooks than about the learning needs and progress of their students. Perhaps it is time to look more carefully at our school district leaders and ensure that they learn the language of accountability.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DELAINE EASTIN, CALIFORNIA STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, my name is Delaine Eastin. I am the California State Superintendent of Public Instruction. As an elected state constitutional officer, I administer the California Department of Education (CDE) and serve as the Executive Officer and Secretary of the California State Board of Education.

Our priority in California education is to raise standards for every student. This means keeping the focus on making sure every student is proficient in standard English. While I share the concerns of many parents, educators, and community members about the unacceptably low academic achievement levels of African-American students of the Oakland Unified School District and other school districts in California, I also believe it is a disservice to African-American students to set lower standards for their achievement. My department and I are committed to high academic standards and English proficiency for all students. Separate and equal education is inherently unequal.

I want to state unequivocally that I oppose the use of so-called Ebonics or African language system as a means to improve student achievement. While I value the cultural and linguistic richness that students bring into the classroom, educators must be diligent to design and implement instructional strategies that enable African-American and other students to acquire the highest level in the achievement of

standard English. The use of Ebonics in the classroom is simply a poor instructional strategy in my opinion.

According to researchers, even before the age of five, many children learn an intricate system of language. They are able to construct sentences, ask questions, and select appropriate pronouns using the structure (syntax, phonology and grammar) of the language system to which they are born. Basically, children are not taught language in the sense that they are taught arithmetic. They learn language by themselves, and as long as it is spoken around them, they seem to mirror the language of their environment. Since oral language is learned by children whether or not it is taught to them, and because they model the language and dialects of their immediate environment, all spoken language mirrors the environment in which it is used, regardless of a child's race or social status. In other words, unless neurologically or physically handicapped, children enter school with a language system that reflects their cultural milieu.

Without question, language is the basis for communication. In our society, communication plays an important role in the determination of an individual's educational, social and vocational success. Standard English is the language of commerce and social mobility both here and abroad. To the extent that African-American students deserve every opportunity to improve their socioeconomic status, it is imperative that they learn standard English if they have not already acquired such a skill before entering school. Toward this goal, the CDE Standard English Program (SEP) seeks to assist school-level administrators and classroom teachers and parents in developing locally-designed standard English programs to expand the standard English language skills of speakers of nonstandard English.

In June 1979, the concept of a program to help African-American children learn standard English first emerged at the Summit on Educational and Social Concerns. Subsequently, the Equal Educational Opportunities Commission of the California State Board of Education developed a paper on a standard English program and presented it to the Board in November 1980. Succinctly, the paper outlined the need for special efforts to develop proficiency in standard English for students who are speakers of nonstandard English or Black Language. Based on the recommendations of the Equal Educational Opportunities Commission, the California State Board of Education adopted a policy in February 1981 directing districts to address the linguistic needs of Black Language speakers.

To provide standard English learning skills proficiency to California students who are speakers of Black Language and to provide equal educational opportunities for African-American students, the California State Board of Education and the California Department of Education recognized then, and continue to do so now, that:

—oral language development is a key strategy that facilitates learning in reading and other academic areas;

—structured oral language practice in standard English should be provided on an ongoing basis;

—oral language development should be emphasized during the teaching of reading and writing;

—special program strategies are required to address the needs of students who speak nonstandard English or Black Language;

—staff development should be provided for policy makers, administrators, instructional personnel, and other persons who are responsible for the education of students who speak nonstandard English;

The CDE Standard English Program (SEP) is a language arts expansion based on oral language development for speakers of nonstandard English or Black Language. This effort to improve proficiency in standard English for speakers of Black Language is NOT: (a) A program to teach Black Language; (b) A program for teachers to learn to speak Black Language; (c) A program to develop curriculum materials on Black Language; SEP is an effort to improve the oral, reading, and writing standard English proficiency of kindergarten through grade 12 students who speak nonstandard English. SEP provides these students a rich standard English language acquisition program. SEP uses intensive oral, language-based activities focused on the culture of the students and community and devotes as much time as needed to improve the proficiency in standard English among speakers of Black Language. The amount of study time spent on SEP activities is based upon appropriate levels of oral and written standard English proficiency of the students.

Each January, the CDE sponsors a statewide "Language Symposium." CDE encourages school districts to attend in order to learn the SEP implementation strategies that are supported by the California State Board of Education-adopted English-Language Arts Framework. CDE provides technical assistance to local school districts throughout the year and at a Summer Institute for teachers and other staff

working in their respective standard English programs. Currently there are 20 districts, 300 schools, and 6,000 students in California involved with the SEP.

While the CDE supports implementation of the SEP, we also support many other strategies for improving achievement levels of all underachieving students. The academic achievement problems in Oakland are the result of a great many factors common to many low-performing urban schools. There is no single solution. There is a need to use the entire "toolbox" of strategies that have demonstrated to be effective in improving the academic achievement of low-performing students. Such strategies include preschool focus on early language acquisition, smaller class sizes in early elementary grades, and a greater emphasis on early literacy. I am working closely with the chief executive officers of our state institutions of higher learning to advance a legislative proposal to hire college students to tutor public school students who need assistance with their academic development outside regular school hours. All these and other strategies are welcome additions to the toolbox of strategies that can benefit low-performing students, including speakers of nonstandard English.

Our goal in California is to teach the children of this state to speak as effectively as the Mayor of Oakland, the Mayor of San Francisco and the Superintendents of Schools in Oakland, San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego. All of these leaders are eloquent African-American speakers of standard English.

The California Department of Education and I stand ready to cooperate in every way possible with the Oakland Unified School District and other school districts in applying effective strategies to teach standard English in California schools. To reiterate, separate standards for African-American children to learn English are a sell-out to lesser standards and unequal education. As a society, we have a stake in helping all children to meet the same high standards. Bill Cosby said it very well, I think, when he wrote in the Wall Street Journal, "Legitimizing the street in the classroom is backward. We should be working hard to legitimize the classroom—and English—in the street."

Thank you.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOHN R. RICKFORD, PROFESSOR, STANFORD UNIVERSITY, STANFORD, CA

Please allow me to submit the following statement to be read into the record of the Ebonics panel which will testify before your Subcommittee on January 23, 1997.

Exordium.—I am a Professor of Linguistics at Stanford University, where I have been employed as a faculty member since 1980. My professional qualifications include an M.A. (1973) and Ph.D. (1979) in Linguistics from the University of Pennsylvania. I have been involved in the study of Creole languages and American English dialects, including African-American Vernacular English [AAVE] or "Ebonics," for over twenty-five years, and I have taught several courses on these topics at Stanford. I am currently co-authoring a book on African-American English for Cambridge University Press, and co-editing another on the same subject for Routledge. I am a member of the Executive Committee of the Linguistic Society of America, and in that capacity, wrote the draft of the resolution on Ebonics which was unanimously approved, with minor amendments, at the Society's business meeting in Chicago on January 3, 1997. I wish to emphasize that I am an independent scholar and researcher, committed to the highest standards of scientific inquiry, and to the pursuit of scientific truth regardless of the direction in which the evidence may lead.

Role of vernacular language varieties in school success.—Since the Oakland School Board passed its original Ebonics resolution on December 18, 1996, I have stepped up my research on the role of vernacular varieties in school success, considering evidence not only from the United States, but also from other countries.

One perhaps unsurprising finding of this research is that, almost universally, students who speak non-standard or vernacular varieties of a language tend to do relatively poorly in school, especially in reading, writing, and related subjects which require competence in the standard variety.

More surprising, however, and of particular relevance to the Oakland School Board's proposal, is the evidence of several studies that taking the vernaculars of students into account can facilitate their mastery of the standard variety, as well as the curriculum-central skills of reading and writing. I will cite six such studies, beginning with two European cases and then turning to U.S. cases involving AAVE:

1. Tore Osterberg, in his 1961 book, Bilingualism and the first school language—an educational problem illustrated by results from a Swedish dialect area (Västerbottens Tryckeri, Umeå), describes an experiment in which an experimental group of dialect speakers (D) in the Piteå district of Sweden was taught to read first in their nonstandard dialect, and then transitioned to standard Swedish, while a par-

allel control group (R) was taught entirely in standard Swedish. After thirty-five weeks, he found that:

The dialect method showed itself superior both when it was a question of reading quickly and of rapidly assimilating matter which comes fairly late in the course. The same applied to reading and reading-comprehension. (p. 135) Instruction in dialect has thus resulted in a good general reading technique in both dialect and standard language. This technique was better, that is, quicker and surer, in comparison to R group's. D pupils also understood better what they read. (p. 136)

2. Tove Bull, in a 1990 article entitled "Teaching school beginners to read and write in the vernacular" (in Tromso linguistics in the eighties, Novus Press, Oslo), discusses a Norwegian research project conducted between 1980 and 1982 in which ten classes of beginning students, including nearly 200 students each about 7 years old, were taught to read and write either in their Norwegian vernaculars (Dialect group) or in the standard language (Control group). After assessing their progress on several measures, Bull concluded that:

With respect to reading and reading abilities the results above show that the vernacular children read significantly faster and better than the control subjects. It seems as if particularly the less bright children were the ones to benefit from this kind of teaching. They made superior progress during the year compared with the poor readers in the control group. (p.78)

Bull's proposed explanation for the superior progress of the vernacular children (ibid.) is that "the principle of vernacularization of the medium of initial teaching may have made illiterate children more able to analyze their own speech, thus increasing and improving their metalinguistic consciousness and phonological maturity, than the principle of traditional teaching of reading and writing achieved."

3. Ann McCormick Piestrup, in a 1973 study of 208 African-American first grade children in Oakland, California (Black dialect interference and accommodation of reading instruction in first grade, Monographs of the Language Behavior Research Laboratory, No. 4, University of California at Berkeley) showed first of all the typical relationship in which children who used more AAVE features also had lower reading scores. What was more interesting, however, was the relationship between the teacher's teaching style—the way they responded to their pupil's language—and the children's success in reading. Piestrup distinguished six different teaching styles, but I will report only on the two which were correlated with the lowest and the highest reading success. The least successful teachers were those in the "Interrupting" group, who "asked children to repeat words pronounced in dialect many times and interpreted dialect pronunciations as reading errors" (p. iv). They had a stultifying effect on their students' reading development, reflected not only in lower reading scores, but also in the fact that some children "withdrew from participation in reading, speaking softly and as seldom as possible; others engaged in ritual insult and other forms of verbal play apart from the teacher" (ibid.). By contrast, teachers in the "Black Artful" group "used rhythmic play in instruction and encouraged children to participate by listening to their responses. They attended to vocabulary differences of Black children and seemed to prevent structural conflict by teaching children to listen for standard English sound distinctions." Not only did children taught by this approach participate enthusiastically in reading classes, they also showed the highest reading scores.

4. Gary Simpkins and Charlesetta Simpkins, in a 1981 article entitled "Cross-cultural approach to curriculum development" (in Black English and the education of Black children and youth, ed. by Geneva Smitherman, Center for Black Studies, Wayne State University) describe an experiment involving the Bridge readers which they had created in 1974 together with Grace Holt. The Bridge readers, which were published by Houghton Mifflin in 1977, provided reading materials in three varieties: AAVE, a transitional variety, and Standard English [SE]. The Bridge materials were field tested over a four-month period with 417 students in 21 classes throughout the United States (Chicago, Illinois; Macon County, Alabama; Memphis, Tennessee, and Phoenix, Arizona). A control group of 123 students in six classes was taught using "regularly scheduled remedial reading" techniques. At the end of the four-month period, students' scores on the Iowa test of Basic Skills indicated that students taught by the Bridge method showed an average gain of "6.2 months for four months of instruction, compared to only an average gain of 1.6 months for students in their regular scheduled classroom reading activities" (p. 238, emphasis in original). It should be noted parenthetically that the gain of only 1.6 months for four months of instruction which was evidenced by the control group is consistent with the evidence we see all over the U.S. that African-American inner city children tend to fall further and further behind mainstream norms with each year that they remain in school.

5. Hanni Taylor, in a 1989 book entitled Standard English, Black English, and Bidialectalism (Peter Lang, New York), reported that she tried to improve the Standard English writing of inner city Aurora University students from Chicago using two different methods. With an experimental group of twenty students, she raised students' metalinguistic awareness of the differences between Ebonics and Standard English through contrastive analysis, and tailored pattern practice drills. With a control group, also including twenty students, she did not do this, but simply followed "traditional English department techniques." After nearly three months of instruction, the experimental group showed a 59 percent reduction in the use of Ebonics features in their SE writing, while the control group, using traditional methods, showed a slight INCREASE (8.5 percent) in the use of AAVE features. One of Taylor's points was that students were often unaware of the precise points on which AAVE and SE differed; raising their awareness of this difference through contrastive analysis helped them to limit AAVE intrusions in their SE usage.

6. Doug Cumming, writing in the Atlantic Constitution on Januay 9, 1997 (p. B1), reported on a program that has been going on for the past ten years in De Kalb County, Georgia in which fifth and sixth grade students in eight schools are taught to switch from their "home speech" to "school speech" at appropriate times and places. The program originally emphasized differences between AAVE and SE, but now stresses bidialectalism more generally, taking into account the international backgrounds of many students. The program, which is similar to Taylor's, and to the methods followed in California's "Standard English Proficiency" program (ongoing in fifteen school districts since 1981), has produced excellent results. According to Cumming, "The program has won a 'center of excellence' designation from the National Council for Teachers of English. Last year, students who had taken the course had improved verbal test scores at every school. At Cary-Reynolds, their scores rose 5.2 percentage points."

These experimental results lead me on the one hand to support the Oakland School Board's decision to take the vernacular of their students into account in teaching them to read and write and to master SE, and on the other to urge that your Subcommittee continue Title I funding for programs like SEP and the Atlanta program, and even consider increasing it. Although some commentators have rightfully pointed to the importance of school facilities, teacher training and other factors which retard the progress of children in inner city and low income schools, the experimental evidence suggests that when these significant factors are controlled for, approaches which take the vernacular dialects of students into account are more likely to succeed on a large scale than those which do not.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to your important deliberations. Should you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me, either by e-mail (rickford@csli.stanford.edu) or at the address and phone number above.

Sincerely,

JOHN R. RICKFORD, *Professor.*

LETTER FROM JOHN BAUGH

SWARTHMORE COLLEGE,
Swarthmore, PA, January 22, 1997.

Hon. ARLEN SPECTER,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR SPECTER: I write in three capacities: as a Professor of Linguistics and Education, as a former Director of Stanford's Teacher Education Program, and as a black person who attended inner-city public schools in Philadelphia and Los Angeles as a child.

Much of the present confusion over the term "Ebonics" stems from the fact that it was coined by Afrocentric scholars who viewed the linguistic consequences of the African slave trade internationally. For them the term "Ebonics" applies comprehensively to descendants of former slaves throughout North and South America. The original "Pan-African" (i.e., international) definition of "Ebonics" exceeds the linguistic consequences of slavery within the United States, which has been characterized by linguists in various ways, including Nonstandard Negro English, Black English (vernacular), and African-American (vernacular) English.

Professional linguists did not embrace the term "Ebonics" for domestic usage, in part, because of the international attributions of the term. However, several urban educators have come to interpret "Ebonics" in the narrower national context that

has recently spawned linguistic consternation in the wake of the Oakland School Board resolutions of December 18, 1996, and January 15, 1997.

I know of no professional linguist who would characterize African-American vernacular English as anything other than a dialect of English, albeit one that is not standard. I know of no professional linguist who would diminish the unique linguistic heritage of American slave descendants in comparison to all other U.S. immigrants.

Whereas the typical European immigrant came to America without knowing English, they did so without being segregated from speakers of their native language. By striking contrast, slaves were immediately segregated from other speakers of their native language by their captors to prevent revolts.

Whereas the typical European immigrant attended a public or private school to become literate, it was once illegal to teach slaves to read or write.

These unique linguistic characteristics are profound, and belie the pervasive linguistic ignorance that has been displayed in response to Oakland's efforts to teach standard English to many of their African-American students. Black English is not simply "bad English," nor can it be dismissed as mere slang. Linguistic research by many of the leading black and white scholars in the field clearly demonstrate systematic and rule-governed linguistic patterns that differ considerably from the prescriptive standard English norms that are essential to full participation in any professional arena.

Thus, while I take considerable exception to any interpretation of "Ebonics" as a language other than English (i.e., in the U.S. context), I commend the efforts of educators who acknowledge the unique linguistic consequences of slavery in pedagogy that intends to foster mastery of standard American English.

On a very personal note, many of my former teachers in public schools in Philadelphia and Los Angeles were overtly critical, or hostile, to the home languages and nonstandard dialects that I and my fellow classmates brought with us to school. Theirs was a pedagogy on linguistic castigation, shame, and intimidation, which was detrimental to our educational welfare.

At Stanford we have adopted new procedures for teacher training that instill a foundation of cultural and linguistic respect for every student. Unlike many of the teachers who taught me, the teachers that we now educate recognize that no student should be made to feel the sense of linguistic shame and embarrassment that was pervasive in my youth.

Thank you for your willingness to consider these remarks. It is with considerable humility and the highest regard for your national responsibilities concerning the educational welfare of all American students that this letter is written.

Respectfully submitted,

John Baugh, Eugene M. Lang Visiting Professor for Issues of Social Change, Swarthmore College; Past President of the American Dialect Society; Professor of Education and Linguistics, and former Director of Teacher Education, Stanford University.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CHARLENA M. SEYMOUR, PRESIDENT, AMERICAN SPEECH-LANGUAGE-HEARING ASSOCIATION

I am Charlena M. Seymour, Ph.D., President, American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) and Dean of the Graduate School at University of Massachusetts at Amherst. ASHA appreciates this opportunity to provide written testimony to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS and Education concerning Ebonics. ASHA represents more than 87,000 audiologists, speech-language pathologists, and speech, language and hearing scientists nationwide. More than 50 percent of our members provide services in educational settings.

Audiologists, speech-language pathologists, and speech, language and hearing scientists specialize in the identification, assessment and treatment of persons with communication disorders. They are specialists in the understanding and expression of human communication and its normal development, including hearing, articulation, voice, fluency, auditory and/or visual processing, language, and memory.

More than one in ten Americans have some type of speech, language or hearing disorder. Speaking and hearing are so essential to our daily lives that they have been specifically recognized as two of the nine "major life activities" cited in the Americans, with Disabilities Act. Communication skills and language abilities define the very core of learning and set the course for academic and lifetime success. Because communication influences an individual's ability to obtain, retain and apply knowledge, it is critical that individuals receive appropriate services from qualified

professionals who are cognizant and respectful of linguistic and culturally based communication differences.

BACKGROUND

ASHA and its members have historically addressed linguistic varieties used by their consumers. Prior to the 1970's, many consumers using varieties different from society's mainstream linguistic standard were misdiagnosed as having a communication disorder and were recommended for therapeutic services. Since then, ethnolinguistic and sociolinguistic research has spurred a growing appreciation for how culture and social experiences affect the development and use of language and speech. Members of our association became increasingly aware of different linguistic varieties belonging to culturally and linguistically diverse communities. The research described legitimate and rule-governed patterns and behaviors learned by children, used effectively by families and friends, and taught by parents. This information gave way to greater understanding of the nature of language and led to clinicians' diagnosing communication disorders based on the individual's own linguistic background. Similarly, court cases such as Larry P. v. Riles and the Ann Arbor Decision, which gave legal recognition of social dialects (particularly "Black English") in educational settings, prompted ASHA to reconsider the role of the professions relative to social dialects.

ASHA'S POSITION

In 1982, ASHA's Legislative Council, the governing body of the Association, unanimously approved a position paper on social dialects. Since then, ASHA has officially recognized that the English language is comprised of many linguistic varieties, such as Black English, standard English, Appalachian English, New York dialect and Spanish-influenced English. The features of these varieties are systematic, highly regular and cross all linguistic parameters, e.g. phonology (the sounds of language), morphology (the word patterns of language), syntax (the sentence patterns of language), semantics (the meanings of language), lexicon (the words of language), pragmatics (the use of language), suprasegmental features (the prosodic features of speech), and kinesics (the body movement and gestures that convey meaning). The existence of these varieties is the result of historical and social factors. Due to historical factors, the majority of Ebonics speakers are African-Americans. However, due to social and educational factors, not all African-Americans are Ebonics speakers.

It is the position of ASHA that no dialectal variety of English is a disorder or a pathological form of speech or language. Each social dialect is adequate as a functional and effective variety of English. Each serves a communication function as well as a social solidarity function. It maintains the communication network and the social construct of the community of speakers who use it. Furthermore, each is a symbolic representation of the historical, social and cultural background of the speakers. ASHA also recognizes that standard English has been adopted by society as the linguistic archetype used by the government, the mass media, business, education, science, and the arts.

The purpose of ASHA's position statement is to provide guidance to members of our professions and others working with individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse communities on appropriate treatment strategies. First, according to this position statement, it is indeed possible for dialect speakers to have linguistic disorders within the dialect. In order to distinguish between those aspects of linguistic variation that represent the diversity of the English language from those that represent speech, language and hearing disorders, professionals must take essential steps to make accurate assessments. This requires competencies that include knowledge of the particular dialect as a rule-governed linguistic system, knowledge of the phonological and grammatical features of the dialect, and knowledge of nondiscriminatory testing procedures. Clinicians are expected only to address those features or characteristics that are true errors and not attributable to the dialect.

Second, the position statement holds that dialect speakers can find it advantageous to have access to the use of standard English. Also, professionals can provide elective services to individuals who do not present a disorder. These services are offered without jeopardizing the integrity of the individual's first dialect. Service providers must be sensitive and competent in at least three areas: linguistic features of the dialect, linguistic contrastive analysis procedures, and the effects of attitudes toward dialects. Furthermore, the professional should have a thorough understanding and appreciation of the community and culture of the dialect speaker.

Third, ASHA members also can serve in a consultative role to assist educators in utilizing dialectal features to facilitate the learning of reading and writing in standard English.

SUMMARY

In summary, the experience and expertise of ASHA members has been at the core of ASHA's position on social dialects. It has recognized the existence of linguistic varieties used by speakers belonging to culturally and linguistically diverse populations. These varieties have proven to be systematic, rule-governed and adequately serve pragmatic and social functions of specific social contexts. ASHA has identified competencies necessary to being sensitive and respectful of linguistic varieties and their speakers. These require that professionals are knowledgeable of the dialects spoken by their consumers and of procedures that are sensitive to their consumers' own communication norms. Furthermore, one of the fundamental components of preferred practice patterns in the clinical process states "Procedures are conducted in the patient's/client's chosen communication mode and linguistic system. These become essential to appropriately identify "language disorders" from "language differences."

ASHA has also recognized that proficiency in the English standard is advantageous for success in the mainstream society. Any speaker can elect to learn the standard dialect. Similarly, school systems can elect to implement procedures or programs that incorporate dialect varieties to enhance and facilitate learning. Competencies for professionals assisting in these endeavors also include knowledge of the dialect, its differences to mainstream English, and effects of attitudes toward dialects.

In keeping with these recommendations, ASHA continues to address dialectal matters. The Association offers the opportunities for our members to present research on culturally and linguistically diverse children's language development. ASHA offers members continued education opportunities through workshops and teleseminars on issues such as non-discriminatory assessment procedures. Policy and clinical papers are developed and disseminated. Also, articles are published in journals and books are written on the subject. All these activities are necessary to offer the highest quality services in the best interest of the individuals who we serve.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) appreciates the opportunity to submit these comments to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS and Education concerning Ebonics.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE CENTER FOR APPLIED LINGUISTICS

Much of the national discussion about the Oakland Unified School District's policy on standard English instruction suggests a lack of public awareness of how language works. Under-informed about what dialects are, how they relate to each other, and what functions they fulfill, people have voiced their biases about language in society. Ebonics, or African-American Vernacular English (AAVE), has been erroneously called "slang," "broken English," "poor grammar," or "improper usage," instead of the fully-fledged dialect that it is.

This conversation is not just another harmless case of the lay audience having less technical information than the scientist. It is a matter of perpetuating the myth that there is one correct English. When this myth goes unchallenged, it is hard for schools to treat students' linguistic competence in a vernacular dialect as relevant to continuing language development. It is even harder for schools to present language as an intriguing system for scientific investigation. But without these two ingredients, dialect instruction is unlikely to succeed.

Sociolinguistic studies show that all dialects have linguistic integrity. None is more regular than another; they are merely different. The features of AAVE that contrast with standard English varieties are patterned and predictable, not random deviations. In other words, AAVE is just as regular as is standard English.

What makes standard English the standard is a matter of social attitude and the political power of those who speak it. People believe that standard English equals "good grammar," and these beliefs are knit into our institutions. Since standard English speakers control education, commerce, government, and so on, the standard dialect is firmly associated with public life.

Entrenched belief in a monolithic English hinders curriculum development. One of the aspects of Oakland's position on Ebonics that seems so hard for many people to accept is the notion that vernacular dialect offers a valuable language learning resource. (Certainly the school board's view of the role that Ebonics should play in

schools has not been clear.) Seen repeatedly in the media is the view that AAVE is without value, that it should be remediated, and that vernacular features should be corrected even at home. But this is the traditional approach that has had such limited success. One study found that when teachers corrected students' dialect, they actually increased their production of vernacular features.

We need research into effective ways of teaching standard English. Since vernacular and standard dialects of English share almost all of their linguistic resources, standard dialect instruction should pinpoint exactly where vernacular and standard structures differ. For example, standard had gone ("Teachers had gone into classrooms") contrasts with vernacular had went ("Teachers had went into classrooms") according to a rule that regularizes the past participle; and standard mine ("I've got mine today") is vernacular mines ("I've got mines today"). Rather than subjecting vernacular speakers to the traditional mind-numbing and inefficient translation drills, teachers might situate mini-lessons according to the dialect learning needs that students demonstrate. If class members agree that standard English is appropriate for classroom interaction and for writing, these lessons could help students progress toward their language development goals.

Because dialect prejudice is rampant and accepted, efforts to teach another dialect need to be grounded in scientific consideration of sociolinguistic facts. Students need to look at some of the evidence that all dialects are regular so that they can begin to question the inaccurate characterizations of dialects that they have been exposed to. They need to also examine dialect appropriateness in social settings as demonstrated by language use, in order to be convinced that bidialectalism is valuable. Informal experiments with dialect awareness curricula developed by Walt Wolfram and his colleagues have shown that upper elementary and middle school students find sociolinguistic education fascinating. Informal evaluation indicates students' recognition that dialect contrasts occur regularly, rather than haphazardly, and their awareness that dialect prejudice is not justifiable.

Dialect awareness is not just for vernacular dialect speakers learning standard English as an additional dialect. All students need a scientifically based education on language variation to engage sensibly in discussions about dialect differences such as that occasioned by events in Oakland and to get along in a dialectally diverse world. The challenge is to develop curriculum and materials for students and teachers and to ensure that dialect education plays a central role in language education.

In conclusion, the Center for Applied Linguistics submits the following recommendations for the record:

First, students who are not proficient in standard English should have access to instruction that helps them to develop it.

Second, research is needed to determine what works in teaching standard English to speakers of other varieties of the language. Sociolinguistic research on African-American Vernacular English can be applied to developing methods and materials for teaching standard English.

Third, parents and other community members need to participate in decisions concerning standard English instruction. Much of the negative parental reaction to the possibility of using AAVE to show its contrast with standard English has been the result of scarce information available to the community. If parents are involved in every step of the process, such dialect instruction should be better received.

Fourth, developing methods of teaching standard English should not be left exclusively to the local schools. There is a need to consult carefully with scholars who have conducted research on AAVE and its applications to education. Otherwise, there is a danger that mistaken perceptions of dialect differences will be taught.

We would encourage the Subcommittee not to let this issue be shelved, nor allow for short-term solutions which are bound to fail. We urge the Subcommittee to support research on dialects and dialect instruction—not only for African-American students, but for all students. Every American citizen needs to know that variation in the English language is natural and normal. Schools need to develop curricula that will invite students to examine dialect differences. Making scientific knowledge about dialects available should help to dispel the myths about language use that fuel social factionalism.

CONCLUSION OF HEARING

Senator SPECTER. I think it has been a very constructive hearing, and we will digest this record and decide what to do further on the subject.

Thank you all.

[Whereupon, at 11:35 a.m., Thursday, January 23, the hearing was concluded, and the subcommittee was recessed, to reconvene subject to the call of the Chair.]

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