

# The Dunbar Chronicle: A Case Study

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## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The Paul Laurence Dunbar High School in Baltimore, Maryland, opened in 1918 as the Paul Laurence Dunbar Elementary School No. 101. It was named in memory of "the Poet of the Negro Race," who had died ten years earlier in his native Ohio. In 1925, a secondary school program blossomed from the elementary school and a separate entity was established as the Dunbar Junior High School No. 133 in 1932. Shortly thereafter, a senior high school program was authorized. Dunbar awarded its first diploma in 1940, thus becoming the second Negro high school to be established in the city of Baltimore.

During this evolutionary period, the school plant grew from a condemned two-story, six-classroom building to a splendid structure built to house the junior high school. With the rapid population growth, city school officials established two annex buildings at Dunbar to accommodate the increased student body. Measures such as double shifts, portables, and the remote annex buildings created dissatisfaction. During these years, the Colored Citizens' Equitable Improvement Association of East Baltimore ably expressed their vexation. A sense of community prevailed through the years, and in 1965 the citizens of East Baltimore once again expressed their dissatisfaction with the educational facilities provided for that area's residents. This time, however, one recommendation proffered by city fathers was to demolish Dunbar High School and name a new facility under construction, nearly one and a half miles north of the original site, Dunbar.

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city. The area, two blocks west of the world renowned Johns Hopkins Hospital, consists of six blocks encompassing roughly ten acres. This superblock, as it was later known, was to play a significant role in the education of Blacks in Baltimore.

The pronouncement of the intent to move or possibly demolish a key black institution in the early 1960s galvanized the residents of the East Baltimore community. The Dunbar problem became a foremost educational issue and focused the attention of the public upon the general problems of providing quality education for all children in Baltimore. There was a clarion call for a new plant on or near the original site and for a radical change in the educational offerings of the school.

The governance body of the school system, the Board of School Commissioners, approved the formation of a community study group after numerous protests. After several months, the Educational Facilities Charette was conceived and organized. Working together with professional consultants and group dynamics experts were students, parents, faculty, alumni, neighborhood citizens, elected officials and representatives of a few public and private Baltimore institutions, including Johns Hopkins Hospital. A new building, within a stone's throw of the old, with a modern educational program had been won by residents of the community.

In February, 1969, a report entitled *People, Planning, and Community* outlined the dreams of East Baltimore residents in four areas: community services, educational processes, manpower development relationship, and community development. These all-encompassing plans addressed some of the most pressing problems faced by the community. The issue of a new school provided impetus for development in several other areas.

The new \$10.5 million Paul Laurence Dunbar Community High School No. 414 was occupied in early 1974. Dunbar was one of the premier community high schools in the nation. It was visited by the Secretary of the United States Office of Education and used as a model for several schools in the United States as well as in Europe. On the ground level, it houses a mayor's station, a community dining room, a theater, a branch office of Social Security, a branch office of Parole and Probation, and a branch office for Urban Services.

In 1974, the Board of School Commissioners introduced the concept of Citywide and Zoned High Schools. Each Citywide School had a "magnet" or an area of concentration and students had to meet established entrance criteria. In the Zoned High Schools, students had to reside within a certain geographic region. Divergent views surfaced, particularly within the Alumni Association, as to

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the classification of Dunbar. The decision of the Board was to designate Dunbar as a Citywide School with a health professions emphasis. This was a severe blow to many residents in the immediate area, since the construction of the new school came about as a result of much effort on their part and the athletic events occurring in the school provided a tradition around which they had coalesced.

Winning in basketball became a Dunbar tradition shortly after the 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision was rendered. Black pride, in general, and East Baltimore pride, in particular, were evident as a result of the numerous championship basketball teams fielded by the athletic department. Throughout the late 1950s into the early 1970s, the male varsity basketball teams won sixteen Maryland Scholastic Athletic Association Championships. The current athletic field of Dunbar is named in honor of the coach of these teams. However, team cohesiveness in terms of community support groups became more fragmented during the 1975 to 1980 era.

The unique educational facility and innovative program required a higher level of funding than appropriated; therefore, the planned educational program was never fully implemented nor realized. Conscientious attempts were made to continue to satisfy the various constituents expressing support for the school. Dunbar suffered an identity crisis in terms of its curriculum and its area of residence of students. To appease certain neighborhood groups, entrance criteria were ignored, thereby reducing the rigor of some of the courses. To address some of these concerns, several innovative educational projects were conceived and implemented by the staff. One such project was sponsored by the federally funded Baltimore Teacher Corps. One of the outcomes of this project was a sharply critical 250-page study entitled "The Dunbar Report." Completed by an independent panel of professionals, the report concluded, "Non-college bound graduates generally were no better prepared for health careers than graduates of comprehensive high schools. Almost all college bound seniors did poorly on Scholastic Aptitude Tests, [were] unlikely to major in health career courses in college and almost as unlikely to graduate."<sup>1</sup> The schism created by different factions prompted the superintendent to suggest that Dunbar might have to abandon its mission as a citywide school for health careers.

Three weeks prior to the release of the Dunbar Report in July, 1982, a new principal was named to head the troubled school. Concomitant with the release of the report, the Board of School Commissioners issued several charges to the new principal including, "Turn the school around and make the medical careers program

<sup>1</sup>Frank D. Roylance, "Gladden Is Dunbar's Big Man on Campus," *Baltimore Evening Sun*, November 3, 1982, pp. A1, 2.

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score as high as the school's well-known basketball team."<sup>2</sup> Additionally, the ten-year-old decision to designate the school as citywide, the adequacy of the curriculum, and staff competency were also to be reviewed.

### THE CHALLENGE—PHASE ONE

With perhaps very limited community input, an experienced administrator, returning from sabbatical leave, was appointed to head the beleaguered school. The first year, 1982-83, was primarily devoted to gathering information through observation of policies and practices in the day-to-day supervision of students and staff. Nevertheless, prior to the beginning of the initial year, the homeroom advisory period was changed from 12 noon to 8:30 A.M. and the practice of awarding partial credit for partial completion of courses was to be reviewed at the end of the year.

Since no official school motto was evident, the slogan for the first year was "Beat your Best." Seizing every opportunity during morning public address announcements and assembly programs, the slogan was repeated continuously. It also appeared in correspondence to parents, weekly bulletins, faculty agenda, and in several teachers' classrooms. Eventually, students could be heard parroting it in the corridors; it was now infused in the daily operation of the school.

The slogan was not only applicable for students, but also for teachers. They were encouraged to apply it to their pedagogy, attendance, record keeping, and punctuality. All staff members, including the principal, were required to sign in in the morning. Any staff member arriving after the designated time received a red dot. This also applied to the principal, unless notification had been given on a prior day of a pending meeting. Furthermore, staff members were reminded that we were all starting with a clean slate.

"Beat your Best" appeared on the cover of the school's Program Plan for the 1982-83 school year. A possible synonym for program plan is the instructional improvement emphases plan—Who will do what, when, and to what degree? The program plan for the first year was written by the principal after many hours of discussion with the assistant principals. A brief assessment was made to construct the program plan, which emphasized that all teachers were to have a course syllabus, provide instruction in test-taking techniques, and administer departmental examinations at the end of each semester. Additionally, the English Department was to produce at least three publications containing information regarding activities of the school for parents and community leaders. Needless to say,

<sup>2</sup>Becky Todd York, "Call for Principal's Dismissal Latest in Dunbar Controversies," *Baltimore American Newspaper*, August 5, 1984, p. B1.

faculty resistance was apparent and these objectives were achieved only to a very limited degree. Regardless, the concept of a Program Plan had been introduced to the staff.

Not only was the resistance to change expressed by staff, but also acted out by many students. The requirement to have written passes when venturing in the corridor other than during passing time caused many students to liken the school to jail. Enjoying the privilege of an open campus, students objected to being sent to the office on the second occasion of returning to the next scheduled class late. Impromptu visits to lavatory areas further exacerbated the situation. One or two-day disciplinary removals for reported class cutting also caused consternation among students. Parents of seniors vehemently insisted that graduation be held at an expensive site instead of the school site.

There were endless meetings with community groups separately and collectively. Two groups were diametrically opposite in their views on whether the school should be citywide or zoned. This disagreement spilled over to the open-space concept of the school. The most significant community group, the Parent-Teacher-Student Association, was being courted by other groups to join them in their stance. After more than a year of visits by group members and meetings with various groups, a joint meeting with all groups was finally convened. Two primary issues dominated the agenda for these meetings, chaired by the President of the Parent-Teacher-Student Association, open-space classrooms, and citywide status. By majority vote, after several joint meetings, representatives of the various organizations voted to eliminate open-space classrooms and to continue the citywide status with emphasis on the health professions. The minutes of the final meeting show only one dissenting vote, which came from an elected official who was a member of the original Charette.

In May, 1984, the Board of School Commissioners accepted the report on the Charges given to the principal and reaffirmed the citywide status of the school. The vote of confidence was short lived, since two months later one group of parents and community members asked for the removal of the principal and a reexamination of the mission of the school. Another group was pleased with the changes and requested more time for the new administrator. After listening to both sides, the superintendent concurred with the latter group and lamented, "It (the Charette) was a very idealist concept. Maybe it was an impossible dream."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

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## THE CHALLENGE—PHASE TWO

Was the Charette an impossible dream? Was it a possessive community resisting an erosion of political power? Was it an idea whose time had not arrived? Or was it an expression of disdain for the reassertion of the original mission of school? The majority was satisfied with the decision of the Superintendent and the Board of School Commissioners.

Buoyed by the retention decision, the principal moved to phase two in August 1984 in response to Charges and placing his imprint on his alma mater. The physical plant was constructed to accommodate open-space classrooms. English teachers had to sign up for the only room built to accommodate more than twenty students. Although the principal sought the advice and consent of the supervisory staff, the recommendations they offered had been implemented previously. An independent advisory committee consisting of health professionals and educators, formed by the principal, validated the new offerings and the notion of a program plan to direct the instructional activities of the school.

During phase two, a Program Plan was constructed, and a presentation was made to the faculty at the monthly staff meeting in April, 1985. Student test results on the required local, state, or national standardized tests, such as the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT), the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), or the State Functional Tests (SFT) were examined. Conscientiousness and accountability for the end product of education were raised among some members of the faculty. With faculty input, the consensus was that at the previous program had not been achieved. The majority of the members agreed to keep the objectives relating to preparation of course syllabi, instruction in test-taking techniques, and administering of departmental examinations. A new objective required each teacher to provide additional skill development exercises in reading, writing, and speaking in order that the average score of students on the California Achievement Tests (CAT), the PSAT, and the SAT would be increased by a minimum of three points. Though this objective was not achieved in terms of the CAT, it was exceeded on the SAT by seventeen points.

This newest objective led to faculty requests for staff development. A committee composed of faculty members planned several sessions designed to increase student achievement on tests and to increase staff morale. Not all of these sessions achieved the desired results; however, one session presented by a specialist from the office of Social Studies was particularly motivating to the staff. Through involvement, teachers were required to use morphemes to create new words. Several departments adopted this approach in teaching their classes. Additionally, the specialist from the office of Social



Services taught twenty-five students who volunteered to attend four Saturday sessions in preparation for the PSAT during the month of September. Several faculty members sensed the seriousness of the effort to raise the achievement level of the students.

Faculty members were also concerned about the pending visit of members from the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. The self-evaluation year had provided ownership of the educational program for the teachers and forced a semblance of team effort. The oral report of the Visiting Committee further encouraged teamwork and supported the view that the school was more than adequate in preparing students for future pursuits.

The report was very laudatory of the new and emerging health programs. During the 1984 year, through the efforts of the president of Johns Hopkins Hospital, the Josiah Macy, Jr. Foundation provided a grant to the school to include study in the health professions as was being done in several high schools in the United States. Our program was very similar to the curricular offerings at these schools. Staff members visited Macy Program Schools in New York, the Houston (Texas) High School of Health Professions, the High School for Mathematics and Science in Durham, North Carolina, and Xavier University in New Orleans, Louisiana. The report on new emerging programs also hinted at a greater collaboration between Dunbar and the Johns Hopkins University and Hospital.

A few weeks after receiving the Middle States Report, Johns Hopkins Hospital/University announced a grant to provide equipment and funds for a coordinator and secretary for a Hopkins/Dunbar Project. Among his duties, the coordinator was to marshal the forces of the university and hospital to raise the level of black professionals in the field of medicine from its low of less than three percent nationally. The individual selected as coordinator was a committed educator who had formerly served as a principal and superintendent of schools on the West Coast. Additionally, he had served as the vice president of a local college. His responsibilities also included finding funding sources for a five-year program designed to follow students through their first year of college.

Faculty participation in the selection of a motto for the school crystallized in the adoption of "Determination, Dedication and Dependability" as the official motto of the school. The motto was expected to permeate the entire fabric of school life. As with the previous slogan, it was written on weekly bulletins, posted in the corridors, and written in the student and faculty publications. Coupled with a campaign to reduce vandalism within the building, students assumed a greater role in the ownership of the building, thereby increasing their sense of responsibility for its upkeep.

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Students also became accustomed to sayings designed to provoke action but not rebellion such as "Stop running, you may fall and break the cement"; "That wall won't fall if you move"; "Come on ladies, we do not have any classes scheduled in here"; "Don't put your hands on my daughter (son)"; "I hope you didn't damage the door if you bumped into it." Students were also dismayed at the prospect of having to complete a form whenever referred to the office for discipline. The form required students to state why they think they were referred, what reason was given by the teacher, and how they could avoid a similar referral in the future. The process may have contributed to fewer students committing minor infractions. There was evidence of increased school spirit.

Certainly, school spirit was elevated by the invincible basketball teams during this phase. Sports enthusiasts throughout the city were mesmerized by the winning ways of the football and, particularly, the basketball teams. The coach, a Dunbar graduate, who replaced the indomitable coach of the 1950s and 1960s produced basketball teams ranked number one in the nation. College recruiters from all over the nation converged on the "Poet's Place," another name for the gymnasium, to view the teams in action. As many as twenty-five major colleges and universities would be represented at any championship contest held at the school. Students and athletes were aware of their presence as well as of the academic requirements needed to enroll in major colleges and universities. Athletes failing more than a one-credit subject knew they could not participate in any interscholastic sport. Faculty members captivated by the teams' efforts formed a study hall for athletes, which was conducted before practice. The "Poet Followers," consisting primarily of Dunbar's former athletes, and sports enthusiasts policed the games and supervised the after-school study hall. It was accepted that the necessary prerequisite to athletic participation was academic performance.

In other areas of the physical plant, metamorphosis was also occurring. One open-space area, previously known as the home economics suite, was converted to four semi-enclosed classrooms for English teachers. The study carrels in the library were restored and chalkboard walls between "seminar" rooms were removed so that the area could accommodate at least thirty students. A commitment to painting the entire facility, installing a new roof and repairing frayed carpet areas was extracted from the Division of Physical Plant. Additional modifications were also promised on a phase-by-phase basis to transform the physical plant into a more traditional high school structure.

Structure in the day-to-day operations of the school appeared to meet with favor among the students. They began to exhibit pride in themselves and their school. Before the start of the 1986-87 school



year, during the August orientation for students, twenty-five students, two teachers, and five parents agreed to attend the "National Conference on Educating Black Children."

The conference, held on September 5-7, 1986, outside of Baltimore at Hunt Valley Inn, produced a document known as *Blueprint For Action*. The students, parents and faculty members who participated sensed the urgency of the problem and the need for team efforts in attempting a solution. Some students appeared to be self-actualized as a result of their attendance. One parent became active in our Parent-Teacher-Student Association and provided a report to the body. The teachers presented a synopsis of the conference to the faculty. Several members of the faculty concurred with the focus of the conference and committed themselves to higher expectations of the students. Efforts are being made to implement as many of the recommendations as possible, particularly those relating to students, teachers, administrators, and parents.

#### THE CHALLENGE—NOW

The conference at Hunt Valley provided confirmation, encouragement, and impetus to the efforts of educating black children. In the areas of curriculum, student and staff development, discipline, and school spirit, Dunbar continued to progress. Being a traditionally black school, little progress has been made in attracting students from other ethnic groups; however, we believe quality education knows no color or economic strata.

The most recent profile (1985-86 school year) released by the superintendent indicated that 62 percent of Dunbar students receive free or reduced price lunch.<sup>4</sup> Even though admission requirements are in effect, this poverty index is higher than most zoned high schools in the city of Baltimore. The promotion rate was 88 percent with a suspension rate of less than 1 percent. The disciplinary removal rate was 12 percent. The 99 percent black student population had a 6 percent drop-out rate. The average daily attendance rate was 85 percent. Seventy-two (72) percent of the senior class was accepted to two- or four-year colleges.

Many colleges were more prone to accept the graduates after several revisions in the course offerings. Specialized diplomas were awarded according to the program completed. In order to receive a Health Professions Diploma, either advanced college preparatory or college preparatory, a student had to complete twenty-three prescribed credits which included four years of mathematics and four years of science. To receive a Health Occupations Diploma, either clinical or business, a student had to earn a prescribed twenty-

<sup>4</sup>Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Educational Initiatives and School Profiles, School Year 1987-1988* (Baltimore City Public Schools, December 18, 1986), p. 183.

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two credits; otherwise, the student received a general diploma. The notion that all students are expected to attend a postsecondary institution is actively promoted. Additionally, continued efforts to secure human and material resources so that our health occupations graduates will receive a state license is another major goal.

Our most recent licensed program was added in February, 1988. Due to a dire need in the Baltimore metropolitan area for paramedics, the Office of the Mayor approved payment of tuition for fifteen Dunbar seniors to the Community College of Baltimore, to be trained as Emergency Medical Technicians. Upon successful completion of the program in June, these students will receive a state certificate, thereby qualifying them for immediate employment. They will have earned five college credits, and should they continue another year they will be certified as paramedics. Another program, Dental Assisting, can terminate in a state license upon successful completion of the program. We have experienced excellent support from our local community colleges in constructing new programs.

Our collaborative efforts have not been limited to the local community colleges. We have received support from local four-year colleges and universities. As disclosed earlier, our involvement and proximity to the Johns Hopkins Hospital made us natural partners. The Hopkins/Dunbar project was designed to prepare minority high school students for access to higher education, particularly in the health professions. A three-pronged effort was utilized: university-hospital intervention, community/family involvement, and student-faculty improvement. Students normally entering the advanced college preparatory course were selected for this project.

Entering students were required to attend a four-week preenrollment summer session conducted on the campus of Johns Hopkins University. Dunbar teachers who had been previously identified taught the abbreviated summer courses as well as the regular courses during the following year.

Now in its second year, the Hopkins/Dunbar Project includes mentors, tutors, and summer employment opportunities at the hospital. Parents attend monthly meetings with a counselor hired specifically for the program. Additional staff will be employed when full funding is received. Instructional materials and supplies, as well as the summer program, are currently funded through the Johns Hopkins University and two local foundations. The Hopkins/Dunbar Project was cited as a promising new program on school-college partnerships in a monograph published by the National Association of Secondary School Principals. It is significant that one of the tutors for these students is the first Dunbar graduate to be admitted to the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. The students also receive considerable financial aid from the medical institution.

Due to the limited financial assistance available, fewer high school graduates are attending colleges. In the case of black males, the problem is crucial. To address this situation as well as the plight of historically black colleges, a West Coast graduate of Dunbar and Morgan State University established the Dun-Mor Scholarship. In 1987, five Dunbar graduates received full tuition scholarships to Morgan State University. These tuition scholarships are renewable over the four-year period. Additionally, each recipient received a \$200 book allowance. The donor has pledged to continue the awarding of these scholarships for the next two years. Plans are to include other traditionally black high schools in Baltimore City and females as recipients. To note this effort, the university's magazine wrote: "Ralph Williams, '62, founder of the Williams Scholarship Group has raised \$9,100 to date to send Dunbar High School graduates to Morgan."<sup>5</sup>

In other areas, Dunbar was also receiving favorable publicity. The coach of the basketball team, who in his eleven-year tenure had four teams considered as national champions with a winning percentage of over 91, became the first black coach in the Atlantic Coast Conference. Alumni and students had ambivalent feelings regarding the loss of an outstanding graduate to the ranks of college coaching. School pride, through the publicity associated with the selection of three Dunbar graduates from the class of 1983 on the first round draft of the National Basketball Association was accelerated. The odds against this occurrence were astronomical. However, students experienced a vicarious thrill in the unfolding of these events.

Other events were initiated by the faculty in promoting future expectations of students. A project recommended by several members of the staff was to inquire of the future plans of all ninth grade students. All students were asked to state which college they planned to attend upon graduation from high school. Parents, students, and teachers became involved in a concerted project to raise the horizon of students and to initiate the process of goal setting. Attempts were made to convince students that in most cases the quality of the majority of their lives hinges upon how they perform within the next eight years.

The quality of the day-to-day existence for students can be encapsulated in the phrase "That's not the Dunbar Way." The Dunbar Way means no running in the corridors, attending all classes, picking up debris from the floor, completing homework, behaviors which promote a safe orderly educational environment. Another component of the Dunbar Way requires that students not wear hats, possess beepers, or have radios or tape players in school. Students

<sup>5</sup>Morgan State University. *Morgan Mirror*, 3 (Winter 1987), 4.

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found violating this rule are required to sign a contract which states that on the next offense the confiscated item will become the property of the school unless a parent comes to retrieve it.

Students are familiar with the use of contracts. During the first week of each school year, all students are given a contract which outlines the responsibilities of the school, the parents, and the students. The contract must be signed and returned to the school. One of the stipulations in this contract requires that if a student fails three or more subjects at the end of a quarter the parent and student must meet with a counselor. Individualized contracts are utilized to modify behavior of certain students. The behavior of several students on a public bus encouraged a group of students to seek a meeting with the principal to discuss expanding the Dunbar Way into other aspects of the lives of students.

Not only was the Dunbar Way to be utilized on public transportation vehicles, but could it also be applied to the personal lives of students? Because of the profound educational and social consequences of adolescent parenthood, a program was designed to elicit peer pressure to combat the problem of teenage pregnancy in the school.

With a group of teachers, counselors, administrators, and a health specialist, plans were made to conduct a series of seminars to explore the consequences of teenage sexuality and the realities of teen parenthood. Letters were sent to the parent or guardian of each student requesting permission for the student to participate in the project. Less than 2 percent of the parents refused to grant permission; all were parents of ninth grade students. Eight sessions were planned utilizing the services of physicians, psychologists, sociologists, economists, ministers, teenagers, and the parents of teenage parents.

The student body was divided into thirty-five heterogeneous groups, with volunteer faculty members and school health nurses serving as small group discussion leaders. All students attended an assembly presentation followed by a small group discussion session. Guide questions for the small discussion groups were prepared based on the large group presentation. Students completed an evaluation at the conclusion of each session.

There was a wide range of topics addressed at what was called "The Prevention of Teenage Pregnancy Symposium." The series was launched with a male presenter for male students and, in separate areas, a female presenter for female students. Other topics included, "Teenage Dads, Biological Aspects and Contraception," "Psychological Pressures and Media Influence," "Social Pressure Resistance Training," "Economics of Parenting," "Moral Issues and Teenage Parents and Grandparents." Students were also required to complete a writing activity summarizing the symposium.

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It is significant to note that the symposium followed an expansive teenage pregnancy project conducted by Johns Hopkins Hospital in 1984. A local newspaper commented, "Through the \$600,000, three-year project, pupils from Dunbar High School and Lombard Junior High are offered a variety of free services including counseling, medical exams, and even the dispensing of contraceptives (abortions are not a part of the program. Neither are contraceptives distributed by the schools. The hospital does that. We point out that lest we bring unnecessary criticism to the program.)"<sup>6</sup>

The project came under heavy criticism when the results were published. Calls came from several areas of the country because of a misunderstanding regarding the location of the site of distribution of contraceptives.

During the second semester of the 1987-88 school year, a second series was conducted. The planning session involved parents, several students, counselors, teachers, and a representative of a funding foundation. Students enthusiastically endorsed a second series with a request for more time for small group discussions. The Abell Foundation provided a small grant in order to evaluate any change in knowledge and attitude of students regarding the problem. If there is a change in these areas, hopefully a change in behavior will follow. A definitive evaluation of the efficacy of the project is difficult to make due to the sensitive nature of the issue; however, during the first year of the symposia, seventeen young women were transferred to the school for pregnant girls and thus far this year, with a similar number of females, nine have been transferred. If proven successful, the program will be replicated in other high schools. The decimation of this and future generations through unwanted teenage pregnancies is an urgent challenge facing many urban high schools. The Dunbar Way is one approach toward ameliorating the problem.

In the preceding sections, we have attempted to describe some of the history, programs, and activities occurring at Dunbar. In the following sections, we will provide samples of the overriding structure in which they came about. Finally, from a biased point of view, we concur with the Council of Great City Schools in including Dunbar in its list of "High Schools that Work."<sup>7</sup>

#### THE INFRASTRUCTURE—PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR HIGH SCHOOL

##### Entrance Requirements

As a citywide school, any eligible student residing in the City of Baltimore can attend Dunbar High School. Unlike other citywide

<sup>6</sup>Editorial Staff, "Of Teenage Pregnancies," *The News American* (Baltimore), September 29, 1982.  
<sup>7</sup>"High Schools That Work," *Ebony*, November 1987, pp. 36-38.

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schools, entrance requirements have been less stringent because of the lack of confidence in standardized test scores of black students. However, the established criteria are enforced. Entrance requirements for the health occupations programs have been progressively raised and will be the same as the health professions program in September 1989. A composite score for each applicant is derived and a student is admitted at grade nine based on the following criteria:

**A-COURSE**—an accelerated program designed for the advanced student who desires an intensified college preparatory health oriented course of study:

Reading Level	>	1-year above grade level
Arithmetic Level	>	
General Average	>	85 or above (grades 7 & 8)
Mathematics Average	>	
English Average		
Good Attendance		90% or better

**HEALTH PROFESSIONS**—designed for the advanced student who wishes to pursue post-high school study in the health field on a college level

Reading Level	>	Grade level or above
Arithmetic Level	>	
General Average	>	80 or above (grades 7 & 8)
Mathematics Average	>	
English Average		
Good Attendance		90% or better

**HEALTH OCCUPATIONS CLUSTERS**—a program designed for the student who wishes to seek employment in the health field following graduation.

Reading Level	>	1 year below grade level
Arithmetic Level		(acceptable)
General Average		75 or above (grades 7 & 8)
Good Attendance		85% or better

### Philosophy

We believe that every facet of life is important—intellectual, physical, social, and emotional. We believe that every student is unique and valuable. We believe that one of the purposes of life is to improve the quality of life. We believe that if we have enabled



our students to become more humane, more tolerant, more productive and more helpful, then we have prepared them for life.

The Paul Laurence Dunbar Community High School has as its main thrust the health care delivery services. This makes us unique in our attempts to prepare students for the future. We believe that our program demands a strong, in-depth preparation in mathematics, science, communication, and business skills if our students are to compete in society. We believe this preparation should be current, exciting, provocative, creative, and challenging.

It is our belief that the process of satisfying the educational needs of young people is a cooperative enterprise involving students, teachers, parents, citizens, and community agencies. By nature, young people should be constructively involved in a program of studies that engages their minds and requires active participation in the learning process to assure maximum utilization of their potential. Individual differences must be taken into account in the program of studies by providing traditional courses at various levels.

We believe that the administration, faculty, parents, student body, and support staff at Dunbar have a philosophy of education collectively supporting the philosophy of the school.

#### Mission Statement

The mission of the Paul Laurence Dunbar High School is to provide for its students a sound academic education in basic skills with a specialization in selected health cluster areas that emphasizes both the occupational and professional aspects of the field.

#### Program Goals\*

1. To provide the verbal, mathematical and cognitive skills to succeed on college entry and job entry examinations.
2. To provide an academic background which will enable capable students to enter four-year pre-medical collegiate programs.
3. To provide updated curricular offerings in the health cluster areas.
4. To build a psychological base for the delivery of health care.
5. To provide positive role models for students from professionals in the health cluster area.
6. To provide all students in the professional tracts with emergency medical care procedures.
7. To provide on-site exposure to medical facilities for all students.
8. To provide articulation between two-year and four-year postsecondary educational institutions.
9. To maintain traditions in the areas of music, art, and physical education through the use of flex-time.

\*Copies of the Program of Studies may be obtained by writing to the Principal of Dunbar

## THE PROGRAM PLAN

Our Program Plan describes who will do what, when, and to what degree. The program plan is divided into four sections: Section A—Program objectives, Section B—Supporting Activity objectives, Section C—Evaluation/Monitoring Plan and Section D—Critical Path Management. The following represents two sample objectives collaboratively developed with the faculty for inclusion in the program plan for the year. (Section D does not appear here.)

### Section A—Program Objectives

Program Objective I— By October 1, all teachers will have provided a course syllabus with grade requirements for each student.

Program Objective II—By May 30, all faculty members will have provided additional skill development exercises in reading, writing, and speaking in order that the average score on the CAT, PSAT, SAT and TSWE (Test of Standard Written English) will increase by a minimum of 3 points.

### Section B—Supporting Activity Objectives

Program Objective I

#### *Supporting Activity Objectives*

I — SAO — 1 — By September 15, department heads/ chairpersons will have discussed with different teachers of the same course those common understandings, skills, and content that a student should acquire as a result of being enrolled in that course.

I — SAO — 2 — By September 24, department heads/ chairpersons will have met with members of their respective departments to discuss basic content of the syllabus and suggest components which may be included in the grading system.

I — SAO — 3— By September 28, all teachers will have submitted a copy of the course syllabus with grade requirement to their respective department head/ chairperson.

Program Objective II

Supporting Activity Objectives

		Section
II - SAO - 1 -	By October 30, department heads/chairpersons in concert with the teachers, will have developed and submitted a plan for improving the writing skills of the students. This plan should include but not be limited to: (A) a one page essay as a home assignment, (B) procedures for standardizing the inclusion of vocabulary terms with each new unit of instruction, and (C) the inclusion of one essay question on an examination during each quarter.	E - P.C
II - SAO - 2 -	By October 30, department heads/chairpersons, in concert with teachers, will have developed and submitted a plan for improving the speaking skills for the students. This plan should include strategies for: (A) encouraging students to speak in complete sentences, (B) providing opportunities for oral expression in each class, (C) establishing an atmosphere in which students will ask questions, and (D) correcting, unobtrusively, the oral expression of students.	E - PI -
II - SAO - 3 -	By October 30, department heads/chairpersons, in concert with teachers, will have developed and submitted a plan for improving the reading skills of the students.	E - PI
II - SAO - 4 -	By October 1, all administrators will have regularized procedures which will require students referred to the office to write their version of the reason for the referral.	E - PI
II - SAO - 5 -	By October 1, homeroom advisors will have submitted the name of two students who will serve as student announcers on the public address system. In addition to announcements, students will use role-playing to demonstrate strategies for improving human relations.	E - PI

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### Section C—Evaluation/Monitoring

- E — P.O. I — By October 2, the Program Monitor (PM) will have randomly selected ten students from each grade level to ascertain the receipt of course syllabi with grade requirements from teachers.
- E—PI — S1 — By September 16, the PM will have received from department heads/chairpersons a verbal or written summary of the identified understandings, skills, and content for common courses taught by different teachers.
- E — PI — S2 — By September 25, the PM will have received a copy of the agenda from the meeting.
- E — PI — S3 — By September 29, department heads/chairpersons will have submitted from each teacher a copy of the course syllabus with grade requirement to the PM.
- E — PO — II — By May 30, the average score achieved by students on the CAT, PSAT, SAT and TSWÉ will have been compared to ascertain growth.
- E — PII — S1 — By October 30, the PM will have received the plan for improving the writing skills from each department head/chairperson.
- E — PII — S2 — By October 30, the PM will have received the plan for improving the speaking skills from each department head/chairperson.
- E — PII — S3 — By October 30, the PM will have received the plan for improving the reading skills from each department head/chairperson.
- E — PII — S4 — By October 1, the PM will have received procedures from the administrative staff.
- E — PII — S5 — By October 2, the PM will have submitted the names from each homeroom advisory section of students who will be announcers to the administrative staff.

#### THE HANDBOOKS

Each teacher and each student receives a handbook at the beginning of the school year. All changes in the *Faculty Handbook* are

highlighted at the initial faculty meeting. Students are taught the content of their handbook in the English classes during the first week of school. Policies and procedures affecting the day-to-day operation of the school are listed.

### THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL

The principal has a significant role in determining the quality and tone of the school. As stated by a major committee of the Maryland State Department of Education, "the principal should exercise educational leadership and managerial ability in the following six functional areas: instructional maintenance and improvement, professional development and services, pupil development and services, school and community relations, administration of facilities, and finance and organizational relationships and responsibilities."<sup>9</sup> The importance of the functional areas may vary according to the community in which the school is located and the students which it serves. We shall examine each area as it relates to Dunbar High School.

*Instructional Maintenance and Improvement.* To this writer, this is the most important leadership function of the principal. Staff members are apprised of the average level of achievement of students on all standardized and systemwide tests. Unequivocal commitment to increase these levels must be communicated by the principal to the faculty as the *pièce de résistance*. Team building is a prerequisite to translating this commitment to reality in the classroom.

Teacher participation and the principal's tenacity merged to produce a program plan designed to improve student achievement. Each year the program plan reflected an expected higher level of achievement than the previous year. Though we did not achieve our projected levels during the first three years, the repetition of the objective underscored its importance and efforts were made to attain the stated objective. Staff members were reminded of the truism that their destiny as well as that of the principal was tied to the achievement of students. Overall, student attendance increased from 85 percent to 86 percent. The proportion of students scoring 800 or above on the SAT increased from 5 percent to 8 percent. It is essential to address student achievement and attendance in the program plan.

At Dunbar, it was essential that the principal remained cognizant of the poor self-esteem of many of the students. Therefore, it was necessary to instill pride and confidence that they could achieve. In addition to raising students' aspiration, teachers had to raise their expectations.

<sup>9</sup>Joseph L. Shilling, *Improving the Effectiveness of School-Based Administrators* (Baltimore, Md.: Maryland State Department of Education, February 1987), p. 25.

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*Professional Development and Services.* As the principal, it is necessary to model the expected classroom behavior of teachers. Alternatives to the lecture method were discussed and a procedure for teaching note-taking skills, when the lecture method was employed, was demonstrated. Through the evaluation process, teachers were encouraged to enroll in inservice or college courses according to their needs.

After the philosophy of the principal regarding instructional methods and performance expectations became apparent, a staff development committee composed of teachers emerged. Though all teachers received praise, where appropriate, for their contributions, those whose students learned the course content and became motivated to learn for the sake of learning received an outstanding evaluation.

All reasonable requests for equipment, supplies, or schedule changes are granted if it is in the best interest of the students. The need of the majority of students, whether it pertains to a class or to the entire school, influences the decision to be rendered.

An open-door policy is maintained for teachers and students. The principal supports teachers in their efforts to maintain discipline if it is administered fairly and equitably to all students. New teachers soon sense their policy through the reading of the faculty and student handbooks. To show appreciation, once a year, in the morning, coffee and donuts are provided for the faculty on a surprise basis.

*Pupil Development and Services.* Conscientious attempts are made to assist students in raising their expectations and aspirations. The promotion of a positive self-esteem is expected to be paramount in the relationship with students. Freshmen are encouraged to identify the college they plan to attend in an attempt to create a goal for them.

Yearly themes and mottos, when properly promoted, tend to build school spirit. The "Dunbar Way" is so engrained that students suggest new applications whenever a new problem arises. At Dunbar, the prevention of teenage pregnancy symposia came as a result of the application of the "Dunbar Way."

Students are used in a variety of situations to promote the betterment of the school. They are expected to pick up paper in the building, report any outsiders to the office, talk in moderate tones, take textbooks home, communicate with parents, and report any unlawful activity—all in the name of the "Dunbar Way." They are also told that they are the best students in the city, state, and nation.

An attempt is made to learn the names of as many students as possible. This can be facilitated by reading the reports of test results and spending time in the cafeteria during lunch period. With an



open-door policy, students soon come to the principal for mediation of their problems with teachers. The principal also becomes aware of the types of problems experienced by individual teachers.

Guidance counselors plan sessions on a quarterly basis for students identified as underachievers, attendance problems, or violators of the school contract. A parent-student-counselor conference is held whenever possible in these cases. Students in need of medical services are referred to our Comprehensive School Health Clinic or the Mental Health Team. Leadership experiences are also provided for students.

*School and Community Relations.* At the beginning of each year, parents are sent a copy of the yearly calendar which includes report card distribution dates, meeting dates of the Parent-Teacher-Student Association, date that school is to be closed, and examination dates. Prior to a specific activity, reminders are sent to parents/guardians. If there are any necessary changes in the schedule, with consultation with the Executive Board of the PTSA, parents are notified by letter. Any letter from a parent receives a response either by telephone or in writing.

To encourage parental participation, we scheduled a "Family Night." Activities were planned for the gymnasium, the cafeteria, the student activity room which included dancing, shooting baskets, and baby-sitting services. The price of admission for students was to be accompanied by their parent or guardian.

*Administration of Facilities and Finances.* At Dunbar, a facility built to accommodate open-space classrooms, many building modifications have been made with the approval of the Parent-Teacher-Student Association. These modifications, in the opinion of teachers, have improved the learning environment for students.

The problem of inadequate staff parking spaces was also addressed. Groups of teachers, in cooperation with administrators, sought relief to the situation. Through cooperative efforts the problem will be solved.

Problems regarding the allocation of funds are discussed in the administrative Council Meetings. This council consists of all administrators and department heads and chairpersons. Unresolved problems are referred to the principal for resolution. Small sums from the PTSA and alumni can be obtained by procedures established by these organizations.

*Organizational Relationships and Responsibilities.* Our superintendent distributes systemwide goals which are sufficiently broad to be incorporated in the program plan of most schools. At Dunbar, we include these goals in the plan for the school year; however, we may not place as much emphasis on goals not directly related to

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student and faculty attendance and student achievement as on others.

We recognize the need for our schools to be in concert with the overall objectives of the system, the needs of the particular student populations, and the desires of the communities. In the case of differences, it is the responsibility of the principals to do all that is possible to minimize these differences without sacrificing what is best for the majority of students.

#### SUMMARY

To service the needs of an urban secondary school, high principal visibility is essential. Students and staff should expect the principal and other administrators to be everywhere all the time. When one administrator is assigned to a fixed location, the others should move about the building. Department heads must augment the limited administrative staff in proposing and monitoring solutions to recurring problems. The role of the principal in managing or providing stability to the educational environment is known; however, the time to perform this function adequately is limited.

Leadership (change) and management (stability) are the paramount functions of a principal. Reduction in management activity coupled with an increase in leadership role is absolutely essential if school improvement is to be achieved.

*Bureau of Instructional Management?*

**BIM MEETING**  
**Friday, October 7, 1988**  
**8:30 A.M.**

**MINUTES**

- The meeting was convened at 9:00 a.m.
- Dr. Yates welcomed the staff members to the first 1988-89 BIM meeting. She gave recognition to Donald Williams, Ellen Oberfelder, and Calvin Glover on their newly appointed positions and assignments. She stated that meetings will be utilized to discuss pertinent issues and develop recommendations to be presented to the superintendent.

Suggested Timely Issues for Consideration:

- ..Schools without brand new textbooks
- ..Pupil population was over estimated last year. We would like to do an internal audit. We are also looking at procedures to do an in-house audit.
- ..Staffing (inequities): Transferring teachers to other schools
- ..Staff development for those teachers who were redeployed
- ..Master teachers who were placed in classrooms after being out of the classrooms for a number of years
- ..Student suspension reports: Dr. Yates noted that she was very disturbed that students were being sent home for bringing trivial articles to school.

Three Year Longitudinal Study of Suspended Students:

(Report was given by Ms. Helen Patterson and Mr. Larry Howe)

- Ms. Patterson explained the role of the Office of Suspension Services and pointed out that each office may be of help with the suspension problems of students.
- Members were informed that interviews were set up for suspended students now eligible to return to school. During the dates assigned for interviews, some students never showed up; some students were just lost in the files; some parents did not follow-up; and some over- and under-sixteen dropped out or vanished from the system.
- Ms. Patterson read the "Executive Summary" that is printed in the Three Year Longitudinal Study of Suspended Students 1984-1987, dated September 14, 1988. Persons interested in reviewing the report may secure a copy from their associate superintendent's office.



- Mr. Howe gave brief descriptions of charts depicting the frequency of multiple suspensions and expulsions over the three year period and reasons.

Questions:

Do the students go back to the old school with approximately the same program they had prior to suspension?

What happens to the student population regarding the competency tests that are needed prior to graduation?

Is there a continuing, sequential profile of the behavior of students starting with the student's original enrollment?

Are we doing anything for students who are successful once they return from suspension?

Summary:

Each office needs to think about traditional ways to deal with the problems of suspension. We need to get our students back in school and keep them there.

- Dr. Yates recognized Ms. Jessie Gladden, Dr. Samuel Banks, Dr. Evelyn Valentine, and Ms. Carla Ford for outstanding work they recently done or are doing in the interest of the school system. She also recognized the promotions of Sylvia Brooks-Brown, Celia Carr, Ellen Gonzales and "Skip" Sanders.
- Each BIM member will receive a copy of the article written in the Howard University Journal by Ms. Jessie Gladden entitled, "The Dunbar Story."
- Dr. Yates also mentioned that Dr. Hunter has brought new members aboard, effective October 10, 1988, as advisors to the Superintendent.

Dr. James Andrews  
Dr. Herman Howard

Mr. Roger Powell  
Mr. Wendell Whitlock

The Supervisory Model

**Division of Curriculum Management:**

A copy of the proposed model for the supervision of curriculum and support for instruction was distributed to each member. Dr. Spilman read the mission for this model and concluded that this team effort is a concept from a three divisional prospective. The main ingredients of this concept would be centered around the students, instructional support, and collaboration. He also gave special thanks to Alice Morgan-Brown, Nancy Gimbel, Ken Smith and Shirley Bullock for the preparation of this proposal.

Discussions of the enclosed materials were given by the following staff members:

Pre-K-12 Service Structure: Mr. Ken Smith  
Impact on Service: Ms. Nancy Gimbel  
Staff Assignments: Dr. Freeda Thompson  
Self-Contained Programs: Ms. Jane Birkhead  
Supervisory Services: Ms. Alice Morgan-Brown  
Collaboration: Ms. Carla Ford  
Employ the Concept of Collaboration: Ms. Lucretia Billups

Discussion groups were formed to consider and report on the following questions:

1. To whom should a request for an emergency service be directed?

Concerns:

- What are emergency services?
- How do we determine priorities?
- Does the responsibility belong to the principal or the executive director?
- Will the crisis support teams begin flowing through the executive directors?

2. What should be the role of the Division of the Instructional Support Services in regard to curriculum implementation?

Concerns:

- What are the channels of communication and the sites where decisions will be made?
- Should the Division of Instructional Support Services be part of the curriculum development process based on the whole child?
- Will there be in-service training and support for parents and students?

3. What should be the role of each division in regard to the selection, design and implementation of special projects and programs sponsored by other agencies, universities, etc.?

Concerns:

- Should we implement individually each project that is proposed or should they all be channeled through a single arm of the system?
- How do most of these projects come through?

4. How will formal and informal observations be addressed?

Concerns:

- Are observations of target groups listed as unsatisfactory teachers deemed formal or informal?
- What level of supervisors would actually observe the teachers?

5. What is the role of the Office of Staff Development in supporting curriculum dissemination and implementation?

Concern:

- Staff Development and the Professional Library should be a part of Curriculum Management rather than the Division of Personnel.
- Dr. Yates suggested that we discuss additional matters regarding the group discussions and questions. A follow-up meeting was scheduled for Friday, October 21, 1988 at 8:30 a.m.
- The Division of Curriculum Management was commended for an excellent presentation.
- The Divisions of School Management and Instructional Support Services will give their report at the next BIM meeting.
- The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.