

## **STANDARDS, ACCOUNTABILITY & THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP: LESSONS FROM HISTORY**

### **ACCOUNTABILITY, STANDARDS, AND THE GROWING ACHIEVEMENT GAP— LESSONS FROM THE PAST HALF-CENTURY**

Douglas N. Harris and Carolyn D. Herrington, *American Journal of Education*, February 2006

The rise of accountability policies during the early 1990s coincided with an increase in the achievement gap between white and minority students, reversing decades of steady improvement in outcome equity. This paper explores the policies that helped to reduce the achievement gap before 1990, the effects of the subsequent shift toward accountability, and what can be learned from past successes to guide the future development of accountability systems. An extensive review of research suggests that pre-1990s reductions in the achievement gap occurred because minority students were exposed to greater resources and academic content.

### **CALLING FOR CLEAR, SPECIFIC CONTENT**

The Editors, *American Educator*, Spring 2008 (See Pocket)

This introduction to the Spring 2008 issue of the AFT's *American Educator* magazine summarizes the original case for standards-based education reform, then lays out the myriad ways that federal, state, and local policies have impeded the effective implementation of this reform.

### **THERE'S A HOLE IN STATE STANDARDS—AND NEW TEACHERS LIKE ME ARE FALLING THROUGH A Second-Year Teacher *American Educator*, Spring 2008 (See Pocket)**

Writing anonymously, a new teacher laments the lack of standards and curriculum that leave her struggling to figure out how to provide students with a quality education.

### **PLUGGING THE HOLE IN STATE STANDARDS (ONE MAN'S MODEST PROPOSAL FOR INFUSING MORE CONTENT INTO THE LITERACY BLOCK AND MAKING READING TESTS MORE EQUITABLE)**

E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *American Educator*, Spring 2008 (See Pocket)

Hirsch argues that “The best route to general academic achievement—high scores on reading tests and on everything else—is broad general knowledge.” Thus, ensuring that every child is exposed to a coherent, content-rich liberal arts curriculum is key both to raising scores overall and to significantly lowering the achievement gap. “To ensure that all students are adequately prepared for each new class is precisely what the four-pronged program—good standards, good tests, good teacher training, and good materials—can accomplish.”