

## A Resilience Program Model

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THE DATA FROM this research suggest that the participants were resilient individuals. Protective factors in their lives helped them become resilient, and these factors facilitated their successful transitions through elementary school, high school, and postsecondary programs.

Much can be learned from the data in this study. Its findings suggest that protective factors in families, schools, postsecondary programs, and communities could contribute to the academic achievement of African American deaf and hard of hearing students. Further, their resilience and academic achievement could prepare them for postsecondary programs.

The participants' families, especially their parents, played major roles in fostering their resilience. There were only three participants whose parents had set the goal of a college education for them prior to graduation from high school. The other parents set a goal of high school graduation. The data does not show that most of the parents had an established plan for their child's academic transition into and graduation from college. However, they had practices that promoted resilience in their children, and their children succeeded in postsecondary programs.

Though schools and community organizations were involved in the education of the participants, the research does not show that there was a coordinated plan of action that was set in motion with the ultimate goal and outcome of postsecondary graduation for the participants. From the information gathered from the participants, in most cases their families, the schools, and the organizations acted independently of each other in fostering resilience, and their independent actions ultimately contributed to the participants' earning bachelor's degrees.

The key question is: how can parents, schools, and community stakeholders who provide protective factors that contribute to academic achievement collaborate on a comprehensive resilience program designed to prepare students for postsecondary programs? This study and other

research clearly point out that there are factors within families, schools, and community organizations that promote resilience and positive academic outcomes for young children, adolescents, and young adults.

The recommendation of this researcher is a collaborative program model for developing and building protective factors in the students' environments that lead to resilience. From the study data, resilient African American deaf and hard of hearing students are able to successfully transition into and through four-year colleges and universities. The more resilient students are, the better able they are to function.

### **Purpose of the Resilience Program**

The goal of the resilience program is to strengthen the likelihood of success for a larger group of African American deaf and hard of hearing students by unifying the family, school, postsecondary programs, and community stakeholders into a cohesive group with the same academic goals. The members of this group would work together in an organized fashion to provide the necessary protective factors that foster resilience, enabling students to prevail over obstacles and succeed in school. The resilience program should be housed in the school so that the key groups in the lives of children have a central place to meet and plan how to help students transition from elementary to secondary school and through postsecondary programs (see Figure 1).

This resilience program focuses on African American deaf and hard of hearing children, adolescents, and young adults because the percentage of these students who enter and graduate from four-year colleges and universities is very small. The program is designed to enhance and facilitate the educational attainments of African American deaf and hard of hearing students and to enable each child to reach his or her fullest potential. However, it could benefit other students with other disabilities as well as students without disabilities. The key components of the program are the protective factors that promote understanding and respect of African American culture, Deaf culture, and other cultures; academic achievement; healthy social and emotional developmental; and culturally relevant curriculum, programs and activities. It involves a diverse staff that includes African American administrators, teachers, and staff; African American

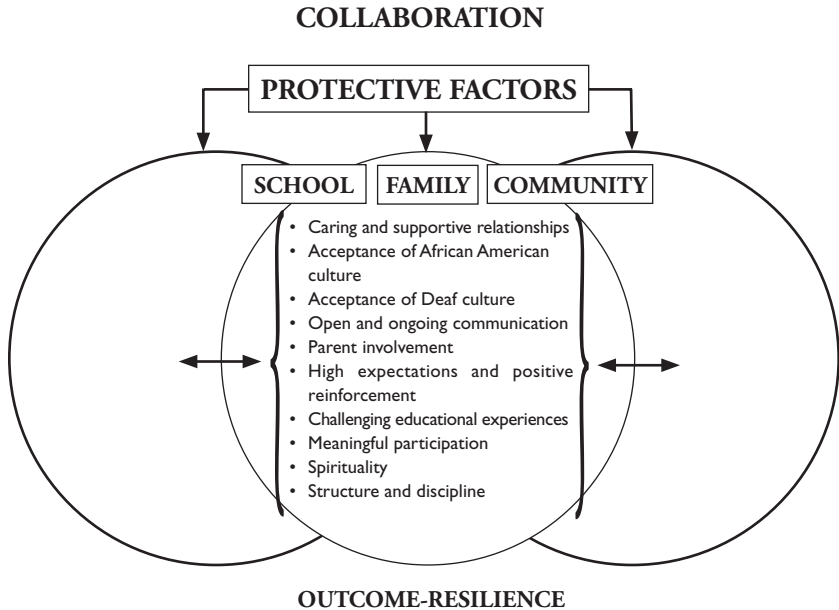


Figure 1. Model for Fostering Resilience in African American Deaf and Hard of Hearing Young Children, Adolescents, and Young Adults

parents and age-appropriate students; community organizations; and other stakeholders in the planning and decision-making processes (see Table 6).

The theory underlying the program is that the more resilience students possess, the better able they are to achieve in school. The resilience program will eliminate gaps in services, create appropriate interventions for students to succeed in school, and promote a cohesive and caring environment for African American deaf and hard of hearing students and for students from other ethnic groups to grow and develop to their fullest potential. It provides an avenue for the family, school, and community to reinforce each other. Working together, they can provide the guidance, intellectual stimulation, support, nurturance, opportunities, and resources students need to achieve success by changing systems, structures, and beliefs within schools and communities. This includes providing and modeling the protective factors children need to persevere in spite of obstacles to their academic, social, and emotional progress. Students are key elements in the resilience process, and they need to understand what contributes to resilience and the transition process, what resources are available, and

how to access the resources. With the help of their families, schools, and community organizations, they must take active roles in their own development through age-appropriate activities.

Resilience, like transition, is a lifelong process. The following are three characteristics of the process that should be taken into consideration when planning policies, programs, and practices:

1. The process is developmental and ongoing.
2. The strengths of the students rather than their weaknesses should be recognized.
3. The process promotes protective factors that help students achieve through changes in the systems, structures, and beliefs within their environment (Winfield, 1994, p. 4).

These characteristics have been considered in designing the proposed resilience program. The program would be initiated early in the life of the child and continue through their postsecondary program. Schools and postsecondary programs need to begin planning programs that focus on children's strengths and are ongoing. In too many schools systems today, administrators are continuously changing programs to fit new educational fads with no real vision of where they are going and how they will educate African American deaf and hard of hearing students and other minorities.

### *Structure of the Program*

The resilience program consists of the family, the school, postsecondary programs, and community stakeholders. Universities and colleges, as community stakeholders, could play major roles in this process by providing research, professional training, and postsecondary credit courses in the high schools for teachers and staff. The components of this resilience program are connected and support each other. This proposed program would have a director of resilience who reports to the principal of the school and would have the following roles:

1. Coordinating the services of the schools with parents, postsecondary programs, and other community stakeholders in developing and implementing a resilience program

2. Providing best practices of linking academic and student support services (mental health, athletic, and residence life programs) to resilience goals
3. Providing resources and training and development for teachers and staff, as well as parents and community agencies, to develop innovative approaches to develop and enhance resilience
4. Serving as a resource on resilience to administrative, teacher, and staff development program planning
5. Identifying and planning strategies to address practices and programs that are in conflict with fostering protective factors
6. Coordinating resources for the library and for a resource center on resilience
7. Coordinating workshops and speakers for the school on innovative programs that focus on resilience
8. Building partnerships with community organizations to promote student resilience
9. Creating partnerships with colleges and universities for advanced placements of students, research and data analysis assistance, grant writing, and professional development purposes
10. Administering the program

### *Program Development*

The program would use a collaborative approach that is developed through planning meetings that involve teachers, administrators, students, parents, community organizations, and other stakeholders. This would be accomplished through formal planning meetings as well as ongoing informal communications. The initial meetings would include retreats involving facilitators to help the group process, and the information from these meetings would be used to develop the resilience mission statement, develop annual goals, and gather information for the strategic plan. A series of scheduled meetings would be held to discuss goals, develop new ideas, and to exchange information about program development. In addition, those involved would attend monthly and annual forum and planning meetings.

The purpose of the resilience program is to link the home, school, and community in establishing environments that promote resilience through

Table 5. Protective Factors and Processes in the Community (Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, Cultural Role Models, and Church Members)

Protective factors	Examples
Caring and supportive relationships	Acceptance of African American culture Acceptance of Deaf culture Technological assistive devices Information Encouragement High quality services Recognition
Open and ongoing communication	Fluency in ASL Use of communication mode of child Active listening Meaningful feedback
High expectations	High goals and standards Praise Rewards and recognition Postsecondary planning
Challenging educational experiences	Rigorous coursework Development of critical thinking skills Classes with diverse groups of students Coursework applicable to life experiences Culturally relevant coursework
Discipline and structure	Clear and consistent expectations Structure Equitable rules and consequences

such protective factors as (a) care and support, (b) open and ongoing communication, (c) high expectations, (d) challenging educational opportunities, (e) meaningful participation, (f) parent involvement, and (g) discipline and structure. The goals of the program would include the following:

1. Enhancing the resilience of more African American deaf and hard of hearing children, adolescents, and young adult students to facilitate their transition
2. Linking academic, student support services, residential living, and athletic objectives with resilience enhancement
3. Coordinating school resilience programs with parents, community, and other stakeholders

Table 6. Proposed Resilience Program

Program	Program components	Program partners
Infancy to elementary school	Involve parents in school and community program planning and implementation.	Parent/school/community
	Hold sign language/Deaf awareness classes.	School/community/deaf adults
	Hold infancy and childhood development workshops.	School/community agencies
	Create challenging classes.	School/community
	Provide mentoring programs and other activities that expose students to successful African American deaf and hard of hearing adults.	Parent/school/community
	Create social skills groups.	School/community
	Provide independent living skills activities.	Parent/school/community
	Initiate cognitive and physical development after school activities.	Parent/school/community
	Develop and disseminate infancy and child development materials.	School/community
	Incorporate culturally relevant information into the curriculum and community activities.	School/community
	Create a transition program to elementary school.	Parent/school/community
	Provide on-site community agency services.	School/community
	Elementary to high school	Continue with age-appropriate components above and add the following:
Develop childhood to adolescent workshops.		Parent/school/community
Create and disseminate adolescent development materials.		School/community
Transition to high school activities.		Parent/school/community

Table 6. (continued)

High school to college	Continue with age-appropriate components above and add the following:	
	Provide access to advanced classes and college courses.	School/community
	Hold adolescent to young adulthood development workshops.	Parent/school/community
	Provide work experiences.	School/community
	Transition to college activities.	Parent/school/community

Note: Community includes postsecondary programs

The following would be critical outcomes of this program:

1. More African American deaf and hard of hearing children, adolescents, and young adults will benefit from protective factors in their homes, schools, and communities.
2. Schools serving African American deaf and hard of hearing children, adolescents, and young adults will integrate protective factors into the curriculum, mental health programs, athletic programs, after-school programs, and residence life programs.
3. Schools for the deaf and mainstream programs will collaborate with parents, postsecondary programs, and community stakeholders to provide protective factors that enhance resilience.
4. More collaboration will occur between schools for the deaf and mainstream programs.
5. More African American students will enter four-year colleges and universities and graduate.

### *The Role of the Schools*

In addition to schools being an educational institution for students, they would also become advocates and community resources for students and parents before their children are enrolled in school. Such a program would become a resource for parents of deaf and hard of hearing students, regardless of whether or not the child is enrolled in the school. The program would provide resource materials, conferences, and workshops on factors that contribute to resilience in children from infancy through young



adulthood. For example, parents of newborn children recently diagnosed as deaf or hard of hearing would have access to information that would help them provide experiences for their child that would foster resilience. The focal point or hub of the program must be the school because it alone possesses the expertise to assemble all of the other resources. An additional reason is that the primary beneficiaries, the children, would be educated in the school in partnership with their parents and their community.

In order for the schools to serve as advocates for promoting resilience, cultural changes within the school, home, and community may be necessary. The importance of culture and its impact on educating African American deaf and hard of hearing students needs to be addressed in the program's initial organizational retreats. Schools are in the central position to take the lead in implementing policies, programs, and procedures that contribute to the students' resilience and thus their successful transition. A well-planned, comprehensive school program that focuses on organizing and coordinating environmental factors that promote protective factors is essential to facilitating the educational and transition process. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act has mandated schools to facilitate transition.

To develop a program that has high potential to accomplish the established goals, there must be a clear agreement among the participants. For example, the program would require cooperation among the schools, the families, and numerous organizations throughout the community. Furthermore, to ensure that increased academic achievement and more successful school transition takes place for African American deaf and hard of hearing students, the school administrator must be able to promote the vital role of resilience in this process and must also view the role of the school as critical in fostering resilience through a collaborative partnership among parents, the school, and community stakeholders. Successful academic transition should be an expressed outcome mentioned in the mission statement's goals. Parents, teachers, staff members, and stakeholders should participate in the process of developing and finalizing the mission statement, which should include goals that promote and foster student resilience.

School policies and programs will promote collaboration among the staff members within the schools to foster protective factors, and the policies, programs, and strategies will focus on collaborative partnerships with

parents, community organizations, and key stakeholders to facilitate the resilience process. Programs should address protective factors from the child's infancy through high school graduation and beyond. The model's plan will have a strong commitment to acknowledging and embracing diversity, including different ethnic cultures and Deaf culture, and it will provide training in understanding various cultures, including Deaf culture and sign language.

The school should provide parents with information about what contributes to resilience, how to promote resilience in the home, how the school and parents can work together to promote resilience, how community organizations can be involved in this process, and how resilience facilitates successful transition. These programs, with any necessary changes, will continue as long as their child is in school.

The director will ensure that the development of all school programs will take into account the need to promote resilience and transition by providing a high-quality and culturally relevant curriculum. In addition, the program will include the following:

1. Instructional practices that are inclusive and challenging to all students
2. A supportive and positive reinforcing school climate
3. Extracurricular activities that build self-esteem, leadership, and teamwork
4. Programs that promote relationships with positive adult role models
5. Procedures for including students in age-appropriate decision-making
6. Recognition of the accomplishments of students

When a student's academic placement is in question, a team approach would be required in keeping with school policy in order to avoid inappropriate class placement. The parent and student would participate in the process. A school assessment team consisting of a teacher representative, a school mental health staff member, dormitory staff member, and a lead teacher would review appropriate school data to determine school placement. These data would include student test scores, progress reports, student portfolios, written feedback from all of the student's teachers with samples of the student's work, and a form developed to assess students' resilience. This approach could eliminate heavy reliance on test results and one person's recommendation for class placement.

A survey, the School Success Profile, has been used in mainstream schools to assess students' individual adaptation in their social environments, which includes their neighborhood, school, friends, and family. It assesses their self-perceptions of their well-being. Richman, Rosenfeld, and Bowen (1998) suggest that this survey could be useful in providing interventions to promote academic resilience and educational outcomes for students placed at risk (p. 311). There is a strong need for a resilience form or survey that assesses the resilience of African American deaf and hard of hearing students. This form also could be used for students with other disabilities.

The program would designate responsible personnel for each step of the resilience process. It would also indicate how resilience factors are incorporated into the process. Though all teachers and staff would participate in the resilience process, the procedure would not be left to chance. A clearly developed program with designated individuals for each task would ensure the absence of gaps in services to students.

In order to implement and facilitate the policies, procedures, programs, and practices that promote resilience and transition in the school, school administrators should institute a comprehensive professional development program. Professional development is critical in the orientation of new teachers and support staff and the ongoing training of continuing teachers and staff. A professional development program can provide training and strategies to effectively implement the school's mission, goals, policies, procedures, and programs. Professional development is also beneficial in developing educators' cultural awareness and sensitivity and in incorporating relevant cultural practices.

Evaluation procedures are necessary to ascertain whether the school is accomplishing its mission and goals. For individual students, the administrator, with input from teachers and staff, will need to determine what types of tests will be used by the school to evaluate student progress and how they will be administered. This is especially important because tests have resulted in inappropriate placements of African American deaf and hard of hearing students in many academic settings. Administrators will need to be aware of how best to use tests and other forms of evaluation for student academic placements.

The director will develop methods for evaluating the progress of the program. One method would be biannual evaluations of goal accomplishment.

The director should also utilize ongoing feedback from students, parents, teachers, staff, and community organizations that are stakeholders in the school through periodically scheduled meetings that elicit feedback about policies and programs.

By fostering open and ongoing communication between the home and school, schools will develop an effective working relationship with parents that promotes resilience and successful transition. Parent discussion groups are an ideal way for parents to share information with the school as well as for the school to share information with parents. Schools could also provide workshops and training activities for new parents as well as school age children. As seen in the study, the participants' parents were primary factors in their transition, and they provided the protective factors that facilitated their children's successful transition through school. Workshops that focus on information about resilience should be coordinated with community organizations, including local churches. These workshops will include information about infants', toddlers', and preschoolers' development that enhances cognitive, social, communication, and perceptual-motor skills. Parents can learn ways to help their infants and young children learn language, writing, reading, thinking, mathematical, and social skills, thereby making parents partners in the child's learning process.

Topics for the discussion groups could be generated from surveys sent to the parents. Also, parents could be asked for their input and feedback on the mission goals and new programs that the school wants to implement. Times for the discussion groups should be coordinated with the parents. In addition, residential and day programs will develop outreach programs that would involve setting up meetings in communities in centrally and conveniently located places such as libraries, churches, and community organizations where large groups of parents normally attend. The school will also make the workshops available to any parent in the community who wants to attend, which will make information available to parents whose children are not yet school age. The principal of the school and professionals who have information about the topic to be discussed should attend the meetings. It is important that school administrators attend some of the meetings because their presence will communicate commitment to the school's mission and also provide a personal method for the dissemination of information about the school's goals and how the school is meeting those goals. During the meetings,

administrators will obtain feedback from parents regarding whether the school is meeting its goals and both can exchange views about the effectiveness of school programs.

In this study, many parents began preparing their children with learning opportunities prior to their children's entrance into school. The information from the participants on what they viewed as important to their success and the problem areas that could have impeded their progress could be helpful to other parents of African American students.

The question that arises is how this type of information can be disseminated to all African American parents of deaf and hard of hearing students. Professionals usually receive information about effective parenting skills through college courses, professional development training, and professional magazines, but parents usually do not receive this information. School professionals must address how to provide to parents literature on current topics for discussion groups and how to schedule times for meetings that ensure opportunities for parental attendance.

Parents, teachers, and staff can learn from one another. Parents of successful students can exchange information about techniques that they have found to be effective, and parents of older students in the school can help parents of new children as their children transition into the school. Parents of graduates who have succeeded in entering and graduating from college should be invited to speak to parents of continuing students. School staff can use the forum to obtain input from parents regarding the schools' programs and policies and how they impact on their child's academic, social, and emotional development. This approach will be useful especially when schools are planning new programs and policies or have controversial policies that are not accomplishing the goal of improving academic performance.

Information bulletins that focus on resilience factors—how to develop and enhance resilience in the home as well as how resilience contributes to academic achievement—can be shared with the parents. Also, these bulletins will provide parents with information that helps them identify resilience factors in the school and community.

Workshops to enhance parents' communication skills will include sign language, open and ongoing communication skills, and active listening skills. These skills will enable the parents to communicate effectively with their children about transition plans. Effective communication skills will

also foster resilience because parents will be able to directly offer the support their children need rather than going through a third party to do so.

Workshops will provide important concepts that will enhance understanding of the transition process from elementary to high school and from high school to postsecondary programs. They will be designed to increase awareness of parents' roles in these transitions in school and postsecondary programs and of available financial resources. They should include panels of successful graduates and their parents to share information with parents and students.

### *The Role of Teachers*

To foster resilience and facilitate successful transition, teachers can make their classrooms a setting in which all students feel that they are important and valued participants who can achieve academically to their potential. The following characteristics are recommended for teachers:

1. Understand Deaf culture.
2. Be able to sign fluently.
3. Promote a caring and supportive environment.
4. Provide challenging coursework and experiences.
5. Have high expectations for all students.
6. Promote open communication.
7. Develop students' problem-solving and decision-making skills.
8. Promote activities that build social skills.
9. Communicate high expectations for all students.
10. Actively engage all students as participants in the class.
11. Use words of encouragement and praise to positively reinforce appropriate behaviors and academic performance.
12. Treat all students as worthwhile individuals.
13. Use culturally relevant instructional material.
14. Incorporate information about transition, including college resource information, into the existing curriculum.
15. Work collaboratively with parents by encouraging their active participation in decision-making, exchange of information, the classroom, field trips, and general school activities.
16. Provide workshops on how parents can reinforce what is being taught in the classroom.

Young children can also begin to learn about their environment and the people in it. Teachers can offer age-appropriate information about careers and how people obtain jobs. Students can learn this information from books, films, field trips, workshops and other activities designed specifically to enhance resilience and successful transition.

### *The Role of Support Staff*

Support staff will include the professional development staff, dormitory staff in residential schools, counselors, transition advisors, and parental advocates. These staff persons, working collaboratively with parents, teachers, administrators, and outside community agencies, can help make a positive difference in fostering resilience and academic accomplishments. In all planning and implementation of programs, it is important that the role of each is clear so that they are not duplicating or leaving gaps in needed services. Staff can help in identifying needs of students and parents and can be vital contributors to planning and implementing individual, group, and workshop programs. The key here is that roles are clear and supportive of each other. For example, the mental health team of social workers, psychologists, and school counselors will coordinate their efforts with dormitory staff, parent education advocates, and transition staff in identifying needs and developing programs for students to foster resilience and transition activities. The mental health team plays a key role in helping to develop and implement workshops and group training sessions for parents, staff, students, and community organizations that focus on student resilience and transition. They will also coordinate efforts with community agencies that would provide the necessary resources to help facilitate transition. However, specific persons should be designated to provide individual, group, and workshop training for students, parents, teachers, and community organizations. Programs that focus on resilience and transition need to be well-planned and well-coordinated. The following are recommendations for support staff:

1. Develop manuals of activities for the elementary, middle, and high school levels that would be used in workshops and groups to teach students about different careers. These activities should be age-appropriate and include problem-solving, decision-making, and self-advocacy skill

development activities; social skills activities; role playing; video tapes for use in workshops; and topics for research on careers. It is suggested that student input is included in developing the manual.

2. Develop mentoring programs.
3. Develop a program for students to shadow adults in the school on their jobs and to visit their parents for a day to learn what they do.
4. Develop workshops on various careers, resources, self-advocacy skills, and colleges, and discuss at the high school level how to access resources and financial aid.
5. Develop transition workshops that facilitate students' moves from elementary to high school and from high school to college. Students who have successfully transitioned from elementary school and middle school to high school could help those currently entering high school. Students who are in college and those who have graduated from college could be asked to share their perspectives on what helped them succeed and how they handled obstacles that interfered with their progress.
6. Develop a comprehensive work-study program that has a variety of careers that require college degrees that students can apply for based on their interest level. Make this program a part of the students' requirements for graduation that they can fulfill either during the school year or during the summer.
7. Develop collaborative relationships with colleges and universities that allow students to take courses and visit and ask presenters from those schools to come to the high school for presentations.
8. Develop mentor programs that will provide African American deaf and hard of hearing students with mentors who will provide ongoing and open communication on an informal basis. It is important that the students have mentors that they can also relate to as role models.
9. Develop career and college fairs with input from African American students and parents and participation of African American parents and former graduates.

### *The Role of Community Organizations, Businesses, and Key Stakeholders*

Community organizations and key stakeholders can provide a variety of resources and opportunities for students to enhance their resilience. This



was evident in the participants' description of how VR, churches, and cultural organizations contributed to their transition by providing care and support, high expectations, and learning opportunities.

The model uses regular meetings to obtain feedback and to discuss ways to enhance collaborative efforts, and it will ensure that African American deaf and hard of hearing individuals and advocate organizations are included in the process. Written agreements, which include policies, programs, and procedures, need to be developed with the community organizations, other schools, and local colleges so it is clear what is expected from the schools, colleges, and the organizations in collaborative partnerships.

VR is a very important agency in the transition of deaf and hard of hearing students, which is why students and their parents need to be aware of these services. VR administration helps deaf and hard of hearing individuals obtain competitive employment and enhance their independent living skills. Eligibility for this service is based on individual physical or mental impairments that interfere with the individual's ability to obtain or maintain employment. This agency provides training, educational assistance, and employment services to eligible individuals to help them become and remain employed. There is no cost for the services. For financial assistance for college, students should check with their local VR counselors discuss the services available to them. Students' VR cases should be opened no later than the end of their junior year in high school so that they will be able to enter college with the proper support services and financial aid. High schools need to coordinate their transition programs with VR by having periodic meetings with them to discuss their students and how they can work together to help them and their families understand how to use this service effectively. The school and VR representatives should arrange an orientation session at the school for students and their parents that provides information about VR services. The school should also arrange office space for VR personnel to come to the school to meet with individual students and their families.

All of the organizations and individuals who work with the school in the transition process should be invited at least twice a year to school. The first meeting would focus on how the school and all of the agencies could collaborate in meeting the needs of the students. A second meeting at the end of the year will evaluate the year's work and include a reception

to thank the community agencies for their contributions to the students' resilience and transition. The following are some recommendations for working with community agencies and key stakeholders. It is proposed that schools provide training in Deaf culture and sign language for mainstream school personnel, employers, and other stakeholders who are providing transition services for the students. In addition, schools will need to provide workshops on resilience and transition. The collaboration of family, school, community organizations and key stakeholders will provide a more comprehensive approach to developing and strengthening resilience.

Local universities can provide many services for students and school personnel. Nettle (1991) discusses the need for postsecondary programs to establish partnerships with schools, "especially in schools with high minority populations." These partnerships can assist with curriculum development and help teachers develop teaching and learning techniques directed toward university preparation (p. 90). In addition, research staff at the postsecondary level can aid schools in developing databases for collecting useful information that will help schools with identifying educational areas that need strengthening and developing strategies for improving student achievement.

### **Conclusions and Research Recommendations**

There is a great need to establish models of policy and program planning that would help schools develop protective factors that contribute to African American deaf and hard of hearing adolescents' academic success and transition to postsecondary programs. Very little empirical research focuses on African American deaf and hard of hearing adolescents, and much of the research that exists is not recent. Given the absence of longitudinal studies of African American deaf and hard of hearing students that use the resilience construct as a frame of reference, there is a need for more in-depth and ongoing study in this area.

It is crucial that the research on African American deaf and hard of hearing adolescents move beyond identifying risk factors. Such research must focus on protective factors that foster academic achievement and postsecondary transition to either a four-year college, a training program, or gainful employment. These are the issues that need to be addressed for policy, program planning, classroom instruction, and developing parent partnerships to improve academic achievement, career development,

and transition. There is a need to know what schools, administrators, teachers, and support staff can do to facilitate and enhance protective processes. Research has shown that a large group of African American deaf and hard of hearing students, though in desegregated schools, are still receiving below-standard education. Some researchers, educators, and administrators are continuing to reinforce stereotyped theories about African American deaf and hard of hearing adolescents. This deficit perspective perpetuates low achievement and subsequent poor transition results in those African American deaf and hard of hearing students who otherwise could be prepared to enter postsecondary programs. Research on resilience should focus on the interrelationship of parents, schools, and cultural identity as protective factors in the functioning of high-achieving African American deaf and hard of hearing students.

Studies of parents of African American deaf and hard of hearing students should focus on the protective factors that lead to achievement when their children are separated from them for most of the year while they are in residential programs. Parents should be taught how to set in motion the steps that other parents of successful children in mainstream programs are taking to provide protective factors for their children when they have an additional barrier of being the minority in a hearing school setting. They should learn how parents promote their children's positive racial and ethnic socialization when they are separated from them and in predominantly White settings. They should be shown how parents perceive their roles in the IEP as it relates to transition goals and what factors contribute to positive outcomes in the IEP process.

A collaborative partnership needs to be established among families, schools, businesses, community organizations, and key stakeholders. Longitudinal studies are needed to determine if a comprehensive transition plan that focuses on resilience increases the number of African American students who successfully transition through four-year colleges and universities.

From the participants' discussions in this study, there is clearly a need for elementary, secondary, and postsecondary school programs to be more culturally sensitive to African American deaf and hard of hearing students. This can be achieved through more support from teachers and support staff in student development and by schools taking a more active role in

training programs related to cultural sensitivity. Many schools have policies and mission statements regarding cultural diversity; however, based on the participants' comments, more is needed to create cultural awareness and respect. In addition, colleges and universities should be more aware of how the lack of cultural awareness affects instructional and other services for African American students. Research is required to understand what factors contribute to African American deaf and hard of hearing students' likelihood of graduating from predominately White high schools, colleges, and universities for the deaf.

Until more models emerge and until longitudinal data are collected on successful African American deaf and hard of hearing students, there will continue to be a lack of understanding of how to establish effective policies, programs, and strategies that result in increased numbers of African American deaf and hard of hearing college graduates.

This model presents one research-based approach that is not costly and is relatively easy to implement. It could make a vast difference in the academic achievement of African American deaf and hard of hearing students.