

Priority Schools Campaign

Changes, Challenges, and Collaboration

An NEA Priority Schools Campaign (PSC) Forum

New Orleans, Louisiana
November 10 – 12, 2011



Priority Schools Campaign

Forum sponsored in part by:



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Dennis Van Roekel
President

Lily Eskelsen
Vice President

Rebecca S. Pringle
Secretary-Treasurer

John Stocks
Executive Director

Welcome fellow disrupters!

Now that I have your attention, let me explain.

NEA's Priority Schools Campaign is grounded in disrupting the status quo in public education. We know that we must reclaim our profession, reframe the debate, and renew our nation's commitment to provide a quality public education for every student.

To meet the challenges of the 21st century, we must transform the system by demanding sweeping changes that make high dropout rates in high schools and persistent achievement gaps for poor and minority students totally unacceptable.

We must fix a political environment that fails to support schools, leading to increased class sizes and cuts to critical academic programs.

We also must work to dispel the myth that unions can't work with administrators, or that parents and families can't work with schools. The commitment of teachers and educators in priority schools proves these myths wrong every day in the districts where you work.

Now we are taking our collaboration to the next level, examining everything we do, figuring out how we can improve our practice and our policies to transform public education, to institute real reform that is student centered.

When we address change, we have to focus on significant and sustainable improvement. This is the mission of the Priority Schools Campaign, and we are starting to see positive results.

There is a great sense of anticipation about this Forum. To have such a diverse set of stakeholders together on a common agenda, sharing experiences directly related to almost everyone in the room, is a rare opportunity. NEA is committed to taking advantage of that opportunity and we have dedicated some unique technical resources and talented staff to facilitating and sharing the work over these several days and beyond.

Thank you for your commitment to the job ahead, for your time and your attention to each other, for your stubborn belief in the power of collaboration. But most of all, thank you for your commitment to the students we all serve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dennis Van Roekel". The signature is written in a cursive style and is enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

Dennis Van Roekel
President, National Education Association

Priority Schools Campaign

Changes, Challenges and Collaboration

An NEA Priority Schools Campaign (PSC) Forum

November 10 – 12, 2011
New Orleans, Louisiana

Wednesday, November 9

3:30 p.m. Registration Galerie Booth

Thursday, November 10

6:00 a.m. Registration Carondelet Foyer

7:00 a.m. Breakfast Bissonett Ballroom

8:00 a.m. Welcome, Introductions/Agenda Review Carondelet Ballroom

Dennis Van Roekel, President
National Education Association

John Stocks, Executive Director
National Education Association

8:45 a.m. **The Role of Community Engagement in Sustaining School Transformation**

Presiding: Joyce Powell, Executive Committee
National Education Association

Speaker: Dr. Warren Simmons, Executive Director
Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University

10:45 a.m. Work Session 1: Whole Team Focus
What Do Our Data Tell Us?

12:15 p.m. Lunch Bissonett Ballroom

Virtual Learning Community

Presiding: Greg Johnson, Executive Committee
National Education Association

Speaker: Jennifer Locke, Senior Policy Analyst
NEA Teacher Quality

Speaker: Dr. Melissa Rasberry, Director of Project Management
Center for Teaching Quality

1:45 p.m. Work Session 2: **What is your role in sustaining school reform efforts?
How can the NEA help you?** Preservation Hall

3:30 p.m. Day 1 Wrap Up Carondelet Ballroom

4:30 p.m. Priority Schools Campaign Partners' Fair and Reception Bissonett Ballroom

7:30 p.m. Adjourn

Friday, November 11

7:00 a.m.	Registration	Carondelet Foyer
7:00 a.m.	Breakfast	Bissonett Ballroom
8:00 a.m.	Convene for the Day/Agenda Review	Carondelet Ballroom
8:30 a.m.	Leadership that Improves Learning Results: Who, What, and How	Carondelet Ballroom
	Presiding: Princess Moss, Executive Committee National Education Association	
	Speaker: Dr. Joseph F. Johnson, Jr., Executive Director National Center for Urban School Transformation at San Diego State University	
10:00 a.m.	Team Presentations: Promising Practices in School Reform	Preservation Hall
	Belmont High School, Dayton, Ohio	
	Oak Hill Elementary School, High Point, North Carolina	
	Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation, Evansville, Indiana	
	– Glenwood Middle School	
	– McGary Middle School	
	– Evansville Elementary School	
	West Seattle Elementary School, Seattle, Washington	
	Des Moines North High School, Des Moines, Indiana	
	Totem Middle School, Marysville, Washington	
12:15 p.m.	Lunch	Bissonett Ballroom
	How Boys and Girls Clubs Can Help Your Students	
	Phoebe L. Bailey, Director of Education Programs Boys & Girls Club of America	
1:45 p.m.	Open Café: Resources for Sustaining Success	Carondelet Ballroom Preservation Hall 9&10
1:45 p.m.	Teaching that Improves Learning Results	Preservation Hall 2
	Speaker: Dr. Joseph F. Johnson, Jr., Executive Director National Center for Urban School Transformation at San Diego State University	
	<i>* Admission to this session is by ticket only</i>	
3:15 p.m.	Work Session 3: What have you learned so far that will help you support sustained success at your school site?	
4:00 p.m.	Day 2 Wrap Up	Carondelet Ballroom
5:00 p.m.	Screening of <i>The Mitchell 20</i>	Bissonett Ballroom
	Kathy Wiebke, Executive Director Arizona K-12 Center	
7:00 p.m.	Adjourn	

Saturday, November 12

7:00 a.m.	Registration	Carondelet Foyer
7:00 a.m.	Breakfast	Bissonett Ballroom
8:00 a.m.	Convene for the Day/Agenda Review	Carondelet Ballroom
8:30 a.m.	The Obama Administration's Continuing Agenda to Support and Improve Priority Schools Presiding : John Stocks, Executive Director National Education Association Speaker: Jo Anderson, Senior Advisor to the Secretary U.S. Department of Education	
10:00 a.m.	Family/School Community Partnerships for Sustaining School Success Warlene Gary, Education Consultant Bob Witherspoon, Education Consultant	
12:00 p.m..	Lunch NEA's Bully Free Pledge	Bissonette Ballroom
1:15 a.m.	Work Session 4: The Current Reality and Future Predictions for School Improvement Grants (SIG) Jason Snyder, Deputy Assistant Secretary U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education	Carondelet Ballroom
2:30 p.m.	Policies that Support and Sustain School-Based Reform Presiding: Earl Wiman, Executive Committee National Education Association Speaker: Mary Jane Morris, Executive Director Consortium for Educational Change	
3:15 p.m.	Wrap up and Evaluation	
4:00 p.m.	Adjourn	
4:30 p.m.	Adhoc Organizing Meeting: Beginning the Movement	Carondelet Room

Priority Schools Campaign

ADVOCACY

The Union's Role in School Transformation

The National Education Association (NEA) is committed to transforming the nation's persistently low-performing, priority schools into great public schools for all students.

Through our six-year Priority Schools Campaign—our title for these schools which we consider a national priority—we will partner with our state and local affiliates to assist priority schools identified by the U.S. Department of Education. The Campaign began in fall 2009 and will run through 2015-16.

Increasing Student Achievement

NEA's Priority Schools Campaign rests on an evidence-based set of measures that increase student achievement—performance and attainment (e.g., high school graduation):¹

- A strong partnership between the school and students' families;
- An investment in increasing the skills and effectiveness of the school staff; and
- Community-provided social and health services for students and their families.

In addition our experience tells us that another important measure is:

- District/union collaboration

By working with our state and local affiliates to create these partnerships, secure additional investment in educators' professional development, and engage community agencies and organizations, we are confident that the NEA will help raise student achievement in priority schools. Here are examples of NEA affiliate-supported initiatives which have done just that.

Hamilton County, Tennessee: Support in part by a grant from the NEA Foundation, this union-involved, multi-year project has cut achievement

gaps in reading between white and ethnic-minority middle school students by more than half (from 23.9 percent in 2004 to 10.7 percent in 2004.). These results were due in part to:

- A partnership with Center for Teaching Quality to increase the number of teachers in the district who are certified by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards;
- Ongoing professional development designed and delivered by educators who are familiar with the needs of the district's diverse students; and
- Strong connections between teachers' planning/instruction and students' learning, based on careful evaluation of students' classroom work and test performance.

Compadres in Education, Putnam City Schools, Oklahoma: Beginning with community conversations organized by the local union, this largely Hispanic community has improved student achievement (as measured by state test scores and college entry), increased family involvement in their children's education, and provided learning opportunities in the community for students who were likely to drop out. This union-initiated, community-based effort:

- Raises the educational aspirations and achievement of Hispanic students from immigrant and low-income families with limited knowledge of English;
- Uses private sector and other community resources to enhance learning opportunities for both parents and students at school and in the community.

Say Yes to Education, Syracuse, New York: Inspired by the Say Yes to Education Foundation, a coalition of community partners (including the local union) decided to dramatically alter the life course of 26,000 students in this urban school

district. The result is a city-wide model that removes one of the most significant financial obstacle for low-income, inner-city children and their families—the high cost of a quality post-secondary education. Syracuse Say Yes to Education:

- Fully funds the cost of high-quality post-secondary education;
- Provides students with individual growth plans, tutoring; diagnostic testing and monitoring; after-school and summer school enrichment; mentoring; internships, and social, emotional, health support for themselves and their families; and
- Creates a network of accredited post-secondary institutions committed to accepting, retaining and graduating qualified Say Yes students.

“Transforming” Schools

As the federal Race to the Top competition illustrates, there is increasing acknowledgement that unions have a serious and legitimate role in school transformation.

As a practical matter, school districts implementing any of four federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) models (“restart,” “closure,” “turnaround,” and “transformation”) will be required to comply with state and local laws, including state teacher tenure and public sector bargaining laws, as well as collective bargaining agreements.

The fundamental question for us remains: What should unions bring to efforts to “transform” priority schools?

Our answer: Flexibility, problem-solving, and commitment that emanate from a strong, collaborative relationship between school districts and local unions. We believe collaboration is the cornerstone of the unions’ productive role in school transformation. Here are examples of such collaboration:

CommPACT Schools Program, Connecticut: NEA’s state affiliate is a co-founder of this five-year transformation effort in eight schools in the

state’s poorest cities. CommPACT schools have documented improvements in achievement, greater family involvement, and enhanced school ownership in their communities. Each CommPACT school:

- Creates committed partners in—community members, parents, administrators, children, and teachers;
- Attracts and retains excellent teachers because they participate fully in school-level decisions that affect their students; and
- Uses research-based, effective practices that are appropriate for each school.

Empowerment Schools, Clark County, Nevada: The local union is one of three employee organizations that supported, and agreed to contract waivers, to create the Clark County School District Empowerment Schools.

Since 2006-07, 17 schools have become empowerment schools; 11 additional schools will join the network in 2010-11. Student achievement has increased more than in comparison schools, according to an independent evaluation. Each empowerment school:

- Creates a team of teachers, administrators, educational support staff, students, parents, and community members that establishes school priorities and decides how the school operates;
- Selects the instructional programs and materials, assessment practices, and daily schedule best suited to their students’ needs, within the parameters provided by the state and district; and
- Hires, retains and rewards educators with up to a two percent raise for meeting school-wide student achievement and school environment targets by the end of the academic year.

For More Information

Visit <http://neaprioritieschools.org>

ⁱ Berliner, D.C. (Nov. 6, 2006). Our impoverished view of educational reform. *Teachers College Record*, 108(6), 949-995; Rothstein, R. (2004). *Class and schools*. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.



School Turnaround

VOLUME II, ISSUE I

SUMMER 2011

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Introducing the School Turnaround Learning Community

We have a big announcement from our school turnaround team this month: the launch of the **School Turnaround Learning Community (STLC)**, an online community of practice for state, district, and school leaders implementing school turnarounds.

The STLC provides one-stop access to resources on school turnaround, and it promotes and facilitates sharing across states and districts to deepen learning on the issue over time. Available resources on the STLC include research-based practices and practical examples from states, districts, and schools inventing on-the-ground solutions. The STLC

also facilitates regular activities such as training, discussions, and Q&A sessions with experts on school turnaround implementation.

We know from our visits to different SIG schools and talking with superintendents and principals across the country that

there's a great need for this kind of platform to share information and to continue to grow as professionals together. We encourage those of you who haven't signed up for the community to do so and ask that you share your feedback and suggestions on how to make the STLC even more useful to your work. We at the Department are truly excited to make this resource available to you. Most of all, we look forward to joining this community with you and learning about all the wonderful, innovative work you are doing in your schools every day.



*Thelma Meléndez de Santa Ana,
Assistant Secretary*

To join the STLC, visit www.schoolturnaroundsupport.org.

Spotlight on Nevada: Monitoring the Implementation of SIG

The "dynamic duo" – that's what Sue Moulden-Horton, who oversees School Improvement Grants (SIG) for Nevada, calls the team that has created a successful monitoring system to help oversee SIG implementation across the state. The partnership consists of staff from the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) and the Southwest Comprehensive Center at WestEd, who worked together to create a handbook and a framework for evaluating the progress districts and schools were making in their turnaround efforts.

For Moulden-Horton, the decision to partner with WestEd was easy.

"Due to the fact that the NDE does not have the capacity to work with all of our schools, we

needed to reach out to our comprehensive center to assist us in this process," she said.

Nevada is home to 17 school districts. Three districts – Washoe County, Clark County, and Carson City – applied for SIG grants, and Nevada awarded grants to 10 schools, creating its first SIG cohort.

To help monitor the implementation of SIG at these schools, Moulden-Horton turned to an online monitoring tool originally created by WestEd in 2004 to help Utah improve its Title I monitoring efforts. Since then, WestEd has made the tool available for all states served by the Southwest Comprehensive Center.

"Each state uses the tool differently, because it has a

monitoring side and a planning side. Nevada had only used the monitoring side ... but after lots of talking about monitoring SIG and how we were going to do this work, we said to ourselves, 'why don't we have our SIG schools use the planning side?'" said Moulden-Horton.

In addition to the online tool, WestEd and the state produced an evaluation handbook that was developed for SIG based on the work by Dean Fixsen and Karen Blase. Moulden-Horton says the handbook helped provide the framework and a starting point for the overall monitoring plan. NDE used the handbook throughout the first year of the SIG program; a revised, lessons-learned version will be released in July.

Continued on page 2



“But now, after the first year of working with schools and districts, I really believe that SIG is one of the best programs that has ever come out.”

- Dr. Moulden-Horton,
Nevada Department of
Education



About Charlotte Danielson

Charlotte Danielson is an educational consultant based in Princeton, N.J., who has worked on teacher evaluation systems for the past 10 years. She has taught at all levels, from kindergarten through college, and has worked as an administrator, a curriculum director, and a staff developer. In her consulting work, Danielson has specialized in aspects of teacher quality and evaluation, curriculum planning, performance assessment, and professional development. She was a featured speaker on teacher evaluation systems at the Regional Capacity Building Conferences this Spring.

Spotlight on Nevada

Continued from page 1

Monitoring SIG Schools

The first step in monitoring the progress of Nevada’s SIG schools began with bringing all 10 schools into NDE.

“We put them in front of the computer, trained them on how to use the planning system, and had them enter their SIG plans, budgets, and all other information into the tool,” said Moulden-Horton.

Once the information was in place, Moulden-Horton was able to go into the system at any time and keep in touch with the districts and schools without having to physically travel to the sites. She tracked the progress of each SIG school and left comments for each site to address. The districts and schools, in turn, used the system

to respond to any inquiries from Moulden-Horton, update their status on a particular goal, and upload evidence and other documents to show the work that was happening on the ground.

In addition to online monitoring of schools, Moulden-Horton and a WestEd staff member visit each of the SIG schools four times over the course of the year. The team spends half a day at each school, interviewing principals, coaches, and other trainers hired with SIG funds to work with the teachers. The team holds teacher focus groups with a different group of teachers each visit.

The team also spends half a day interviewing district leaders and staff. In such instances, the team offers advice and resources from WestEd and other organizations like the Center for Innovation and Improvement, and suggestions for improvement. After the visit, the team creates a report that details accomplishments, observations, next steps, and a ranking score

based on the indicator rubric in the evaluation handbook. The scores are based on how well the district or school is implementing its SIG plan.

Moulden-Horton admits that it can be a struggle for districts to see their scores based on the rubric, but she says that districts have not been reluctant to make changes based on the feedback provided through the visits.

For example, said Moulden-Horton, “[in our first visit to one district], we asked the staff, ‘how do you know if your coaches and your principal are doing a good job? Where’s the data?’ Well, they didn’t have any. So I said that we needed to come up with a plan, and asked district staff if they’ve ever thought of doing 360 degree evaluations.”

To read the full article, visit:
<http://www.ed.gov/Spotlight-on-Nevada-SIG>.

Developing Effective Teacher Evaluation Systems

A Conversation with Charlotte Danielson

Note: This article does not constitute an endorsement by the Department of Education (ED). The interview is the first of several resources that ED plans to share in the future on teacher evaluation systems. More resources will be available at www.schoolturnaroundsupport.org.

ED: What makes a teacher evaluation system effective, and why is it so difficult for schools and districts to put effective systems into place?

Charlotte Danielson (CD): The bottom line, I’ve discovered, is that when you do this work [of teacher evaluations] well, it produces growth for teachers. I’ve worked across the country and around the world trying to help people do this work well by developing training and

helping them design systems. Specifically, the procedures that you use [to evaluate teachers] must be ones that do what we know can produce teacher learning. Now, this is not easy to do. Just because we know how to do it doesn’t mean it’s easy.

One problem people point to is that there’s no time to do it well. To some degree, that’s true. In your typical teacher evaluation system, it’s mostly the principals and some assistant principals who do evaluations. But these leaders have to do other things – they have to manage day-to-day operations and handle other issues which have the advantage of being of more immediate concern. Some schools choose to get around this by delegating work out – either the management piece

or the evaluations piece.

But what I’ve found is that it doesn’t take any longer to implement a teacher evaluation system well than to do it poorly. Most schools, however, just don’t know how to do it well.

ED: What are the first steps that SIG schools and districts should take when re-thinking their teacher evaluation systems?

CD: First, there needs to be an intense dialogue with faculty members about what constitutes good teaching. They need to develop a shared understanding of what is good practice.

To read the full interview, visit:
<http://www.ed.gov/Teacher-Evaluation-Systems>.

NEA Partners with SIG Schools in Priority Schools Campaign

In 2009, more than 9,000 educators attending NEA’s representative assembly responded to President Obama’s policy on turning around low-performing schools by voting to direct NEA’s resources toward transforming struggling schools. As a result, the Priority Schools Campaign was born.

“NEA seized on the public policy window afforded by the [Obama] Administration’s School Improvement Grant program to leverage our resources as a complement,” said Sheila Simmons, the director of the NEA Priority Schools Campaign.

Today, the NEA is working directly with 35 schools implementing School Improvement Grants (SIG) in 25 districts across the country, providing intensive technical assistance to schools and districts as well as providing other resources to support the success of school turnarounds. Each of NEA’s priority schools has a two-year plan for improvement that was co-created with local and state union affiliates, the district, and the NEA. The union also provides strategic and on-the-ground support at no cost on matters such as educator practice and professional development, family and community engagement, communications support, and collective bargaining.



“It may be a shock to those stuck on so-called conventional wisdom, but unions aren’t obstructionists; in fact, we are helping to lead the way!” said Simmons. “Partnerships between schools, districts, and

educators may be surprising, but make no mistake – the Priority Schools Campaign is changing the game and moving the reform conversation.”

The Making of the Priority Schools Campaign

With the support of the NEA Foundation, NEA created a school-based, operationalized framework for the Priority Schools Campaign that focuses the organization’s support in three areas:

1. Support and advocacy for priority

schools as they implement SIG, including professional development, school visits, and local advocacy on behalf of the schools.

2. Organizational capacity building to improve leadership skills of teachers and school leaders, and to increase collaboration among the superintendent, the district, and the leadership of the local union.
3. Engagement and outreach to better involve the community and to successfully communicate the successes of each school as it undergoes turnaround.

While NEA started with 15 target states and 300 schools, it narrowed its focus to a smaller group of schools and states to distill best practices. In each of the 31 Priority Schools, the NEA has a team member working directly with the local union president and staff. Working with all local stakeholders, the team creates a two-year plan for the school built around the three components of NEA’s framework for support.

To read the full article, visit: www.ed.gov/NEA-Partners-with-SIG-Schools.

SIG Grant Invested in Teachers, Technology at Rural Turnaround

By John White, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Rural Outreach at the U.S. Department of Education

This article originally appeared as a blog post on the [Department’s blog](#).

Teachers and administrators in the rural village of DePue, Ill. – more than 100 miles southwest of Chicago – are connecting with their colleagues and students in new and exciting ways as they lead the difficult work of turning around academic achievement in their local high school.

Like many who traveled to this month’s federal 2011 Midwest Regional School Improvement Grant Capacity-Building Conference in Chicago, the DePue School District team is investing heavily in teacher and administrator training to improve instruction. With help from the Department of Education’s School Improvement Grants, it is also deploying the latest technologies to provide students and adults with a new world of learning opportunities.

Robert Libka, who leads a transformation team of 10 educators at DePue High School, used Skype to connect with a teacher in

Indonesia during a recent professional development workshop. “It was 1 a.m. her time and she was interested enough in our work to log-in,” said Libka, adding that he wants DePue teachers to know their work is important and can have global impact. Technologies such as Skype can improve collaboration for rural educators and reduce their sense of isolation.

English teacher Mary Flor uses an interactive white board to guide her class of seniors to research on poetry classics. Her students use their laptops to dive deeper into the material than would be possible with only a text book. These new tools are being used to enrich classroom discussions through wireless Internet at school, which is the only online access available to some DePue students. DePue is also using technology to give its students a head start for college. Many of

them are the first in their families to attend college. It offers college-level coursework to its students online through a partnership with nearby Illinois Valley Community College.



Teacher Tim Stevens uses

computer software to help students prepare for the ACT college entrance exam, which is mandatory for all 11th-graders in Illinois as a part of its state assessment. The individually paced instruction has helped some students boost both their scores and their confidence in going on to college.

A transformation is under way at DePue High School – one that is designed to prepare every student for success in college and the career of their choice.

Extending Learning Time for Student Success

An Interview with Ron Karsen, Principal of Dayton Street School in Newark, N.J.

The Department of Education (ED): Explain your model for extended learning time. How did you come to this model, and why do you think it has been successful?

Principal Ron Karsen (RK): I've been an educator for quite a few years. I've worked in a high school, elementary school, and at the central office. Throughout my work, it's always been assumed that students will achieve more if they have more time in class. We tried things like afterschool and Saturday and morning programs. But when I looked at the outcomes-based data, I saw that we didn't get the biggest bang with that kind of approach. There was just a whole litany of variables that worked against what these programs were trying to achieve through more learning time.

When we received the SIG funds, we were awarded a nice chunk of money. So we sat down as a school community with all the stakeholders and set some goals for ourselves. The first and most important goal is student achievement. To get there, I needed to put highly effective teachers in front of my kids every day who could teach written curriculum and align it to spoken curriculum. We wanted to make sure we had sound instructional practices. Of course, this was easier to say than do, especially when the teachers were leaving at 3 p.m.

We decided that we needed to build in more time for content areas during the day and also support teachers and help build their content capacity. To build in more time, we changed the whole school day: now, it's from 8:35 a.m. to 4:35 p.m. every day. We doubled the time for math, doubled the time for language arts, and ensured that students had the opportunity to take an hour of science and social studies every day.

Now that I had more time for my kids in the classroom, I thought, how do I support teachers? With extended time and the addition of support staff, we were able to provide more time for teachers away from the classroom. The extended learning schedule gives teachers an additional three hours a week for collaborative planning, both horizontally and vertically. Teachers have more time to meet, and we built in content-based, job-embedded professional development. We have coaches, master teachers from Seton Hall University, and two content practitioners who spend time with every teacher, planning with them, doing demo lessons, and reflection sessions – it's built so that teachers become practitioners.

In summary, throughout the year, we give kids extra time, support for teachers, and time for planning for teachers. We build professional learning

communities, engage in content-based dialogue, and monitor teachers more frequently with spot observations from the administration. It's only been one year, so we are in the early stages of transformation.



ED: What is the buy-in currently among teachers for these changes? How did you encourage buy-in?

RK: Last year, when we applied for the grant, we talked through the components of the grant and asked each teacher about extending learning time. Out of the entire staff, only two people couldn't do it – and that was because of personal reasons or obligations.

My first year at the school, we spent a lot of time on building the climate and the culture. It made buy-in of the changes for SIG easier.

To read the full interview, visit: www.ed.gov/Extending-Learning-Time.



The Department of Education is focused on promoting student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by

fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access. The Office of Elementary and Secondary Education strives to enhance educational opportunities and equity for all America's children and families as well as improve the quality of teaching and learning by providing leadership, technical assistance, and financial support.

Call for Submissions: Share your SIG Success Stories

Across the country, there are close to 1,000 schools implementing one of the four intervention models under SIG. In just under a year, many of these schools have seen encouraging growth in leading indicators as well as transformations in school culture and climate. The Department of Education believes these stories must be shared widely – to highlight successes, to inspire colleagues, and to validate the work being done in your communities.

We are calling on all educators who are undertaking school turnarounds to make your story known by sharing with us the positive changes you are seeing in your schools and districts. Specifically, we are asking states and districts to submit names and contact information of schools that are making improvements under the SIG grant. Your school may then be featured in an upcoming School Turnaround Newsletter.

Please submit the name of the school, contact information, and a brief summary of school highlights to school.improvement.grants@ed.gov. We look forward to hearing back from you!

Starving America's Public Schools

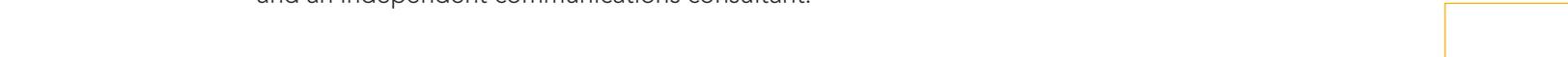
How Budget Cuts and
Policy Mandates are Hurting
our Nation's Students

Starving America's Public Schools



How Budget Cuts and
Policy Mandates are Hurting
our Nation's Students

This report was authored by Jeff Bryant, associate fellow, Campaign for America's Future. Bryant is a former front page blogger for OpenLeft.com and an independent communications consultant.



CAMPAIGN FOR AMERICA'S FUTURE

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The Campaign for America's Future (CAF) is a center for ideas and action that works to build an enduring majority for progressive change. The Campaign advances a progressive economic agenda and a vision of the future that works for the many, not simply the few. The Campaign is leading the fight for America's priorities—for good jobs and a sustainable economy, and for strengthening the safety net.



Great Public Schools for Every Student

The National Education Association is the nation's largest professional employee organization, representing 3.2 million elementary and secondary teachers, higher education faculty, education support professionals, school administrators, retired educators, and students preparing to become teachers.

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Executive Summary

The Crisis in American Public Schools Is Not What You Think



Critics of America’s public schools always seem to start from the premise that the pre-K–12 public education system in this country is failing or in crisis. In fact, as the renowned education historian Diane Ravitch recently noted in an article in *The Saturday Evening Post*, this perpetual state of “crisis” in American public schools goes back a long way, “at least the past half-century.” The claims are that student scores on international tests are middling at best and that the future of the nation is in peril “because other nations have higher scores.”¹

This crisis mentality is in stark contrast to years of survey research showing that Americans generally give high marks to their local schools. Going back to 1984, Phi Delta Kappa International and Gallup surveys have found that the populace holds their neighborhood schools in high regard. That’s been true every single year—and in fact, this year’s survey found that “Americans, and parents in particular, evaluate their community schools more positively than in any year since” the survey started.²

How could there be such a disconnect between a national narrative about public education and opinions about local schools? It’s not so surprising when you consider that there is a similar phenomenon if you ask Americans to rate their members of Congress. The majority of Americans have a favorable impression of their local Congressional representatives even though they perpetually hold the U.S. Congress as a whole in low regard.

But in regard to perspectives of education, the two contradictory narratives draw on completely different sources of evidence.

Debate about public education on the national level generally draws on evidence from macro-sources of data: scores from standardized testing, reports on the nation’s dropout rates, samplings from various student populations, and comparative assessments in various subject areas. But people get their school news from far more local, personal, and qualitative sources—from hometown newspapers, from local television and radio broadcasts, from neighbors, and from their own personal observations and experiences. It’s this broad and personal information flow that informs their opinions about student progress, school events and activities, and services their schools provide to children and families.

The national data sources obviously add value to the national discussion about reforming and improving public schools, but getting a full and comprehensive view of American public education also requires looking at the information flow and data from the local level.

This report looks at American pre-K–12 public schools—from the perspective of what Americans are reading and hearing in their local newspapers and media

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broadcasts. The intent is to see how this bottom-up view of the system might further inform our discussions about improving and renewing America's public schools.

Sifting through these on-the-ground accounts from local news reports and other sources revealed that there is indeed a growing crisis in America's public schools—one that is far more real and much more dangerous to our nation's children than the prevailing narrative suggests. This particular crisis, evident to some degree in nearly every state in the country, hinges on two factors.

The first factor: New austerity budgets passed by state legislatures are starting to have a huge influence on direct services to children, youth, and families. There is widespread evidence that the education funding cuts are leading to:

- Massive cuts to early childhood education programs (pre-K and kindergarten);
- Huge class sizes in many subjects, reaching levels that are upsetting parents and potentially damaging students' education;
- An end to art, music, physical education, and other subjects considered to be part of a well-rounded education;
- Cuts in specialized programs and/or hefty fees for them. Some of these programs serve students with developmental issues or those who need more individualized attention. They also include extra-curricular activities such as band and sports as well as academic offerings in science, foreign language, technology, and Advanced Placement subjects.

The second factor: As public schools are grappling with these severe budget cuts to programs, they also are facing enormous pressure to transfer tax dollars to targets outside traditional public education. New policy mandates at the federal and state levels are forcing public school systems to redirect tax dollars meant for public schools to various privately held concerns such as charter schools, private and religious schools, and contractors and companies tasked with setting up new systems for testing and accountability.

This report confines its attention to the emerging crisis in K–12 education only; although, the authors acknowledge that similar trends and issues are affecting higher education as well. Furthermore, this report focuses on five states—Arizona, Florida, North Carolina, Ohio, and Pennsylvania—that perhaps epitomize the current crisis in K–12 education systems.

The analysis in this report compels the authors to conclude that the debate and discussion about public education policy must both acknowledge the new realities in American public schools and focus attention on the issue of adequately funding programs that serve all of America's public school students. The report also recommends that states provide regulatory relief to local districts in order to stanch the transfer of public education funds to privately held entities.



New austerity budgets passed by state legislatures are starting to have a huge influence on direct services to children, youth, and families.... This report confines its attention to the emerging crisis...in five states—Arizona, Florida, North Carolina, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

Introduction



Imagine it's your child's first day of elementary school and you find out that all art, music, and physical education programs have been eliminated, the teachers have been dismissed, and the programs will not be replaced.

Imagine being a working parent on a tight budget and being told that your five-year-old can no longer attend full-day kindergarten—that the program has been cut to a half-day program and you will have to pay significantly more in tuition or fees.

Imagine your teenager has set a goal of attending college on an athletic scholarship, but the school board just eliminated that particular sports program.

Imagine that the high school your son or daughter attends has stopped offering the advanced classes that are needed to get into a particular college or university.

These are not hypothetical examples, farfetched ideas, or isolated scenarios. Parents and students are facing these very concerns. Schools across the country are being forced to cut back on essentials, and these drastic cut-backs are diluting the quality of education that many students are receiving. Parents and students in some places hardly recognize their schools because they look and feel very different from the past.

In state after state, public schools are cutting services, shutting down programs, and charging extra fees for academic and other learning opportunities that American families value and consider part of a public education.

Why is this happening now? Most state legislatures have just passed new state budgets that are having huge negative effects on public education in general and K–12 school systems in particular. These austere budgets are creating a widespread funding crisis throughout the nation's public schools, according to *Education Week*.³

And even as state education funds are disappearing, public schools are being asked to respond to expensive new policy mandates for questionable items: more standardized testing, unproven evaluation methods, and brand new systems to funnel public education tax dollars into charter schools, private schools, and privately held education service providers.

This one-two punch to the nation's public schools means that children everywhere are losing essential learning opportunities when schools lay off staff, cut back programs, reduce course offerings, and charge families, already being hit hard financially, extra fees to cover school expenses. In the meantime, the tax dollars that could be used to restore these direct services to children and families instead are being transferred, because of policy mandates, to private concerns that are of questionable value to the public.

Parents and students in some places hardly recognize their schools because they look and feel very different from the past. In state after state, public schools are cutting services, shutting down programs, and charging extra fees for academic and other learning opportunities....

The Purpose of this Report

The objectives of this report are to:

- Raise awareness of the fact that severe state budget cuts are undermining the learning opportunities available to students;
- Document on-the-ground effects that these austerity budgets are having on the services that schools traditionally provide to students and families;
- Ask questions about policy mandates that are diverting public tax dollars intended for public education into new education initiatives that have little or no record of success;
- Suggest alternatives that could reverse the effects of this emerging education crisis at the federal, state, and local levels of government.

In analyzing the data for this report, the following questions were addressed:

- How do severe state budget cuts to K–12 public schools play out in communities, and what are the effects of the austerity measures on students and families in those communities?
- How deep are the cuts, and are there any patterns to them?
- What is the rationale for the cuts, are they necessary, and to what extent do they reflect the will of the people?
- Why are public school funds being steered away from programs and direct services to students—and shifted toward things such as teacher merit pay systems, more standardized testing, and charter schools and school voucher programs, which are more likely to be in the private domain?

Is it wise to spend more on public education during a recession?

As recently as 2008, the job website careerbuilder.com declared education to be the number 1 recession-proof industry in the U.S.⁴ It may be that the editors at careerbuilder.com bestowed this honor on education because of this country's long record of supporting public schools financially, even during tough times.

In fact, according to the journal *Education Next*, per-pupil spending in the U.S. has declined only four times since 1929 and “significantly only twice, once during the Great Depression and once in the midst of World War II.”⁵

The resiliency of education spending in down economies makes good financial and economic sense, because, as many analysts have noted, once issues of race and poverty have been factored out, more public spending on schools is associated with higher scores on international assessments of achievement.⁶

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School finance expert Bruce Baker, associate professor in the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers University, has cited numerous rigorous empirical studies of state school finance reforms and finds, in general, “that increased funding levels have been associated with improved outcomes, and that more equitable distributions of resources have been associated with more equitable distributions of outcomes.”⁷

Also, it makes sense that education spending has been so resilient because the majority of Americans clearly support this kind of investment in our future. In fact, according to one of the most respected and widely cited surveys of trends in spending priorities—the 2010 General Social Survey conducted by the University of Chicago—education remains one of the top spending priorities of Americans and that has been the case since 1990.⁸

Cuts to Public Schools Are Deep and Wide

Yet despite historical precedent, empirical evidence of the economic value of continuing to invest in education, and public support for keeping public schools adequately funded during difficult economic times, public education budgets across the U.S. currently are being hit with severe cuts.

As a recent *Los Angeles Times* article notes, education spending is taking a beating nationwide. The authors cite a study from the National Association of State Budget Officers that finds K–12 public education budget cuts will “reduce, or eliminate, personnel and programs vital to the most vulnerable populations: lower-income and minority students.”⁹

The major source of the widespread education rollback, as pointed out by a recent report from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, is the “unnecessarily deep spending cuts” enacted by state legislatures. The Center points to 34 states plus the District of Columbia that have already reduced K–12 public education spending, citing numerous examples of how severe the cuts are (see sidebar).¹⁰

Because state tax dollars are the primary source of support for public schools, there is little doubt that these cuts will have significant effect on school-aged children and families.

According to...the 2010 General Social Survey... education remains one of the top spending priorities of Americans and that has been the case since 1990.

State Budget Cuts in the New Fiscal Year are Unnecessarily Harmful

Published: July 28, 2011

- Arizona is cutting \$183 million from K–12 education spending in the coming year and continues another \$377 million in cuts that were implemented over the previous three years, bringing the total cut relative to pre-recession levels to \$560 million, or \$530 per pupil.
- Colorado is cutting state spending on K–12 education by \$347 per pupil compared to last school year.
- Florida is cutting spending on K–12 education by \$542 per pupil compared with last year. The state also has cut \$13 million from the state’s school readiness program that gives low-income families access to high quality early care for their children. The cut means over 15,000 children currently participating in the program will no longer be served. Florida also reduced by 7 percent the per student allocation to providers participating in the state’s universal prekindergarten program for four-year-olds, which will mean that classrooms have more children per teacher.
- Georgia cut state and lottery funds for pre-kindergarten by 15 percent, which will mean shortening the pre-K school year from 180 to 160 days for 86,000 four-year-olds, increasing class sizes from 20 to 22 students per teacher, and reducing teacher salaries by 10 percent.
- Iowa reduced state funding for its statewide pre-kindergarten program for four-year-olds by 9 percent from last year. Schools serving these children will now receive fewer dollars per child and may have to make up for lost funds with reduced enrollment or higher property taxes. The state is also cutting back support for a community-based early childhood program that provides resources to parents with children from birth to age five, including a cut of nearly 30 percent to preschool tuition assistance.
- Illinois is cutting general state aid for public schools by \$152 million, on top of a loss of \$415 million in expired federal recovery dollars—a total decrease of 11 percent. The budget takes \$17 million from the state fund that supports early childhood education efforts, which may result in an estimated 4,000 fewer children receiving preschool services and 1,000 fewer at-risk infants and toddlers receiving developmental services. The budget also eliminates state funding for advanced placement courses in school districts with large concentrations of low-income students, mentoring programs for teachers and principals, and an initiative providing targeted, research-based instruction to students with learning difficulties.
- Kansas cut the basic funding formula for K–12 schools by \$232 per pupil, bringing this funding nearly 6 percent below fiscal year 2011 budgeted levels.
- For the third year in a row, Louisiana will fail to fund K–12 education at the minimum amount required to ensure adequate funding for at-risk and special needs students, as determined by the state’s education finance formula. Per student spending will be \$215 below the level set out by the finance formula for FY 2012.
- Michigan is cutting K–12 education spending by \$470 per student.
- Mississippi, for the fourth year in a row, will fail to meet the state’s statutory obligation to support K–12 schools, underfunding school districts by 10.5 percent or \$236 million. The statutory school funding formula is designed to ensure adequate funding for lower-income and underperforming schools. According to the Mississippi Department of Education, the state’s failure to meet that requirement over the past three years has resulted in 2,060 school employee layoffs (704 teachers, 792 teacher assistants, 163 administrators, counselors, and librarians, and 401 bus drivers, custodians, and clerical personnel).
- Missouri is freezing funding for K–12 education at last year’s levels. This means that for the second year in a row, the state has failed to meet the statutory funding formula established to ensure equitable distribution of state dollars to school districts.

- Nebraska altered its K–12 school aid funding formula to freeze state aid to schools in the coming year and allow very small increases thereafter, resulting in a cut of \$410 million over two years.
- New Mexico cut K–12 spending by \$42 million (1.7 percent). The governor is requiring school districts to spare “classroom spending” from the cuts, which means greater proportional cuts to other areas of K–12 education like school libraries and guidance counseling. The operating budget of the state education department is being cut by more than 25 percent.
- New York cut education aid by \$1.3 billion, or 6.1 percent. This cut will delay implementation of a court order to provide additional education funding to under-resourced school districts for the third year in a row. Beyond cutting the level of education aid in FY 2012, the budget limits the rate at which education spending can grow in future years to the rate of growth in state personal income.
- North Carolina cut nearly half of a billion dollars from K–12 education in each year of the biennium compared to the amount necessary to provide the same level of K–12 education services in 2012 as in 2011. Both the state-funded prekindergarten program for at-risk four-year-olds and the state’s early childhood development network that works to improve the quality of early learning and child outcomes were cut by 20 percent. The budget also reduces by 80 percent funds for textbooks; reduces by 5 percent funds for support positions, like guidance counselors and social workers; reduces by 15 percent funds for non-instructional staff; and cuts by 16 percent salaries and benefits for superintendents, associate and assistant superintendents, finance officers, athletic trainers, and transportation directors, among others.
- Ohio is cutting state K–12 education funding 7.5 percent this year, a cut of \$400 per student and equivalent to nearly 14,000 teachers’ salaries.
- Oklahoma is cutting funding for school districts by 4.5 percent, and making additional cuts to the Department of Education’s budget. The Department of Education has voted to eliminate adult education programs, math labs in middle school, and stipends for certified teachers, among other things.
- Pennsylvania cut K–12 education aid by \$422 million, or 7.3 percent, bringing funding down nearly to FY 2009 levels. The budget also cuts \$429 million dollars in additional funding that the state provides to school districts to implement effective educational practices (such as high quality pre-kindergarten programs) and maintain tutoring programs, among other purposes. Overall state funding for school districts was cut by \$851 million or 13.5 percent, a cut of \$485 per student.
- South Dakota cut K–12 education by 6.4 percent, for next year, an amount equal to \$416 per student, and 8.8 percent in 2013.
- Texas eliminated state funding for pre-K programs that serve around 100,000 mostly at-risk children, or more than 40 percent of the state’s pre-kindergarten students. The budget also reduces state K–12 funding to 9.4 percent below the minimum amount required by the state law. Texas already has below-average K–12 education funding compared to other states, and this cut would depress that low level even further at a time when the state’s school enrollment is growing. This would likely force school districts to lay off large numbers of teachers, increase class sizes, eliminate sports programs and other extra-curricular activities, and take other measures that undermine the quality of education.
- Utah cut K–12 education by 5 percent, or \$303, per pupil from the prior year’s levels.
- Washington has cut more than \$1 billion from state K–12 education funds designed to reduce class size, extend learning time, and provide professional development for teachers—a reduction equal to \$1,100 per student.
- Wisconsin reduced state aid designed to equalize funding across school districts by \$740 million over the coming two-year budget cycle, a cut of 8 percent. The budget also reduces K–12 funds for services for at-risk children, school nursing, and alternative education.

—“State Budget Cuts in the New Fiscal Year Are Unnecessarily Harmful: Cuts Are Hitting Hard at Education, Health Care, and State Economies,” Erica Williams, Michael Leachman, and Nicholas Johnson, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, July 28, 2011, www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3550

Where School Cuts Hurt Most

This report documents how drastic cuts to education budgets are especially damaging to four education issues that are essential to students' academic and personal development that parents support and that benefit both individuals and society at large.

1. Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education programs are popular with parents, particularly those who work long hours and need affordable day care. The average cost for day care at a center varies quite a bit (depending on where you live), but the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies estimates the U.S. average at \$11,666 per year (\$972 a month).¹¹ Young families find that day care costs typically account for about 20 percent of yearly income.¹²

Clearly, cutting early childhood education is an expensive proposition for families, but the benefits of early childhood programs go well beyond individual family considerations. The value to society of high quality early childhood programs is well documented.¹³ Even current Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke has weighed in on this issue, stating, “Studies find that well-focused investments in early childhood development yield high public as well as private returns,” including short-term payoffs to state budgets and long-term “returns to the overall economy and to the individuals themselves.”¹⁴

Early childhood education also is critically important to children's personal development and future success. A recent *Education Week* article summarizes the massive amount of research on early childhood education in a single sentence: “Evaluations of well-run pre-kindergarten programs have found that children exposed to high-quality early education were less likely to drop out of school, repeat grades, or need special education, compared with similar children who did not have such exposure.”¹⁵

And communities also recognize the value of these kinds of early investments in our young people. A national organization of more than 5,000 law enforcement leaders called “Fight Crime: Invest in Kids” has set up a grassroots initiative based on the finding that “early childhood education programs are among the most powerful weapons to prevent crime and violence.” According to the group's website fightcrime.org, they have urged state government leaders in California, Florida, Kentucky, Montana, Ohio, Tennessee, and elsewhere not to cut early childhood education.

Given the economic and social benefits of early childhood education to individuals and society, it's good education policy, to say nothing about common sense, to help these kinds of programs flourish. Yet funding for early childhood education in the U.S. has been spiraling downward for years. In 2009–2010, states spent \$30 million less than in the previous year, giving \$700 less per child than what was spent in 2001–2002 and enrolling only 26 percent of four-year-olds nationwide. Ten states

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have eliminated all early childhood programs—and now, new state budgets in Texas, Pennsylvania, California, New Jersey, North Carolina, Florida, Colorado, Michigan, Georgia, and Illinois are all making significant cuts to early childhood programs or eliminating them altogether.¹⁶

2. Class Size

Parents have a unique perspective on the issue of class size because they can see that smaller class sizes make a positive difference in their children's lives. And the public agrees. In fact, in a majority of states, voters have approved legislation that limits class sizes.¹⁷ And parent-teacher associations in many states—including Texas and Florida—have been outspoken in their support for keeping current class size limits, despite strained state budgets.

But there's more than parent insights on the issue of class size—there is a significant body of research confirming the benefits of small class sizes. The most comprehensive study of class size ever conducted, the STAR experiment in Tennessee, found that children who were placed in smaller classes (13-17 students) scored significantly higher on tests, received better grades, and had higher rates of attendance compared to children who were placed in larger class sizes (22-26 students). Furthermore, by the time the children who were placed in smaller classes in early grades got into fourth, sixth, and eighth grades, they were ahead of their peers academically. As those children moved through school, they had lower dropout rates, higher grades, and received better results on their college entrance exams. And the study even found that later in life, they had higher incomes and were more apt to open a 401-k retirement plan.¹⁸

Many school administrators acknowledge the importance of smaller class sizes, so when budgets are slashed, they tend to make reductions in non-teaching positions first. But in the past three years, public schools have lost more than 201,600 jobs.¹⁹ And schools now are facing the prospect of having to shed 250,000 more jobs in 2011-12, many of them full-time teaching positions, which automatically leads to larger class sizes.^{20, 21}

3. Well-Rounded Curriculum

In a recent address to the National PTA, U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan spoke about the importance of students receiving a well-rounded education. "The President and I reject the notion that arts, history, science, writing, foreign language,

...in the past three years, public schools have lost more than 201,600 jobs. And schools now are facing the prospect of having to shed 250,000 more jobs in 2011-12, many of them full-time teaching positions, which automatically leads to larger class sizes.

physical education, geography, and civics are ornamental offerings that can or should be cut from school when times are tough,” he said. “In fact, in the information age, a well-rounded curriculum is not a luxury but a necessity.”²²

He was obviously preaching to the choir here, as most parents and teachers understand that children need a 21st century education that includes classes in the arts, music, health and physical education, social studies, and vocational training.

Here again, the research supports parents’ and teachers’ observations. A report released in 2011 by Common Core, a respected Washington education advocacy organization, confirmed the importance of a well-rounded education.

The report, *Why We’re Behind: What Top Nations Teach Their Students But We Don’t*, examined the curriculum and assessments in nine countries that have outperformed the U.S. on the Program for International Student Assessment, or PISA. The report found that a standard feature of those countries’ school systems is the demand that students receive a broad and diverse education. According to the report, “the common ingredient across these varied nations” was a “dedication to educating their children deeply in a wide range of subjects.”²³

The report concluded, “Too many American schools . . . are by contrast sacrificing time spent on the arts and humanities.”

Since passage of No Child Left Behind, the federal policy that mandated rigid accountability measures for student achievement in reading and math, schools have spent substantially more instructional time preparing for tests in those subjects— at the expense of science, social studies, art, music, and physical education.²⁴ Budget austerity measures can only exacerbate that negative trend.

4. Special Programs for Developmental, Academic, and Non-Academic Needs

Everyone knows that children learn in different ways, at different rates, and face different challenges in the classroom. Some have developmental issues that can affect learning while others face physical or behavioral issues that need to be addressed. Some come to school without having learned to speak English. Some come from difficult homes that provide too little support for learning. Some students struggle with academic work but get great joy out of their abilities in other arenas, such as sports, band, or community service.

Schools have an obligation to work with all of these students and help them achieve. Meeting the needs of our diverse student bodies requires specialized personnel and programs for special education, reading, counseling, English as a second language (ESL), sports, clubs, after-school activities, and service learning.

When school budgets are severely cut, however, these special programs and staff often are the first to go. Many schools are eliminating such popular programs as after-school care, special-interest clubs (academic as well as non-academic), and sports. And increasingly, schools are charging families what are known as pay-to-play fees in order for their children to participate in programs that have always been considered part of the school experience. Some schools are even charging fees for basic academic courses such as foreign languages and “non-core” science and social studies classes, including chemistry, physics, civics, and history.²⁵ These pay-to-play fees can end up costing families thousands of dollars.²⁶



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Austerity, But Not for Everyone

More Public Funds Go to Privately Operated Schools

While the main focus of this report is to chronicle the effects of these severe education budget cuts on students and families, it's important to note that while schools are being forced to slash programs and services, many state governments are allowing and in some instances, encouraging and subsidizing private interests to capitalize on public education.

Charter and private schools, for example, are enjoying robust growth, due to, in part, budget cuts that are causing traditional public schools to cut back on popular services.²⁷ Many governors and state legislators who are behind the draconian cuts to public schools are the very same people who passed and signed laws that increase spending on new programs that favor privately operated charter schools and programs that allow citizens to transfer—through vouchers and tax credits—public funds to private and religious schools.²⁸

The idea of transferring public tax dollars to the private education sector is a trend that has been documented by the non-partisan, non-profit education group ASCD (formerly known as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development). Its recent analysis concluded that nearly \$1 billion is being redirected every year from public schools to the private sector through voucher and tax credit programs.²⁹

According to the American Federation for Children, an advocacy group that supports parental choice in K–12 education, “more than 200,000 children will go ‘back to school’ [in 2011–12] as participants in America’s 26 private school choice programs, spanning 13 states and the District of Columbia.”³⁰

Public tax dollars redirected to charter schools operated by for-profit and not-for-profit individuals and organizations are difficult to trace but no doubt amount to many millions of dollars.

More Public Funds Go to Private Education Contractors and Service Providers

There is another significant area where public education tax dollars are going to private hands—when schools use federal and state education funds to pay private contractors to help implement new federal and state policy mandates. These mandates almost always require schools to expand significantly their use of standardized tests and then build elaborate data systems to track student scores.

Education Week recently reported that nearly every state that participated in the federal Race to the Top (RTTT) program sent out requests for proposals for technical help to address the complexities of RTTT proposals. In fact, every state that

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received RTTT grants—except for Massachusetts— has used 50 percent or more of its RTTT grant money for outside contractors.³¹

Testing companies appear to be among the biggest beneficiaries. Pearson, the company that dominates the test-scoring industry, for example, has seen its revenues from testing grow from \$293 million in 2002 to \$1.64 billion in 2009, according to one source.³²

And even in these austere times, school systems are ramping up the use of standardized testing to ever-higher levels, despite the lack of evidence that increased testing can improve learning. In fact, just the opposite may be the case. As the non-partisan National Center for Fair and Open Testing (FairTest) recently observed, “Two recent studies report striking evidence that [mandatory] exit exams decrease high school completion rates, increase GED test taking, and exacerbate inequalities in educational attainment.”³³

Even so, elected officials at all levels of government are still calling for more testing. They want to add new end-of-year tests in reading and math, new tests during the year (interim testing), pre-tests in the fall, and they want tests in more subjects. Some states have even announced plans to test children before they enter kindergarten.

One has to wonder how parents who are dealing with cutbacks to their children’s education and being asked to pay hefty fees for basic school services would feel—were they aware—about the billions of dollars being sent to private businesses based on a vague idea of collecting student data and so-called value-added measures.



Case Studies: Real life Consequences of Budget Cuts

Arizona, Florida, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Ohio

This reports cites five states that are prime examples of public schools getting hit by a one-two punch of state budget cuts plus expensive new policy mandates. All five states have implemented severe austerity measures that slash public education by billions of dollars.

Yet all five states have been lauded as education reform role models for other states to follow. Three of the five states—Florida, North Carolina, and Ohio—were winners in the 2010 Race to the Top competitive grant challenge and were described by Education Secretary Arne Duncan as examples of “what is possible when adults come together to do the right thing for children.”³⁴ Florida and Ohio have both been promoted by conservative reform enthusiasts, such as the Thomas Fordham Institute, which named them “contestants” for an “Education Reform Idol.”³⁵

And all five states are key players in steering tax money meant for public education to private interests, including charter and private schools and contractors.

Arizona

Arizona is a “cut king,” second only to California in slashing the most from education spending, per pupil, from FY 2008 to FY 2012.³⁶ State lawmakers cut \$183 million from K–12 education in 2011.³⁷

Arizona ranks sixth among states in the amount of public school funds being funneled to private schools. The state redirects \$61 million per year through individual, corporate, and other kinds of tax credit programs.³⁸

Florida

Florida has cut more than \$1 billion from education in its new budget for 2011–12, an almost 8 percent drop that translates to a loss of \$542 per student.³⁹

Florida ranks first among states in the amount of public school tax dollars being sent to private schools. The state redirects \$229 million per year through voucher and corporate tax credit programs.⁴⁰

All five states have implemented severe austerity measures that slash public education by billions of dollars. Yet all five states have been lauded as education reform role models for other states to follow.

North Carolina

Overriding the governor's veto, the North Carolina General Assembly approved a 2011 budget that cut \$800 million in funding for education.⁴¹ The state ranked 47th in spending per pupil in the country in 2010 and likely will slip to 49th for 2011.⁴²

North Carolina currently does not have a voucher or tax credit program open to all its citizens. But the legislature this year passed a bill that for the first time allows the state to send public tax dollars to private schools for families of special needs students. And legislators passed a law to allow an unlimited number of charter schools to operate in the state with much less oversight.⁴³

Ohio

Ohio is cutting state K–12 education funding by \$800 million over the next two fiscal years, 2011–2012 and 2012–2013. The cut amounts to an average of 7.5 percent, which equates to \$400 per student and nearly 14,000 teachers' salaries.⁴⁴

Ohio comes in fourth among states in the amount of public school tax dollars being redirected to private schools. The state redirects \$107 million per year through voucher programs.⁴⁵

Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania's state political leadership passed and approved a new budget this year that cut \$851 million from public schools that will likely lead to, according to the state's teachers' union, increasing class sizes, eliminating programs, laying off teachers, as well as forcing school districts to raise taxes.⁴⁶

Pennsylvania ranks seventh among states in the amount of public school funds being sent to private schools. The state redirects \$52 million per year through various types of tax credit programs.⁴⁷



Photo: Wars

Yes, It Can Get Worse

By the end of the 2011–school year, Arizona’s public schools had enrolled about 1.1 million students in a little over 2,000 schools. Compared with other states, Arizona has one of the worst records with regard to financial support of public schools.

Education Week’s 2011 Quality Counts report gave Arizona a “D+” in the school finance category,⁴⁸ and according to the U.S. Census Bureau, Arizona ranks near the bottom when it comes to per-student education spending.⁴⁹ In 2010, Arizona school districts spent \$300 less per student than in the previous year, and the state was nearly \$2,500 per student below the national spending average.⁵⁰ Then, from 2010 to 2011, in response to these cuts, local schools eliminated more than 10,000 education jobs, including 6,640 teachers.⁵¹

Instead of reversing this troubling downward spiral, in 2011, Arizona lawmakers voted to cut even more spending on K–12 public education, this time by \$183 million, a 7 percent decline.⁵² And again, school districts are being forced to respond by laying off teachers, freezing salaries, increasing class sizes, and closing schools.

The following chart offers examples of how these cuts are affecting services and programs for students and families. Where possible, the chart provides a quantitative and anecdotal account of how the raw numbers agreed to by state legislators have been translated into diminished services in local communities.

Information was not available for every service category due to the differences in how schools report budget outcomes and the gaps in news coverage by local media sources.

These cuts to public education in Arizona are coming at a particularly challenging time—the state is facing growing numbers of students who cost more to educate. From 2000 to 2009, the number of Arizona children living in poverty jumped 42 percent, to 254,000, according to the Census Bureau. The increase in the poverty rate nearly doubled for children under the age of five. And during that same period, the number of public school students with disabilities rose 36 percent, which means that now one out of every eight students is eligible for special education programs and services.⁵³

The outlook for early education in Arizona is particularly bleak. More than half of Arizona’s children under the age of six are from low-income families, and 15 percent have limited English proficiency, which puts the state’s youngest citizens significantly at risk, according to the early childhood education advocacy group Pre-K Now, (preknow.org). Worse, Arizona has a long track record of very limited financial support for pre-K and kindergarten programs. According to Pre-K Now, a coalition of business leaders and early childhood experts helped pass a ballot measure in 2006 that established a dedicated fund to serve children from birth to age five. But in the ensuing years, state leaders kept attempting to divert these resources to fill short-term budget holes. Then in FY 2011, lawmakers eliminated pre-K funding completely, wiping out the dedicated resources voters had insisted on. And to make matters even worse, funds to support full-day kindergarten across the state also were eliminated. As students returned to classrooms this fall, the state was paying only for half-day kindergarten sessions; the extra cost for the full-day program has been shifted onto the backs of parents or must be taken out of local funds such as property taxes.⁵⁴

ARIZONA



The following list of school districts have experienced deep cuts in state funding to education as well, but due to stop-gap measures or because fiscal year planning has yet to be completed, this report has no data to show how these schools will adapt to the consequences of the cuts.

School District	State Cuts
Statewide	\$183 million^a
Phoenix	
Deer Valley	\$11 million ^b
Paradise Valley	\$4.2 million ^a
Tempe-Mesa-Scottsdale	
Gilbert	\$5.4 million ^c
Mesa	\$22 million ^d

Early Childhood Education

Statewide

- Eliminated pre-K funding^e
- Cut funding of kindergarten to half-day only^e

Prescott

- (Cottonwood-Oak, Prescott, Humboldt)
- Eliminated full-day kindergarten (Cottonwood-Oak)^e
 - Cut pre-K program (Prescott)^f

Other

- (Lake Havasu)
- Charged extra fees for full-day kindergarten^g

Class Size

Phoenix

- (Paradise Valley Higley, Deer Valley, Buckeye, Agua Fria, Tolleson, Isaac, Roosevelt)
- Cut more than 30 teaching positions (Higley)^h
 - Reduced teaching force by 56 (Deer Valley)^b
 - Closed 2 elementary schools (Isaac)^a
 - Closed an elementary school (Roosevelt)ⁱ

Prescott

- Closed an elementary school (Cottonwood-Oak)^f
- Cut 24 teaching and staff positions including a 3rd-grade teacher, a 4th-grade teacher, and a 6th-grade teacher (Humboldt)^k

Tempe-Mesa-Scottsdale

- (Tempe, Gilbert, Mesa, Kyrene)
- Closed a middle school (Tempe)^f
 - Eliminated 21 secondary teachers and increased class size at the junior high level from 28 to 30 (Mesa)^d
 - Increased class size by two students in grades K–3 and one student in grades 4–8 (Kyrene)^k

Tucson

- (Tucson, Vail, Flowing Wells)
- Fined \$1.9 million for insufficient instruction time for 7th and 8th graders^l
 - Class sizes reaching 40 (Tucson)^m
 - Increased high school class sizes from 24-29 to 32-35 students (Vail)ⁿ
 - Increased class sizes (Flowing Wells)^m

Well-Rounded Curriculum

Statewide

- Eliminated a statewide program funding courses in career and technical education subjects for 9th graders^o

Phoenix

- Cut 10 teaching positions in physical education, music, art, and library and reduced time students spend on those subjects (Higley)^h

Prescott

- At one school, reduced art, music and physical education faculty to one person (Cottonwood-Oak)^f
- Cut music, art, and physical education in elementary schools (Prescott)^g
- Cut an alternative learning center teacher, a computer/social studies teacher, a health teacher, a industrial technology teacher, and a physical education (Humboldt)^j

Tempe-Mesa-Scottsdale

- Cut art, music, physical education, and library services (Kyrene)^k

Tucson

- Cut geometry, art drama, and photography (Vail)^m

Other

(Lake Havasu)

- Eliminated elementary school art and music^g

Special Programs

Phoenix

- Charged pay-to-play fees for sports: \$100 per sport, \$400 family cap (Agua Fria)^p
- \$100 fee, no family cap (Buckeye)^p
- \$50 per sport, \$200 family cap (Tolleson)^p
- Cut cheerleading (Buckeye)^q

Prescott

- Cut special education paraprofessionals, behavior coaches, and school nurses (Prescott)^r
- Cut one English Language Learner teacher, one ELL aide, and one nurse's aid (Humboldt)^j

Tempe-Mesa-Scottsdale

- Charged high school students to participate in athletics \$100 per sport (Mesa)^d
- Cut an elementary-school teacher serving students in the local hospital (Mesa)^s

Tucson

- Cut elementary school counselors and librarians (Flowing Wells)^l

NOTE: Information in this report relies on the most accurate news reports until September 15, 2011. After the school year is underway, individual schools may readjust and call back or lay off employees. Many school districts are using money made available from the 2010 educator jobs bill. If the 2011 American Jobs Act is not passed, schools will have no federal help to fill in gaps in their state budgets.

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Transferring Public Education Tax Dollars to Private Interests in Arizona

As Arizona slid further down the education finance scale, more tax dollars meant for public schools ended up in private hands. And many traditional public schools across the state reported declining enrollments, in part due to the incentives given to private and charter schools.

A tax credit program enacted by state legislators in 2009 allows individuals and organizations to receive a tax credit either for funding a child's enrollment in or donating to a private school. Tax credits also can be earned by sending students with learning disabilities or those who live in foster care to private schools. Most of the students who benefit from this program already attend religious schools,⁵⁵ which prompted a challenge in court. This year, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled to preserve the program, thereby continuing this transfer of public tax money into private hands.

Arizona is known to be a huge promoter of charter schools. The Center for Education Reform notes on its website that Arizona is “the fastest growing charter state in the nation.” From 2000 to 2007, Arizona charter school enrollments did indeed achieve explosive growth—117 percent.⁵⁶ More recently, from 2005 to 2011, enrollment growth in charters continued to rise (44.2%) and significantly outpaces enrollment growth in the state's traditional public schools (3.4%), according to the Arizona Charter Schools Association. Some 11.5 percent of Arizona's public school students attend charters, up from 7 percent a decade ago. Despite the popularity of charter schools, the Arizona Department of Education's AZ Learns scale, which ranks each public school's academic performance, indicates that traditional public schools outperform their charter counterparts.



Photo: Ebyabe

New Cuts Harm a School System Already in Trouble

The state of Florida has 67 school districts that serve 2.6 million students in the K–12 system. Six of the top 20 largest school districts in the U.S. are located in Florida.

Florida, though, has a troubling record in terms of how the state serves all those school children. The state ranks 50th in the nation in per-capita spending per student, 44th in graduation rate, 47th in teacher pay, and 48th in college entrance exam scores.⁵⁷ As of 2009, Florida ranked 42nd in state spending on education as percentage of total resources. As a state, Florida spends only 3.1 percent of its resources on education.⁵⁸

Despite its education record, Florida’s elected officials this year passed an education budget that slashes funding to K–12 public schools by \$1 billion, an almost 8 percent cut, or about \$542 per student. The state’s contribution to its public schools will be the smallest since 2003.⁵⁹

The following table offers examples of how these cuts are affecting services and programs for students and families. Where possible, the table provides a quantitative and anecdotal account of how the raw numbers agreed to by state legislators have been translated into diminished services in local communities.

Information was not available for every service category. For instance, in the area of early childhood education, news of service cuts were not generally

reported publicly due, in part, to the way Florida administers its pre-K program—the state contracts with private childcare facilities and schools. That said, it should be noted that Florida’s pre-K program is not known for high quality. Nationally, it ranked 34 out of 37 in a recent ranking of state preschool programs when it came to pre-K funding. It met just three of 10 quality benchmarks on the annual report by the National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University.⁶⁰

Also, regarding class size, the table includes some data on teacher layoffs as evidence of increased class sizes. But the majority of Florida districts have avoided mass teacher layoffs by relying on federal EduJobs funds to pay for teaching positions in the 2011–12 school year.⁶¹ School districts had this money on hand because the Florida Senate appropriations chairman had told them to save these funds or an equivalent amount.⁶² These funds will not be around next year.

And even though the state has legal restrictions on class size that are enforceable by fines, Florida lawmakers have passed a law allowing more than 500 courses—including foreign languages and Advanced Placement—to be exempt from these restrictions.⁶³

FLORIDA



The following list of school districts have experienced deep cuts in state funding to education as well, but due to stop-gap measures or because of fiscal year planning has yet to be completed, this report has no data to show how these schools will adapt to the consequences of the cuts.

School District	State Cuts
Statewide	\$1 billion^a
Broward County	\$141.7 million ^a
Orange County	\$80.4 million ^a
Volusia County	\$34.6 million ^a
Seminole County	\$38.5 million ^a
Duval County	\$70.6 million ^a
Miami-Dade County	\$185.7 million ^a
Indian River County	\$9.2 million ^a
Sarasota County	\$38.5 million ^a
Pasco County	\$38.4 million ^a
Hillsborough County	\$100.1 million ^a
Nassau County	\$5 million ^a
Hernando County	\$12.1 million ^a
Pinellas County	\$66.2 million ^a
Osceola County	\$19.5 million ^a
Putnam County	\$6.1 million ^a
Manatee County	\$17 million ^a
Leon County	\$15.6 million ^a
Charlotte County	\$9.7 million ^a
Clay County	\$19.7 million ^a
St. Johns County	\$12.7 million ^a
Palm Beach County	\$88.9 million ^a
Alachua County	\$15.1 million ^a

Early Childhood Education

Statewide

- Cut funds for voluntary pre-kindergarten by about \$20 million, an average of about \$180 per 4-year-old^p

Orange County

- 20 percent of providers are considered “low performing” and need financial assistance to improve^p

Class Size

Statewide

- Increased pre-K class sizes to 20^f
- Dropped number of K–12 subjects exempted from class size caps from 849 to 304^a

Broward County

- Eliminated 1,100 teachers^q
- Cypress Bay High cut 40 teachers^q
- Miramar High cut 30 teachers^q
- Boyd Anderson High cut 29 teachers^q
- South Plantation High cut 27 teachers^b
- Coconut Creek High and Dillard High cut 26 teachers^b

Orange County

- Eliminated more than 1,300 teachers^c

Volusia County

- Eliminated more than 1,500 positions^c
- Closed several elementary schools^c

Seminole County

- Closed Longwood Elementary School^c

Miami-Dade County

- Increased class sizes for AP and other “college-prep” courses from 25 to more than 30^o

Pasco County

- Laid off 516 staff, including 249 instructional positions and 139 instructional support positions^h

Hillsborough County

- Enacted amendment to allow more courses to exceed enrollment capsⁱ

Nassau County

- Cut 39 teachers and 15 paraprofessionals^j

Hernando County

- Cut 10 percent of staffing allocations^k

Pinellas County

- Eliminated 400 jobs, including many teaching positions^r
- At one high school, class sizes for non-core subjects increased from 25 to 30 students, for AP classes from 25 to 33 students^s

Well-Rounded Curriculum

Statewide

- House version of legislation defined social studies as an “elective,” making it easier to cut^m

Broward County

- 44 elementary schools cut art^t
- Eliminated 40 percent of media specialists^t
- 20 schools eliminated music^t
- 20 schools eliminated physical education^t

Duval County

- Reduced art, music, and physical education classes^c
- Canceled purchase of science texts^d

Indian River County

- Cut 15 non-core teachers, such as business and drama, at the secondary levelⁿ

Hernando County

- Cut French, automotive, and construction technology courses^k

Pinellas County

- Eliminated 6 elementary music teachers, 6 elementary art teachers, and 37 elementary media specialists^r
- Cut 1 media specialist and 1 elective teacher per middle school^r
- Cut 2 elective teachers per high school^r
- One high school eliminated drama and culinary courses and shifted Latin to online only^s

Special Programs

Volusia County

- Eliminated 9th-grade sports^c

Duval County

- Phased out public transportation to magnet schools^d
- Cut back sports programs^u

Miami-Dade County

- Cut after-school programs for up to 4,500 young children^e
- Cut eligibility for 7- and 8-year-olds for state subsidized afterschool programs^v

Indian River

- Cut 25 special education teacher assistantsⁿ

Sarasota County

- Cut high school guidance counselors and academic advisors^q
- Eliminated 23 intervention teachers from elementary schools^q

Hernando County

- Cut “exceptional education” teachers and staff^k
- Cut driver’s education^k
- Instituted pay-to-play fees for sports: \$35 for first sport, \$20 for second^k

Pinellas County

- Eliminated 5 English for Speakers of Other Languages teachers and 37 guidance counselors^w
- Cut 1 guidance counselor in each middle school^w
- Cut 1 guidance counselor per high school^w
- Eliminated transportation to magnet school and career academy programs^w

NOTE: Information in this report relies on the most accurate news reports until September 15, 2011. After the school year is underway, individual schools may readjust and call back or lay off employees. Many school districts are using money made available from the 2010 educator jobs bill. If the 2011 American Jobs Act is not passed, schools will have no federal help to fill in gaps in their state budgets.

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Transferring Public Education Tax Dollars to Private Interests in Florida

As state leaders in Florida were enacting the most austere public education budget in memory, they also were hard at work providing a boost to private and charter schools and saddling school districts with costly new mandates.

By passing new laws that provide more taxpayer-funded vouchers for students to attend private schools and allow charter schools to expand with less oversight, Florida has expanded the pipeline so that more public school funds can be routed to private interests. For example, the legislature added a potential 50,000 students to a voucher program for disabled students by expanding eligibility requirements to include students with food allergies, asthma, attention deficit disorder, and other conditions. Another voucher program financed by corporations in exchange for tax credits also is set to expand, pushing enrollment beyond the current 33,000 students.⁶⁴ Plus, as the *Orlando Sentinel* reported, under the new budget, while traditional public schools will get no money from the state this year for additions or needed repairs to thousands of aging buildings, charter schools will get \$55 billion.⁶⁵

Adding to the flow of public money to private education interests, Florida is expanding the use of standardized testing. In fact, despite these recessionary times, the state is poised to spend more than \$1 billion to develop and implement end-of-course exams over the next two years. Scores on these new tests will be used for grading schools and awarding teacher merit pay.⁶⁶

Faced with Increasing Demand for Education, a State Cuts Supply



Photo: Jim Bowen

Immigration to North Carolina has boomed in recent years, and the state's public school system has grown to nearly 1.5 million students in 115 districts. From 2000–2010, the state took in 1.5 million newcomers and grew at a rate of 18.5 percent, almost twice the national average of 9.7 percent.⁶⁷

Many of those moving to North Carolina were households with children, and local schools in the state have been straining to keep up with rapidly expanding student populations. Yet this year, state legislators responded to this growing demand for services by providing less funding for education.

Budget cuts passed this summer—over the governor's veto—hit public education with a 9 percent reduction in state funding.⁶⁸

The \$800 million cut was broad and deep and included cuts ranging from textbooks and instructional materials to social programs for students who are deaf or blind. It also included cutting back the number of school janitorial staff as well as social workers, guidance counselors, and media specialists. The most unusual cut may have been a “discretionary cut” requiring schools to *pay back* \$124.2 million in “allocated operational resources” (commonly called discretionary funds) they received from the state. North Carolina designates the amount of the cut, but it's up to the local school district to decide what to cut. With more than 80 percent of education dollars typically spent on personnel, it's not surprising that many schools cut the number of classroom teachers, assistant principals, and support staff.⁶⁹

The following chart offers examples of how these cuts are affecting services and programs for students and families. Where possible, the chart provides a quantitative and anecdotal account of how the raw numbers agreed to by state legislators have been translated into diminished services in local communities.

Information was not available for every service category due to the differences in how schools report budget outcomes and the gaps in news coverage by local media sources.

Even though the state budget provides some new funds for hiring new teachers to lower class sizes in first, second, and third grades, many schools have lost more teaching positions than they gained.

In fact, a survey conducted recently by the North Carolina Department of Instruction found that state public schools have lost 16,678 positions and laid off 6,097 people since the 2008–09 school year, which is 8 percent of the education work force. The 2011–12 school year showed the largest number of positions eliminated—6,307.5—and the largest number of layoffs, 2,418.1. Some 35 percent of the jobs lost were teachers.⁷⁰

Many districts—Wake County, Guilford County, Charlotte-Mecklenberg, and others—avoided teacher jobs losses this year by relying on federal EduJobs funds. More than 4,000 public school employees statewide are being paid with federal EduJobs money, but these funds will not be around next year.⁷¹

Particularly hard hit in the 2011 state budget was North Carolina's pre-K program called More at Four. Relying on a combination of state and federal funds, More at Four provides free pre-kindergarten to about 40,000 children across the state. But in the 2011 budget, the legislature cut the program's funding by 20 percent and mandated a co-payment in the future in the amount of 10 percent of gross family income for a family of three. The program also would move to the state's Department of Health and Human Services' Division of Child Development, conveying the message that the state is downgrading its pre-K program to “day care” rather than keeping its emphasis as a program with educational goals.⁷²

NORTH CAROLINA

School District	State Cuts
Statewide	\$800 million^a
Mountain	
Asheville	\$1.8 million ^b
Madison	\$1 million ^b
Haywood	\$3-3.5 million ^b
Transylvania	\$1.5 million ^b
South Central	
Lincoln	\$3 million ^c
Cleveland	\$8.7 million ^c
Triad	
Winston-Salem/Forsyth	\$11.3 million ^d
Triangle	
Durham	\$15.6 million ^e
Orange	\$2.4 million ^e
Chapel Hill-Carrboro	\$7.7 million ^e

Early Childhood Education

Statewide

- Cut \$16 million (20%) for pre-K education^f

Mountain

(Buncombe County, Asheville, Madison, Haywood, Transylvania, Jackson, Clay)

- Closed 2 pre-K programs (Jackson)^g

South Central

(Charlotte-Mecklenberg, Iredell-Statesville, Mooresville, Cabarrus, Kannapolis, Union, Lincoln, Cleveland)

- Closed 13 pre-K centers (Charlotte)^h

Class Size

Statewide

- Eliminated 13,000 education jobs^a

Coastal

(New Hanover, Lenoir, Carteret, Craven, Pitt, Duplin)

- Cut 6 teachers and 1 teacher assistant (Lenoir)ⁱ
- Cut 42 teachers and 16 teacher assistants (Carteret)ⁱ
- Cut 34 teachers (Craven)ⁱ
- Cut 32 teachers assistants (Pitt)ⁱ
- Cut 210 teachers (Duplin)ⁱ
- Cut 58 teachers and 90 teacher assistants (New Hanover)^p

Mountain

- Cut 7.5 teaching positions and increased class size in middle schools to 27-30 students (Asheville)^j
- Cut 25 positions including 4 teachers (Clay)^g

North Central

(Vance, Granville, Warren)

- Cut 35 positions (Vance)^k
- Cut 32 positions including 9 teachers and 16 teacher assistants (Warren)^k
- Cut 34.5 positions including 12 teachers and 3 teacher assistants (Granville)^k

South Central

- Cut 37 teacher assistants (Iredell-Statesville)^l
- Cut 20 teacher positions and 2 teacher assistants, and increased class size by 25 percent, moving high school classes into larger rooms (Mooresville)^l
- Cut 10 percent of teacher assistants and reduced remaining assistants' work day by 2 hours (Cabarrus)^l
- Cut 8 teaching positions and 27 teacher assistant positions and increased class sizes (Kannapolis)^l
- Cut teachers and teaching assistants (Union)^m
- Cut 27 teaching positions (Cleveland)^c
- Cut 190 teacher assistants and 38 teachers (Lincoln)^c

Triad

(Winston-Salem/Forsyth, Guilford)

- Cut 211 jobs, including 118 teaching positions, and increased class sizes in all high schools (Winston-Salem/Forsyth)^d

Triangle

(Wake, Durham, Orange, Chapel Hill-Carrboro, Johnston)

- Cut 55 teaching positions (Durham)^e
- Cut 123 positions, including 74 teacher assistants (Johnston)^e

Well-Rounded Curriculum

Statewide

- Cut \$92.2 million from textbook purchasing and \$42 million (46 %) from instructional materials purchasing^f

South Central

- Eliminated an elementary school science lab (Charlotte-Mecklenberg)^h

Special Programs

Statewide

- Cut \$22.9 million (5 %) in instructional support for guidance counselors, social workers, and media specialists^f
- Cut \$1.7 million from residential schools for the deaf and the blind^f
- Eliminated a \$13.3 million dropout prevention program^f

Coastal

(New Hanover)

- Cut 11 special education teachers and 27 special education teacher assistants^p

Mountain

- Eliminated 80 Title I and special education assistant positions (Asheville)ⁱ

South Central

- Cut 11 school counselors, 2 social workers, 4 special education teachers, and 4 special education teacher assistants (Iredell-Statesville)^j
- Cut eight positions in guidance, media, technology, and art (Kannapolis)^j

Triad

- Eliminated foreign languages in elementary schools (Winston-Salem/Forsyth)^k
- Instituted pay-to-play fees of \$40 for a student to play high school sports and \$15 for a student to play middle school sports (Winston-Salem/Forsyth)ⁿ

Triangle

- Cut 54 jobs to help teachers and to monitor meeting the academic needs of students with disabilities (Durham)^e
- Instituted pay-to-play fees (Johnston)^o

NOTE: Information in this report relies on the most accurate news reports until September 15, 2011. After the school year is underway, individual schools may readjust and call back or lay off employees. Many school districts are using money made available from the 2010 educator jobs bill. If the 2011 American Jobs Act is not passed, schools will have no federal help to fill in gaps in their state budgets.

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Transferring Public Education Tax Dollars to Private Interests in North Carolina

While the North Carolina state legislature was slashing public education funding, they also were passing new laws that increase the flow of money originally meant for public education into private hands. Just as budget cuts were forcing some schools to cut staff for special education, North Carolina passed legislation to implement its first private school choice program that gives a tuition tax credit to families to send their special needs children to private schools. And legislators passed a law to lift the cap on the number of charter schools allowed to operate in the state, so more traditional schools that are cutting programs, narrowing curriculum, and charging pay-to-play fees will likely find themselves competing with new charter start-ups.⁷³

As a recipient of \$400 million in federal Race to the Top funds, North Carolina also is scaling up contracts with private companies and foundations to implement more standardized testing, test score-based teacher evaluations, and other initiatives. Among recent contract announcements coming from the state Department of Instruction are new projects to send money to private companies. The projects include money to:

- Produce “an informational video highlighting teachers’ views on creating and implementing new standards for North Carolina’s Race To The Top initiative;”⁷⁴
- “Launch of a variety of communication and change management activities with local educators and community members;”⁷⁵
- Continue to “offer developmentally appropriate reading diagnostic assessments for students in elementary grades.”⁷⁶



Troubling Indicators on the Rise

The state of Ohio has 613 school districts that provide education for 1.8 million students in the pre-K–12 system.

According to *Quality Counts, Education Week's* annual ranking of state performance indicators on education, Ohio's public education system does better than most other states in the nation, earning a "B-" grade. But a closer look at this ranking shows that the state has lower-than-average results in important areas such as "K–12 achievement" and "chance for success." In terms of per-pupil expenditures (PPE), Ohio's \$10,340 is only slightly above the national average of \$10,297. Once regional cost differences are taken into account, Ohio falls below average, spending nearly 4 percent less than the national average and relegating 68 percent of its students to districts with PPE below the U.S. average.⁷⁷

This year, the Ohio state legislature cut state K–12 education funding by \$800 million (7.5%), a cut of \$400 per student and equivalent to nearly 14,000 teachers' salaries. The cuts will be implemented over two years: 10.5 percent in 2011–2012 and 4.9 percent the following school year. These cuts come at a difficult time for many Ohio school districts in communities coping with job losses and tightening household budgets that limit school funding at the local level.⁷⁸

The following table documents some of the substantial cuts to education that are playing out in districts across Ohio. Where possible, the table provides a quantitative and anecdotal account of how the raw numbers agreed upon by state legislators have translated into diminished services in local communities.

Because Ohio school districts tend to be much smaller when compared to other states, such as Florida, districts have been clustered by geographic proximity that matches, to the extent possible, news media coverage. Two patterns in the data are particularly noteworthy.

Abandoning Early Childhood Education:

According to *Education Week's Quality Counts* report, 45.8 percent of Ohio children ages three and four attend pre-K programs while 74 percent are enrolled in kindergarten. Those figures are below national averages of 48.3 percent for pre-K and 77.7 percent for kindergarten. To address this issue, Ohio's previous legislature voted to mandate funding for full-day kindergarten statewide. However, this law was undone by the current administration, and early childhood education in the state is noticeably spotty. The situation is likely to get worse because the state has chosen to cut by 75 percent the number of four-year-olds enrolled in tax-funded pre-school since 2001. Ohio's drop in support for early childhood education is the greatest among the 40 states with tax-funded programs for pre-K.⁷⁹

The following table does not reflect these deep cuts to pre-K and kindergarten programs for a number of reasons. One problem in reporting cuts to Ohio's kindergarten programs is that the state now requires school districts to charge fees based on a sliding scale tied to federal poverty levels. School districts have some latitude on how to implement these fees, and that means changes in enrollment may not be evident until the school year is well underway. Cuts to pre-K programs also are difficult to trace due, in part, to the way Ohio distributes early childhood education services. According to the National Institute on Early Education Research (NIEER), although state funds for pre-K are distributed directly to public schools, these schools may subcontract with Head Start programs, faith-based centers, and private child care centers, making program cuts difficult to track. In its latest annual *The State of Preschool*, NIEER found that Ohio's percentage of three- and four-year olds enrolled in state funded pre-K programs declined to unprecedented lows of 1 percent and 2 percent, respectively, and state spending per child enrolled dropped by almost half, from \$6,911 to \$3,902.

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Embracing Pay-to-Play Fees: Ohio is a prime example of the strong trend in public schools to charge extra fees for school services—commonly called pay-to-play fees. Many school districts across the state are exploring or setting up fee schedules or raising existing fees that allow students to play sports, participate in band and other extra-curricular activities, attend kindergarten, and enroll in and obtain materials for “non-core” academic courses, including foreign language and college-prep Advanced Placement classes. Regarding sports programs, nearly half of Ohio schools had some form of pay-to-play fees last year with an average cost of \$140. This year, those numbers are expected to rise.⁸⁰

The following list of school districts have experienced deep cuts in state funding to education as well, but this report has no data to show how these schools will implement the cuts.

School District	State Cuts
Statewide	\$800 million^a
Alexander	\$0.81 million ^a
Athens City	\$2 million ^a
Columbus Area	
Columbus City	\$30 million ^b
Federal Hocking	\$0.25 million ^a
Fremont	\$3.7 million ^c
Granville	\$1.4 million ^d
Toledo Area	\$1.48 million ^e
Trimble	\$0.54 million ^a

Early Childhood Education

Statewide

- Eliminated mandate for districts to provide and fund full-day kindergarten^f

Dayton Area

(Beavercreek, Buckeye, Centerville, Dayton City, Fairborn, Huber Heights, Oakwood, Xenia)

- Eliminated funding for full-day kindergarten (areawide except Oakwood)^d

Toledo Area

(Maumee, Oregon, Port Clinton, Toledo City)

- Raised the fee charged for kindergarten (Maumee)^g

Class Size

Alexander

- Will not replace 11 retired teachers^h

Athens City

- Not replacing retired teachers^a

Bucyrus

(Crawford County)

- Eliminated elementary dean of students and a 2nd-grade teacherⁱ

Cincinnati Area

(Cincinnati, Lakota, Lebanon)

- Cut 7 teaching positions (Lebanon)^c
- Eliminated 78 positions, mostly teaching (Lakota)^j
- Cut 208 school district jobs, including 145 teaching positions (Cincinnati)^k

Cleveland Area

(Cleveland Metropolitan, Cleveland Heights-University Heights, Medina, Strongsville)

- May increase class sizes to a ratio of more than 25-to-1 (Cleveland Heights-University Heights)^l
- Laid off nearly 1,000 teachers and paraprofessionals and closing 7 schools (Cleveland)^m
- Cut more than 70 teacher and teaching support positions and increasing class sizes from 25 to 30-32 (Medina)ⁿ

Columbus Area

(Columbiana, Columbus City, Marysville)

- Eliminated 13 teachers and planning to cut up to 40 teaching positions (Marysville)^o
- Planned to cut more than 80 teaching positions (Columbus)^b

Dayton Area

- Eliminated more than 1,200 education jobs areawide^d
- Cut 139 teaching positions (Dayton)^d
- Cut 18 teachers and 16 paraprofessionals (Huber Heights)^d
- Cut 33 full-time jobs, including many teachers (Fairborn)^d
- Cutting 76 jobs and closed two elementary schools (Xenia)^d
- Cutting 18.5 teaching positions (Beavercreek)^p

Fremont

- Eliminated 19 teaching, paraprofessional, and student monitoring positions^a

Granville

- Eliminated a number of elementary teachers^r

Toledo Area

- Trimmed staff by 8 positions and closing an elementary school (Maumee)^g
- Cut 6 teaching positions, 7 support staff, and 1 part-time teacher (Port Clinton)^s

Well-Rounded Curriculum

Athens City

- Eliminated high school English and consumer science teachers^h

Cleveland Area

- Reduced the middle school foreign language program (Strongsville)^t
- Eliminated many AP science and math classes, the German and French programs, and offerings in art, music, and other electives (Medina)ⁿ

Columbus Area

- Eliminated 13 teachers and planning to cut up to 40 teaching positions (Marysville)^o
- Planned to cut more than 80 teaching positions (Columbus)^b

Newark City

- Leaving a science teacher position unfilled^u

Toledo Area

- Laid off 132 elementary school art, music, and physical education specialists (Toledo)^v

Special Programs

Statewide

- Proposed cuts to gifted education by \$61.8 million (88%)^w

Alexander

- Cut computer classes in elementary grades^h

Athens City

- Cut field trip budget^a
- Cut high school computer and photography classes^h

Bucyrus

- Cut an intervention teacher, a special education teacher, a vocal music teacher, a computer science instructor, and a librarianⁱ

Cincinnati Area

- Raised student athletic fees (Lebanon)^c

Cleveland Area

- Cut advisers and coaches for sports and extracurricular activities (Strongsville)^t
- Eliminated social workers, nurses, and coaches (Cleveland)^x
- Increased fees to \$660 to play a high school sport, \$200 to join the concert choir, and \$50 to act in the spring play (Medina)ⁿ

Columbus Area

- Eliminated gifted and talented teachers (Marysville)^o
- Cut 16 coaches and activity supervisors at the high school, reducing or eliminating middle school sports, and increasing pay-to-participate fees by \$50 to \$200 per activity (Marysville)^o
- Added student government fees for middle and high school (Marysville)^o
- Eliminated 6 resource teachers and 2 gifted and talented teachers (Columbus)^b
- Reduced special education expenditures and staff (Columbiana)^y

Dayton Area

- Raised high school sports participation fees to \$100 per sport with an individual limit of \$200 per year and a family limit of \$250 per year; and raised middle school sports fee to \$70 per sport with an individual limit of \$140 and a family limit of \$250 (Beavercreek)^p

Granville

- Eliminated an elementary intervention aide^r

Newark City

- Eliminated gifted and talented^z

Toledo Area

- Raised to \$100 the fee for a student to play any sport, this may increase (Maumee)^g
- Increased high school athletic fees \$150 for the first sport, \$100 the second, and \$50 the third; and increased middle school athletic fees to \$50 (Oregon)^s

NOTE: Information in this report relies on the most accurate news reports until September 15, 2011. After the school year is underway, individual schools may readjust and call back or lay off employees. Many school districts are using money made available from the 2010 educator jobs bill. If the 2011 American Jobs Act is not passed, schools will have no federal help to fill in gaps in their state budgets.

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Transferring Public Education Tax Dollars to Private Interests in Ohio

As state leaders in Ohio were enacting this austere public education budget, they took steps to significantly boost the ability of the private sector in education to receive taxpayer dollars meant for public schools. How? By saddling school districts with costly new mandates.

New measures were passed to more than quadruple the number of school vouchers available to parents, a move that would, in effect, transfer significantly more tax dollars to private schools.⁸¹ According to the liberal think tank Innovation Ohio, the 39 school districts already participating in the state's voucher program would "suffer a loss of \$67 million in state funding—which translates into \$5,200 per year for a private school education, as opposed to the \$4,327 per child the state pays those districts to educate public school students."⁸²

Privately operated charter schools, for-profit and others, also are getting a funding boost from the state, as many more of these schools, including e-schools, can now open without local sponsors and without adequate regulatory oversight.⁸³ Charters in Ohio are enjoying boom times, with state funding increases of a whopping 1,285 percent since 2001, compared to traditional public schools that have received only a 25 percent increase.⁸⁴

This action to bolster charters, Innovation Ohio pointed out in a recent study, was taken despite the fact that only 21 percent of Ohio's charters are rated "effective" or better. That 21 percent rate pales in comparison to 72 percent of the state's traditional public schools earning ratings of effective or better. Furthermore, according to the same report, the cost to Ohio taxpayers to educate a student in a charter school is "more than double what [the state] spends to educate that same child in a traditional public school."⁸⁵

Added to the public-to-private funds issue is the state's investment in vast new data systems, teacher evaluation programs, and school "turnaround" measures related to winning federally funded Race to the Top grants. One local reporter, *The Plain Dealer's* Edith Starzyk, has traced RTTT money and found that nearly half of the \$400 million has gone directly to outside contractors.⁸⁶

Starzyk also points to other uses of RTTT funds: \$12.7 million to "build capacity to run the program," \$19.9 million to "create new standards and assessments," and \$43 million to "link students' performance to their teachers through a 'value-added' measure."⁸⁷



How Creative Can School Cuts Be?

Pennsylvania has 500 school districts that receive the majority of their funding through an elaborate combination of five different funding sources:

1. Basic Education Funding
2. Reimbursement of Charter Schools
3. Accountability Block Grants
4. Education Assistance Program
5. School Improvement Grants

This year, the Pennsylvania legislature and governor figured out a creative way to say they were “increasing” education spending, while in reality, they were slashing education spending by \$851 million.

Simultaneous to adding \$233.2 million to the state’s Basic Education Funding (an increase of 4.6%), Pennsylvania lawmakers rolled back education funding in total to 2008–2009 levels by passing steep cuts in the other four funding sources.⁸⁸

A big cut came from a \$220 million reduction for reimbursing school districts with charter schools. The state’s reimbursement for charter school costs was never more than about 30 percent, but now school districts have to cover the total cost of educating students who transfer to those schools. According to sources, Pennsylvania has more than 90,000 students enrolled in charter and cyber charter schools.⁸⁹

State leaders also eliminated \$155 million for Accountability Block Grants. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s website, the purpose of these grants is to “support any of several proven programs to improve educational achievement of students,” in particular “quality prekindergarten, full-day kindergarten programs, and reduced class size in the early grades, kindergarten through third grade.” Many districts use these grants to offset the cost of pre-K services and full-day kindergarten.

The Education Assistance Program, which provides tutoring for at-risk students, took a \$46.2 million hit. And

last among the enacted education cuts was a \$10.6 million cut from the School Improvement Grants category, which is money Pennsylvania gets from the federal government to “reform” low-achieving schools (as defined by federal guidelines.)⁹⁰

It also must be noted that the state subsidy for special education was frozen for the third straight year.⁹¹

The bottom line of all this is that any district in Pennsylvania that got a boost in Basic Education Funding got slammed in other areas, which resulted in huge reductions in overall funding.

The following table offers examples of how these cuts are affecting services and programs for students and families. Where possible, the table provides a quantitative and anecdotal account of how the raw numbers agreed to by state legislators got translated into diminished services in local communities.

Information was not available for every service category due to the differences in how schools report budget outcomes and the gaps in news coverage by local media sources.

These cuts have had a profound effect on students and their families. A recent survey, conducted in August 2011 by the Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials and Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators, reported that, as a result of the state cuts, school districts slashed 5,106 jobs and left 3,259 positions unfilled.

Many of those districts cut afterschool and summer tutoring programs aimed at improving student achievement and scores. They raised class sizes, cut program options, and in some cases, charged fees for participating in sports and extracurricular activities. Some 294 of Pennsylvania’s 500 school districts participated in the survey.

High schools reduced their offerings in foreign languages, middle schools eliminated foreign language

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programs altogether, and most schools cut counselors and nurses. There are now fewer high school business and consumer science courses, fewer classroom aides, and fewer elementary art and music teachers.⁹²

What is particularly distressing is that state budget cuts have hit poor school districts hardest. As the Associated Press reported, poorer districts were hit with per-pupil cuts nearly three times the size of those in wealthier districts. The hardest hit, such as Harrisburg, Philadelphia, Reading, and York, lost more than 10 times the money per student as wealthier districts.⁹³

In addition to the state cuts, legislators also eliminated an exemption that allows districts to raise municipal taxes for renovation or new construction projects. Now those taxes can only be raised through ballot referenda, which most acknowledge would be difficult and time consuming to pass.⁹⁴

Most Pennsylvania school districts are enduring their third straight year of significant budget cuts, and many have found that to balance their 2011–2012 budgets, they had to rely on their reserve funds, using up to half a million dollars.⁹⁵ Many districts now have no reserve funds left at all.⁹⁶

School District	State Cuts
Statewide	\$851 million ^a

Early Childhood Education

Statewide

- Cut \$30 million from early childhood education statewide^b
- 4 districts eliminated full-day kindergarten, 9 reduced full-day kindergarten, 7 eliminated pre-K, and 11 reduced pre-K^a

Bethlehem-Allentown Area

(Allentown, Bethlehem, Bangor, Wilson)

- Reduced pre-K program (Bethlehem)^c

Philadelphia Area

(Philadelphia, Chester Upland, Southeast Delco)

- Cut full-day kindergarten to half-day (Philadelphia)^d

Pittsburgh Area

(Pittsburgh, Beaver County, Bethel Park, Deer Lakes, Duquesne, East Allegheny, Elizabeth Forward, Highlands, West Mifflin Area, McKeesport, Moniteau, Seneca Valley, Sto-Rox, Steele Valley, South Allegheny, South Park, Upper St. Clair, Willkensburg, Woodland Hills)

- Went from full-day to half-day kindergarten (Highlands and East Allegheny)^e
- Cut full-day kindergarten for at-risk children (South Park)^e
- Eliminated 15 early childhood teachers and 13 paraprofessionals; reduced the number of children in pre-K by more than 400, or about 20 percent (Pittsburgh)^f
- Cut 2 kindergarten teachers (Duquesne)^g

Class Size

Statewide

- Cut more than 14,000 school jobs, including 3,556 teachers, 739 administrators, 4,000 other employees, and 5,883 positions left vacant in nearly 60 percent of school districts^a
- An average of 28.5 positions were cut in districts^c
- 70 percent of schools increased class size^a

Bethlehem-Allentown Area

- Cut 145 jobs, including 88 teaching positions (Bethlehem)^e
- Eliminated 78 faculty positions (Allentown)^e
- Eliminated 8 elementary teaching positions, a math teacher, and 2 English teachers (Bangor)^h

Harrisburg Area

(Harrisburg, York, Lebanon County, Central Dauphin, Lower Dauphin, Middletown, Palmyra, Susquehanna Township)

- Eliminated 153 teaching positions and closed 4 buildings (Harrisburg)ⁱ
- 12 teaching positions cut (Lower Dauphin)^j
- Cut 3 teaching positions and 6 teacher aides (Middletown)^j
- Cut 10 teaching positions and increased class sizes (Palmyra)^j
- Cut 5 teaching positions (Susquehanna Township)^j
- Increased class sizes in secondary schools up to 30-35 (York)^k

Philadelphia Area

- Eliminated 3,409 positions, including 1,158 teachers; and increased class sizes in all grades but K–3 (Philadelphia)^d
- Eliminated over 40 percent of teachers and increased class sizes from an average of 21 students per teacher to 30 in the elementary grades and more than 35 in high school, which prompted students to walk out of over-crowded classes (Chester Upland)^l
- Eliminated funds for class size reductions in grades 6, 8, and 9^p

Pittsburgh Area

- Increased class size 50 percent (Beaver County)^a
- Cut teaching staff from 51 to 29 (Duquesne City)^d
- Eliminated a middle school teacher (Sto-Rox)^d
- Eliminated 7 high school teachers^c and increased class sizes at elementary schools (Seneca Valley)^e
- Eliminated 11 teachers and 7 support staff (South Allegheny)^e
- Eliminated 11 teachers (South Park)^e
- Eliminated 19 teachers (Willkensburg)^m
- Eliminated 22 teachers and 10 teachers aides (West Mifflin)^e
- Cut 22 full-time and 2 part-time teaching positions (Elizabeth Forward)^e
- Cut 36 teachers^h and increased class size by 3 to 6 students per class (Steel Valley)^e
- Cut 5 teachers (Highlands)ⁱⁿ
- Expanded teacher-student ratio to 25-1 (Sto-Rox)^m
- Closed 7 schools;^o increased class sizes to 25 students in grades K–5, 28 students in grades 6–8, and 30 students in high school;^p and eliminated 31 full-time teachers,^k and 23 paraprofessionals (Pittsburgh)^q
- Increased class sizes at the secondary level (Upper St. Claire)^e
- Cut 19 teaching positions 1 each, 2nd-, 3rd-, 4th-, 5th- and 6th-grades; (Duquesne)^q
- Eliminated 35 teachers (Woodland Hills)^e
- Cut 10 teachers, and 9 paraprofessionals (Moniteau)^w
- Eliminated 90 positions and increased class sizes (McKeesport)^e

Well-Rounded Curriculum

Statewide

- 44 percent of schools reduced curriculum offerings, including core subjects such as math, English, sciences, and social sciences and electives such as foreign languages, music, and physical education^a
- 41 percent delayed textbook purchases and 58 percent delayed technology purchases^a

Bethlehem-Allentown Area

- Ended middle school teacher teams that integrated curriculum across disciplines^c
- Cut dozens of high school electives and established a 20 student enrollment minimum (Bethlehem)^c
- Eliminated dozens of music, library, and physical education teachers at all grade levels^c
- Cut electives in the high schools (Allentown)^c
- Cut 2 art teachers, 2 physical education teachers, a business education teacher, a middle school science teacher, and, a music teacher. (Bangor)^h

Harrisburg Area

- Cut all art, music, and physical education teachers in elementary schools; cut high school performing arts program; and eliminated a character education program (York)^k

Philadelphia Area

- Cut \$7.7 million from art and music instruction (Philadelphia)^d

Pittsburgh Area

- Eliminated a high school English teacher (Sto-Rox)^e
- Discontinued high school business and family and consumer science departments (Seneca Valley)^c; cut a social studies teacher and a half-time business education teacher, and eliminated French and Spanish courses at the middle school (Elizabeth Forward)^e
- Cut foreign languages at elementary and middle school levels (South Park)^e
- Cut 3rd-grade music and 5th-grade foreign language (Bethel Park)^e
- Cut art, music, family and consumer science, business education, foreign languages, and career and technical education (Pittsburgh)^f
- Cut a middle school math teacher, a science teacher, an English teacher, a drama/theater arts teacher, and a music/band teacher (Duquesne)^q
- Reduced art, music, and physical education to once every 5 days in elementary schools (Seneca Valley)^q

Special Programs

Statewide

- 35 percent of schools reduced tutoring programs^a
- 20 percent eliminated summer school programs that allowed students to graduate on time^a
- One-third of the districts reduced or eliminated activities and sports, while 31 percent either established or increased pay-to-play fees^a
- 57 cut student field trips^a

Bethlehem-Allentown Area

- Eliminated teachers who addressed academic, social, and family needs of students (Bethlehem)^c
- Cut 4 special education behavioral interventionists, 2 special education teachers, a mental health worker, 2 guidance counselors, and a librarian. (Bangor)^h
- Eliminated assistant coaching positions for football, field hockey, baseball, softball, and wrestling; and cut middle school field hockey and cross country completely (Wilson)^r

Harrisburg Area

- Cut 11 library aids (Central Dauphin)ⁱ
- Eliminated nearly all special education and English Language Learner aides; cut all math and reading coaches, and eliminated all library aides (York)^k
- Eliminated elementary guidance counselors, some secondary guidance counselors, and an at-risk coordinator who helped students with issues at home (York)^k

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Philadelphia Area

- Eliminated nurses and counselors^x
- Cut special education^p
- Cut English as a second language instruction by 50 percent^p
- Cut \$3 million from an extended-day programⁱ
- Cut gifted and talented programs and middle school athletics^p
- Cut \$3 million from a program for students at risk of dropping out (Philadelphia)^s
- Cut 40 percent of counselors, nurses, and social workers (Chester Upland)^t
- Cut 6 reading specialists who help at-risk students (Southeast Delco)^u

Pittsburgh Area

- Eliminated extracurricular activities (Duquesne)^q
- Eliminated a behavior specialist, a psychologist, an elementary librarian, and a part-time nurse at the middle school (Sto-Rox)^{j, e}
- Dropped 7th grade football^c and instituted pay-to-play fees charging \$75 per sport and \$35 per nonathletic activity (Seneca Valley)^q
- Reduced 16 special education classroom aides from full-to-part-time (West Mifflin)^e

- Cut guidance counselors and a librarian (Elizabeth Forward)^e
- Eliminated an alternative program for at-risk high school students (Woodland Hills)^e
- Eliminated literacy and math coaches, writing labs, in-house school suspension programs,^d and cut after-school tutoring (Sto-Rox)^q
- Instituted pay-to-play fees for athletics (Upper St. Claire)^y
- Cut a math coach, 2 reading intervention specialists, and a library/media teacher (Duquesne)^q
- Reduced French courses at the high school (Moniteau)^w
- Instituted pay-to-play fees of \$50 for sports and activities (Bethel Park)^q

NOTE: Information in this report relies on the most accurate news reports until September 15, 2011. After the school year is underway, individual schools may readjust and call back or lay off employees. Many school districts are using money made available from the 2010 educator jobs bill. If the 2011 American Jobs Act is not passed, schools will have no federal help to fill in gaps in their state budgets.

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Transferring Public Education Tax Dollars to Private Interests in Pennsylvania

While Pennsylvania state legislators were making painful funding cuts to public education, they also were coming up with new ways to ensure that more money intended to be used for public education would end up in private hands.

For starters, Pennsylvania already transfers \$52 million in public education dollars to private schools through a tax credit program for families earning less than \$60,000 per year.⁹⁷

Furthermore, almost all funding transferred to charter and cyber charter schools—more than \$200 million—is provided by local school districts. And some school districts, such as Chester Upland, have as many as 40 percent of school children enrolled in charter schools.⁹⁸

However, unlike traditional public schools in Pennsylvania, these charter and cyber charter schools do not have to reconcile their tuition fees with actual service costs. A recent audit conducted by the Pennsylvania auditor general found that charter and cyber charter schools were holding onto more than \$100 million of the money sent to them each year as “unreserved-undesignated reserve funds” rather than spending those funds on student services and operational costs.⁹⁹

Rather than reforming the state’s flawed charter school funding mechanism, however, Pennsylvania’s legislature is considering a bill that would expand charter schools without involvement from local communities. If the bill becomes law, the school districts would still be responsible for funding charter and cyber charter schools, (payments for charters are taken from school district funds), but they would have no authorization or regulatory oversight. Furthermore, the legislation would establish a new state commission for authorizing these types of schools that would be financed in part by fees from charter and cyber charter schools. So the bottom line would be a system that incentivizes the regulatory process to advance the interests of what the system is supposed to be regulating.¹⁰⁰

Conclusion and Recommendations

This bottom-up examination of the state of the American public school system indicates a new and growing crisis in pre-K–12 public education. The crisis is characterized by two widespread trends:

1. Funding cuts recently enacted by state legislatures and signed into law by governors are having a severe negative effect on direct services to children, youth, and families.
2. New policy mandates at both the federal and state levels are forcing school districts to divert tax dollars meant for public education to various privately held concerns, including charter schools, private and religious schools, and contractors and service providers that are hired to meet new demands for testing and accountability systems.

The result of this one-two punch to the nation's public schools is that children everywhere are losing essential learning opportunities at the same time that tax dollars meant for education are being diverted to private concerns for services that are of questionable value to the public.

This report looks at news reports in five states that exemplify the trends identified here: Arizona, Florida, North Carolina, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

The report also warns that on top of a distressing outlook for the 2011–2012 school year, many states are considering even more dramatic cutbacks for 2012–2013. Many districts noted in this report took extreme measures to respond to budget cuts in 2011–2012 that cannot be repeated in the next fiscal year. Without a doubt, the situation will be even more difficult financially in 2012–2013.

In many Florida districts, for instance, lawmakers took the edge off of this year's cuts by, in effect, reducing the salaries of teachers and other school employees and by reducing or completely foregoing annual contributions to the Florida Retirement System. Most Florida school districts also saved their shares of \$550 million in federal jobs money they received this past year and are using it to offset some of this year's spending cuts. Those factors and prior year layoffs are allowing most districts to avoid eliminating more teachers this year, but these options won't be available in 2012–2013.

Many Ohio districts that are looking at unprecedented deficits for 2012–2013 have responded by placing new fundraising levies and other initiatives on the ballot in November's elections in hopes that local citizens will dig deeper in their pockets to support public education. But with the American economy continuing to falter, it's anyone's guess as to how these measures will fare in fall elections.

It's time for policy leaders at all levels to intercede in this crisis. It is imperative that officials at the national, state, and local levels:

According to the 2010 General Social Survey education remains one of the top spending priorities of Americans, and that has been the case since 1990.



Restore funding of public schools to levels that

- Guarantee all children have access to high quality pre-K and kindergarten programs;
- Ensure class sizes in all subjects reflect community wishes;
- Provide a well-rounded, 21st century education that includes the arts, foreign languages, physical education, social studies, and science;
- Support special programs that personalize school experiences and meet students' differing needs, which may include help with developmental issues, language ability, and learning problems. Provide opportunities for nonacademic and extracurricular activities. Provide support for a more academically challenging curricula in science, foreign language, technology, and Advanced Placement subjects.

Offer immediate regulatory relief to schools being forced to send significant financial resources meant for public education to privately held entities, including

- Charter schools not yet approved by current authorizers;
- Voucher or tax credit programs that redirect education funds to private and religious schools;
- Policy mandates that require hiring of contractors and outside service providers operated by private individuals and corporations.

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NBI 2010-19: The Impact of Family Economic Conditions on Student Educational Achievement

Not only is there an immense amount of evidence linking the economic conditions of families to the lack of student educational achievement, but science is beginning to unravel both the complexity and causes of poverty's relationships to low student achievement. The path from poverty to lower achievement involves the students' lack of resources as well as his or her social, physical health, mental health, and cognitive impairments. The mechanisms causing this relationship include simple lack of resources plus lack of positive social and cultural exposure, environmental hazards, hormonal reactions to long-term psychological stress, and poor parenting practices resulting from the cross-generational cycle of poverty.

Adding to the complexity is the evidence that the negative effects of long-term poverty are made worse by school segregation and extreme inequities in wealth.

While the negative impact of poverty on achievement is true throughout the world, the situation in the United States is of increasing concern as the number of children in poverty grows larger, as schools become increasingly segregated, and as the gap between rich and poor grows and accelerates.

The Size of the Problem

According to the U.S. Census Bureau¹, the percentage of 5 to 17 year old children living in families in poverty increased from 15.3% in 2002 to 18.2% of all children in 2009. Every U.S. county is affected by poverty in schools, with child poverty rates ranging from 2% to 64%. Nearly 17% of all counties face high concentrations of poverty with between 40% and 64% of their children living in poverty. According to the Department of Education², there were 21.5 million children eligible for the free and reduced price lunch program sponsored by the Department of Agriculture.

As demonstrated in documents for the U.S. Census Bureau [Appendix A], the percentage of children in poverty increased by 19% between 2002 and 2009, and this increase affected every state and nearly every county in the country. By 2009, every county had at least 2.2% of its population below the poverty line. This is happening at the same time that the gap between the richest and poorest Americans is widening rapidly. As pointed out by Nobel laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz,

It's no use pretending that what has obviously happened has not in fact happened. The upper 1 percent of Americans are now taking in nearly a quarter of the nation's income every year. In terms of wealth rather than income, the top 1 percent control 40 percent. Their lot in life has improved considerably. Twenty-five years ago, the corresponding figures were 12 percent and 33 percent.

2010 New Business Item 19:

Utilizing existing resources, the NEA shall use available data and research to determine the correlation of family economic conditions and their impact on student educational achievement. This study shall compile pertinent data and research that truly reflect the economic conditions of American families and educational attainment of their students.

The results, theories and conclusions will then be made available to NEA members and others through existing means.

As shown in Figure 1, every income group below the top 20% has a smaller share of national income than at any time since 1979. The graphic also shows that the poorest among us have lost the largest proportion of national income while those in the very top income groups, the top 1% and above, have taken a much larger share of national income in the last three decades.

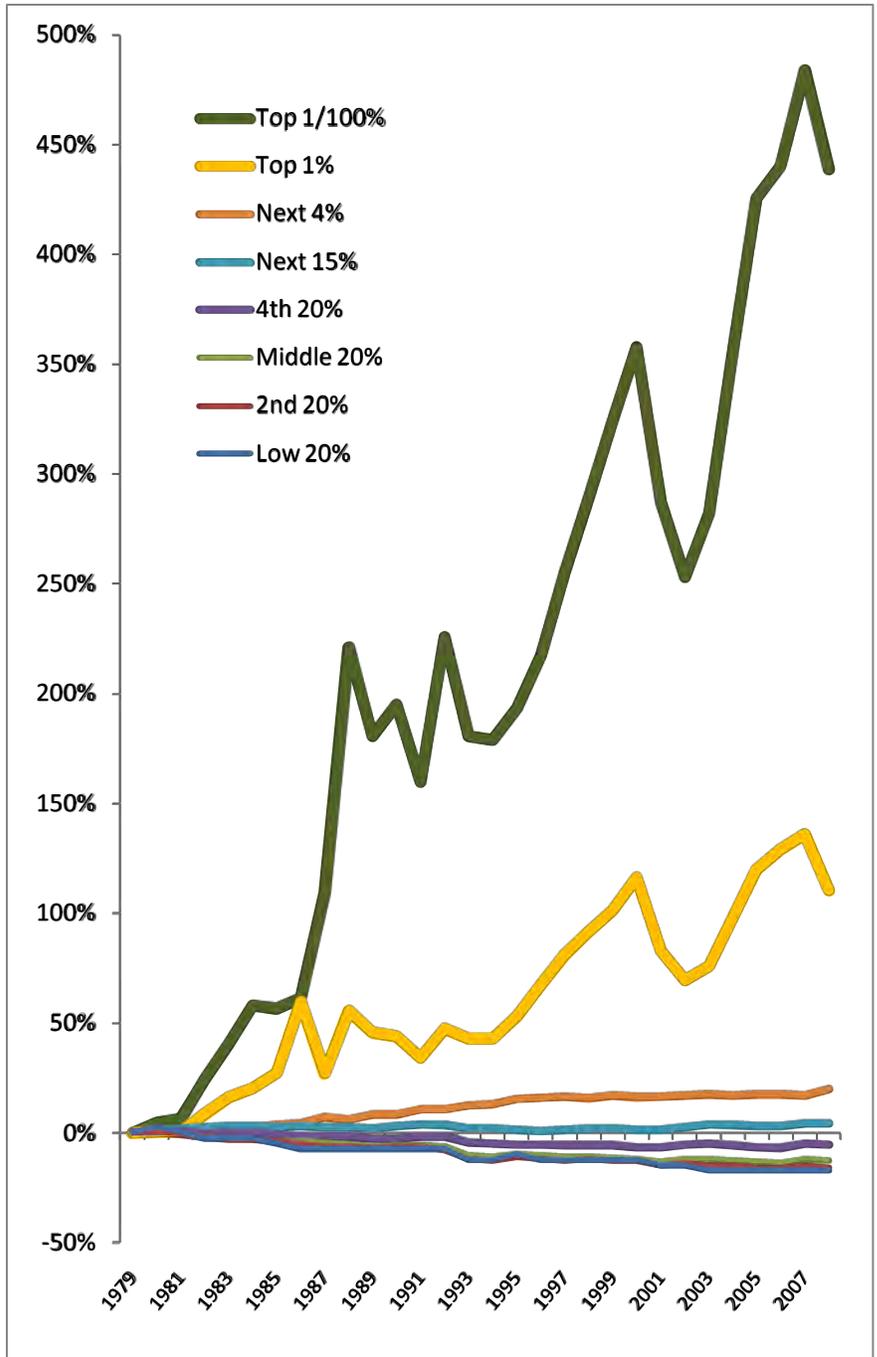
Almost five decades ago, the Coleman Report³ pointed to poverty as the primary factor leading to low academic achievement. Since then, reanalysis of the Coleman data provides a broader view by showing that academic deficiencies are the shared responsibility of families, communities, and schools.⁴

At the same time, a wealth of new data and analysis has been assembled that sheds light on many ways that economic conditions and the related issue of racial segregation in schools affect student achievement.

The remainder of this study will:

- Suggest a graphical model that attempts to show many of the paths by which economic conditions can negatively affect student achievement;
- Describe some of the recent studies by world-class academics that support this model;
- Discuss the impact of the model on educators; and
- Discuss the impact of the model on the U.S.

Figure 1: Change in Share of National Income by Household Income Groups, 1979-2008



Sources: Quintile data are from US Census Household Income Historical Table H-2. "Share of Aggregate Income Received by Each Fifth and Top 5 Percent of Households, All Races: 1967 to 2009," available at http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/data/historical/household/H02AR_2009.xls; Upper income group data are from The Top Incomes Database, available through query at <http://g-mond.parisschoolofeconomics.eu/topincomes/>, and Emanuel Saez' spreadsheet "TabFig2008.xls" available at <http://elsa.berkeley.edu/~saez/TabFig2008.xls> (revision of 7/17/2010).
Graphic by NEA Research

A Model of How Negative Family Economic Conditions Impact Student Performance

Figure 2 represents potential mechanisms or paths that recent academic research about poverty suggests play an important role in reducing academic achievement.

In its simplest form the model says that:

1. Demographic studies reveal an increasing number of children in poverty combined with increasingly segregated schools, and increasing inequities in income and wealth;
2. These factors combine to produce a broad range of childhood injuries;
3. These various injuries may result in social, physical, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral impairments;
4. The impairments manifest themselves in the classroom as poor attendance, lack of energy, lack of motivation, poor concentration, behavior problems, and poor study habits; and
5. The sum of these behaviors results in poor academic performance.

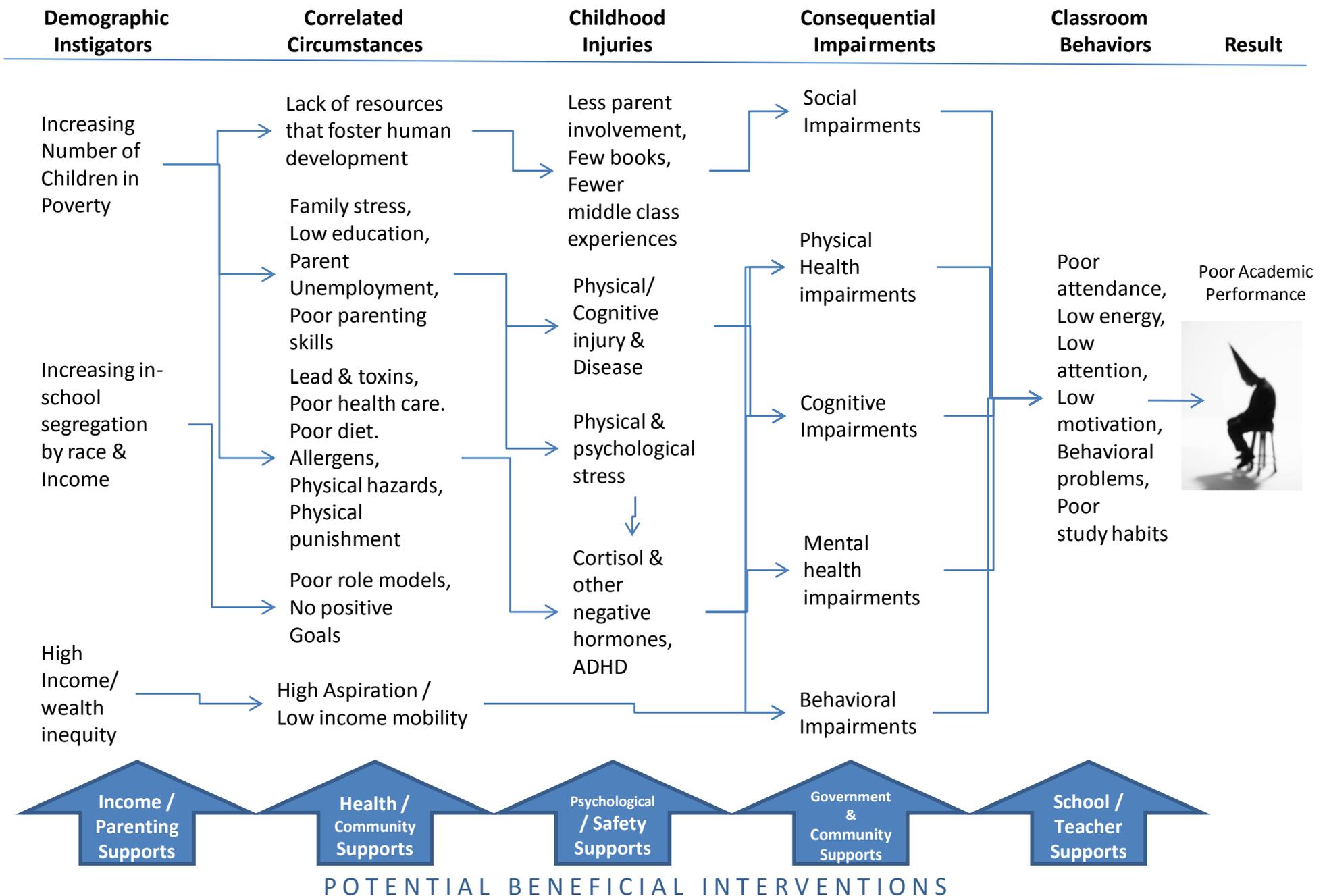
It should be noted however that this poor performance might be lessened through family, community, government, and school interventions. It should also be noted that, in some very rigorous large-scale studies ^{5,6,7}, it has been demonstrated that any single point of intervention, such as incentives to teachers to improve test scores, cannot compensate for an underlying cascade of events that result in poor academic performance.

Fortunately, there are known family, community, school, and government interventions that have the potential to mitigate the set of negative effects due to poverty.

The model shown in Figure 2 is conceptual, and the numerous chains of causation implied in the diagram have not been demonstrated within comprehensive experiments or through comprehensive statistical analysis. The amount of data required to conduct such a study is well beyond the scope of anything that done to date. However, most of the individual arrows in the diagram have been demonstrated in rigorous studies referenced below.

Figure 2: Paths from Poverty to Poor Academic Performance

POVERTY'S TIES TO POOR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE



Examining the Evidence for the Relationships within the Model

While it is not possible within the scope of this paper to examine all of the implied causation within the model, we will examine evidence for some of them.

1. Lack of resources impedes human development

As noted by David Berliner in his recent research, "the most powerful policy for improving our nations' school achievement is a reduction in family and youth poverty⁸" Berliner further points out that, for every one hour in school, children spend five hours with their families and in their communities.

It turns out that this time outside of school is critical, and especially so for the poorest among us. Turkheimer *et. al.*⁹ conducted a large study of twins in the U.S. and found that, among the poorest children, it is overwhelmingly their shared life in poverty that accounts for their lower than average IQs while only a very small amount is due to genetics. Among the most economically advantaged, it is the reverse, *i.e.*, most of the variation in IQ among twins is accounted for by genetic differences.

So, what is it about living in poverty that results in poor performance in academic settings? The answer, in part, is obvious. These factors include lack of quality parenting by parents who may be working multiple jobs and who have never learned the basics of good parenting. Also, we know that a lack of books and reading at home relates to poor academic performance. Finally, if the community where children live is homogeneously poor, then there is little opportunity to experience the benefits available to better-off children in terms of hope for the future and positive material rewards for behaviors valued by middle-class society. Of course, these factors are made that much worse when the schools attended by poor children are populated only with other poor and minority students like themselves.

According to Feudtner *et. al.*, there are many other mundane ways that poverty causes poor health in children. These include poor maternal conditions, unsafe housing, limited social engagement, maternal depression, cigarette smoking, and a sedentary life style. This list could be further extended to include single-parent families and other every day realities of people living in extreme poverty.

2. High levels of prolonged family stress

It is well documented that stress leads to the excess production of cortisol and other steroids that have negative effects on short-term memory among children.

According to a 2009 article in the American Medical Association's *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*¹⁰,

New evidence accumulated during the past several decades has refined our understanding, showing not only the association between an individual child's absolute or relative exposure to poverty and a greater risk of myriad diseases and conditions but also a similar association between ill health and the degree of nonuniform distribution of income across an entire population or society. . .

Similarly, Evans *et. al.* in an article in the Proceedings of the National Academies of Sciences,¹¹ notes that:

A large, robust literature demonstrates a pervasive income/achievement gap. Family income is a strong and consistent predictor of multiple indices of achievement, including standardized test scores, grades in school, and educational attainment. Family income matters to children's cognitive development, with more enduring economic hardship particularly harmful. The income/achievement gap is already present by kindergarten and accelerates over time. The longer the duration of childhood exposure to poverty, the worse achievement levels become.

Evans *et al.* found that,

the greater the proportion of a child's life growing up in poverty, the higher the degree of cumulative wear and tear on the body during his or her early lifetime [as measured by physiological tests]. . .[and] to working memory in young adulthood. . .

The longer the period of childhood poverty, the higher the levels of allostatic load [a physiological measure of stress] during childhood, and the greater the reductions in young adults' subsequent working memory.

In conclusion, Evans *et.al.* state,

The income/achievement gap is an important societal problem. Childhood poverty is a well-established risk factor for cognitive competency as well as for physical morbidity throughout the life course. We show that these 2 outcomes of childhood poverty are interrelated. The prospective association between the duration of childhood poverty and adult working memory appears to be explained in part by elevated chronic stress during childhood.

3. Environmental factors

A child living in poverty faces many more environmental dangers than do most other children. Not only is violence of all kinds more prevalent in poor neighborhoods, but there is less adult supervision than in middle-class families. These conditions lead to significant dangers such as accidental ingestion of toxins, physical assault, and slower response to mishaps.

One example frequently cited is the exposure of children in poverty to lead from water flowing through lead plumbing and to old lead-based paints.

About one in twenty American children have significant lead toxicity in their blood. Symptoms of lead toxicity can include anemia, learning disabilities due to changes in the nervous system, behavioral problems, reduced IQ, and delayed puberty in girls.¹² Lead exposure is frequently linked to lead in old plumbing and in old paint. It is reported to be more common in the housing of people in poverty.

Impact on Educators

Considering all of the ways poverty results in reduced physical and mental health, lower cognitive functioning, and an increased number of behavior problems, it is not surprising that students at schools in high-poverty areas are frequently reported to have poor attendance, low motivation and energy, behavioral problems, poor study habits, and resulting low academic achievement.

Of course, many good educators deal successfully with such issues, but others tend to burn out in the difficult environment of underperforming schools.¹³ As Sass et. al. point out, getting and maintaining high-quality teachers in high-poverty schools is not as simple as transferring them there. He notes that there is a tendency in high-poverty schools for teachers not to grow and enhance their skills over time. Recruiting good teachers and continuously improving their skills over time may require a broad range of incentives that should include improved working conditions. For example, class size and funding for high-poverty schools is not much different on average from those in other schools. However, it seems clear that high-poverty schools require more funding than other schools and/or more external supports for children in extreme poverty as depicted in Figure 2. As pointed out in a 2011 reanalysis of the data from the Tennessee STAR study¹⁴, shows that smaller class sizes in early grades not only result in higher test scores, but also increases the likelihood of college attendance and other positive life outcomes. Not only would smaller class sizes benefit children in high-poverty schools, but they may also provide an incentive for teachers work and improve their skills at such schools.

The biggest issue pointed out in the model shown in Figure 2 is that no matter how much funding and effort is put into high-poverty schools, the large portion of these children's lives spent at home and in the community makes it unlikely that within school interventions alone can overcome all of the negative aspects of living in high-poverty families and communities.

Even when interventions meant to benefit high-poverty communities include efforts to improve schools, success is not assured. Bryk *et. al.* report on a large study of Chicago education reforms that examined the impact of a comprehensive school reform model and finally conclude as follows.

Our findings about schooling in truly disadvantaged communities offer a sobering antidote to a heady political rhetoric arguing that all schools can be improved. Our evidence suggests a need to temper this enthusiasm with a realistic appraisal of the extraordinary problems confronted by some schools. To be sure, this comment should not be read as an excuse to let some places off the hook. But it does require us to recognize that few reform efforts to date have adequately acknowledged the full scope of problems that must be confronted.

Perhaps if our society better understood the pervasiveness of the many relationships of poverty to childhood academic failures and the future of our society, we could look for solutions that are more comprehensive than those tried in Chicago and other places. Perhaps then, the frequent attacks on our “failing schools” and our “underperforming” educators would be muted by an understanding of the broader plight faced by educators working with children living in extreme poverty within the United States.

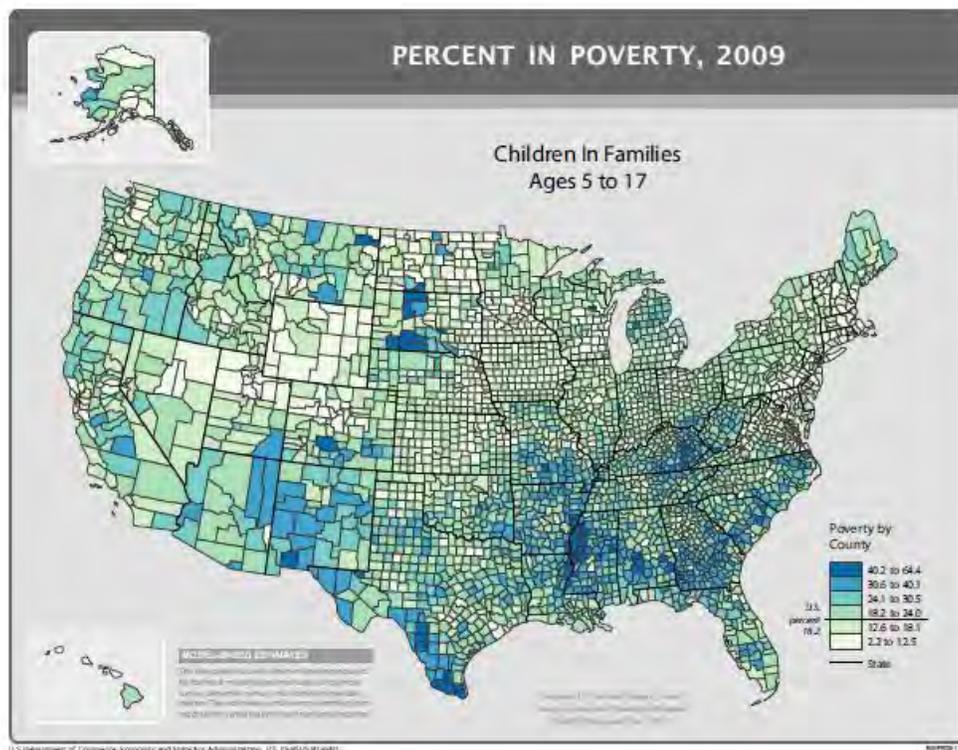
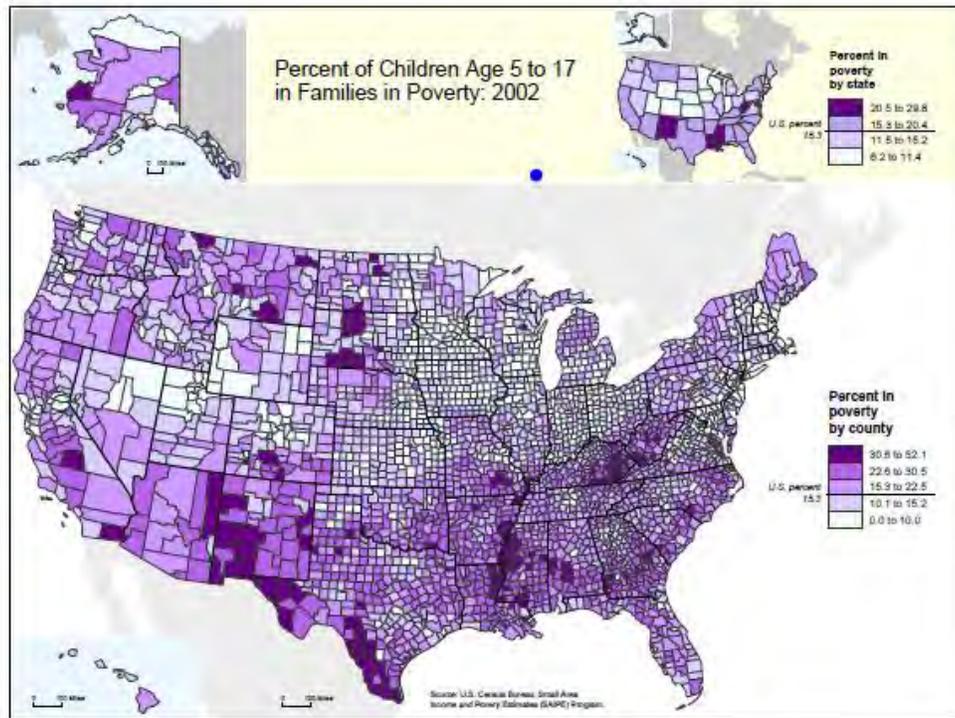
Impact on the American Dream

The American dream is that everyone in America has the opportunity to succeed. However, it is clear that not everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed. The cost to the United States of allowing so many to fall of the train to success is very high in many ways.

As one example, according to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*,¹⁵ the amount spent by states on prisons increased by 127% between 1987 and 2007 while the amount spent on higher education only increased by 21%. Such relative statistics, however, represent a very small part of the economic long-term cost to society of an America divided by increasing extremes in wealth and income. It would appear that the inability to address the problems of poverty and its correlation with a lack of academic achievement is reinforcing the income disparities in the United States.

APPENDIX: Levels of School-Age Children in Poverty by U.S. County in 2002 and 2009

In 2002, the average percentage of school-age children below the poverty line was 15.3% and seven years later it was 18.2%. In addition, by 2009, every U.S. county had a poverty rate of at least 2.2%.



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Reducing Student Poverty in the Classroom

School-Based Antipoverty Strategies the Federal Government Can Learn From and Act On

Saba Bireda and Joy Moses September 2010



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Introduction and summary

Since the time when the most pressing problem facing educators was pigtailed boys being dunked in inkwells, the American school house has maintained a tradition of delivering the 3 Rs—reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic. Those halcyon days, if they ever existed, are long past. Today's educators face a myriad of concerns including the high concentrations of poverty that limit opportunities for young Americans to succeed in too many of our schools. That's why the American school house must play a critical role in addressing at least one more R—reducing the negative consequences of poverty by becoming a central component of federal, state and local antipoverty strategies.

Schools that are educating high numbers of disadvantaged students must employ innovative strategies to promote academic achievement. Many of these strategies are what we believe have a direct impact on student learning, such as offering incentives to recruit and retain highly effective teachers, implementing challenging yet accessible curriculum, and providing additional learning opportunities beyond the traditional school day. Yet it is just as important to address outside-school influences, specifically poverty that can also significantly impact student achievement and success.

Factors from inadequate housing, food instability, and financial insecurity place stresses on young people that distract them from their studies and can cause them to disengage from school entirely. When poverty intersects with poor performing schools the outcome for low-income students can be devastating, from dramatically lower test scores as compared to their higher-income peers, to staggering dropout rates.

Further, there are a number of government programs that help address the basic needs of school-age children but families often face barriers to participating in these programs. Some of these barriers include:

- Lack of outreach and accessible information about the programs
- Transportation challenges of visiting and signing up for these programs at different (and sometimes remote) locations
- Burdensome application requirements, such as unnecessary repeat visits to program offices and unnecessary document requests
- The stigma associated with applying for programs

These problems are multiplied and made more complicated for those families that qualify for more than one public-benefits program.

Communities across the country are finding that pairing antipoverty strategies with schools result in positive student outcomes as well as improve the delivery of public benefits. Although these are not traditional relationships, schools can play a pivotal role in providing the important economic services that stabilize families—services that can also eliminate some the challenges that undermine student academic achievement. Already school-based antipoverty initiatives in places such as New York City, Michigan, San Diego, and New Mexico highlight the success students can realize, not only in the classroom but also as it concerns their overall sense of well-being, when the traditional role of the school is expanded to include services targeting poverty.

For a number of years the city of San Diego had one of the nation's lowest rates of participation in the federal SNAP/Food Stamp program (about 35 percent of eligible residents). The low participation rate was pegged to a number of factors, from inconvenient and hard-to-reach enrollment locations, to lack of assistance to help families fill out cumbersome and confusing forms.

To boost participation in the program, county officials enlisted the help of the San Diego School board, which in turn agreed to allow four of its schools located in high-poverty neighborhoods to serve as food stamp screening centers. This school-based program has been able to remove a number of enrollment barriers, including easing the sense of anxiety experienced by many families, by providing locations with which they are familiar and comfortable. While advocates are still working to help increase participation rates, more than 600 San Diego families have been counseled on eligibility requirements through the school-based initiative.

The SNAP/Food Stamp program is just one of the many federal, state, and local government programs and services available to low-income students and their

families. Unfortunately, families who can benefit most from these programs often encounter challenges and barriers to participation that are similar to those that existed for San Diego's SNAP program. Dealing with multiple agencies in different locations, requiring different application processes can be overwhelming for many families. Streamlining the process by allowing for central connection points for services will maximize outcomes.

Schools are ideal locations because they have unparalleled access to poor students and their families—they are located in the neighborhoods in which families live, are recognized and familiar community institutions, and have established relationships with low-income students and their families. In short, schools are ideally positioned to become effective central connection points for a broad range of social welfare services.

Consequently, in this paper, we urge:

- Congress, with its current concerns about reducing costs, to attach to an appropriations bill (or other vehicle) a requirement that relevant federal administrative agencies produce a report to Congress that outlines a plan for expanding the use of central connection points and simplifying and consolidating public benefit application requirements. These efforts should include advancing school-based antipoverty strategies.
- The White House Domestic Policy Council and the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships to get involved in efforts to develop a plan, and take a leadership role to help spur Congress to action.
- Congress to invest in community school models and to create a new innovation fund designed to explore the potential benefits of delivering public benefits through schools.
- State and local governments to establish interagency committees to replicate and expand upon existing school-based antipoverty models and maintain new modes of providing services through schools.

We're confident that after reading our analysis and recommendations policymakers in Congress and the Obama administration will realize the positive impact that school-based antipoverty programs could have on the education and well being of low-income children across our country.

Poverty and student achievement

We know that in-school factors, most importantly, effective teaching have the greatest impact on student achievement, especially for students from low-income families.¹ But the influence of poverty on student achievement should not be ignored. There are real-life consequences that flow from living in poverty that can interfere with a student's ability to learn.

A lack of consistent healthcare can contribute to frequent absences and therefore interrupt the learning process. Homelessness and inconsistent housing also contribute to frequent school transfers and student absence. Hunger and malnutrition make it difficult for students to concentrate and participate in classroom activities. In general, family economic instability (parents being unemployed or being inconsistently able to meet basic needs) can put a significant amount of stress on young people, distracting them from their studies or causing them to completely disengage from school.

When poverty's effects are combined with ineffective instruction and disorganized schools, it's easy to understand why many low-income students struggle to achieve academically. In 2009, only 16 percent of low-income eighth graders scored proficient in reading compared to 41 percent of their higher-income peers.² And in 2007, the dropout rate of students from low-income families was about 10 times greater than the rate of students from high-income families.³

Increasing the economic stability of a student's family has been shown to lead to improved academic performance. The well-known New Hope Project in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for example, found that elevating family incomes above the poverty level correlated to positive student achievement gains and prolonged engagement in school.⁴ That's why it is important to ensure that economic benefit programs effectively target low-income families with school-aged children to ensure that families have the opportunity to rise out of poverty.

Services available to students living in poverty

Low-income students and their families stand to gain from multiple public benefits that help to meet their basic needs. The federal government offers programs that:

- Reduce hunger—the SNAP/food stamps program, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, or WIC
- Reduce homelessness—public housing, housing choice vouchers, and emergency housing
- Reduce deprivations from lack of home heating—Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, or LIHEAP, and the Weatherization Assistance Program
- Reduce dangers and safety risks to children—childcare subsidies and child welfare services
- Reduce health concerns—Medicaid, Children’s Health Insurance Program, or CHIP
- Reduce poverty more generally by directly providing families with income—Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or TANF, Supplemental Security Income, or SSI, the Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Support Enforcement, and Unemployment Insurance. In addition to these benefits, many state and local governments offer their own services that are unique to their jurisdictions.

Individually and in tandem with one another, these programs have the ability to lift families out of poverty, providing additional resources that allow them to make ends meet and provide for the basic needs of their children. Unfortunately, families often face barriers to participation. Some common challenges associated with connecting families to social programs include:⁵

Insufficient outreach

Many people who qualify for various services are often unaware that the services exist. Some are misinformed about eligibility and participation requirements. In addition, programs often lack the resources and mechanisms to effectively market their services to target populations.

Required locations

Families must apply for services at identified locations. This can be challenging if those locations are far away from where many low-income people live and/or are difficult to access by public transportation.

Burdensome application and continued participation requirements

Some programs have application or participation requirements that erect barriers to receiving assistance. For instance, they may require applicants to make multiple trips to their offices, which is difficult for those lacking transportation or who are unable or can't afford to take off from work. In order to ensure eligibility and prevent fraud, others may require detailed information and the production of multiple documents, such as lease agreements, birth certificates, utility bills, employment information, all of which could lead to different types of delay. Families may have to request documents from other entities or make a trip to the application site only to find out that they are missing a document and have to return at a later date. Although some of these steps make sense, some agencies ask for more materials than are reasonably necessary.

Stigma

Some potential participants equate the need to ask for help with embarrassment, personal failure, or shame. They may not want to be seen entering certain locations that are identified with participation in social services. Environments that are unwelcoming or that fail to treat people with dignity may contribute to these negative feelings.

Insufficient staffing

Some agencies have a small number of staff available to assist participants. This can result in long waits over the phone or while standing in lines. It may also mean that insufficient attention is paid to the needs of participants or to answering questions about the services provided.

Wariness and distrust

Potential participants may become wary of government programs, distrusting the ability of these agencies to actually provide help. This may occur if an individual experiences one or a combination of the above factors or knows someone who has, leading to a possible reluctance to participate.

All of these complications are multiplied for those families that stand to benefit from more than one program. Imagine a single mother balancing a number of different responsibilities who qualifies for three different programs, say housing subsidies, childcare assistance, and food stamps. She may have to make multiple trips to three different program offices in different parts of town just to receive and maintain her benefits. There would likely be three different application processes that ask for similar though not overlapping information and documentation.

She may also wait in several different lines and make several follow-up calls that require her to spend time on hold.

In short, multiple agencies each work to verify her income eligibility and prevent fraud when just one form could have been used and just one entity could have given her the stamp of approval and then shared that information with other agencies.

For some participants, there are negative consequences—employers are angered about time spent on personal issues and jobs are endangered—or it becomes difficult to keep track of all the things that are required for program participation and benefits are jeopardized. Sometime eligible participants become completely discouraged and give up on efforts to obtain needed and helpful benefits for themselves and their children.

In addition to these inconveniences, this is simply an inefficient way of delivering services and maximizing outcomes. Filling out multiple applications wastes the time of program participants and the resources of government agencies, especially when applications are seeking similar information about family income and resources. Further, segregating the application processes for benefits programs fails to allow for interconnected approaches that maximize outcomes by assessing a family's broad range of needs in order to match them with services that complement and coordinate with one another.

Filling out multiple applications wastes the time of program participants and the resources of government agencies.

Moving toward a better approach

As this paper suggests, much more can be done to improve the delivery of public benefits to families in need. This will require reforms that are tailored to each individual program. But there is also a need to look at the big picture and at reforms that impact the entire antipoverty service delivery system that includes the broad range of public-benefits programs. Important to these efforts is the creation of more central connection points for the receipt of services.

The benefits of central connection points

Families would benefit from central connection points for services. These are singular locations where families are informed about the broad range of public benefits available to them. Ideally, families would be able to apply for and engage in activities necessary for the enrollment and maintenance of their benefits all under one roof.

This approach works to address some of the barriers identified above. For instance, it eliminates burdensome application and continued participation requirements. There would no longer be a need to travel or make phone calls to multiple government agencies in order to get all required assistance. Outreach efforts would be much easier since enrolling in one type of service would occur at a location where a family could learn about other available services. Staffing needs can also be reduced. A family who can learn about three different programs from one worker at a central connection point, requires less human resources than that same family talking to three different workers at three different agencies.

Central connection points can also help facilitate another important reform: consolidating application processes to the greatest extent possible. Since families often provide similar types of information and documents, such as those related to income, identification, residency, and children, to each agency from which they garner benefits, it would save time, energy, and staff resources to have families fill

out one form and have the form apply to multiple programs. Central connection points are ideal locations for filling out consolidated forms since these locations would not be attached to a particular program.

Strides toward these ideals are reflected in the nonprofit effort Single Stop USA, which provides information and helps people access a broad range of public benefits and services at one location.⁶ And lessons also can be learned from efforts to centralize employment and training services via federally funded one stop centers run by the Department of Labor.⁷

Why schools?

Schools are in an ideal position to become effective central connection points for social welfare services. There are several advantages to co-locating antipoverty services at schools, among them:

Access

Schools have unparalleled access to students and families in need of services. Even students and parents from the most financially challenged families come into contact with school officials. Community schools and other reforms models that make parental engagement a priority are especially suited for doing this work because as a matter of course they are engaged in helpful activities such as doing outreach to parents, housing other types of services that attract adults (such as job training), and extending their building hours that accommodate parental work schedules. Thus, schools, and community schools in particular, are uniquely positioned to address challenges related to public-benefits outreach.

Public-benefits programs that target low-income families with children can connect with those families in schools and inform parents of their services. This is particularly true of schools receiving Title I funds that serve significant numbers of children living in poverty.

Convenience

The school building presents a ready-made space for service providers to set up shop. Schools are often located in neighborhoods where low-income families live, which reduces their transportation burdens. Since parents have other reasons (child drop-off and pick-up, parent-teacher meetings) to go to their child's school, co-locating services reaches parents at a place where they are already likely to be found.

School community

Teachers and principals interact with students and families on a daily basis and can identify issues that impact student learning. These educators often have insights into what types of public benefits are most needed by their students' families. Since children spend significant amounts of time at schools, astute educators are likely to be the first to notice student issues such as hunger or homelessness.

Familiarity

The school building is often the most recognized structure in a community. Beyond proximity, the school may be less threatening to families than other social agencies. As familiar places that are already providing necessary educational services, schools can help reduce feelings of wariness and distrust of public-benefits programs.

Reducing stigma

Parents already have other reasons to be in a school building. Unlike with identified agency locations, if someone sees a parent going inside a school they won't automatically know that the family is in need of public benefits. Also, if schools take a more child-centered approach to public benefits, suggesting that supports are being offered as a part of an educational plan or to promote better educational outcomes, then parents may be less likely to view their circumstances as a personal failure. Rather than being embarrassed, they may view program participation as another thing that they can do to ensure that their child does well in school.

Improving student and family connection to school

When parents and family members frequent the school building they engender more positive feelings about the school, which may in turn lead to more involvement with their children's education. Studies have demonstrated that parents who utilize services at school participate more in school activities and attend more parent-teacher conferences.⁸

Challenges

Some challenges may be associated with providing access to public benefits at school sites. Importantly, most of these challenges are not rooted in federal legislation. Typically, authorizing legislation creating public-benefits programs does not mandate or limit locations where participants must apply for services. To the contrary, many laws encourage effective and creative outreach approaches, reductions in participation barriers, and interagency coordination and collaboration.⁹ Case in point: The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act says that supportive housing providers are allowed to help participants in obtaining access to federal, state, and locally funded assistance programs, including those that help with mental health and employment needs. In general, federal education law does not prohibit schools from allowing public-benefits program services from being offered in their buildings.

In implementing federal programs or addressing other concerns, however, states and localities may have developed policies (official and unofficial) that create barriers to connecting families to public-benefits programs within schools. For instance, state or local guidelines may require that caseworkers conduct the application process or demand in-office visits to complete the enrollment process.¹⁰

Implementation of a school-based antipoverty program strategy could initially require a significant time investment from public-benefits staff as well as school leaders in reviewing and revising policies, forging interagency discussions and collaborations, and providing new information and training to staff. This may be difficult for those government agencies that are underfunded or have staffs that already have too many demands placed on their time, or both.

This problem may be particularly acute during this current era in which states and localities are experiencing severe budgetary constraints that may include employee layoffs. Decreasing or failing to increase staff, at a time when there is a greater demand for poverty programs, can make it difficult for agencies to dedicate time to new projects and innovations.

There may also be barriers created by the culture of programs. Sometimes it is difficult to get workers, especially career employees, to make a mental shift from the way things have always been done. Some may be very protective of their programs, and thus reluctant to share responsibilities with other agencies or have others involved in their work. Others may be concerned about such plans diluting their efforts or missions, among them educators who think schools should be focused on academic instruction and not on ancillary services and programs. Further, there may be fears that involving others in the work of agencies or expanding access to remote sites may somehow make it easier for individuals to commit fraud and wrongfully gain access to services.

Finally, there may be logistical concerns that must be overcome. Individual schools, for example, may not have an adequate amount of physical space to accommodate these efforts. Precautions may have to be taken to protect family privacy. And divisions of labor and sources of funding may be an issue. Many of these concerns are valid, but they are not insurmountable. Through coordination, flexibility, and innovative thinking about the intersection of school and social services, successful school-based strategies can be created. In the next section of this report, we'll examine two states and two big municipalities where school-based antipoverty programs are proving their worth every day.

There may also be barriers created by the culture of programs.

Where it works

States, districts, and schools across the country are implementing strategies at the school building to support family economic stability and by extension, student academic success. We take a look at two states and two big cities: New Mexico and Michigan, and New York City and San Diego.

San Diego

A school-based effort to increase the number of families receiving food assistance¹¹

San Diego has had the lowest federal SNAP/Food Stamp enrollment rate of any metropolitan city for several years.¹² The county lost approximately \$107 million dollars in unclaimed benefits in 2007.¹³ In 2009, facing pressure from hunger advocates, the city partnered with several nonprofit organizations and embarked on a city-wide campaign to increase enrollment. San Diego's public schools became an integral part of the strategy.

Advocates cite numerous reasons for San Diego's low enrollment rate, which is about 35 percent of the residents eligible for food stamps.¹⁴ The county has rarely employed aggressive outreach plans and county guidelines require home visits for many applicants to prevent fraud. Many new immigrants were also deterred by language barriers and a general lack of information about eligibility. A recent report by the U.S. Department of Agriculture found several "choke points" in the county's food stamp application system, including long waits, an epidemic of lost documents requiring multiple trips to the county office, and unnecessary and time-consuming investigation of applicants.¹⁵

Both the county and school district recognized that students were harmed by the low participation rates of families. So last year the San Diego School Board

directed the school district to work with county officials and local nonprofits to increase food stamp enrollment for families at high-poverty schools.

The district's school-based enrollment strategy centers on the placement of full-time Americorps volunteers provided by the San Diego Local Initiatives Support Corporation and trained by the San Diego Hunger Coalition in four high-poverty schools. The school district provides office space and administrative support to the volunteers who screen parents to determine whether families meet the requirements for enrollment.

Moreover, the volunteers help families fill out applications and acquire the necessary documentation to ease the submission process. The coalition also hosts special enrollment fairs at schools with high numbers of low-income students. And importantly, the county government bolstered the school-based outreach program by overhauling application processing procedures and increasing waivers for face-to-face interviews.

The San Diego Local Initiatives Support Coalition estimates that volunteers have counseled more than 600 families at the four participating schools, resulting in a monthly benefit total of \$39,116 for these families. Volunteers are now expanding the scope of their involvement to include assisting with other benefit programs and general family assistance. The coalition plans to broaden the impact of the initiative by creating counseling hours at additional high-poverty schools in the fall of 2010.

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New Mexico

A focus on economic stability for middle school students and their families¹⁶

New Mexico is one of four Elev8 sites in the country. Elev8, a nationwide initiative funded by the Atlantic Philanthropies and other public and private partners, focuses on providing integrated services in the middle school years when risk for school disengagement is high. The New Mexico Community Foundation manages the Elev8 New Mexico initiative in five middle schools, in three different school districts. These schools are carrying out the Elev8 components of providing extended-day learning programs, comprehensive school-based health care, and family support services. The schools are provided with financial and programmatic support from the Atlantic Philanthropies-funded initiative to implement a system of wraparound services for students.

The New Mexico sites are particularly diligent about building up the benefits enrollment portion of the Elev8 program.¹⁷ Each school site works with a non-profit partner that provides staff at the school. Several of the schools created family resource centers where parents can drop in and access a variety of family support services. In partnership with Single Stop USA, staff at the family resource centers screen parents for several benefit programs, including TANF, Medicaid, child care assistance and the Earned Income Tax Credit using a web-based multi-benefit screening tool.

Families can benefit from assistance with the state’s presumptive Medicaid eligibility process, which provides coverage while the family completes the enrollment process. Because enrollment completion can be an issue for families, staff follow-up with families to ensure that benefits are actually received. Staff also works full-time on outreach to parents, referring families to services outside the school and providing financial literacy classes. These family resource centers are open before and after school to encourage use at times that best suit parents’ schedules.

The Elev8 program has not yet conducted a formal evaluation, but officials are collecting student achievement and anecdotal evidence that indicates positive changes at the schools. The initiative cites a 45 percent leap in math proficiency scores at Laguna Middle School, with a saturation rate of Elev8 programs at almost 100 percent. Aggressive outreach to parents at one of the participating schools, Grant Middle School in Albuquerque, led to a 10 percent increase in free and reduced-price lunch enrollment. All of the schools report high levels of parent involvement from extended-learning students, increased visits to doctors and dentists, and lower absentee rates among students at Elev8 schools participating in the extended-learning program.

Michigan

[A statewide initiative to provide basic needs assistance through schools](#)¹⁸

In 2003, Michigan, like many other states, found that several of its schools failed to meet “adequate year progress” as required by the federal No Child Left Behind law. The state determined, as part of its reform strategy for these low-performing “priority” schools, that students at these schools were often engaged with the Department of Human Services. Research and site visits also revealed several common characteristics of students at the schools: High mobility rates for fami-

lies, high poverty rates, excessive absentee rates, general education lags, and poor school grade performance.¹⁹

At the same time, Gov. Jennifer Granholm’s Children’s Cabinet was seeking ways to increase access and make service delivery easier for families. So in 2003, Michigan established a statewide system of wraparound service centers known as family resource centers at many of the state’s lowest-performing schools in response to these findings.

According to Linda Schmidt, Michigan’s poverty policy director, these family resource centers are based on the premise that when students’ basic needs are being met they are more likely to be academically successful. Each center is staffed by a Department of Human Services caseworker who provides direct access to DHS programs such as emergency cash assistance, food stamps, homelessness prevention services, and Medicaid enrollment. The centers are often deliberately located in schools with high populations of families turning to DHS programs so that parents can complete caseworker visits at the schools. In this way benefit recipients can comply with the demands of public programs without making time-consuming extra trips to a county office.

Family resource center staff also coordinates other services at the school, depending on student need and availability of locally based agencies. Several FRC-linked schools in Kent County, for example, are part of a larger community school effort—the Kent School Service Network. The Kent schools build upon the FRC success and coordinate service delivery at the district level through several non-profit partnerships.

Schools with family resource centers attempt to set goals and target services to the specific needs of the school population by using both student achievement data and information gathered through the state’s Department of Human Services. In Genesee County, for example, the district found that a large number of students were not finishing the school year at the school where they first enrolled. During the 2002-2003 school year, at least two schools experienced mobility rates of over 50 percent for families with children enrolled at the schools.²⁰ To decrease the number of highly transient students, the district began providing a rent subsidy to families at risk of residential displacement.

Family resource
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coordinates other
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school.

After two years, a 2006 evaluation of the program found that students whose families received rent subsidies had higher attendance rates and performed substantially better on state assessments than students who were not in the program.²¹ Schools with FRCs have yielded positive outcomes across the state. A state evaluation found that FRC-linked schools were four times as likely to make adequate yearly progress as non-FRC linked schools.²²

New York City

Coordinated outreach to uninsured students and parents at school

New York City's Children's Aid Society runs one of the nation's oldest community school initiatives.²³ CAS community schools are predicated on the idea of co-locating social and health services at school, but in the late 1990s CAS also recognized that many students and their families were in need of health insurance. Because CAS community schools prioritize outreach and parent involvement at school, launching a project to base health care enrollment at schools fit well into the model.

In 1998, the organization began providing staff at its community schools to identify and assist families with health care enrollment. In 2000, CAS became a facilitated enrollment contractor with New York State, which greatly increased its role in the enrollment process. As a facilitated enrollment agency, CAS staff can substitute for Medicaid office staff, reducing the need for families to spend hours at an office outside of their comfort zone.

CAS, in 2007, launched a pilot community-based program in conjunction with the city's health care access agency. The city and CAS created a roster of potentially uninsured students at CAS schools. Using demographic information provided by the school and the city, CAS staff reached out to families in an effort to notify them of eligibility criteria and then guided them through the enrollment process. Each CAS community school also has a parent coordinator who can play a vital role in identifying families in need of health insurance and planning outreach events.

The combination of outreach and placing a facilitated enroller in the school building (facilitated enrollers are also in several other locations) helps CAS reach

and enroll otherwise uninsured students and families in Medicaid. CAS's Health Access Project also pairs case managers with families to help clients navigate the managed care process once they are enrolled.

These successful school-based antipoverty programs provide telling evidence that a federal role in these efforts would be equally effective. They demonstrate that schools can play a large role in empowering families and providing stability to low-income students. Schools can be the center of poverty reduction strategies without having to dramatically alter the school management structure or add new staff. Public-benefits programs also gain from having an effective avenue for conducting outreach, identifying members of their target populations, and having a more effective means of delivering their services. So how could the federal government learn from these experiences and tailor their antipoverty programs accordingly? To this we now turn.

Policy recommendations

Too few high-poverty schools and social welfare agencies implement the strategies highlighted here—strategies that can make a significant difference in the lives of students. There must be a more concerted effort to fully realize the potential of these school-based, antipoverty models. Although communities must have significant flexibility in deciding what works best for them, at a minimum, such efforts should include:

- Schools providing a physical space for the delivery of public benefits
- Public-benefits programs collaborating to inform and facilitate delivery of services via schools
- Public-benefits programs developing methods of simplifying and consolidating their various application and maintenance of benefits requirements

For maximum effectiveness, we would also recommend:

- Full-time staff at each school who can bridge the gaps between educators, public-benefits programs, and families. Ideally, these individuals would be social workers who can act as case managers and be sensitive to the needs of low-income parents.
- Active involvement of school staff, including participating in trainings and information sessions about government-benefit programs and in the referral process using their knowledge of their students. For example, if a child in their class is showing signs of hunger, teachers should find tactful ways of encouraging the child's family to take advantage of the benefits information and access being offered at the school.
- Public-benefits programs that ensure all requirements for applying and maintaining benefits can happen at the school building. This is preferable to families still being required to make trips to remote locations to handle certain portions of the process.

- Engaging nonprofit organizations and other relevant entities that can provide input and assistance in perfecting these models.

For these ideals to take hold across the country, policy and culture changes must occur at the federal, state, and local levels. Let's begin at the federal level.

Focus on improving entry points into public-benefits programs

Better coordination of the nation's various public-benefits programs must be a priority. These efforts are necessary to ensure that delivering services through schools reach their full potential. There are multiple administrative agencies responsible for public-benefits programs, among them the Departments of Health and Human Services, Agriculture, Labor, and Housing and Urban Development, all of which must work together in developing ways to consolidate application and income verification requirements while also breaking down barriers to establishing central connection points.

Given the potential cost savings associated with simplifying and consolidating application requirements, Congress should be involved. Legislators engaged in appropriations and authorization should find an appropriate congressional vehicle through which to direct federal agencies to produce a report to Congress that outlines a realistic plan for reaching these goals—one that includes cost-savings estimates and any offsets for new expenditures.

To be effective, the development of this plan also should involve the Domestic Policy Council and Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships²⁴ within the White House. The ultimate goals should be to:

- Review and revise any regulations or guidance that may hinder progress in the area
- Develop new guidance and models for consolidating and simplifying public-benefits applications and instituting central connection points at locations that include community schools.
- Develop new informative materials, trainings, and meetings that help market such guidance and models to states and localities
- Create lasting federal interagency collaborations focused on delivering public benefits through schools

Better coordination of the nation's various public-benefits programs must be a priority.

- Translate collaborations on the federal level into models for state and local collaboration efforts.

In addition to managing logistical concerns, these efforts will help facilitate a cultural change within individuals programs and the entire array of public-benefits programs.

Notably, the Obama administration is already taking some important steps in the direction of connecting the delivery of public benefits to schools. The administration boasts a “Federal Strategic Plan to End Homelessness” that includes a relevant new initiative that is included in the president’s 2011 budget. It is relevant because fostering collaboration among the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Education, the initiative could serve as a model for delivering public benefits through schools. In the proposal, homeless liaisons, or school district personnel who are responsible for ensuring that homeless children are enrolled in school and achieve positive outcomes, would help identify students whose families would benefit from housing choice vouchers.

This is one version of delivering public benefits through schools that will likely produce tremendous positive outcomes as children with the most serious housing needs achieve housing stability, which is associated with better educational outcomes. Expanding that model to include other types of public benefits would further reduce the impact of poverty on effective learning and otherwise improve the well-being of children and their families. New efforts to deliver services through schools should definitely be targeted to established community schools, federal agency activity should be developed to broaden outreach to other schools and to urge communities to utilize their existing resources for these types of service models.

The Obama administration is already taking some important steps in the direction of connecting the delivery of public benefits to schools.

Federal support for community schools

Community schools combine their educational mandate with other antipoverty programs designed to boost student achievement, stay open longer to increase parental and community involvement, and provide more noninstructional services than traditional schools. Most community schools enjoy relationships with nonprofit partners that make service delivery possible. What’s needed to make these programs available to schools nationwide is consistent federal funding as

proposed by the Obama administration and championed by House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD), which could greatly increase the number of community schools and the depth of services offered.

Two of the administration's hallmark education reform programs, Race to the Top and the School Improvement Grant program encourage the implementation of wraparound services at low-performing schools. Rep. Hoyer and Sen. Ben Nelson (D-NE) also introduced the Full Service Community Schools Act (H.R. 3545/S. 1655) in September 2009. The legislation aims to dramatically increase the number of community schools by providing \$200 million in annual funding to states and districts to support community school development.

These programs can help states and school districts lay the groundwork for scaling up community schools. The Department of Education can maximize the effectiveness of community schools by offering specific guidance directing districts to offer services in partnership with local social services agencies. And any community school grant program should prioritize funding for those districts that demonstrate existing collaborative efforts.

Create a demonstration grant specifically focused on schools

The federal interagency administrative collaborations described above have great potential and far-reaching implications for service delivery, but evaluating the effectiveness of delivering these services via schools, as opposed to other locations, should be connected to a demonstration grant. We recommend that the secretary of Department of Education, in consultation with HHS and HUD, select grantees based on the extent to which a community can demonstrate the following:

- Commitments to participate from multiple local public benefits agencies and schools
- Detailed memorandums of understanding among the various agencies involved
- Identification of other funding sources, including those available through other federal, state, and local sources as well as those made available via private entities such as foundations and corporate interests

Ultimately, this demonstration grant would encourage implementation and help with any start-up costs, assisting local agencies that may be experiencing funding and staffing limitations.

Finally, in reauthorizing each public-benefits program, Congress should seek to include new provisions that advance school-based antipoverty efforts. This could include freeing up new resources, but may also come in other forms. The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, for example, is likely to be reauthorized by Congress next year. During that process, new provisions could be included that incentivize or reward TANF agencies to collaborate with schools or work with other public benefit programs to create central connection points and/or simplified application procedures.

State and local governments—Open up and then establish local interagency committees

For too long, schools have not viewed themselves as part of antipoverty solutions for families. School services are directed solely to students and mostly in the academic domain. Schools should capitalize on their access to students and their families and open the school space and schedule to services for adults. To successfully reach parents, schools should remain open longer and allocate space to other government agencies and nonprofit partners to assist in service delivery.

State and local social welfare agencies must also be willing to be flexible in transferring service delivery to schools. Allowing agency staff to work out of a school, or changing guidelines to expand who can screen and enroll applicants for benefits, can extend the reach of programs to the most disconnected families.

These efforts need to be standardized by establishing local interagency committees that can work with the schools and with federal public-benefits agencies to see these services are delivered effectively and efficiently. Families living in poverty come into contact with several agencies, including schools, social welfare offices, and charity organizations. Interagency committees or task forces would help in determining where appropriate linkages on service delivery can be established and the extent to which local guidelines must be changed to facilitate such efforts.

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The federal government has encouraged such collaboration through the introduction of the Promise Neighborhoods program. One specific goal of the program is to “integrate programs and break down agency ‘silos’ so that solutions are implemented effectively.”²⁵ Another useful local model is the Kent School Service Network in Michigan, which depends on the collaboration between the county government, the school district, and foundations supporting the effort. Representatives of each of agency come together monthly for planning meetings. Federal agencies could encourage this kind of collaboration by building their own successful collaborations and working together to translate their models to the local level.

Conclusion

Research shows that children who experience poverty have worse adult outcomes in terms of educational attainment, adult poverty status, and nonmarital childbearing than children in higher-income families.²⁶ Children who grow up in poverty are therefore at high risk for becoming adults who live in poverty. But there are ways to break this cycle.

One solution is as close as the neighborhood school. We know that effective, academically rigorous schools can provide students with the skills they need to pursue college and productive careers. Schools can further increase their impact on students by also implementing school-based antipoverty strategies in collaboration with other social welfare agencies and organizations that increase family economic security and stability.

School-based strategies like the ones discussed in this paper also would help to improve the delivery of public benefits, addressing some of the problems that hinder participation and generally promoting the well-being of children and their families. That is why our recommendation about how the federal government and Congress can act to make these reforms happen more quickly and more deeply across our country are as timely as they are critical to the future of our least well off children.

Endnotes

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Saba Bireda comes to American Progress from Philadelphia where she was a Philadelphia Bar Foundation Fellow with the Education Law Center. As a fellow, she worked on several education policy issues, including school climate and discipline, charter schools, teacher quality, and high school graduation exams. Her efforts included administrative and legislative advocacy, producing fact sheets and reports, and litigation. Saba also gained legal experience as an associate in the corporate litigation department of Morgan Lewis and Bockius.

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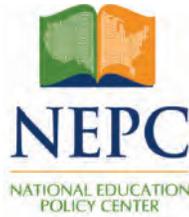
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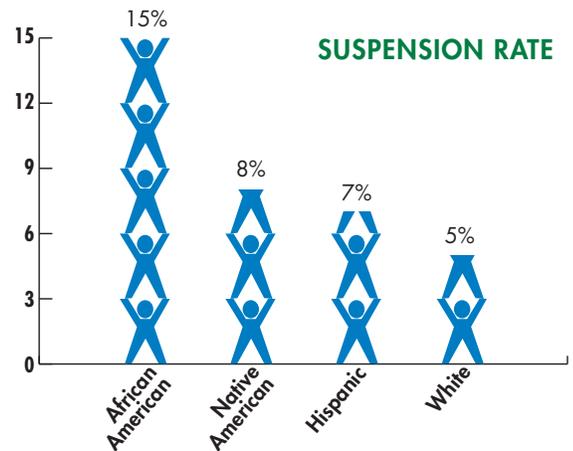
NEPC DISCIPLINE RESOURCE SHEET

School Discipline What the Research Tells Us: Myths and Facts

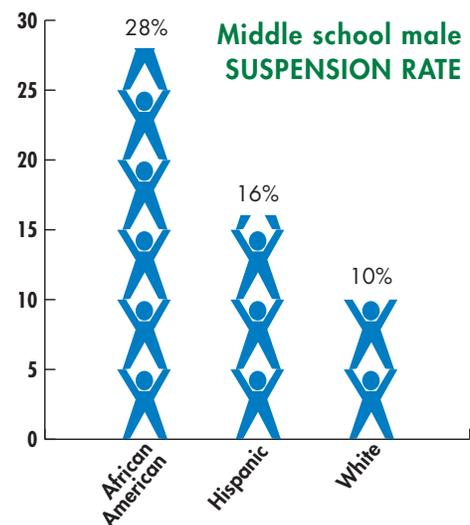
This is a summary of the report *Discipline Policies, Successful Schools, and Racial Justice*, written by Daniel J. Losen, published by the National Education Policy Center and funded by the Ford Foundation and the Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice.

The complete report, along with suggested statutory changes to implement the report's recommendations, will be available as of October 5, 2011, at: <http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/discipline-policies>.

- Each year, more than 3.25 million K–12 students are suspended at least once.
- African American students are suspended **THREE TIMES** as often as White students – 15 percent versus 5 percent. Hispanic students (7 percent) and Native American students (8 percent) are also suspended at higher rates than White students.



- Nationally, 28 percent of African American male middle school students and 16 percent of Hispanic male middle school students are suspended each year, compared to 10 percent of White male students.



MYTH: Suspending disruptive students is necessary to make sure well-behaved students can learn.

FACT: There is no evidence that frequently suspending disruptive students improves learning. In fact, schools with high suspension rates tend to have lower academic achievement, even after controlling for demographics. Many schools are now using suspension so often (primarily for minor infractions) that more than a third of the student body is suspended every year! Research also indicates that suspension is related to an increased risk for dropping out. Students who are suspended miss important instructional time. Students with learning disabilities and students struggling academically are also disproportionately suspended.

MYTH: Teachers need to suspend students to maintain order and safety.

FACT: Suspension is sometimes a necessary measure of last resort. However, teachers and leaders trained in child and adolescent development and classroom management can use a variety of methods to improve student behavior. Moreover, strategies such as system-wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS), have proven to be effective in reducing disciplinary removal while raising achievement. PBIS relies on careful data monitoring, shifts school culture and policies to better support positive behavior, and provides a tiered system of supports and interventions for students with challenging behaviors.

MYTH: Rising suspension rates are a necessary response to increasing school violence.

FACT: Most suspensions are not responses to serious violence. Most states mandate expulsion (not suspension) for weapons, violence, and drug possession/use. Rising suspension rates reflect an increase in school removal for other, lesser infractions. Compared to 102,000 expulsions in 2006-2007 (the most recent year of available data), more than 3.25 million students were suspended at least once, mostly for nonviolent infractions such as truancy, dress-code violations, inappropriate language, and classroom disruptions. Advocates representing students in expulsion cases have even found that some expulsions are for minor, nonviolent infractions, such as repeated instances of talking back or not following a dress code.

MYTH: Students of color are suspended at higher rates because they misbehave more often.

FACT: Researchers have found no evidence that students of color engage in more misbehavior than White students. Research does document that the largest disparities in discipline of White and African American students are for infractions that involve judgment calls by adults – talking back or disrespect, for instance. For example, an analysis of North Carolina discipline data found that African American first-time offenders were far more likely to be suspended than White first-time offenders for the same infraction.

MYTH: Suspensions are necessary to deter future infractions.

FACT: The opposite seems to be true. Students suspended in sixth grade are far more likely to be suspended in later grades. Further, by removing students from supervised settings, suspensions put students at greater risk for gang involvement, dropping out, and juvenile delinquency.

MYTH: Suspensions will get parents' attention and help curb misbehavior.

FACT: Suspensions disproportionately affect students living in poverty and those with single parents. Missing work to stay home with a suspended student can cost caregivers crucial income or even their jobs; parents who cannot miss work often end up leaving students unattended. Schools can better engage parents by working with them to identify solutions that support their children's needs or in implementing solutions that can improve the quality of school as a whole.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Districts, states, and Congress would improve outcomes by implementing the following research-based recommendations for creating fair and effective school discipline systems:

- Strengthen support and training for teachers on effective classroom and behavior management.
- Improve annual collection and reporting of discipline data, disaggregated by race, gender, disability status, ELL status, and free/reduced price lunch eligibility.
- Align discipline policy with academic achievement goals and require support and intervention – rather than punishment – for schools with disproportionately high suspension rates.

Teachers Aren't the Enemy

[Pedro Noguera](#) and [Michelle Fine](#)

April 21, 2011 | [This article appeared in the May 9, 2011 edition of The Nation.](#)

Public school teachers and their unions are under a sustained assault that is still unfolding. In 2010 Michelle Rhee, former Washington, DC, schools chancellor, announced the creation of a multimillion-dollar lobbying organization for the explicit purpose of undermining teachers unions. She has charged that “bad teachers” are the primary cause of the problems that beset America’s schools. New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg has asserted that effective teachers need no experience. Romanticizing the young, energetic, passionate (read: cheap) teacher, he has made eliminating seniority preferences in layoffs (*aka*, last in, first out—or LIFO) his pet cause (it has been stymied for the time being by the state legislature).

New Jersey Governor Chris Christie has slashed school aid by \$1.2 billion while refusing to comply with a court-mandated formula for school funding equity. He has become a right-wing hero by demonizing teachers, lambasting unions, challenging tenure rights and introducing a crude teacher-evaluation process based on student test scores. Christie is also pushing what he calls a “final solution”—\$360 million in tax credits for a tuition voucher system that would permit any child in New Jersey go to any school, public or private, and would include state subsidies for some students already attending parochial schools and yeshivas. It’s hard to think of another field in which experience is considered a liability and those who know the least about the nuts and bolts of an enterprise are embraced as experts.

The attack has diverse roots, and comes not only from Republicans. Groups like Democrats for Education Reform have dedicated substantial resources to undermining teachers unions. With Race to the Top, the Obama administration has put its weight behind a reform agenda featuring charter schools, which employ mostly nonunion labor, as its centerpiece. A disturbing bipartisan consensus is emerging that favors a market model for public schools that would abandon America’s historic commitment to providing education to all children as a civil right. This model would make opportunities available largely to those motivated and able to leave local schools; treat parents as consumers and children as disposable commodities that can be judged by their test scores; and unravel collective bargaining agreements so that experienced teachers can be replaced with fungible itinerant workers who have little training, less experience and no long-term commitment to the profession.

In this atmosphere of hostility to public schools and teachers, it has become nearly impossible to have a rational discussion among educators, parents, advocates, youth and policy-makers about what should be done. Honest analyses suggest that removing ineffective teachers is an excessively slow and arduous process, though unions are often blamed when administrators have failed to document problems systematically. Likewise, the LIFO system for layoffs does need reform because it contributes to high turnover in the most disadvantaged schools. These schools are the hardest to staff, and in cities like New York, Los Angeles and Chicago, many veteran teachers have found ways to avoid being assigned to such schools. But candid conversations about how to solve these problems are extraordinarily difficult when any comment critical of unions is likely to be used as a weapon by the right.

None of the reforms on the table address the inequality and opportunity gaps that plague our schools. Raging debates over LIFO, seniority, teacher evaluation and test-based school closings do little to improve schools and much to distract from the real challenges. Moreover, because current reforms have been designed to promote school choice and weaken the unions, they have been exacerbating the challenges rather than fixing them.

But teachers unions and their allies are fighting back. Trade unionists, civil rights activists and educators have rallied with the Wisconsin protesters and put Governor Scott Walker on the defensive. To have the greatest impact, the unions must find a way to mobilize parents, young people and communities. Without their support, teachers will not succeed in countering these assaults. Getting that support will not be easy, because it requires educators to acknowledge that the school status quo is untenable and to join labor rights to educational justice.

In a small but growing number of school districts, teachers and their unions are taking the lead rather than waiting for policy-makers to act. At Columbus High School in the Bronx, teachers are working with students and parents to resist the district's efforts to close the school by addressing the causes of student failure. In the South Bronx, parents, labor, educators and community organizers, united as CC9, have designed a strategy to reverse teacher turnover by providing new teachers with support from veteran lead teachers.

In Chicago, Karen Lewis, of the Caucus of Rank-and-File Educators (CORE), is presiding over the Chicago Teachers Union with a platform to reverse Renaissance 2010, a program to close many schools serving poor children of the South Side and timed to coincide with the demolition of housing projects pushing great numbers of poor people out of the city. CORE is focused on much more than salaries and benefits. It is challenging the use of high-stakes testing to punish students, teachers and schools, organizing for greater equity in school finances and mobilizing with parents against school closings.

In Milwaukee, longtime education activist Bob Peterson, editor of *Rethinking Schools*, is running for union president. Peterson worked with a broad array of local activists to defeat mayoral control of the schools and co-founded an educator/parent task force on responsible assessment.

And in California, the California Teachers Association sponsored the Quality Education Investment Act (QEIA), which has targeted funding toward reducing class size, hiring more counselors and providing professional development for teachers focused on the sharing of best practices. Schools that have enjoyed QEIA support have shown marked student improvements, particularly for low-income young people of color and English as a second language learners. This activism will culminate in a national Save Our Schools March in Washington on July 30. We can begin to feel the rumble of solidarity, with parents, teachers, labor and youth taking back what is rightfully theirs—public schools and democratic public education.

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BUILDING CAPACITY

Changing Professional Practice Requires Changing Beliefs

Educators must address underlying beliefs if we hope to significantly improve learning for culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students.

BY PATRICIA L. GUERRA AND
SARAH W. NELSON

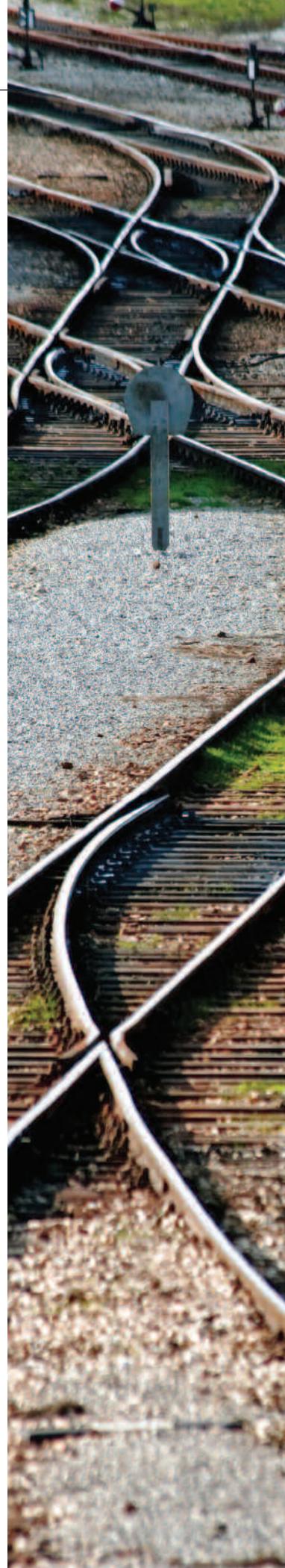
An abundance of research suggests that teachers' personal beliefs drive professional practice. Unfortunately, the prevalence of deficit thinking, which is the inclination to view certain groups of students as inherently flawed, is well documented in the literature on pre- and inservice teacher education (Valencia 1997). In spite of this, most school improvement efforts continue to focus on changing only the behavior of educators, rather than working on both beliefs and behaviors. We believe this is, at least in part, why 30 years of school reform have failed to significantly change educational outcomes for culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students (CSRQ 2006; Berman, Chambliss, and Geiser 1999).

Why don't school leaders address beliefs? Could it be they ascribe to the old adage of change the behaviors and the beliefs will follow? Or could they hold many of the same deficit beliefs teachers do, believing students and families, rather than educators, should be the target of change? Or could they be aware of the deleterious effects of deficit beliefs but aren't quite sure how to approach staff about this sensitive topic?

CHANGE BEHAVIORS

If school leaders believe, like many people do, that changed behavior will result in changed beliefs, they are mistaken. Research reveals that for lasting changes in behavior to occur, beliefs and assumptions must be brought to consciousness and the deep structures supporting behaviors must be addressed (Yero 2003; Bocchino

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If school leaders believe that changed behavior will result in changed beliefs, they are mistaken.

1993). As Shulman (1999, p. 3) points out, “The inside beliefs and understandings must come out, and only then can something outside get in. . . . The first influence on new learning is not what teachers do pedagogically but the learning that’s already inside the learner.” Thus *without* addressing the underlying deficit beliefs influencing educators’ behavior, providing “high-quality” or “research-based” professional development does little to change practice once educators return to classrooms and close their doors (Hunzicker 2004; Pohan 1996; Bocchino 1993).

WHERE DO I START?

School leaders who are aware of the need to focus on beliefs along with practice may hesitate to address this problem because they aren’t quite sure where to start or because they doubt they have sufficient cultural knowledge and skills to tackle these tough issues. Such concerns are warranted. Diversity training requires knowledgeable, strategic, and skillful implementation. One-shot workshops do little to transform deficit beliefs, and poorly implemented professional development can backfire and cause more harm than good by alienating teachers and making them resistant to the need for this type of change. For this reason, care must be taken when planning and implementing training to address teacher beliefs and develop cultural responsiveness.

Although a myriad of literature describes the behavior of different cultural groups and the need for becoming culturally responsive, there is little that explains how to do so. We suggest a six-step process that centers on transforming educator beliefs as well as their practice. Derived from our training and research in the field, we have found it to be effective with both practitioners and educational leadership students at the university.

CONDUCT A PERSONAL INVENTORY

Before beginning this journey, a school leader must ask, “Am I the one to lead this effort?” As deceptively simple as this question appears, it requires that a leader take an honest look and critically assess her own: 1) beliefs about diversity, 2) cultural knowledge, 3) facilitation skills, 4) commitment to equity, and 5) conviction and courage in the face of resistance.

Are your beliefs about diversity additive? To determine whether beliefs are additive or subtractive, consider how students from diverse backgrounds are viewed. For example, is cultural diversity seen as an asset to teaching and learning, or are some groups of children viewed as “at risk” or “disadvantaged” by their cultural and economic backgrounds? Is every child capable of learning at high levels or only those with the “right” experiences? Do all parents value education, or are some viewed as not making education a top priority? Individuals with an additive view see diversity as a rich resource that can be tapped to bridge cultural differences and maximize learning for all children. Because these individuals understand that schooling is a process of cultural transmission, they believe that every student can learn when pro-

vided with a culturally responsive education. They also believe that every parent values education and demonstrates this value in a variety of ways, ranging from regularly assisting their children with homework to working two jobs to ensure their children have a “better life” than theirs. Moreover, they believe that developing cultural understanding is not a necessity just for some, but for all students and families.

Do you have the cultural knowledge to know where you are going? Having sufficient knowledge to lead this process means understanding culture at a deep level. Although many educators are familiar with differences in the visible aspects of culture — such as customs, clothing, and language — to aide teachers in developing cultural responsiveness, the leader of this effort must understand the invisible aspects of culture. These include important aspects of cultural variance, such as thinking and communication styles, power distribution, role expectations, and identity development.

Are you comfortable leading this journey? Transforming beliefs requires that educators engage in critical reflection to understand their own cultural identity and to consider how they view cultural differ-

ences. It also requires discussing personal views with others so that the existence of multiple perspectives becomes apparent. Such discussions often are emotionally laden and can become heated. The facilitator must be skilled in leading this type of conversation so that the discussion is productive. In addition, the facilitator must not be afraid to challenge the deficit beliefs that are certain to surface in this process. At the same time, the facilitator must address those beliefs in a dignifying manner so that participants know this is a safe space to explore and reframe ideas.

Do you have the conviction to lead this journey? The goal of this process is to help educators develop the beliefs, knowledge, and skills that will allow them to transform schools so that *all* students are well served. Realizing this transformation requires that educators acknowledge and modify those aspects of the education system that have benefited some students over others. This is easier said than done. While almost everyone will agree that serving all children well is an important goal, not everyone is willing to acknowledge that the system is inequitable, particularly those who have benefited from it. Furthermore, many will actively resist efforts to change the system if it means they will no longer enjoy advantages they have long held. This is when the work of creating culturally responsive schools becomes challenging, even daunting. The leader of such efforts must be willing to continue the work when faced with resistance. The leader must have relentless conviction about the importance of this work and must be courageous when those who hold power work against such efforts.

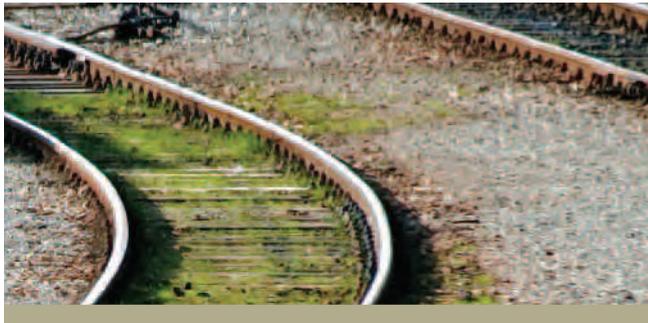
RAISE THE ISSUE

Once a leader for this process has been identified, the next step is raising the issue with staff. One of the most effective ways to do this is by using data. Because educators’ beliefs are the lens through which all decisions about schooling are made, inequities exist in many areas at all levels of the system. Examining data that have been disaggregated by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status (SES) makes these inequities visible. Leaders can present faculty with a wide variety of data that include information related to special education, discipline, course failures, retentions, advanced classes, gifted education, college-bound, vocational programs, and parent participation. Seeing these data helps teachers understand that the achievement gap is not created by deficiencies in students and families but by a system that serves some groups better than others. This activity can be facilitated over



“They’re reducing my class size by assigning me to a smaller room.”

several faculty meetings or on a professional development day. Before presenting the data, remove any identifiable teacher information. By masking the data, teachers will be less likely to feel attacked and more likely to engage in a productive discussion about the significance of the data.



Identify teachers who appear to empathize with students' experiences, don't express judgments about cultural differences, and want to learn more.

When the data are first presented to teachers, some teachers will validate the inequities, some will remain silent, but many others will vehemently insist the data support the perception that students and parents are the problem. At this point, it is important for the leader to remember that teachers are well-intentioned individuals who lack adequate cultural knowledge and skills to dispel their deficit beliefs and, as such, interpret data through this lens. The leader should avoid getting drawn into an angry debate. Instead, the leader should address deficit beliefs by offering alternative explanations for inequities in the data. Allowing deficit beliefs to go unaddressed may leave teachers thinking such beliefs are founded. Once a session has concluded, the leader should talk to individual teachers to hear their concerns, particularly those who did not voice their opinions. This action will go a long way in keeping the lines of communication open and in building trust with staff by demonstrating concern for their needs as well as student needs.

Once the staff is aware of inequities in the data, the leader helps them develop a vision of a culturally responsive school. Reading stories of educators who are successfully working with culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students and parents is one strategy for accomplishing this. These books, such as *Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American*

Children, can be read individually or in small groups. After reading, the leader convenes staff to discuss the factors that contributed to success — such as the additive beliefs and practices culturally responsive teachers and schools exhibit — and assists staff in identifying assets in the school and identifying the knowledge, skills, and structures to be developed. In addition to providing evidence to counteract the beliefs that some groups of students do not want to learn or come with less ability, these success stories help staff see that a teacher does not have to be a person of color to successfully work with culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students.

For many teachers, reading success stories will instill new hope that they, too, can be successful with students of diverse backgrounds. However, not all teachers will be as easily convinced. Some will reject these stories as an anomaly, often believing the students in the stories are “not like” the students they teach or that the schools have more resources than the school where they work. It is important to note these varied reactions because they reflect teachers' underlying beliefs. More important, they are an indication of a teacher's receptiveness to developing cultural responsiveness.

ASSESS READINESS

While every teacher needs to develop cultural responsiveness, they will not all follow the same path in doing so. Some teachers who were not previously aware of system inequities may need more time to process this idea before moving forward. Others may be eager to learn at a faster pace. One thing we have learned through our work is that you cannot force a teacher to move faster than she is willing to go. Force creates only resistance and fear, which slow the process. For this reason, assessing the readiness of teachers for more extensive learning is critical. Cultural simulations, such as *BARNGA* (Thiagarajan 1990) or *Bafá Bafá* (Shirts 1977), are an effective way to assess readiness. Designed to replicate diverse cultural groups with different expectations for behavior and the conflicts that occur as a result of misunderstanding cultural differences, these simulations can help identify which teachers are ready to pursue more exploration of cultural responsiveness. While facilitating the debriefing, ask teachers to discuss their experiences and feelings and draw parallels between the experiences of culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students. Then listen carefully to their responses and observe their behavior. Identify teachers

who appear to empathize with students' experiences, don't express judgments about cultural differences, and want to learn more. Once this group has been identified, approach each teacher individually and encourage each one to participate in this important professional development effort.

After a group of teachers is identified, the next step is to implement differentiated training. While volunteers undergo more intensive learning experiences, the remaining staff continues activities such as those described earlier. Have staff read additional success stories and discuss them in meetings. Engage staff in cultural simulations and ongoing data analysis to build cultural awareness and to help the nonvolunteers realize the need for change. But most important, keep the issue of developing cultural responsiveness on the table to reinforce that it's not another passing fad but a lasting commitment to equity and an assurance of a high-quality education for every student.

The group of teachers going through more intensive training will play a key role in developing readiness among other staff. As the volunteers participate in learning experiences throughout the year, they will spread the word about how much they are learning and enjoying these experiences. Visible signs of increased student engagement and learning and more parent participation in volunteers' classrooms will support the effectiveness of culturally responsive practices. These side effects, combined with further readiness development for nonvolunteers, produce more volunteers for a second round of training in year two. As a result, capacity grows. By year three, the final year of training, most of the remaining teachers have developed readiness. The few who haven't find they are outnumbered by culturally responsive peers. At this point, the leader should have a frank discussion with such teachers to convey that becoming culturally responsive is nonnegotiable. They either reluctantly participate or choose to leave the school. In either case, they have little influence on others.

INCREASE KNOWLEDGE

To provide intensive learning experiences that will expand teachers' cultural knowledge, have volunteers form a learning community of no more than 40 individuals or divide them into small study groups. Use a variety of activities to help teachers explore their own cultural identity and that of students and families in the community. Through this process of exploration, teachers learn that culture includes hidden aspects, such as values, beliefs, norms, role definitions, com-

munication styles, and worldviews, that influence instruction and classroom decisions, students' learning patterns and behavior, and teacher interactions with students and parents. Furthermore, they learn that children whose cultural orientations match the one that is rewarded in school (i.e., independence, individual identity, competition) experience more aca-

Teachers must rethink practices they once thought were color-blind and equitable.

ademic success than those with different cultural orientations (i.e., interdependence, group identity, group success). Lack of understanding of these differences by educators often leads to negative consequences for students, including disproportionate representation in special education, overreferral to discipline, underrepresentation in advanced academic and gifted programs, and high retention and dropout rates.

After several sessions, a safe environment will be created in which teachers feel they can talk frankly without fear of repercussions. Since developing trust among teachers at this step is a priority, the discussion must remain focused on depersonalized practice in order to prevent teachers from feeling attacked and shutting down. When deficit beliefs do surface, leaders must avoid being confrontational with teachers, address these beliefs as stereotypes, and reframe them using the cultural knowledge and insights gained from the activities.

CHALLENGE AND REFRAME BELIEFS, CHANGE PRACTICE

Once teachers have developed adequate cultural knowledge and trust has been established, teachers will be ready to explore their personal data. Disaggregate the data not only by student ethnicity and SES but also by teacher and program. Gather and examine survey and interview data focused on building relationships with students and parents.

When the discussion is focused on inequities in their personal practice, teachers' deficit beliefs will surface. Faced with this cognitive dissonance, teachers must rethink practices they once thought were color-blind and equitable. While some will accept responsibility and express guilt over "harming" children, many others will counter with deficit beliefs. As

each belief is expressed, the deep structures underlying it are examined, deconstructed, and reframed using knowledge on cultural variation. For example, rather than believing certain groups of parents “don’t value education” when they fail to attend meetings, teachers are asked to describe parents’ behavior in these situations, consider alternative explanations, and verify conclusions with parents, students, or a cultural mediator. Using this approach, teachers discover that *all* parents value education but that other reasons prevent their attendance at these meetings, such as having different role expectations for parent participation or simply lacking transportation. After examining personal practice and reframing deficit beliefs, teachers are ready to learn how to change their practice to become more culturally responsive. The leader should guide teachers in exploring how they can apply culturally responsive strategies gleaned from the readings.

BUILD CAPACITY AND A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SCHOOL

Once a core group of teachers has been through this process, build capacity within the school by providing professional development for another group of volunteers, continue to develop further readiness among the staff yet to be trained, and appoint teachers from the first cycle of training to serve in key roles on school improvement committees. In these roles, teachers apply their newly acquired cultural lens to school policies and procedures to identify bias that once went unnoticed and work with school leaders to transform inequities into culturally responsive practices. Teachers can examine discipline and grading policies, curriculum and instructional resources, assessment and referral procedures for special and gifted education, student counseling practices, parent involvement programs, extracurricular activities, college and vocational programs, and teacher hiring practices.

After three years of this work, schools will see evidence of transformed classrooms. Teachers learn that transforming deficit beliefs into a cultural lens and changing subtractive practices to additive ones will not only promote effective communication with students and parents, but also will lead to engaged student learning and higher achievement, as well as to parents and a community who feel welcomed by the school and who strongly support it. Once this occurs, do not stop the work. Transforming beliefs and practices is an ongoing journey, not a destination. ■

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Relevant: Beyond the Basics, Fall 2009, Number 36

Monica Edwards was frustrated. As a teacher in an urban elementary school, Edwards faced a class that was largely African American and Latino: she was neither. She often felt that she wasn't effectively reaching them, and she was beginning to get discouraged. (Monica Edwards isn't her real name. She's a real teacher who told me her story privately.)

After hearing a colleague briefly mention her success in using culturally relevant instructional strategies, Edwards decided to try her hand at the same. She bought a commercial CD called *Multiplication Rap*, which promised to teach mathematics based on repetition and rhyme, hand-clapping and a hip-hop musical style. She was sure the CD would appeal to her students' interest in the rap music genre.

In the classroom, however, things didn't go quite as planned. Students focused on the music itself, paying little attention to the math objectives. Several were unimpressed with the CD, and commented on the poor audio quality and amateurish lyrics. Except for the musical debate, nothing much happened. The failure rate on Edwards' weekly exam did not change.

Sadly, Edwards' experience is not uncommon. Many teachers have a cursory understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy, and a desire to see it succeed in their classrooms. The problem is that in many cases, teachers have *only* a cursory understanding, and their efforts to bridge the cultural gap often fall short.

"Culturally relevant pedagogy" is a term that describes effective teaching in culturally diverse classrooms. It can be a daunting idea to understand and implement. Yet even when people do not know the term, they tend to appreciate culturally relevant pedagogy when they see it.

Think of the film *Stand and Deliver*, in which Edward James Olmos, as teacher Jaime Escalante, teaches his students about negative numbers using the example of digging and filling holes in the sand on the California beach. He tells his mostly Latino class that the Mayan civilization independently invented the concept of zero. When the students begin to catch on, the audience is inspired by this moment of epiphany.

Most people understand intuitively that this type of teaching engages and motivates students. Teachers want to be a Jaime Escalante for their own students — and they leap at the chance to try new techniques or tools designed to bridge a cultural gap.

Often, these well-meaning educators assume that culturally relevant pedagogy means simply acknowledging ethnic holidays, including popular culture in the curriculum or adopting colloquial speech. And many are afraid to take it farther than that. Why? Largely because they believe the following myths:

- Only teachers of color can be culturally relevant.
- Culturally relevant pedagogy is not appropriate for white students.
- Caring teachers of diverse students have no classroom management skills.
- The purpose of culturally relevant pedagogy is to help diverse students “feel good” about themselves.
- Culturally relevant teachers attend to learning styles by addressing African American male students’ need for kinesthetic activities or by allowing Asian American students to work alone.

These myths and misperceptions often result in awkward classroom moments, ineffective instructional practices and counterproductive teacher-student and teacher-parent relationships.

Let’s tackle the biggest myth first. Culturally relevant teaching may indeed boost the self-esteem of your students, but that’s not the main reason you should adopt it. You should take a culturally relevant approach because it will maximize student learning.

A culturally relevant pedagogy builds on the premise that learning may differ across cultures and teachers can enhance students’ success by acquiring knowledge of their cultural backgrounds and translating this knowledge into instructional practice.

Culturally relevant pedagogy has theoretical roots in the notion that learning is a socially mediated process and related to students’ cultural experiences. Culture is an important survival strategy that is passed down from one generation to another through the processes of enculturation and socialization, a type of roadmap that guides and shapes behavior. If new information is *not* relevant to those frameworks of culture and cognition, people will never remember it. If the information *is* relevant, they will never forget it.

The March To the Mailbox

Let me give you an example to show how culturally relevant pedagogy works, and why it works for all students.

A teacher in a low-income school once told me about her struggle with that age-old task: teaching students to write a business letter. Her textbook offered what sounded like some pretty good advice for making this task relevant to students. Bring a toy catalog to class, it said, and let students write letters placing an order for a Game Boy or other item.

The teacher tried to picture this working with her students. Most of them couldn’t afford a Game Boy. And who orders catalog items with a business letter these days? She decided that this exercise, so seemingly good in theory, would seem completely pointless to her students.

So she found another, more appropriate task. She told her students they were going to write letters to the mayor, asking for changes that would make life better in their neighborhood. She told students not to rely solely on their own perspectives: they should go into the community and ask relatives, neighbors and church leaders about the problems in the community. The students did their research — learning about their community and strengthening their bonds with family — and wrote their letters. The teacher held a “march to the mailbox,” mailing their letters with great ceremony. And not long afterward, the mayor was on the phone with the principal, asking when he could visit the class and address their concerns in person.

The cultural norms and behaviors of schools are based on a very specific set of mainstream assumptions. When there is a cultural mismatch or cultural incompatibility between students and their school, certain negative outcomes might occur, such as miscommunication; confrontations among the student, the teacher, and the home; hostility; alienation; diminished self-esteem; and possibly school failure.

In the case above, someone assumed that all students had the means to envision themselves ordering a Game Boy. Perhaps just as important, it assumed that young people are interested only in acquiring toys — that they had no interests or lives outside of getting and spending. The teacher’s solution to this problem was truly culturally relevant because it drew on the students’ resources and experiences. It worked extremely well for this group of students, who got to see their own knowledge, and that of their community, honored in the classroom. But clearly it would have worked well even in other communities.

What could Monica Edwards have done differently? Culturally relevant teaching requires the teacher to possess a thorough knowledge of the content *and* employ multiple representations of knowledge that use students’ lived experiences to connect new knowledge to home, community, and global settings.

What do we mean multiple representations? Teachers need to find pertinent examples in students’ experience; they need to compare and contrast new concepts with concepts students already know; they need to bridge the gap between the known (students’ personal cultural knowledge) and the unknown (materials and concepts to be mastered).

In one of my texts, *Culturally Responsive Lesson Planning*, my colleagues and I present culturally relevant and transformative lesson units in four subject areas that are aligned with content area standards. Examples include:

- teaching weather and other scientific concepts by first helping students to understand the connections between their culture and weather as portrayed in myths, folklore, and family sayings;
- teaching social studies by helping students in urban communities to analyze and report voting patterns in their neighborhood and execute a voter education project.

There is a widespread myth that teachers who care about a culturally relevant classroom are *not* the ones who care about rigor. In reality, culturally relevant pedagogy is perfectly aligned with

high standards in the content areas. Just look at the standards of the [National Council for Teaching of Mathematics](#). The first of NCTM's principles and standards is the Equity Principle, which states: "Excellence in mathematics education requires equity — high expectations and strong support for all students."

Culturally relevant teaching isn't about lowering those "high expectations." It's about providing strong supports by approaching effective instruction through a cultural lens. I believe that many diverse students fail in schools not because their teachers don't know their content, but because their teachers haven't made the connections between the content and their students' existing mental schemes, prior knowledge and cultural perspectives. In helping learners make sense of new concepts and ideas, culturally relevant teachers create learning opportunities in which students' voices emerge and knowledge and meaning are constructed from the students' perspectives.

Monica Edwards, the teacher in the opening of this story, is a good teacher. She wanted her students to learn, and she correctly identified the student/school cultural gap as a possible reason for their lack of learning gains. She and her colleagues deserve support in the form of professional development that helps them achieve their goals. Not superficial, one-day teacher workshops on diversity or multiculturalism: these often do more to maintain stereotypes and biases about culturally diverse students and their families than to change them. Not a focus on international festivals and once-a-year programs honoring Black History Month or Cinco de Mayo. Teachers need to be encouraged to question the curriculum and the pedagogy.

Educated Guesses

Culturally relevant teachers form caring relationships with their students.

I remember an incident that occurred while I was observing a preservice teacher at work in a mostly-black elementary school in the South. The topic was classification: students were supposed to show ability to sort out like and unlike objects and consonant sounds. When the teacher showed students a photograph of a wrinkly, cabbage-like vegetable, she expected them to identify it as *kale*. Students were stumped, though some guessed that it was *collard greens*. Later the teacher showed the students a picture of broccoli, which the students also could not identify. (Not everybody cooks broccoli. I grew up in Alabama, and I never saw broccoli on a plate until I was in college.) The teacher couldn't hide her shock that the students didn't recognize this vegetable: the students began to suspect that they were being lured into a game they couldn't win. Soon the students were acting up, and the teacher, upset, was storming out of the room.

I searched my mind for something to do. I recalled hearing students talking, before class, about the cars they'd seen in the school parking lot that morning. I asked them if they could name the various types of cars they'd seen. As it turned out, they had quite an extensive knowledge of brands and makes of cars. We classified the information we collected, sorting the cars into vehicles driven by first-grade teachers, vehicles driven by second-grade teachers, and so on. We even did a little geography, with students using a map to point out where various cars came from. Students had some trouble finding Sweden, but they knew Volvos came from there. We talked about what a hypothesis was — an educated guess — and as homework, I asked them to look

over their data about cars and make a hypothesis about the difference between principals and new teachers. The next day, many students hypothesized, based on the cars in the parking lot, that principals make more money than teachers.

You could say I got lucky in this situation. But if you have a true, caring relationship with your students, you don't have to be lucky. You will know what their interests are, what information they relate to. Even in an abstract discipline like mathematics, relationships with students matter. When you're talking about distances, it certainly helps to be able to say, "I heard you talking about your cousin Miguel. How far do you think you go to visit him?"

Culturally relevant teachers recognize that they do not instruct culturally homogenized, generic students in generic school settings. Teachers armed with a repertoire of generic teaching skills often find themselves ineffective and ill-prepared when faced with a classroom of culturally diverse students.

Teachers need to re-envision their roles in schools. Culturally relevant teachers are systemic reformers, members of caring communities, reflective practitioners and researchers, pedagogical content specialists and antiracist educators.

As systemic reformers, culturally relevant teachers must lead, not simply respond to, the call for whole school reform. Educating and mentoring peers is part of that. All teachers, not just novices, benefit from the expertise and guidance of master teachers who observe their classes and coach them on a regular basis. In addition, teachers need release time to observe master teachers in their classes and periods for conferencing and planning.

They also need to make time to reflect on their classroom experiences. Reflection enables teachers to examine the interplay of context and culture as well as their own behaviors, talents and preferences. Reflective teachers are inquirers who examine their actions, instructional goals, methods and materials in reference to their students' cultural experiences and preferred learning environments. The culturally relevant teacher probes the school, community and home environments searching for insights into diverse students' abilities, preferences and motivations. This type of reflection assists teachers in confronting their misunderstandings, prejudices and beliefs about race that impede the development of caring classroom climates, positive relationships with their students and families, and ultimately their students' academic success.

Thinking of culturally relevant teachers as action researchers extends another important component of the reflection process. Action research is inquiry conducted *by teachers for teachers* for the purpose of higher student achievement. Action research requires teachers to identify an area of concern, develop a plan for improvement, implement the plan, observe its effects, and reflect on the procedures and consequences.

Finally, student achievement is not the only purpose of a culturally relevant pedagogy. Culturally relevant teachers must also assist students to change the society, not simply to exist or survive in it. For some teachers, this can be very challenging. When teachers promote justice they directly confront inequities in society such as racism, sexism and classism. Far too many teachers appear

to be not only colorblind, but also unable or unwilling to see, hear or speak about instances of individual or institutional racism in their personal and professional lives.

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The Civic Opportunity Gap

Peter Levine

Half the youth population in the United States is left out of civic life. Schools must help change this situation.

A few years ago, depressing statistics dominated conversations about youth and social responsibility. For instance, the voter turnout of adults ages 18–29 had fallen by one-third since the 1970s, reaching a low point when only 36 percent voted in the 1996 presidential election (Lopez, Kirby, & Sagoff, 2005). This declining turnout, many claimed, indicated that young Americans were either less concerned about social issues or less confident that their votes could make a difference—or both.

Another oft-quoted statistic was that only one-fourth of high school seniors scored as proficient or better on the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress's civics assessment (Lutkus & Weiss, 2007). These facts boded ill for youth's civic participation. And news reports about young people who were alienated, uninformed, or downright destructive abounded.

But the situation began changing in the early 2000s. Youth voter turnout, for instance, rose in both 2000 and 2004, returning to levels last seen in the 1970s. Today's young people volunteer at record rates. And youth are often the most idealistic users of the new electronic media. According to the National Conference on Citizenship, within the last year more than half of young adults used a social networking site like Facebook to express an opinion about a social or community issue (National Conference on Citizenship, 2008).

The 2008 presidential election demonstrated how extensively our current crop of young people is willing to engage. Their turnout rose for the third presidential election in a row, surpassing 50 percent (Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement [CIRCLE], 2008), and young adults were heavily involved in volunteering, fund-raising, and reaching out to potential voters.

The National Exit Poll, conducted on election day, found that 16 percent of young voters had been contacted by someone in the Obama campaign, compared with 4 percent contacted by the McCain campaign. That was an extraordinary level of outreach that helped to produce a higher than usual youth turnout and an unprecedented tilt in favor of the candidate who did the most youth outreach: Obama won two-thirds of the youth vote, far higher than the previous record set by Reagan in 1984 (CIRCLE, 2008).

Obama's enormously successful appeal to youth proves that it is effective to call on young people to serve, to approach them individually, to offer concrete opportunities, and to state this call in idealistic terms. Research bolsters this idea: When researchers examine why young people perform community service, join civic groups, or attend meetings, participants often report that they took these actions because someone asked them to (Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1997).

But Who's Left Out?

The 2008 election provides another less heartening lesson. Although overall youth turnout rose, those who voted were almost all college students or young adults with college experience. In the 2008 presidential primaries, about one in four young adults who had attended at least some college voted, but only about one in 14 of their non-college-educated peers turned out (Kirby, Marcelo, Gillerman, & Linkins, 2008). Preliminary estimates from exit polls suggest that college students also dominated youth voting on the day of the presidential election.

About half of the young people in this country have not had any college experience at all—not a single course. These young people are increasingly being left out of civic life in the United States. They are less likely to vote, volunteer,

belong to civic groups, and even join unions than are their college-educated peers (Flanagan, Levine, & Settersten, 2009).

Immediately before the 2008 presidential election, my colleagues at the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) and I spoke with some noncollege-educated young adults in a major U.S. city. Virtually none of them expressed any interest in or excitement about the campaign. They did not believe that the winner would make any difference to their community or that there were significant differences between the leading candidates.

Most of these young people were black, but they were less interested in the race of the Democratic candidate than in the vast perceived gulf between their own lives and all political institutions. They told us numerous stories of mistreatment by the police, schools, and municipal agencies. They did not expect any of this to change.

When these young adults mentioned their experiences with volunteering or community service, the opportunities they described were not at all empowering, educational, or inspiring. Instead, they recalled being assigned menial, unpaid work under the label of "service" or "civic education." In contrast, when CIRCLE talked to almost 400 college students in 2007, we found that many of them had performed challenging, meaningful forms of service. For example, the noncollege youth most often recalled cleaning up streets as their voluntary service, whereas college students recalled being asked to testify before public officials and using innovative technologies to address environmental problems.

This civic opportunity gap between college-bound and non-college-bound students has worsened over the last three decades. People without college experience are virtually invisible in civil society. This civic opportunity gap is a profound problem—one that educators should not accept—for three reasons:

1. *Young people who are active with social institutions do better in life.* They are more likely to stay in school and out of trouble. Participation in community groups can even reduce teen pregnancy (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).
2. *Youth have different interests than older people, and someone needs to represent those interests.* For instance, Social Security is a bigger issue for senior citizens than for youth and therefore gets disproportionate attention from politicians. The unemployment rate for people ages 16–19 is above 20 percent, but candidates rarely talk about unemployment as a youth problem—because working-class youth don't vote enough.
3. *We need young people's energies to address the complex problems that will face us in coming decades.* The United States has never overcome any major challenge without unleashing the skills, energies, and passions of millions of citizens. Collaboration is the genius of American democracy. But according to my analysis of data from the Needham Lifestyle Survey, which was conducted annually from 1975 to 2006 (DDB Worldwide, n.d.), people are less likely to work on community projects than they were a generation ago. If we want to turn this decline around, we must focus on youth. Very few programs, projects, or even movements have changed passive *adults* into active citizens.

What Teachers Can Do

The decrease in civic participation of non-college-bound youth has many causes, including the decline of certain key organizations. Labor unions encourage all their members to vote and teach many members leadership skills, and metropolitan daily newspapers provide essential political information on their front pages. But both of these institutions have shrunk dramatically and have especially lost influence for people without college backgrounds. For educators, however, the most important causes of the civic opportunity gap are those connected to K–12 education.

It's not that we don't know what to do: Research shows that specific practices, done well, increase students' civic engagement and social responsibility (CIRCLE & Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2003). These include service

activities connected to course content and discussions (service learning); mock trials and other simulations of practices central to citizenship; participation in groups like student government or the school newspaper staff; and community research projects. All these practices involve relevant issues, challenging concepts and skills, and active student participation.

One of the most strongly supported practices for increasing civic participation is civil, balanced classroom discussion of controversial events or issues. As University of Wisconsin professor Diana Hess (in press) found, such discussions increase students' knowledge of—and interest in—politics. Some research indicates that most of the positive influence that civics classes have on civic engagement can be attributed to the discussions in these courses. Michael McDevitt (2003) of the University of Colorado found that such in-class discussions contributed to similar conversations at home and thereby raised *parents'* voter turnout.

It's essential that teachers develop skill at moderating such sensitive discussions. It may be especially challenging for younger teachers to moderate current-events discussions because the examples we see on television tend to be shouting matches, and few of today's teachers experienced such discussions as students in the 1980s and 1990s. By that time, the once-popular high school class called Problems of American Democracy, which involved reading newspapers and debating issues, had largely disappeared.

Schools should provide teachers with professional development to help them initiate and handle discussions on controversial issues. For example, thousands of Chicago high school students are now involved with Mikva Challenge (www.mikvachallenge.org), a project that helps students conduct informed discussions of serious issues, such as teen violence. After 30 students from the Chicago public schools were killed by gun violence in the 2007–08 school year, Mikva Challenge's Youth Safety Council conducted research, prepared a report, and presented its ideas to city officials (Klonsky, 2009). Groups like the National Issues Forums, Public Agenda Foundation, Everyday Democracy, and Streetlaw also have good materials and models available.

At the same time, our education system needs to change reward structures so that we encourage teachers to promote meaty discussion of current events—rather than penalize them for taking the time or the risk. Skills and knowledge related to current events are not measured on high-stakes tests. And controversial discussions sometimes get teachers into hot water. Teachers need support from administrators and education policy leaders.

Efforts to infuse class discussion and other engaging forms of civic education into schools must concentrate on getting these practices into schools and classes that serve disadvantaged students—because that's where the need is. Researchers Joseph Kahne and Ellen Middaugh (in press) found that, within a given high school, students taking college-preparatory courses were more likely than those taking less advanced courses to report that their classes included such experiences as service learning, classroom discussions of issues, field trips, or visiting speakers.

When we compare suburban schools with urban and rural schools—or compare schools with high test scores with those with lower scores—we find that privileged schools are more likely to offer interactive civic education. Struggling schools tend not to provide such experiences, either because they lack resources or because they concentrate on "fundamental" academic subjects (Kahne & Middaugh, in press).

As frequently as possible, given the constraints of today's curriculum mandates and high-stakes testing, educators—particularly those working with youth from less advantaged backgrounds—should offer their students opportunities to choose issues to focus on and discuss. As students discuss issues, teachers should moderate, promoting civility, diversity of perspectives, reliance on trustworthy information, and the application of such perennial principles from the U.S. Constitution as freedom of speech.

Encourage students to take whatever social action they can on the basis of such discussions. They might conduct voluntary service (for instance, tutoring younger children), prepare testimony for political leaders, contact the media, or create their own Web sites or videos.

Toward Better Politics

There is another crucial reason that we must close the civic opportunity gap: It will create a better form of politics and education for everyone. Good school-based programs of service learning, youth-led research, and even civil discussion of issues exemplify a kind of politics that's in desperately short supply today. Civic education runs counter to three harmful trends in how society approaches politics and education:

We treat young people as bundles of problems. High-quality civic education embodies the alternative approach of positive youth development. This approach treats young people as assets and says that if you want young people to thrive, you must give them opportunities to contribute. Young people need a sense of purpose and value. We undermine that sense when we treat youth as crises waiting to happen and constantly test, treat, and discipline them.

We see education as the job of teachers and principals, a specialized task that only experts can perform and measure. Education should be the process by which a whole community transmits to the next generation appropriate values, traditions, skills, and cultural norms. Civic education at its best crosses the line between schools and communities and reflects a more inclusive definition of education.

We see politics as government centered. Governments are not the only institutions that matter, and a government-centered view of politics leaves citizens little to do but inform themselves and vote. Youth civic engagement epitomizes a citizen-centered politics in which people form relationships, exchange ideas, and use a range of strategies to bring change, some having little to do with the government.

Good civic education is open-ended politics. In fostering students' civic participation, we don't try to manipulate them into adopting the opinions or solutions we think are right—at least, we shouldn't. Instead, we give them opportunities to learn, deliberate, and act in ways that seem best to them. At a time when most politics is manipulative—when politicians, advocacy groups, and the like study us, poll us, and send tailor-made messages designed to encourage or scare us into acting just how they want us to—such opportunities are precious. If we want our democracy to flourish, we must make sure *all* students have these opportunities.

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Winning Schools for ELLs



PHOTO COURTESY OF THOMAS EDISON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

What does it take to produce academic excellence for English language learners? Four award-winning urban elementary schools show the way.

Delfino Aleman, Joseph F. Johnson Jr., and Lynne Perez

Schools with similar resources and challenges may produce dramatically different achievement for English language learners.

In the past four years, the National Center for Urban School Transformation (NCUST) has given its Excellence in Urban Education awards to urban elementary, middle, and high schools that achieve impressive results. These schools do not have selective admission criteria, yet they produce high achievement for every demographic group of students they serve,

including ELLs (NCUST, 2008).

Four of these award-winning elementary schools are Southside Elementary Museums Magnet School in Miami, Florida; Pillow Elementary in Austin, Texas; and Edison Elementary and Signal Hill Elementary in Long Beach, California. In each school, at least 30 percent of the students are ELLs, and the percentage of ELLs demonstrating proficiency on state assessments is substantially higher than statewide averages for English language learners (see fig. 1, p. 69). In some cases, ELL proficiency rates exceed state averages for all students.

To explore what makes these schools more successful than most schools serving large percentages of English language learners, we interviewed principals, teachers, parents, and students. We also observed classrooms and reviewed various documents and data. Beyond test scores, we found many other indications that ELLs in these schools are enjoying school and succeeding academically.

High Expectations

In these high-performing schools, ELLs learn more because they are given more

to learn. At Southside Elementary, the principal and teachers tell students they are “the smartest kids in Miami,” and prove it every day by providing lessons that require students to explain, analyze, compare, graph, dissect, and construct information. For example, 4th grade students dissected, weighed, and compared real pig hearts as they learned about the circulatory system and metric measurement.

All four schools use benchmark assessment systems to help ensure that students are meeting essential academic standards. ELLs are expected to master the same grade-level concepts and skills as other students. The benchmark assessment systems give teachers advance notice of the skills they need to teach as well as feedback on the effectiveness of their instruction. Most important, however, teachers exhibit a commitment to helping each student (regardless of English proficiency) meet the standards assessed.

Teacher collaboration fuels ongoing efforts to elevate the rigor of the curriculum and get high percentages of students to perform well on benchmark assessments. In contrast to schools in which “learning communities” devolve into stress-relief sessions that affirm low expectations, principals and teacher leaders in these high-performing schools structure and lead collaboration that builds teacher confidence that all students can meet high expectations.

Unlike some less effective schools, in which leaders share data in ways that reinforce a sense of despair, leaders in these effective schools share data in ways that celebrate improvement, reinforce small accomplishments, and build a sense of teacher efficacy. For example, teachers at Signal Hill use grade-level team meetings to examine data, acknowledge growth, and learn from one another’s best efforts. When benchmark assessment results indicate that students have not learned key concepts, teachers collaboratively plan intervention strategies that provide additional



PHOTO COURTESY OF PILLLOW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Students at Edison (far left), Pillow (above), and Southside Elementary Schools celebrate and learn.

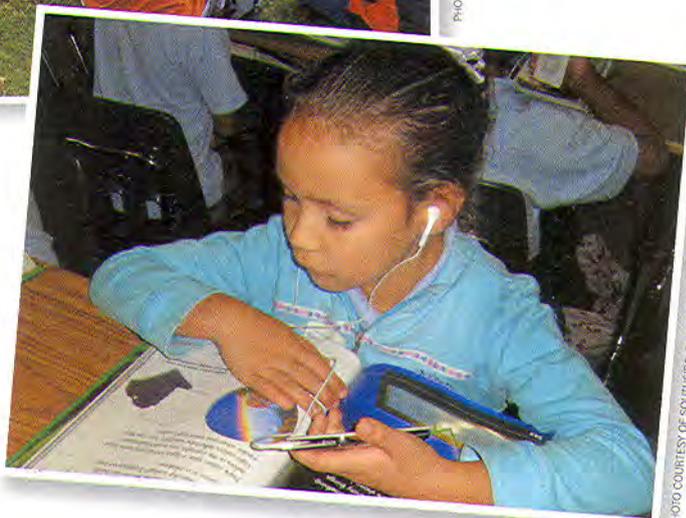


PHOTO COURTESY OF SOUTHSIDE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

opportunities and resources—for example, tutoring (before school, after school, during school, or during inter-sessions).

Focus on Conceptual Understanding

The four schools use different reading and mathematics curriculums, emphasize different professional development initiatives, and vary in the extent to which they provide instruction in Spanish, which most ELLs in these schools speak. (In some cases, instruction was designed to help students master academic content through both Spanish and English. In other cases, instruction was primarily in English, but teachers and aides used Spanish to help students understand difficult concepts.)

All four schools have one instructional approach in common, however: an emphasis on ensuring deep levels of understanding. For example, at Edison and Signal Hill, teachers use academic vocabulary strategies advanced by

Marzano and Pickering (2005). They identify vocabulary terms that are important for upcoming lessons and teach these terms in ways that require students to use the vocabulary and demonstrate their understanding. Because students have mastered the academic vocabulary associated with each lesson, they are better able to actively participate in content-rich discussions.

At Southside and Pillow, teachers use object-based learning (a pedagogy they learned from Smithsonian Institution trainers) to help make concepts real and understandable for every student. Teachers enrich lessons by bringing in real objects to illustrate key concepts, stimulate conversation, and deepen understanding. As students manipulate and talk about objects, they increase their understanding of a vast array of social, cultural, historic, and scientific concepts.

In all four schools, teachers require students to explain, discuss, and write to demonstrate their levels of under-

standing throughout the school day. As we observed classrooms, we heard student voices more often than teacher voices. Teachers give many students multiple opportunities to share, question, and describe. ELLs enjoy at least as many opportunities to contribute verbally as other students do.

As students articulate their ideas, teachers listen attentively and provide feedback that affirms or fine-tunes student understanding. When students do not seem to understand, teachers are often prepared with alternate examples, analogies, or hands-on materials. In several cases, we observed teachers using Spanish to explain a word or concept to ensure that students understood. These strategies were not merely the focus of random professional development events: They were evident to us in almost every classroom observation.

Teachers in these four schools focus more on ensuring deep levels of understanding than on covering the pages in a textbook. They pay more attention to student responses than they pay to the teachers' guide.

A Culture of Appreciation

At all four schools, principals and teachers use the metaphor of *family* to describe the climate and culture of their schools. Students do not simply "attend"; they are family members. Educators demonstrate sincere concern for students and their well-being. Parents perceive that teachers and principals value their children, their children's cultural backgrounds, and themselves. A parent at Signal Hill reported, "I was impressed when teachers I didn't even know greeted me by name and said, 'Oh, you are Maria's father.'"

The atmosphere at each school is positive, even celebratory. Cultural and language diversity are celebrated through bulletin boards, banners, assem-

As we observed classrooms, we heard student voices more often than teacher voices.



A dad at Signal Hill Elementary School reads with students.

blies, and classroom assignments. Educators acknowledge students' excellent work, academic strengths, and character attributes frequently. Teachers and other staff members talk to students respectfully, even when they have misbehaved. Students perceive that their teachers like them and want them to succeed.

Principals lay the foundation for this positive culture by working to ensure that teachers feel respected, valued, and appreciated. As a Signal Hill teacher explained, "We use the Safe and Civil Schools program, but the concept applies for the teachers, too. We are free to share our honest opinions, to share our ideas, even to disagree."

As evidence of their principals' caring, teachers cited expressions of concern related to personal situations, support with challenging students, and the provision of training and materials. Teachers reported that they felt chal-

lenged, but supported. In general, teacher attendance rates are higher and turnover rates are lower than those in other schools serving similar communities. More than teachers in typical urban schools, teachers at these four schools feel that they are part of a team. They are less likely to feel that they are flying solo in a turbulent environment.

Leadership

Improvements in teaching and learning at these schools have resulted from intelligent, persistent, caring leadership. Principals at each of the schools have focused on goals that resonate with their faculties and communities. Teachers and parents express enthusiasm for the goals and directions that the principals articulated—perhaps in part because principals help them see the connections between these goals and student success.

Goals are not merely an annual conversation, tacked onto a meeting agenda. Principals use data to bring the goals to life every day. Often, those data are disaggregated to ensure that English language learners are making substantial academic progress. Usually, teachers and support staff know specifically what they need to teach, and students know specifically what they need to learn. The schools acknowledge and celebrate progress toward goals. For example, at Signal Hill, teachers established class goals for academic growth. One teacher established the goal that 100 percent of her students would achieve at least one year of growth on district assessments. In her wrap-up meeting with the principal, she reported that only 93 percent achieved at least one year's growth, but 20 percent made at least one and one-half a year's growth.

Although the principal's leadership role is clear and ever present, these schools benefit from teams of leaders (made up of principals, assistant princi-

pals, teachers, and other professionals) who share responsibility for creating a high-performing school. Teachers share responsibility for making school-wide curriculum decisions, organizing and implementing pilots of new approaches, and assessing program effectiveness. At some of the schools, teachers participate in hiring new teachers or plan and lead professional development activities.

Teachers and support staff speak with pride about the responsibilities they have assumed. Principals take pride in the teachers from their schools who have been promoted to administrative positions in nearby schools or in district offices. Principals are eager to create platforms to support the leadership of other staff members who want to contribute to the attainment of school goals.

Principals have not relinquished their responsibility to set the tone for the school, however. Although they are eager to engage teachers, other staff members, and parents in defining how important elements of the school culture will be enacted, they protect those elements tightly. One value they refuse to compromise is an appreciation for children, families, and staff members. For example, the former Pillow principal challenged staff members to discuss and examine any false assumptions they might unwittingly hold that students' socioeconomic status and cultural backgrounds might limit their ability to achieve.

On the other hand, principals are willing to hold other issues loosely. They often give teachers a major role in

making decisions regarding curriculum, instruction, and organization throughout the school.

Complex Lessons

Curriculum, instruction, school culture, and leadership at these four high-achieving urban schools differ from what we typically see in schools that serve large percentages of English language learners. But observing these elements at work in successful schools does not tell us how to transplant them to struggling schools.

We suspect that these elements interrelate in complex ways. If teachers try to elevate curriculum expectations without changing instructional approaches, ELLs may simply experience greater frustration. If a school's culture remains dysfunctional, teachers are unlikely to engage in the difficult work necessary to improve curriculum or instruction. In the absence of focused, caring leadership, none of these elements are likely to change.

In many respects, this study of four schools has only scratched the surface of all that we need to learn about elementary schools that achieve high academic results for English language learners. Thus, we continue our efforts to engage, study, and learn. **EL**

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FIGURE 1. Four National Excellence in Urban Education Award-Winning Schools

School	Enrollment	% ELL	% Low-Income	% of ELLs Proficient in Reading	% of ELLs Proficient in Math
Edison Elementary, Long Beach, California (2007 Winner)	923, K-5	64	100	37	83
Signal Hill Elementary, Long Beach, California (2008 Winner)	756, K-6	37	91	53	77
Data for Entire State of California		25	51	26	36
Pillow Elementary, Austin, Texas (2007 Winner)	523, PK-5	31	63	96	96
Data for Entire State of Texas		16	47	67	62
Southside Elementary, Miami, Florida (2008 Winner)	446, PK-5	56	64	71	78
Data for Entire State of Florida		11	46	37	47

Sources: State Department of Education Web sites and GreatSchools.Net. Proficiency in reading and math was measured by standardized achievement tests for each state.



National Center for Urban School Transformation

Leading Successful School Turnarounds: Learning from Research & Practice

Los Angeles, CA

September 30, 2010

Joseph F. Johnson, Jr., Ph.D.

Executive Director,

National Center for Urban School Transformation

<http://www.ncust.org>



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NCUST Identifies, Celebrates, and Studies

Non-selective, urban schools (serving primarily students from low-income families) that demonstrate high achievement for all students. These schools evidence:

- High proficiency rates for all demographic groups
 - High graduation rates for all demographic groups
 - High rates of access to challenging programs for all demographic groups
 - No disproportionate enrollments of racial/ethnic groups in special education
 - Low rates of suspension/expulsion for all groups
 - Other indicators of student success/achievement
-

In the past five years, NCUST has identified 48 remarkable elementary, middle, and high schools in 15 different states.

Also, NCUST partners with a few urban districts to help them turn around schools in ways that emulate the best practices of the high-performing schools we study.

School and District Leaders Rely on Many Strategies for Turning Schools Around

- Get a new principal
 - Get a new plan
 - Get a new textbook
 - Get more test prep
 - Get new students
 - Get new teachers
 - Get more teachers
 - Get a new schedule
 - Get a charter
 - Get a new computer system
 - Get a new reading program
 - Get more aides
 - Get new parents
 - Get a new test
 - Get a new curriculum
 - Get a new staff development program
-

Bottom Line:

In spite of all the many strategies used
to turn around low performance –

**Nothing Changes Unless Teaching
and Learning Changes.**

Nothing Changes Unless Teaching and Learning Changes

- Change WHAT gets learned (curricula)
 - Change HOW it gets taught (instruction)
 - Change levels of COMMITMENT to the work (climate/relationships)
-

Changing What Gets Learned

- Essential Question: How will you ensure that what students learn is qualitatively superior to what was learned previously?
-

Changing What Gets Learned

- Issues:
 - Shifting from a focus on coverage to a focus on mastery
 - Moving from curriculum documents to curricular implementation
 - Focusing on depth more than breadth
 - Ensuring teachers understand the depth of understanding students need to acquire
 - Ensuring teachers possess the knowledge they are expected to impart
 - Ensuring application to all groups of students
 - Measuring progress throughout the year & responding constructively to data
-

Changing What Gets Learned

- District Implications:
 - Promoting policy coherence may mean re-thinking/refining pacing guides
 - Providing instructional leadership may mean providing structures that help build teacher content knowledge
 - Reorienting the organization may mean finding ways to maximize attention and responsive to the extent that students learn critical content throughout the year
 - Focusing upon equity means ensuring that all groups of students are learning critical content (Special programs are not an excuse for less learning. They should be a catalyst for more learning.)
-

Changing How Instruction Occurs

- Essential Question: How will you ensure that teaching will more likely result in students learning?
-

Changing How Instruction Occurs

■ Issues:

- Helping people understand that it isn't about changing tasks or programs. It is about changing mindsets.
 - Keeping it simple, yet focused & powerful
 - Ensuring application to all educators
 - Measuring progress throughout the year and responding constructively to data
-

Changing How Instruction Occurs

■ District Implications:

- Providing instructional leadership means structuring high-quality support. Support means helping people:
 - **See** the change,
 - **Understand** the change,
 - **Plan** implementation collaboratively,
 - **Practice** and receive feedback,
 - **Order** priorities,
 - **Refine** implementation with more feedback, and
 - **Transfer** new skills to other areas.
-

Changing How Instruction Occurs

- District Implications:
 - Focusing upon equity may mean ensuring that more effective teachers work with students with greater needs.
 - Reorienting the organization may require rethinking “satisfactory.”
 - Promoting policy coherence may mean eliminating practices that safeguard adults who do not improve.
-

Changing Levels of Commitment

- Essential Question: How will you ensure that students, parents, teachers, support staff, and other key stakeholders maintain a level of buy-in and commitment sufficient to ensure the necessary changes in teaching and learning?
-

Changing Levels of Commitment

■ Issues:

- Building understanding and enthusiasm vs. giving orders and generating compliance
Building hope (People must perceive that their success is possible.)
 - Sharing and building leadership
 - Ensuring that all stakeholders feel valued, appreciated, and respected
 - Measuring progress throughout the year and responding constructively to data
-

Changing Levels of Commitment

■ District Implications:

- Promoting policy coherence may mean re-thinking/refining policies that encourage people to give up.
 - Providing instructional leadership may mean helping educators know how to relate better to students and parents.
 - Reorienting the organization may mean finding new ways to celebrate progress and keep everyone focused on the positive impact to students
 - Focusing upon equity may mean ensuring that the lowest achieving groups perceive the district's commitment to their success.
-

Nothing Changes Unless Teaching and Learning Changes

- Change **WHAT** gets learned (curricula)
 - Change **HOW** it gets taught (instruction)
 - Change levels of **COMMITMENT** to the work (climate/relationships)
-

Transforming a School Step by Step: A Conversation with Principal Melissa Glee-Woodard



By [Anne O'Brien](#) on April 7, 2010



When Melissa Glee-Woodard became principal of Maryland's Lewisdale Elementary School four years ago, it was struggling. The school was in the dreaded "school improvement" process because of the performance of multiple subgroups of students, and it needed change.

Change is what it got. But not the dramatic "fire-all-teachers" change that has been making the papers. Rather, Glee-Woodard inspired teachers, parents and students with a new vision. The staff began focusing on student data in a meaningful way.

Targeted professional development addressed areas of weakness in the instructional program. And new summer programs ensured that students kept their academic success going even when school was not technically in session.

As a result, Lewisdale has made AYP every year Glee-Woodard has been principal. The National Association of Elementary School Principals recently honored her for her transformational leadership.

She joined us for a conversation about the school and its journey.

Public School Insights: How would you describe Lewisdale?

Glee-Woodard: Lewisdale Elementary School is located in an urban setting in Prince George's County, Maryland. We are in the backyard of the University of Maryland, College Park. It is a working-class neighborhood. 80% of our students are Hispanic. 17% are African-American.

"We have a lot of veteran teachers who have a lot of skills and talents to bring to our school"

All of our students walk to school each and every day, and we are a neighborhood school. Our parents are very actively involved. Anytime that you are outside in the morning, you will see a lot of parents either walking their children to school or dropping their children off in cars.

Lewisdale is also a Title I school. 84% of our students qualify for free or reduced meals. And 54% of our students speak English as their second language. So that gives you a general idea of the demographics and the type of community that we serve here at Lewisdale.

We also have a very good teaching staff. 98% of our teachers stay at Lewisdale Elementary School. We do not have a high turnover rate. So we have a lot of veteran teachers who have a lot of skills and talents to bring to our school.

We also have very, very active community partnerships that provide resources for our students. We have a very strong partnership with the University of Maryland, and one with Kaiser Permanente. So we try to bring as many resources as possible to the students of Lewisdale.

Public School Insights: I understand that since you came to Lewisdale, the school has greatly improved and there has been a big shift in its culture. What was the school like when you arrived?

Glee-Woodard: The shift in culture had to do with the vision that I brought to the school and changing the mindset of 1) students, 2) parents and 3) teachers.

“No matter the type of background that our kids come from we can help them achieve academically”

I can distinctly remember at one of my first staff meetings someone saying that, “Well, our kids speak English as a second language, and our kids come from poverty.” And just changing that mindset to one of, “No matter the type of background that our kids come from we can help them achieve academically.” Also, imparting this vision to the parents and letting them know that we think that their child can succeed, no matter what the obstacles are. And letting the students know that, too. I constantly tell the students, “You are going to college.” Many of them do not have that kind of encouragement at home, so I feel that at the school we have to provide it to them.

There was also a shift in looking at data. Before, data were not made public. They were not shared openly. But now we have data charts across the school and in the cafeteria. We have individual student data conferences with parents from pre-K all the way up to fifth grade—“This is your child's reading level. This is the number of kindergarten words that your child knows. This is your child's math assessment score. This is where they are and this is where they need to be.” And when we have our staff meeting, the cafeteria workers, the custodians and everyone else knows where we are and where we need to go as a school.

Public School Insights: What was student achievement like?

“The cafeteria workers, the custodians and everyone else knows where we are and where we need to go as a school”

Glee-Woodard: Lewisdale was in school improvement, which means that the school had not made AYP for multiple years. The school had missed making their AMOs [annual measurable objectives] in several different subgroups. But we have made AYP each year that I have been at Lewisdale. The kids have not changed. The teachers have not changed. But the way that we teach and the way that we look at data have changed.

I think that the biggest piece in moving the school forward was providing professional development that was able to look at some of the areas of weakness within our instructional program and being able to fine-tune them. And also getting everybody on board and looking at, how can we help each child achieve? And when they don't know what we want them to know, what are we going to do to ensure that they learn it, so they can be successful?

Public School Insights: That raises a couple of questions for me. At the national level there is a lot of talk right now about how when schools are not performing well the best thing to do may be to clean house and get rid of the existing staff. But that does not sound like it was the case at your school.

**“The kids have not changed.
The teachers have not changed.
But the way that we teach and
the way that we look at data
have changed”**

Glee-Woodard: No, not at all. But I'll be honest with you. When I came into the building, there were certain teachers about whom I said, “They cannot teach here.” They were not delivering quality instruction. And that is when as an administrator, you have to have those courageous conversations. And so when I told you about the 98% that are here and the 2% that are not, the 2% are the ones that I had those courageous conversations with. I stated to them, “You are not delivering the best instruction,” and I gave them the tools to improve. When they did not improve, I had to have another courageous conversation with them. Those individuals have moved on to do other things. But like I said, we had, and continue to have, great teachers. We just had to fine-tune instruction. But there were some teachers here who did not meet the standards that I felt should be met, and those are the ones who are no longer with us.

Public School Insights: And speaking of that teacher retention rate...It seems from the demographics of your school that it would typically be described in national policy discussions as “hard-to-staff.” But you have retained most of your teachers. What do you think are some of the factors that make teachers stay?

Glee-Woodard: I think one of the biggest factors is the camaraderie among the staff. I have worked at all levels—high school, middle school and elementary school. And I have never seen a group of individuals who work so well together. Whenever we have a new staff member come on board, they are always willing to assist in any manner that they can. And I think that helps with retaining teachers, because there's a sense of family within the building.

**“We had, and continue to have,
great teachers. We just had to
fine-tune instruction”**

Also, as a building administrator, you have to constantly be the cheerleader for your staff. You have to constantly recognize small accomplishments as well as large accomplishments. So in the afternoon announcements I say “Today I was in so-and-so's classroom and I saw kids doing XYZ and that is great. And we want all of our kids to do that.” I just publicly let the staff know that I appreciate what they do.

Public School Insights: Getting back to some of the ways Lewisdale has changed over the past few years, you have talked about a new vision and improving instruction using student data. Do you think there were other major components to the school's turnaround?

Glee-Woodard: Yes. One thing is that instead of giving teachers staff development kind of randomly, I started giving them a needs assessment and asking them, “Where do you see your staff development needs?” And actually went into the classroom and observed teachers to find out where our staff development needs were.

Another big component was that I started providing a half-day of collaborative planning each month for teachers during the school day. That is a time for them to really look at student work, to do long-range

planning and to look at data. They were already sort of doing the data thing, having a quarterly “data utilization meeting.” But now we take a different look. We have developed a template that the teachers actually fill out to become more accountable for individual student data. In the very beginning, we just glazed over data, but now we are looking deeper into it to see how we can really help our students.

“I have never seen a group of individuals who work so well together”

Also, prior to my tenure here, Lewisdale only had summer programs for students in pre-K through second grade. Since I have been here, I have pushed to make sure that we have a summer school program for all students in our building. Each year I've been at Lewisdale, we've had three summer school programs. I think that that is a critical, key component of our success. Some of our students, realistically, do not get that support during the summer.

And my first year here we literally had school every single day of the week except for Sunday. We had an afterschool ELL program, a Saturday ELL program and a student learning opportunity program.

Public School Insights: Earlier you mentioned some of your community partners, including the University of Maryland, College Park and Kaiser Permanente. What are some of the services that those partnerships provide, and how did you form those partnerships?

Glee-Woodard: I formed a partnership with the University of Maryland because I am an alumnus. They have a Maryland Day every year in the spring. They have booths all across the campus. I went to the education booth and told them that I am an alumnus and wanted to start a partnership. They gave me someone to call, and then the next year we developed a partnership with their Department of Education. We have Maryland students who come in to shadow our teachers as a part of one of the courses for education majors. And we're trying to become a school that will host student teachers for the University of Maryland.

“I just publicly let the staff know that I appreciate what they do”

We also have a partnership with “Partners in Print.” University of Maryland students come out and do evening programs with our primary school parents. They talk about strategies parents can use to help their children learn to read, and our students leave with a free book to help build up their home library.

We also have a program called “Math Counts” through the University of Maryland. Maryland students come out twice a week to work with our fourth grade students on math skills. At the end of the program our students actually get to spend a day at the University of Maryland. That is exposure to the college campus that I feel is really critical for students here.

The Kaiser Permanente partnership was here before I came to Lewisdale. They provide nutritional information to our parents and students. They also provide staff development on nutritional information.

Public School Insights: You have mentioned a few ways that you get parents involved here at Lewisdale—the reading program, the nutritional information. Are there other things that you do to help get parents involved and connected to the school?

“In the very beginning, we just glazed over data, but now we are looking deeper into it to see how we can really help our students”

Glee-Woodard: I am very visible as a principal.

And so I know my parents. I talk to my parents. I think that you have to build those relationships. I think that is the biggest piece, and I've been told by parents that the school has really changed since I've been here.

We do callouts whenever we have afterschool activities. We have reading night, math night, science night. And these nights are standing room only. Our parents come out. I think it is because of the community feeling and knowing that we are all on the same page to help our kids. And they leave with so many resources that our teachers give them, from “Make and Take” to strategies on how to work with their child on reading or math. The information is very valuable, so the parents know that if they come out they are going to receive information that can really help them.

I think it is also critical that I can able to provide translators for each session. If we do breakout sessions in classrooms, each classroom has a translator to ensure that parents understand what is being said.

Public School Insights: What would you say are the major challenges you face at Lewisdale?

Glee-Woodard: One of the biggest challenges would be—and I still have this challenge, this is my own personal challenge—trying to get all students to believe that they can achieve. I look at my African-American subgroup in comparison to my English language learners, and I have to admit that they are still not performing as well as I feel they should be. So looking at particular subgroups and asking, “How can I get this group on board? Why isn't this particular subgroup performing as well as another subgroup?”

“I have pushed to make sure that we have a summer school program for all students in our building”

I know that we have quality instruction. I know that we look at data. But I still believe that motivation is half the battle. If you can get your kids motivated to learn, they will achieve. So we do all kinds of crazy things at Lewisdale to try to get our kids motivated [In 2009 *The Washington Post* covered [one particularly unusual motivational technique](#)]. And I think that works as well as providing quality instruction for our students. So I guess one of the biggest challenges would be just trying to figure out how to help particular subgroups.

Another challenge is getting my primary teachers examining rigor. Some teachers think, “Oh, MSA [Maryland State Assessment] is a third through fifth grade thing.” No, MSA is a pre-K-through fifth grade thing. And even still this year I am thinking of ways that I can help my kindergarten teachers increase rigor and let them know that the basic foundation they provide is going to help those kids when they take the MSA—that it starts with them and not just with the intermediate teachers.

Public School Insights: I am also interested in hearing a little more about the strategies that Lewisdale uses with its English language learners. You have mentioned summer school, afterschool and parental involvement programs. Are there any other strategies that you use when focusing on that group in particular?

Glee-Woodard: We have changed the way that we deliver instruction to our English language learners in two ways. First, there used to be a lot of pullout sessions, where the English language learners were pulled out for ESOL instruction. Now we do more co-teaching, and we have found that to be very, very successful.

“I know my parents. I talk to my parents. I think that you have to build those relationships”

We have also implemented the Comprehension Toolkit, which is a reading instructional program where kids actually do a lot more dialoguing with their peers—what is called “Turn and Talk.” This allows them to express themselves much more than in traditional instruction. And between the Comprehension Toolkit and the fact that we do not pull kids out in isolation as much we used to, we saw a great increase in scores, especially in fifth-grade reading.

Public School Insights: As I'm sure you're aware, the Obama administration has called for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, currently known as No Child Left Behind. Are there any changes that you would like to see made to that law that would help it better support the work that you are doing at Lewisdale? Or are there any components that you think are essential and should be maintained as is?

Glee-Woodard: That is a difficult question. I firmly believe that all kids should obtain 100% proficiency. But there is not a level playing field. There really isn't. That is my personal belief.

Even with our own county...A large percentage of my kids do not have Internet access at home. Their parents may not take them to the local library or take them to a museum. And I truly believe that exposure has a big correlation to academic achievement, so to compare Lewisdale to another school in a different part of the county that has different economic status...It is not an even playing field. I do think that all kids should achieve, but we are not all on the same playing field. And I think that more resources need to be given to schools that may not have the same sort of economic background as other schools.

“If you can get your kids motivated to learn, they will achieve”

I just find it so interesting. When I've gone to conventions and conferences I have talked to principals who are complaining because now they have 40 English language learners, and what are they going to do? And I'm saying, “Look at Lewisdale. Look at how many we have and the challenges we have.” But we still make AYP.



National Center for Urban School Transformation



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UNIVERSITY

Teaching in High-Performing Urban Schools

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National Center for Urban School Transformation



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NCUST Identifies, Celebrates, and Studies

Non-selective, urban schools (serving primarily students from low-income families) that demonstrate high achievement for all students. These schools evidence:

- High proficiency rates for all groups
- High graduation rates for all groups
- High rates of access to challenging programs for all groups
- No disproportionate enrollments of racial/ethnic groups in special education
- Low rates of suspension/expulsion for all groups
- Other indicators of student success/achievement



In the past five years,
NCUST has identified 48
remarkable elementary,
middle, and high schools
in 15 different states.

2010 NCUST Award Winners

- Horace Mann Elementary, Glendale CA
- International Elementary, Long Beach, CA
- Lemay Elementary, Los Angeles, CA
- Nueva Vista Elementary, Los Angeles, CA
- Whitefoord Elementary, Atlanta, GA
- Horace Mann Dual Language Academy, Wichita, KS
- Branch Brook School, Newark, NJ
- Charles Lunsford School, Rochester, NY
- Marble Hills High School, Bronx, NY
- Escontrias Elementary, El Paso, TX
- Hambrick Middle School, Houston, TX
- Nathan Adams Elementary, Dallas, TX
- Stephens Elementary, Houston, TX

2009 NCUST Award Winners

- Bonham Elementary, Dallas, TX
- Bursch Elementary, Compton, CA
- Fallon Park Elementary, Roanoke, VA
- Franklin Town Charter High, Philadelphia, PA
- Golden Empire Elementary, Sacramento, CA
- Highland Elementary, Silver Springs, MD
- Ira Harbison Elementary, National City, CA
- Lawndale High School, Los Angeles, CA
- Kearny School of International Business, San Diego, CA
- KIPP Adelante Academy, San Diego, CA
- Montebello Gardens Elementary, Los Angeles, CA
- World of Inquiry School, Rochester, NY



Although these urban schools serve low-income communities with many challenges, they have multiple evidences of outstanding achievement for all of the demographic groups they serve.



What are the teaching practices in these high-performing urban schools?

Why are they more likely to attain excellent learning results than schools with similar demographic compositions?



The common instructional practices found in these successful schools are highly consistent with the practices identified by Geneva Gay (2010) as culturally responsive teaching. These practices emphasize caring, communication, curriculum, and culturally congruent pedagogy

Excellent Teaching is Focused on Generating Mastery

In excellent lessons, educators:

- Create clarity about what students are expected to learn
- Focus persistently on the objective to be mastered
- Focus on generating substantial depth of understanding (higher order thinking)
- Maximize the use of every instructional minute
- Respond to data/information concerning student mastery of content

Excellent Teaching is Focused on Acquiring Evidence that All Students Understand

- In excellent lessons, educators:
 - Engage all students in demonstrating their levels of understanding throughout the lesson
 - Refuse to allow students to sit passively and fail
 - Attend carefully to evidence of student understanding throughout the lesson
 - Adapt instruction when student mastery is not evidenced
 - Conclude by checking student understanding

Excellent Teaching Introduces Content Clearly, Concisely, and Logically

- In excellent lessons, educators:
 - Know the content they intend to teach thoroughly
 - Present key concepts in an organized manner, based on a logical task analysis
 - Teach strategies so students can acquire information on their own
 - Keep presentations of information brief
 - Wait to present a second concept until students demonstrate that they understand the first concept

Excellent Teaching Integrates Lesson Vocabulary into Spoken Vocabulary

- In excellent lessons, educators:
 - Pre-identify key lesson vocabulary that influences understanding of the lesson content
 - Educators provide multiple opportunities for all students to practice using key lesson vocabulary in their own spoken language

Excellent Teaching Introduces Content in Ways that Connect with Students

- In excellent lessons, educators:
 - Present key concepts in ways that build upon students' background, culture, and interests
 - Present key concepts in ways that build upon students' prior knowledge
 - Recognize when students are not understanding and find other ways to explain concepts when necessary
 - Scaffold down and enrich upward based on levels of student understanding

Excellent Teaching Helps Students Practice New Skills with High Levels of Success

- In excellent lessons, educators:
 - Allow students to practice independently only when they have substantial evidence that independent practice will be meaningful and successful
 - Monitor independent practice (and/or give students ways to monitor their own practice) and intervene when necessary

Excellent Teaching Leads Students to Believe Their Academic Success is Valued

- In excellent lessons, educators:
 - Maintain a clean, attractive classroom
 - Express a genuine interest in each student's ideas
 - Demonstrate courtesy and respect in all interactions
 - Provide specific praise in response to student effort
 - Post high-quality student work frequently
 - Give students the tools needed to evaluate the quality of their work (rubrics)
 - Provide visual aids that can help students succeed

Excellent Teaching Leads Students to Love Learning and Want to Learn More

- In excellent lessons, educators:
 - Help students understand the importance of the content to be learned
 - Demonstrate enthusiasm for the content
 - Provide opportunities for students to use technology and/or manipulate objects in ways that reinforce lesson objectives
 - Integrate material from other disciplines in teaching lesson objectives
 - Provide students leadership opportunities
 - Encourage student-to-student interaction

Consistency of Implementation

- In high-performing urban schools, most of these eight practices are found abundantly in most classrooms.
- The presence of these practices is not accidental. In high-performing schools, teachers and leaders work hard to support each other in developing and refining these practices.
- Implementation improves over time with support, practice, feedback, more support, more practice, and more feedback.

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*Professional Community and
Professional Development in the
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Judith Warren Little
University of California, Berkeley

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For more than two decades, research has shown that teachers who experience frequent, rich learning opportunities have in turn been helped to teach in more ambitious and effective ways. Yet few teachers gain access to such intensive professional learning opportunities.¹ More typically, teachers experience professional development as episodic, superficial, and disconnected from their own teaching interests or recurring problems of practice. This prevailing pattern—a few rich opportunities, many disappointing ones—speaks both to the promise and to the limitations of professional development, as it is typically organized. An important part of this enduring story centers on the schools and districts where teachers work and whether they are positioned well to foster professional learning opportunities that enhance the quality of teaching and learning.

This paper focuses on professional development and professional community as foundations of the learning-centered school. Its purpose is to marshal research evidence that can be used productively to enhance professional learning and thereby to nourish such a school. To establish benchmarks for best practice, the paper begins with an overview of the goals that professional learning serves, suggests strategic content priorities, and ends with a discussion of effective approaches or means. It is addressed to school leaders—especially teachers and administrators—who must identify priorities for professional development and allocate scarce professional development resources in

ways that will improve instruction and enhance children's success in school.

As will become apparent, the research is uneven (for a recent review, see Borko 2005). We know more about the characteristics of high-quality formal professional development (typically outside the school) than we do about the content, processes, and outcomes of ongoing, informal

¹ The evidence is consistent on this point. See findings from the nationally representative survey of elementary, middle, and high school teachers reported by Garet and others (2001) and the study of elementary teachers' participation in mathematics professional development conducted by Cohen and Hill (2001).

workplace learning. We know a substantial amount about how to help teachers become effective in helping students learn core academic subjects (especially math and science), but our knowledge tends to come up short when those students are also learning English as a second language. We know more about the benefits of strong student assessment practices than we do about how to help teachers incorporate such practices into daily instruction. We have begun to assemble rich portraits of teaching that responds to and builds on student diversity in ways that support student learning, but we have little in the way of research on related programs of professional development. The research provides more guidance for schools in some areas than in others—or, put another way, the lessons from research do not map neatly or completely onto the professional learning needs or interests of a given school. Nonetheless, it provides a worthy starting point.

The School's Stake in Teacher Learning

The basic premise of this paper is that a school is more likely to be effective in supporting high levels of student learning and well-being when it also plays a powerful, deliberate, and consequential role in teacher learning. As the context most directly connected to the daily enterprise of teaching and learning, the school has a stake in pursuing professional development purposes that together build the individual and collective expertise and commitment of the staff, sustain professional growth for both novice and veteran teachers, and equip the school to tackle its most central goals, priorities, and problems.

Four Goals for Teacher Learning

The school's stake in teacher learning may be expressed in terms of a set of four broad, ambitious goals that join the needs and interests of individual teachers to the collective needs and interests of the school.

Making Headway on the School's Central Goals, Priorities, or Problems

A key test of professional development lies in its capacity to mount a strong collective response to schoolwide problems or goals. Some of these problems and goals arise out of a broad policy agenda affecting all schools—raising the bar of educational achievement and closing the achievement gap. Other problems and goals arise from teachers' and parents' interest in educational benefits that go beyond measured academic achievement in tested subjects: students' overall intellectual growth; their social, moral, and political development; their independence and self-confidence; their

aesthetic sensitivity; and more. Finally, some problems and goals arise out of the specific circumstances of each school. For example, schools in some areas have experienced a flood of non-English-speaking immigrants over the past two decades and reasonably expect that all or most teachers will acquire expertise in teaching second-language learners. A well-wrought school plan would show evidence that professional development forms one part of a larger strategy for pursuing ambitious levels of teaching and learning in this school, with these students, in this community, and with these resources.

Building the Knowledge, Skill, and Disposition to Teach to High Standards

The quality of a school's teaching staff can be judged by the depth and breadth of knowledge, skill, and judgment that teachers bring to their work, both individually and collectively. Sound hiring practices offer one resource in this respect, but hiring well-qualified teachers will not be sufficient to meet this goal. Insights into teachers' expertise and their learning trajectories have multiplied as researchers have uncovered the complexities of teaching and the cognitive and social demands associated with learning to teach well. Thus, one test of effective professional development is whether teachers and other educators come to know more over time about their subjects, students, and practice and to make informed use of what they know.

Cultivating Strong Professional Community Conducive to Learning and Improvement

Research has steadily converged on the importance of strong teacher learning communities for teacher growth and commitment, suggesting as well their potential contribution to favorable student outcomes. Schools whose staff members espouse a shared responsibility for student learning and are organized to sustain a focus on instructional improvement are more likely to yield higher levels of student learning. Creating and sustaining robust professional learning communities is difficult, but research provides examples of what such communities look like and helps illuminate the conditions that place them within reach. Effective professional development might thus be judged by its capacity for building (and building on) the structures and values, as well as the intellectual and leadership resources, of professional community.

Sustaining Teachers' Commitment to Teaching

Individuals experience professional development at particular points in a teaching career and in conditions that bolster

or erode commitment to teaching over time. Here, the test of professional development lies in teachers' access to professional opportunities that afford them satisfaction, support, and stimulation appropriate to their stage of career and that make good use of their acquired expertise and experience. Recent studies of teaching careers, derived primarily from in-depth biographical interviews, emphasize the meanings that individuals attach to their work, the kinds of professional responsibilities they seek, and the identities and relationships they form. These studies draw attention to overlooked intersections of professional career and professional development (e.g., how particular teaching assignments build on, stimulate, or frustrate teacher learning). Such studies seem particularly consistent with recent initiatives in the support and assessment of beginning teachers and the cultivation of networks, teacher research groups, and other manifestations of professional community.

Why Focus on the School?

Despite talk of "site-based staff development," most organized professional development activity takes place outside the school. Furthermore, in an era of heightened accountability pressures, more districts are exercising control over professional development, thus constraining funds and staff time at the school level. Yet an alternative vision of teacher learning is emerging from the research. School-based professional communities are the core of the system; these are purposefully and coherently linked with external professional development opportunities.

Why focus on the school?

First, and most simply, the school is where the work of teaching and learning resides. It is where the problems of practice take on a particular face, where pressures for achievement are most directly felt, and where investments in professional learning pay off or do not. To focus on the school is to sustain attention to improvements in teaching and learning and to signal a broad conception of professional development encompassing "the full range of activities, formal and informal, that engage teachers or administrators in new learning about their professional practice" (Knapp 2003, p. 112). The school looms large not because it is the site of formal professional development activity (although it may be) but because its staff have a stake in thinking wisely and strategically about whether and how the school is organized to invest in professional learning.

Second, the school is important because a school's failure to create an environment conducive to professional learning has high costs. Students bear those costs in the form of inadequate instruction and high teacher turnover.

Teachers bear the costs in the form of weak instructional support and personal stress. In contrast, schools that are well organized for professional learning stand to reap the benefits of demonstrable student gains and enduring teacher commitment. Over the past two decades, evidence has accumulated that the workplace learning environment matters. Schools that support teacher learning and foster a culture of collegiality and continuous improvement are better able to support and retain new teachers, pursue innovation, respond effectively to external changes, and secure teacher commitment (Johnson and others 2004; Little 1982, 2003; Little and Bartlett 2002; Louis and Kruse 1995; McLaughlin and Talbert 1994, 2001; Rosenholtz 1989).

Corresponding to the four goals for teacher learning outlined above, conceptions of professional development in education have both broadened and deepened over the past two decades. We have moved from a model that emphasized the acquisition of discrete skills and behaviors to a more complex vision of teacher thinking, learning, and practice in particular subject domains. We have moved increasingly away from an individualistic view of teacher growth and toward a view that emphasizes a school's collective capacity and that credits the potential power of strong professional community. We have acknowledged the ways in which teachers' career experience and teaching commitments are shaped by the quality of the workplace environment and by the nature and extent of their professional ties. In addition, in many schools and districts, professional development planning has matured. Plans that were once a laundry list of activities are more often framed in terms of explicit links between student learning goals and expenditure of professional development resources.

It is true that school-level changes emerging from these bodies of research have been slow in developing. The most ambitious examples of powerful teacher learning remain relatively rare and modest in scale. Not all practitioners can say that they have frequent and meaningful contacts with colleagues or consultants or that they have been richly supplied with stimulating ideas, materials, and experiences. Indeed, many would readily report being "in-serviced" in ways that do little justice to their experience, interests, and circumstances. Patterns of local resource allocation at both the school and district levels have tended to favor traditional training models over promising but unfamiliar alternatives. Large districts are more likely than smaller ones to offer intensive, sustained professional development. Few schools or districts conduct meaningful

evaluation of the benefits derived from professional development activity. Yet meaningful shifts are evident. Table 1 summarizes the direction of these shifts in the form of strategic benchmarks for professional development and professional community at the school level.

Of course, no school exists in a vacuum. Schools are embedded in relationships that directly or indirectly affect teachers' work and professional development—relationships with school districts, the state, professional associations, reform organizations, and various professional development providers or partners. In particular, school districts have assumed growing importance as a context for professional learning and as a source of both resources and requirements for teaching. Although this paper centers on the school, it does so with the understanding that the school's ability to support teachers' professional learning depends both on its *internal resources* and on its *external connections* and relationships.

Professional Development Rooted in Goals And Problems of Teaching and Learning

Educators and researchers have lambasted the scattered, shallow, fragmented array of activity that so often makes up the professional development landscape, reserving special criticism for activities that seem remote from teachers' priorities and problems of practice. In a paper commissioned for the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, Ball and Cohen (1999) acknowledged this long-standing problem and offered a remedy: designing professional development more persuasively "in and from practice" (p. 10):

Rarely do...in-services seem based on a curricular view of teachers' learning. Teachers are thought to need updating rather than opportunities for serious and sustained learning of curriculum, students, and teaching...

Hence, we propose new ways to *understand and use practice as a site for professional learning*, as well as ways to cultivate the sorts of inquiry into practice from which many teachers could learn. (Ball and Cohen 1999, pp. 3–4, 6, emphasis added.)

Problems of Practice and the Instructional Triangle

When Ball and Cohen (1999) urged more opportunities for teachers to learn in and from professional practice, they focused professional development squarely on what

many now term the *instructional triangle*: the relationships between teacher, students, and content. The instructional triangle encompasses the dynamic, fluid, and complex interactions by which teachers help children learn challenging subject content and pursue other important intellectual and social goals.

Lampert's *Teaching Problems and the Problems of Teaching* (2001) provides a compelling illumination of the instructional triangle. Drawing from her 5th grade classroom, Lampert showed how teaching mathematics required that she solve problems related not only to her goals for students' content learning but also—and simultaneously—to her goals for building a classroom culture in which children can reason and argue about mathematics, learn how to work both independently and collaboratively, build up "intellectual courage," and develop a sense of their own growing understanding and accomplishment. In working toward those ambitious ends, she had to find ways to "cover the curriculum" without compromising "the complex character of content" while contending with "the complexities of human character." Throughout the book, the children's encounters with problems in mathematics helped Lampert, as teacher, expose and work on the problems of teaching.

Lampert's (2001) book embodies the kind of teaching knowledge required if teachers are to help all children meet ambitious standards. It also suggests the crucial importance of professional learning opportunities that are rooted firmly and specifically in problems of practice. Finally, it demonstrates the way in which the large, seemingly intractable problems of student achievement and achievement gaps—the problems that pervade policy debates and that stimulate waves of reform—take on a local and arguably more tractable face in each classroom and each school.

Consistent with the principle of organizing professional development in and from practice, then, a school organized for teacher learning would promote systematic attention to teaching and learning in multiple ways. School leaders would support teachers in acquiring a deep understanding of what it means for children to learn core concepts and skills in particular subject domains. School staff would develop the habit of collectively examining evidence of student learning and investigating the sources of students' progress or difficulties. Teachers would be helped to locate and participate in the best of external professional development opportunities and to parlay what they learn into collective capacity in the school. Partnerships with organizations or groups outside the school would be

Table 1. Benchmarks for Professional Community and Professional Development

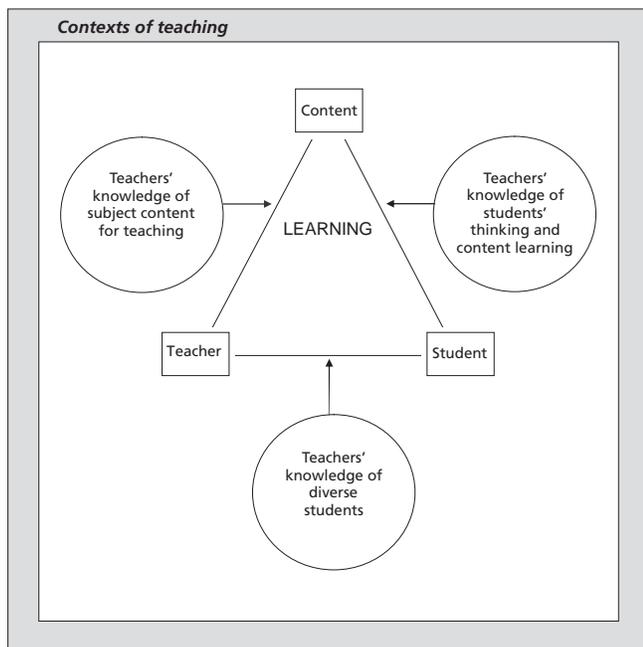
Benchmarks for...	Moving from...	Moving toward...
Purposes for professional development	Individual knowledge or change	Individual, collective, and school goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Making headway on school goals and problems ■ Building knowledge and skill to teach to high standards ■ Cultivating a strong professional community ■ Sustaining professional commitment.
Content focus of professional development	Unfocused “laundry list” of topics not related to school improvement goals Relationship to student learning unclear, unexamined, or left up to teachers to figure out	Focus on the “instructional triangle”: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pedagogical content knowledge ■ Student thinking, learning, and assessment ■ Understanding and responding to student diversity.
Strategy for professional development	Episodic training events on topics often disconnected from practice Strategies poorly designed to achieve effect	School-based professional communities are the core; these are coherently linked with external professional development opportunities. Strategies have characteristics associated with effectiveness: collective participation, active learning, coherence, sustained duration.
Professional community as resource for professional learning	Professional community a weak resource for professional learning Little attention by school leaders to building strong professional community Working conditions weakly or unevenly conducive to professional learning	Continuous learning is a school-wide norm; learning is embedded in the professional community. Cultivating professional community is a focus for school leaders. Working conditions are conducive to professional learning (teaching assignment, time, space, materials, and access to colleagues).
External professional development supports	Insufficient external support for teacher learning and school capacity building	Multiple external professional development opportunities link school professional communities with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ New advances in knowledge about subject content, learning, and teaching ■ Opportunities to understand students and their diverse communities ■ Externally developed tools and materials.

strategically chosen for their contributions to professional development and professional community.

From Problems of Practice to Professional Development

Working from the image of the instructional triangle, the following sections take up three entry points for professional learning. As Figure 1 shows, each represents one of three principal *relationships* in the instructional triangle; each offers a potential focus for activity within the school and for strategic participation in programs and partnerships beyond the school. The instructional triangle is useful as a strategic guide that provides a clear focus for the *content* of professional development.

Figure 1. Professional Development and the Instructional Triangle



Source: Adapted by the author from Cohen, Raudenbush, and Ball (2003).

The first relationship centers on teachers' understanding of subject domains for purposes of teaching. A substantial body of research now supplies evidence that teachers benefit from in-depth understanding of subject-specific concepts and from an understanding of how to help students learn them. Research on subject-specific professional development programs, sometimes in conjunction with innovative curricula, shows the power of intensive professional

development to deepen teachers' understanding, alter teaching practice, and promote student learning. In particular, these programs may help teachers transform basic subject knowledge into the practical knowledge required for teaching, or what Shulman (1986) termed *pedagogical content knowledge*.

The second area of professional development activity and research centers on teachers' grasp of students' thinking and learning. This relationship puts students' interaction with the content of the curriculum into the foreground. It encompasses efforts to expand teachers' facility with formative assessment as well as other initiatives that involve close, collective examination of students' thinking by means of what students say and do and the work they produce. In all of these activities, an underlying assumption is that systematic attention to student learning—and to students' responses to the instructional activities intended to promote that learning—will foster teacher learning and improve instructional decision making.

The final relationship focuses on teachers' understanding of and responsiveness to the students they teach, with special emphasis on understanding the nature and significance of student diversity. Of the three starting points for professional development, this relationship presents the broadest terrain by encompassing the many sources of student diversity—cultural, linguistic, cognitive, and more—that present resources and challenges for teaching and learning. Further, it offers a particular reminder that the instructional triangle of classroom life resides in—and reflects—multiple contexts beyond the classroom.

As Figure 1 suggests, these three relationships intersect and intertwine in practice. However, each relationship places a different aspect of the instructional triangle at the center, and each tends to emphasize a different central purpose for professional development activity. Subject-specific professional development focuses principally on the depth of teachers' subject-teaching expertise and how it might serve as a scaffold for children's learning, aided by well-designed curricula and instructional resources. Professional development focused on children's thinking and student work turns attention to the nature and progression of children's learning (in general and in particular subject areas) and the meaning they make of instructional activities and materials. Finally, professional development focused on student characteristics and conditions highlights teachers' knowledge of how those characteristics and conditions affect students' success in learning and how teachers' response matters. Together, the three suggest a broad set of foundational concerns and priorities for professional development.

Building Subject Knowledge for Teaching and Learning

In the last decade and a half, perhaps the most important developments in teaching and professional development center on expertise in specific domains of subject teaching. As teachers attest and research amply demonstrates, simply knowing a subject is not sufficient for knowing how to teach it. Nor is familiarity with a generic set of pedagogical routines sufficient for teachers to manage the subject-specific complexities that arise as students grapple with new concepts or skills.

The term *pedagogical content knowledge*, coined in the mid-1980s by Shulman (1986, 1987), captures a notion that dates to John Dewey in the early 20th century: that teachers must find a way to connect the subjects they teach to students' ideas and experience in ways that yield deep conceptual understanding and build skill and competence. Broadly defined, pedagogical content knowledge is the practical knowledge that enables teachers to transform the content and epistemology of a subject discipline for purposes of teaching.

Convincing evidence regarding the importance of pedagogical content knowledge comes from studies that range from small-scale, quasi-experimental investigations of teacher change to large-scale survey studies of content-focused professional development. Together, these experimental and survey-based studies support certain conclusions about the importance of subject-focused professional development and about the most effective features of professional development design.

In one experimental project designed to help elementary teachers with the teaching of fractions, researchers designed activities focused on the underlying mathematics, the specific math curriculum, children's mathematical understanding and motivation, and student assessment, including the use of student work and classroom videos to illuminate children's mathematical thinking and development (see Saxe, Gearhart, and Nasir 2001). Project researchers developed three professional development configurations. Teachers in the first group participated in an intensive program that included the full set of content-focused activities, facilitated by the project developers; a second group received the curriculum materials and participated in an implementation support group, but did not experience the structured activities; and a comparison group taught as usual. The most significant effects on student learning and the most uniform shifts in teaching practice were associated with the group having the most intensive and integrated approach to looking at mathematics,

children's understanding, and assessment. Other studies of specific programs, primarily in mathematics and science but also in literacy and history, offer similar findings.²

Large-scale survey studies reinforce the findings from these small-scale, program-specific experimental studies. In a detailed survey of professional development participation and classroom practice in mathematics reported by California elementary school teachers, Cohen and Hill (2001) found that the more that professional development focused in depth on mathematics curriculum, instruction, and assessment (e.g., by working with teachers to understand and prepare for the use of replacement units), the more teachers' classroom practice reflected an ambitious conception of mathematics teaching. Schools where teachers reported the most ambitious practices of mathematics instruction were also those with higher student achievement in mathematics.

Findings from an evaluation of the large, federally funded Eisenhower Professional Development Program in math and science further help to specify the characteristics of "high-quality professional development" in content areas. In a three-year study of teachers in 30 schools in five states, researchers investigated the extent to which professional development accounted for reported changes in classroom practice. In a paper summarizing the study, Desimone and others (2002) reported that teachers with the highest level of participation in particular kinds of subject-focused professional development also showed the greatest changes in their reported math and science practice. Taken together, these studies underscore the likely benefits of content-focused professional development compared with other emphases. They also point to the conditions under which those benefits are likely to be realized.

Sustained Focus on Subject Teaching

Professional development with a sustained focus on subject teaching—strongly tied to the curriculum, instruction, and assessment that students would encounter—produces the most consistent effect on subject teaching and student learning.³ Other professional development

² An exhaustive review of this literature is beyond the scope of this paper. Among the research reviews, see Wilson and Berne (1999); Kennedy (1998); Little (2004); Randi and Zeichner (2004).

³ In research conducted in the 1960s and 1970s, professional development focused on generic pedagogical practices was shown to have measurable effects on students' basic skills (Brophy and Good 1986). More recent research suggests that the depth of student learning is related to the depth and subject-specificity of teacher learning. For a useful brief summary, see Cohen and Hill (2005).

emphases, such as using hands-on activities, organizing cooperative small groups, taking steps to increase gender equity, or preparing teachers for leadership roles, certainly respond to widespread interests and concerns. However, none of them shows a consistent relationship to teachers' conceptions of subject teaching or reported practices of subject teaching. Only the professional development focused on subject knowledge for teaching does so.

Collective Participation, Active Learning, and Coherence

A focus on subject-teaching content thus appears to be necessary, but it is also insufficient. In the Eisenhower evaluation studies cited above (Desimone and others 2002), individual participation had less of an influence than participation by a group of teachers from the same school, department, or grade level. Programs were also more effective when they afforded teachers the opportunity "to become actively engaged" and were coherently linked to prior knowledge and other activities. The authors sum up:

Professional development is more effective in changing teachers' classroom practice when it has *collective participation* of teachers from the same school, department, or grade; and *active learning opportunities*, such as reviewing student work or obtaining feedback on teaching; and *coherence*, for example, linking to other activities or building on teachers' previous knowledge. (p. 102, emphasis added.)

Time Matters, but Only If Focused on the Right Stuff

Common sense suggests that activities of greater duration would yield more benefits. However, just as *subject* focus alone is insufficient to enhance teacher knowledge and practice, so must greater investments of *time* be coupled with other strategic and design choices. In the study of California's elementary teachers described above (Cohen and Hill 2001), teachers with the most sustained professional development were more likely to pursue extended mathematical investigations with their students, hold classroom discussions about problems and their solutions, and have students write or talk about their mathematical reasoning. The study's authors emphasized that "time spent had a potent influence on practice," but only if the time was spent on content, curriculum, and student tasks (p. 88).

Similarly, the national survey of teachers conducted for an evaluation of the Eisenhower professional development programs (Garet and others 2001) found that the "duration" of professional development (defined both in terms of total contact hours and span of time over weeks or months) achieved its effect primarily through the greater likelihood that teachers would experience active forms of professional learning and a coherent link between new professional learning, prior professional learning, and student learning standards in their state, district, and school.⁴

The principal lesson from this body of research is that teaching to high academic standards requires subject knowledge *for teaching*. This pedagogical content knowledge is most effectively developed through professional development that combines a number of key features. Effective professional development is content-focused, active, collective, coherent, and sustained.

Focusing on Students' Thinking and Evidence of Learning

Students produce a mountain of work in school each year, but only a fraction of those data are mined for instructional guidance. (Supovitz and Klein 2003, p. 13.)

Most teachers say they learn from their experience with students and that they do so in the course of their daily work. Yet few say they have the time or resources to stand back from the daily fray and articulate what they have learned—or how they have learned it. Few teach in circumstances where their observations of students and their explanations of student success or failure form part of an ongoing dialogue with colleagues or inform a school-level assessment of teaching effectiveness. Even where such dialogue occurs, it may be narrowed and constrained by an emphasis on measured achievement that limits consideration of the nuances of students' thinking.

Meanwhile, a growing body of research suggests that systematic attention to children's thinking and learning will pay off in improved classroom practice and student outcomes. As one recent review (Grossman, Schoenfeld, and Lee 2005) put it:

Effective teachers know much more than their subjects, and more than "good pedagogy."
They know how students tend to understand

⁴ By helping to specify the conditions under which "more time" matters, these two studies (i.e., Cohen and Hill 2001; Garet and others 2001) help explain why Kennedy's (1999) review of professional development effects on student learning found minimal or inconsistent results with regard to the duration and distribution of professional development.

(and misunderstand) their subjects; they know how to anticipate and diagnose such misunderstandings and they know how to deal with them when they arise. (p. 205.)

This body of research includes studies of three main sorts. A first category of research involves collaborative classroom assessment studies, in which teachers and researchers have worked together to develop and validate assessments embedded in curriculum in core academic areas. These studies supply evidence of benefits to students and to teachers when assessment strategies are integrated into instruction. Based on a review of collaborative assessment research and other quasi-experimental studies of professional development, Little (2004) concluded that

These studies...provide evidence that groups whose members systematically examine student work and student thinking were associated with higher student learning gains, more self-reported and observed change in teaching practice, and more growth in teacher knowledge than comparison groups where looking at student work was not a central activity. (pp. 104–05.)⁵

A second group of studies focuses on professional development programs and other school-based activity in which teachers' collective examination of student work and investigation of students' thinking forms a principal resource for professional learning. These studies show how teachers' fund of pedagogical content knowledge deepens as they pay closer attention to evidence of students' thinking as revealed both in classroom talk and in the work students produce. However, these same studies tend to show that it takes time, support, and structured opportunity for teachers to develop productive approaches to collecting evidence of student thinking and learning, distilling what might be learned from it.⁶

A final category of studies has developed in the context of whole-school reform efforts in which improved student assessment plays a pivotal role. These studies provide

⁵ For reports of specific studies, see Wilson and Sloane (2000); Wolf and Gearhart (1997); Herman and others (2005).

⁶ For examples of studies situated in formal programs of subject-specific professional development, see Kazemi and Franke (2004); Richardson (1994); Franke and others (2001). For an example of efforts to organize school-based conversations involving "looking at student work," see Little and others (2003).

examples of whole-school, grade-level, and classroom assessments, together with accounts of how changes in assessment helped to advance an agenda of schoolwide reform and boost student achievement.⁷ Experiments in school restructuring during the 1990s frequently entailed an emphasis on "authentic assessment" of student learning, providing structured processes and instruments for describing, analyzing, and reporting on student progress. Examples range from the collective use of the Primary Language Record to chart and support children's language development in elementary schools to the public presentation and review of student portfolios or senior projects at the high school level (Darling-Hammond, Aness, and Falk 1995).

These studies underscore the value that teachers attach to professional conversations anchored in student thinking and performance. Altogether, this body of research points schools toward more frequent and focused discussion of student learning data from a variety of sources that range from standardized test results to teachers' accounts and artifacts of what children do, say, and produce in the course of everyday instruction. Two directions seem especially promising for schools. One is to expand the quality and variety of formative assessments at the classroom level; a second is to promote and organize collective inquiry into and discussion of student progress and achievement based on a range of evidence, including but not restricted to standardized achievement measures.

Expanding Formative Assessment of Student Learning

Assessment for learning is any assessment for which the first priority in its design and practice is to serve the purpose of promoting students' learning. (Black and others 2004, p. 10.)

Formative assessment occurs in and through instruction, with the fundamental purpose of providing teachers and students with information on the progress of learning. Having reviewed more than 250 studies of formative assessment, British researchers Black and Wiliam (1998) concluded that

innovations that include strengthening the practice of formative assessment produce significant and often substantial learning gains. These studies range over age groups from 5-year-olds to university undergraduates,

⁷ For a collection of examples, see Darling-Hammond, Aness, and Falk (1995).

across several school subjects, and over several countries. (p. 140.)

Based on what they characterized as a “wealth of evidence,” these authors (Black and Wiliam 2004) concluded that the accumulated research strongly warrants an investment in professional development aimed at expanding the use of formative assessment in classrooms and schools:

Such improvements [in formative assessment], produced across a school, would raise a school in the lower quartile of the national performance tables to well above average. Thus, it is clear that, far from having to choose between teaching well and getting good test scores, teachers can actually improve their students’ results by working with the ideas we present here. (p. 11.)

Scholars in the United States also advocate a substantial increase in the use of formative assessment as a means to strengthen instruction and boost student learning. In a recent paper intended to inform programs of teacher education, Shepard and others (2005) concluded that effectively implemented formative assessment can improve student achievement as much or more than other powerful interventions such as intensive reading instruction or one-on-one tutoring.

To yield such powerful benefits for teaching and learning, formative assessment must be closely integrated in instruction and must rest on a strong foundation of pedagogical content knowledge in the subjects being assessed. Yet despite the potential power of formative assessment to strengthen instruction and aid student learning, few teachers have been prepared to make effective use of it—or to create the kind of classroom instructional environment that is compatible with it. Shepard and others (2005) warned that the majority of teachers have limited knowledge of formative assessment strategies, tending to think of assessment primarily for purposes of grading (see also Herman and others 2005).

Similarly, Black and Wiliam (1998, p. 141) observed that the gains in student learning associated with increased use of formative assessment require practices that remain relatively scarce in “normal” classrooms. The authors remarked on the current “poverty of practice” and argued that developing the necessary practices and perspectives would entail “sustained programs of professional development and support” (p. 146).

Altogether, then, the available research provides persuasive evidence that schools would benefit by expanding the use of formative assessment but that most face professional development challenges in doing so. Projects under way in England and the United States provide some guidance regarding effective professional development for formative assessment. For example, Black and Wiliam (2004) worked with teachers to develop specific classroom practices that generate evidence of student learning, which in turn informs instructional modifications. Teachers participated in nine one-day professional development events over a period of 18 months, interspersed with opportunities to try out new approaches and to discuss their experiences and ideas with project researchers. Researchers report that evidence collected from the teachers in the form of interviews, observations, and reflective writing indicates that the teachers achieved “very significant, often radical changes in their instructional practices” (Black and Wiliam 2004, p. 46) and that they attributed those changes to the professional development in which they had participated. Those instructional practices included the effective use of questioning strategies to elicit student thinking and reasoning; student feedback that minimized the use of grades or marks and emphasized the use of comments targeted to learning goals and next steps in learning; and the development of peer- and self-assessment routines and norms.

Fostering Schoolwide Conversation about Student Learning and Achievement

At the school level, teachers increasingly are being asked to consider evidence of student learning as a basis for establishing instructional priorities. One mark of schools that make headway on the achievement gap appears to be their propensity to promote and organize conversations based in evidence of student progress. Symonds (2003) compared schools that had made progress in closing the achievement gap, as measured by California’s Academic Performance Index (API), with schools that had not. Drawing on academic performance data and surveys from teachers in 32 K–8 schools, Symonds determined that most schools devoted attention to student assessment and most linked professional development to high-priority areas, but that the gap-closing schools were home to a far more intensive, ongoing set of activities and conversations focused on student learning and instructional improvement.

Schools in Symonds’ (2003) study differed dramatically in the frequency with which they assessed student progress and with which they based staff discussions on student performance evidence. Nearly two-thirds of respondents

from gap-closing schools reported such activity a few times a month or even weekly, whereas most teachers from other schools reported such activity infrequently or never. Teachers in the gap-closing schools were much more likely to work with school leaders who actively encouraged inquiry into the nature of the achievement gap and to receive professional development that helped them craft instructional responses to the problems targeted by the evidence in hand. Finally, the evidence-based conversations in gap-closing schools were not limited to the evidence yielded by external tests. Rather, they built a habit of assessment designed to gauge growth in student learning and to help teachers refine instruction. In effect, these schools developed a collective capacity for *formative assessment* of student progress as a resource for their own decision making, although they credit the need periodically to take stock of whether and how well students have mastered particular concepts and skills (*summative assessment*).

In a study of America's Choice schools completed by the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE; Supovitz and Klein 2003), researchers found teachers and administrators making extensive use of multiple sources of student learning data. Data sources ranged from the results of standardized tests to student portfolios, various kinds of open-ended assessments, and the use of "running records" in reading. Of these, school leadership teams reported the classroom- and school-based assessments as most useful and the state and district assessments as less helpful—mainly, it appears, because states and districts do not provide timely feedback. The researchers attributed the effective use of assessment and assessment-based conversations in large part to school leaders, remarking that a culture of inquiry had "taken root into the culture of the school," and that "the fingerprints of strong leadership are all over the data activities in the schools in this study" (pp. 2, 18).

Preparing for Student Diversity

Teachers' understanding of their students and the relationships they form with those students remain central to the success of the teaching enterprise. Classrooms are inevitably diverse places, and each class presents its own new possibilities, resources, and challenges. As we are reminded in a recent essay, "*Teaching Diverse Learners* (Banks and others 2005), "diversity is the nature of the human species, and students are and always have been different from each other in a variety of ways" (p. 232). However, that essay goes on, through a series of compelling vignettes, to illustrate the difficulties that teachers face in deciding how best to respond to the kinds of diversity their

students present.⁸ Those vignettes—about the school's response to a child's developmental and learning difficulties; about feedback to a student who has produced troubling work; and about the special needs of English language learners—illuminate the magnitude of the task that teachers face in preparing to teach students whose backgrounds and perspectives may be very different from their own.

Added to the human complexities present in all teaching relationships, then, teachers in American schools increasingly confront the challenge of understanding and bridging differences that historically have disadvantaged entire groups of children. Of course, enduring inequities have roots in political, social, and economic conditions outside the school. Nonetheless, research also shows clearly how the school and classroom are implicated in either sustaining those inequities or interrupting them. Because schools and teachers matter, for good or for ill, and because tackling the disparity in outcomes proves so difficult, schools have a stake in knowing what contribution investments in professional development might make.

Building on Successful Equity-Oriented Classroom Practice

Portraits of successful classroom practice have multiplied. Studies of teachers who are effective in teaching students of color, children from poor families, children learning English as a second language, or children with learning disabilities supply concrete images of effective practice and help to shape an agenda for professional development. These emerging portraits consistently underscore the importance of the entire "instructional triangle" and its relations among teachers, learners, and content.

In a synthesis of the research on the knowledge, skills, and experiences needed for teaching diverse learners, Cochran-Smith (1997) also emphasized the importance of foundational subject-matter knowledge linked to teachers' shared commitments to students. She reported that researchers who have studied culturally responsive teachers, such as Ladson-Billings (*The Dreamkeepers*, 1994), and educators who have successfully led or taught in high-achieving urban schools, such as Meier (*The Power of Their Ideas*, 1995), find that one crucial element of teachers' success rests in their "passion" for engaging students with important subject matter.

⁸ Teaching "diverse learners" may take the form of teaching in heterogeneous classrooms or schools or teaching in settings in which the student enrollment is fairly homogeneous but the background of the students is different from that of their teachers.

The same observation emerges from a two-year study of 140 classrooms in 15 schools across three states (see Knapp and Associates 1995). In that study, “teachers who were most successful teaching for meaning [in high-poverty schools] were those with a deep knowledge of subject matter as well as a conception of students as active participants in learning whose prior knowledge must be connected to school subject matter” (Cochran-Smith 1997, p. 39). In the classrooms of the most successful teachers, students learned basic skills as tools to aid them in more ambitious tasks, such as writing extended texts, rather than as discrete, decontextualized skills. Knapp and Associates (1995) wrote:

The more classrooms focused on teaching for meaning—that is, geared reading instruction to comprehension, and writing instruction to composing extended text—the more likely students were to demonstrate proficiency in...reading comprehension and written communication, all other factors being equal.

...Approaches to...reading and writing instruction that emphasized meaning were likely to work as well for lower achieving children as for higher achieving ones, and sometimes better. (p. 142.)

These studies have special import when they demonstrate how shifts in classroom practice enhance students’ success in “gatekeeper” domains such as early literacy and secondary mathematics that tend to make or break students’ chances for future opportunity. In one such example, researchers traced the mathematics learning of 700 high school students in three schools as they progressed through four years of high school (Boaler and Staples 2005; see also Horn 2005). The researchers examined the nature of teaching that students experienced, the students’ attitude toward mathematics, and the students’ mathematics learning. Among the three schools, the one with the highest level of student diversity—an urban school with a culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse student population—produced the greatest surprises:

At the beginning of high school, “Railside” students were achieving at significantly lower levels than the students at the other two more suburban schools in our study.⁹ Within two years, the Railside students were significantly

outperforming students at the other schools. The students were also more positive about mathematics, they took more mathematics courses and many more of them planned to pursue mathematics at college. In addition, achievement differences between students of different ethnic groups were reduced in all cases and were eliminated in most. By their senior year, 41 percent of Railside students were taking calculus compared with about 27 percent of students in the other two schools.

At Railside, mathematics classes were calm and peaceful, with a high work-rate and few behavioral problems, and the ethnic cliques that are evident in many schools did not form. In interviews, the students told us that they learned to respect students from other cultures and circumstances through the approach used in their mathematics classes. The mathematics teachers at Railside achieved something important that many other teachers could learn from—they provided students from disadvantaged backgrounds a great chance of success in life and they taught them to enjoy mathematics and to include it as part of their futures. (Boaler and Staples 2005, p. 1; see also Boaler 2004).

Boaler and Staples (2005) attributed Railside’s favorable student outcomes to a complex combination of practices and conditions, both in the classroom and among the teachers as a department. The research findings are consistent with other studies in pointing to the importance of the teachers’ stance toward their subjects and their capacity to work with subject learners in deep and flexible ways.¹⁰ The teachers focused especially on algebra, creating a common curriculum in which core concepts were taught through problems with multiple solution paths. Students were also helped to use mathematical language, graphs, tables, and other representations as tools to develop and express their reasoning.

⁹ The example of “Railside” school actually draws from two complementary studies of the same school and teachers. In Boaler and Staples (2005), the school is named Railside; in work published by Horn (2005) and Little (2003), it is called East High. “Railside” is used throughout as a matter of convenience.

¹⁰ For additional case study examples, see Lee’s (1995) research on African-American students in an experimental high school English course and Tharpe and Gallimore’s (1988) study of literacy practices that bridge home and school in a program for native Hawaiian children.

In addition, the research findings at Railside are consistent with studies that point to the importance of collective participation in professional development and to shared responsibility for student learning and mutual support among colleagues. Drawing from the ideas of Complex Instruction developed at Stanford University (Cohen and Lotan 1997), the Railside teachers set about systematically and explicitly replacing the usual status order in the mathematics classroom—one in which the students who perform mathematical tasks quickly are the “smart” kids—with one in which many kinds of contribution are needed and valued. The teachers credit their ability to transform the student culture of the math classroom in large part to their professional development experience in adapting the equity principles of Complex Instruction in combination with their membership in a strong network of reform-oriented math educators and participation in reform-oriented mathematics professional development outside the school. Meeting on a weekly basis, the teachers continually assessed students’ success and struggles, refined the curriculum, and helped each other with problems of teaching practice (Horn 2005). The Railside math department is similar to departments described by Gutierrez (1996) as “organized for advancement,” that is, organized to enhance students’ access to and success in rigorous academics.

From Exemplary Classrooms to Professional Development

Therefore, a question arises: What kind of professional learning opportunities equip teachers for “thinking pedagogically about diversity” in ways that are both “academically challenging and responsive to students” (Banks and others 2005, p. 245)? In answering that question, we are hampered by certain difficulties. The first is the apparent scarcity of professional development focused on preparing teachers for student diversity—or at least the relatively low rates of participation in the opportunities that do exist. In a report by the National Education Association (NEA 2003), only 40 percent of teachers surveyed reported having participated in professional development for “managing diversity in the classroom,” compared with 82 percent who reported participating in subject-matter professional development, with substantially more participation by minority teachers (55%) than white teachers (38%).

A second difficulty is the apparent tendency to separate professional development for “diversity” or “equity” from professional development designed to deepen subject-teaching knowledge. Much of the professional development (and corresponding research) targeted toward stu-

dent diversity has the effect of turning the instructional triangle into a set of parallel lines. The result is that teachers may acquire greater awareness of and sensitivity to student differences without understanding how to draw on that awareness to engage students in particular subjects, or vice versa. As Cochran-Smith (1997) observed in a review of the research, “the teacher’s knowledge of subject matter is given little attention in the literature on teaching diverse populations. Likewise, the teaching of culturally diverse learners is given little attention in the growing literature on teaching subject matter” (p. 38).

An additional difficulty is that in comparison with research on subject-related professional development, there exists relatively little research on professional development designed to prepare teachers for student diversity. Even programs with extensive research on classroom implementation and student outcomes (e.g., Cognitively Guided Instruction or Success for All) tend to offer little or no research on teachers’ professional development experience or teacher learning outcomes. Knight and Wiseman (2006) reported in a recent review of the literature that studies about the effects of professional development for teachers of diverse students provided too little detail about the professional development activity itself to provide practical guidance for improving it.

The growing body of research on teaching diverse learners provides some clues for professional development in part by helping to specify the nature of the challenges teachers face and by identifying the kinds of knowledge, skill, and dispositions evident in successful classrooms and schools (e.g., Stodolsky and Grossman 2000). That research supports the importance of professional learning that keeps all the relations of the instructional triangle in view, making explicit links between subject-matter preparation and the knowledge, perspectives, and needs of diverse learners. As McDiarmid (1991) noted more than a decade ago, “Teachers’ capacity to evaluate the appropriateness of representations they make of their subject matter depends, then, on their view of learners as well as on their understanding of the learners’ relationship to the subject matter” (p. 263).

On the one hand, it seems unlikely that teachers working only to strengthen their subject-teaching expertise will be able automatically to detect, appreciate, and build on the diverse cognitive, cultural, and linguistic resources that students bring to the classroom. In a recent essay, Banks and others (2005) organized their discussion of what teachers need to know by illustrating what teachers must know and do to create the “culturally responsive classroom” and the

“inclusive classroom.” By “culturally responsive,” the authors meant classrooms organized to support the learning of children from diverse racial, ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. “Inclusive” referred specifically to classrooms supportive of children with other “special needs” such as learning or physical disabilities. Both notions emphasize building on children’s knowledge and strengths, accepting and capitalizing on differences, and creating a classroom environment that is physically and emotionally safe for learning.¹¹

On the other hand, it is unrealistic to expect teachers to figure out independently how to transform subject-matter teaching on the basis of a newly found sensitivity to student diversity. Professional development is likely to be limited in its classroom effects if focused primarily on teachers’ awareness, attitudes, and generic pedagogical strategies.¹²

As a case in point, Sleeter (1997) completed a study of the classroom impacts of a two-year program of multicultural education, observing the professional development sessions and teachers’ classroom practice and interviewing teachers about what they had learned. Most teachers reported having developed a new level of awareness regarding student diversity, becoming more sensitized to differences among students and more knowledgeable about multicultural education ideas. Some teachers made modest—generally short-lived—changes in their use of cooperative learning and in their attempts to interact with all students. Overall, however, the proposed teaching strategies appeared only sporadically and rarely in the context of a core content area: “Few teachers substantially reconstructed their teaching in any discipline over the 2-year period” (p. 689). Furthermore, an analysis focused specifically on mathematics teaching found virtually no effects of the professional development on teachers’ conceptions of mathematics curriculum or their instruction. Indeed, “most did not see much connection between multicultural education and mathematics” (p. 686). These findings indicate that teachers are unlikely to recognize connections between multicultural awareness and subject teaching where they are not helped to develop them explicitly and concretely in ways that deepen their command of subject-teaching possibilities.

¹¹ Reviews by Banks and others (2005) and Cochran-Smith (1997) both offer numerous examples and citations to classroom research that spans several decades.

¹² Indeed, there is some evidence that professional development focused principally on teachers’ awareness, attitudes, and sensitivity may have the unintended effects of reinforcing stereotypes (Grant 1991; Zeichner 1992; Zeichner and Hoefft 1996).

To create more responsive and inclusive classrooms, it appears, requires that professional development help teachers explicitly develop inclusive and culturally responsive practices relevant to students’ success with the core subjects they teach. Studies of teachers like those at Railside suggest that professional development will be most potent if it joins an equity mission, teachers’ understanding of student diversity, strategies designed to open up students’ learning opportunities, and serious work on subject-matter teaching.

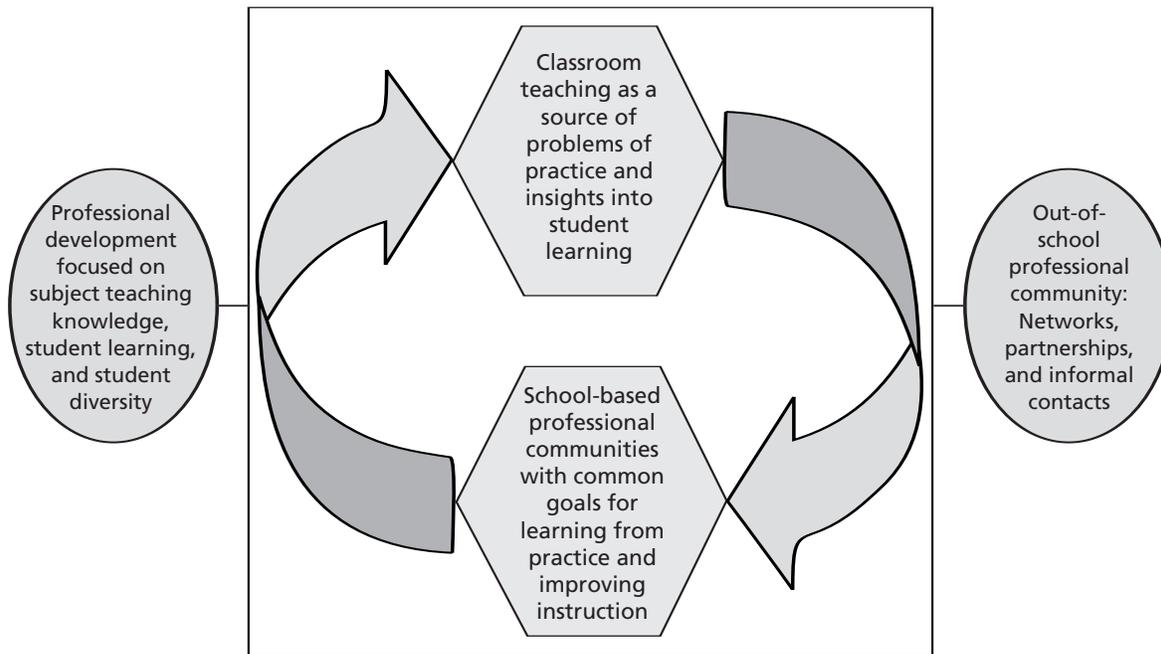
Everything we know about the nature of ambitious and successful classroom teaching points toward taking the instructional triangle seriously as the point of departure for professional learning. In doing so, however, schools take on a task of considerable magnitude. The sheer magnitude of the task, and the fact that it is never-ending, points our attention toward the way in which the school itself is organized to facilitate teachers’ individual and collective efforts to deepen their teaching knowledge, foster inquiry into student learning, and develop meaningful supports for all students.

Professional Community in Support of Teaching and Learning

At the very least, one must imagine schools in which teachers are in frequent conversation with each other about their work, have easy and necessary access to each other’s classrooms, take it for granted that they should comment on each other’s work, and have the time to develop common standards for student work. (Meier 1992, p. 602.)

It does not take a newcomer long to take stock of whether the school’s professional environment is consistent with professional learning. Although multiple workplace conditions play a part,¹³ vigorous professional communities occupy a particularly central role in schools conducive to teacher learning. Ideally, professional communities within schools are fundamentally oriented to problems of classroom practice and linked to a variety of external sources of knowledge and support for teacher learning. As we turn from the content of professional development to consider the process or the means, Figure 2 provides a schematic overview that places school-based professional learning communities focused on problems of classroom teaching and learning at the center of a larger constellation of learning opportunities.

¹³ For discussion of the broader range of workplace conditions that bear on professional learning opportunity and teacher retention, see Johnson and others (2004) and Little (1999).

Figure 2. Linking Professional Community and Professional Development

Source: Author.

What Professional Community Is and Why It Matters

As commonly used, the phrase *professional community* refers to close relationships among teachers as professional colleagues, usually with the implication that these relationships are oriented toward teacher learning and professional development. Although there are some variations from study to study in how researchers define and characterize professional community, most definitions encompass the elements shown in Box 1.

The image of professional community has its origins in research on teachers' workplace relationships and their relationship to school improvement. In one early example of such research, Little (1982) found that schools with "norms of collegiality and experimentation" were more likely to adapt successfully to a major change (court-ordered desegregation) and to record higher levels of student achievement than schools where teachers worked in isolation and where norms of privacy and noninterference prevailed. In the highly collegial and improvement-oriented schools, teachers talked frequently with each other about their teaching and how to improve it. They spoke in focused, specific ways about classroom practice and

Box 1. Defining Elements of Professional Community

- Shared values and purposes, including shared orientations to the teaching of particular subjects
- Collective focus on and responsibility for student learning, sometimes described as a "service ethic," with regard to students' learning and well-being
- Collaborative and coordinated efforts to improve student learning
- Practices supportive of teacher learning, including observation, problem solving, mutual support, and advice giving—sometimes summed up as "deprivatized practice and reflective dialogue"
- Collective control over important decisions affecting curriculum.

Source: Grodsky and Gamoran (2003); Louis and Kruse (1995); McLaughlin and Talbert (2001); Secada and Adajian (1997).

student learning; worked with each other to develop and share classroom materials; observed each other teach when possible; were open to giving and receiving advice; and participated together in professional development, helping one another learn new ways of teaching.

Other studies produced similar results, showing that schools benefited when teachers achieved high levels of collaboration and adopted a norm of “continuous improvement.” Rosenholtz (1989) concluded that her sample of 78 elementary schools could be divided into “learning enriched” and “learning impoverished” schools based on the levels of collaboration, professional sharing, and advice-giving among teachers. Those in the learning-enriched category—with robust learning environments for teachers—were also more likely to have strong profiles of student achievement. Schools engaged in whole-school restructuring during the 1990s were also found to produce higher levels of student achievement where teachers formed a professional community oriented toward learning (Newmann and Wehlage 1995; Newmann and Associates 1996).¹⁴

Over a decade or so, educators and researchers have gradually shifted from a language of “collegiality” and “collaboration” toward language centered on notions of “community,” linking a “community of learners” in the classroom and “professional community” among teachers. Of those who write about professional community, many have referred to Wenger’s (1998) work on “communities of practice.” As Wenger defined it, a community of practice exists when individuals are mutually engaged in a joint enterprise and over time develop a “shared repertoire of ways of doing things” (p. 49). Wenger described local communities of practice, but he also envisioned “constellations” of professional communities that link local communities together with broader networks in shared enterprises. An example might be a school professional community that is linked with a professional association and a university partner—all working together on a more challenging mathematics curriculum for the school.

Cultivating Professional Community for Teacher Learning and School Improvement

As the research on teachers’ professional community has evolved and matured, it has tackled a series of questions of

importance to school leaders: Are all forms of “professional community” beneficial for teachers, students, and schools? What conditions enable professional communities to form and be productive? What goes on inside teacher communities that provides resources for teacher learning? Each of these questions yields insights for cultivating professional community.

Distinguishing “Strong Traditional Community” From “Teacher Learning Community”

Much of the early research distinguished between collegial (strong) and isolating (weak) professional cultures and offered compelling portraits of how some collegial schools or groups successfully pursued improvement. However, in schools, as in other organizations or in society more generally, strong cultures are not necessarily innovative cultures. That is, groups or schools may prove to be “strong” from a social and political perspective (cohesive and adept at securing resources), but “weak” as sources of improvement in teaching and learning.

Based on extensive research in public and private secondary schools, researchers at Stanford’s Center for Research on the Contexts of Teaching (CRC) found that professional communities vary in significant ways. McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) differentiated between a weak professional culture, where classroom work remains private and teachers “pass like ships in the night,” and a strong professional culture in which teachers share a set of commitments regarding teaching and learning. They further distinguish between two types of strong professional community. In *tradition-oriented strong communities*, teachers unite to preserve their preferred conceptions of subject and pedagogy even in the face of student failure. Teachers in these groups are held together by conservative views of a subject discipline, school curriculum, and instruction, but display little in the way of collective responsibility for student learning. Teachers in *teacher learning communities* also share certain core views and commitments but take a more dynamic and flexible stance toward subject teaching and routinely question and challenge teaching routines when they prove ineffective with students. Such communities embrace collective obligations for student success and well-being and develop collective expertise by employing problem solving, critique, reflection, and debate (see also Gutierrez 1996; Horn 2005; Louis and Kruse 1995; Talbert 1995).

The CRC studies, other studies of whole-school reform (Newmann and Wehlage 1995; Louise and Kruse 1995), and analyses of large-scale data sets all point to a high standard

¹⁴ A thorough review of this literature is beyond the scope of this paper. Taken more or less chronologically, some of the contributions include Little (1982, 1987, 1990); Rosenholtz (1989); Nias, Southworth, and Yeomans (1989); Little and McLaughlin (1993); Siskin (1994); Louis and Kruse (1995); Newmann and Associates (1996); Westheimer (1998); Grossman, Wineburg, and Woolworth (2001); McLaughlin and Talbert (2001); Achinstein (2002); Horn (2005).

for the kind of teacher learning community that is likely to boost student learning. In one analysis of a national data set, Lee and Smith (1995) found measures of staff cooperation to be unrelated to student achievement, even though a spirit of cooperation is no doubt desirable from a workplace perspective. However, student achievement in math and science was significantly higher in schools where teachers expressed what the authors termed *collective responsibility for student learning*. Collective responsibility was defined in terms of teachers' expressed view that it was their responsibility to ensure that students learned and to help prevent them from dropping out or failing.¹⁵

Moving from a Culture of Privacy to Teacher Learning Community

Creating and sustaining such a robust teacher learning community is no small matter. The available research, although relatively small in quantity, points consistently to certain perspectives and practices that must develop over time and to the leadership required to nurture them.

First, portraits of robust teacher communities show teachers at ease with disclosing their teaching dilemmas, discussing them in depth, and helping one another craft solutions to problems of teaching practice and student learning. In one recent study of teacher study groups ("critical friends groups"), looking closely at examples of student work became the means by which teachers gained a deeper appreciation for dilemmas that they and their students faced (Little and others 2003).¹⁶ In one vignette,

Shelby, a high school health/science teacher, provided two samples of a persuasive essay she had assigned as the culminating assignment in a mental health unit on violence and violence prevention. Shelby was not satisfied that the essays had captured what she had hoped students would learn from the unit. Her colleagues in the meeting, representing a wide range of subject fields, had all participated in professional development aimed at strengthening "writing across the curriculum." In

examining the student essays, they began to realize that they had an incomplete grasp of what it meant for students to produce a persuasive essay—and for teachers to assign and assess one. A math teacher mused, "What comes to mind is how well do the students understand what is meant by a persuasive essay?" and seconds later, "...because I'm not clear what is meant by a persuasive essay..." Those dual themes—what *students* understood and what the *teachers* understood as "persuasive essay"—were picked up throughout the discussion, culminating in this exchange:

English teacher: Do you think maybe the kids didn't get it?

Shelby: Do you think maybe the *teacher* didn't get it?! (Laughter.)

(Little and others 2003, p. 189.)

Second, teachers move toward more robust forms of teacher community if and when they find ways to air and explore disagreement, acknowledge their differences, and tolerate conflict. Grossman, Wineburg, and Woolworth (2001), reporting on a three-year study of a project involving high school English and history teachers, considered this "navigation of fault lines" pivotal in the teachers' gradual shift from what they termed *pseudo-community* to *authentic community*. In its initial stages, the authors said,

A group may deny differences and proclaim a false sense of unity... With the formation of community, differences among participants can be acknowledged and understood. With such recognition comes the ability to use diverse views to enlarge the understanding of the group as a whole. (p. 989.)

Finally, case study research suggests that teacher groups benefit from the kinds of leadership or facilitation that help build the conditions outlined above—the ease in disclosing problems and the disposition to dig into them, as well as a growing acceptance of teacher-to-teacher initiative on matters of practice. Grossman, Wineburg, and Woolworth (2001) noted that teacher communities become venues for cultivating teacher leadership. A comparable finding emerges from the study of critical friends groups cited above:

¹⁵ In this case, the term *collective* refers to the aggregate of individual measures, but commonality of views (a high mean level and low variance on the reported items) suggests that a shared norm may be operating. That is, teachers in such a school would expect one another to take responsibility for student learning and would disapprove of those who do not.

¹⁶ For more detail on this case, see Curry (2003). For other examples of teacher groups developing the capacity for rich, productive conversation about teaching and learning, see Clark (2001).

Where we saw evidence of group norms built on open discussion, constructive questioning and critique, it was where individuals took the initiative to establish a different kind of conversation—one in which people could push on ideas and practice while still being respectful of one another. (Little and others 2003, p. 190.)

Creating Resources for Learning inside Teacher Community

Not all schools or groups that are committed to learning and improvement necessarily possess or create resources sufficient to act productively on those commitments. Research that probes “inside teacher community” concentrates on trying to uncover the kinds of distinctive processes that characterize vigorous and effective teacher communities—those, such as Will Rogers Elementary School or Railside High School’s math department, that demonstrably influence the quality of teaching and learning. Although this research remains in its early stages, it has begun to illuminate how even “collaborative” groups vary in the variety and density of resources that teachers marshal in their interaction with one another, and thus vary in their ability to sustain their focus on teaching practice and student learning. In one recent comparison among highly collaborative groups (Little and Horn, in press; Horn 2005), one group consistently emerged as a powerful site for teacher learning. What stood out in this group of math teachers—all teaching algebra in detracked classrooms—was the sheer density of human and material resources on which the teachers relied to focus their attention productively on teaching and learning. In their once-a-week after-school meetings, the teachers routinely drew on three kinds of resources that distinguished them from other collaborative groups of math and English teachers.

- *Expectations and routines for extended talk about teaching*, or what Horn (2005) has called “episodes of pedagogical reasoning.” In particular, a routine called “check-in” served not only as a coordination function (where are we in the semester curriculum?) but also more importantly, as a problem-raising and problem-solving function for novice and veteran teachers alike (Little and Horn, in press). Problems raised by individuals (“I started the geo-boards today and it felt like mayhem. It felt like no one understood.”) became the focus of further “unpacking” questions and extended talk about possible interpretations of the problem and

approaches to solving it. On a novice teacher’s “mayhem” problem, teachers talked about what might have produced students’ unexpected response. Among the commentaries from veteran teachers was this one:

When they get upset and they seem to be off task and acting goofy, it usually is motivated by “I’m so confused and the last thing I want to do is admit I’m confused so I’m instead I’m going to find a way to distract myself or distract others so that I don’t have to face the fact that I don’t know how to do something.” So I always try to sympathize. (I may pretend to) be mad, like “You guys aren’t working! What are you doing?” And then I try to take a step back and think what are they afraid of, how can I make them feel comfortable with that fear, what can I say or do to make them feel like this is a safe place. And that usually takes me somewhere where it’s never fully successful, but I see some successes and then that translates into other days that become more successful (Little and Horn, in press).

- *Frequent and purposeful use of curricular resources.* Teachers made active use of texts, binders of sample problems, manipulatives, and reference books, as they talked with one another about what and how they were teaching core concepts and how students responded. With a pile of transparencies ready at hand, they used the overhead projector to display problems and map out approaches to teaching them (“So this graphic up here sort of illustrates...”). They recorded and referred back to their own thinking about their goals for particular problems and their instructional strategies.
- *Plentiful, detailed examples of student work and teaching practice.* The face of the classroom was constantly present in the form of lesson plans, samples of student work, demonstrations and simulations of classroom teaching, teachers’ accounts of student response in the classroom, teachers’ thinking aloud in detail about future classes, and even references to their observations of one another’s teaching.

Fostering Professional Community at Multiple Levels and Locations

Where might teacher community best be constituted if it is to foster professional learning and influence student learning? Huberman (1993) has speculated that

professional community seems most likely to take root in grade levels, departments, or teams “where people have concrete things to tell one another and concrete instructional help to provide one another—where the contexts of instruction actually overlap” (p. 45). Yet schoolwide improvement teams have also become widespread. One recent study suggests that the most productive stance might be to foster professional community at multiple levels, with different expectations about what it might accomplish at each level.

In a two-year study of one innovative elementary school, Stokes (2001) showed how the staff of Will Rogers Elementary School structured opportunities to offer precisely such multilevel inquiries. Each form of inquiry worked well to enable some kinds of learning or to tackle some kinds of problems but was less well suited to others. The entire school staff engaged in what Stokes described as “whole-school assessment of learning outcomes,” developing common benchmark assessments of students’ literacy learning and devoting a full week in midyear to examining the data. Inquiry at this level enabled the teachers not only to develop a common understanding of student progress in reading and writing but also to see that a gap remained in race-based patterns of differential achievement and opportunity. This form of inquiry had an important motivational effect but could not supply teachers with sufficient insight to attack the gap and gauge their effectiveness. For this, smaller groups of teachers designed action research projects that afforded an opportunity to experiment with changes in curriculum and instruction at grade level and to assemble evidence regarding the nature and extent of any change in student performance. This form of activity provided the kind of mutual support and peer pressure needed to persist with a difficult task. However, it also tended to expose teachers’ own uncertainties and to reveal differences in teachers’ beliefs about teaching and learning. It was within a third inquiry context, which Stokes characterized as “individual reflection with small-group support,” that individual teachers created a more private, voluntary forum in which they took up their individual concerns and problems. This was the forum, Stokes reported, that “enabled teachers to ‘say things you wouldn’t say’ in other settings” (p. 148).

Stokes (2001) emphasized that no one strategy for introducing and organizing inquiry satisfies all interests. No one approach encompasses all of the work of teacher learning and instructional improvement. Further, to develop this constellation of activities required that the staff develop both *normative* capacity (“the staff’s collective

embrace and enactment of values that support self-study as an important kind of learning”) and *technical* capacity (“the structures, processes, knowledge, and activities by which the school staff does the actual work of inquiring into their practices”) (pp. 150–51). These in turn required serious leadership work on the part of both the principal and the teachers. As Stokes observed, “inquiry generates powerful learning—but also guilt and conflict” (p. 153). Staff continually navigated a tension familiar to observers of (or participants in) professional community—the tension between individuality and the common good (Hargreaves 1993), or, put another way, between individual and collective autonomy (Little and McLaughlin 1993). The Stokes study suggests the kinds of benefit that might be realized by cultivating professional community in ways that promote sustained attention to student learning and teaching practice at multiple levels and locations in the school.

Making the Most of External Ties

Schools are busy places that easily become insular places. Individuals, organizations, and groups outside the school sometimes provide the stimulation and intellectual push needed to consider possibilities beyond those a school would come up with independently. The strongest and most generative professional communities appear to benefit from ties to external sources of ideas, material, and assistance. These include teacher-to-teacher networks, university-school partnerships, school networks, and special projects that join teachers with knowledgeable colleagues and inform them about new possibilities of import to their teaching.

The growing pressure on schools to reduce the persistent achievement gap heightens the significance of external ties. Elmore (2005) described two schools that most lay observers would say are good schools. The teachers worked hard, and students appeared engaged in learning. There was a sense of internal accountability, and a great deal of emphasis was placed on improving student performance and closing achievement gaps. The school staffs did everything they knew how to do. Yet, despite their efforts, after some initial gains, student performance went flat, and the schools were designated as “failing.” To continue moving to higher levels of performance, according to Elmore, these schools needed external help and support for capacity building commensurate with the demands being placed on them. They needed help diagnosing and addressing crucial issues, such as raising the level of cognitive demand in lessons and improving program coherence.

In sum, robust teacher learning communities stand out for their relentless focus on student learning, student experience, and student success; their willingness to take (and tolerate) initiative on matters of teaching practice; and the value they place on the ideas, feedback, and resources they derive from ties to individuals, groups, and organizations outside the school. Such communities are well positioned as sites of ongoing teacher learning—and to seek and benefit from participation in well-designed professional development.

Linking Professional Development and Professional Community

At their best, high-quality professional development and vibrant teacher community intersect to form strong foundations for the learning-centered school. In one of the earliest studies of professional development and school-based professional culture, schools with strong, improvement-oriented professional communities were more likely to value and make use of coherent, long-term professional development offered by the district (Little 1984). This and other studies suggest that no matter how well designed a structured program of professional development, its track record of success in the classroom owes a debt to the quality of professional community and other supports at the school level (Wilson and Berne 1999; Stein, Silver, and Smith 1998; Little 1984).

At the same time, there is some indication that when a school supports teachers' participation in high-quality professional development, it may also strengthen professional community. In one recent summary of survey-based research (Grodsky and Gamoran 2003), the authors concluded:

Positive effects of school-sponsored professional development on professional community obtain at both the school and individual teacher levels, suggesting that teachers who participate in school-sponsored professional development benefit not only from their own participation, but from the participation of their colleagues as well. (p. 1.)

The authors also acknowledged that the relationship may be the other way around (i.e., professional community has an effect on participation in professional development).

Overall, then, both case study and survey research suggest that the relationships between professional development and professional community are likely to be reciprocal, with

good professional development stimulating or strengthening professional community and professional community providing fertile ground for participation in professional development.

Schools might more deliberately and profitably link professional development and professional community by taking a two-part strategic approach. One element of the strategy focuses on investing time and money in teachers' access to high-quality professional development both inside and outside the school. Such investments represent a departure from the conventional stance, described by one review (Wilson and Berne 1999) as "a patchwork of opportunities—formal and informal, mandatory and voluntary, serendipitous and planned—stitched together into a fragmented and incoherent 'curriculum'" (p. 174). The second element focuses on creating the kind of teacher workplace in which teachers experience both structural supports for professional growth and an organizational culture or ethos conducive to professional learning. This element entails a mindset among school leaders that is consistently attuned to the importance of teacher learning and to the various ways in which learning opportunities might be constructed in the fabric of everyday work.

Investing in High-Quality Professional Development

Schools invest in teacher learning by prioritizing and subsidizing collective participation in formal programs of professional development, inside and outside the school, that meet the criteria outlined above. These programs or activities deepen teachers' subject-teaching knowledge; equip teachers to attend carefully to student thinking and to collect evidence of their learning progress; and prepare them to understand and respond to student diversity. Such investments might take the form of subsidized participation by groups or teams in one or more of the ways discussed below.

In-Depth, Sustained Professional Development in Selected Subject Areas

Teachers often reserve high praise for professional development that is sufficiently concentrated (as in summer institutes) and sufficiently sustained (periodic, continuous opportunities across a school year or years) to achieve new understanding and to develop new patterns of classroom practice. Specialized summer institutes range from one to three or more weeks, typically focused in the teaching of specific subject areas (e.g., writing or literature, math, science, and the arts) and sometimes involving a mix of

participants from schools, universities, or private industry. Such institutes and other long-term activities permit a measure of content depth together with the kinds of professional exchange that are rarely possible in other kinds of workshop settings. In addition, long-term professional development may involve partnerships with universities, reform organizations, or professional development providers.

School or Teacher Networks

Teacher collaboratives and networks grew in size, visibility, and influence during the 1980s and 1990s. Perhaps the most long-lived and widely known exemplar is the National Writing Project, but other well-documented examples exist in science, math, the humanities, and the arts. Lieberman and Miller (1996) posited that networks fill a need created “because schools are organized in ways that often do not encourage the kind of frank discussion that is necessary for inventing new modes of working with students” (p. 14). In these “intentional” but “borderless” learning communities, outside their own bureaucracies, teachers “find it easier to question, ask for help, or ‘tell it like it is,’ rather than be fearful that they are exposing their lack of expertise in a given area” (p. 15; see also Lieberman and Wood 2001).

Building Teacher Learning into the School Workplace

Schools join professional development and professional community by strengthening the various naturally occurring niches where professional community might flourish—grade level groups, departments, and teams—and by allocating time, space, and dollars to other kinds of activity that expand the opportunities for teacher learning in the course of ongoing school life. This element of the linking strategy rests on an important premise: that the most promising forms of professional development are those that engage teachers in the ongoing pursuit of genuine questions, problems, and curiosities, over time, in ways that leave a lasting mark on their thinking and practice. The following paragraphs, without constituting an exhaustive set of possibilities, indicate some of the most commonly described approaches to organizing teacher-to-teacher learning opportunities at the school level.

Teacher Study Groups for Inquiry into Teaching and Learning

Some schools, especially those affiliated with comprehensive school reform initiatives, have sought to anchor

teacher learning in organized teacher study groups. In some cases, teachers are encouraged to frame research topics tied to school goals, priorities, or problems. In other cases, they are afforded complete independence in deciding what to investigate. Examples include the Critical Friends Groups initiated by the Coalition of Essential Schools, and the teacher study groups developed as an integral part of the Atlas Communities school improvement model.¹⁷

Lesson Study

Adapted from a well-established practice in Japanese schools, Lesson Study is a continuous cycle of action research organized by teachers to improve curriculum and instruction. It engages teachers in collaboratively planning a lesson on a key concept and in relation to shared goals and then observing, critiquing, and refining the lesson together.¹⁸ The Standards in Practice (SIP) model, developed by the Education Trust, also focuses on an analysis of lessons in relationship to academic standards. On the premise that “students can do no better than the assignments they are given,” the SIP process joins a review of student work with scrutiny of the corresponding classroom assignment (Education Trust 2003; see <http://www2.edtrust.org/EdTrust/SIP+Professional+Development>). Participants in school-based teacher groups bring an academic task and samples of the student work that resulted from it. They begin by completing the assignment themselves and then analyzing the learning demands embedded in it and the degree to which it is linked to relevant standards. Using the assignment and standards, they develop a scoring guide for assessing the student work and pose the question of whether a given sample of student work would “meet the standards.” The eventual aim of reviewing student work is to turn attention back to instructional strategy—specifically to the design of appropriate academic tasks.

¹⁷ Although the volume of research is not large, the available studies point to conditions that make such groups more or less productive. For example, see studies of Critical Friends Groups by Nave (2000), Matsumura and Steinberg (2001), and Curry (2004). In addition, *The Journal of Staff Development*, published by the National Staff Development Council, has published numerous articles designed to help schools organize viable teacher study groups.

¹⁸ The Lesson Study Research Group at Teachers College, Columbia University (<http://www.tc.columbia.edu/lessonstudy/>), has undertaken a set of case studies aimed at understanding the possibilities and problems of Lesson Study in American schools (Chokshi and Fernandez 2004; Fernandez 2002; Fernandez, Cannon, and Chokshi 2003; Fernandez and Chokshi 2002). For a list of the Research Group studies, see http://www.tc.columbia.edu/lessonstudy/articles_papers.html.

Protocol-Based Conversation about Student Work

By the late 1990s, various groups and organizations had begun to promote “looking at student work” as a focus for professional development.¹⁹ Several have developed structured protocols to help teachers look closely at student work for evidence of student reasoning and understanding. Protocols are designed to stimulate and structure a conversation focused on what the work reveals about student reasoning and understanding. According to one online summary, “a protocol creates a structure that makes it safe to ask challenging questions of each other” (see *Looking at Student Work*, n.d., <http://www.lasw.org/protocols.html>). Research shows that protocols serve to organize and guide an unfamiliar and potentially threatening discussion—but the discussion may lose its generative edge when protocols are treated more like a script and less like a flexible resource, adaptable to teachers’ own interests and goals. Further, most protocols in use are generic guides to process, taking no explicit account of the specific challenges of teaching and learning in subject-matter domains (Curry 2003; Little and others 2003). (An example of a subject-specific protocol is the Protocol for Looking at Student Work in Reading Apprenticeship Classrooms, developed by the Strategic Literacy Initiative at WestEd. (The protocol itself is unpublished; for project information and contacts, see <http://www.WestEd.org/sli>.)

Peer Observation

Classroom and school visitations figure prominently in teachers’ accounts of “getting started” with new ideas—especially when teachers are able to visit several different classrooms (or visit one classroom on several occasions) and spend time talking with the colleagues whom they have visited. Further, regular and focused observation and real-time mentoring have been found to be important elements of effective teacher induction programs. Yet observing and being observed remain rare, and careful analysis of teaching episodes is even more so. In one national survey, more than three-quarters of teachers expressed faith in observation as a way to sustain reform—but fewer than half (47%) said they had actually participated in any form of peer observation (Holmes and others 1995).

¹⁹ The Annenberg Institute for School Reform, together with the Chicago Learning Collaborative, Harvard Project Zero, and the Coalition of Essential Schools, has developed Web pages and practical guides to help teachers collaboratively examine student work. For an example, see the Web site <http://www.lasw.org> (*Looking at Student Work*, n.d.) and Allen and Blythe (2003); Blythe, Allen, and Powell (1999); Seidel and others (2001); Weinbaum and others (2004); and McDonald (2001).

Video Clubs

Video technology is a relatively underexamined resource for teachers’ professional learning.²⁰ Although usually employed as part of formal professional development or preservice preparation, it also has promise for use in schools where teachers can rarely manage to observe one another in “real time.” Video clubs demonstrate the benefit that teachers derive from a series of conversations focused on evidence from ongoing, situated classroom activity. Where teachers are able to refrain from a quick leap to judgment about one another’s practice, and where deep conversations evolve, research provides testimony to the benefits. One recent study found that “over time, discourse in the video clubs shifted from a primary focus on the teacher to increased attention to students’ actions and ideas. In addition, discussions of student thinking moved from simple restatements of students’ ideas to detailed analyses of student thinking. Furthermore, teachers began to reframe their discussions of pedagogical issues in terms of student thinking.” (Sherin and Han 2004, 163). Schools interested in this approach might find *Teaching for Understanding: A Guide to Video Resources* (Segal, Demarest, and Prejean 2006) a useful tool.

Conclusion

This paper builds selectively on the available research to suggest where schools might make important strides through investment in teacher learning. Its basic premise is that when a school systematically supports professional learning it is more likely to be effective with students. Schools that exhibit a high level of success with students, sometimes against considerable odds, tend to supply consistent portraits of work environments conducive to teacher learning. In these schools, teacher learning arises out of close involvement with students and their work; shared responsibility for student progress; access to new knowledge about learning and teaching; sensibly organized time; access to the expertise of colleagues inside and outside the school; focused and timely feedback on individual performance and on aspects of classroom or school practice; and an overall ethos in which teacher learning is valued and professional community cultivated. School leaders could go some distance toward creating such an

²⁰ Some of the earliest examples of video clubs were formed to aid the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards as it developed criteria and processes for assessing videotape samples of teaching practice (e.g., Frederiksen and others 1998). Since that time, video has emerged as a more integral part of preservice and in-service teacher education (Lampert and Graziani 2003; Sherin and Han 2004; Sherin, in press).

environment by generating professional community, promoting and organizing activity that sustains a focus on teaching and learning, and ensuring that other workplace conditions enhance rather than impede teachers' professional development and commitment to teaching.

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Reducing stereotype threat in classrooms: a review of social-psychological intervention studies on improving the achievement of Black students



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Institute of Education Sciences
U.S. Department of Education



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July 2009

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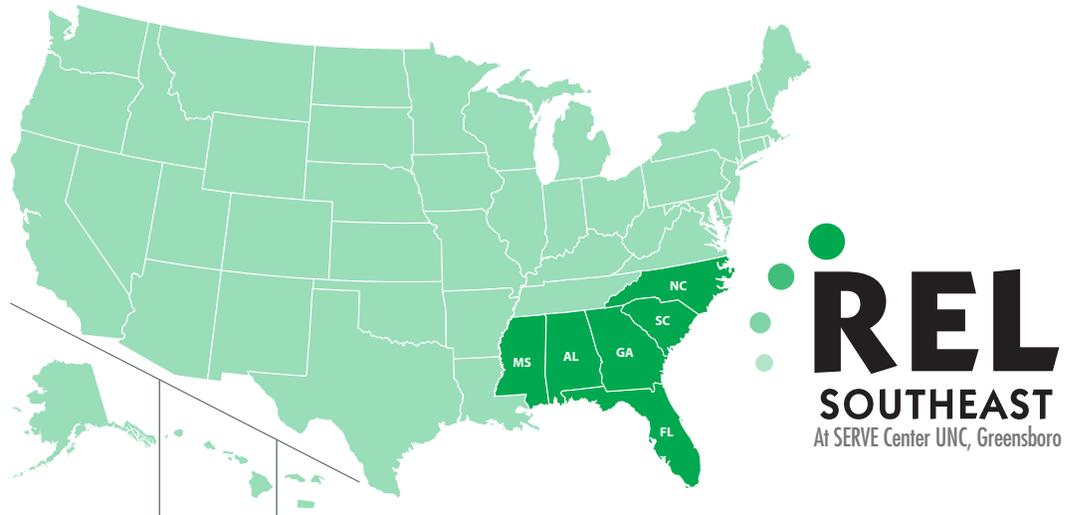
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Reducing stereotype threat in classrooms: a review of social-psychological intervention studies on improving the achievement of Black students

Stereotype threat arises from a fear among members of a group of reinforcing negative stereotypes about the intellectual ability of the group. The report identifies three randomized controlled trial studies that use classroom-based strategies to reduce stereotype threat and improve the academic performance of Black students, narrowing their achievement gap with White students.

This review located and summarized the findings of randomized controlled trial studies on classroom-based social-psychological interventions aimed at reducing the experience of stereotype threat that might otherwise lead some Black students to underperform on difficult academic tasks or tests. Reducing the achievement gap between Black and White students is a critical goal for states, districts, and schools. Experimental research on both inducing and reducing stereotype threat can inform discussions of strategies.

Some students may perform below their potential because of the stress of being under constant evaluation in the classroom. Black students, however, may experience another source of stress in addition to this general one (which they share with their nonminority

peers). This second source of stress is specific to negatively stereotyped groups. It arises from a fear of reinforcing negative stereotypes about the intellectual ability of their racial group. Because Black students must contend with two sources of stress rather than one, their performance may be suppressed relative to that of their nonminority peers.

A systematic search was conducted for empirical studies of classroom-based social-psychological interventions designed to reduce stereotype threat and thus improve the academic performance of Black students. Search term combinations, such as “stereotype threat” and “intervention,” and “achievement gap” and “intervention,” were used to search a number of bibliographic databases. In addition, a web site on this topic with an extensive reference list was also reviewed. This initial search identified 289 references. After applying relevant inclusion criteria for topical and sample relevance, three experimental studies were identified. The three studies found positive impacts on the academic performance of Black students for the following social-psychological strategies:

- Reinforce for students the idea that intelligence is expandable and, like a muscle, grows stronger when worked.

- Teach students that their difficulties in school are often part of a normal learning curve or adjustment process, rather than something unique to them or their racial group.
- Help students reflect on other values in their lives beyond school that are sources of self-worth for them.

These three experiments are not an exhaustive list of the interventions to consider in reducing the racial achievement gap, nor are they silver bullets for improving the academic

performance of Black students. Rather, they present scientific evidence suggesting that such strategies might reduce the level of social-psychological threat that some Black students might otherwise feel in academic performance situations. It is important to note that while the strategies use established procedures that can be emulated by teachers and administrators, they also require thought and care on the part of schools and teachers in applying them in their particular situations.

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Stereotype threat arises from a fear among members of a group of reinforcing negative stereotypes about the intellectual ability of the group. The report identifies three randomized controlled trial studies that use classroom-based strategies to reduce stereotype threat and improve the academic performance of Black students, narrowing their achievement gap with White students.

WHY THIS STUDY?

At every level of family income and school preparation, Black students¹ on average earn relatively lower grade point averages (GPAs) and scores on standardized tests (Bowen and Bok 1998; Hacker 1995; Jencks and Phillips 1998; Steele 1997). In a society where economic opportunity depends heavily on scholastic success, even a partial narrowing of the achievement gap would lead to a positive change in the lives of many academically at-risk children.

Need for the study

Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast serves six southeastern states for which reducing the achievement gap between Black students and White students continues to be a major concern. The data indicate an education crisis in the Southeast Region, especially for Black male students (KewalRamani et al. 2007; Wald and Losen 2005). A report by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) on SAT and ACT scores concludes that between 1998 and 2002 none of the 16 SREB states narrowed the achievement gap between Black and White students (Southern Regional Education Board 2003). The achievement gap even widened for Black male students. Among the SREB states, which include the six states covered by the Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast, only 45 percent of Black male students graduated from high school in 2003 compared with 61 percent of Black female students, 65 percent of White male students, and 67 percent of White female students.

Thus, Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast frequently receives requests from Southeast Region educators for information on new ideas on interventions, programs, and policies that could close the achievement gap between Black and White students. Several Southeast Region states have regularly hosted conferences on this topic and published reports based on reviews.

Many potential contributing factors in the achievement gap have been explored, some

Because of an awareness of negative stereotypes presupposing academic inferiority, Black and other minority students may worry that they could confirm the intellectual inferiority alleged by such stereotypes. Such worries can hinder their test performance, motivation, and learning

individual (for example, family socioeconomic background, self-efficacy, and student aspirations) and some school related (for example, class size, distribution of resources across schools, quality and diversity of teachers, and lack of explicit and high performance standards). Other factors external to school are also suggested as having an impact on racial gaps in academic performance, such as a lack of high-quality early childhood education and of economic

opportunities to pursue postsecondary education, an important incentive to do well in school. (For reviews of research on the achievement gap, see Bowen and Bok 1998; Jencks and Phillips 1998; Rothstein 2002.) This report recognizes that there is a complex set of influential factors and that many of them are beyond a teacher's influence; these are not addressed here. Rather, to respond to the ongoing need for new information in this area, this review located and summarized findings from experimental studies on classroom-based social-psychological interventions to reduce stereotype threat in schools and classrooms that might lead some Black students to underperform on difficult academic tasks or tests.²

What is stereotype threat and how has it been studied?

What is stereotype threat? Social psychologists hypothesize that racial stigma could help explain why, on average, Black and White students of similar socioeconomic backgrounds perform differently in college and on key standardized tests (Steele and Aronson 1995; see also Steele 1997). As students progress through school, classroom learning environments may become increasingly competitive, evaluative in nature, and stressful for some minority students. The logic behind stereotype threat is that because of an awareness of negative stereotypes presupposing academic inferiority, Black and other minority students may worry that they could confirm the intellectual inferiority alleged by such stereotypes (see appendix

A for a summary of the research on stereotype threat). Such worries, in turn, can hinder their test performance, motivation, and learning.

Research on stereotype threat began with laboratory studies exploring why Black college students seemed to be performing below their potential. Although a test-taking situation may seem objectively the same for all students, some students, because of their social identity, may experience it in a very different way. Steele and Aronson (1995) conducted a seminal experiment to explore the negative impact of administering a test under potentially stereotype-threat-inducing conditions by randomly assigning study participants to two different test-taking conditions. In one test-taking condition, a standardized test (composed of verbal Graduate Record Exam items) was presented to one group of college students as “diagnostic of intellectual ability.” It was hypothesized that Black students in this condition would worry that performing poorly could confirm a stereotype about their racial group's intellectual ability. Black students performed worse in this condition than when the same test was given in a second condition that introduced the test as one that was “not diagnostic of your ability.” The two ways of introducing the test had no effect on the performance of White students. Black students in the study sample answered roughly 8 of 30 test items correctly in the “threat” condition and roughly 12 of 30 correctly in the “no threat” condition.

Since the original experimental studies on the effects of inducing stereotype threat (Steele and Aronson 1995; Steele 1997), there has been an explosion of research documenting the negative effect of this phenomenon on performance of various types (for reviews see Ryan and Ryan 2005; Shapiro and Neuberg 2007; Steele, Spencer, and Aronson 2002; Walton and Cohen 2003; Wheeler and Petty 2001). Shapiro and Neuberg (2007, p. 125), in reviewing this literature, suggest that

The intellectual excitement surrounding the stereotype threat concept and research program stems in large part from the possibility

BOX 1

Study methods

Search and screening. This study began with a thorough search, screening, and quality review to identify empirical studies of classroom-based social-psychological interventions designed to reduce stereotype threat and thus improve the academic performance of Black students. In addition to literature searches using key terms, a web site on this topic with an extensive reference list of peer-reviewed journal articles was examined (www.reducingstereotypethreat.org). The literature search yielded 158 citations, and the web site reference list yielded an additional 131 citations.

The 289 references were then screened for inclusion using a set of six questions (see appendix C for the article screening protocol). A total of 214 studies were excluded based on the initial screening, applying the first three criteria (see table B2 and figure B1 in appendix B for disposition details). Studies were excluded as off-topic or irrelevant (87); because they were literature reviews, book chapters, or summary articles rather than empirical studies (20); or because they focused on gender-based stereotype threat (107). The remaining 75 references were subject to a second round of screening to see whether they met the following criteria:

- Studied the effect of a social-psychological intervention (relevant to reducing the intensity of the psychological experience of stereotype threat) on improvements to student academic performance.

- Included Black students in the sample.
- Included K–12 students as the focus.

The second round of screening excluded 72 studies. Most studies (65) were excluded for failing to meet the first criterion—they explored various aspects of the negative impact of stereotype threat on performance rather than studying interventions to reduce the intensity of the experience of stereotype threat.

A second, broader verification search (using the broadest search term “stereotype threat” without the word “intervention”) was conducted to ensure that relevant studies had not been missed. No additional studies appropriate for inclusion were found among the 741 references identified.

Assessing the quality of identified intervention studies. The three remaining studies were subject to a final quality review to describe any methodological limitations, using a study coding protocol (see appendix C) based on the five criteria below from the *What Works Clearinghouse Procedures and Standards Handbook* (U.S. Department of Education 2008) for assessing the internal validity of studies examining the effects of interventions:

- *Outcome measures.* The measures used to assess impact must be shown to actually measure what they are intended to measure. The three studies reported on here used appropriate school measures of student achievement.
- *Random assignment process.* In experimental studies researchers use random assignment to assign

participants to experimental conditions (intervention or control) to ensure that the groups are as similar as possible on all characteristics so that the outcomes measured reflect the influence of the intervention only. Only one study had a limitation in this area (Good, Aronson, and Inzlicht 2003).

- *Attrition of participants.* Loss of participants can create differences in measured outcomes by changing the composition of the intervention or control groups. Both overall attrition and differential attrition (differences between intervention and control groups) are of concern. All three studies were acceptable in this area.
- *Intervention contamination.* Intervention contamination can happen when unintended events occur after intervention begins that could affect group outcomes and therefore the conclusions of the experiment. One study was noted as having a possible limitation in this area (Good, Aronson, and Inzlicht 2003).
- *Confounding factor.* It is important to examine factors beyond the intervention that might affect differences between groups, such as the effects of teachers or of the intervention provider more generally. No studies were noted as having problems in this area.

The completed study quality review protocols were used in developing the final list of limitations reported for each of the three studies.

For further details on the methodology see appendixes B and C.

that the real-world costs of stereotype threat are substantial. . . . If one could design effective interventions for reducing the experience of stereotype threat, then one would have a powerful tool for influencing an important set of societal problems.

The experimental manipulations used to study the effect of stereotype threat on academic test performance are of two kinds, direct and indirect. The direct way of inducing stereotype threat in experiments has been to tell the test-taking group that the test they will take has been sensitive to group differences in the past (for example, “this test shows racial differences”), thus raising the potential relevance of the stereotype as an explanation for poor performance. An indirect way of studying the negative effects of stereotype threat has been to inform students that a test is “diagnostic of your ability” (as in Steele and Aronson 1995), conveying that the test is designed to evaluate students’ performance along a stereotype-relevant trait (intellectual ability) and consequently bringing to the fore concerns about confirming the stereotype.

To the extent that stereotype threat might be a factor in some Black students experiencing extra stress when doing challenging academic work in school, what can be done to alleviate this stress and possibly improve their performance? Relatively few experimental studies have been conducted in classroom settings on interventions to explicitly reduce the experience of stereotype threat and thus im-

prove the academic performance of Black students. However, some recent classroom-based experimental studies were identified that have relevance for educators.

This study’s search for empirical studies of classroom-based social-psychological interventions designed to reduce stereotype threat and thus improve the academic performance of Black students initially identified 289 references (see box 1 and appendix B on

study methods). After relevant inclusion criteria were applied, three experimental studies were identified for description here. Those three studies are described in the following section.

FINDINGS OF THREE EXPERIMENTAL STUDIES OF INTERVENTIONS TO REDUCE STEREOTYPE THREAT IN GRADE 7 CLASSROOM SETTINGS

All three studies reported on here found statistically significant positive effects of the tested interventions on achievement measures. The following intervention strategies were tested in the studies described in detail below:

- Reinforce for students the idea that intelligence is expandable and, like a muscle, grows stronger when worked.
- Teach students that their difficulties in school are often part of a normal “learning curve” or adjustment process, rather than something unique to them or their racial group.
- Help students reflect on other values in their lives beyond school that are sources of self-worth for them.

Table 3 at the end of the main report summarizes the outcome measures, analytic techniques, and the findings across the three studies. (Table B4 in appendix B summarizes the methodologies.)

Study 1: Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck 2007, “Implicit theories of intelligence predict achievement across an adolescent transition: a longitudinal study and an intervention”

Intervention idea

- Reinforce for students the idea that intelligence is expandable and, like a muscle, grows stronger when worked.

There is much research in psychology exploring the idea that some students can be trained to

Intervention strategies in the studies described reinforced the idea that intelligence is expandable, taught students that difficulties in school are often part of a normal “learning curve,” or helped students reflect on other values in their lives as sources of self-worth

think more productively about how they approach performance challenges. One belief that seems to affect how students approach such challenges is that intelligence is not fixed but malleable, that it can be developed through focus and effort and thus that intelligence can be taught (Dweck 1999; Whimbey 1975). Indeed, Aronson, Fried, and Good (2002) posit that some Black students might have developed a stereotype-consistent belief that their intellectual ability is “fixed,” causing them to feel more negative about academic performance situations than they would if they believed that their ability could grow with greater focus, effort, and creativity in problem-solving strategies. Alternatively, such students may feel that others see their ability as fixed and thus worry about negative inferences being drawn about them based on their performance. Thus, reinforcing the idea that intellectual ability is malleable and incrementally developed and that others view it in this way indirectly reduces students’ sense of psychological threat under challenging academic performance situations.

The first study reports on the effects of an intervention to teach students to see intelligence as incrementally developed rather than fixed.

Research question. Does teaching students to see intelligence as malleable or incrementally developed lead to higher motivation and performance relative to not being taught this theory of intelligence?

Study sample. The study sample included 91 grade 7 students in an urban public school with low-achieving students (52 percent Black, 45 percent Hispanic, and 3 percent White and Asian; 79 percent eligible for free or reduced-price lunch). There were 48 students in the intervention group and 43 in the control group. The two groups did not differ significantly in their prior academic achievement (fall term math grades) or on any baseline measures of motivation.

What was the intervention? Students in advisory classes—periods in the schedule when small

groups of students can receive more individual attention from a teacher—were randomly assigned to an intervention or control curriculum to test the effectiveness of teaching students about the theory of incremental intelligence. Both groups received eight weekly 25-minute sessions beginning in the spring of grade 7 during their regular advisory class period (to which they had been assigned at random by the school).

Both intervention and control groups received four 25-minute sessions on the brain, the pitfalls of stereotyping, and study skills. In four additional sessions the intervention group received information that focused on “growing your intelligence” and involved reading age-appropriate descriptions of neuroscience experiments documenting brain growth in response to learning new skills and class discussions on how learning makes students smarter. The intervention was based on previous experimental materials used in studies with college students (Aronson, Fried, and Good 2002; Chiu, Hong, and Dweck 1997). For these four sessions the control group received content unrelated to the malleability of intelligence and focused instead on topics about the brain and memory that were unrelated to the incremental theory of intelligence.

The sessions were delivered by 16 trained undergraduate assistants, with two undergraduates assigned to each class. To ensure consistent delivery of the intervention materials, session leaders received reading material and met weekly with the research team to review the material and prepare to present it to their assigned advisory class. Intervention and control workshop leaders met separately to train to prepare for the four sessions with different content.

Results. The researchers first provided results to show that their intervention had been successful

The Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck study reports on the effects of an intervention to teach students to see intelligence as incrementally developed rather than fixed

The intervention group in the Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck study improved from pre- to postintervention, whereas the control group showed a continued downward trajectory in performance

in teaching the intervention group students about the incremental theory of intelligence. The results from a theory of intelligence questionnaire given to students before and after the intervention showed that participants in the intervention group changed their opinions toward a more incremental view of intelligence after the intervention.

The researchers reported that a paired sample *t*-test (see box 2 for definition of key terms) was significant ($t = 3.57, p < .05$, Cohen's $d = .66$), indicating that the intervention group endorsed the incremental theory more strongly after the intervention (mean score of 4.95 on the questionnaire) than before (4.36). The control group mean score on the questionnaire did not change (4.62 preintervention and 4.68 postintervention; $t = 0.32$ and not significant, Cohen's $d = .07$).

The important question, then, was whether achievement was higher in the intervention group as a result of the intervention. The researchers assessed the effect of the intervention on academic achievement by examining the growth curves of participants' math scores across three points in time: spring of grade 6 to fall of grade 7 (both prior to the intervention) and spring of grade 7 (postintervention). The researchers noted an overall downward trajectory in the mean math

scores for the entire sample (spring grade 6, 2.86; fall grade 7, 2.33; spring grade 7, 2.11). Analysis revealed a significant decline in scores for the total sample between the spring of grade 6 and fall of grade 7 ($b = -.34, t = -4.29, p < .05$) and between fall of grade 7 and spring of grade 7 ($b = -.20, t = -2.61, p < .05$).

The researchers further reported that the intervention group improved from pre- to postintervention (fall of grade 7 to spring of grade 7), whereas the control group showed a continued downward trajectory in performance (figure 1). That is, the intervention had a significant positive effect ($b = .53, t = 2.93, p < .05$) on math scores from the fall of grade 7 to the spring of grade 7.

The researchers also collected comments from math teachers about students who had shown changes in motivational behavior after the advisory class sessions. (The teachers did not know to which condition their students had been assigned.) The study reported that 27 percent of the intervention group students received positive comments from math teachers about motivational change after the intervention, compared with 9 percent of the control group, a statistically significant difference.

Methodological review. No reservations were identified concerning the methodological quality of the study based on the study quality review protocol

BOX 2

Key terms

t-statistic. For a given sample size, the *t*-statistic indicates how often differences in means as large as or larger than those reported would be found when there is no true population difference in means (the "null hypothesis"). For example, a reported *t*-statistic that is statistically significant with a *p*-value of .05 indicates that in only 5 of 100 instances would this difference between the means in

a sample be found if the real population difference were zero.

Degrees of freedom. The number of independent observations used in a given statistical calculation and typically calculated by subtracting 1 from the number of independent observations (sample size).

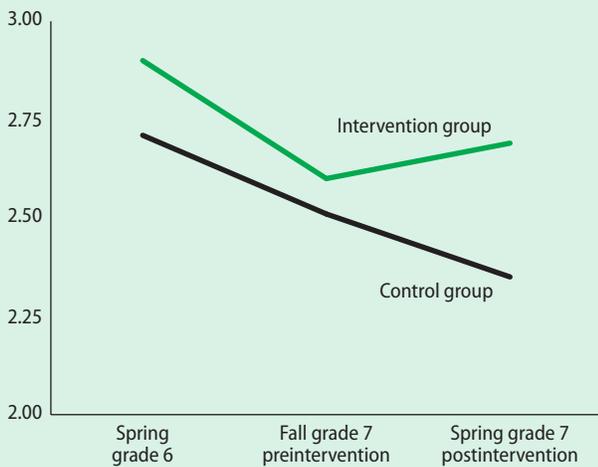
b-statistic. Represents the slope of a regression line based on predictors measured in their naturally occurring units.

F-statistic. Represents the ratio of the between-group variation divided by the within-group variation. A statistically significant *F*-statistic indicates that the mean is not the same for all groups (conditions).

Effect size. The impact of an effect expressed in standard deviation units.

Cohen's d. A type of effect size that represents the standardized mean difference between the treatment and control groups.

FIGURE 1

Estimated mean math scores by experimental condition

Source: Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck 2007.

criteria. (See summary of quality criteria on this study in appendix B.)

Conclusions. The researchers suggest that the incremental theory intervention “appears to have succeeded in halting the decline in mathematics achievement” (p. 258). Future research on the role of teachers in changing students’ beliefs about intelligence is needed, though these results are promising, particularly as the treatment was found to yield a significant effect in a low-income, urban setting where problems associated with minority underperformance can be severe.

Study limitations. This study was conducted in a single school, and thus the uniqueness of the school context or population as the setting for the intervention is unknown. Another limitation in generalizing the results of this study is that the sample of students was racially mixed (primarily Hispanic and Black), making it difficult to determine whether the intervention benefited both minority groups equally. The study authors acknowledge that the effects were measured at a single point in time, and it is not known whether the effects of the intervention would hold up for students as they moved to grade 8. The intervention sessions were delivered by trained undergraduate

assistants, not teachers. Thus, it is also unknown to what extent the intervention effect would hold up if delivered by teachers rather than trained undergraduates who, in this case, were closer in age to the students.

Study 2: Good, Aronson, and Inzlicht 2003, “Improving adolescents’ standardized test performance: an intervention to reduce the effects of stereotype threat”

Intervention idea

- Teach students that their difficulties in school are often part of a normal “learning curve” or adjustment process, rather than something unique to them or their racial group.

A related potentially unproductive thought process occurs when students attribute academic struggles to their intellectual limitations, which may be more likely for students who struggle with stereotypes about their group’s intellectual inferiority. To the extent that students attribute normal difficulties—for instance, those that occur with hard-to-learn topics or concepts—to fixed personal inadequacies, they may experience more distraction, anxiety, and pessimism. Thus, interventions might reduce the negative effects of stereotype threat, as well as other forms of doubt, by encouraging students to attribute difficulty in school to the transitory struggles all students experience.

Research question. Can teaching students to attribute academic difficulties to transitory situational causes rather than to stable personal causes improve standardized math and reading test scores?

Study sample. The study took place in a rural school district in Texas serving a largely low-income and predominantly minority

The Good, Aronson, and Inzlicht study asks whether interventions might reduce the negative effects of stereotype threat, as well as other forms of doubt, by encouraging students to attribute difficulty in school to the transitory struggles all students experience rather than to fixed personal inadequacies

population (63 percent Hispanic, 15 percent Black, and 22 percent White). Study participants were 138 grade 7 students enrolled in a computer skills class as part of their junior high school curriculum. Enrollment in the course was randomly determined by the school administration, and all students in the course participated in the study. As part of the regular course curriculum, students learned a variety of computer skills including using email and designing web pages.

What was the intervention? Shortly after the school year began (mid-October), students in the computer skills class were randomly assigned a mentor with whom they communicated in person and by email throughout the school year. They were also randomly assigned to receive one of four types of educational messages from their mentors:

- *Incremental message (40 students).* Students learned about the expandable nature of intelligence (as explored in the previously described study).
- *Attribution message (36 students).* Students learned about the tendency for all students to initially experience difficulty during grade 7 and about the tendency for this difficulty to subside with time and for performance to improve.
- *Combination of messages (30 students).* Students received both the incremental and attribution messages.

- *Control condition (32 students).* Students learned about the perils of drug use (an unrelated topic).

The mentors conveyed the content of their assigned messages in person to the students during two school visits of 90 minutes each. After learning this information, students created public service announcements on the web with guidance from their mentor,

reinforcing the message that they had learned and helping to internalize the message through a self-persuasion process. A restricted web space was created for each of the four conditions so that students learning a particular message could read more about their assigned message but not read the messages for the other three groups and acquire additional ideas for polishing their web page.

The mentors were 25 college students who participated in a three-hour training session on mentoring required by the district and then supplementary training by the researchers on how to convey the four messages tied to the four conditions in the study. The same mentors delivered the intervention to students in three of the four conditions.

Results. At the end of the school year participating students' scores on statewide standardized tests in math and reading were analyzed for the four groups of students.

Math test scores were analyzed using a 2 (gender) by 4 (experimental condition) analysis of variance. The math analyses are not presented here because they focused on understanding gender effects, which were not the focus of this report.

Reading scores on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills were analyzed using a one-way analysis of variance that compared the performance of students participating in the four experimental conditions. Although the researchers were interested in differences between Black and White students' performance in the four conditions, the samples were not large enough to analyze the two groups separately. The analysis of variance conducted on the state reading test scores revealed a significant effect ($p < .05$) of the conditions, $F(3,125) = 2.71$. Follow-up statistical tests showed that scores on the state reading test were significantly higher for students in the conditions receiving the incremental (malleable) intelligence message (mean score of 88.26) and the attributional message (89.62) than for students in the control group (84.38) (table 1). There was

Statistical tests for the Good, Aronson, and Inzlicht study showed that scores on the state reading test were significantly higher for students in the conditions receiving the incremental (malleable) intelligence message and the attributional message than for students in the control group

TABLE 1

Reported intervention impacts on the spring grade 7 state reading test (Texas Assessment of Academic Skills)

Intervention effect	Incremental condition	Attribution condition	Combined condition	Control condition
Mean reading score	88.26	89.62	86.71	84.38
Standard deviation	7.17	7.01	8.70	7.79
Difference between each experimental condition and control condition	$t(65) = 2.07$ $p < .041$ Cohen's $d = .52$	$t(61) = 2.72$ $p < .008$ Cohen's $d = .71$		Not significant

Source: Good, Aronson, and Inzlicht 2003.

no significant difference between the combined messages condition and the control condition.

Methodological review. Applying the study quality review criteria revealed two limitations of the methodology (see appendix B for complete summary).

Random assignment process. The study reported that 6 of the 138 students' scores were removed from the analysis, which could be considered a disruption in the random assignment process. In addition, no evidence was presented of the equivalence of the four groups on baseline achievement. Although the authors reported that these six students did not come from any particular experimental condition or group, it is difficult to know how well the random assignment process worked in creating equivalent groups at baseline without these data. Therefore, the study results showing differences between experimental conditions after the treatment should be interpreted with caution.

Intervention contamination. The same mentors delivered the intervention to students in three of the four conditions, so the intervention conditions could have been somewhat blurred if the mentors brought knowledge from one condition to their delivery of another. However, under What Works Clearinghouse review standards, contamination such as occurred in this study is not considered grounds for downgrading a study.

Conclusions. The authors suggest that showing the positive impact of these attitude-changing

interventions on state test performance builds on prior experimental studies showing the effects of similar interventions on college students' classroom performance (see Wilson and Linville 1985).

Study limitations. The sample in this study was mixed. Although it consisted mainly of minority students, Hispanic students made up 63 percent of the sample and Black students only 15 percent. So, there are limitations in generalizing the findings to Black students alone. As in the first study, teachers did not deliver the intervention and thus it is difficult to know under what conditions teachers can effectively deliver the intervention (for instance, how much teacher training would be needed, what kind of materials would they use). Nevertheless, the results are interesting, especially the finding of the intervention conditions' significant effect on academic achievement in a low-income school setting.

Study 3: Cohen, Garcia, Apfel, and Master 2006, "Reducing the racial achievement gap: a social-psychological intervention"

Intervention idea

- Help students reflect on other values in their lives beyond school that are sources of self-worth for them.

Another route to alleviating stereotype threat is to allow individuals to affirm an alternative positive identity—one that shores up their sense of self-worth in the face of threat. Through

The Cohen et al. study examined whether allowing students to affirm an alternative positive identity one that shores up their sense of self-worth in the face of threat would alleviate stereotype threat

self-affirmation people reinforce their sense of personal worth or integrity by reflecting on sources of value and meaning in their lives (Steele 1988). People are better able to tolerate psychological threat in one domain (such as school) if they can shore up their self-worth in another domain (such as family). Laboratory research shows that self-affirmations can reduce stress (Creswell et al. 2005).

For example, college students asked to give a speech in front of a sullen audience displayed lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol if they were first given the opportunity to engage in the self-affirmation exercise of reflecting on an important value, such as their relationships with friends.

Research question. Would Black students perform significantly better in a targeted course when they received a self-affirmation intervention than when they did not? The researchers hypothesized less of an intervention effect for the nonstereotyped group, as the risk factors (elevated stress and psychological threat) were expected to be lower for nonstereotyped students, who do not contend with a negative stereotype about their racial group.

Study sample. The researchers report the results of two randomized experiments. The second, a replication study, took place a year after the first study and with a different cohort of students. A total of 119 Black and 124 White grade 7 students participated in the two studies (roughly evenly distributed across the two studies). Students were from a suburban northeastern middle school. The three teachers who participated all taught the same subject area. At the beginning of the fall semester students were randomly assigned to an intervention or control condition. Teachers were unaware of which students in their classes were assigned to which of the two conditions, and the two experimental conditions as described below were presented to students as part of the regular classroom curriculum.

What was the intervention? The intervention was intended to engage students in a self-affirmation process that would alleviate some of the stress Black students might feel from stereotype threat and thereby improve their academic performance. The affirmation intervention was a series of writing assignments designed to induce feelings of self-worth and test whether psychological threat could be lessened through asking students to “reaffirm” their “self-integrity.” The assignments (developed by the researchers) were provided to students in an envelope and included self-explanatory instructions that required little teacher involvement. The teachers’ role in the study was to hand out the envelopes containing the writing assignments, provide a brief scripted introduction to students, and then to remain at their desks and allow students to independently complete the assignment and return their work to the teacher in the envelope.

The envelopes were identical for the intervention condition and the control condition assignments, so teachers were unaware of which students were receiving the self-affirmation intervention. The self-affirmation assignment was designed to encourage students to think about a personal value or values they had singled out as important and its significance in their lives.

Students in both groups received a list of values and were asked to read and think about them. The values were notions such as athletic ability, creativity, music, relationships with friends, independence, religious values, and sense of humor. The instructions for students in the intervention group asked them to select their most important value (or values) and to write a paragraph about its importance to them. The instructions for students in the control group asked them to select their least important value (or values) from the list and write about why it might be important to someone else. The instructions then asked the students in the intervention group to write the top two reasons why the value (or values) they selected was important to them. The students in the control group were instructed to write the top two reasons why someone else might consider their least important value important. Finally, the

instructions asked students to select their level of agreement with four statements about the values they chose (most important value for the intervention condition and least important for control condition) as a way of reinforcing their value selection in the affirmation condition.

Teachers presented the instructions to students as a regular classroom assignment. Completing the assignment took students in both intervention and control conditions about 15 minutes. One structured writing assignment was provided to students in the first study, and two were provided to students in the replication study.

Results. The outcome data collected were students' GPAs from official transcripts in the targeted course for the fall term in which the intervention was delivered. The data were analyzed using multiple regression. The interaction of race (Black or White) and experimental condition (affirmation intervention condition or control condition) was significant for study 1 ($b = 0.29, t(98) = 2.00, p < .05$) and study 2 ($b = 0.52, t(119) = 2.80, p < .01$), as was the treatment main effect for Black students in study 1 ($b = 0.26, t(41) = 2.44, p < .02$) and study 2 ($b = 0.34, t(60) = 2.69, p < .01$). Black students receiving the affirmation intervention had higher grades in the targeted course in the fall term than did Black students in the control condition. The difference in GPA for Black students in the intervention condition and the control condition was 0.26 point in the first study and 0.34 point in the second replication study.

The mean differences in the outcome measure for Black students and White students by three levels of prior academic performance are shown in table 2. The study reports that the intervention was as strong for previously low-performing Black students ($t(31) = 2.74, p < .01$) as for previously moderate-performing Black students ($t(30) = 2.40, p < .02$). The previously high-performing Black students benefited less from the intervention condition ($t(31) = 1.72, p < .10$).

The intervention effect on the difference in GPA between Black students receiving the affirmation intervention and those in the control group was 0.43 point for the previously low-performing group, 0.44 point for the previously moderate-performing group, and 0.22 point for the previously high-performing group. In all three cases Black students who received the affirmation intervention had a higher mean GPA in the course than did Black students in the control group. Additionally, the intervention effect for Black students extended to courses beyond the targeted course, as evidenced in an analysis of students' mean GPA in core academic courses.

Combining data from studies 1 and 2 shows that the intervention reduced the percentage of Black

In the Cohen et al. study Black students receiving the affirmation intervention had higher grades in the targeted course in the fall term than did Black students in the control condition

TABLE 2

Covariate-adjusted mean grade point average (averaged over both studies) for intervention and control groups, by level of preintervention performance

Condition	Low performing student group		Moderate performing student group		High performing student group	
	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White
Affirmation intervention	1.7	2.2	2.8	3.3	3.5	4.0
Control	1.3	2.3	2.4	3.2	3.3	4.0

Note: The grade point average is that received in the fall term in the academic subject in which the experiment was carried out at the beginning of the school year. The academic subject area was not identified in the study except to say that it was not one that was typically related to gender stereotypes (for example, math).

Source: Cohen et al. 2006.

students earning a D or below in the fall term of the course from 20 percent in the control group, a rate consistent with historical norms at the school, to 9 percent in the intervention group, a significant difference (figure 2). There was no significant difference between the intervention and the control conditions for White students.

Methodological review. No reservations were identified concerning the methodological quality of this study on the study quality review protocol criteria (see appendix B for details).

Conclusions. The authors conclude that “our intervention is among the first aimed purely at altering psychological experience to reduce the racial achievement gap.” That is, rather than “lift all ships,” the intervention benefits those most in need—low-performing Black students. Additionally, “the research highlights the importance of situational threats linked to group identity in understanding intellectual achievement in real-world, chronically evaluative settings . . . [and] challenge[s] conventional and scientific wisdom by demonstrating that a psychological intervention,

although brief, can help reduce what many view as an intractable disparity in real-world academic outcomes” (p. 6).

Study limitations. Limitations of the study include the fact that it was conducted in only one school and grade level in a suburban district and that it is difficult to determine how representative the sample is of the general population from which it was drawn. It is thus difficult to know whether the intervention would yield similar benefits in other schools of varying demographic and socioeconomic characteristics and in other grade levels. Additionally, as with the other two interventions reported here, it is unclear whether the intervention would be similarly beneficial when prepared and implemented entirely by teachers rather than trained researchers. Still, the results are promising, as the intervention effect proved replicable (obtained in two separate studies), and the effect of the intervention on minorities’ grades was consistently positive across most of the range of prior achievement.

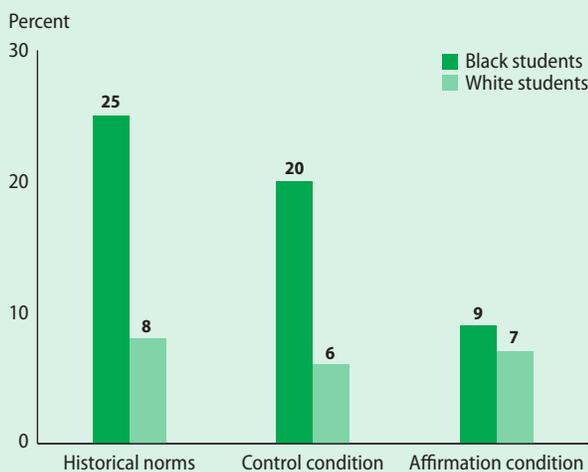
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON TURNING RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

The objective of this report was to conduct a systematic search to identify classroom-based strategies designed to reduce stereotype threat and thus to improve the academic performance of Black students. The three studies that were identified found that the following social-psychological strategies had impacts on minority group achievement:

- Reinforce for students the idea that intelligence is expandable and, like a muscle, grows stronger when worked.
- Teach students that their difficulties in school are often part of a normal “learning curve” or adjustment process, rather than something unique to them or their racial group.
- Help students reflect on other values in their lives beyond school that are sources of self-worth for them.

FIGURE 2

Percentage of Black and White students receiving a grade of D or lower in targeted course in same semester as the intervention, by experimental condition



Source: Cohen et al. 2006.

When considering these studies, several limitations of this review are important. First, the search was very focused, intended to identify only studies of interventions that had been tried in real school settings. For each strategy, there is a larger body of social-psychological theory and research that led to the testing of the particular intervention that is not reviewed. Few social-psychological studies are conducted in classroom settings, but it was important to focus only on studies with possible applicability for educators. Another limitation is that these strategies do not represent all the possible ways of reducing stereotype threat, only those that have been studied with rigorous research. There may be other, better ways of reducing stereotype threat that have not been studied.

Finally, readers should be aware that the studies here are small in scope, and their replicability is unknown. However, it is clear that the stereotype threat phenomenon has been experimentally shown to exist across a wide variety of studies. Thus, it is important to share ideas for reducing the negative effects of this phenomenon, even if they are in the early stages of knowledge development. For the three experiments reported on here, evidence suggests that such strategies might reduce the level of psychological threat some Black students feel in the classroom and that, combined with other efforts, these strategies could benefit the performance of Black students.

Although researchers have developed specific protocols to follow for the interventions in some contexts, educators might need to adapt the interventions to fit their classrooms and then monitor them to determine what impact they have. An understanding of the purpose and process involved in using the strategy is important, as is professional wisdom about how to apply the process in a given classroom context. Such understanding and awareness help ensure that the spirit of the intervention is not lost when local conditions prevent a teacher from strictly following the protocols. If school teams or teachers do not grapple with the underlying rationale or purpose

of an intervention, key elements may be left out, rendering the intervention less effective.

For example, the timing of interventions is important. The interventions in the Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck (2007) and Cohen, Garcia, Apfel, and Master (2006) studies seemed to halt or at least slow a downward performance spiral for students. All three studies were conducted on students in grade 7, which raises the possibility that there may be windows of opportunity for influencing student attitudes and beliefs. For instance, grade 7 is a time when concerns about race-based stereotype increase for minority students and is a developmental period when adolescents' sense of identity is in flux. Interventions may be particularly influential at such junctures by altering students' early trajectory and preventing a path of compounding failures.

Thus, the grade level at which the intervention ideas are applied is an important consideration, as is the timing during the year. For example, the self-affirmation assignment may be most effective when given at times of high stress, such as the beginning of the school year, to halt or reverse a downward slide that could otherwise feed off itself, with stress worsening performance and with deteriorating performance heightening stress in a repeating cycle. Such downward slides coincide with academic transitions, such as the transition to middle school, high school, or college. These are times when performance standards shift upward, when students' sense of identity is not yet crystallized, and when social-support circles are disrupted, heightening stress and feelings of exclusion. If a small psychological intervention can interrupt a downward spiral at such times, or prevent it from emerging, there is the possibility of large and long-term effects (Cohen et al. 2006).

The evidence suggests that strategies such as those analyzed in the three experiments reported on here might reduce the level of psychological threat some Black students feel in the classroom and that, combined with other efforts, these strategies could benefit the performance of Black students

The three studies reported here suggest that seemingly small actions in the classroom when well timed, well targeted, and thoughtfully and systematically implemented can produce positive results for minority students

Social-psychological research suggests that human intellectual performance and motivation are fragile (Aronson and Inzlicht 2004; Aronson and Steele 2005). The three studies reported here suggest that seemingly small actions in the classroom—when well timed, well targeted, and thoughtfully and systematically implemented—can produce positive results for minority students.

It is important to bear in mind, however, that none of these interventions would work unless students already have some ability or motivation to improve academically and unless the school has the foundational resources to permit students to achieve at a higher level. The interventions will

not teach a student to spell who does not already know the fundamentals. They will not suddenly motivate an unmotivated student or turn a low-performing and underfunded school into a model school. More generally, the interventions would not work if there were not broader positive forces in the school environment (committed staff, quality curriculum) operating to facilitate student learning and performance. Without these broader positive forces, social-psychological interventions, while potentially reducing psychological threat levels for some students, would be unlikely to boost student learning and achievement. However, when these broader positive forces are in place, social-psychological interventions such as those reported on here may help Black and other minority students to overcome stereotype threat and improve their performance in school.

TABLE 3

Summary of effects reported by the three studies

Study	Outcome measure	Analysis technique	Treatment effect ^a	Description of difference between intervention and control groups
Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck (2007)	Predicted math grades on a 0 [F] to 4.0 [A] scale	Growth curve analysis	$t(371) = 2.93, p < .05$	According to a figure presented in the study report, the intervention group averaged roughly a 0.10 increase in math course grades from fall to spring. The increase does not represent a letter grade change (such as C+ to B-); it remains within the C+ range. However, the increase for the intervention group from fall to spring, though small, contrasted with a decline in grades for the control group from fall to spring (from roughly a C+ to a C).
Good, Aronson, and Inzlicht (2003)	Reading achievement scores on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) standardized tests	Analysis of variance	Incremental condition: $t(65) = 2.07, p < .05$ Attributional condition: $t(61) = 2.72, p < .01$ Effect sizes reported: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between students who received the message on the incremental theory of intelligence and students in the control group: Cohen's $d = .52$ Between students who received the attributional message and students in the control group: Cohen's $d = .71$ 	Compared with students in the control condition, students in the incremental condition earned an average 3.88 points higher on the TAAS and students in the attributional intervention condition an average of 5.24 points higher. The .52 and .71 effect sizes reported are considered moderate to large effects for educational interventions.
Cohen, Garcia, Apfel, and Master (2006)	Targeted course grade point average, on a 0 [F] to 4.33 [A+] grade point average scale	Multiple regression	Study 1: $t(41) = 2.44, p < .02$ Study 2 (replication): $t(60) = 2.69, p < .01$	According to the authors, the intervention effects translated into an estimated 0.26 point increase in study 1 and 0.34 point increase in study 2, respectively, in fall targeted course grades for Black students in the intervention condition compared with those in the control condition.

Note: Only the Cohen et al. (2006) study directly analyzed the reduction in the achievement gap between Black and White students. The other two studies reported on positive effects of the intervention on the overall sample of students, which included primarily minority (Black and Hispanic) students. However, the two studies were not able to compare minority student improvement with that of White students.

a. The effect size statistic represents the impact of the effect in standard deviation units. Because only the Good, Aronson, and Inzlicht (2003) study calculated and reported effect sizes, effect sizes could not be compared across the studies. Instead t -statistics and corresponding p -values are reported. For a given sample size, the t -statistic indicates how often differences in means as large as or larger than those reported would be found when there is no true population difference in means (the null hypothesis). The number in parentheses with the t -statistic indicates the degrees of freedom. Cohen's d , a type of effect size, represents the standardized mean difference between the intervention and control groups. It is calculated by dividing the difference between the intervention group and control group means by either their average standard deviation or by the standard deviation of the control group. See box 2 for more detailed definitions.

Source: Authors' compilation and calculation from Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck (2007); Good, Aronson, and Inzlicht (2003); and Cohen et al. (2006).

NOTES

1. This report uses the term *Black students* throughout, even when the reported study used a different term.
2. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 refers to “scientifically based research” as an important criterion for educators as they consider new interventions or strategies. Randomized controlled experiments are said to be the “gold standard” of the sciences, the highest standard of evidence or methodology available for studying the effectiveness or impact of an intervention. In such experiments participants are randomly assigned to one of two or more conditions that differ in a critical way that is hypothesized to have a particular impact. At the simplest level there is an

intervention group that receives the intervention and a control group that does not. If the students randomly assigned to the intervention group perform significantly better on the outcome measure than do students in the control group (a less than 5 percent probability of the difference between the two groups being due to chance), it is likely that the difference in performance was the result of the intervention. Random assignment creates groups that should be (on average) identical in all dimensions except for receiving the intervention; thus, any differences in outcomes can be attributed to the intervention. The three published studies identified and examined in this report use this type of research design for testing interventions to reduce stereotype threat in classrooms and improve academic performance.

APPENDIX A RESEARCH ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STEREOTYPE THREAT AND BLACK STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Students' academic performance in classrooms, because of processes such as stereotype threat, can be more variable than people customarily think, fluctuating with changes in the situation (Aronson and Steele 2005). For example, studies show that women's performance on math tests can be made to rise and fall with surprising ease. When women were asked to generate a short list of qualities shared by men and women, their math test performance rose (Rosenthal and Crisp 2006). In another study, when women were reminded that they were students at a selective liberal arts college and their attention was thus turned away from their gender, women's spatial-abilities test performance rose and the male-female gap shrank (McGlone and Aronson 2006). When women took a test in the presence of men, their math performance declined (Inzlicht and Ben-Zeev 2000). But when women were presented with a female test proctor who excelled in math, their performance improved and the male-female gap again shrank (Marx and Roman 2002). Such studies underscore the degree to which human performance is shaped by environmental and psychological forces—not simply by how smart a student is or how hard he or she works.

Research on stereotype threat began with laboratory studies exploring why Black college students seemed to be performing below their potential. Although a test-taking situation may seem objectively the same for all students, some students, because of their social identity, may experience it in a very different way.

Steele and Aronson (1995) conducted an experiment to explore the negative impact of administering a test under potentially stereotype-threat-inducing conditions by randomly assigning study participants to two different test-taking conditions. In one test-taking condition a standardized test (composed of verbal Graduate Record Exam

items) was presented to one group of college students as “diagnostic of intellectual ability.” It was hypothesized that Black students in this condition would worry that performing poorly could confirm a stereotype about their racial group's intellectual ability. Black students performed worse in this condition than when the same test was given in a second condition that introduced the test as one that was “not diagnostic of your ability.” The two ways of introducing the test had no effect on the performance of White students. Black students in the study sample answered roughly 8 of 30 test items correctly in the “threat” condition and roughly 12 of 30 correctly in the “no threat” condition.

Since this first Steele and Aronson study, the concept of heightened performance stress or anxiety for certain groups has been found across a variety of potential stereotypes and minority groups. Experimental studies have shown that detrimental stereotype threat affects not only Black students on verbal tests, but Hispanic students on verbal tests (Aronson 2002), young women on math tests (Quinn and Spencer 2001; Spencer, Steele, and Quinn 1999), White men in certain sports situations (Stone et al. 1999), students from socioeconomically disadvantaged households on school tests (Croizet and Claire 1998), and high-performing White students on math tests when they are reminded of the stereotype of Asian superiority in math (Aronson et al. 1999).

Direct and indirect manipulations of stereotype threat

Experimental manipulations of stereotype threat have differed, and these differences can be relevant to test-taking instructions used in K–12 settings (Quinn and Spencer 2001). One direct way of inducing stereotype threat in experiments has been to tell the test-taking group that the test they will take has been sensitive to group differences in the past (for example, “this test shows racial differences”), thus raising the potential relevance of the stereotype as an explanation for the test taker's poor performance. Although drawing attention to group differences just before administering a test

(for example, stating that girls have performed worse than boys on the math test in the past, or that Black students as a group performed poorly on the test the previous year) could cause a few students to rise to the challenge, the laboratory research suggests that the average performance of negatively stereotyped group members decreases. The fact that some of this laboratory research was conducted with college students on elite campuses (Steele and Aronson 1995) suggests that such a detrimental effect could occur even among the most confident and skilled students.

A less direct way of studying the negative effects of stereotype threat has been to inform the students in the study that the test is “diagnostic of your ability” (as in Steele and Aronson 1995). This conveys that the test is designed to evaluate students’ performance along a stereotype-relevant trait (intellectual ability) and consequently can bring to the fore concerns about confirming the stereotype. Experimental studies have shown that the performance of the stereotyped group tended to be poorer in the group that received the instruction that the test was diagnostic of ability than in the comparison group that received instructions emphasizing that the test is not diagnostic of ability (Spencer et al. 1999; Steele and Aronson 1995).

The power of these direct and indirect ways of inducing stereotype threat relates to a general psychological principle that has been widely studied—the priming effect. The priming effect refers to the tendency for people to conform their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to psychologically accessible mental constructs such as stereotypes. Thus, when individuals are “primed” with a negative stereotype, their interpretations of ambiguous stimuli, behaviors, or performances are often influenced by the stereotype, even when the priming occurs at the unconscious or subliminal level. The implication of priming effects for teachers trying to encourage their students to perform to their potential is that subtle events in the classroom can undermine a student’s confidence, trust, and performance. Studies also show that priming positive concepts, such as being a

good student, can improve performance (McGlone and Aronson 2006).

Mediating mechanisms

Although inducing stereotype threat conditions has been shown across multiple studies to result in poorer performance from the stereotyped group, the research has been less clear on the mediating mechanisms—on why stereotype threat results in poorer performance.

Some researchers have studied mediating mechanisms that might interfere with the quality of the performance under conditions of stereotype threat such as increases in stress, anxiety, self-consciousness, mental load, or heightened demands on working memory—all of which could lead to less focus on the task at hand, suboptimal test-taking strategies (such as guessing more), and underperformance (Beilock et al. 2006; Schmader and Johns 2003). Making students aware of the effects of anxiety from stereotype threat has been shown in several studies to improve the performance of negatively stereotyped students (Johns, Schmader, and Martens 2005; McGlone and Aronson 2007), presumably because awareness of external pressures reduces the tendency to attribute test anxiety to one’s intellectual shortcomings by providing an alternative attribution. The study findings suggest that helping students understand stereotype threat might inoculate them in some way against the extra stress or lack of focus that might take their attention away from the performance at hand.

Experiencing stereotype threat over time

Although difficult to study, some long-term effects of repetitively experiencing the extra stress due to stereotype threat have been suggested. One consequence might be that as Black students have the opportunity to make choices in school, some of them might avoid challenges by selecting easier courses or assignments when they are being academically evaluated. Studies with middle school minority students have found that students asked

for easier problems to solve when confronted with the prospect of being intellectually evaluated on the basis of their performance (Aronson and Good 2002). Compared with White students, the minority students showed a strong tendency to take on less challenging work, presumably because they were threatened by the prospect of looking less intelligent if the challenge proved too great.

But there were individual differences that moderated these findings. Minority students were less likely to avoid a challenge if they believed that the challenge could increase their intelligence. Additionally, reducing stereotype threat through an experimental intervention increased minorities' interest in taking challenging rather than easy college courses (Walton and Cohen 2007).

**APPENDIX B
METHODOLOGY**

The methodology for this study included a systematic search, screening, and review process to ensure methodological replicability.

Search process

A systematic search was conducted to identify empirical studies of classroom-based social-psychological interventions designed to reduce stereotype threat and thus to improve the academic performance of Black students.

The broadest search used the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) and the search term “stereotype threat,” resulting in 44 citations. Subsequently, narrower search term combinations, such as “stereotype threat” and “intervention,” and “achievement gap” and “intervention,” were used to search several bibliographic databases. To identify new literature, PsycInfo was used to search on “stereotype threat” and “social identity

threat.” Forward citation searches using seminal stereotype threat papers and searches of reference lists in newly published work were also conducted. The searches yielded 158 citations (table B1). In addition, a web site on this topic, with an extensive reference list of peer-reviewed journal articles, was reviewed (www.reducingstereotypethreat.org). Launched on November 28, 2007, the web site was developed by Steve Stroessner (Columbia University) and Catherine Good (Baruch College), but is now maintained solely by Stroessner. Until June 26, 2008, it was updated monthly or bimonthly. Scanning the web site reference list resulted in an additional 131 citations, for a total of 289 references.

Screening

The references were screened twice, first for content relevance and then for intervention and sample relevance (see appendix C for the six screening criteria).

Initial screening of references. Citation information from these 289 references was entered into an

TABLE B1
Search results

Search engine or web site	Database	Search terms	Number of references identified
ERIC		stereotype threat	44
EBSCOhost	PsycINFO	achievement gap and intervention	0
EBSCOhost	Academic Search Premier	achievement gap and intervention	0
Wilson Web	Education Index	racial achievement gap and intervention	0
EBSCOhost	PsycINFO	stereotype threat and intervention	3
EBSCOhost	Academic Search Premier	stereotype threat and intervention	1
Wilson Web	Education Index	stereotype threat and intervention	0
EBSCOhost	ERIC	stereotype threat and intervention	2
First Search	Dissertation abstracts	stereotype and threat	108
First Search	Dissertation abstracts	stereotype threat and intervention	0
First Search	Dissertation abstracts	racial achievement gap and intervention	0
www.reducingstereotypethreat.com	na	na	131
Total references			289

na is not applicable.

Source: Authors' compilation.

internal tracking database for documenting disposition. These references were first screened for inclusion using three questions on content relevance (see article screening protocol in appendix C):

- Is the article on topic?
- Is the citation an empirical study?
- Does the study focus on race-based stereotype threat?

If the title or abstract did not provide enough information about the study, the full article was reviewed for relevance. Table B2 and figure B1 show the disposition of references.

Applying the first set of three criteria in the article screening protocol led to 214 exclusions:

- 87 references, as off-topic or irrelevant.
- 20 references, which were literature reviews, book chapters, or summary articles—not empirical studies.
- 107 references, which focused on gender-based stereotype threat (conditions under which women perform worse than men on math tests) rather than race-based stereotype threat.

Second-level screening of relevant references. The remaining 75 references were subject to a second round of screening to determine whether the studies met the following criteria:

- Examined the effect of a social-psychological intervention (relevant to reducing the intensity of the psychological experience of stereotype threat) on improvements to student academic performance.
- Included Black students in the sample.
- Included K–12 students as the focus (not college students fulfilling requirements to participate in experiments).

FIGURE B1

First- and second-level screening and assessment of the quality of studies

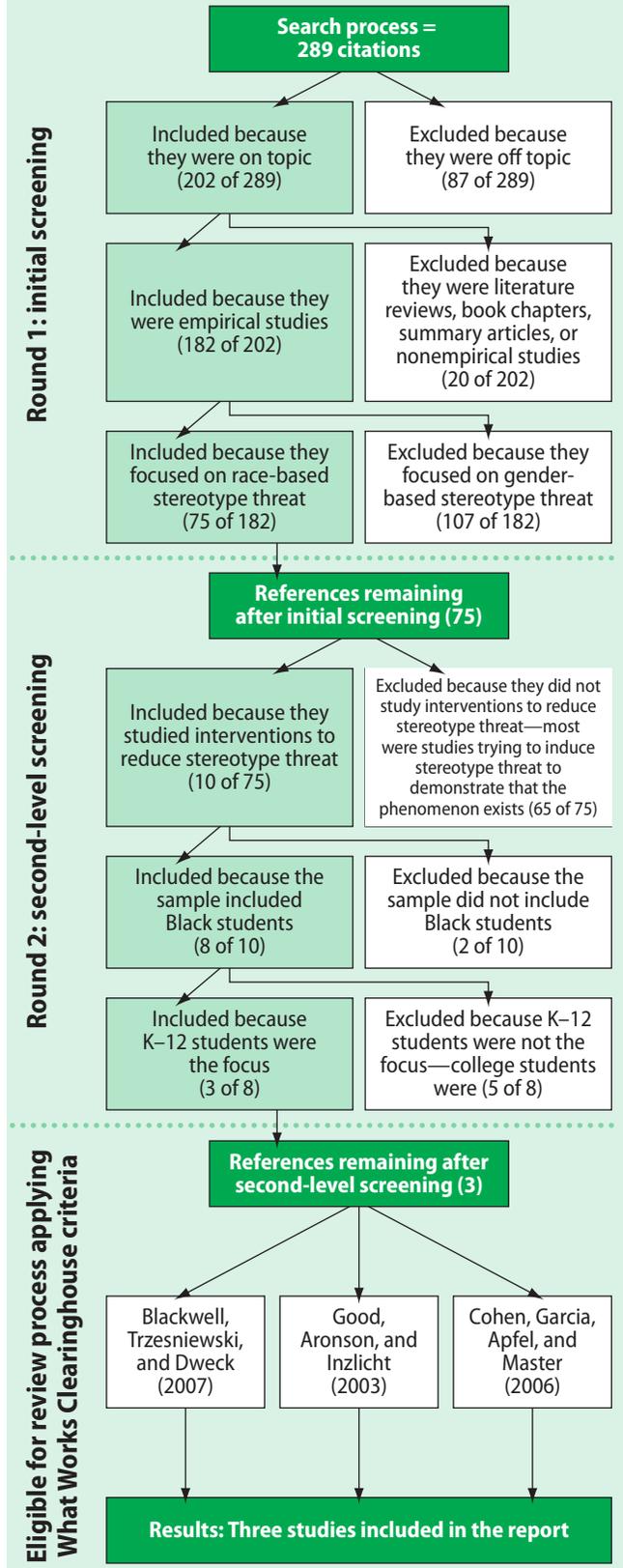


TABLE B2
Disposition of references

Search engine	Database	Search terms	Number of studies identified	Round 1			Round 2			Total references included after screening
				Off topic	Nonempirical (chapter/literature review)	Gender stereotype threat only	Not an intervention to reduce stereotype threat	Sample excludes Black students	Non K 12 classroom setting/student focus	
ERIC		stereotype threat	44	10	10	18	5	0	0	1
EBSCOhost	PsycINFO	achievement gap and intervention	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
EBSCOhost	Academic Search Premier	achievement gap and intervention	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wilson Web	Education Index	racial achievement gap and intervention	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
EBSCOhost	PsycINFO	stereotype threat and intervention	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
EBSCOhost	Academic Search Premier	stereotype threat and intervention	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Wilson Web	Education Index	stereotype threat and intervention	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
EBSCOhost	ERIC	stereotype threat and intervention	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
First Search	Dissertation abstracts	stereotype and threat	108	35	2	32	36	1	2	0
First Search	Dissertation abstracts	stereotype threat and intervention	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

(CONTINUED)

TABLE B2 (CONTINUED)
Disposition of references

Search engine	Database	Search terms	Number of studies identified	Round 1			Round 2			Total references included after screening
				Off topic	Nonempirical (chapter/literature review)	Gender stereotype threat only	Not an intervention to reduce stereotype threat	Sample excludes Black students	Non K 12 classroom setting/student focus	
First Search	Dissertation abstracts	racial achievement gap and intervention	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
www.reducingstereotypethreat.org	na	na	131	41	7	55	24	1	3	0
Total references excluded	na	na	na	87	20	107	65	2	5	na

na is not applicable.

Source: Authors' compilation.

This second round of screening excluded 72 studies (see table B2).

The majority of the studies (65) were excluded for not meeting the first criterion. The studies explored various aspects of the negative impact of stereotype threat on Black students. They did not test a social-psychological intervention aimed at improving Black student performance by reducing stereotype threat or mitigating its effects.

Two studies were excluded because they did not include Black students. Studies that included Black students as part of their sample were retained. No specific percentage of the sample was stipulated as having to be Black students. (Also, no criterion was specified for sufficient representation of Black students for analyses of outcomes by ethnicity.)

Of the three studies that remained after screening, only one study (Cohen et al. 2006) specifically analyzed race as a factor. In the Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck (2007) study the students were from a large urban school district, and all were minority (52 percent were Black and 45 percent were Hispanic). In the Good, Aronson, and Inzlicht (2003) study, the students were from a rural district in Texas with 70 percent eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (67 percent were Hispanic, 13 percent were Black, and 20 percent were White). The researchers noted that previous research had demonstrated stereotype threat effects for Black, Hispanic, and low-income students and argued that, for this reason, “all of the participants in the sample were potentially susceptible to stereotype threat” (p. 652). In the Cohen, Garcia, Apfel, and Master (2006) study, participants were from a suburban northeastern middle school with a student population equally split between Black and White students. Whereas the other two studies were conducted in socioeconomically disadvantaged settings, this study was conducted in a suburban area. However, race (Black or White) was used as a factor in the analyses (119 Black and 124 White students participating). Interestingly, all three included studies focused on grade 7 students.

Five studies were excluded because they did not include K–12 students as their focus. Though the studies examined the impact of an intervention on improving Black student performance, the sample was college students in laboratory settings, not K–12 students. Thus, these studies lacked external validity. Although a common practice in certain disciplines, it is difficult to generalize results from studies conducted with college students to other populations, especially to populations that are significantly younger.

Verification search

Because of the small number of studies identified for inclusion, a second broader, verification search was conducted to catch any relevant studies that might have been missed in the focused search of the databases. This verification search used the broadest search term of “stereotype threat” without the word “intervention,” searching the literature using the terms “stereotype threat,” “stereotype,” and “threat.” The EBSCO host search engine was used to search the ERIC, PsycINFO, Academic Search Premier, and Soc Index with Full Text databases. Also, the Education Index database was searched using Wilson Web, and the Dissertations Abstracts database was searched using First Search. The entire text of identified documents was searched, not just keywords or title. The only limit placed on the search was the publication year, which was set at between 1990 and 2007 (as the concept of stereotype threat emerged in the 1990s).

This search identified 741 references. Reviews of the titles and abstracts turned up no additional studies appropriate for inclusion. The reasons for exclusion were as follows: 74 percent were off-topic, 14 percent were not empirical, and 12 percent were on-topic but did not test an intervention, occur in K–12 classrooms, or include Black students.

Review process: identifying methodological limitations of included studies

The three studies identified as meeting the six inclusion criteria in the article screening protocol

(in appendix C) were reviewed first by a Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southeast researcher using a study quality review protocol (see appendix C). The researcher adapted the items on the protocol from one used by REL Central, which provided the researcher with background knowledge about the meaning of each item. The completed protocols for each study and the study articles were then examined by an external reviewer trained in What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) criteria.

Development of study quality review protocol.

Researchers for this study obtained a copy of a coding protocol that REL Central had developed using the WWC evidence standards (U.S. Department of Education 2008) to code studies included in the report *Using strategy instruction to help struggling high schoolers understand what they read* (Apthorp and Clark 2007). This coding protocol included criteria that WWC indicates are important, such as adequacy of outcome measure, equivalence of groups at baseline, extent of overall and differential group attrition, intervention contamination, and confounding of teacher and intervention. Also included were descriptive items to summarize each study, such as independent and dependent variable description, summary of analysis and results, and an overall narrative summary of the study.

The REL Central coding protocol was simplified for this study, as the intention was to describe any limitations in the methodology of the three studies based on an interpretation of WWC standards and the researchers’ understanding of good science, rather than to conduct a WWC-level review. The REL Southeast staff member who developed the protocol and who has experience in research design used the study quality review protocol to gather information from each study on items in the protocol: adequacy of outcome measure, random assignment process, overall attrition, differential group attrition, intervention contamination, and confounding factors. A section was not included on items related to assessing the quality of quasi-experimental designs in the protocol since all three identified studies used an experimental design. The completed coding protocol on each study was

reviewed by the external reviewer, who raised questions for clarification with the third researcher from REL Southeast and the initial coder.

Assessing the quality of identified intervention studies. The three studies were subject to a final quality review to describe any methodological limitations, using a study coding protocol (see appendix C) based on the five criteria below from the *What Works Clearinghouse Procedures and Standards Handbook* (U.S. Department of Education 2008) for assessing the internal validity of studies examining the effects of interventions:

- *Outcome measures.* The measures used to assess impact must be shown to actually measure what they are intended to measure. For studies in school settings, common academic achievement measures include state- or locally mandated tests and course performance (term grades). The three studies reported on here used such school measures of student achievement.
- *Random assignment process.* In experimental studies researchers use random assignment to assign participants to experimental conditions (intervention or control) to ensure that the groups are as similar as possible on all characteristics so that the outcomes measured reflect the influence of the intervention only. All three of the studies reported on their random assignment process, so any threats to random assignment could be identified. Only one study had a limitation in this area (Good, Aronson, and Inzlicht 2003).
- *Attrition of participants.* Loss of participants can create differences in measured outcomes by changing the composition of the intervention or control groups. Both overall attrition and differential attrition (differences between intervention and control groups) are of concern. All three studies were acceptable in this area.
- *Intervention contamination.* Intervention contamination can happen when unintended events occur after intervention begins.

Because these new factors could affect group outcomes, they also could affect the conclusions of the experiment. An example is a teacher in an intervention group sharing the intervention materials with a teacher in a control group. One study was noted as having a possible limitation in this area (Good, Aronson, and Inzlicht 2003).

- *Confounding factor.* It is important to examine factors beyond the intervention that might affect differences between groups, such as the effects of teachers or of the intervention provider more generally. For example, if each condition of the study involves only one teacher's classroom, then the effects of the teacher cannot be separated from the effects of the intervention. No studies were noted as having problems in this area.

Methodological review. The methodological limitations reported for each study were identified through this process. The results of the study quality review process are shown in the individual descriptions of each study below and summarized in table B3. Table B4 summarizes the methodology of the three studies.

Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck (2007). No limitations were noted in applying the quality review criteria to this study:

- *Random assignment process.* Students were randomly assigned by the school to regularly scheduled advisory classes (groups of 12–14). Each pre-existing advisory group was assigned by the research team to an intervention or control condition. The researchers reported baseline equivalence data: fall term math grades for the students were not significantly different for the two groups (2.38 for the intervention group and 2.41 for the control group).
- *Attrition.* The attrition rate (students who did not complete the eight-week sessions) was 5 percent and roughly equivalent for both groups (three from the intervention group and two from the control group).

TABLE B3
Quality of final studies included in report

Study	Adequacy of outcome measure			Random assignment process			Overall attrition			Differential attrition			Intervention contamination		Confounding factor	
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	1	2
Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck (2007)	✓			✓			✓			✓			✓		✓	
Good, Aronson, and Inzlicht (2003)	✓				✓		✓			✓				✓	✓	
Cohen, Garcia, Apfel, and Master (2006)	✓			✓			✓			✓			✓		✓	

Note: 1 = acceptable; 2 = acceptable with reservations; 3 = not acceptable.
 Source: Authors' compilation.

- *Intervention contamination.* There was no reporting of any events during the eight weekly 25-minute periods that might differentially affect the two groups. Each advisory group was assigned to a condition, making it less likely students would share information across conditions.
- *Confounding factors.* The study used undergraduate assistants to deliver the eight sessions, assigning two undergraduates as workshop leaders for each advisory class. Different workshop leaders were assigned to each advisory class. Student participants all had the same math teacher during the study period, so differences in math teachers could not have influenced differences in math grades between the intervention and control students.

Good, Aronson, and Inzlicht (2003). Two limitations were noted in applying the study quality review criteria that might limit the confidence in the results of this study.

- *Random assignment process.* Six of the 138 students' scores were removed from the analysis. In addition, evidence was not presented on the equivalence of the four groups on baseline

achievement. Although the authors reported that the six excluded students did not come from any particular condition, it is difficult to know how well the random assignment process worked in creating equivalent groups at baseline. Therefore, results showing differences between experimental conditions after the intervention should be interpreted with caution.

- *Intervention contamination.* The same mentors provided the intervention to students in three of the four experimental conditions, so the intervention conditions could have been somewhat blurred if the mentors brought knowledge from one condition to their delivery of another. In addition, students were all in the same class so they could have discussed or shared their experiences across the experimental conditions. Such a problem would work against finding a significant difference between the control group and the other experimental conditions, thus, perhaps strengthening confidence in the intervention condition effects where found. (Under WWC review standards, contamination such as occurred in this study is not considered grounds for downgrading a study.)

No limitations were found relative to the attrition or confounding factors.

- *Attrition.* Roughly 4 percent of students were excluded from the reading test analysis based on an outlier analysis intended to identify students whose test score results represented very limited English speaking skills. This attrition rate is less than the 20 percent level determined as significant attrition. The attrition was reported as occurring equivalently across groups.
- *Confounding factors.* The participating students were all part of one class, but the teacher did not provide the intervention. Students were randomly assigned to one of four conditions and also randomly assigned to a mentor who provided their condition.

Cohen et al. (2006). No limitations were noted in applying the quality review criteria to this study, as summarized below.

- *Random assignment process.* The article reported on two randomized, double-blind experiments of an affirmation intervention. Students in three teachers' classrooms were involved. Random assignment to either the affirmation intervention or control condition was at the level of the individual student. For each teacher/classroom period, there were about equal numbers of students in the two conditions. Baseline measures for each student (standardized measure of pre-intervention in-class performance, prior year grade point average in core courses, and pre-intervention test score) were collected and used in the analysis as potential covariates.
- *Attrition.* Individual student attrition (absences, missing data, experimenter error) was four students for study 1 (roughly 3 percent attrition), leaving 111 students in the final sample, and seven students from study 2 (roughly 5 percent), leaving 132 students in the final sample. There was no differential attrition as a function of condition, as indicated by the authors in a subsequent correspondence; baseline covariates were used in the analysis.
- *Intervention contamination.* There was no reporting of events or circumstances that might have contributed to contamination. The experiment was double-blind, so the teachers did not know what condition the students were assigned to, nor did the students. Additionally, neither group was aware of the experimental hypothesis, and students were unaware of the intervention.
- *Confounding factors.* Students were the unit of analysis for the study and were randomly assigned to the two conditions in approximately equal numbers for each of the three teachers. Because fall grades in the targeted course were the outcome measure and teachers may grade differently, the regression analysis included a teacher variable (dummy codes for the three teachers), a main effect of baseline in-class performance measures, and two terms representing the interaction of baseline in-class performance with each of the two teacher dummy variables to control for teacher differences in the predictiveness of early in-class performance. Thus, teacher effects were addressed and did not threaten internal validity.

TABLE B4

Methodological summary of the three experimental studies reviewed

Study	Intervention description	Sample	Design	Measures and outcomes	Analysis methods	Findings
Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck (2007) (Study 2)	Students participated in eight weekly 25-minute sessions. During the sessions students engaged in reading, activities, and discussions related to the malleability of intelligence. Students in the control condition also received eight sessions, but they received materials on the brain and memory for four of the sessions rather than the intervention materials on how to grow intelligence.	91 students in grade 7 in a large urban school district (48 in the experimental condition and 43 in the control condition): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 52 percent were Black. • 45 percent were Hispanic. 	Random assignment by advisory class periods to two conditions: intervention and control. Both groups received eight weeks of sessions, but the control group sessions did not include the information on the malleability of intelligence.	1. Theory of intelligence questionnaire 2. Changes in classroom motivation 3. Grade 7, spring term scores in math (time 3)	1. Analysis of variance 2. Chi-square test 3. Hierarchical linear modeling	<p>Students in the intervention group showed a significantly greater change from pretest to posttest on the theory of intelligence questionnaire than did the control group and scored significantly higher on the measure after the intervention than did the control group ($d = 0.47$), indicating that the theory of intelligence message was successfully communicated.</p> <p>2. Teachers identified 27 percent of the intervention group as showing positive motivational change, compared with 9 percent in the control group, a significant difference.</p> <p>3. "There was a significant effect of experimental condition on change in grades across the intervention (Time 2 to Time 3; $b = 53, t = 2.93, p < .05$). Thus, the sample as a whole was decreasing in grades, but this decline was eliminated for those in the experimental condition. The decline in grades suffered by the control-group students mirrors that commonly observed over the junior high school transition" (p. 257).</p>

(CONTINUED)

TABLE B4 (CONTINUED)

Methodological summary of the three experimental studies reviewed

Study	Intervention description	Sample	Design	Measures and outcomes	Analysis methods	Findings
Good, Aronson, and Inzlicht (2003)	<p>Students were randomly assigned mentors (students from a local college trained to deliver the intervention) who taught them messages throughout the school year through personal and email communication. There were three interventions that were hypothesized to help students deal with stereotype threat: students were taught that intelligence is malleable, school difficulty is normal, or both. Mentors for the control group students taught them about the dangers of drugs (a topic unrelated to the interventions).</p>	<p>138 grade 7 students who were enrolled in a computer skills class in a rural district in Texas, 70 percent of them eligible for free or reduced-price lunch:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 67 percent of sample were Hispanic. • 13 percent were Black. • 20 percent were White. <p>The researchers note that previous research demonstrated negative stereotype threat effects on performance for Black students, Hispanic students, girls in math, and students from low-income households. Thus, “all of the participants in the sample were potentially susceptible to stereotype threat” (p. 652).</p>	<p>Random assignment of students in the computer skills course to one of four conditions: incremental intelligence, attribution of difficulty, combination, and antidrug (control). The mentors were blind to the specific hypotheses of the study.</p>	<p>Achievement scores on statewide standardized tests of reading and mathematics (Texas Assessment of Academic Skills)</p>	<p>1. For math, a 2 (gender) by 4 (experimental condition) analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted followed by planned comparisons. 2. For reading, test scores were submitted to a one-way ANOVA comparing performance across the four conditions followed by planned comparisons. 3. In both sets of analyses, the sample size was too small to examine differences between ethnic groups.</p>	<p>1. Math results indicated a significant main effect of gender, qualified by a significant gender-condition interaction; girls in the incremental ($d = 1.13$), attributional ($d = 1.50$), or combined ($d = 1.30$) condition achieved significantly higher math scores than girls in the control condition. “All these are large effect sizes indicating that the intervention procedures meaningfully increased females’ math scores compared to the control condition” (p. 656). Marginally significant improvement was found for boys in the incremental condition compared with boys in the control condition ($d = 0.64$). 2. Reading. The ANOVA revealed a significant effect of condition. Planned comparisons indicated that students in the incremental ($d = 0.52$) and attributional ($d = 0.71$) conditions achieved significantly higher reading scores than students in the control condition.</p>

(CONTINUED)

TABLE B4 (CONTINUED)

Methodological summary of the three experimental studies reviewed

Study	Intervention description	Sample	Design	Measures and outcomes	Analysis methods	Findings
Cohen, Garcia, Apfel, and Master (2006)	The intervention was a self-affirmation exercise in which students completed an in-class writing assignment early in the school year, writing about an important value they held. The writing exercise (provided once in study 1 and twice in the replication study 2) was provided without teacher instruction. Students read instructions provided in an envelope, completed the instructions, placed their work in the envelope and returned it to the teacher. In the affirmation treatment, students were asked to select the most important personal value (or values) from a list and asked to write a paragraph about why the value was important to them. Control group students were asked to select the least important value and to write about why the value might be important to someone else.	Participants were seventh graders in a suburban northeastern middle school with a student body split evenly between Black and White students. 243 students participated in the two studies reported on (study 2 was a replication of study 1 with different students): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 119 were Black. • 124 were White. The treatment group had 119 students, and the control group had 124 students.	Students were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: self-affirmation treatment or control condition, resulting in four cells: race (Black or White) by 2 conditions (affirmation or control writing assignment)	Fall semester grade point average in the targeted academic course. The intervention was delivered early in the fall semester in the targeted course. The targeted course was the same subject area for all experimental and control students.	1. Multiple regression	1. Black students participating in the self-affirmation condition earned a higher grade in the targeted course than students in the control group (average difference between intervention and control group grades was 0.30 grade point). No difference was found between the conditions for White students. The race-condition interaction was significant for both studies. 2. Combining data from both studies showed that Black students participating in the intervention were less likely to receive a D or below in the course (9 percent) than were students in the control condition (20 percent).

Source: Authors' compilation.

APPENDIX C ARTICLE SCREENING AND STUDY QUALITY REVIEW PROTOCOLS

Article screening protocol

Coder (name and date): _____

APA style citation: _____

Initial-level screening for relevance

Content relevance

1. Is the article on topic?
 - Yes
 - No (exclude)
2. Is the citation an empirical study (not a literature review, book chapter, conceptual paper, etc.)?
 - Yes
 - No (exclude)
3. Is the study focused on race-based stereotype threat (as opposed to gender or other type of stereotype threat)?
 - Yes
 - No (exclude)

Second-level screening for relevance

Intervention-type relevance

4. Does the study investigate interventions aimed at reducing stereotype threat?
 - Yes
 - No (exclude)

Sample relevance

5. Does the study include African American students?
 - Yes
 - No (exclude)
6. Does the study focus on K–12 students?
 - Yes
 - No (exclude)

Relevance screen summary. In order for the study to be included, it must have passed all relevance screens (content relevance, intervention-type relevance, and sample relevance). If “yes” for all six items above, the study is eligible for inclusion in the report if it is judged of sufficient methodological quality applying What Works Clearinghouse–based criteria.

Study quality review protocol

Study information and outcome measure

1. Study information

- a. Reference citation (author and publication year):

- b. Title: _____
- c. Source:
 - Dissertation
 - Conference presentation
 - Technical report
 - Book or book chapter
 - Journal (specify name): _____

2. *Adequacy of outcome measure.* List the outcome measures and the validity and reliability evidence as outlined below.

Examples of validity evidence includes test or measure has correlations from studies of concurrent validity, predictive validity, factor analysis; measure is in established use as an academic achievement indicator (for example, a state-developed standardized test administered as part of an annual student testing program or course grades on official transcripts) and thus has face validity as a reliable measure of student achievement. Examples of reliability evidence include internal consistency, test-retest, or, if measure requires judgment, interrater reliability.

Quality review criteria

3. *Random assignment process.* In looking at information included in the study on the random assignment process . . . (check one)

- There were no reported disruptions of or contaminations in random assignment process, and/or baseline equivalence was checked. → (Acceptable)
 - There was evidence of disruptions or contaminations in random assignment process, but they were minor and/or pre-test differences were checked and were nonsignificant → (Acceptable with reservations)
 - There was evidence of disruptions or contaminations in random assignment process, and pretest differences were not checked or were checked, were significant, and were not corrected statistically. → (Not acceptable)
4. *Attrition*. In looking at information included in the study on attrition . . . (check one)
- There was no significant attrition (<20 percent overall). → (Acceptable)
 - There was significant attrition (>20 percent overall), but postattrition equivalence was demonstrated. → (Acceptable)
 - There was significant attrition (>20 percent overall), and postattrition equivalence was not demonstrated. → (Acceptable with reservations)
 - There was no information on attrition provided, but degrees of freedom provide adequate information and indicate no significant attrition (<20 percent overall). → (Acceptable)
 - There was no information on attrition provided, but degrees of freedom provide information that indicates significant attrition (>20 percent overall), and postattrition equivalence was demonstrated. → (Acceptable)
 - There was no information on attrition provided, but degrees of freedom provide information that indicate significant attrition (>20 percent overall), and postattrition equivalence was not demonstrated. → (Acceptable with reservations)
- There was no information on attrition provided, and degrees of freedom do not provide adequate information. → (Not acceptable)
5. *Differential sample attrition*. In looking at information included in the study on sample attrition . . . (check one)
- There was no significant attrition differential between intervention and comparison groups (<7 percent). → (Acceptable)
 - There was significant attrition differential (>7 percent), but group comparability was demonstrated. → (Acceptable)
 - There was significant attrition differential (>7 percent), and group comparability was not demonstrated. → (Acceptable with reservations)
 - There was no information on attrition differential provided, but degrees of freedom provide adequate information and indicate no significant attrition (<7 percent). → (Acceptable)
 - There was no information on attrition differential provided, but degrees of freedom provide information that indicate significant attrition (>7 percent); however, group comparability was demonstrated. → (Acceptable)
 - There was no information on attrition differential provided, but degrees of freedom provide information that indicate significant attrition (>7 percent); group comparability was not demonstrated. → (Acceptable with reservations)
 - There was no information on attrition differential provided, and degrees of freedom do not provide adequate information. → (Not acceptable)
6. *Intervention contamination*. Was there evidence of something happening after the beginning of the intervention that affects the outcomes for the intervention or control group (affects the outcome of one of the groups in an unexpected way)? (check one)
- No → (Acceptable)
 - Yes → (Acceptable with reservations)

7. *Confounding factor* (teacher or other intervention delivery agent confounds). In looking at information included in the study on the assignment or role of teachers or other intervention delivery agents (e.g., mentors), was there any situation in which one teacher or other intervention delivery agent was assigned to just one experimental condition? (check one)
- No → (Acceptable)
 - Yes → (Not acceptable)

8. *Summary of randomized controlled trial study quality review criteria.* Look back at your answers for questions 2–7 and enter the results in the following box:

Criteria	Acceptable with reservations		
	Acceptable	Acceptable with reservations	Not acceptable
Q2. Adequacy of outcome measure			
Q3. Random assignment process			
Q4. Overall attrition			
Q5. Differential sample attrition			
Q6. Intervention contamination			
Q7. Confounding factor			

Overall study description. The following items are used to ensure that consistent information was gathered about each study.

9. *Study population sample.*

- a. School district/local:
- Urban
 - Suburban
 - Rural
 - Missing

- b. Race/ethnicity of students included (check all that apply):
- African American/Black
 - Asian/Pacific Islander
 - Hispanic/Latino
 - White
 - Other
 - Multiracial
- c. Percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch: _____
- d. Grade level (check all that apply):
- K–3
 - 3–5
 - 6–8
 - 9–12
- e. Age (mean and/or minimum–maximum): _____
- f. Total sample size: _____
- g. Achievement outcome variable (if more than one treatment group, specify in parentheses which treatment group you are placing in each column)

Outcome	Achievement outcome variable	Standard score mean
Outcome 1 (specify)	Treatment 1 (specify)	
	Treatment 2 (specify)	
	Treatment 3 (specify)	
	Control	
	Overall	
Outcome 2 (specify)	Treatment 1 (specify)	
	Treatment 2 (specify)	
	Treatment 3 (specify)	
	Control	
	Overall	

Independent variable/intervention

10. *Intervention description*

- a. Briefly describe the intervention, including the stated purpose and any required special conditions or resources: _____

- b. Subject area (check all that apply):
 English/language arts
 Math
 Social studies
 Science
 Other (specify course title)

- c. Duration of intervention: _____

Analysis and results.

11. Unit of assignment and analysis match.

- a. Was there a match between unit of assignment and analysis? (Check one)
 Matched, both were students
 Matched, both were teachers
 Matched, both were schools
 Not matched, not addressed in analyses, group differences not statistically significant
 Not matched, not addressed in analyses, group differences statistically significant
 Not matched, but addressed in analyses
 Explain: _____

- b. Was an effect size reported?
 No
 Yes (specify pages) _____

12. *Results.* Please fill in the following table for each outcome included in the study

Outcome	Statistic	Notes	Page numbers
Outcome 1 (specify)	Mean/count/proportions (include both treatment and control statistics)		
	Sample size (include both treatment and control statistics)		
	Standard deviation (include both treatment and control statistics)		
	Test statistic		
	Were group differences statistically significant? (provide p-value)		
	Researcher reported effect size (including type, if available)		
	Outcome 2 (specify)	Mean/count/proportions (include both treatment and control statistics)	
Outcome 2 (specify)	Sample size (include both treatment and control statistics)		
	Standard deviation (include both treatment and control statistics)		
	Test statistic		
	Were groups differences statistically significant (provide p-value)?		
	Researcher reported effect size (including type, if available)		

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Making Afterschool Programs Better

Denise Huang & Ronald Dietel

Policy Brief
No. 11



National Center for Research
on Evaluation, Standards, & Student Testing

UCLA | Graduate School of Education & Information Studies

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National Center for Research
on Evaluation, Standards, & Student Testing

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Introduction

The number of students attending afterschool programs has skyrocketed in recent years, currently serving an estimated 8.4 million children (Afterschool Alliance, 2009). Consequently, the demand for high quality afterschool programs, and to learn from successful ones, has never been greater. This *Making Afterschool Programs Better* policy brief, synthesizes the results from nearly 20 years of experience in evaluating afterschool programs. CRESST evaluations include U.S. Department of Education supported 21st Century Community Learning Center programs, state-supported afterschool programs across California, and multiple evaluations of the LA's Better Educated Students for Tomorrow enrichment program¹.

CRESST is pleased to share this brief with the goal that others will benefit from our findings and recommendations; thus, providing an increasing number of children with a high quality afterschool program leading to exceptional learning and successful careers.

Key Components of Effective Afterschools

A growing body of research has found that students' participation in afterschool programs is beneficial to academic achievement and social adjustment (Pierce, Hamm, & Vandell, 1999; Posner & Vandell, 1994). A recent study, for example, found that students who participated in afterschool programs had significantly higher reading achievement and were rated by teachers as having a greater expectancy of success than students who did not participate in afterschool programs (Mahoney, Lord, & Carryl, 2005).

Other research has found that those students who participate in quality afterschool programs the longest (both in terms

of frequencies and duration) have lower criminal activity rates (Goldschmidt, Huang, & Chinen, 2007; Huang et. al, 2006; Lamare, 1997). Research has also discovered that higher rates of participation in afterschool programs can contribute to higher scores on academic standardized tests in mathematics, reading, and language arts (Huang, Gribbons, Kim, Lee, & Baker, 2000; Huang, Leon, La Torre, & Mostafari, 2008). Muñoz (2002) found a positive relationship between afterschool program participation rates and improved day school attendance and academic achievement.

Drawing from research and more than a dozen afterschool evaluations, CRESST developed a model for what we consider five key components of effective afterschool programs:

¹Unless otherwise indicated, specific data in this policy brief are from CRESST Report 768, "What Works? Common Practices in High Functioning Afterschool Programs Across the Nation in Math, Reading, Science, Arts, Technology, and Homework—A Study by the National Partnership." The report (as well as numerous afterschool evaluations) is available on the CRESST website: www.CRESST.org.

- 1 **Goals** are clear, rigorous, and supported across the program in structure and content. Funding is adequate to support goals.
- 2 **Leadership** is experienced, well-educated, has longevity at the current site, uses effective communications, sets high expectations, and has a bottoms-up management style.
- 3 **Staff** is experienced, has longevity at current program, relates well to students, models high expectations, motivates and engages students, and works well with leaders, colleagues, and parents.
- 4 **Program** aligns to the day school, provides time for students to study, learn and practice; includes motivational activities, frequently uses technology, science and the arts to support youth development, student learning, and engagement.
- 5 **Evaluation** uses both internal (formative) and external (summative) methods. Evaluative information and data accurately measure goals; results are applied to continuous program improvement.

These five components work together to produce a high quality afterschool program (Figure 1).

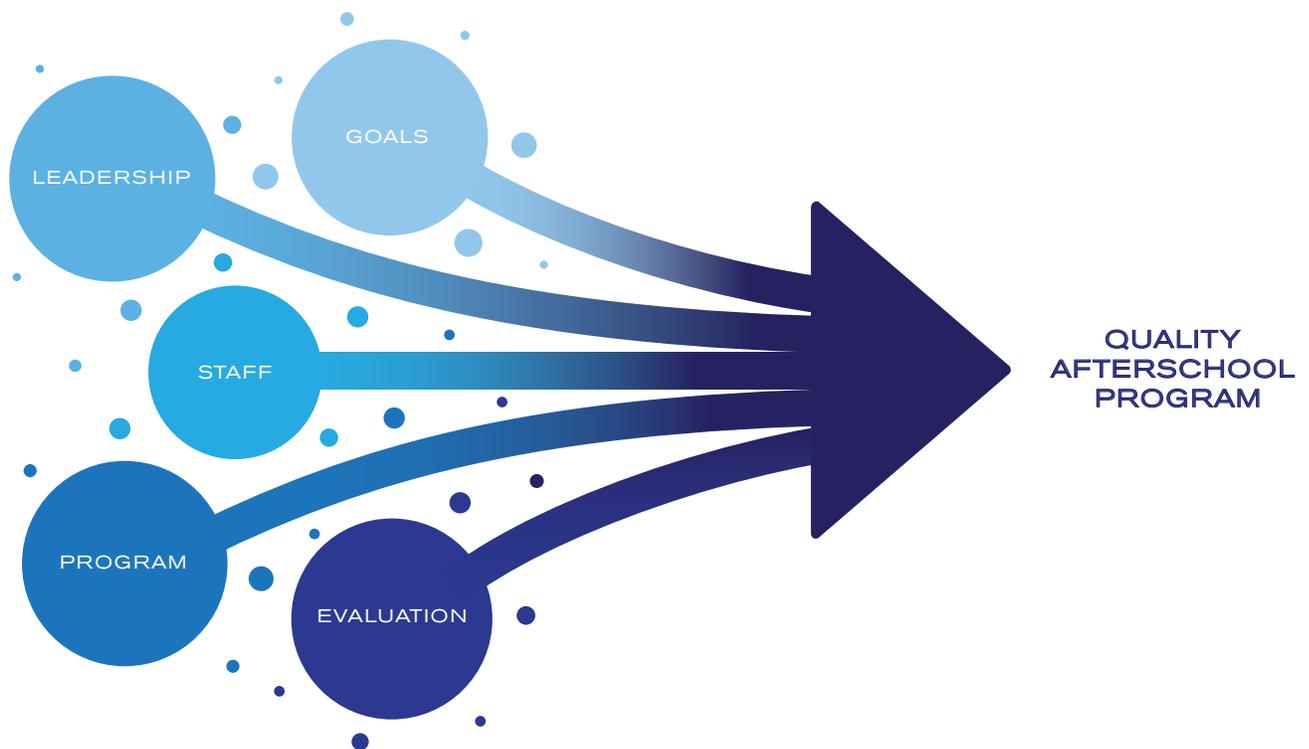


Figure 1. CRESST Afterschool Program Quality Model.

The remainder of this brief covers each of these five components. First, we provide common evaluation findings across most programs 🔍. We then provide examples, either best practices or useful observations, noted by the CRESST team 📝. We conclude with a short list of recommendations, which could help make afterschool programs even better.

Component 1: Goals

“Everything that we do in afterschool, we try to make it connected to the real world....One of our many goals is to make it relevant...make a connection for students to stay in school, go to college, a reason to be on a particular career path...” - Afterschool Project Director

Overview

Setting clear goals and desired outcomes is a cornerstone of afterschool program success (Bodilly and Beckett, 2005). Virtually all of the programs we studied had established unambiguous goals and structured their programs to meet those goals. At the same time, most programs also recognized the importance of considering student voices when making decisions regarding program activities and content; hence, many programs allowed students to provide input, especially in the arts and technology programs. As a result, students were engaged and excited to be in their afterschool programs.



Key Evaluation Findings

- 🔍 The best programs had:
 - clearly defined goals in a written plan;
 - curricular design and specific practices aligned to program goals; and
 - internal and external evaluations (for further details, see Component 5 of this report).
- 🔍 “Achievement” focused programs, often district-affiliated, were:
 - usually more structured than other afterschool program types;
 - stressed improvement of academic performance;
 - hired more certified teachers; and
 - maintained a more consistent linkage with the day school than less achievement-focused programs.
- 🔍 Goals of many high quality afterschool programs also had a specific emphasis (e.g., science, technology, homework support, community involvement, or the arts).

Examples

- 📝 The site coordinator at one math program described program goals as focused on developing students’ academic skills within a specific content area: “Our primary goals are to bring the student to grade level.” Similarly, goals for three of the math programs and four of the reading programs specifically targeted students who were struggling academically.
- 📝 A primary goal of many arts focused afterschool programs was to provide students, who otherwise would have little-to-no exposure to the arts, with quality art experiences. Many interviewees reported using an integrative approach to arts instruction that could help students who were struggling academically and personally.
- 📝 Similar to arts, all science staff responded to questions about curricular goals by suggesting a primary interest in offering positive science experiences to students. A few went further to explain that their principle goal was to improve standardized test scores in science by focusing on extending day school instruction into afterschool.
- 📝 Interview data across seven homework-focused programs suggested that the primary goals in afterschool homework were to complete homework and increase academic achievement.
- 📝 Nearly all of the technology staff had the goal of teaching students the mechanics of a broad range of technology skills, an interest in encouraging the students to use those skills to enhance learning in other

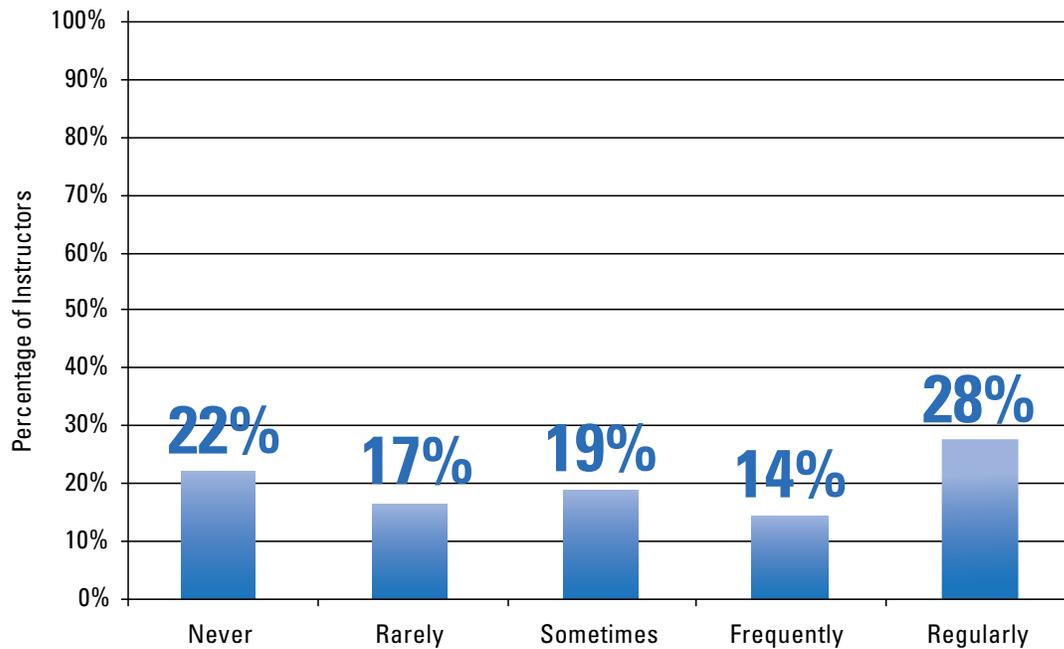


Figure 2. Frequency of communication between afterschool program and day-school staff.

content areas, and teaching the students a technical skill that is relevant to their real lives (both now and in the future).

In aligning activities to achieve their program goals, nearly all interviewees described the merits of developing a curriculum that combined academic skill development with opportunities to explore and encourage students' social development. One program director summed up:

"Our goal is to help each child to make sure that it's an afterschool program that's fun, but at the same time it's enriching, so they grow and learn every day, so they can take home more knowledge..."

Component 2: Leadership

"Obviously, we try to be democratic....So one of the things we try to do here, how we want to make this a great place to work, is in finding great people, then giving the people the power and leeway and the accountability, but also the freedom to do what they think works best, and trusting them...."

- Afterschool Project Director

Overview

Our studies found that directors and managers of high functioning afterschool programs usually had many years of experience in afterschool programs. Further, the leaders nearly always shared decision-making with their staff across afterschool goals, programs, and evaluation.

Key Evaluation Findings

- 🔍 The best programs had leaders who:
 - articulated a clear program mission, vision statement, and goals;
 - decentralized decision making; used a bottoms up leadership style;
 - trusted in the knowledge and skills of staff regarding curriculum and instruction;
 - promoted a team culture of positive relationships, frequent communication, and staff problem-solving skills;
 - insured that instructors and students had adequate materials and resources; and
 - provided all staff with professional development opportunities that improved individual and team skills.
- 🔍 The majority of both site coordinators and instructors said that afterschool instructors had an active voice in decisions about curriculum and instruction (4.4 average on a 5.0 point scale) and took active roles in program leadership and decision-making (4.1 average).
- 🔍 Administrators consistently described the value of staff's content-specific skills and expertise; as a result, curriculum development was a group process in which leaders gave staff members a strong voice in designing instruction.
- 🔍 Leaders and staff across high-quality programs maintained good relationships with the day school personnel. However, few of them had established formal communication systems for that purpose

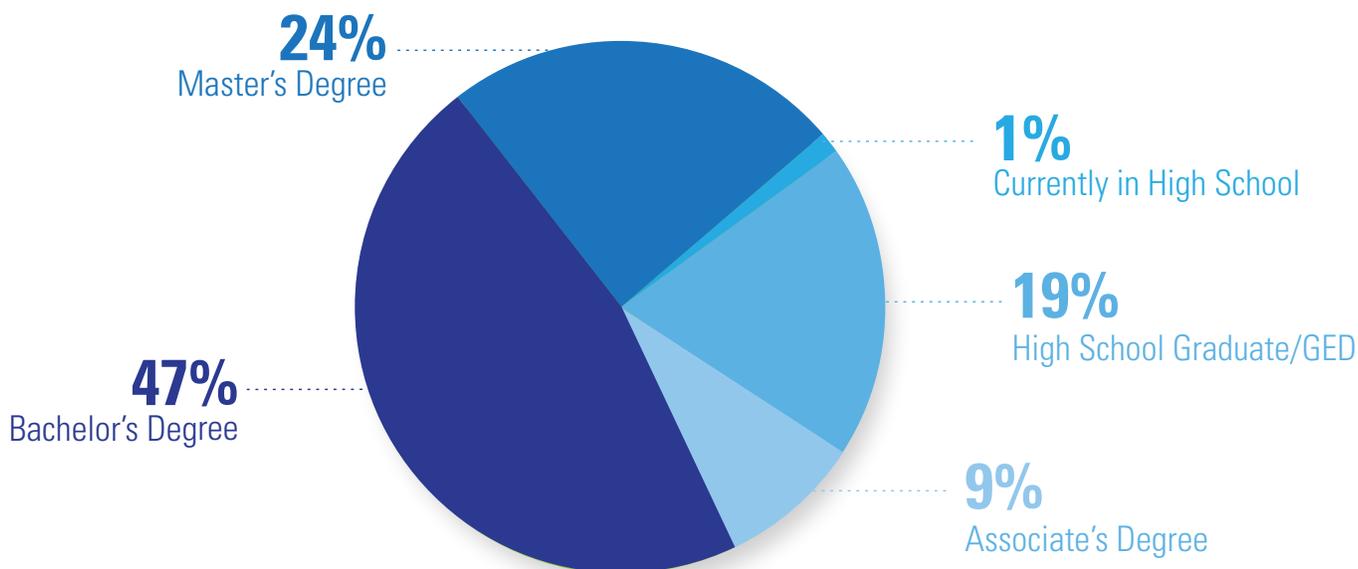


Figure 3. Educational levels of afterschool staff.

(as indicated in Figure 2), with less than 50% of afterschool staff reporting that they had regular or frequent communication with day school teachers (see Recommendations section).

Examples

- One site coordinator expressed appreciation for the staff by stating, "These are professional adults...and they are the best ones to implement the curriculum... They're right there with the students...they know what their levels are and their abilities."
- An arts program instructor explained, "My experience has been that the afterschool teachers propose something that we'd like to do with the kids afterschool and [the director] then just talks to us about what our plans are. We... report to her in terms of lesson plans and how we incorporate standards and benchmarks, but a lot of freedom is really given to us. We teach what we're comfortable teaching and what we're passionate about."
- A project director at a technology program said that his staff's latitude was evenly balanced by a strong level of accountability for their curricular choices. "Every quarter they have to come back to us and tell us how they're doing. They report back as to what is going on at their...programs. In terms of actual decision-making and setting goals and deciding what we're going to do, that's much more of a bottom-up process."

Component 3: Staff

"We recognized that the other role we (staff) have to play is to get children engaged in the learning process. So it's not just about completing the homework, but it's about finding ways outside of the school to get them interested, excited, feeling confident, and to build their self-esteem, so that they want to come back the next day and try a little harder." - Afterschool Staff Instructor

Overview

We found that high quality programs recruited qualified staff and created collegial environments supporting their programs' missions. Afterschool leaders were able to retain staff and achieve lower turnover rates than other programs because staff felt respected, supported, autonomous, and confident in their ability to reach their students. In turn, staff and students constructed positive relationships with each other, characterized by warmth and mutual respect.

Staff was often role a model for students, creating a norm of high expectations, appropriate student behavior, good school attendance, effective work habits, and positive attitudes towards learning.

Key Evaluation Findings

- Staff from quality programs generally had high educational levels. Forty-seven percent of all staff had Bachelor's degrees; twenty-four percent had a Master's degree (see Figure 3).

- 🔍 Afterschool staff in quality programs usually had substantial afterschool experience. Sixty-six percent had more than three years of work experience in afterschool; twenty-three percent had six years or more of experience.
- 🔍 Program staff at high quality sites also tended to have low turnover. The majority of the staff had been at their current site for three years or more (see Recommendations section).
- 🔍 Positive relationships and interactions between the staff and the students were observed in virtually all high quality programs, particularly in terms of expectations for student performance, disciplinary issues, and democracy.
- 🔍 All interviewees reported having some form of technology-related professional development available in their afterschool program.
- 🔍 Most professional development opportunities were for helping students with reading and math, applying state standards to the curriculum, and connecting with the day school. Fewer opportunities were offered on topics of English learners, special needs students, evaluation, and assessment (see Recommendations section).
- 🔍 A higher percentage of site coordinators reported receiving professional development in most categories (other than working with English language learners), compared to instructors who reported receiving the lowest percentage of professional development in program and self-evaluation (see Recommendations section).
- 🔍 Although staff generally found professional development useful, only 26% had regular (2-4) opportunities each year. About 50% of the homework program staff reported that no professional development was offered to them (see Recommendations section).

Examples

- 🔍 Nearly all quality afterschool programs approached decision-making in a democratic fashion. One program allowed students to offer input on where they would like to conduct their service learning projects; others considered students' activities choices and made great efforts to include them in their program decision-making.
- 🔍 Arts-, science-, and technology-focused afterschool programs tended to give students more autonomy and input into programs compared to homework or academic focused programs. One arts program staff stated that student inputs were "always of great value; student interests had a vast impact on art curriculum content." Consequently, students took ownership in their learning and remained engaged.

Component 4: Staff

"These are kids who have never been exposed to anything—our goal is to open their minds to new things, and to show that they can do it.... We want a well-balanced, well-rounded program with a lot of different things to offer to the children." - Afterschool Site Coordinator

Study findings revealed curricular similarities and differences across all programs, a majority of which offered three or more activities each day. Most programs included homework help or tutoring, but other activities ranged from academic (e.g., math, reading, writing, science) to enrichment (e.g., arts and crafts, cooking, gardening, health and nutrition, cultural activities, computers) and recreation (e.g., sports, dance, drill team, outdoor games). The frequency and duration of instruction offered by the programs are provided in Table 1.

These findings suggest that students were receiving adequate afterschool time for learning and skills practice. Observation reports across the programs also indicated that students appeared to be mostly engaged and attentive, and enjoyed the activities. Virtually all programs provided substantial time for recreational and crafts activities, keeping students engaged while exercising other parts of their brains.

Key Evaluation Findings

- 🔍 The majority of programs employed unique and innovative strategies to engage students in the afterschool setting, placing a particular emphasis on making learning fun.
- 🔍 Technology programs reported the most frequent use of research-based practices, whereas reading programs reported the lowest frequency.
- 🔍 Technology, science, arts, and homework programs appeared to be more focused on developing higher order thinking skills, whereas reading and math programs were more focused on direct skills instruction.
- 🔍 Most programs shared similar methods of disseminating information to parents, as well as a means of encouraging their involvement in the afterschool programs
- 🔍 Parents were very satisfied with the programs both in terms of positive changes in their children's behaviors and attitudes, and in general program functioning. They felt that the staff cared about and respected their children. They also reported that

Content area	Average duration of daily instruction	Average number of days offered per week
Reading	51 min.	3.20
Math	66 min.	2.58
Science	77 min.	2.28
Art	77 min.	3.72
Technology	105 min.	3.55
Homework	45 min.	4.00

Table 1. Duration and Frequency of Instruction by Content Area

afterschool staff dealt with their children’s behavioral problems promptly.

- 🔍 Over half of the programs took field trips to enhance student learning and motivation.
- 🔍 Many of the high quality programs had social or character development in their curriculum as well as a community involvement component.
- 🔍 However, links to day school curriculum were at low levels, even at high quality sites. Communications with the day school teachers occurred mostly in forms of brief, informal contacts such as email or casual drop-in conversations. The key topics on most of the communications between day school and afterschool were homework related (see Recommendations section).
- 🔍 The need for additional space was commonly mentioned by both site coordinators and program staff (see Recommendations section).
- 🔍 According to most program staff, another scarce resource was access to technology and particularly computers (see Recommendations section).
- 🔍 Almost all programs had fairly low parent participation and volunteerism, as well as low percentages of formal parent–teacher meetings. For example, only 19% of staff met with parents on a regular basis. Low parent involvement was usually attributed to parental work commitments (see Recommendations section).

Examples

- 🔍 Afterschool programs used a number of strategies to keep students engaged in learning, including cross-

content integration, diversity of activities, real world examples, dialogic and cooperative learning, and cultural awareness programs. Learning was often embedded discretely in sports, games, discussions, and journal writing. A site coordinator explained the approach:

“I think that because a lot of our program is disguised learning, a lot of times the kids don’t even realize that they are doing math or that they are doing language arts or reading.”

- 🔍 Staff at one site described a science program that was the result of a collaborative effort between day school and afterschool instructors, designed around the district’s science curriculum, grounded in state and/or national science standards, and supplemented with purchased science kit materials. Science lessons revolved around a fish hatchery theme, developed primarily during day school instruction, and maintained and studied throughout the year in both the day school and the afterschool program. According to interviewees, this concept provided a focus that gave students a beneficial sense of continuity between day school and afterschool science instruction.
- 🔍 Almost all afterschool programs offered arts activities for their students as enrichment including poetry, dance, drama, choir, and drawing. One program instituted an innovative program, “Fun with Junk,” where kids created art projects out of recyclables. Other sites put on drama, dancing, or singing productions for fellow students, teachers, and parents; thereby, providing opportunities for students to collaborate with each other.

- Many sites provided character development. The site coordinator at a reading afterschool program described two character programs that they offered students:

The girls get “Smart Girls”, which is also character building but it deals with those life changes during puberty, taking care of your body in terms of hygiene, and what does it mean to be a woman in society. For the boys it’s “Passport to Manhood.”

Another site coordinator for a math afterschool program mentioned a program called Character Development, which focused on teaching students values, such as honesty, respect, responsibility, and caring.

- Community involvement was common in the programs, such as making get well cards for patients in the hospitals, taking trips to nursing homes to sing to the senior citizens, recycling or community beautification efforts, and cultivating community gardens. One afterschool program worked with a local charitable organization not only to restore a public garden, but also to hike, take horticulture classes, go rowing, and swim in the lake.
- Community members often volunteered in the afterschool programs, often a result of affiliations with local universities and high schools, who frequently tutored students. Boy and girl scouts, churches, and boys and girls club members also volunteered. Afterschool program staff frequently invited science experts from the community to visit their programs and share their own experiences of practical, real-world applications for science. As one project director explained,
“What makes it unique [at our program] is we have so much community involvement in teaching science...We’ve really tried to get experts in the field to come in...I don’t think that there is any program that has more community involvement in teaching students science than ours.”



Component 5: Evaluation

When you look at their assessments on the [state test]...they weren’t measuring up with other states; and because of that we had to go back and revisit our curriculum to see where we were falling through the cracks. - Afterschool Program Principal

Overview

As outlined in the CRESST afterschool model, ongoing evaluation is necessary to measure program performance and make continuous improvement. While evaluation data serves many stakeholders including students, parents, and afterschool staff— funding agencies (who are making a growing investment in afterschool programs) increasingly want to know if their outlays are making measureable improvements.

We found that nearly all afterschool programs used internal evaluation to identify program strengths and weaknesses. Internal evaluation, often called formative evaluation, was usually done by the program’s own staff or staff within its funding agencies governance structure. The stakes or consequences were usually low – with program improvement the key goal. An external evaluation, on the other hand, typically had higher consequences for programs and was nearly always conducted by a disinterested third party. In some cases, accreditation or even program continuance may be decided by an unbiased outside, “external” evaluation expert.

Interview and survey responses across our studies indicated that even though rigorous examination of data was rare, nearly all of the afterschool programs conducted internal or external evaluations of their programs.

Key Evaluation Findings

- All but two programs reported having conducted internal evaluations. Evaluation varied from informal conversations between afterschool staff, day school staff, and parents, to a formal administration of surveys to students, parents, staff, and tracking of test scores, grades, and attendance records (see Recommendations section).
- Responses from interviewees suggested that many of the programs were evaluated externally, sometimes by an evaluation organization experienced in program evaluation. Interviewees consistently indicated that most of the evaluations were of the entire program.
- External evaluation methodologies typically included pre-post testing or classroom evaluations, comparison groups, surveys, focus groups, observational assessments, or a combination of methods.

- In general, interviewees from the majority of the programs reported positive results from external evaluations, although specific results were often not substantiated with reports (see Recommendations section).
- For the reading and math programs that were closely affiliated with school districts, approximately one third of the programs mentioned having an external evaluator.

Examples

- In general, interviewees most frequently mentioned using the results of internal evaluation to serve as a baseline for instruction, monitor student progress, and document program impact. For example, the principal at one of the science afterschool programs reported that student achievement data from an internal evaluation were used to revise science curricula at the afterschool program in order to align instruction with the standards and improve student performance.
- A few formal external evaluations and systematic tracking of student progress showed improvements in

attendance, classroom grades, and achievement scores.

- About half of the afterschool staff reported that the students in their afterschool programs had improved their day school attendance, were paying more attention in class, and had fewer discipline problems (see Figure 4).
- Fifty eight percent of teachers agreed that the afterschool program students increased their frequency of class participation; most teachers (61%) agreed that their students in the afterschool program put more effort into school work.
- At the less quantifiable level, several programs reported improvements in attitudes toward schooling, student efficacy, confidence, and engagement.

“Attendance is unbelievable. I have kids that say, ‘I only came to school today because I knew I was going to be working with you.’ I feel, just from talking with my teachers, that behavior problems in some instances are resolved. Students have success in my class.” - Afterschool Arts Instructor

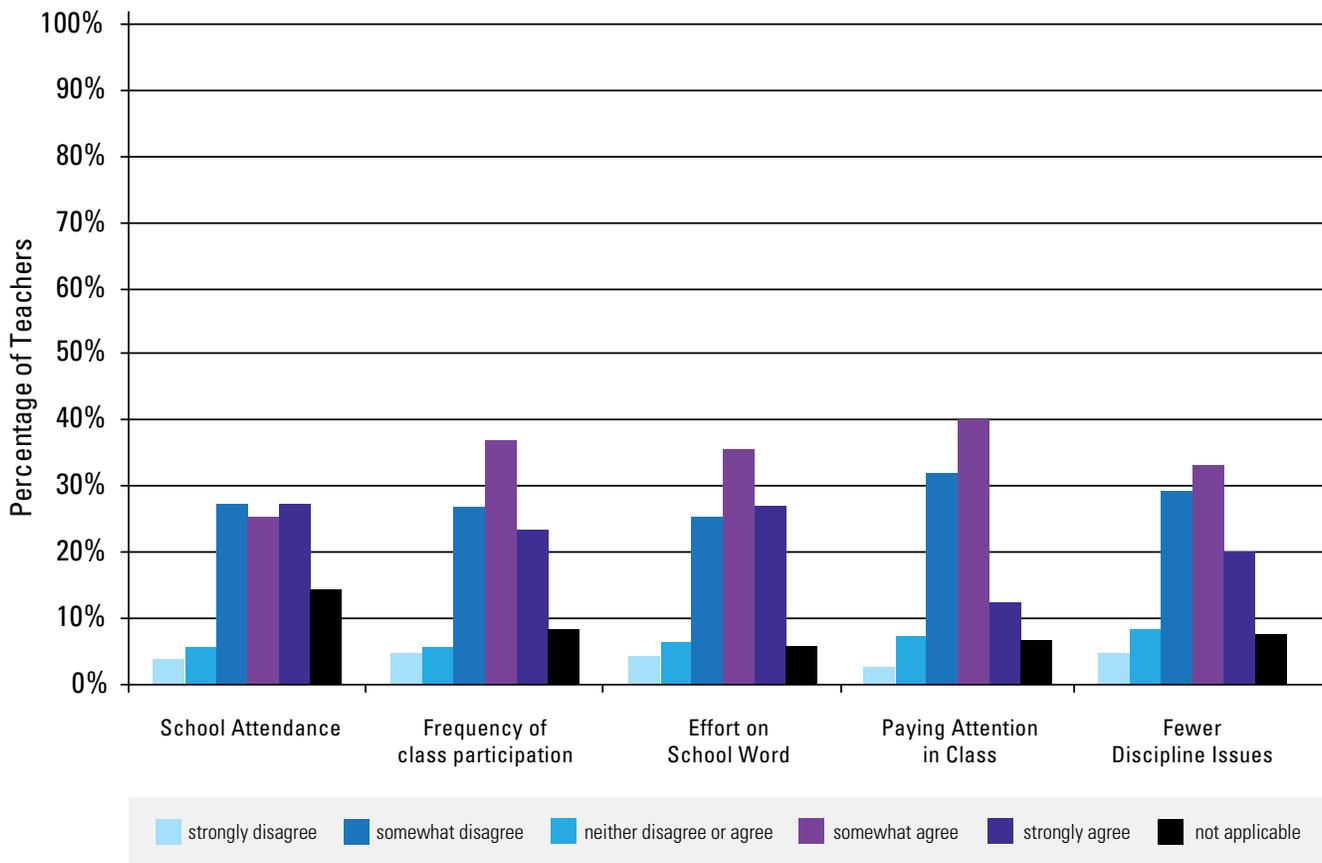


Figure 4. Teacher perception of changes in student behavior.

Recommendations

Our findings point to the contributions of goals, leadership, staff, programs and evaluation to high quality afterschool programs. Nevertheless, we noticed consistent areas of weaknesses in even the best afterschool programs. We offer the following research-based recommendations ✓ that we believe will help improve any afterschool program:

Staff Stability

Our study's results indicated that high functioning programs tend to have low staff turnover rates. Over 60% of the staff had between 1–7 years of experience at the current site and over 30% of the staff had over 4 years of experiences at the current site. Staff stability is important for relationship building and a basis for students to build trust, positive attitudes, and efficacy toward learning.

✓ **Recommendation.** Funders and afterschool administrators should consider incentives for building staff retention, ranging from educational opportunities (e.g., tuition grants) to “outstanding afterschool teams or teachers” nominated and selected by parents, teachers, and students. A pay scale incentive for years of service and a possible career ladder may also improve staff retention.

Collaboration with the Day School

In our studies, all of the programs maintained positive relationships with the day school. However, despite the importance of this relationship, too few programs had strategic systems established that supported and strengthened this connection.

✓ **Recommendation.** Formal agreements and written plans (ideally in early stages) should address day school collaboration. Time for day school teachers and afterschool staff to meet and plan lessons together plus a communications system, (e.g., homework log between day school teachers and afterschool staff), should be included in both school and afterschool plans. Funding agencies should budget additional resources for afterschool programs that will facilitate linkages, such as shared professional development, staff retreats, or workshops that jointly support students.

Space and Technology

Many programs relied on access to common space, such as an auditorium or a classroom shared with day school teachers, which often caused logistical problems and sometimes prevented planned activities from taking place. Furthermore, some programs expressed difficulty with not having consistent access to classrooms. A site coordinator illuminated the problem, “I would say physical space would be definitely a big thing with our program....That is probably one of the hardest things to work with just because every 6 weeks we are readjusting the classroom to new classroom seating charts, new areas in which the students can and cannot go.”

✓ **Recommendation.** Afterschool space issues should be addressed early in the planning process and reviewed each year for adequacy. Technology too, especially with shared equipment, should also be addressed, recognizing the growing role that technology plays in both learning and recreational activities.

“
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Professional Development

We found that professional development was not regularly offered at all program sites, and when offered, participation rates were often low. Moreover, project directors and site coordinators appeared to attend conferences and workshops more frequently than program staff.

✔ **Recommendation.** Because professional development has a strong correlation with staff efficacy, instructional quality, and student outcomes (Ingvarson, Meiers, & Beavis, 2005), federal and state policies guiding the development and operations of afterschool programs should *provide additional guidelines for sufficient quality professional development for all afterschool staff*, especially at the instructor level.

✔ **Recommendation. Afterschool programs should include professional development in their written plans.** Those plans should address funding issues, for substitutes, for example. If there is a “training-of-the-trainer” approach at the sites, written guidelines should include evaluation to ensure professional development fidelity. When planning the yearly calendar, professional development for all staff should be included. Topics should address program evaluation, assessment and data use, plus needs of English learners and students with disabilities.

Content and Curriculum

Our study findings showed that although most program staff were aware of the standards within their specific content areas, they were less knowledgeable about the links between the standards and successful instructional practices. Professional development can help address this need, which is increasingly important with most state’s recent adoptions of the common core standards.

✔ **Recommendation.** Professional development should help all **program staff expand their knowledge of content standards and instructional methods** for aligning those standards to instruction. Program goals should include content and curriculum enhancement for staff as a key purpose, plus implementation and evaluation methods.

Parent Involvement

Although the research literature continuously stresses the importance of parent involvement in influencing children’s academic outcomes, our study repeatedly found that parents, though very satisfied with the programs, were generally not involved in attending events or volunteering in afterschool programs.

✔ **Recommendation.** Despite the time constraints families face, afterschool leaders should continue to include **parent involvement as a central program goal**, offering specific late afternoon or early evening times for parent involved events, as well as using both social networks and websites to support positive communication between parents and staff. Parents should be included in an active program committee or evaluation team when possible, thereby enhancing parent involvement and contributions to the afterschool program. Open houses and parent-teacher conferences can facilitate parent participation. Home visits and family assistance can further solidify the relationships between the afterschool and its families.

Evaluation

The contributions of effective internal and external evaluations must not be overlooked. Equally important is the use of the findings for specific program improvements.

✔ **Recommendation. Federal, state, and local policies should address and provide funding for systematic evaluation of all programs.** Evaluation should ideally include internal, formative evaluation as well as annual or biennial external, summative evaluations. Multiple perspectives should be sought when gathering evaluation data including parent, student, and community input. Evaluation results should span accountability needs as well as guide continuous program improvement. To be effective, all evaluations should be in written format.

✔ **Recommendation. For internal evaluation, program directors and site coordinators need to clearly define the purposes of evaluations in their goals.** Self-evaluation tools can be used to understand staff professional development needs, staff utilization of research-based activities, and staff knowledge of standards-based curriculum. Using these evaluation results, program directors can implement changes, allocate resources, and design professional development opportunities to further staff expertise in needed areas.

✔ **Recommendation. External evaluation should focus on student outcomes**, ideally using student data from the regular day school level that includes both performance and attendance information. It is crucial that external evaluation results are provided in a written format, so that comparisons may be made over periods of time. In order for evaluation data, either internal or external, to be used effectively and lead to program improvement, results must be well communicated to all stakeholders and a system created for monitoring evaluation usage.

Conclusion

Even at a time of austere federal, state, and local funding – we highly encourage policy makers, afterschool managers, and school districts to fully budget afterschool programs that will provide high quality leaders and staff. Professional development and external evaluation should also be included in both budgets and program planning. As one program director said:

“I think it’s very important that everybody understand the power that can come from an afterschool program in affecting change, not only cultural change on campus but also individually in particular lives. The sense of accomplishment that comes from being in one of our programs where they have more freedom to explore and have more hands-on experiences is profound.”

Resources

Links to Various CRESST Afterschool Evaluations

- Examining Practices of Staff Recruitment and Retention in Four High-Functioning Afterschool Programs: Extended Study from the National Afterschool Partnership Report
- Examining the Relationship between LA’s BEST Program Attendance and Academic Achievement of LA’s BEST Students
- Identification of Key Indicators of Quality in Afterschool Programs
- A Circle of Learning: Children and Adults Growing Together in LA’s BEST
- What Works? Common Practices in High Functioning Afterschool Programs Across the Nation in Math, Reading, Science, Arts, Technology, and Homework--A Study by the National Partnership
- The Afterschool Hours: Examining the Relationship between Afterschool Staff-Based Social Capital and Student Engagement in LA’s BEST
- The Afterschool Experience in *Salsa, Sabor y Salud*
- Exploring the Relationships between LA’s BEST Program Attendance and Cognitive Gains of LA’s BEST Students
- Preparing Students for the 21st Century: Exploring the Effect of Afterschool Participation on Students’ Collaboration Skills, Oral Communication Skills, and Self-Efficacy
- Exploring the Intellectual, Social and Organizational Capitals at LA’s BEST

Link to the Afterschool Toolkit

- SEDL - National Center for Quality Afterschool / Afterschool Training Toolkit

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BULLY-FREE: IT STARTS WITH ME

The NEA Campaign Against Bullying

Bullied students that go it alone because they don't know who to turn to are far more likely to fall behind in their studies, get sick and/or depressed, miss school, and drop out. And in the most tragic cases, the bullied student commits suicide, or "bullycide," as it has come to be known. But research tells us that one caring adult can make all the difference in a bullied student's life.

It is crucial that bullied students know which adults in their school or community they can go to in their time of distress—adults who will really listen to them and then act on their behalf.

The Bully-Free: It Starts With Me Campaign aims to identify caring adults in our schools and communities who are willing to stand up as someone pledged to help bullied students. These caring adults will agree to listen carefully to the bullied student who comes to them. They will also agree to take action to stop the bullying. NEA, in turn, promises to provide those caring adults with the resources they need to provide solace and support for the bullied student, ask the right questions, and take the appropriate actions needed to stop the bullying.

The purpose of this initiative is to connect the bullied student with a caring adult—one on one. But it is our profoundest hope that the caring adults who have volunteered for **Bully-Free: It Starts With Me** will also become part of a larger effort to bully-proof our schools. We encourage all caring adults to speak up for the bullied students and advocate for measures that will stop bullying in our school communities.

There is a wealth of research-based information available about bullying on NEA's Bully Free website. And as one of the world's foremost anti-bullying experts, psychology professor Dan Olweus, notes: "It now all boils down to a matter of will and involvement on the part of adults in deciding how much bullying will take place in our schools."

In other words, when it comes to student bullying the adults can stop it, fix it, and prevent it from happening again—and NEA wholeheartedly embraces this challenge. It starts with one caring adult and results in all of us creating safe learning environments and supportive communities for our students.

Please join the campaign and sign the pledge at:

www.nea.org/bullyfree



Priority Schools Campaign

**COMMUNICATION
ABOUT PSC
INTENSIVE
SUPPORT SITES**

Involvement or Engagement?

Larry Ferlazzo

We need to relate to families not as clients, but as partners in school and community improvement.

"Hello, is this John's mother? This is his English teacher, Mr. Ferlazzo. John has had a rough day."

"I like teaching in this school because the parents don't bother us much."

"We need parent volunteers to bake cookies for the fund-raiser."

"I wish parents here cared enough to get their kids to do their homework."

These quotes (all of which I've heard—except the first one, which I've said) illustrate how educators often feel about parents: We should contact them when there is a problem, it's good when they don't "bother" us, we need them to raise money, and we can blame them for all kinds of things we're not happy about. Unfortunately, research and experience show that these attitudes do not lead to the kind of school-family connections that raise student achievement.

However, the right kinds of school-family connections—those built on relationships, listening, welcoming, and shared decision making—*can* produce multiple benefits for students, including higher grade point averages and test scores, better attendance, enrollment in more challenging courses, better social skills, and improved behavior at home and at school (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2002). Such school-family connections address important nonschool factors—such as health, safety, and affordable housing—that account for about two-thirds of the variance in student achievement (Rothstein, 2010). These connections can also improve parents' feelings of efficacy and increase community support for schools.

What's the Difference?

To create the kinds of school-family partnerships that raise student achievement, improve local communities, and increase public support, we need to understand the difference between family *involvement* and family *engagement*. One of the dictionary definitions of *involve* is "to enfold or envelope," whereas one of the meanings of *engage* is "to come together and interlock." Thus, involvement implies *doing to*; in contrast, engagement implies *doing with*.

A school striving for family involvement often leads with its mouth—identifying projects, needs, and goals and then telling parents how they can contribute. A school striving for parent engagement, on the other hand, tends to lead with its ears—listening to what parents think, dream, and worry about. The goal of family engagement is not to serve clients but to gain partners.

It's not that family involvement is bad. Almost all the research says that any kind of increased parent interest and support of students can help. But almost all the research also says that family engagement can produce even better results—for students, for families, for schools, and for their communities (Ferlazzo & Hammond, 2009).

Empowering Families and Communities

Effective family engagement requires the school to develop a relationship-building process focused on listening. One way to begin this process is for teachers and other staff members to make prearranged visits to students' homes.

Unfortunately, in many urban neighborhoods, the only public entities that usually send representatives to visit are the police and child protective services. Schools can fill this void and send a different, more positive message.

At Luther Burbank High School, an urban school serving 2,000 students in Sacramento, California, scores of teachers, counselors, and classified staff make hundreds of home visits each summer. We visit the homes of all incoming freshmen, as well as all older students who have not yet passed the California High School Exit Exam. These visits are not just to tell students and their parents what to expect when they enter high school or to harangue them about the need to work harder to graduate. Our primary goal is to listen to the wisdom that parents have gained in more than 14 years of raising their children. We want to learn about their hopes and dreams for their children and discuss how the school can work with them to make those dreams a reality.

The school coordinates its home visits with the nationally recognized Parent Teacher Home Visit Project (www.pthvp.org), which works with school districts throughout the United States to set up similar programs. Independent evaluations of this project have shown that such visits result in numerous academic benefits for students (Cowan, Bobby, St. Roseman, & Echandia, 2002; Tuss, 2007).

The listening process can take many forms. The home visitors sometimes respond to the concerns that parents express by encouraging them to connect with one another and move toward broader action. For example, during one of our home visits with a Hmong immigrant family a few years ago, the father told us how impressed he was with the online literacy program the school was using to help his son. He added that he wished he could afford to have a computer and Internet connection at home so that he and the rest of the family could also use the program to learn English.

The teacher visitor suggested that if the father knew other parents who had a similar interest in getting access to the literacy program, he might want to bring them together in a meeting with school staff members to explore ways to address this need. The father did so, and out of that process, the parents and the school developed a family literacy project that provided computers and home Internet access to immigrant families, who used the school's website to increase their English skills.

Initially, we used discarded computers and obtained a private foundation grant to pay for Internet access. Later, the school district allocated federal grants so refugee students could purchase new computers and continue the program. Students whose families participated in the project had a fourfold increase in their English assessment scores, and the International Reading Association gave the project its 2007 Presidential Award for Reading and Technology.

Our school's successful Parent University began in much the same way. Some parents expressed an interest in learning more about how the schools operate. Parents then came together with school staff and representatives from a local university to develop a curriculum that parents wanted—not a predesigned agenda constructed by others. These monthly classes, which often attract as many as 100 parents, offer simultaneous translation in Hmong and English and include sessions on naturalization and citizenship, high school graduation requirements, and college readiness and financing.

Successful engagement efforts like these are similar to the work of traditional community organizers. People first tell their stories and then share them with others. The group develops a different vision of what might be possible and then takes collective action. It's the difference between *irritation*—challenging others to act on something *you're* interested in—and *agitation*—challenging others to act on something *they're* concerned about.

Using the community organizer model, schools have worked with local religious congregations, businesses, neighborhood groups, and labor unions to tackle community problems. For example, schools have built partnerships to help stop toxic incinerators from being built nearby, assisted in getting approvals for local affordable housing, and challenged officials to increase public safety in entire neighborhoods, not just on the school grounds. The Annenberg Institute for School Reform has extensively documented a multiyear study showing the positive effects community organizing can have on students, schools, families, and neighborhoods (Mediratta et al., 2008).

Schools have a long history of developing and deepening relationships among different entities in the community. In fact, the term *social capital*, which describes the societal and economic value of building connections among people, was developed by a school superintendent nearly 100 years ago. L. J. Hanifan (1916), a state supervisor of public schools in West Virginia, coined the phrase while promoting a parent engagement strategy that yielded numerous benefits. Hanifan concluded,

I am firmly convinced that the supervisor and teachers whose achievements I have described have struck bedrock in community building. It is not what they did for the people that counts most in what was achieved; it is what they led the people to do for themselves that is really important. Tell the people what they ought to do, and they will say in effect, "Mind your own business." But help them to discover for themselves what ought to be done, and they will not be satisfied until it is done.... The more the people do for themselves the larger will community social capital become, and the greater will be the dividends upon the social investment. (p. 138)

The Temptation to Settle for Involvement

Given the pressures to immediately increase test scores, it is tempting for schools to emphasize family involvement rather than family engagement. After all, most family involvement programs can have a positive effect on student achievement, and they are generally easier to implement than engagement models. Unfortunately, some of the most well-publicized family involvement efforts right now—tempting as they might be—are likely to have negative consequences.

For example, some school districts in Texas and Delaware are planning to pay parents to participate in more school events, despite the fact that New York City ended a similar program because it did not achieve the desired results (Bosman, 2010). In a similar initiative, Detroit schools are working with businesses to offer store discounts to parents who visit school parent centers. As Daniel Pink (2009) has shown in his book *Drive*, financial incentives may work in the short term to motivate people to do mechanical tasks (such as showing up for a meeting), but they will do little to stimulate more cognitively challenging work (such as making it a priority to ask children about their school day or assist them with their homework). In fact, paying parents for participation can actually reduce motivation for doing these more challenging tasks. And when the incentives are gone, everyone is worse off than before.

In Newark, New Jersey, schools are using \$1 million of their \$100 million donation from Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg to hire workers, including former census workers, to canvas door-to-door asking people what they think about local schools. Compared with the work required for schools to develop reciprocal, long-lasting relationships, this information-gathering effort is certainly easier—and somebody else is paid to do it. But there's a reason why community organizers call this strategy *slash and burn*—it can be destructive to the overall community ecosystem because it gives people a sense of doing something by just answering a survey with no serious commitment. As a result, it produces no sustainable long-term benefits.

Expanded Possibilities

Consider the methods your school uses to invite parents to participate. Invitations for parent involvement often come through one-way forms of communication— notes home, automated phone calls, or requests for assistance for a particular project. In fact, the dictionary's first definition for *communication* is "an act or instance of transmitting." Invitations for parent engagement, on the other hand, tend to come as a result of *conversation*, a word whose Latin root means "to keep company with; to live with."

Family involvement and engagement are not mutually exclusive; most schools pursue both. But when you think about your school's efforts, you'll probably see a clear direction. Does your school tend toward *doing to* or *doing with* families? Does the staff do more talking or more listening? Is the emphasis on one-way communication or on two-way

conversation? Is your school's vision of its community confined to the school grounds, or does this vision encompass the entire neighborhood?

Some people see power as a finite pie: If you get more, that means I have less. The vision of family engagement described here, however, views power in a different way. As families move from being school clients or volunteers to being leaders in education improvement efforts, they gain more power. As a result, the whole pie gets bigger, and more possibilities are created.

Schools can help create those expanded possibilities.

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Is Anyone Listening to Families' Dreams?

Eileen Gale Kugler

Schools can build partnerships with "invisible" families through targeted programs that value their dreams and experiences.

The stately grandmother rose from her chair. She began speaking in Xhosa, her mother tongue, to the other families who had gathered that afternoon in a classroom in rural South Africa.

The interpreter did not interrupt Mrs. Nyati's impassioned speech. At the front of the room, I could only stand respectfully as she addressed her comments to me. We had gathered for a family engagement program I had organized during my second volunteer stint at this elementary school in the Eastern Cape. The families would spend several afternoons making a school quilt, with each family creating a square illustrating their hopes and dreams for their child. While the families sewed, they learned about school expectations and resources in the school and community.¹ At this second session, the families were sharing what they learned from discussions with their children about the children's dreams.

When Mrs. Nyati finished, I wasn't sure what the translation would reveal. Was she challenging my presence as an outsider? Did she think the project was a waste of time and not relevant to the families' lives? But as her words were translated, their central message was powerful:

We do have hopes and dreams for our children, but no one ever asked us before.
Thank you.

Mrs. Nyati's words struck me to my core. I was surrounded by impoverished, illiterate families. These are the families who often remain invisible in school, not just in South Africa, but around the world.

The teachers in this school, although dedicated to educating the students, expected little from the families, again not unlike schools in other countries. Even the principal, a great leader who had grown up in this isolated black township created under apartheid, could not see a significant role for families in the school.

After all, the families are largely uneducated. There are many grandparents raising children, and the parents who *are* around are too busy working in the nearby orange groves. I was warned that few families would come to the meetings, and those who came would be late. Yet at the scheduled time, the room was filled with 50 family members, who not only came to meeting after meeting, but also brought relatives and friends.

What We Can Learn from Every Parent

In reality, many families without formal education have lessons to teach and much to share. In South Africa, many parents of today's black students left school to fight apartheid or had no funds to continue their education. Even those who did continue had only a substandard education available to them.

Over the years, I have learned a great deal from these families who struggled against oppression and now struggle to move forward under democracy. Whether or not they have a formal education, their lives teach vital lessons, such as perseverance, hard work, and commitment.

On my third volunteer trip last August, I visited Mrs. Nyati's home. "You don't really want to see my home," she said initially. But when I assured her I truly did, her face lit up. She showed me her neat, small quarters of unfinished cinderblock walls, filled with photos of her children and grandchildren. She pointed to her partially built new home just a few feet away. It is one of the homes started by the South African government to replace the old mud or metal shacks in the townships. But the government funding has run out, and the house sits

unfinished like so many others. She said, "I must finish it myself. I will get cement and put it up. And then I will clean it because it must be clean. And then I will paint it myself." I have no doubt she will.

Mrs. Pepeta, another South African grandmother, apologized for missing a meeting, explaining that she was taking a class. "What are you studying?" I asked. "English," she replied with a twinkle in her eye. I soon learned that she had excellent English skills already, and I often asked her to serve as interpreter. I learned from others that she had been a Gold Scholar in English in her early schooling, but the opportunity to be a stellar student evaporated under apartheid. So now, in her late 70s, she is continuing the education previously denied her.

How Parents Are Disempowered by Schools

These experiences in Africa helped me reflect on the immigrants in the United States who may appear to be uninterested in school because they don't show up for a back-to-school night or a teacher conference. Having worked with immigrants who have come to the United States from all over the world, I've learned how much more complex the reality is.

Many parents came to the United States specifically for its education system, and they care deeply about their children's future. But they bring with them the rules and expectations of their home countries. They tend to keep their distance from their children's school as a sign of respect. They trust their children's education to the teachers and would never question trained educators. Further, many do not know how to traverse the complicated U.S. system—how to access enrichment or remedial services for their child or even what options are available.

Such families rarely find a place in school. In South Africa and the United States, as well as other countries around the world, schools underestimate them because of stereotypical expectations of what constitutes "a good parent." But many individuals, like Mrs. Nyati and Mrs. Pepeta, defy expectations.

Revealing Families' Hidden Strengths

There's far more to many parents than what appears on the surface. I worked with an extraordinary high school student whose family moved to the United States from Sudan when she was 8 years old. Her father had been a lawyer and judge, owning three houses. But he saw the limited opportunities for his three daughters, and when given the chance a decade ago to come to the United States through his brother, a U.S. citizen, he moved the entire family. With limited English skills, his job opportunities were few. His brother, who was helping the family acclimate, died of cancer.

Today, the father delivers pizza, and the family lives in a small apartment. But his daughter is fulfilling his dream as she begins college. As she spoke of her father, her eyes welled with tears, "He may only be a delivery man, but I know he is so much more. I am so grateful to my dad for bringing our family here."

How do schools reach out to families like these? Perhaps the school translates a flyer for a family meeting into another language. Or the school hosts an International Dinner. But too often, there is little personal outreach that treats the families as individuals, connecting them to school in a meaningful way.

A student who moved to the United States from Pakistan when she was 12 described how frustrating it was for her parents and herself to negotiate school customs, particularly in high school: "The school did not help my parents understand how American schools operate." When the student became editor in chief of the school newspaper in 12th grade, her mother could not understand why she had to stay so late after school and literally dragged her daughter out by the ear one afternoon. At the student's request, the newspaper advisor met with her mother and helped the student explain some of the requirements of being an editor. Armed with this knowledge, the mother supported her daughter's decision and soon began bringing the entire newspaper staff

homemade food for their long editing evenings.

"The stereotype is that these families are a drain on our resources, but they have great strengths, and we need to tap into them," said Grace Valenzuela, program director of the Portland, Maine, Public Schools' Multilingual and Multicultural Center:

Immigrant and refugee parents have been able to survive extraordinary experiences in bringing their families here. Yet, once they are here, we disempower them. We need to give them the power to be in charge.

Opening the Door for Families

In South Africa, I felt humbled by working with families in the school where my husband, my adult daughter, and I have volunteered since 2008. Once given the opportunity to take part in a welcoming project that valued them, the families became more connected to the school. And they became empowered to advocate for their children at school, just as many of them had fought so hard against apartheid years earlier.

Back home, I have worked with school faculties and communities on strengthening school culture, creating an environment where students and families of all backgrounds are valued. Through family projects such as school quilts, community biographies, or group murals, families come together in a welcoming, nurturing environment. The families gain confidence in their role at school, and they learn the tools to be supporters and advocates for their children. I've seen true parent leaders emerge—parents who had little attachment to the school before the projects. As in South Africa, families share their dreams and appreciate the opportunity to gain the knowledge needed to help their children reach those dreams.

Not a Luxury

For many hard-working teachers and administrators, outreach to these families seems like an add-on. But family engagement is powerfully linked to student success. Research shows that, across races and income levels, students whose families are engaged tend to do better on tests, attend school more regularly, adapt to school better, and go on to postsecondary education.²

The research reflects what is lost to schools when some families remain disconnected. Those families can't share valuable insights about their children. They can't mentor and guide their children through their educational travels. They can't help strengthen the school for the benefit of all the students. Schools miss out on their potential assistance in reaching other families from their community or cultural group.

As I work with school faculties, I quickly acknowledge that intensive family outreach requires time and commitment. But so does classroom instruction. We would not expect students to learn effectively using outdated instructional strategies. We can't expect outdated parent engagement practices to do the job, either.

Schools need new parent engagement strategies that reflect the realities of today's diverse families. Schools that successfully build partnerships with families use practices that break the long-standing mold, such as the following:

Reach out to families with novel programs that are welcoming and nonthreatening. Back-to-school nights and parent organization meetings work for some families, but others need a less daunting first step. To begin drawing families in, teachers can invite them to a classroom celebration of students' writing where the children serve as guides and translators. An early-morning breakfast event gives families an opportunity to join their children at school and then walk them into the classroom and meet the teacher before going to work. Targeted, small-group meetings provide a chance to meet with other families from their culture or neighborhood, building the confidence to then take part in larger family events.

Take outreach to the community. Some families find it intimidating just to walk through the school doors. To connect with families in a more comfortable setting, schools can hold meetings in community rooms, libraries, or religious institutions in the neighborhood. A local factory's lunchroom is a great place to connect with parents who can't leave work. Home visits are the ultimate way to show a family respect. As one teacher said, "This is not just about transportation to school or convenience; this says that we respect you so much, we are willing to come to you." Some schools offer the option of a parent-teacher conference in the family's home.

Make contact personal, sharing good news as well as concerns. Most schools communicate largely through flyers and form letters; when they do make personal contact, it's usually just to deliver bad news. No wonder some families never want to pick up the phone if the call is from school. To build trust, teachers should reach out with a welcoming initial contact and positive news throughout the year. Whether through a phone call, a personal note, or a home visit, families need to hear what is going well with their child. This includes secondary schools, where contact with a parent can make the difference between an adolescent who flounders or one who has the essential connection to school.

Send out invitations to school events in multiple ways, the more personal the better. For parents with more social capital—those who know how school works and feel comfortable being there—a simple flyer home may be enough. But for many other families, a personal note makes a big difference. Parents tell me that the amount of information sent home by schools can be staggering, especially if they have children in more than one school. But the one envelope they always open is the one hand-addressed by the teacher. Even if the teacher can't write in the family's home language, the parent can get a relative or friend to translate.

Look for other ways to reach targeted groups. Most cultural groups read newspapers geared to their community, and reporters for those papers are eager to write about local school events. The reporters often speak English even if the newspaper is printed in another language. A community or religious leader who is known and respected by school families can also be a great ally in efforts to connect with diverse families.

Support families so they can support their students. Culturally sensitive training on parenting issues (such as workshops on child behavior or disciplining adolescents) as well as education issues (such as family literacy or math nights where parents and children learn together) can help parents play a positive role. Leadership development training is also important in creating a new generation of parent leaders who represent the diversity of the community.³

Hold targeted small-group meetings. As schools look for innovative ways to reach families, success can't be judged by the number of families who initially respond. Sometimes a smaller gathering is just what families need to feel comfortable. Then the snowballing can begin, as families invite their neighbors and friends. Future outreach efforts can be even more effective when the school collaborates with the new families who do become involved, learning firsthand what worked and what didn't.

Ask current family leaders to serve as mentors for newly involved families. To build a stronger school community, schools can pair newly engaged parents with long-active parents. Many families who are already active are eager to connect with new families; they just don't know how to get beyond their small circle of friends and acquaintances. As relationships develop, provide training to ensure that the perspectives and experiences of all families are respected, not just those who represent the "way we've always done it."

The Power of Families' Dreams

As schools grapple with ways to reduce the achievement gap, many of our students' families have dreams no one is asking about. Many are eager to help their children achieve those dreams, but don't know how. We need family outreach that respects their personal experiences, their culture, and their knowledge. Then we can build true partnerships with families that foster student success.

Videos

To hear the author speak about her work in South Africa and to view the story quilt project in the Eastern Cape elementary school described in this article, go to www.embracediverseschools.com/eileenkugler/south-africa/. To watch a video on the "Tellin' Stories" project, go to the Teaching for Change website at www.teachingforchange.org/parentorg/overview.

Endnotes

- ¹ The story quilt project is part of a parent engagement model called Tellin' Stories, developed by Teaching for Change (www.teachingforchange.org).
- ² Henderson, A. T., & Mapp, K. L. (2002). *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.
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Making the Most of School-Family Compacts

Anne T. Henderson, Judy Carson, Patti Avallone and Melissa Whipple

Three urban schools made their Title I school-family compacts a powerful tool for student achievement.

Wouldn't it be great if the administrators and teachers at a school—particularly a school with many at-risk students—could sit down with parents and exchange ideas about what part each might play in supporting students' learning? Imagine if parents could hear directly from teachers what teachers believe their kids most need to learn, how teachers plan to structure that learning, and precisely what parents can do at home to reinforce it. What if teachers could hear each caregiver's view on what most helps his or her particular child? And what if this meaningful interaction could happen through an existing protocol, one that most schools now perceive as a burdensome requirement?

As staff members in Connecticut's Department of Education and as consultants on school-family collaboration, we've worked with several elementary schools that initiated such meaningful conversations by transforming school-family compacts, which all Title I Schools are required to create, from boilerplate language into vehicles for collaboration. Creating the compact became a catalyst for authentic school-parent cooperation.

A Missed Opportunity—Seized in Connecticut

No Child Left Behind stipulates that each school in the Title I program must develop an agreement, or "compact," that outlines how parents, school staff, and students will share responsibility for improving academic achievement. Compacts describe how the school and parents can work together to help students achieve the state's standards.

For most schools, compacts are a missed opportunity. As Judy Carson—who supports family engagement in Connecticut schools—found in reviewing compacts submitted by the state's schools, such documents rarely described activities that directly affect learning. Most compacts parroted general language in the law about parents' responsibility to support children's learning, for example, by monitoring their school attendance or their TV watching. And most were gathering dust on the shelf. This is true across the United States; a report from the U.S. Department of Education concluded that the parent involvement requirements, including compacts, are one of the weakest areas of Title I compliance (Stevenson & Laster, 2008).

Research shows that all students benefit from family involvement in education, and low-income and minority students benefit the most (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Most parents want timely information about school goals and learning strategies so they'll know what to do at home to support their children's achievement. This is the kind of information compacts were intended to provide—but a document asking parents to pledge that they'll get their kids to bed on time doesn't provide it. So Carson and several colleagues in Connecticut's Department of Education decided that if school-family compacts have to be created, schools should use the process to spark authentic conversations and listen to parents' ideas about learning.

In 2008, the department initiated a program to improve school-parent compacts, bringing several consultants onto their team.¹ This team designed a training curriculum, "A New Vision of Title I School-Parent Compacts," that they offered as free professional development for Connecticut's urban school districts.

Connecticut launched the effort with a Compact Conference that summer. Participants from five urban districts across the state learned how to transform compacts into plans for partnership among teachers at common grade levels and among parents of learners in those grades. Revised compacts would list specific actions that parents, students, and teachers could take to improve performance; they would be linked to current school improvement plans and grounded in achievement data. Participants learned about promising practices to promote parent-teacher collaboration, explored practical home learning ideas, and made plans to seek parents' input. The state offered schools committed to this process follow-up support in the form of professional development and advice from team consultants. Here's how three urban elementary schools put this process into action, focusing on students' reading achievement.

Reaching Out to Wary Parents

Macdonough Elementary School in Middletown, Connecticut, serves 80 percent low-income students (the highest percentage in the Middletown School District). In 2008, Macdonough had high staff turnover and a reputation for being a "not-so-good" school in a run-down, working-class neighborhood. Although the school had recently improved under the leadership of principal Jon Romeo, word had not gone out beyond the immediate neighborhood. A redistricting plan to improve racial balance was poised to move one-fourth of the district's elementary students to different schools, including moving many new kids to Macdonough. Parents packed school board meetings to express concerns.

Romeo realized that Macdonough had to create positive relationships with new families fast and assure them that it would provide high-quality academics. When Romeo first heard about the program to improve Title I compacts, "To be honest, I groaned," he admitted. The school's compact hadn't been revised in a while and was sitting on the shelf. But the school needed to work more closely with families to close the achievement gap between its middleclass and low-income students. Romeo realized that co-creating a compact was a way to start; so he assembled a team of teachers, curriculum specialists, and parents to take this on.

<p>Sample School-Family Compact</p> <p>1st Grade Teachers Will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conduct daily small-group reading instruction. ▪ Read aloud each day to students. ▪ Provide take-home reading materials for students. ▪ Provide homework that supports topics learned at school. ▪ Take weekly trips to the school library. ▪ Keep families informed of children's reading progress and ways to support learning at home. 	<p>1st Grade Families Will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make reading a daily part of family time. ▪ Ask children questions about books they're reading. ▪ Visit the local library on a regular basis. ▪ Complete homework assignments with students. ▪ Attend family literacy events at Macdonough School. ▪ Stay in touch with teachers about reading progress.
<p><i>Source:</i> Macdonough Elementary School, Middletown, Connecticut</p>	

Drawing on what they learned at the 2008 Compact Conference and on help from consultant Patti Avallone, Macdonough's teachers invited families to family-friendly evening learning events, such as an author's tea, organized by grade level. Romeo confessed, "We were afraid if we mentioned compacts they'd stay away. We enticed them with a fun event featuring their children."

After each activity, teachers pulled parents into the library and asked them to share ideas on improving students' reading. Romeo talked to the group about grade-level goals, and teachers showed parents what reading instruction looked like in their child's grade. Families met in small groups, with a Macdonough staff member guiding each group's conversation. To encourage parents to open up, teachers asked, "What advice would you offer next year's parents to support children's reading?" Ideas poured out: Visit the library once a month, spend family time reading, write letters to other family members. "Teachers were impressed with parents' ideas and their obvious commitment to learning, and parents' eyes were opened to the school's intense focus on reading," Romeo recalled.

These gatherings were not a one-shot deal. After these initial conversations, teachers took parents' ideas and drafted compacts. There was a lot of back and forth at grade-level meetings between parents and teachers. For example, teachers told parents that they wanted to send home reading materials with students each night to help students get

into the habit of reading and that they'd like parents to monitor and guide their children's nightly reading. Parents were willing, but they asked the teachers to "tell us exactly what you want us to work on and how we can help."

Teachers were surprised; they'd never thought of telling parents what strategies they used in class. Teachers showed parents, for instance, about making text-to-self connections with books. Once parents learned that relating what their kids were reading to something in their lives—like comparing a character's trip to a recent family trip—is motivating and helps comprehension, they said, "Oh, we can do that." Through such exchanges, many people had their fingerprints on the finished compacts (see "Sample School-Family Compact," p. 50).

As redistricting went into effect, Macdonough used the momentum to promote relationships. Teachers took walks in the neighborhood, during which they gave books to families and discussed improvements to the school. A back-to-school picnic enabled teachers and parents to socialize informally. At the school's annual open house, teachers shared concrete information about what students would be learning and doing in class. School staff met with new families to invite them to help the school become the best it could be, using the compacts to explain how families might help improve student success in reading.

News began to spread that the school was improving. In 2008, a state advocacy group named Macdonough one of the 10 most improved schools in Connecticut.

Bringing Reading Strategies Home

At M. D. Fox Elementary School in Hartford, literacy coaches Rosana Bannock and Elise Francis initiated the compact-creating process. The school serves 900 children; 70 percent are Latino, and many others are refugees from Bosnia, Thailand, and Laos.

Through flyers and personal phone calls, Bannock and Francis invited parents to a meeting in the school's library that featured a presentation on developing compacts and how important parents are to the process. After the presentation, parents broke into groups according to their children's grade level. Teachers shared with each group tips they could use to help their kids succeed in school, and then asked two questions: What do teachers need to do to help students? and What can the school do to help parents support their children?

Bannock and Francis circulated the parents' ideas to other Fox parents, who checked off the ideas most important to them. Teachers identified recurring themes that they used to construct the final compact for parents' approval. The exchange was a learning process, noted Francis. "We had assumptions about what parents know and can do [to help children learn], and they're much more willing to do things than we thought." Bannock explained how the discussions boosted school attendance:

Parents know their kids need to get to school on time, but single moms with four and five kids are struggling. As a result of the compact conversations, teachers have more sympathy for what families are going through, and grandparents are filling in to help kids get to school.

Teachers designed specific activities for different grade levels in response to parents' suggestions. For example, parents said they didn't understand what children learn in kindergarten—do they just play or do they learn to read? Teachers responded with a three-day kindergarten orientation for parents at which they gave parents learning materials and showed them how to support reading at home. An astounding 95 percent of families came.

Pushing For Pride in Student Work

Renata Lantos, principal at Bielefield Elementary School in Middletown, also had students' reading on her mind. Bielefield's attendance zone is the largest in the Middletown district, and more than one-half of its students are from low-income families. Although reading achievement is now improving steadily, at the time of compact creation, it was below average for the state.

After attending the Compact Conference, Lantos realized she and her staff had to revise their compact, which consisted of general compliance statements. Two teachers developed a presentation for families that explained the schools' reading goals. They linked practical strategies for improving reading skills to these goals and showed how these strategies could be outlined in the compact.

For example, Bielefield teachers now assign each student books that fit that student's reading level. Teachers have agreed to help students select "just-right books" and provide parents with reading materials connected to the books each week; parents agree to ensure that their children read regularly, encourage them to share and use new vocabulary, and use the materials the teacher sends home to have "book talks." Students agree to read these books regularly, keep a reading record, and build a list of new words they learn.

During follow-up conversations, a major issue came up: Students needed to take more pride in their work. They were handing in subpar work that showed a lack of motivation. "The whole building got involved," recalls Lantos. "Parents had great ideas, such as focusing on 'pride in work' in the newsletter and exhibiting student projects." At each grade level, students discussed what taking pride in your work means.

Teachers constructed a rubric that pinpointed three levels of student effort and time on task. Students described the basic level as "No effort. I worked way too quickly, and I didn't reread or revise my work. The paper is not my best and neatest." The top level is "My best effort. I thought and tried my hardest. I spent enough time to give my brain quality time. I carefully reread and revised my work." Teachers sent the rubric home, and parents signed off on reading it. Parents agreed to regularly review their children's work and discuss with them the meaning of pride. During parent-teacher conferences, teachers refer to the rubric.

Lantos says the result has been a huge improvement in student work: "Even 2nd graders get it, like the one who wrote: 'Now I know what quality work looks like.'" All Bielefield students have produced at least one "pride paper" that meets the top-level criteria on the rubric.

Keys to Success

We have discovered practices that help turn compacts into catalysts for action. The most important thing is to create a setting for parents and teachers to talk about how to help the kids—and to get to know one another. At Macdonough, Romeo asked staff members to facilitate meetings with families to ensure teacher buy-in. The process went from a conversation between a self-selected group of teachers and parents, to discussions among many teachers, to one with the entire parent teacher association. Parent leaders who emerged went to follow-up compact conferences, which strengthened their capacity to engage other families.

Continuing follow-up by the principal is important. Administrators should affirm practices that teachers are already doing—such as book drives and trips to the library—and explicitly link existing practices to the compact and the school improvement plan. This takes teachers' actions beyond "random acts of family engagement" and integrates them into a systematic plan for improving achievement (Weiss, Lopez, & Rosenberg, 2010).

Working with grade-level colleagues inspires teachers. We found that developing compacts for each grade level made a big difference. At M. D. Fox, the literacy coaches facilitated grade-level meetings and brainstormed specific activities for teachers in each grade.

There is a striking difference between the school-family compacts of participating schools before and after this improvement effort. New compacts are more focused on student learning and linked to school data. They are stimulating new, creative activities in schools. Connecticut's Department of Education will be launching the program statewide as a best practice for Title I parent involvement, leveraging the language of the law to create a powerful strategy for parent-teacher collaboration.

Tools for Engagement

The following books and websites provide resources for engaging families in students' learning.

- *Beyond the Bake Sale* by Anne T. Henderson, Karen L. Mapp, Vivian Johnson, and Don Davies (The New Press, 2007). See especially Chapter 5.
- Connecticut State Department of Education's web page on compact tools (www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2678&q=320734).
- Family Involvement Network of Educators (www.finenetwork.org).
- National Network of Partnership Schools (www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/ppp/index.htm). See especially the compilation of promising practices.
- San Diego Unified School District's website on family engagement (www.sandi.net/parentoutreach).

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Endnote

¹ Other important partners were the state Parent Involvement Resource Center and the Capitol Region Education Council.

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Priority Schools Campaign

**COMMUNITY
AND FAMILY
ENGAGEMENT**

Priority Schools Campaign

Family-School-Community Partnerships 2.0 Collaborative Strategies to Advance Student Learning



This publication was produced by a team of NEA staff and consultants.
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Foreword



Jennifer Pasillas. Henrietta Parker. Sarah Gebre. Bryan Sanguinito. Paty Holt. Rhonda Johnson. Their names may not be familiar now. But if their recent work is any indication, they will be soon. They are just a few of the amazing educators, parents, and Association and community leaders featured in *Family-School-Community Partnerships 2.0: Collaborative Strategies to Advance Student Learning*.

NEA's core belief is that all students deserve great public schools. And these dedicated individuals embody the spirit of partnership and collaboration between educators, parents, and community leaders that is critical to student success.

Family-School-Community Partnerships 2.0 outlines 10 strategies that are the foundation for creating effective partnerships, like building one-to-one relationships between families and teachers that are linked to learning. That tactic was the key to success for the Parent-Teacher Home Visit Project in Sacramento, which is now being replicated in school districts across the country with support from NEA. The program grew out of a desire to disrupt the cycle of blame between families and schools, and it is now recognized as a national model.

One of this report's greatest values is its portrayal of the broad range of school personnel involved in these efforts – from school bus drivers and teachers, to administrators and cafeteria workers. Regardless of job category, educators are helping create and sustain essential partnerships with their communities.

The examples in *Family-School-Community Partnerships 2.0* are impressive, and we know there are many, many more to be found. NEA will continue to collect, disseminate, and elevate such examples because we believe families, schools, and communities are fundamentally and positively interconnected. This guide will also be an important resource for the educators, community members, and parents who have joined NEA's Priority Schools Campaign in 39 of the nation's most under-resourced, underfunded schools. They are currently examining these strategies with an eye toward sparking new thinking about what's possible in their own communities.

Finally, we commend our allies who share our vision of collaboration: the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, the Coalition for Community Schools, the Harvard Family Research Project, Communities In Schools, the National PTA, and the National Network for Partnership Schools, whose programs in the field of family-school-community partnerships continue to contribute to our efforts. Thank you for joining with us to improve the odds for our nation's students.

Dennis Van Roekel, President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dennis Van Roekel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

National Education Association

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Executive Summary

In local communities across the country, NEA affiliate members and leaders are working closely with parents, families,* and community members to close achievement gaps, improve low-performing schools, and transform relationships between schools and their communities.

This report identifies and describes key partnerships that Association members have forged in 16 communities and includes the Association perspective on these efforts.

Part I of this report reviews recent research on school and family collaboration and presents 10 key strategies for creating effective family-school-community partnerships that are focused on advancing student learning. It also includes recommendations for moving this important work forward.

Part II contains profiles for each of the 16 partnership programs. In many cases, Association members have been catalysts for or taken on key roles in these effective programs. These profiles demonstrate very clearly that family-school-community partnerships with a central focus on advancing student learning can have a powerful impact.

Methods

To learn more about local family-school-community partnerships, an interdepartmental NEA work group reviewed a host of parent and community engagement initiatives designed to advance student learning in schools and districts represented by NEA's local and state affiliates. In this first scan, the team identified 16 partnerships that meet the following criteria:

- ▶ Educators and leaders who are active members in NEA local and/or state affiliates
- ▶ A two- to five-year track record
- ▶ Success in engaging families and/or community organizations
- ▶ Evaluation plans in place to measure student outcomes
- ▶ Increased family or community involvement over time
- ▶ Reasonable costs and potential for others to replicate the program

Three Types of Initiatives

The 16 programs profiled in this report fall into one of three categories:

- ▶ **Community and family-community programs:** These are efforts to engage the community (including families, local residents, and community organizations) in advancing student learning.
- ▶ **Programs to engage parents and other family members:** These are programs/efforts to engage families in children's learning and development.
- ▶ **Wraparound social and community services programs:** These are programs that provide social and health services to strengthen and support children and families.

* Throughout this report, we define "parents" and "families" to mean any family members, legal guardians, or other adults acting in a parental role to a student.

Ten Key Strategies for Effective Partnerships

Across these programs, the NEA team identified 10 major strategies and approaches that define the direction of program efforts and appear to be critical to their success.

Strategy #1 - Agreeing on core values: Taking time at the beginning to think deeply and reflect about what participants believe, and why they think the efforts will work.

Strategy #2 - Listening to the community: Identifying priorities and developing an action plan in a collaborative way that creates community consensus around what needs to happen and in what sequence.

Strategy #3 - Using data to set priorities and focus strategies: Looking closely at current achievement trends and addressing areas of weakness in students' knowledge and skills.

Strategy #4 - Providing relevant, on-site professional development: Basing professional development on data and conversations among stakeholders, in a way that builds both educator-educator and educator-parent collaborations.

Strategy #5 - Building collaborations with community partners: Pulling in strategic partners and developing community buy-in—with colleges, social service agencies, community groups, faith-based organizations, local leaders, public officials, and businesses—to improve student learning and other outcomes.

Strategy #6 - Using targeted outreach to focus on high-needs communities, schools, and students: Identifying groups that need special attention, learning about their concerns and needs, and responding in culturally appropriate ways.

Strategy #7 - Building one-to-one relationships between families and educators that are linked to learning: Taking time to have conversations and reach agreement on how best to collaborate in order to improve student achievement.

Strategy #8 - Setting, communicating, and supporting high and rigorous expectations: Making it clear that success is the norm by creating pathways to college, especially for students at risk and those at the margins, and providing students with support to succeed.

Strategy #9 - Addressing cultural differences: Providing support for teachers and education support professionals to bridge barriers of culture, class, and language.

Strategy #10 - Connecting students to the community: Making learning hands-on and relevant to students' lives while also showing that students and schools serve the community.

Conclusions

These initiatives to engage families and advance student learning, many of which are led by teachers and education support professionals, are a positive development, but they are not yet a trend. They do, however, show that NEA and its affiliates can leverage significant change in local communities. This work is in the beginning stages and it deserves to be studied further and scaled up, with guidance from the research.

More infrastructure and capacity-building are needed at the state and district levels to support, evaluate, replicate, and report on this work. Finding ways to fund

development, dissemination, and implementation of the effective strategies discussed in this report is also part of the challenge.

Identifying these 16 successful programs is a first step in what will be a yearly effort to collect more examples of Association-supported practices that strengthen family-school-community ties in ways that transform schools and advance student learning.

Following are recommendations to scale up and strengthen this work so it becomes a focus for the Association and other organizations committed to creating great public schools for all students.

Recommendations

1. At the local level: Build capacity in schools

- ▶ Use professional development to enhance educators' knowledge and skills in collaborating with families and community members.
- ▶ Bargain contract language or create Memorandums of Understanding that provide time, opportunities, and reimbursement for teachers, as a way to support stronger and deeper teacher-parent connections. Work with the school district to support capacity-building for educators on family engagement, using district professional development days.
- ▶ Provide technical assistance on appropriate use of Title I funds for teacher-parent collaborations to achieve the goals of the school improvement plan, such as using the School-Parent Compact required under Section 1118.
- ▶ Provide technical assistance for educators to show parents how to use data to monitor and support their children's progress.
- ▶ Identify cultural brokers in the community who can help enhance communication between teachers and families and develop shared expectations around learning.

2. At the school district level: Work collaboratively on policies and practices

- ▶ Support districtwide policies that promote effective family-school-community partnerships and commit resources such as funding and professional development to make them work.
- ▶ Support wraparound community services to address the health and social needs of students, as well as their academic ones.
- ▶ Ensure that needs of families from diverse cultures are addressed in a systemic way, and provide needed translation and interpretation services.

- ▶ Give first priority to those sites with the greatest needs.
- ▶ Create structures such as action teams and regular community conversations to ensure student progress.

3. At the state level: Provide opportunities for dialogue and offer technical assistance

- ▶ Train local facilitators to conduct communitywide conversations that can leverage change, focusing first on the neighborhoods with the greatest needs.
- ▶ Disseminate information on appropriate and effective use of Title I funds to further engage families in partnerships that advance student learning.
- ▶ Use the strategies described in this report to make recommendations to public officials and policymakers.

4. At the national level: Promote research-based strategies on family-school-community partnerships

- ▶ Place family-school-community partnerships at the center of school reform.
- ▶ Include provisions for family-school-community partnerships in proposed legislative and policy language, in comments on federal regulations, and in policy forums and conferences.
- ▶ Continue to advocate for meaningful, research-driven family-school-community partnerships in federal legislation.
- ▶ Disseminate the strategies for family-school-community partnerships recommended in this report throughout the Association.

These recommendations are provided to support and inform NEA's mission to create a great public school for every student and to give priority attention to the schools and communities with the greatest need.

Overview

In local communities around the country, Association members and leaders are working closely in supportive relationships with parents, families,* and community members to close achievement gaps and improve student learning.

These efforts are growing steadily, thanks to careful cultivation by the National Education Association (NEA) and its state and local affiliates and members. And the results are becoming apparent. In many communities, we can already see clear benefits for students, such as increased attendance and engagement in school, improved work habits and behavior, higher enrollment in college preparatory classes, better grades and test scores, and higher graduation rates.

This report documents the partnerships that local Association members have forged in 16 communities and offers a perspective from the state or local Association. It also lays out 10 key strategies to consider in establishing any effective family-school-community partnership with student learning at its core. In addition, it provides recommendations for enhancing and replicating programs like the ones profiled here.

The Research Is Clear: Families and Communities Matter

Despite two decades of education reform, only about one-third of U.S. students are proficient in reading and math, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress. That percentage is rising, but progress has been slow. The title of Charles Payne's recent book sums up the situation: *So Much Reform, So Little Change*.

Organizing Schools for Improvement, a new study from the Consortium on Chicago School Research, identifies strong family and school partnerships as

one of five key elements in accelerating progress (Bryk et al., 2010). This rigorous study compared Chicago public schools that had made significant improvements with those that had stagnated or declined, over two separate five-year periods. The characteristics of the improved schools in both data sets were the same.

From these characteristics, Anthony Bryk and his colleagues gleaned five "essential ingredients" to the success of turnaround efforts. They found that all five ingredients contribute about equally to a school's improvement and that a school's chances for success declined precipitously with the loss of only one or two elements. One of these five essential ingredients is "close ties with families and the community." When a school establishes close ties, its educators are familiar with students' cultures and community concerns. They conduct home visits, become knowledgeable about the community and its culture, invite parents to observe in classrooms, and see strong attendance by parents at school events.

The Chicago study confirms that engaging families and communities in student learning is a core strategy for school reform, and that its impact on a school's prospects for success are as powerful as the impact of strong leadership and quality teaching. This finding builds on 30 years of research about the impact that engaging families can have on student outcomes.

A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family and Community Connections on Student Achievement (Henderson and Mapp, 2002) is a comprehensive review of the research. It concludes:

The evidence is consistent, positive, and convincing: families have a major influence on their children's achievement. When schools, families, and community

* Throughout this report, we define "parents" and "families" to mean any family members, legal guardians, or other adults acting in a parental role to a student.

groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more.

The Henderson and Mapp review includes the following key findings:

- ▶ Students whose families are involved in their learning earn better grades, take higher-level classes, have higher graduation rates, and are more likely to enroll in postsecondary education.
- ▶ Children do best when parents can take on various roles in their learning: helping at home, participating in school events and activities, guiding their children through the system, and taking part in key decisions about the school program.
- ▶ When families actively support learning, students have more positive attitudes toward school, attend more regularly, and behave better.
- ▶ Children from diverse backgrounds tend to do better when families and school staff collaborate to bridge the differences between home and school cultures.
- ▶ Middle and high school students whose families remain involved make better transitions to their new schools, maintain the quality of their work, develop realistic plans for the future, and are less likely to drop out.

These findings hold true at all ages from birth through high school and across all socioeconomic backgrounds. Studies have found that all families can support their children's success and that most families do so. School improvement efforts are far more effective when schools enlist families in the process and when schools link activities for families to what students are learning and doing in class.

When parents become involved in their child's school, they tend to become more active in their community

and take advantage of local resources such as libraries and adult learning programs. Well-planned family learning and support activities tend to increase parents' self-confidence, and parents and family members often go on to pursue a high school diploma, additional job training, and higher education.

Community groups are also critical partners. A key difference between high- and low-achieving children is how, and with whom, they spend their time outside of school. Community groups offer important resources for students and families, and schools can provide a critical link to those resources (Henderson, Mapp, et al., 2007).

Dr. Joyce Epstein, a noted education researcher and director of the National Network for Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University, sums up her findings this way: "Schools, families, and communities all contribute to student success, and the best results come when all three work together as equal partners."

Helping Educators Connect

Despite this large body of convincing research, not enough attention has been paid to the issue of connecting schools and families. Teachers report they need more training to work with families, especially with those from class and cultural backgrounds that are different from their own. According to the 2005 MetLife Survey of the American Teacher, educators say that engaging families is a key challenge and that it is an area where they feel under prepared.

"Family engagement is often avoided or ignored because schools don't have the tools or strategies to implement effective services to families."

Maria Paredes, founder, Academic Parent-Teacher Team Program, Creighton, Arizona

NEA recognizes the barriers schools face in fostering partnerships that focus on student learning. In collaboration with its state and local affiliates, the Association is committed to addressing this issue. By working with its members and affiliates at the site, local, state, and national levels, NEA can be a powerful partner in formulating solutions that support all students in fulfilling their learning potential.

How Were the 16 Profiles Chosen?

To learn more about local family-school-community partnerships, an interdepartmental NEA team reviewed a host of parent and community engagement initiatives designed to improve student achievement in schools and school districts represented by NEA's state and local affiliates. NEA intends to repeat this scan annually. The goal is to collect more examples of effective family-school-community partnerships that are transforming schools and improving student outcomes.

The NEA team found many positive examples of family and community outreach, but not every program used a systematic approach or was designed specifically to improve student learning. For a program or initiative to merit inclusion in this report, it had to meet six essential criteria:

- ▶ Educators and leaders who are active members of an NEA local or state affiliate Association or both
- ▶ A two- to five-year track record
- ▶ Success in engaging families, community organizations, or both
- ▶ An evaluative component tied to student outcomes
- ▶ Increased family or community involvement over time
- ▶ Reasonable costs and the potential for other schools or districts to replicate the program

Three Identifying Characteristics of the Programs

- 1. Program type:** Each of the 16 programs we profiled fits into one of three categories:
 - ▶ **Community and family-community programs:** Three of the programs involve efforts to engage the community (including families, community residents, and community organizations) in supporting student achievement. Two of those three operate across the district, and one focuses on an underachieving middle school.
 - ▶ **Programs to engage parents and other family members:** Ten of the programs engage families in children's learning and development. Some are based in a single school, and some operate districtwide.
 - ▶ **Wraparound social and community services programs:** Three programs provide social and health services to strengthen and support children and families. All of those three operate districtwide.
- 2. Program reach:** Some programs were based in individual schools while others were implemented across the district or county.
- 3. Program longevity:** The third characteristic is how long each program has been operating and how well established it is. Programs are classified in this way:
 - ▶ *Mature* programs are well established and defined by their tenure of more than 10 years. Six of the featured programs fall into this category.
 - ▶ *Established* programs have been in place for at least four years. Five of the programs fall into this category.
 - ▶ *Emerging* programs are promising but are in the early stages of development. They are included because they are engaging families and community members in innovative ways that align with research on effective practice. Five of the programs fall into this category.

Ten Key Strategies for Effective Partnerships

Across these programs, the NEA team identified 10 major strategies and approaches that define the direction of program efforts and appear to be critical to their success.

STRATEGY #1: Agreeing on core values: In effective programs, participants take time at the outset to think deeply and reflect about what they believe and why they think their efforts will work.

Examples:

The Parent-Teacher Home Visit Program (PTHVP) in Sacramento, Calif., was initiated after Sacramento Area Congregations Together (ACT), a community organizing group, began asking families what would make their community a better place to raise children. This inquiry brought to the surface a deep distrust of the schools. The PTHVP partners (the school district, the Sacramento City Teachers Association, and Sacramento ACT) took time at the outset to reach agreement about their attitudes and beliefs and to identify the following core values:

- ▶ Families and teachers are equally important co-educators. The family is the expert on the child; the teacher is the expert on the curriculum.
- ▶ Before teachers can effectively share important information about academics, teachers and parents must establish positive communication.
- ▶ Teachers must visit all students and families, because targeting only the challenging students will perpetuate the cycle of mistrust.
- ▶ All parents can assist in their children's academic success; effective family involvement can happen in every home.

Successful Transitions at Upper Merion Area Middle School in King of Prussia, Pa., is designed to smooth the crucial transition from elementary to middle

school. It is a year-long program of meetings, visits, tours, correspondence between pen pals, and peer mentoring, so that students and parents become familiar with the middle school culture. Parents, staff, students, and community partners all had a hand in developing the program.

The program is rooted in the choice to be a *Community of Caring* school, where the school community subscribes to the core values of caring, respect, responsibility, trust, and family. These values are integrated throughout the school's curriculum and activities. In recent years, the school has seen improved test scores and steady decreases in suspension rates and bullying incidents.

“The students get so excited. The parents are more anxious than the kids. That's one reason why we need to have a lot of face-to-face time with parents. We assure them that safety is the No. 1 priority.”

*Dr. Karen Geller, principal, grades 5 and 6,
Upper Merion Area Middle School*

The *Community-School Programs* in the Evansville Vanderburgh school district in Indiana are driven by the vision that to succeed in closing achievement gaps, schools must become full-service community centers for students, parents, and other family members. The local Association, the school district, and all its partners agree that home, school, and the community are jointly responsible for students' well-being, and that to close academic achievement gaps, they must meet the needs of the whole child.

Evansville Teachers Association President Keith Gambill put it this way: “Our community had high hopes for its children, but if we were honest, some kids were being left behind. So educators had to

find a different, more comprehensive way of working with parents and our community. And it has paid off in terms of relationships with families and improved outcomes for our students.”

STRATEGY #2: Listening to the community: In effective programs, participants identify priorities and develop action plans collaboratively, which creates community consensus around what needs to happen and in what sequence.

Examples:

Putnam City West High School in Oklahoma City, Okla., began its *Compadres in Education* program for Hispanic families following a series of NEA-supported community conversations about closing achievement gaps. Leaders of the Oklahoma Education Association, with technical assistance from NEA, trained local community members to facilitate and record the conversations. In these conversations, parents said they did not feel welcome at the school, and they asked for more bilingual staff members who could share information with them in Spanish. Parents also requested more information about college admissions and all course information in Spanish, especially information pertaining to classes required for college. Finally, they requested NEA’s professional development assistance to better equip all teachers in serving the needs of English Language Learner (ELL) students.

In response, the school has taken several actions:

- ▶ Adding bilingual staff members, so that now 25 percent of staff are bilingual, including the crucial positions of receptionist, ELL graduation coach, and instructional assistants in ELL, algebra, and English classes.
- ▶ Holding quarterly Hispanic Family Nights, which focus on the pathways to college, and providing course descriptions and college entrance requirements in both Spanish and English.
- ▶ Offering professional development for educators, to help enhance teaching of ELL students that takes into account specific cultural priorities and needs.
- ▶ Expanding opportunities for students to engage in service-learning (community service activities aligned with the curriculum), with special outreach to students deemed at risk for dropping out.

The school’s bilingual teacher and ELL graduation coach, Jennifer Pasillas, comments:

“When our school started listening and responding to the parents’ requests such as more bilingual staff and resources, our school began to reflect the community it serves, thus increasing community parental participation and involvement, as well as student success.”

Since the *Compadres* program’s inception in 2007, the graduation rate among Hispanic students has risen by nearly 70 percent.

“The bottom line is, ‘What can I do to help my students to graduate, go on to secondary schools, and be successful?’ We are committed to our partnership between the school, the families, and the community. And it’s working!”

*Melanie Pealor, assistant principal,
Putnam City West High School*

The *Community Learning Centers* (CLC) program in Lincoln, Neb., has a tiered structure designed to ensure that activities and services for each school are tailored to local community needs and priorities. Ten different lead agencies offer a variety of services that local communities can select. Each CLC site has a School Neighborhood Advisory Committee that represents the diversity of its neighborhood and shapes the school’s program. In addition, action teams focus on specific issues such as public and family engagement.

STRATEGY #3: Using data to set priorities and focus strategies: Effective programs look closely at current achievement trends and address areas of weakness in students' knowledge and skills.

Examples:

Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APTT) in Creighton, Ariz., provide a structure for parents to meet with teachers, converse with other parents, and learn ways to support their child's academic skill development.

At the team meetings, the teacher models activities that parents can do at home with their children. The teacher also presents academic performance data for the class and gives parents individual information about their own child's performance. Test data show significant short-term gains among first graders in APTT classes. Among students tested in the fall of 2009, oral reading fluency scores in APTT classrooms rose nearly 25 points, compared to only 10 points for other students.

“Many parents wonder what the parents of kids at the top of the class are doing at home to make that happen. Parents give other parents ideas for successful practice at home. It forms a community.”

*Maria Paredes,
founder of the APTT program*

Revitalizing the School-Parent Compact required by the federal Title I program inspired teachers at Geraldine Johnson Elementary-Middle School in Bridgeport, Conn., to link activities for families to the School Improvement Plan. Teachers meet twice a month for 30 minutes in grade-level “data teams” to discuss how students are doing. At the beginning of the school year, each team identifies two or three skills on which to focus and develops strategies that families can use to promote learning at home. Based on those conversations, teachers design workshops

and home learning activities, such as questions to ask while watching a movie or ideas for using math at the grocery store.

The workshops and activities become part of a written School-Parent Compact in which teachers and families agree to collaborate. Nicole Fitzsimmons, a sixth-grade teacher, says, “The compact ties things together and brings us closer. Math workshops refresh parents' skills in solving equations and other areas of sixth-grade math. It's fun, not stressful.”

“I applaud the efforts our members are making to establish school-family partnerships through the Title I School-Parent Compact. We all realize that this type of collaboration is a key component in our students' success.”

*Gary Peluchette, president,
Bridgeport Education Association*

SUN (Schools Uniting Neighborhoods) Service System, in Oregon's Multnomah County, is a “wraparound” service model that uses 60 neighborhood schools as delivery sites for a comprehensive range of educational and social services for students, families, and community members. Core services at each site include academic support, social and health services, and recreation and enrichment activities.

Centering services at the school site allows close collaboration among schools and agencies that provide the educational and social services to support the success of children and their families. Students' growth targets and academic performance are monitored and evaluated annually. Among the 7,500 students who participated in SUN Service programs for 30 or more days in the 2009-2010 school year, average scores in reading and math exceeded state goals.

Furthermore, at least 75 percent made gains in reading and math test scores that exceeded state goals. More than 80 percent of seniors graduated, compared to less than 60 percent for the district as a whole.

STRATEGY #4: Providing relevant, on-site professional development: Effective programs base professional development on data and conversations among stakeholders in a way that builds both educator-to-educator and educator-to-parent collaborations.

Examples:

After Hispanic parents participating in *Compadres in Education* requested that the school's programs for ELL students be improved, Putnam City West High School in Oklahoma City created enrichment classes for ELL students in all core subjects in ninth and tenth grades. To enhance their teaching skills with ELL students, teachers are learning effective techniques for visual presentation of information and use of hands-on activities. They are also learning to create environments in which students and parents who are still learning English are comfortable speaking English together.

Bringing Learning to Life is a professional development program in Columbus, Ohio, that helps teachers infuse student service projects in the community that are aligned with the curriculum. The program benefits from a community outreach and engagement agreement between the Columbus Education Association, Columbus City Schools, and The Ohio State University (OSU) College of Education and Human Ecology. The program provides district K-12 teachers with tuition-free professional development. A government grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service makes it possible for these teachers to be eligible for mini-grants to implement hands-on community projects with students.

“What I love about this program is that it provides both students and teachers an opportunity to tackle real community problems, and at the same time develop 21st century skills like collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and communications.”

*Rhonda Johnson, president,
Columbus Education Association*

STRATEGY #5: Building collaborations with community partners: Effective programs pull in strategic partners and develop community buy-in—with colleges, social service agencies, community groups, faith-based organizations, local leaders, public officials, and businesses—to help improve student learning and other outcomes.

Examples:

The *Wicomico Mentoring Project* in Salisbury, Md., draws mentors who work one on one with students from more than 50 local government agencies, colleges, businesses, civic organizations, and faith-based groups, as well as the schools themselves. To keep local interest high, a monthly newsletter includes information, a calendar of events, and resources for mentors. News of activities, profiles of participants, and inspiring quotes help to build support and buy-in from current and potential mentors. About half of the mentors are teachers and education support professionals, such as bus drivers and cafeteria workers.

In the Washoe County School District, which includes Reno, Nev., and the surrounding area, the *Infinite Campus Parent Portal* relies on its many partners to get information to parents who want to track their student's progress. Parents learn how to open an account and use the information on the district

website. The Nevada State Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC) provides training to enable more parents to use the portal. The Boys & Girls Club and county libraries offer computer kiosks where parents can log in to check their child's progress. In addition, the district works with Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Northern Nevada to provide mentors with access to the parent portal if the family has given permission.

The Parent Portal program also benefits from a partnership with AmeriCorps, which provides volunteers who serve as Parent Involvement Facilitators (PIFs) at the 12 comprehensive high schools. The PIFs reach out to the families of students at risk, provide support and training on how to use the online tool, and broker conversations with teachers.

“Infinite Campus is ... removing barriers and making it easy for parents to see what is occurring in the classroom. The instantaneous nature of Infinite Campus creates many more opportunities for parents to engage their learner and the teacher in the course material and assignments. Once parents' and teachers' goals are aligned in pushing learner achievement, the learner can't help but be more engaged.”

*Glenn Waddell, math teacher,
North Valleys High School, Reno, Nevada*

The three wraparound programs profiled in this report—*Community Learning Centers* in Lincoln, Neb.; *SUN Service System* in Portland, Ore.; and *Community-School Programs* in the Evansville Vanderburgh district in Indiana—all excel at developing strong and sustained partnerships with community members and with a wide variety of organizations. For example, the *Lincoln Community*

Learning Centers program has a comprehensive infrastructure: key community leaders work together in a coordinating body, under which serve School Neighborhood Advisory Committees at each school; action teams focus on particular issues in the school and across the neighborhood; and the Neighborhood Action Team links back to the Mayor's Strong Safe Neighborhoods Initiative, bringing communication full circle.

“The Lincoln Community Learning Centers provide an invaluable resource serving families and schools in our community. They are great partners focusing on the needs of the whole child so they are better equipped to reach their full learning potential.”

*Jenni Absalon, president,
Lincoln Education Association*

STRATEGY #6: Using targeted outreach to focus on high-needs communities, schools, and students: Effective programs identify groups of students that need special attention, learn about their concerns and needs, and respond in culturally appropriate ways.

Examples:

Daly Elementary School in Germantown, Md., serves a pocket of high need in a county known for its affluence. To connect with Hispanic families, the school began offering monthly workshops, in Spanish, to address topics suggested by the parents, such as reading and math instruction, state assessments, bullying, gang prevention, and Internet safety. These workshops have led to the creation of the *Hispanic Parents Council*.

During the summer, the school offered weekly evenings of literacy activities, arts and crafts, computer activities, and sports at a county recreation

center near the trailer park community where many of the Hispanic families live. When the recreation center closed for a two-year renovation, the school arranged scholarships or tuition waivers for the neediest students to attend its regional summer school program for students from Daly and other county schools. To maintain contact with the Hispanic families, school administrators and teachers hosted a “meet and greet” in the parking lot of the trailer park in May and again shortly before the start of the 2010-2011 school year. Several bilingual parents volunteered as interpreters.

Hispanic family involvement has increased significantly, and the school is meeting its AYP targets for Hispanic students.

“At its most meaningful, parent involvement is about creating a community of trust, a school culture in which families want to give back to the school as much as they may need to take from it.”

*Susan Zimmerman-Orozco, assistant principal,
Daly Elementary School*

James A. Shanks Middle School in rural Quincy, Fla., had been chronically under-performing. A series of NEA-supported community conversations guided by Douglas Harris, an organizer for the Florida Education Association, led to an action plan for change that is transforming the school. Under *Making Parents Count*, a number of strategies to reach families and community members have been employed to improve outcomes for the students, 80 percent of whom are African American. To bolster Hispanic family attendance, the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium, which offers services to migrant farmworker families, conducted focused outreach and provided translators at all community conversations. Families and educators came together to renovate the school—a move that increased personal ownership

and pride and saved the school district more than \$100,000 in services and materials expenses.

To follow up, parents and community members created the Strategic Organizing Group (SOG), whose members agreed to take responsibility for developing and carrying out action plans. One SOG activity, designed to build family involvement, was to mount a door-to-door campaign during the summer of 2011 to welcome families of students who would be entering Shanks in the fall, establish relationships with them, and ease the transition to middle school for students and their families.

STRATEGY #7: Building one-to-one relationships between families and educators that are linked to learning: In effective programs, participants take time to discuss and reach agreement on how they can meaningfully collaborate in order to improve student achievement.

Examples:

Elmont Memorial Junior-Senior High School in Elmont, N.Y., is deeply committed to providing additional support to students through programs beyond the school day. Since 2005, the *Before- and Afterschool Support Programs* have been expanded to target junior high school students and are staffed by Interdisciplinary Team Center teachers. Students can use the time to complete homework, get extra help from a teacher, or make up missed assignments.

“Everything stems from personalized student attention, and you can’t do that without the parents.”

*John Capozzi, principal,
Elmont Memorial Junior-Senior High School*

Communication with parents is an integral part of these support programs. Teachers meet with parents before and after school hours to discuss student progress; they also meet with parents during their planning time.

Parents are included in the process of developing individualized academic intervention plans for students who show academic difficulty. When speaking with parents at team meetings, teachers can offer before- and afterschool sessions to students as a way to make up missed work, study for a test, or practice skills.

The local union takes pride in having developed the arrangements between teachers and the school that make these services possible.

“The Sewanhaka Federation of Teachers is very proud of this work... Teachers at the school understand the diversity of the students and work diligently to meet the educational needs of all. The union and the district continue to work together to ensure our students receive the best education possible.”

*Rosanne Mamo, president,
Sewanhaka Federation of Teachers*

The Parent-Teacher Home Visit Program (PTHVP), based in Sacramento, Calif., trains teachers to make home visits to families that will build relationships and foster parent-teacher collaboration focused on improving student achievement. Participation is voluntary, and teachers are paid for their time.

At the elementary school level, home visits take place in the fall and spring. At the end of the first visit, teachers invite the family to come to the school and they develop a plan to communicate throughout the year. The second visit occurs just before spring testing. In middle and high school, teachers visit the homes of students in the seventh, ninth, and tenth grades, and the focus is on key transitions. The second home visit takes place in eleventh and twelfth grades and focuses on timely graduation and career or college planning. Evaluations have found that the visits lead to increased student attendance, improved test scores, and reduced suspension and expulsion rates.

Middle school teacher Tarik McFall made a home visit in which the mother told him that she hoped her son, DeJanerio, would do well in school and go to college. The son heard what his mother said. “I think hearing her say those words to his teacher really influenced him to do well in school. For the rest of the year, DeJanerio really evolved into an excellent leader and even scored ‘proficient’ in math on the CST!” McFall comments.

STRATEGY #8: Setting, communicating, and supporting high and rigorous expectations: Effective programs make it clear that success is the norm by creating pathways to college, especially for students at risk and at the margins, and they provide students with support and services to succeed.

Examples:

For *Making Parents Count*, Shanks Middle School, in Florida’s Gadsden County, adopted a goal of helping the entire community embrace consistent educational principles and practices. As Juanita Ellis, principal of Shanks, explained, “Our goal is to move the school to a higher level by setting high expectations, engaging students in meaningful activities to promote literacy, and using data to drive instruction.”

The Strategic Organizing Group (SOG) of parents, community members, school leaders, and educators developed a nine-point document of expectations for students, which is focused on preparing them for college. Among the shared values that emerged from community conversations are these:

- ▶ Respect for the importance of families in raising academic expectations and self-discipline among students.
- ▶ Commitment to the inclusion of English Language Learners.
- ▶ Consistency of educational messages throughout the school, home, and community.

“Making public our collaborative efforts towards excellence, through billboards, use of radio and news announcements, and through active reiteration by the local clergy, has made all the difference in getting us all on the same page—parents, students, and community.”

*Arnitia Grice-Walker, president,
Gadsden County Classroom Teachers Association*

Founded in 2009, the *Math and Science Leadership Academy* (MSLA) is a collaboration among teachers, their union (the Denver Classroom Teachers Association), and the Denver Public Schools. The school promises a rigorous education with a focus on math and science to its predominantly low-income and Hispanic student population. In addition to traditional academics, students engage in hands-on learning and service-learning projects in the community. The school has been adding one grade per year with the goal of being a K-5 school beginning in 2012–2013. Faculty and staff attribute the school’s growing numbers of students and families to its focus, rigor, inclusive culture, and high expectations.

Results from the Parent Satisfaction Survey for 2009–2010 show that more than 90 percent of parents give the school positive ratings, well above the district average in all categories.

“One of the key strategies that makes MSLA work is the mutual agreement of all partners—families, educators, community—to set the bar high for our students. It’s worth re-thinking your approach to involving parents, particularly if students aren’t working up to their potential. What’s even better is if your approach is grounded in what’s been shown to work.”

*Henry Roman, president,
Denver Classroom Teachers Association*

STRATEGY #9: Addressing cultural differences:

Effective programs provide support for teachers and education support professionals to bridge barriers of culture, class, and language.

Examples:

To help engage parents in their children’s education and give families a voice in the school community, a coalition of groups, including the Reading Education Association, in Reading, Pa., established the *Parent and Community Outreach Initiative*. One of its goals is to establish a Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) in all 24 schools in the district.

Parent engagement is important in Reading, where the school district has been facing severe budget challenges and changing demographics. Reading was recently identified in the *New York Times* as a “struggling city of 88,000 that has earned the unwelcome distinction of having the largest share of its residents living in poverty, barely edging out Flint, Mich., according to new Census Bureau data.” Reading’s growing Hispanic population, currently around 80 percent, includes many highly mobile students whose families often relocate to find work or affordable housing. Parent organizations can help boost student achievement by helping to break down language barriers and by fostering a sense of community among parents and educators.

Forming a parent organization has been effective in increasing schools’ responsiveness to families in Reading. Miriam Feliciano first became involved in organizing parents at Ford Elementary School after her son was rushed to the emergency room for dehydration caused by severely overheated school classrooms. She collected evidence about conditions in the building, gained support from other parents and from school staff, and presented the school’s case at a school board meeting. The next day, contractors arrived to install air conditioning.

“If we have an established parent organization at a school, that opens a door for further parent involvement. Only with buy-in from teachers, parents, and administrators will we truly be able to do what is right for our students by doing what is right for the community: promoting total involvement in the educational success of our city’s future leaders.”

*Bryan Sanguinito, president,
Reading Education Association*

The *Hispanic Parents Council*, led by Hispanic parents at Daly Elementary School in Germantown, Md., offers monthly workshops, conducted in Spanish, to address topics suggested by parents, such as reading and math instruction, state assessments, bullying, gang prevention, and Internet safety. The Council also is becoming a full partner in school improvement efforts. For example, when parents expressed an interest in computer literacy, a Hispanic parent volunteered to teach a computer class. Parents also expressed a need for afterschool programs during the winter months, and the school began offering afterschool fitness instruction on campus, with tuition scholarships arranged through partnerships with instructors in the community. But the programs that most directly advance student achievement are the afterschool instructional programs to help students prepare for state testing. They are run by teachers and meet twice a week from January through March.

STRATEGY #10: Connecting students to the community: Effective programs make learning hands-on and relevant to students’ lives while also showing that students and schools serve the community.

Examples:

Bringing Learning to Life in Columbus, Ohio, is a program that provides professional development—through The Ohio State University College of Education and Human Ecology—to local K-12

teachers, so that teachers can help students apply what they learn in the classroom to community service projects of their own design. The program concept evolved from an NEA-supported project through which the Columbus Education Association conducted two community conversations where parents and students expressed frustration over their local high school’s lack of connectedness to the community. A grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service helped address this issue by providing additional support.

As part of this professional development training, Te’Lario Watkins, a teacher at Linden-McKinley STEM Academy, is working with students on a project they call, “*Water, Water, Everywhere.*” The students are investigating how improper disposal of hazardous materials affects water quality. They study the community water supply and work with organizations in the community that focus on reducing contamination and improving local water quality. Students then present what they have learned and make proposals for achieving a clean water supply in the Linden neighborhood of Columbus.

As Watkins states: “Our project will give my students the opportunity to connect in a meaningful way and give valuable information back to their community. My students and their parents have both expressed their excitement about the project and their involvement in working with and helping their neighborhood.”

Through such projects, students become informed citizens who can contribute to the ongoing work of community-based organizations, using what they learn in class to analyze and address real-life community challenges.

At the union teacher-led *Math and Science Leadership Academy* (MSLA) in Denver, Colo., students not only learn traditional academics, but they also engage in hands-on learning using knowledge

gained in the classroom to conduct real-world, community-based projects. The program develops leadership skills and encourages civic responsibility.

Upper Merion Area Middle School in King of Prussia, Pa., has an ethic of community service and partnerships with more than 30 community organizations. The local Rotary Club, for example, has been spending \$2,000 per year on books for the school library on topics such as “heroes and respect” and “diversity and good citizenship.” All staff and students perform service-learning or community service activities. Parents and community members also engage in volunteer activities.

These 10 strategies, all interconnected, build upon and reinforce practices that lay a foundation for making a school a great place to learn and work. The highest priority of such initiatives is to create a learning community that fosters trusting relationships among all its members.

In her coaching work with teachers on revitalizing their school-parent compacts, Patti Avallone, a former Connecticut teacher of the year who now works as a consultant with the state Department of Education, found that teachers began to look at parents differently once they got to know each other.

“After having conversations with parents about how to improve student learning, teachers said they appreciated how much parents were willing to help,” Avallone said. “As teachers, they came to realize that they had not been specific about the learning skills and strategies that they wanted parents to do at home. Teachers said, ‘We often assumed that there was no support. Boy, were we wrong! Our relationship with families grew stronger and finally, we were all on the same page.’ This is the kind of collaboration that strengthens student achievement.”

Getting More Strategic About Engaging Families

The National Working Group on Family and Community Engagement has observed that far too many efforts to involve parents are rooted in outdated thinking and faulty assumptions. The Working Group, a leadership collaborative created to inform federal policy on family, school, and community engagement in education, includes the Harvard Family Research Project and the Annenberg Institute for School Reform. This group has proposed a framework for moving these efforts from traditional thinking to new strategies that are systemic and strategic.

Using the Working Group’s framework, the following chart illustrates how the programs profiled in this report have moved away from outdated thinking to create new and vibrant partnership approaches to advance student learning.

Traditional Family Involvement Activities	Strategic Family Engagement Programs
<p>Individual responsibility: Sending home a flier that tells parents to make sure their kids get to bed on time before the state tests next week.</p>	<p>Shared responsibility: Holding a team meeting with parents to share data on student progress and model learning strategies parents can use at home to improve specific skills. <i>(Academic Parent-Teacher Teams, Arizona)</i></p>
<p>Deficit-based and adversarial: Putting up “no trespassing” signs around the school and offering parenting classes.</p>	<p>Strength-based and collaborative: Holding community conversations to hear family members’ ideas for improving student learning, and following up on suggestions such as adding more bilingual staff and improving the ELL program. <i>(Compadres in Education, Oklahoma)</i></p>
<p>Random acts of family involvement: “Let’s send home backpacks with school supplies inside!” “We could ask parents to chaperone the field trip.” “The parent group could hold a bake sale to raise funds for new band uniforms.”</p>	<p>Systemic program linked to learning: Creating a Parent Portal to the district website so that parents can access information about their children’s progress, and providing training to help families use it and connect with teachers when problems arise. <i>(Parent Portal, Nevada)</i></p>
<p>Add-on: Referring struggling students to a local tutoring program</p>	<p>Integrated: Building partnerships with local community organizations and social service agencies to offer tutoring and enrichment programs that are linked to the school curriculum, and monitoring student progress jointly with community partners. <i>(SUN Service System, Oregon)</i></p>
<p>Compliance: Running the district-drafted boilerplate Title I School-Parent Compact past the PTA for “approval,” then putting it on a shelf.</p>	<p>Shared ownership: Holding data team meetings to identify skills that students need to strengthen. Then conferring with parents about workshops and information they would like to improve their children’s skills. Finally, creating a Title I Compact that lays out their shared responsibility. <i>(Compact Revitalization, Connecticut)</i></p>
<p>One-time project: Holding a Family Fun Night once a year.</p>	<p>Continuous improvement: Forming a committee that focuses on creating a positive and inclusive school climate and surveys families each year to get feedback for improvement. <i>(Math and Science Leadership Academy, Colorado)</i></p>

Expanding Strategic Partnerships

The 16 programs and initiatives described in this report show how the National Education Association and its affiliates can leverage significant change in local communities. In the schools and local school districts profiled, the role of the Association has ranged from willing and active individual member, to key initiator, to lead partner. NEA aims to support its affiliates in taking on new and important roles as problem-solvers and leaders in school improvement efforts.

Through its network of state and local affiliates, NEA has both the experience and the capacity to:

- ▶ collaboratively develop programs that transcend traditional ways of doing business
- ▶ create new strategic and systemwide approaches for building and sustaining family-school-community partnerships.

In addition, the meaningful dialogue between educators and family members created by NEA-supported community conversations and transformation efforts can give local educators a new perspective on possibilities for collaboration with families. It can help both the school and the community determine their mutual priorities and take action.

Building an Infrastructure

These initiatives to engage families and improve student outcomes—many of which are led by teachers and education support professionals—are a positive development, but they are not yet part of a national trend. Many of these efforts are in their beginning stages, and they merit further study and scaling up, with guidance from the research.

Educators say that engaging families is their No. 1 challenge and that it is the part of their job for which they feel the least prepared. There is a tremendous

need for capacity-building, not just for classroom teachers and education support professionals, but also for school and district administrators to understand how to encourage and support collaborations with families and community members.

This work will not happen on its own. What is needed is the infrastructure at the state and district levels to support, evaluate, replicate, and report on this work. Finding ways to fund development, dissemination, and implementation of the effective strategies discussed in this report is part of the challenge.

Recommendations

The following recommendations identify a number of ways to scale up and strengthen this important work, so that it can become an intentional focus for the Association at the local, state, and national levels:

1. At the local level: Build capacity in schools

- ▶ Use professional development to enhance educators' knowledge and skills in collaborating with families and community members. For example, build collaboration with nearby institutions of higher learning such as colleges of education to provide practice guidance and professional development programs for which teachers can receive graduate credits.
- ▶ Bargain contract language or create Memorandums of Understanding that provide time, opportunities, and reimbursement for educators, as a way to support stronger and deeper educator-parent connections. Work with the school district to support capacity-building for educators on family engagement, using district professional development days.
- ▶ Provide technical assistance on appropriate use of Title I funds for educator-parent collaborations to achieve the goals of the school improvement plan, such as using the School-Parent Compact required under Section 1118.

- ▶ Provide technical assistance to educators on showing parents how to use data to monitor and support their children's progress.

- ▶ Identify cultural brokers in the community who can help enhance communication between educators and families and develop shared expectations around learning.

2. At the school district level: Work collaboratively on policies and practices

- ▶ Support districtwide policies that promote effective family-school-community partnerships and commit resources such as funding and professional development to make them work.
- ▶ Support wraparound community services to address the health and social needs of students, as well as their academic ones.
- ▶ Ensure that the needs of families from diverse cultures are addressed in a systemic way, and provide needed translation and interpretation services.
- ▶ Give first priority to those sites with the greatest needs.
- ▶ Create structures such as action teams and regular public meetings to ensure student progress.

3. At the state level: Provide opportunities for dialogue and offer technical assistance

- ▶ Train local facilitators to conduct communitywide conversations that can leverage change, focusing first on the neighborhoods with the greatest needs.
- ▶ Disseminate information on appropriate and effective use of Title I funds to further engage families in partnerships that improve student learning outcomes.
- ▶ Use the strategies described in this report to make recommendations to public officials and policymakers.

4. At the national level: Promote research-based strategies on family-school-community partnerships

- ▶ Place family-school-community partnerships at the center of school reform.
- ▶ Include provisions for family-school-community partnerships in proposed legislative and policy language, in comments on federal regulations, and in policy forums and conferences.
- ▶ Continue to advocate for meaningful, research-driven family-school-community partnerships in federal legislation.
- ▶ Disseminate the strategies for family-school-community partnerships recommended in this report throughout the Association.

These recommendations aim to support and inform NEA's continuing mission to create a great public school for every student and to give priority attention to the highest-need schools and communities.



Community and Family-Community Programs

SNAPSHOT

Program:

Making Parents Count

School:

Shanks Middle School

District:

Gadsden County School District

Location: Quincy, Fla.

Grades: 6-8

Enrollment: 610

Free/reduced-price lunch: 92%

Setting high and consistent expectations

Making Parents Count

James A. Shanks Middle School

Quincy, Florida

In 2007, Florida Education Association (FEA) organizer Douglas Harris applied the FEA campaign message, “Making Our Schools a Priority,” to his work in rural and economically depressed Quincy, Fla. Shanks Middle School was a focal point for local change efforts because it had a strong leader committed to increasing parent involvement and its mid-county location could help promote improvement throughout the area.

Harris and a community organization partner guided a series of public conversations with the Shanks community, which led to a wish list and action plan for change that is transforming the school. For the first time, Shanks students now perform above the district average in reading and math. Eighty-one percent of Shanks students are African American. Another 18 percent are Hispanic, most of whom are children of migrant agricultural workers.

“Our goal is to move the school to a higher level by setting high expectations, engaging students in meaningful activities to promote literacy, and using data to drive instruction,” says Shanks Middle School Principal Juanita Ellis.

How the program works

With a \$10,000 grant from the National Education Association, Harris collaborated with Gadsden Coalition for Change, a community-based organization committed to educational equity and social justice, to guide a series of community conversations with Shanks parents and community members. Partners included businesses, media outlets, elected officials, prominent citizens, and members of the school board and PTA. To boost attendance by Hispanic families, the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium, which offers services to migrant farmworker families, targeted its outreach to families and provided translators at all community conversations.

The first community conversation became the starting point for all ensuing activities. To develop and carry out action plans, parents and community members organized the Strategic Organizing Group (SOG), whose members agreed to take responsibility for following up. Because parents’ first priority was improving the school building and grounds—a goal that would unite the whole

Community and Family-Community Programs

community—the SOG first addressed that need. Some 500 volunteers spent eight days painting walls, replacing floors, installing sod, and planting trees. Their sweat equity and donated materials saved the school district more than \$100,000, and their example inspired students to aim high. The initiative led to further changes coordinated by SOG, with a collective goal to promote parent involvement, increase student achievement, and improve graduation rates.

Evidence of effectiveness

According to the Florida Department of Education:

- ▶ James A. Shanks Middle School earned a total of 508 points on the 2011 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), moving up from 433 in 2008. The school's grade moved from D in 2008, to C in 2010, and then to B in 2011.
- ▶ The percentage of students meeting high standards in reading and math rose steadily from 2008-09 to 2010-11, as did the percentage of students making learning gains. Students in the lowest quartile made the most notable gains, increasing from 63 to 76 percent in reading and from 66 to 77 percent in math.
- ▶ Despite these gains, the school did not quite make Adequate Yearly Progress for Title I accountability purposes, although the school has met 82 percent of the necessary criteria.

Exemplary practices

Consistently communicating high expectations:

To help the entire community embrace consistent educational principles and practices, the SOG and school leaders developed a nine-point document of expectations for students that is focused on preparing for college.

Ensuring that the PTA remains parent-focused and inclusive: Earlier, PTA meetings at Shanks had been a forum for the principal to report on school business. Under the leadership of Shanks PTA President Gwen Forehand, who is also a SOG leader, parents now run the meetings, freely discuss their challenges, and create student-focused solutions. To ensure that all public meetings at Shanks are welcoming to ELL parents, the district has invested in translation equipment to serve the needs of its Spanish-speaking families.

Agreeing on core values: The community conversations and SOG meetings have encouraged shared values:

- ▶ Respect for the importance of families in raising academic expectations and self-discipline among students
- ▶ Belief that the physical condition of a school has an impact on student and family engagement
- ▶ Commitment to the inclusion of English Language Learners
- ▶ Consistency of educational messages throughout the school, home, and community.

Using targeted outreach: To sustain parent and family involvement, SOG mounted a door-to-door campaign during the summer of 2011 to personally welcome families of students who would be entering Shanks in the fall.

Identifying high-level advocates for change: The SOG has reached out to powerful partners who are willing to promote success at Shanks. These include the chairman of the board of education, the superintendent, the local state representative, and the director of the Gadsden Coalition for Change.

Starting a service-learning program: Shanks’s math teacher Roosevelt Sea secured a service-learning grant from NEA in partnership with FEA for students to plant a community garden. Students will hone skills in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) as well as give back to their community by donating the garden produce to needy community residents.

Outlook

The commitment of the community and its leaders is high, and the school is making steady progress.

Association perspective

The Gadsden County Classroom Teachers Association is a major partner in the effort. Local President Arnitta Grice-Walker says, “Making public our collaborative efforts towards excellence through billboards, use of radio and television, and through active reiteration by the local clergy, has made all the difference in getting us all on the same page—parents, students, and community.”

Local contact

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Related information

Florida School Grades: <http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/>

NCLB Public Accountability report for Shanks:
<http://bit.ly/qVf3e0>

Shanks Middle School website: <http://www.jasms.gcps.k12.fl.us/?PageName=%27AboutTheSchool%27>

Community and Family-Community Programs

SNAPSHOT

Program:
Wicomico Mentoring Project

District:
Wicomico County Public Schools

Location:
Salisbury, Md., and surrounding area

Grades: PreK-12

Enrollment: 14,400 students in the district, including 754 WMP students

Free/reduced-price lunch:
85% of WMP students

Developing volunteer mentors

Wicomico Mentoring Project
Wicomico County Public Schools
Wicomico County, Maryland

In 1994, the Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce, the Wicomico County Board of Education, and a group of business and professional leaders called the Greater Salisbury Committee, began looking for a way to help raise high school graduation rates. Together, they formed a task force that came up with the idea of a mentorship program for students at risk of school failure. With funding from an AmeriCorps grant, the task force hired Henrietta Parker to administer the Wicomico Mentoring Project (WMP).

This one-on-one mentoring program, which Parker continues to oversee, has grown from 27 mentors in three schools to 754 mentors serving the county's 26 schools. Mentors include college students and volunteers from more than 50 local government agencies, businesses, civic organizations, and faith-based groups, as well as the schools themselves. In fact, 55 percent of the mentors are teachers or education support professionals. The superintendent also serves as a mentor.

How the program works

The Wicomico Mentoring Project is funded by the Wicomico County Board of Education as part of the Student Services Team. Its 11-member Advisory Board is comprised of mentors from a range of backgrounds. The project coordinator and two staff work closely with coordinators at each school. Students are referred to the program by teachers, guidance staff, or others who know them well. Mentors choose a school—usually based on proximity to home or workplace—and commit to meeting one hour per week for the school year.



Mentors act as role models and provide support for students' social, emotional, and academic growth. They can sit in class with their student, read, play board games, eat lunch together, take a walk and talk together, or do whatever is comfortable. WMP schedules summer activities for students and mentors, such as roller-skating, baseball games, and field trips.

Mentors undergo a background check and two hours of training. They also receive a toolkit that includes ice breakers, activities, and other resources. Supplemental training with other mentoring programs is also available.

Community and Family-Community Programs

Mentoring may begin at any grade level and may continue through high school. Currently, about half of the mentored students are in elementary school, a third are in middle school, and the rest are in high school. Of the students being mentored, 69 percent are African American, 27 percent are white, and 5 percent are Hispanic. The school district as a whole is about 55 percent white, 37 percent African American, and 7 percent Hispanic, Asian, or other.

The WMP annual budget (\$177,000 for 2009-2010) covers salaries for the project coordinator and two staff, as well as materials, mentor background checks, and printing. In addition, the Advisory Board raises about \$6,000 in community donations each year to cover the cost of activities, food, and transportation.

Evidence of effectiveness

- ▶ Data for the 2009-2010 school year show that compared to the previous year, 41 percent of WMP students had improved grades, 46 percent had improved attendance, and 27 percent showed improved behavior.
- ▶ The 2010 graduation rate for mentored high school seniors was 99 percent. For the school district as a whole, the graduation rate rose from 78.7 percent in 2009 to 83 percent in 2010.
- ▶ Survey data shows that 75 percent of mentored students' teachers saw personal growth, 73 percent saw improved work habits and effort, and 72 percent saw improved academic achievement.
- ▶ Among parents surveyed, 92 percent saw improved work habits in their mentored children; 91 percent said their child had a positive feeling about the mentor; and 89 percent observed personal growth in their child.

- ▶ The Wicomico Mentoring Project has won numerous awards, including the 2008 Leadership Award in Education from the Shore Leadership Alumni Association and a First Place Award of Excellence from the Office of the Attorney General's Spotlight on Prevention. In addition, America's Promise Alliance, a national network that aims to ensure that all young people graduate from high school ready for college, named Wicomico County one of the 100 Best Communities for Young People in 2010—the fourth time the county has received this recognition.

Exemplary practices

Using targeted outreach: Students are usually referred to the WMP by their guidance counselors for reasons such as poor attendance, lack of self-confidence, delinquent behavior, or life circumstances that limit involvement of their parents. Referrals also come from teachers, parents, and even students themselves.

Building community support and buy-in: A monthly newsletter includes information, a calendar of events, and resources for mentors. News of activities, profiles of participants, and inspiring quotes help to build support and buy-in from current and potential mentors.

Developing personal relationships: The training program helps mentors form reliable relationships that help motivate and support the students. Mentors make a one-year commitment, which they may choose to renew at the end of the school year. More than 20 WMP mentors have remained active for 5 to 15 years. Feedback from students and mentors shows that more than 90 percent are satisfied with their pairing. Ninety-four percent of students reported a great or good relationship with their mentor, and 97 percent wanted to keep their mentor for the next year.

Outlook

Demand for WMP mentors is high: In addition to those in the program, another 1,070 eligible students are on a waiting list. Recognizing the potential for other districts to replicate the program, Parker has shared information and copies of the toolkit with other counties.

Association perspective

As the local Association president, Dave White, puts it: “The Wicomico County Education Association is a critical WMP partner organization, and many of its members—including classroom teachers and education support professionals—serve as mentors. The Association and district have worked out an agreement that allows school staff the necessary time to mentor students.”

Local contacts

Henrietta “Henri” Parker, WMP project coordinator
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Darlene Cole-Culver, WMP Advisory Board chair
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Related information

WMP website: www.wcboc.org/programs/mentoring

Report card: <http://bit.ly/qxJwX1>



Community and Family-Community Programs

SNAPSHOT

Program:
Bringing Learning to Life

District:
Columbus City Schools

Location:
Columbus, Ohio

Grades: PreK-12

Enrollment: 51,000

Free/reduced-price lunch:
77%

Making student learning relevant to everyday life

Bringing Learning to Life

Columbus City Schools

Columbus, Ohio

In survey after survey, students cite boredom and lack of experiences that connect schoolwork to the real world as underlying reasons for disengagement from school. Bringing Learning to Life is a program that helps students apply what they learn in the classroom to service projects in the community. The program received a three-year federal grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service that enhances an existing professional development agreement between the Columbus Education Association (CEA), Columbus City Schools, and The Ohio State University (OSU) College of Education and Human Ecology.

To increase academic success, especially among students in high-poverty schools, CEA and OSU teamed up to provide professional development to K-12 teachers in service-learning, a practice that unites academic instruction and learning with student-focused service in the community. The three-year grant allows Columbus teachers to enroll in a three-credit graduate course taught by an award-winning OSU faculty member.

In addition, these teachers are also eligible for mini-grants to implement hands-on community projects with students. Through the projects, students become leaders who contribute action to deserving community-based organizations, using what they are learning in class to analyze and address real-life community challenges. Typically, students become more engaged in school as they begin to see themselves as civic and socially responsible agents of change. Over the course of the three-year project period, nearly 2,000 Columbus City students will experience civic engagement and academically aligned community service firsthand.

How the program works

Bringing Learning to Life evolved from an NEA-supported project that involved two community conversations in the Linden-McKinley neighborhood. Through those discussions, parents and students expressed frustration over the high school's lack of community connectedness that could help students visualize themselves as contributing adults. The program will help connect the school with the community.

NEA and the NEA Foundation provide project direction as well as grant administration and supervision. The OSU College of Education and Human Ecology

Community and Family-Community Programs

is responsible for instruction, the syllabus, evaluation, and assessment of teacher mini-grant applications. CEA handles purchase and distribution of materials, mini-grant dissemination, project promotion among members, and teacher recruitment for the program.

The first course offered by OSU took place during spring 2011, with 31 teachers who were chosen among 70 applicants. Another 35 teachers began their 10-week course in the summer of 2011. To expose teachers to potential service-learning partners, class sessions meet in the buildings of various community organizations in Columbus.

As part of this training, Te'Lario Watkins, a teacher at Linden-McKinley STEM Academy, is working with students on the project, "Water, Water, Everywhere." The students are participating in real-world hands-on investigations focusing on how improper disposal of hazardous materials affects water quality. They study the community water supply and work with organizations in the community that focus on reducing contamination and improving local water quality. Students then present what they have learned and make proposals for achieving a clean water supply in the Linden neighborhood of Columbus.

Evidence of effectiveness

According to the National Youth Leadership Council's K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice, effective service-learning initiatives include meaningful service, have explicit links to the curriculum, incorporate reflective practice, promote diversity, include youth voice, and engage in collaborative partnerships. The design of Bringing Learning to Life is aligned with this research and focuses on four primary goals:

- ▶ Gains in student achievement and other academic outcomes

- ▶ Improvements in student peer interactions, school attendance, enrollment in challenging programs, and participation in community service
- ▶ Improved relationships with parents, teachers, and community members
- ▶ High-quality service-learning initiatives and partnerships.

Exemplary practices

Providing meaningful professional development for teachers

- ▶ OSU's relationship with the district and the local affiliate offer a replicable model of high quality professional development.
- ▶ Teachers benefit from tuition waivers, free materials, and meeting at potential community-service sites.

Focusing on high-needs schools

- ▶ Teachers in high-poverty schools are given preference in the selection among applicants for the course.

Building community support and buy-in

- ▶ Community support is enhanced by the establishment of a project advisory board consisting of members from the board of education and a variety of key community organizations.
- ▶ The superintendent of Columbus City Schools is an important project advocate and has volunteered to host an initial principals' advisory meeting to increase administrative support.

Scaling up the program

- ▶ The project aims to broaden the use of service-learning throughout the district by establishing a culture of service-learning supported by formal policies and academic practices—first at the classroom level, then schoolwide, and eventually districtwide.

Outlook

Many aspects of this project can be replicated in any school district that establishes a partnership with an institution of higher learning. The program will seek additional funding from private foundations beyond the three-year government grant period.

Association perspective

The program is a partnership between the Columbus Education Association, the Columbus City Schools, and The Ohio State University. As local president Rhonda Johnson puts it: "What I love about this program is that it provides both students and teachers an opportunity to tackle real community problems, and at the same time, develop 21st century skills like collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and communications."

Local contacts

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Related information

Report card: www.ode.state.oh.us/reportcardfiles/2009-2010/DIST/043802.pdf

Bringing Learning to Life flier and application:
<http://bit.ly/qp3XwK>

NEA Foundation website: www.neafoundation.org/listings/news-release/nea-foundation-awarded-550k-to-develop-national-model-for-service-learning/

More information on service-learning

Corporation for National and Community Service:
www.nationalservice.gov

Learn and Serve Ohio: www.serveohio.org/NationalService_LS.aspx

Ohio Campus Compact:
www.ohiocampuscompact.org/

Ohio United Way: www.ouw.org

National Network for Youth: www.nn4youth.org

Youth Service America: www.ysa.org

Programs to Engage Parents and Other Family Members

SNAPSHOT

Program:

Academic Parent-Teacher Teams

District:

Creighton Elementary School District

Location: Phoenix, Ariz.

Grades: K-8

Enrollment: 6,800

Free/reduced-price lunch: 90%

ELL: 40%

Coaching parents as team members

Academic Parent-Teacher Teams

Creighton Elementary School District

Phoenix, Arizona

When parents are engaged in their child's learning, they can help their child strengthen academic skills outside of school. Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APTT) provides a structure for parents to meet with the teacher and converse with other parents while also learning ways to support their child's academic skill development. Founded in 2008, APTT resulted from efforts to increase student learning through support beyond the school day.

The program replaces traditional parent-teacher conferences with three classroom team meetings for parents and one 30-minute individual parent-teacher conference (or more if needed). At the team meetings, the teacher models activities that parents can do at home with their children. The teacher also presents academic performance data for the class and gives parents individual information about their own child's performance.

"Many parents wonder what the parents of kids at the top of the class are doing at home to make that happen," says Maria Paredes, who started the program and until recently was the district's director of community education. "Parents give other parents ideas for successful practice at home. It forms a community." Opportunities for parents to network with one another are especially important in the Creighton Elementary School District, where 85 percent of students are Hispanic and 40 percent are English Language Learners.

How the program works

The program is led by the school district's director of community education, who provides ongoing professional development to school administrators, teachers, and parent liaisons (each school has a parent liaison on staff). Teachers participate in the program voluntarily, and 90 percent of teachers in the district are now participating.

In place of traditional, twice-a-year parent-teacher conferences, there are three 75-minute classroom team meetings and one 30-minute individual parent-teacher conference each year. Teachers send personal letters inviting parents to the meetings.



Programs to Engage Parents and Other Family Members

At the team meetings, the teacher models activities that parents can do at home with their children, and parents practice the activities together in small groups. The teacher also presents academic performance data for the class as a whole and gives parents individual information about their own child's performance. The teacher helps parents set 60-day parent-student academic goals for their child.

At the 30-minute individual conference, parents and teachers create an action plan to optimize learning. Additional conferences may be arranged if needed. Because many of the parents speak only Spanish, the program provides translators for the team meetings, and when possible, makes materials available in the parents' home language. The program receives funding from the federal Title I program.

Joshua Briese, a fourth-grade teacher at Excelencia Elementary School, began using APTT last year and found it especially useful for opening a communication channel with parents early in the school year. "If I can get students doing anything at home related to what we do at school, it will have an impact," he says.

Evidence of effectiveness

- ▶ Teacher participation has grown quickly. The program began with 12 teachers in 2009-2010 and expanded the next year to include 97 teachers. All nine schools in the district are participating. For the 2011-2012 school year, 173 teachers—90 percent of all teachers in the district—have been trained to participate. Many parents have encouraged their children's teachers to take part in the program.
- ▶ Test data show remarkable short-term academic gains among first graders in APTT classes. Among 188 students tested in the fall of 2009, oral reading fluency (ISTEEP ORF) scores in APTT classrooms rose nearly 25 points, while in non-APTT

classrooms, oral reading fluency rose only about 10 points. In August 2009, all classes averaged about 15.55; by November, the ISTEEP scores in APTT classes averaged 40.31, while scores in non-APTT classrooms averaged about 25.

- ▶ Paredes says the rate of participation among fathers is higher at the team meetings than at conventional parent-teacher conferences. Fathers have said that they are very interested in academics and wanted to be involved in understanding their children's progress.
- ▶ Preliminary data shows a 92 percent parent attendance rate at the team meetings, which is much higher than participation at conventional parent-teacher conferences in the Creighton district, according to Paredes.

Exemplary practices

Encouraging teacher collaboration: Teachers meet three times a year for 90 minutes before each team meeting to plan, problem-solve, and share practices. Grade-level teams also have planning time to analyze data, develop goals, and share ideas. These meetings are facilitated by a school data expert and Title I coordinator.

Sharing student performance data with parents: The class-level and individual-level student data that teachers share with parents becomes each student's academic goals. Parents' access to student performance data encourages high expectations and increases efforts to help students practice academic skills at home.

Reaching out to families: Teachers send all families a personalized invitation to the team meetings on school letterhead and follow up with personal calls. Students also encourage their parents to come. If a family cannot attend, teachers must find an

alternative time to share the information with them. The opportunity to receive coaching and support encourages parents to become more involved.

Forming partnerships: The APTT program has established meaningful partnerships with the local community college, Arizona State University, APIRC, Helios Education Foundation, and Rio Salado College. The partners are collaborating on a policy initiative to set higher standards for family engagement programs in Arizona.

Outlook

The APTT program has been spreading to other districts in Arizona and beyond, including Nevada, Colorado, California, and Washington, D.C. Several additional states have shown interest. The model is sustainable because teachers and parents become experts in implementing it, and because it can be supported with Title I funds.

Association perspective

Jason Schnee, president of the Creighton Education Association (CEA), says, “We in CEA fully support the APTT model and encourage all of the individuals who wish to use it to indeed do so. It is a great model and one which has sound research behind it.”

Local contacts

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Note: Paredes owns the copyright to APTT materials. Contact her for more information.

Jason Schnee, president,
Creighton Education Association
602-429-9232; president@creightonea.org

Related information

Report card: www.creightonschools.org

“Preparing Teachers to Engage Families Around Student Data,” Harvard Family Research Project, <http://hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/preparing-teachers-to-engage-families-around-student-data>



Programs to Engage Parents and Other Family Members

SNAPSHOT

Program:

Parent-Teacher Home Visit Project

District:

Sacramento City Unified School District

Location:

Sacramento, Calif.

Grades: K-12

Enrollment: 48,200 students

Free/reduced-price lunch: 66%

ELL: 25%

Boosting student success through home visits

Parent-Teacher Home Visit Project Sacramento City Unified School District *Sacramento, California*

Founded in 1998, the Parent-Teacher Home Visit Project (PTHVP) is collaboration among three partners: the school district, the Sacramento City Teachers Association, and the faith-based community organizing group Sacramento ACT. Designed to address the chronic low performance of local schools and a pervasive cycle of blame between school staff and community members, PTHVP trains teachers to make home visits to families, which build relationships and foster parent-teacher collaboration to improve student achievement.

Participation is voluntary, and teachers are paid for their time. Evaluations have found that the visits lead to increased student attendance, improved test scores, and reduced suspension and expulsion rates. More than 80 percent of students in the district are of color, and 25 percent are English Language Learners. The program is being adopted in several other states, including Colorado, Massachusetts, Montana, and Ohio.

Sarah Gebre, a parent who emigrated from Ethiopia, says, "After the home visit, I felt very respected and comfortable. I started to participate in my child's school. I felt more comfortable to talk to the teachers and ask them questions about my son."

How the program works

PTHVP is a nonprofit organization with four staff members and a cadre of about 30 parent and teacher trainers. Participating schools have a site coordinator; teachers make visits in teams of two and receive one hour of compensation for each visit. Before making visits, the teachers receive instruction and support from PTHVP trainers.

At the elementary school level, home visits take place in the fall and spring. At the end of the first visit, teachers invite the family to come to the school and they develop a plan to communicate throughout the school year. The second visit occurs just before spring testing. In middle and high school, teachers visit the homes of seventh, ninth, and tenth graders and focus on key school transitions. The visits that take place in eleventh and twelfth grades focus on timely graduation and career or college planning.

Programs to Engage Parents and Other Family Members

Middle school teacher Tarik McFall recounts a home visit in which the mother told McFall that she hoped her son would do well in school and go to college someday. The son was present and heard what his mother said. "I think hearing her say those words to his teacher really influenced him to do well in school," McFall says. "For the rest of the year, DeJanerio really evolved into an excellent leader and even scored 'proficient' in math on the CST!"

PTHVP receives its funding from foundations and corporations and from fees for its training and materials offered in other districts. PTHVP covers the cost of training teachers. The district is responsible only for coordinating the program and compensating teachers for the visits, which is largely covered by the federal Title I program.

Evidence of effectiveness

- ▶ A 1998-2001 study of 14 pilot home visit schools, by Dr. Geni Cowan of California State University at Sacramento, found the program to be associated with improved student performance, increased parent involvement, and enhanced communication between home and school. The schools credited PTHVP with making "a critical difference" in improving student STAR scores.
- ▶ A 2003 evaluation of PTHVP training and materials by EMT Associates found successful implementation of the program. Teachers identified several benefits, including increased parent involvement, improved parent-teacher relationships, and improved student achievement.
- ▶ In 2007, the Center for Student Assessment and Program Accountability, Sacramento County Office of Education, found that the home visit pilot project "has been associated with positive attitudinal shifts among students and parents toward school and the future, as well as with positive behavioral changes associated with improved academic outcomes."
- ▶ Recognition and awards include a citation from former U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley; numerous stories in local, state, and national media; and recognition in the September 2005 issue of *Edutopia* magazine as "one of ten big ideas for better schools."

Exemplary practices

Building collaborative relationships: Working from a community organizing model, PTHVP places a premium on relationships. Teachers visit K-12 families with two main goals:

1. To build connection and trust by listening to families and understanding their expertise and strengths
2. To share information about the child's academic status and offer tools for parents to work with students at home.

Agreeing on core values: The PTHVP partners took time at the outset to reach agreement on their attitudes and beliefs. They identified the following core values:

- ▶ Families and teachers are equally important co-educators. The family is the expert on the child, and the teacher is the expert on the curriculum the child needs to master to be successful.
- ▶ Before teachers can effectively share important information about academic status, teachers and parents must establish positive communication and address any communication barriers.
- ▶ Teachers must visit all students and families because only targeting challenging students will perpetuate the cycle of mistrust.

- ▶ All parents can assist in their children's academic success; effective family involvement can happen in every home.
- ▶ Participation in the project should be voluntary, and teachers receive compensation for their time.

Getting buy-in from the district and teachers' union:

Through a series of conversations with local families and community members, Sacramento ACT learned that families felt unwelcome and disconnected from their children's schools. ACT approached the school district and the Sacramento City Teachers Association and convinced them to become partners in planning and implementing the program. This collaboration allowed the home visit initiative to be developed with teacher and parent input within the framework of the existing collective bargaining contract.

Outlook

PTHVP has formed a national collaborative that holds monthly teleconferences and meets annually to share best practices. School communities around the country are participating, and several districts in California and other states now offer the program. These include schools and districts in Alaska, Montana, California, Colorado, Iowa, Minnesota, Ohio, Washington, Massachusetts, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. In support of this expansion, PTHVP is developing regional training teams to increase training capacity for existing sites and availability for new communities.

Association perspective

The Sacramento City Teachers Association was one of the original core partners in establishing this project. In addition, the California Teachers Association (CTA) Institute for Teaching actively supports PTHVP. The NEA Foundation has supported the expansion of

the project to other sites, and it has hosted annual meetings of site teams in Washington, D.C.

Says Scott Smith, president of the Sacramento City Teachers Association: "The Parent-Teacher Home Visit Project is an evidence-based model of collaboration. It underscores the importance of school-family collaboration in improving student outcomes. We are proud to have been at the table in co-designing PTHVP with community partners, and we encourage our fellow Association members around the country to work toward building effective strategies that boost parent and community involvement."

Local contact

Carrie Rose, executive director,
Parent-Teacher Home Visit Project
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Related information

Report card: <http://bit.ly/p5DlMh>

Project website: www.pthvp.org

Programs to Engage Parents and Other Family Members

SNAPSHOT

Program:

Revitalizing the Title I School-Parent Compact

School: Geraldine W. Johnson Elementary-Middle School

District: Bridgeport, Conn.

Grades: K-12

Enrollment: 840

Free/reduced-price lunch: 100%

ELL: 42%

Linking the school-parent compact to school improvement goals

Revitalizing the Title I School-Parent Compact

Geraldine W. Johnson Elementary-Middle School

Bridgeport, Connecticut

When Johnson Elementary-Middle School opened as a new school in 2008, Principal Marlene Roberts wanted the School-Parent Compact mandated under Title I to play a vital role in the school community. That same year, the Connecticut Department of Education announced a program to refresh school-parent compacts. Roberts seized the opportunity to link her school's compact to school improvement goals and engage families in ways that would truly help students succeed.

Now teachers and families are collaborating to bring students' academic skills to grade level. In fact, the effort involves the whole school community, including classroom teachers, the School Leadership Team, and the parent organization. Each grade level has its own compact for achieving Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

According to Roberts, "We found that parents want to know how to help. They ask: 'What is our role to prepare our kids for college? How can we be involved in middle school?' Now teachers are making themselves available to confer with parents, and our families are becoming more engaged each year."



How the program works

Teachers meet about twice a month for 30 minutes in grade-level "data" teams to discuss how students are doing. At the beginning of the school year, each team identifies two or three skills on which to focus and develops strategies that families can use to promote learning at home. Based on those conversations, teachers design workshops and home-based learning activities, such as questions to ask while watching a movie or ideas for using math at the grocery store. The workshops and activities become part of a written school-parent compact in which teachers and families agree to collaborate.

Programs to Engage Parents and Other Family Members

"The compact ties things together and brings us closer," says Nicole FitzSimmons, a sixth-grade teacher. She finds that the math workshops refresh parents' skills in solving equations and other areas of sixth-grade math. "It's fun, not stressful," she adds.

Evidence of effectiveness

- ▶ Student performance at Johnson remains uneven, but scores for students in third, sixth, and eighth grades are improving. In 2011-2012, the focus will be on reading. According to Assistant Principal Deborah Tisdale, some of the youngest teachers have been particularly active in the program. "Our new teachers are energetic and enthusiastic, and they have led the effort, although all teachers are more willing to open their doors to parents and to help each other by working as a team," she says. "Teachers are spending more time with students after school to help them with homework, and parent involvement is increasing each year."
- ▶ Data from the Connecticut State Department of Education show that the quality of compacts at Geraldine Johnson has improved dramatically, according to Judy Carson, the director of the state's School-Family-Community Partnerships Project. On a rigorous rating scale designed by Carson, the school's compact has jumped from a rating of 10 to 18 on a 20-point scale. Because the school is new, long-term student achievement data are not yet available.

Exemplary practices

Linking to data: Grade-level teams steadily track student progress and identify areas where students' skills need strengthening. Thanks to the communications process set up through the compact, parents receive information regularly from teachers, and they use it

to work with their children at home. Teachers offer workshops and family learning activities tied to improving student performance in key skill areas.

Personally inviting families to participate: The Johnson school community and the United Way created a phone squad to call families and offer personal invitations to the workshops. Workshops begin at 5:30 p.m., immediately following the Lighthouse afterschool program. Parents are recruited at the door, and participating families receive a pizza dinner and a basket of five books.

Building on existing practice: Teachers' data team meetings take place about twice a month while the students are at a special class. Teachers also have planning time scheduled twice a month. The time that teachers spend developing compacts is coupled with meetings that are already on the schedule and in the teacher contract.

Outlook

Title I law says that each school must have a School-Parent Compact that describes how teachers and families will work to improve student learning. The Bridgeport school district now requires all schools to revamp their compacts and link them to the school improvement plan. In addition, the district offers technical assistance and support to help schools develop and carry out high quality compacts. The Connecticut State Department of Education is so pleased with the success of Geraldine W. Johnson Elementary-Middle School and the other 15 schools in the state pilot program that it plans to offer training and technical assistance on revitalizing School-Parent Compacts to all schools in the state, starting in the 2011-2012 school year.

Association perspective

As Bridgeport Education Association President Gary Peluchette puts it: “I applaud the efforts our members are making to establish school-family partnerships through the Title I School-Parent Compact. We all realize that this type of collaboration is a key component in our students’ success.”

Local contact

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Related information

Report cards:

<http://ctayp.emetric.net>

www.ctreports.com



Programs to Engage Parents and Other Family Members

SNAPSHOT

Program:

Climate and Culture Committee

School:

Math and Science Leadership Academy

District:

Denver Public Schools

Location: Denver, Colo.

Grades: K-4

Enrollment: 265

Free/reduced-price lunch:

More than 90%

ELL: 60%

Making family collaboration integral to the school culture

Climate and Culture Committee

Math and Science Leadership Academy

Denver, Colorado

The teacher-led Math and Science Leadership Academy (MSLA) engages all members of the school community, including parents, in all aspects of school life. Founded in 2009, MSLA is a collaboration among teachers, their union (the Denver Classroom Teachers Association), and Denver Public Schools. In addition to traditional academics, students engage in hands-on learning and service-learning projects using knowledge gained in the classroom to conduct real-world, community-based projects. The program develops leadership skills and encourages civic responsibility.

The school's vision includes a culture of deliberate partnerships with parents and community groups. About 90 percent of the students are Latino; 60 percent are English Language Learners; and more than 90 percent are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. The school currently has 16 teachers serving 265 students in K-4. While maintaining small class sizes, the school has been adding one grade per year to reach K-5 in 2012-2013. MSLA's Climate and Culture Committee (CCC) plans activities—in collaboration with the school's Parent Teacher Organization—which are designed to engage families fully in the school culture.

How the program works

Led by a core group of six staff members, the CCC coordinates MSLA's family engagement programs in collaboration with a core group of parents. One program, for example, focuses on the school's constructive discipline program, "Conscious Discipline." CCC members explain the program's philosophy to families to help them adopt the practices at home. CCC co-chair Paty Holt often does home visits to deepen relationships with families.

The evening before school starts in the fall, MSLA has an open house for students and families, with an orientation program and a chance to meet the teacher. Once a month, the school also invites families to an evening of activities for parents and children to do together, which are set up in different stations around the school. Each month has a theme, such as math, science, literacy, or the arts. "The focus is on supporting kids' learning at home," says co-

Programs to Engage Parents and Other Family Members

lead teacher Lori Nazareno, who notes that a majority of students' family members have been attending the monthly evening events. Each spring, the school invites incoming students for the fall to a barbecue/open house for the whole family.

MSLA has an open door policy that welcomes parents to volunteer in the classroom or simply visit and observe. The CCC is developing a curriculum for training parents as classroom helpers.

The school also has an independent Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) that plans and carries out its own activities in collaboration with the CCC. Last year, PTO leaders included four moms who met regularly with one of the teachers, CCC co-chair Paty Holt. "We planned a very popular Literacy Day and Night with a bunch of fun activities. The moms really wanted the Cat in the Hat to come and read stories to kids, so we were able to convince Lori [co-lead teacher] to dress up as the Cat. The children were so happy, and the event was a huge success," says Holt.

MSLA is funded by the school district through its per-pupil allocation. It also is a Title I school.

Evidence of effectiveness

For the 2010-2011 school year, MSLA expanded to include a third grade, which was the first class subject to state standardized tests. Two years' worth of test scores, beginning at third grade, are required to measure growth. Next year, the school will receive its first rating under the School Performance Framework.

Meanwhile, parents attest to their children's academic growth:

- ▶ One parent of a third grader said of her son, "He's grown a lot—leaps and bounds. His skills have improved all across the board."

- ▶ Another parent talked about her son's reading success: "He's had issues with his reading, and now he's up to grade level. I'm very pleased with the school."

The school has added a fourth grade for the 2011-2012 school year.

Results from the Parent Satisfaction Survey for 2009-2010 show that in nearly every category, more than 90 percent of parents give the school positive ratings, which is well above the district average in all categories. For example, under school culture, 97 percent of families say the school is a place where parents are treated with respect, compared with the district average of 89 percent.

Exemplary practices

Creating a welcoming environment

- ▶ Open door policy: the school welcomes parents to volunteer in the classroom or simply visit and observe.
- ▶ The CCC plans activities designed to fully engage families in the school culture.

Establishing collaborative relationships

- ▶ Teachers as co-leaders: Two teachers take on administrative duties as "lead teachers," performing the traditional role of a principal.
- ▶ Parents as co-leaders: Student recruitment is parent initiated and parent driven. Parents asked the school for fliers, which they use informally to spread information about the school.
- ▶ The CCC is composed of six staff members and meets regularly with the PTO.
- ▶ The CCC is developing a curriculum for training parents as classroom helpers.

Setting high expectations for students and families

- ▶ Faculty and staff attribute the school's growing numbers of students and families to its focus, rigor, high expectations, and inclusive culture.

Outlook

MSLA has been expanding by one grade per year, with the goal of becoming a K-5 school by 2012-2013.

Association perspective

Denver Classroom Teachers Association President Henry Roman summarizes his union's support: "One of the key strategies that makes MSLA work is the mutual agreement of all partners—families, educators, community—to set the bar high for our students. It's worth re-thinking your approach to involving parents, particularly if students aren't working up to their potential. What's even better is if your approach is grounded in what's been shown to work."

Local contact

Lori Nazareno, co-lead teacher, MSLA
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Related information

School website: www.msladenver.org

CNN: "Teacher turns 'crazy idea' into new school,"
<http://bit.ly/eMdZjG>

Programs to Engage Parents and Other Family Members

SNAPSHOT

Program:

Hispanic Parents Council

School:

Capt. James E. Daly Jr. Elementary School

District:

Montgomery County Public Schools

Location: Germantown, Md.

Grades: PreK-5

Enrollment: 580 (2011-2012)

Free/reduced-price lunch: 62%

ELL: 30%

Creating a community of trust and cultivating parent leadership

Hispanic Parents Council

Capt. James E. Daly Jr. Elementary School

Germantown, Maryland

When Nora Dietz became the principal of Daly Elementary in 2007, she found a growing number of English Language Learners from low-income families. Many of these students were at high risk for school failure, so she was determined to connect with their families. Together with faculty, staff, and Assistant Principal Susan Zimmerman-Orozco, Dietz began several initiatives that led to the creation of the Hispanic Parents Council: a summer program that encourages rapport with parents, afterschool programs that involve community partnerships, and monthly workshops for parents, conducted in Spanish. Dietz's next goal is to create an African American Parents Council.

In a county known for its affluence, 62 percent of Daly Elementary School's student body is eligible for free and reduced-price meals, and 30 percent are English Language Learners. Nearly 40 percent of students are Hispanic, 35 percent are African American, 12.5 percent are white, and 8 percent are Asian.

"Parent outreach is...much more than ticking off a checklist of prescribed action steps for building home-school connections," wrote Zimmerman-Orozco in a recent *Education Leadership* article about the school. "At its most meaningful, parent involvement is about creating a community of trust, a school culture in which families want to give back to the school as much as they may need to take from it."



How the program works

The Hispanic Parents Council evolved from grassroots efforts run by the school. Teachers, school staff, administrators, and others volunteer their time in a variety of ways. For several summers, the school offered a weekly evening of literacy activities, arts and crafts, computer activities, and sports at a county recreation center near the trailer park where many Hispanic students live. Many parents attended along with their children, which helped establish strong rapport and trust between home and school.

Programs to Engage Parents and Other Family Members

The current closing of the recreation center for a two-year renovation presented a challenge. The school responded by arranging scholarships or tuition waivers for the neediest students to attend a regional summer school program hosted by the school for students from Daly and other schools in the county. To maintain contact with the Hispanic families, school administrators and teachers hosted a meet-and-greet event in the parking lot of the trailer park in May and again shortly before the start of the 2010-2011 school year. Several bilingual parents volunteered as interpreters.

During the school year, Daly Elementary offers monthly workshops, in Spanish, which address topics suggested by the parents, such as reading and math instruction, state assessments, bullying, gang prevention, and Internet safety. The school offers free pizza and child care to families that attend.

These workshops have evolved into the Hispanic Parents Council, organized by Hispanic parent leaders. The council is now becoming a full partner in school improvement efforts. For example, when parents expressed an interest in computer literacy, one of the Hispanic parents volunteered to teach a computer class in Spanish. Parents also identified a need for afterschool programs during the winter months. The school arranged for afterschool karate and Latin dance fitness instruction on campus, with scholarships arranged through partnerships with instructors in the community. In addition, afterschool instructional programs run by teachers include extended study twice a week, January through March, to help students prepare for state testing

Evidence of effectiveness

- ▶ Although Daly Elementary did not fully achieve Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2010, the school did reach its targets for Hispanic students and all

other subgroups except special education and Free And Reduced Meal Service (FARMS) students.

- ▶ More than 90 percent of parents responding to a survey indicated that the school does a good job of welcoming and respecting diverse families. <http://bit.ly/nXJU9U>
- ▶ The administration reports significant behavior improvement—the number of referrals dropped from more than 300 in 2009-2010 to only 98 in 2010-2011.
- ▶ Administrators report significant growth in the participation of Hispanic parents in all facets of school life, from volunteering in the classroom to accompanying their child's class on field trips and attending parent-teacher conferences.

Exemplary practices

Adopting a culturally sensitive approach

- ▶ School leaders recognize that Hispanic culture and values emphasize personal interaction, a relaxed sense of time, and an informal atmosphere for communication. At meetings with Hispanic families, parents and staff share their hopes and dreams for the children and discuss how to make them a reality.
- ▶ The leadership team at Daly has been proactive in making home visits to greet parents and listen to their concerns. Teachers sometimes intervene in situations that put a child's health or safety at risk.
- ▶ Hispanic Parents Council meetings are conducted in Spanish, and parents set the agenda and topics for discussion.

Creating an inclusive climate

- ▶ The school believes and acts upon its core commitment to "creating a welcoming school climate and nurturing personal relationships." Sharing this commitment is a condition for being a teacher there.

- ▶ Adults at the school get to know the children and their families on a personal level. If a child has missed several days of school, they check in with the family.

Drawing on community support

- ▶ The afterschool karate and dance-fitness classes were arranged with community partners in response to a concern expressed by Hispanic parents about the need for more activities after school in the winter.

Outlook

Daly Elementary School's success at cultivating parent leaders to engage fellow parents sets an inspiring example for other schools. In July 2011, Dietz and two parents of Hispanic students at Daly were invited to a Community Leaders Forum at the White House.

Association perspective

Montgomery County Education Association President Doug Prouty sums up the success of this program: "What makes this program work is the incredible trust it generates between families, educators, and administrators. MCEA is proud of the level of engagement by our members at Daly Elementary School and their contributions and commitment to improving student outcomes."

Local contacts

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Jon Gerson, MCEA field representative
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Related information

Report card: <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/about/MCPSResultsBook.pdf>

"A Circle of Caring: Success in engaging Hispanic parents depends on creating a school culture that welcomes all," article by Susan Zimmerman-Orozco, assistant principal at Daly, accessible to ASCD members at www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/may11/vol68/num08/A-Circle-of-Caring.aspx



Programs to Engage Parents and Other Family Members

SNAPSHOT

Program:

Infinite Campus Parent Portal, Ninth Grade Outreach Program

District:

Washoe County School District

Location:

Reno, Nev.

Grades: PreK-12 with focus on 9th grade

Enrollment: 62,431 students, including 18,854 in high school

Free/reduced-price lunch: 41%

ELL: 18%

Helping families use data to support high school students

Infinite Campus Parent Portal, Ninth Grade Outreach Program Washoe County School District *Reno, Nevada*

Monitoring a child's grades, homework completion, and attendance is often one of the best things parents can do to guide a child's progress in middle and high school. In 2008, Washoe County School District (WCSD) introduced online access for parents to view their child's attendance and achievement data, but soon the district realized that parents did not have equitable access to the information. For many families, especially those with limited English or limited formal education, lack of Internet access at home and lack of computer literacy skills were formidable barriers.

During the 2009-2010 school year, district staff for family engagement began checking usage data to identify families that had not accessed the online tool. Among students who receive free or reduced lunch, 72 percent did not have an active parent account; among ELL students, 74 percent did not have an active parent account. Because ninth grade is a critical year for students, family engagement staff at the school and district levels developed a program to reach families with no activated account and support them with training and access to the online tool.

Glenn Waddell, a math teacher at North Valleys High School in Reno, says that the Infinite Campus (IC) Parent Portal is removing barriers and making it easy for parents to see what is occurring in the classroom. "The instantaneous nature of IC creates many more opportunities for parents to engage their learner and the teacher in the course material and assignments," he says. "Once parents' and teachers' goals are aligned in pushing learner achievement, the learner can't help but be more engaged."

Now, families report they can have well-informed conversations with their children about how they are doing in school and can collaborate with teachers to help students make up missed assignments. Ana Barajas, mother of a ninth grader, said, "The parent portal helped me to check his grades and open the communication between his teachers and me. It really helped me to be part of his education. I'm trying to show him that I care about his education." Only

Programs to Engage Parents and Other Family Members

about 45 percent of Hispanic students in Washoe County graduate from high school with their cohort.

How the program works

The program is staffed by three members of the district's Family School Partnership Office, as well as staff from the state's Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC) and school-based parent involvement facilitators at the 12 comprehensive high schools. Using the district's Risk Index for students, families of all ninth-grade students with a score above three (on a one-to-10 scale) were targeted. The parent involvement facilitators, who are AmeriCorps volunteers, reach out to the families on the list for their high school and provide support and training on how to use the online tool.

The portal has real-time information for each student, with red flags identifying problem areas. The information includes:

- ▶ Attendance for each class, including excused and unexcused absences and tardiness
- ▶ Grades for assignments, quizzes, and tests in each class
- ▶ Upcoming assignments for each class.

Workshops for parents explain what information is available and how to access and use it. The workshops are kept small, so that facilitators and district staff can have individual conversations with parents and develop an action plan for each student. For example, a student whose attendance falls below 90 percent in any class will not receive credit for that class. Parents learn how to track attendance and press their children to attend class and earn credit. They also learn how to obtain tutoring and other academic support to help their child make up assignments.

The district has created resources that schools can use to inform parents about the Infinite Campus Parent Portal. A training toolkit, support videos, and kiosk materials are available in English and Spanish. District bond funding also provided the resources to establish a kiosk at each of the district's 94 schools and at local libraries and community centers.

Evidence of effectiveness

The district is still studying the impact of the program. The 2010-2011 school year was the first that WCSD could correlate parent portal activation and student achievement data. This first year, the focus has been to reach out and support the families of the district's 1,322 ninth graders who were deemed "at risk" based on the district's Risk Index. Of these, 582 parents have activated their parent portal account, and 397 have logged in more than once. By the middle of the 2010-2011 school year, 601 students on the Risk Index list had earned three or more credits to be on track for graduation.

Exemplary practices

Providing support for parent-teacher collaboration:

Teachers can determine which parents in their classes do not have active parent portal accounts and contact parent involvement facilitators—many of whom are bilingual—to help families open their accounts. The parent involvement facilitators also encourage families to contact teachers and schedule conferences about how to help their students. Washoe County high schools offer parent-teacher conferences only upon request.

Targeting areas of specific need: The program is primarily targeted to ninth-grade students who are at risk. Using the parent portal, families can identify the classes in which their students are struggling and focus on helping to raise attendance and assignment completion rates. The trainings have led to conversations about attendance, unexcused

absences, missing assignments, credits earned, and how these matters relate to high school graduation.

Building community support and buy-in: The state's Parent Information and Resource Center at the Education Alliance helps to provide training to enable more parents to use the portal. The Boys & Girls Club and county libraries offer computer kiosks where parents can log in to check their child's progress. The district also has worked with Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Northern Nevada to provide mentors with access to the parent portal if the family has given permission. The mentors often serve as a bridge between school and family.

Aligning information with the teacher evaluation process: Washoe County has a federal grant to upgrade its teacher evaluation system. The new evaluation criteria include several items on family engagement: helping families to navigate the educational system; sharing information about the instructional program; helping families to support learning; sharing information about the instructional program; and understanding cultural differences. Helping families use the parent portal and participating in the district's Parent-Teacher Home Visit Project are among the criteria for showing evidence of effectiveness. After a positive home visit, family members often log in to the parent portal.

Outlook

During the 2010-2011 school year, the district transitioned from using Edline for middle and high schools to using the Infinite Campus Parent Portal for all 94 schools. The district is establishing baseline data on the number of students at each school who are associated with at least one active parent account. The district will be setting targets and asking each school to achieve growth in the number of active parent accounts during the 2011-2012 school year. District staff members look at usage data internally to

determine growth, and they collect parent evaluations from workshops.

Association perspective

The Washoe Education Association (WEA) is a key partner in the school district's family engagement efforts. In addition, WEA worked with the school district in establishing criteria for teacher-family engagement. WEA supports the Infinite Campus Parent Portal outreach initiative and is also a partner in the local adoption of the Parent-Teacher Home Visit Project model.

Dana Galvin, WEA president, offers a personal perspective as well: "My younger daughter is a senior who attends one of Washoe County's high schools. I have been using the Infinite Campus Parent Portal for over a year now. It is easy to navigate. I can leave and receive messages from her teachers, and it is updated frequently."

Local contact

D'Lisa Crain, administrator, Family School Partnerships
775-325-2000; dcrain@washoeschools.net

Related information

Report card: www.nevadareportcard.com/profile/pdf/09-10/16.E.pdf

Parent resources: www.washoe.k12.nv.us/parents/parent-involvement/school-resources

Harvard Family Research Project Issue Brief, "**Breaking New Ground: Data Systems Transform Family Engagement in Education**," January 2011, www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/breaking-new-ground-data-systems-transform-family-engagement-in-education2

Programs to Engage Parents and Other Family Members

SNAPSHOT

Program:

Before- and Afterschool Support Programs

School:

Elmont Memorial Junior-Senior High School

District:

Sewanhaka Central High School District

Location: Elmont, N.Y.

Grades: 7-12

Enrollment: 1962

Free/reduced-price lunch: 35%

Providing personalized student and parent support

Before- and Afterschool Support Programs

Elmont Memorial Junior-Senior High School

Elmont, New York

Elmont Memorial Junior-Senior High School's before- and afterschool support programs take a personalized approach to student and parent support. Initially, the school's afterschool programs were created to provide additional support for class work and for the New York State assessments and New York State Regents Examinations. Over the past six years, the programs have expanded to address the diverse needs of Elmont students, particularly at the junior high school level. Before- and afterschool programs in grades seven and eight are organized around the junior high school's Interdisciplinary Team Centers and staffed by Team Center teachers. Students can use the time to complete homework, get extra help from a teacher, or make up missed assignments. Some seventh- and eighth-grade students are also selected for Achievement Academy classes, which provide small group instruction.

Communication with parents is an integral part of the support programs for seventh and eighth graders. "Everything stems from personalized student attention, and you can't do that without the parents," says John Capozzi, Elmont's principal. Teachers meet with parents before and after school hours to discuss student progress and also meet with parents during their planning time. Parents are included in the process of developing individualized academic intervention plans for students who show academic difficulty.

The support programs also provide much-needed adult supervision beyond school hours, an especially important resource for the school's many single-

parent households. Elmont Junior-Senior High School has a large immigrant population, including a high percentage of families from the Caribbean. Although more than 90 percent of students in the Sewanhaka district are white, Elmont's student population is about 77 percent African American, 13 percent Hispanic, 8 percent Asian, and 1 percent white. Sewanhaka Central High School District is geographically large. It serves students from multiple elementary school districts in the western portion of Nassau County. Elmont students have access to specialized courses at other high schools in the district.



Programs to Engage Parents and Other Family Members

How the programs work

All the school's before- and afterschool support programs are staffed by Elmont teachers, including the seventh- and eighth-grade Team Center teachers who run the programs for those grades. More than 70 Elmont teachers currently work in the various programs, which are open to all students. When speaking with parents at team meetings, teachers can offer before- and afterschool sessions to students as a way to make up missed work, study for a test, or receive extra skill practice.

The programs involve regular communication with family members of the 600 or so seventh- and eighth-grade students at Elmont. Close contact between school and home continues in the high school years. Operation Success, for students in grades nine through twelve, offers course-specific instruction beyond regular school hours, as well as Regents Exam and state assessment review classes.

In addition to home-school communication, the programs rely on strong cooperation between teachers and the administration. Teachers are given autonomy over the content of before- and afterschool review sessions and can assign sessions to students as an academic intervention. Teachers create their own review materials for class sessions and tailor the instruction to students' needs.

The budget for these programs in 2010-2011 was \$138,000; funds come primarily from Title I but also include state and district sources.

Evidence of effectiveness

- ▶ Elmont has a more diverse student body than other high schools in the Sewanhaka district, and its student academic success is impressive. In 2010, Elmont had a graduation rate of 97 percent, compared to a rate of only 76 percent for New

York state. Some 91 percent of Elmont graduates entered college. In addition, 49 percent of Elmont students received advanced Regents diplomas in 2010, compared to only 31 percent in 2006. (Data for 2011 will be available in January 2012.)

- ▶ The school consistently makes Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), but because of changes in N.Y. state standards, current student performance data is not comparable with past data.

Exemplary practices

Emphasizing communication with families: Frequent interaction between teachers and families of seventh and eighth graders continues beyond grades seven and eight with a program for at-risk ninth graders. The high school's eight guidance counselors meet frequently with families to provide support ranging from academic intervention to college counseling.

When meeting with parents or speaking with them on the phone, teachers can offer academic support programs for students as a way to make up missed work, study for a test, or receive extra skill practice.

Developing individualized intervention plans:

Teachers develop individualized intervention plans for students who show academic difficulty, and parents are included in the process of developing these plans.

Coordinating classroom performance with

afterschool programs: Teachers can prescribe afterschool classes to address a student's academic needs. The afterschool programs are taught by Elmont classroom teachers, who are free to tailor the instruction to students' needs.

Outlook

Each year, the school evaluates the programs' effectiveness based on student achievement,

attendance records, and teacher feedback. Even if there were cuts in Title I or other funding, the school would give precedence to its before- and afterschool support programs. "We make it the top priority," says Assistant Principal Alicia Calabrese. "We think it's our charge to provide these support systems for our students."

Similar programs would be feasible in other school districts that have access to funding and give it sufficient priority.

Association perspective

Local union president Rosanne Mamo was involved in planning and organizing the Before- and Afterschool Support Programs from the outset. She sums up her perspective: "The Sewanhaka Federation of Teachers is very proud of this work.... Teachers at the school understand the diversity of the students and work diligently to meet the educational needs of all. The union and the district continue to work together to ensure our students receive the best education possible."

Local contacts

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Rosanne Mamo, president,
Sewanhaka Federation of Teachers
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Related information

Sewanhaka Central High School District report card:
<https://reportcards.nysed.gov/files/2009-10/AOR-2010-280252070000.pdf>

State report card, Elmont Memorial Senior High School: <https://reportcards.nysed.gov/files/2009-10/AOR-2010-280252070002.pdf>



Programs to Engage Parents and Other Family Members

SNAPSHOT

Program:

Compadres in Education

School:

Putnam City West High School

District:

Putnam City Schools

Location:

Oklahoma City, Okla.

Grades: 9-12

Enrollment: 1,600

Free/reduced-price lunch: 73%

ELL: 10%

Holding community conversations with Hispanic families

Compadres in Education

Putnam City West High School

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Putnam City West High School serves a rapidly changing, ethnically mixed cross-section of Oklahoma City, Okla. The student body turns over at a rate of 40 percent per year, and more than 70 percent of students come from low-income families. In 2007, with support from the National Education Association (NEA) and the Oklahoma Education Association (OEA), the high school staff and administrators began convening a series of community conversations about closing achievement gaps at the school. The result is Compadres in Education, a program of outreach to Hispanic families.

Since the program's inception in 2007, the graduation rate among Hispanic students has risen by nearly 70 percent and participation at Noche de Padres Hispánicos (Hispanic Family Night) has increased from 50 to more than 250 people. Use of service-learning, a proven means of motivating students, is growing. Putnam City West's student body is 39 percent white, 25 percent African American, 25 percent Hispanic, 6 percent Native American, and 3 percent Asian.

Assistant Principal Melanie Pealor says, "The bottom line is, 'What can I do to help my students to graduate, go on to secondary schools, and be successful?' We must have a partnership between the school, the families, and the community. And it's working!"

How the program works

NEA staff joined Dottie Hager, OEA's associate executive director, in training local community members to facilitate and record community conversation and building local capacity to sustain the program. In 2007, the school held three such conversations with Hispanic families and community members. Parents who attended the first conversation said they did not feel welcome at the school and needed information in Spanish about how the high school works. They asked the school to hire more bilingual staff members who could share information with them. In the ensuing conversations, parents asked for more

Programs to Engage Parents and Other Family Members

information about college admissions and requested improvements in the English Language Learners (ELL) program.

As a result of this feedback, the school began to hold meetings with its Hispanic families through a series of evening events called Noche de Padres Hispánicos or Hispanic Family Night, each focusing on a specific topic. One evening each quarter, the school opens its doors to students and their families. Many sessions focus on increasing graduation and college attendance rates:

- ▶ Presentations demonstrate the economic value of higher education, showing that students who have a bachelor's degree earn more than those who have only a high school diploma or a GED.
- ▶ Local colleges talk about their programs and encourage students to apply.
- ▶ Teachers help students and their families complete college financial aid forms, including the notorious FAFSA (federal aid application), and applications for Oklahoma's Promise, a state scholarship program for students from low-income families.

Other Hispanic Family Nights have addressed topics such as the legal rights of immigrants, the challenges of raising teens, and tips for success in high school and college.

The school has taken several actions in response to concerns raised in the community conversations:

- ▶ Adding bilingual staff members. Currently, 25 percent of staff are bilingual, including a receptionist, an ELL graduation coach, and instructional assistants in ELL, algebra, and English classes.

- ▶ Offering professional development to enrich teaching of English Language Learners and enhance learning among ELL students
- ▶ Providing course descriptions in both Spanish and English and descriptions of college entrance requirements in both languages
- ▶ Expanding opportunities for students to engage in service-learning (community service activities aligned with the curriculum), especially for students who are at risk of dropping out
- ▶ Adding specific classes as needed in ninth and tenth grade core subjects for ELL students: a bilingual assistant translates for the teacher and provides extra support for the students. During Parent Night, parents visit these classrooms and meet the teacher and the bilingual assistant.

Evidence of effectiveness

From 2010 to 2011, end-of-instruction test pass rates among Hispanic students rose dramatically in several subjects, including: from 63 to 72 percent in Algebra I; from 82 to 95 percent in Algebra II; from 53 to 71 percent in Biology I; and from 84 to 96 percent in English III.

Assistant Principal Melanie Pealor says that since the inception of Compadres in Education in 2007:

- ▶ The graduation rate among Hispanic students has increased by nearly 70 percent.
- ▶ The Academic Performance Index for Hispanic students has risen by nearly 30 percent, from 893 to 1,151 (on a 1,500-point scale).
- ▶ Attendance at Noche de Padres Hispánicos (Hispanic Family Night) has increased from 50 to more than 250 attendees.

Exemplary practices

Providing professional development that focuses on communicating with ELL students: Teachers are learning effective techniques involving visual presentation of information and use of hands-on activities. They are also learning ways to create an environment in which students and parents who are still learning English are comfortable speaking English together, even if they make mistakes.

Listening regularly to parents and families: At Hispanic Family Nights, families and school staff engage in continuous dialogue on topics suggested by families and community members. This regular communication is helping teachers work more effectively with family members and helping families feel more comfortable approaching school staff.

Building community support: The principal and her team have met with representatives from Hispanic organizations, Oklahoma City Community College, Oklahoma State University, faith-based communities, and various community organizations and encouraged them to attend Hispanic Family Night. Their involvement has led to growing numbers of academic and athletic scholarship offerings for Hispanic students and a rising graduation rate.

Outlook

Biannual community conversations and quarterly Hispanic Family Nights have become part of the school culture. Next, Pealor plans to begin a similar initiative for African-American students and families. Many of the practices adopted already have contributed to improved performance among all students at the school and more effective communication with all families.

Association perspective

This project was brought to life through collaboration across all levels of the Association (local, state, and national). Its success at the site level relies on administrator and member buy-in and in the Association's willingness to listen to the community.

"I am proud that the staff at Putnam City West High School is working so effectively with Hispanic students and their families. The outcomes for students have been impressive," says Linda Hampton, president of the Oklahoma Education Association. "To ensure that all families and students feel welcome at school, we're expanding this successful partnership model into the African-American and Native-American communities as well. Our goal is to provide the support to ensure that every child has the opportunity to realize his or her potential."

Local contacts

Dottie Hager, associate executive director,
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Melanie Pealor, assistant principal,
Putnam City West High School
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Related information

Oklahoma school report cards:
www.schoolreportcard.org

Programs to Engage Parents and Other Family Members

SNAPSHOT

Program:

Successful Transitions

School:

Upper Merion Area Middle School

District:

Upper Merion Area School District

Location:

King of Prussia, Pa.

Grades: 5-8 (program begins in grade 4)

Enrollment: 1,135

Free/reduced-price lunch: 25%

Easing the transition to middle school

Successful Transitions

Upper Merion Area Middle School

King of Prussia, Pennsylvania

Founded in 2000, the Successful Transitions program at Upper Merion Area Middle School is designed to smooth the transition from elementary to middle school by helping students and their families adapt to their new, larger school and its culture. In a year-long program of meetings, visits, tours, correspondence between pen pals, and peer mentoring, students and parents become familiar with the middle school campus; school day routines and schedules; and the school's teachers, administrators, staff, and older students.

"The students get so excited," says Dr. Karen Geller, the school's principal for grades five and six. "The parents are more anxious than the kids," she adds. "That's one reason why we need to have a lot of face-to-face time with parents. We assure them that safety is the No. 1 priority."

Successful Transitions was developed by parents, staff, students, and community partners serving on the school's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP). In recent years, the school has seen improved test scores and steady decreases in suspension rates and bullying incidents.

How the program works

Each year, about 300 fourth graders from four different elementary schools move to Upper Merion Area Middle School for fifth grade. Each fourth grader gets a fifth-grade pen pal. Throughout the school year, the pen pals send each other handwritten letters and drawings.



In February, the fourth-grade classes attend a drama production at the middle school and get a chance to meet the cast, ask questions, and learn about ways to become involved in school activities. All middle school students are welcome to take part in drama productions, and the visitation program encourages student and parent participation in a variety of middle school activities.

In the spring, fourth-grade classes at each elementary school are visited by one of Upper Merion Area Middle School's three

Programs to Engage Parents and Other Family Members

principals. The principal answers questions and talks about the middle school schedule, expectations, safety, clubs, and other aspects of middle school life.

In May, each elementary school's fourth-grade class spends a day at the middle school. The middle school teachers give school tours. The students meet their pen pals, have lunch in the cafeteria, and learn how to use a locker. They also attend 15-minute classes in art, physical education, consumer science (cooking and sewing), and tech ed (engineering, robotics, computer, and industrial arts). Later in the month, fourth graders and their parents are invited to an evening at Upper Merion, where they tour the school and meet the school's three principals, who are available to answer questions.

In August, shortly before the school year begins, the incoming fifth graders and their parents are invited to another meeting at the middle school, where they meet the teachers. Students receive their schedules and become familiar with the building as they walk around and find their classrooms. Parents can purchase gym uniforms and school supplies at the school store.

After each event, parents, students, and teachers complete evaluation forms. The school's Action Team for Partnerships meets regularly to assess Successful Transitions, and the program is adjusted each year. Action Team members include parents, staff, teachers, counselors, and community partners.

Evidence of effectiveness

- ▶ Successful Transitions was recognized by the 2010 National Network of Partnership Schools in the category, "Collaboration with Partners, Promising Practice."
- ▶ The school has received numerous awards, including National Blue Ribbon School of

Excellence, Department of Education Secondary School of Distinction Award, National Community of Caring School of Excellence, 2010 National School of Character (Character Education Partnership), 2011 National Network of Partnership Schools Award, and others.

- ▶ The school has made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for the past five years. Standardized test scores show clear progress from fifth to eighth grade: In the spring of 2006, fifth graders averaged 71.37 in math and 68.35 in language arts. As eighth graders, the same class in the spring of 2009 averaged 81.25 in math and 86.72 in language arts.
- ▶ Suspensions have continued to decrease yearly, from a high of 315 in 2001-2002 to a low of 49 in 2010-2011.
- ▶ Incidents of bullying decreased by 20 percent in 2007-2008, then by an additional 5 percent each year between 2008-2009, 2009-2010, and 2010-2011.

Exemplary practices

Building a supportive school community: The school's meaningful, challenging academic curriculum aims to respect all learners, develop their character, and help each student succeed. "We work for the success of the whole child, and particularly...for the success of students transitioning to the middle school," says physical education teacher Joy Power. The school strives to provide a comfortable, stress-free, and nurturing environment and to foster students' self-motivation.

Welcoming the whole family: Families of rising fifth graders visit the school during the spring of fourth grade and again in August, just before the new school year begins. Upper Merion treats families as partners not only for academic pursuits but also in the school's character-building efforts.

Agreeing on core values: As a Community of Caring school, Upper Merion integrates that program's core values—caring, respect, responsibility, trust, and family—throughout the school's curriculum and activities.

Forming community partnerships: The school has partnerships with more than 30 community organizations. The local Rotary Club, for example, has donated \$2,000 per year for books for the school library on topics such as "heroes and respect" and "families, diversity and good citizenship." All staff and students perform service-learning or community service activities. Parents and community members also engage in volunteer activities.

Outlook

The Successful Transitions program began in 2000, when the school also launched its Community of Caring initiative. The Successful Transitions program is highly popular among parents and students. The Action Team for Partnerships will continue to evaluate each aspect of the program and make improvements based on parent, student, and teacher feedback. Program costs are minimal and are covered by the regular school budget.

Association perspective

As Jerry Oleksiak, vice president of the Pennsylvania State Education Association, puts it: "Having worked for many years at Upper Merion Area Middle School myself, I can attest to the effectiveness of the Successful Transitions and Community of Caring programs. It's easy to forget how daunting moving from elementary to middle school can be for families and students. I'm proud to see that these programs continue to grow and thrive."

Local contact

Dr. Karen Geller, principal, grades five and six,
Upper Merion Area Middle School
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Related information

AYP report on school: <http://paayp.emetric.net/School/Overview/c46/123468402/3394>

Student performance data for the district:
<http://bit.ly/pd8DeK>

School website: <http://umasd.schoolwires.com/umams/site/default.asp>



Programs to Engage Parents and Other Family Members

SNAPSHOT

Program:

Parent and Community Outreach Initiative

District:

Reading School District

Location:

Reading, Pa.

Grades: PreK-12**Enrollment:** 17,860**Free/reduced-price lunch:**

82%

ELL: 19%

Establishing strong parent organizations in every school

Parent and Community Outreach Initiative

Reading School District

Reading, Pennsylvania

To help engage parents in their children's education and give families a voice in the school community, a coalition of groups in Reading, Pa., is working together to establish a Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) in every school in the district. Parent organizations were once prevalent in Reading, but when many affluent families moved to the suburbs, the district's tax base shrank and parent involvement declined. Many parents in Reading felt uninvolved and uninvited, cut off from their students' schools and educators by cultural or language barriers. Establishing a PTA in every school in Reading could help break down these barriers by promoting communication and collaboration between parents and educators.

"It had been hard for parents to get engaged in the school community because they didn't know how to begin," says Ginny Wade, the Pennsylvania PTA regional vice president. "Sometimes the empowered parent wasn't real welcome." Now, the Reading Education Association (REA) and partner organizations are recruiting concerned parents to help establish a PTA in each of the district's 24 schools as part of the district's Parent and Community Outreach Initiative. Over the past two years, the REA, the Reading School District, and the Pennsylvania PTA have worked together to develop new PTAs in two elementary schools. Also active in the Parent and Community Outreach Initiative is Miriam Feliciano, who founded a Parent Teacher Organization at Thomas H. Ford Elementary School and serves as its president. PTAs will be established in additional schools this fall.

Parent engagement is particularly important in the Reading public schools, where the district has been facing severe budget challenges and changing demographics. The district is the poorest in Pennsylvania, and Reading's growing Hispanic population includes many students who move from school to school and from district to district as families relocate to find work or affordable housing. Parent involvement in PTAs can help to boost student achievement by encouraging parent engagement, helping to break down language barriers, and fostering a sense of community among parents and educators.

Programs to Engage Parents and Other Family Members

How the initiative works

This year, the Reading Education Association Community Committee (REACC) formed a parent engagement subcommittee to lead the effort to engage and organize parents. REACC was joined by the state and regional PTA, the Pennsylvania Parent Information and Resource Center, and other community stakeholders. Major operational support has been provided by Lorenzo Canizares, a local organizer for the Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA). Parents and community volunteers have produced a newsletter and provided additional support.

The coalition has been meeting with principals and interested parents throughout the district to discuss what PTAs can do. Although teachers were immediately receptive, Wade says it took longer to get the superintendent on board. Now, under acting Superintendent J. Drue Miles, the district not only supports the Parent and Community Outreach Initiative but has even added to the effort with a district outreach program.

The coalition works to identify active, engaged parents and provide the training and support they need to establish a PTA in their school. To start a PTA, it takes at least two parents—to serve as president and treasurer. Members must pay nominal national and state dues, which Wade says helps to instill a sense of ownership among parents.

At Amanda Stout Elementary School, 30 parents joined the new PTA at the outset. To bring together families at the school, the group held an ice cream social and a game night, to which families brought board games to play with one another.

Starting a PTA was more of a challenge at Sixteenth & Haak Elementary School, where family income is lower

and many parents speak only Spanish. Still, the PTA attracted 14 initial members and hosted a book fair for the school community.

Evidence of effectiveness

Having a PTA at their child's school gives parents a sense of empowerment and belonging. "If we have an established parent organization at a school, that opens a door for further parent involvement," says REA President Bryan Sanguinito.

Forming parent organizations has also proven to be effective in increasing schools' responsiveness to families. Feliciano first became involved in organizing parents at Thomas H. Ford Elementary School after her son was rushed to the emergency room and found to be dehydrated because school classrooms were severely overheated. She collected evidence about conditions in the school building, obtained 200 signatures from parents and school staff, and presented her case at a school board meeting. The next day, contractors arrived at the school to install air conditioning.

The Parent and Community Outreach Initiative has also opened doors between the union and the school district. When the program began two years ago, there was a high degree of tension between the two sides, according to Canizares. Now their relationship is very healthy, he says.

Exemplary practices

Engaging parents and families in learning: One of the best ways to improve the quality of education throughout the district is to engage more parents and family members. Yet many parents in Reading felt uninvolved and uninvited, cut off from their students' schools and educators by cultural or language barriers. An established PTA in every school in Reading can help break down these barriers,

promoting greater communication and collaboration between parents and educators.

Forming a coalition: Initial discussions leading to the Parent and Community Outreach Initiative took place at joint meetings of the REA Parent Engagement Committee, the Reading School District, state and regional PTA leaders, the director of the Pennsylvania Parent Information and Resource Center, and other education stakeholders. By coming together to tackle parent engagement, the groups have motivated one another to work together and expand the initiative.

Outlook

The coalition aims to have PTAs established in every school in the district by 2013. Acting Superintendent Miles is directing every principal in the district to begin pursuing that effort by November 2011.

Association perspective

REA and PSEA leaders have been actively involved in the program. They are an integral part of the Rebuilding Reading Commission, which came up with the idea for the Education Summit that was held in March 2011. The meeting brought together 70 education stakeholders to brainstorm ideas on engaging parents and other community members.

Bryan Sanguinito, REA president since June 2011, is an enthusiastic supporter of the Parent and Community Outreach Initiative. "Only with buy-in from teachers, parents, and administrators will we truly be able to achieve our noble and lofty goals," he says. "We will then be able to do what is right for our students by doing what is right for our community: promoting total involvement in the educational success of our city's future leaders."

Local contacts

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Bryan Sanguinito, REA president
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Related information

Report card: <http://bit.ly/qhggSp>

REA website: www.WeAreREA.com (includes link to BCTV.org, which features a video report on the district's community outreach efforts)

"Union and parents join forces to improve school conditions," NEA Priority Schools Campaign, May 20, 2011,
<http://neapriorityschools.org/2011/05/20/union-and-parents-join-forces-to-improve-school-conditions/>

Wraparound Social and Community Services Programs

SNAPSHOT

Initiative:

Community-School Programs

District:

Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation

Location:

Evansville, Ind.

Grades: PreK-12**Enrollment:** 23,000**Free/reduced-price lunch:** 56%

Enticing the community to share responsibility

Community-School Programs

Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation

Evansville, Indiana

Evansville's wraparound services programs are driven by the concept that if schools are to succeed in closing achievement gaps, they must become full-service community centers for students, parents, and other family members. In the words of Vince Bertram, the school district's superintendent from 2007 to June 2011, "The schools cannot succeed alone...when you look at the factors that affect achievement. The way I believe we improve our schools is getting to the individual students, addressing needs in an individual way." A majority of the students at Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation (EVSC) schools are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch; 74 percent are white, 22 percent are African American or multiracial, and the rest are Hispanic or Asian.

Cathlin Gray, EVSC associate superintendent for family-school-community partnerships, started Evansville's initial wraparound services program in the 1990s at Cedar Hall Elementary School (now Cedar Hall Community School) with a grant from the Indianapolis-based Lilly Endowment to the United Way of Southwestern Indiana. She was a teacher at the time, but in 1994, she became principal of the school. In 2000, a U.S. Department of Education grant allowed the services to expand to five schools. Today, the entire district participates, and the offerings include early childhood learning centers, afterschool and summer programs, a college-access network, health and dental care, social and emotional support, alternatives to suspension/expulsion, and more.



How the initiative works

The School-Community Council, headed by Gray, administers EVSC's community-school programs. The Council, also known as the Big Table, has members representing more than 70 local nonprofit, business, social service, education, and faith-based organizations that provide services.

The Center for Family, School, and Community Partnerships houses multiple wraparound services furnished by local organizations, which augment the ongoing work of teachers,

Wraparound Social and Community Services Programs

nurses, counselors, and other school staff. The services include everything from free wellness, medical, and dental care to preschool, afterschool, and summer programs.

Private donations provide only a small portion of the financing. Since 2000, the district has secured \$30 million in federal grants, mainly from 14 programs funded through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which are administered by the U.S. Department of Education (ED).

In 2010, ED's Full-Service Community Schools Program awarded EVSC a \$2.5 million grant to create five full-fledged community schools similar to the well-known Harlem Children's Zone. Evansville sites include McGary Middle School, part of NEA's Priority Schools Campaign, and Cedar Hall Community School. At Cedar Hall, which served as the original model, the current focus is on physical and mental health, recreation, and educational and vocational studies, under a "circle of caring" theme.

Evidence of effectiveness

The district achieved Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for the first time in 2010. Furthermore, a 2010 study by Diehl Evaluation and Consulting Services, Inc., found the following:

- ▶ Parents, teachers, and the students themselves reported that behavioral concerns had declined and adjustment had improved among students receiving school social work services.
- ▶ The focus on early childhood development, through community partnerships, has contributed to an increase in the percentage of students entering kindergarten who meet the district's early literacy benchmarks. More than 50 percent met the benchmarks in 2010, compared to 39 percent in 2006.

- ▶ Students who participated in afterschool and summer programs for 30 or more days had better attendance records than those who did not. Those who participated for 60 or more days had higher overall grade-point averages, based on an analysis of 1,500 students.

Exemplary practices

Agreeing on core values: The school district and its partners all agree that home, school, and the community are jointly responsible for students' well-being. They also agree that to close academic achievement gaps, they must meet the needs of the whole child.

Building community support and buy-in: The school system has spent more than a decade fostering relationships with the local organizations that provide services and support. Since 2009, a local bank, Old National Bank, has been leasing its large building at 123 Main Street to the district and its community partners for \$1 per year. The building serves as the Center for Family, School, and Community Partnerships, a one-stop source of services and support. It is also the headquarters of the School-Community Council.

Engaging parents and families in learning: The Center offers parent education, family, and financial literacy programs; provides access to computers; and helps low-income families enroll in Hoosier Healthwise, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, food stamps, and other government assistance programs.

Using targeted outreach: For at-risk students from low-income families, the Center offers mentoring, counseling, and connections to agencies that work with school staff to address attendance, behavior, and other problems. St. Mary's Children's Services provides free dental care, physical examinations, and immunizations for uninsured, school-age children.

Setting high expectations for students and families:

The district's Expectations for Excellence, adopted in 2010, is a pledge for the district to "deliver rigorous and relevant learning experiences" and also a pledge for students to "come to school daily, on time, and ready to engage in meaningful learning."

Outlook

Community commitment is especially strong in Evansville, as evidenced by the more than 70 community partners and use of the building donated by a local bank. Since the initiative has required less private funding than community-school models elsewhere, it may offer a feasible model for many other communities with relatively little access to private funding.

Association perspective

Evansville Teachers Association President Keith Gambill sums up his perspective: "Our community had high hopes for its children, but if we were honest, some kids were being left behind. So, educators had to find a different, more comprehensive way of working with parents and our community. And it has paid off in terms of relationships with families and improved outcomes for our students."

Local contact

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Related information

Report card: www.doe.in.gov/data/

Education Week: "School's a Community Effort in Indiana District," April 19, 2011, <http://bit.ly/hWE56k> (\$2.95; free for EdWeek subscribers)



DECEMBER

SUN. MON. TUES. WED. THUR. FRI. SAT.

Frames and Arrows

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Wraparound Social and Community Services Programs

SNAPSHOT

Program:

Lincoln Community Learning Centers (CLCs)

District: Lincoln Public Schools

Location: Lincoln, Neb.

Grades: K-12

Enrollment: 5,326 in Lincoln CLC schools, including 2,369 CLC regular attendees

Free/reduced-price lunch: 42% of district; 67% of CLC attendees

ELL: 7% of district; 10% of CLC attendees

Collaborating to serve student learning and the community

Lincoln Community Learning Centers

Lincoln Public Schools

Lincoln, Nebraska

Founded in 2001 by the local school board, the Lincoln Community Learning Center (CLC) initiative was inspired by the idea that education is a community-wide responsibility. The program brings together community partners to focus on student learning, youth development, and strengthening families and neighborhoods. CLCs provide support and services to students, families, and neighborhoods through collaborative partnerships that offer services at 25 local school sites in the Lincoln district.

CLCs provide low-cost, well supervised before- and afterschool activities and care. They also offer weekend and summer enrichment opportunities for children, youth, families, and neighborhood residents. Funding for the initiative comes from a 21st Century Community Learning Center (Cohort 6) U.S. Department of Education Grant, the Lincoln Public Schools Foundation, and matching resources from local funders and community-based organizations.

How the program works

Before- and afterschool enrichment programs at each center range from cultural learning and talent-building activities to academic work. Services may also include parent engagement and support programs, early childhood programs, recreation, summer activities, health services, housing assistance, counseling, career development, and lifelong learning opportunities.

Each of the 25 CLCs is unique in its offerings and responds to the particular needs of its community as well as the capacities of partnering agencies. The 10 lead agencies—Cedars Youth Services, Family Services, Lincoln Housing Authority, Lincoln Parks and Recreation, YMCA, Clyde Malone Center, Northeast Family Center, Williard Community, Boys & Girls Club, and Lincoln Public Schools—are assigned to various sites where they help to manage and deliver services. The number of sites managed is based on the organization's capacity. For example, Family Services manages five sites. The YMCA and Lincoln Parks and Recreation each manage four sites, and the Lincoln Housing Authority manages one site.

Wraparound Social and Community Services Programs

The CLC initiative uses leadership groups to mobilize and support its activities at the school-based Community Learning Centers:

- ▶ The CLC Leadership Council guides the initiative's development and long-term financing. The Leadership Council's Executive Committee includes the chair, the mayor of Lincoln, the superintendent, and local funders.
- ▶ Each CLC site has a School Neighborhood Advisory Committee (SNAC), which is responsible for assisting in the planning, communication, oversight, and services of the site. Each SNAC reflects the culture and diversity of its school neighborhood. Each includes broad representation and active participation from parents, youth, neighborhood residents, educators, community-based organizations, and local service providers.
- ▶ Subgroups focus on specific issues such as evaluation, communications and public engagement, identification of best practices, professional development for the CLC workforce, and family engagement.
- ▶ The CLC Neighborhood Action Team works in partnership with the Mayor's Stronger Safer Neighborhoods Initiative to identify resources and strategies to support community development.

Evidence of effectiveness

The Continuous Improvement Process Data Snapshot for Lincoln CLC schools in 2010-2011 reports program ratings well above the threshold for quality in all six categories: administration; relationships; family partnerships; school and community collaboration; environment, safety, and wellness of students; and programming. Ratings are based on the Observations for Quality, Nebraska State Evaluation for 21st Century Programs, developed at the Monroe-Meyer Institute, University of Nebraska Medical Center. Based on

observation of each program site, the overall score for Lincoln CLCs was 4.30 on a scale of 1 to 5.

The 2010-2011 Data Snapshot also shows improved student behavior in all categories: turning in homework on time, attending class regularly, being attentive in class, getting along well with others, and more. Assessments are based on teacher observations over the course of the school year.

In 2010-2011 classroom teacher survey outcomes, 71 percent of students enrolled in Lincoln CLCs met or exceeded state writing standards; 74 percent met or exceeded state reading standards; and 84 percent met or exceeded the mathematics standards. This survey is completed in the spring of each year and is based on teacher perceptions of student progress and proficiency. The local evaluator is currently completing an analysis of CLC student performance and scores on state assessments in reading and writing.

Exemplary practices

Working with a diverse range of partners: A wide range of organizations have come together to support CLCs as places where families, school staff, and other partners work together. Programs are well-organized, clearly connected, and easy to access. Working with 10 different lead agencies allows a high level of before- and afterschool services. At Elliott Elementary School, for example, about 130 students receive before- and afterschool care each day, donated by the YMCA. "In-kind and direct support from these organizations is essential to the progress of the sites," says Lincoln CLC co-coordinator Lea Ann Johnson. Supervisors of each site meet bimonthly to share information and plan together.

Tailoring services to local community needs and concerns: Establishing a School Neighborhood Advisory Committee that represents the local community helps to ensure that the program is responsive to those it will serve.

Tying services with school improvement goals: Each CLC site comes up with its own annual plan, which is closely tied with school improvement goals. CLC activities support CLC initiative goals as well as school improvement plan goals.

Outlook

The initiative is supported by a blend of federal, state, and nonprofit funding. “We work collectively to braid these funds together,” says co-coordinator Johnson. The goal is not to depend too much on a single funding source or sector.

Association perspective

In 2009, the Lincoln Education Association (LEA), with support from NEA, joined with the United Way, the Malone Institute, Lincoln Public Schools, and the Lincoln CLCs to form a partnership on family, schools, and community. Resulting community conversations led to a focus on student transitions between preschool, elementary school, middle school, and high school. Some of the conversations drew up to 300 parents.

There’s great synergy between the Association and the CLCs, and LEA President Jenni Absalon is proud of the collaboration: “The Lincoln Community Learning Centers provide an invaluable resource serving families and schools in our community. They are great partners focusing on the needs of the whole child, so students are better equipped to reach their full learning potential.”

Local contacts

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Related information

Report card: <http://reportcard.education.ne.gov>

Lincoln CLC website: www.lincolnclc.org

U.S. Education Department’s 21st Century Community Learning Centers website: www2.ed.gov/programs/21stcclc/index.html

Wraparound Social and Community Services Programs

SNAPSHOT

Initiative:

SUN Service System

District:

Portland Public Schools and Multnomah County's 7 other school districts

Location:

60 schools in Multnomah County, Ore.

Grades: K-12

Enrollment: 18,000 students annually, with 7,500 participating regularly

Free/reduced-price lunch: 74%

ELL: 26%

Delivering vital community services at neighborhood schools

SUN Service System

Multnomah County, Oregon

Multnomah County's SUN (Schools Uniting Neighborhoods) Service System uses 60 neighborhood schools as delivery sites for a comprehensive range of educational and social services for students, families, and community members. Services include before- and afterschool tutoring and sports, family engagement programs, early childhood education, meals, health and social services, and adult education. Services aim to empower parents to become actively involved in their children's education and to encourage a sense of community among families connected to the schools.

"No question about it: I'm going to college," said one student who had been on a trajectory toward dropping out until he got involved in a SUN afterschool basketball program. His experience is not unusual.

In the mid- to late 1990s, increasing poverty and ethnic diversity in Multnomah County were associated with a growing achievement gap in the schools. In 1999, the city of Portland and Multnomah County worked with the state government and local schools to create SUN Community Schools. The goals were to support education and school success while also improving family self-sufficiency by offering school-based health care, social services, and other forms of support. Initially, the services were offered at eight schools in the county.

In 2004, the program became part of SUN Service System, which provides social, health, and other support services. The system includes: SUN Community Schools; Parent Child Development Services, serving children from birth to age five; Self Sufficiency Programs for homeless and low-income households; and Social and Support Services for Educational Success, which mostly serves young adolescents.

In 2009-2010, SUN Community Schools served nearly 18,000 youth and about 3,700 adults in enrolled programming, and more than 70,000 people attended family and community events. Among the 7,500 students served for 30 or more days: about 74 percent qualified for free or reduced-price lunch; 70 percent were students of color, compared to 45 percent for the district as a whole; and 40 percent spoke a language other than English at home.



Wraparound Social and Community Services Programs

How the initiative works

Each SUN Community School serves as a support hub where schools and communities work together to promote the success of children and families through a comprehensive array of services. Core services at each site include academic support, social and health services, and extended-day recreation and enrichment activities. The sites provide a vital link with community centers, libraries, parks, neighborhood health clinics, area churches, and local businesses.

The county manages SUN Service System as a partnership with the 60 SUN Community Schools. Each school site is jointly managed by the school principal, a full-time site manager, and a nonprofit or community organization that serves as the lead agency. Each school also employs extended-day staff and activity leaders/teachers. In addition to the site managers, each school has a site advisory group, which includes representatives of the school, youth, families, and the community.

Costs amount to several hundred dollars per student, which come from a mix of county, city, state, and federal funds. Portland even has a “children’s levy” that amounts to about \$60 added to the property tax for most homes, and some of that money goes to SUN. The tax dollars invested in SUN Community Schools leverage twice as much in resources from districts and local governments as well as substantial cash and in-kind contributions from community organizations and businesses.

Evidence of effectiveness

Outcomes for SUN Community Schools are based on data for students who participate regularly. Among the 7,500 students who participated in SUN Community Services programs for 30 or more days during the 2009-2010 school year:

- ▶ Average gains in reading and math test scores

exceeded state goals. About 75 percent showed increased state scores in reading, and 77 percent in math.

- ▶ Some 88 percent of students improved in at least one interim academic or youth asset measure: 64 percent improved homework completion; 54 percent improved classroom behavior; and 60 percent came to school more motivated to learn.
- ▶ Average daily attendance was 94.3 percent, compared to the state benchmark of 92 percent.
- ▶ More than 80 percent of seniors graduated, compared to less than 60 percent for the district as a whole. Furthermore, 92 percent either graduated or returned for a fifth year of high school, and 95 percent of ninth, tenth, and eleventh graders returned for the next school year.

Exemplary practices

Forming school-community partnerships: Schools and communities work together to provide the comprehensive educational and social services necessary to support the success of children and their families. Students’ growth targets and academic performance are evaluated annually.

Engaging families in culturally appropriate ways: Adult education is among the core services of SUN Community Schools, and programs are geared toward the particular needs of each community. For example, early childhood education services at Alder Elementary School include two culturally specific programs involving parents: Parents as Teachers (PAT) for Hispanic families delivered by El Programa Hispano and for African-American families delivered by Self-Enhancement, Inc.

Grounding the program in the local community: Each local school becomes a hub of community life. The local site advisory group that guides the program

includes members who represent families and community residents.

Outlook

Beginning with a five-year investment by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, more than \$7 million in funding has been brought annually to the SUN Service System over the last four years through co-investment and leveraging efforts of its city, county, school district, and federal partners. Individual schools and nonprofit partners have also been able to leverage significant cash and in-kind resources, using SUN as an infrastructure.

Leaders hope to expand the initiative to all 150 schools in the county, making every school a SUN Community School.

Association perspective

Portland Association of Teachers President Gwen Sullivan says teachers have been closely involved in the SUN initiative since its inception. Sullivan sums up the Association's viewpoint: "Programs like these that address the needs of the whole child are critical to advancing student learning. Involving the family is key, and strengthening the relationships between schools and families improves both teaching and learning."

Local contact

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Related information

Report card: <http://web.multco.us/sun/research-and-evaluations>

SUN Service System website: <http://web.multco.us/sun>

"Schools Uniting Neighborhoods: Successful Collaboration in an Environment of Constant Change," Marjory Hamann with Diana Hall, 2003 report to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, <http://bit.ly/ndSjNs>

"SUN Shines on Portland Students," NEA Priority Schools Campaign, December 2010, <http://neapriorityschools.org/2010/12/02/sun-shines-on-portland-students/>





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Involvement or Engagement?

Larry Ferlazzo

We need to relate to families not as clients, but as partners in school and community improvement.

"Hello, is this John's mother? This is his English teacher, Mr. Ferlazzo. John has had a rough day."

"I like teaching in this school because the parents don't bother us much."

"We need parent volunteers to bake cookies for the fund-raiser."

"I wish parents here cared enough to get their kids to do their homework."

These quotes (all of which I've heard—except the first one, which I've said) illustrate how educators often feel about parents: We should contact them when there is a problem, it's good when they don't "bother" us, we need them to raise money, and we can blame them for all kinds of things we're not happy about. Unfortunately, research and experience show that these attitudes do not lead to the kind of school-family connections that raise student achievement.

However, the right kinds of school-family connections—those built on relationships, listening, welcoming, and shared decision making—*can* produce multiple benefits for students, including higher grade point averages and test scores, better attendance, enrollment in more challenging courses, better social skills, and improved behavior at home and at school (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2002). Such school-family connections address important nonschool factors—such as health, safety, and affordable housing—that account for about two-thirds of the variance in student achievement (Rothstein, 2010). These connections can also improve parents' feelings of efficacy and increase community support for schools.

What's the Difference?

To create the kinds of school-family partnerships that raise student achievement, improve local communities, and increase public support, we need to understand the difference between family *involvement* and family *engagement*. One of the dictionary definitions of *involve* is "to enfold or envelope," whereas one of the meanings of *engage* is "to come together and interlock." Thus, involvement implies *doing to*; in contrast, engagement implies *doing with*.

A school striving for family involvement often leads with its mouth—identifying projects, needs, and goals and then telling parents how they can contribute. A school striving for parent engagement, on the other hand, tends to lead with its ears—listening to what parents think, dream, and worry about. The goal of family engagement is not to serve clients but to gain partners.

It's not that family involvement is bad. Almost all the research says that any kind of increased parent interest and support of students can help. But almost all the research also says that family engagement can produce even better results—for students, for families, for schools, and for their communities (Ferlazzo & Hammond, 2009).

Empowering Families and Communities

Effective family engagement requires the school to develop a relationship-building process focused on listening. One way to begin this process is for teachers and other staff members to make prearranged visits to students' homes.

Unfortunately, in many urban neighborhoods, the only public entities that usually send representatives to visit are the police and child protective services. Schools can fill this void and send a different, more positive message.

At Luther Burbank High School, an urban school serving 2,000 students in Sacramento, California, scores of teachers, counselors, and classified staff make hundreds of home visits each summer. We visit the homes of all incoming freshmen, as well as all older students who have not yet passed the California High School Exit Exam. These visits are not just to tell students and their parents what to expect when they enter high school or to harangue them about the need to work harder to graduate. Our primary goal is to listen to the wisdom that parents have gained in more than 14 years of raising their children. We want to learn about their hopes and dreams for their children and discuss how the school can work with them to make those dreams a reality.

The school coordinates its home visits with the nationally recognized Parent Teacher Home Visit Project (www.pthvp.org), which works with school districts throughout the United States to set up similar programs. Independent evaluations of this project have shown that such visits result in numerous academic benefits for students (Cowan, Bobby, St. Roseman, & Echandia, 2002; Tuss, 2007).

The listening process can take many forms. The home visitors sometimes respond to the concerns that parents express by encouraging them to connect with one another and move toward broader action. For example, during one of our home visits with a Hmong immigrant family a few years ago, the father told us how impressed he was with the online literacy program the school was using to help his son. He added that he wished he could afford to have a computer and Internet connection at home so that he and the rest of the family could also use the program to learn English.

The teacher visitor suggested that if the father knew other parents who had a similar interest in getting access to the literacy program, he might want to bring them together in a meeting with school staff members to explore ways to address this need. The father did so, and out of that process, the parents and the school developed a family literacy project that provided computers and home Internet access to immigrant families, who used the school's website to increase their English skills.

Initially, we used discarded computers and obtained a private foundation grant to pay for Internet access. Later, the school district allocated federal grants so refugee students could purchase new computers and continue the program. Students whose families participated in the project had a fourfold increase in their English assessment scores, and the International Reading Association gave the project its 2007 Presidential Award for Reading and Technology.

Our school's successful Parent University began in much the same way. Some parents expressed an interest in learning more about how the schools operate. Parents then came together with school staff and representatives from a local university to develop a curriculum that parents wanted—not a predesigned agenda constructed by others. These monthly classes, which often attract as many as 100 parents, offer simultaneous translation in Hmong and English and include sessions on naturalization and citizenship, high school graduation requirements, and college readiness and financing.

Successful engagement efforts like these are similar to the work of traditional community organizers. People first tell their stories and then share them with others. The group develops a different vision of what might be possible and then takes collective action. It's the difference between *irritation*—challenging others to act on something *you're* interested in—and *agitation*—challenging others to act on something *they're* concerned about.

Using the community organizer model, schools have worked with local religious congregations, businesses, neighborhood groups, and labor unions to tackle community problems. For example, schools have built partnerships to help stop toxic incinerators from being built nearby, assisted in getting approvals for local affordable housing, and challenged officials to increase public safety in entire neighborhoods, not just on the school grounds. The Annenberg Institute for School Reform has extensively documented a multiyear study showing the positive effects community organizing can have on students, schools, families, and neighborhoods (Mediratta et al., 2008).

Schools have a long history of developing and deepening relationships among different entities in the community. In fact, the term *social capital*, which describes the societal and economic value of building connections among people, was developed by a school superintendent nearly 100 years ago. L. J. Hanifan (1916), a state supervisor of public schools in West Virginia, coined the phrase while promoting a parent engagement strategy that yielded numerous benefits. Hanifan concluded,

I am firmly convinced that the supervisor and teachers whose achievements I have described have struck bedrock in community building. It is not what they did for the people that counts most in what was achieved; it is what they led the people to do for themselves that is really important. Tell the people what they ought to do, and they will say in effect, "Mind your own business." But help them to discover for themselves what ought to be done, and they will not be satisfied until it is done.... The more the people do for themselves the larger will community social capital become, and the greater will be the dividends upon the social investment. (p. 138)

The Temptation to Settle for Involvement

Given the pressures to immediately increase test scores, it is tempting for schools to emphasize family involvement rather than family engagement. After all, most family involvement programs can have a positive effect on student achievement, and they are generally easier to implement than engagement models. Unfortunately, some of the most well-publicized family involvement efforts right now—tempting as they might be—are likely to have negative consequences.

For example, some school districts in Texas and Delaware are planning to pay parents to participate in more school events, despite the fact that New York City ended a similar program because it did not achieve the desired results (Bosman, 2010). In a similar initiative, Detroit schools are working with businesses to offer store discounts to parents who visit school parent centers. As Daniel Pink (2009) has shown in his book *Drive*, financial incentives may work in the short term to motivate people to do mechanical tasks (such as showing up for a meeting), but they will do little to stimulate more cognitively challenging work (such as making it a priority to ask children about their school day or assist them with their homework). In fact, paying parents for participation can actually reduce motivation for doing these more challenging tasks. And when the incentives are gone, everyone is worse off than before.

In Newark, New Jersey, schools are using \$1 million of their \$100 million donation from Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg to hire workers, including former census workers, to canvas door-to-door asking people what they think about local schools. Compared with the work required for schools to develop reciprocal, long-lasting relationships, this information-gathering effort is certainly easier—and somebody else is paid to do it. But there's a reason why community organizers call this strategy *slash and burn*—it can be destructive to the overall community ecosystem because it gives people a sense of doing something by just answering a survey with no serious commitment. As a result, it produces no sustainable long-term benefits.

Expanded Possibilities

Consider the methods your school uses to invite parents to participate. Invitations for parent involvement often come through one-way forms of communication— notes home, automated phone calls, or requests for assistance for a particular project. In fact, the dictionary's first definition for *communication* is "an act or instance of transmitting." Invitations for parent engagement, on the other hand, tend to come as a result of *conversation*, a word whose Latin root means "to keep company with; to live with."

Family involvement and engagement are not mutually exclusive; most schools pursue both. But when you think about your school's efforts, you'll probably see a clear direction. Does your school tend toward *doing to* or *doing with* families? Does the staff do more talking or more listening? Is the emphasis on one-way communication or on two-way

conversation? Is your school's vision of its community confined to the school grounds, or does this vision encompass the entire neighborhood?

Some people see power as a finite pie: If you get more, that means I have less. The vision of family engagement described here, however, views power in a different way. As families move from being school clients or volunteers to being leaders in education improvement efforts, they gain more power. As a result, the whole pie gets bigger, and more possibilities are created.

Schools can help create those expanded possibilities.

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Is Anyone Listening to Families' Dreams?

Eileen Gale Kugler

Schools can build partnerships with "invisible" families through targeted programs that value their dreams and experiences.

The stately grandmother rose from her chair. She began speaking in Xhosa, her mother tongue, to the other families who had gathered that afternoon in a classroom in rural South Africa.

The interpreter did not interrupt Mrs. Nyati's impassioned speech. At the front of the room, I could only stand respectfully as she addressed her comments to me. We had gathered for a family engagement program I had organized during my second volunteer stint at this elementary school in the Eastern Cape. The families would spend several afternoons making a school quilt, with each family creating a square illustrating their hopes and dreams for their child. While the families sewed, they learned about school expectations and resources in the school and community.¹ At this second session, the families were sharing what they learned from discussions with their children about the children's dreams.

When Mrs. Nyati finished, I wasn't sure what the translation would reveal. Was she challenging my presence as an outsider? Did she think the project was a waste of time and not relevant to the families' lives? But as her words were translated, their central message was powerful:

We do have hopes and dreams for our children, but no one ever asked us before.
Thank you.

Mrs. Nyati's words struck me to my core. I was surrounded by impoverished, illiterate families. These are the families who often remain invisible in school, not just in South Africa, but around the world.

The teachers in this school, although dedicated to educating the students, expected little from the families, again not unlike schools in other countries. Even the principal, a great leader who had grown up in this isolated black township created under apartheid, could not see a significant role for families in the school.

After all, the families are largely uneducated. There are many grandparents raising children, and the parents who *are* around are too busy working in the nearby orange groves. I was warned that few families would come to the meetings, and those who came would be late. Yet at the scheduled time, the room was filled with 50 family members, who not only came to meeting after meeting, but also brought relatives and friends.

What We Can Learn from Every Parent

In reality, many families without formal education have lessons to teach and much to share. In South Africa, many parents of today's black students left school to fight apartheid or had no funds to continue their education. Even those who did continue had only a substandard education available to them.

Over the years, I have learned a great deal from these families who struggled against oppression and now struggle to move forward under democracy. Whether or not they have a formal education, their lives teach vital lessons, such as perseverance, hard work, and commitment.

On my third volunteer trip last August, I visited Mrs. Nyati's home. "You don't really want to see my home," she said initially. But when I assured her I truly did, her face lit up. She showed me her neat, small quarters of unfinished cinderblock walls, filled with photos of her children and grandchildren. She pointed to her partially built new home just a few feet away. It is one of the homes started by the South African government to replace the old mud or metal shacks in the townships. But the government funding has run out, and the house sits

unfinished like so many others. She said, "I must finish it myself. I will get cement and put it up. And then I will clean it because it must be clean. And then I will paint it myself." I have no doubt she will.

Mrs. Pepeta, another South African grandmother, apologized for missing a meeting, explaining that she was taking a class. "What are you studying?" I asked. "English," she replied with a twinkle in her eye. I soon learned that she had excellent English skills already, and I often asked her to serve as interpreter. I learned from others that she had been a Gold Scholar in English in her early schooling, but the opportunity to be a stellar student evaporated under apartheid. So now, in her late 70s, she is continuing the education previously denied her.

How Parents Are Disempowered by Schools

These experiences in Africa helped me reflect on the immigrants in the United States who may appear to be uninterested in school because they don't show up for a back-to-school night or a teacher conference. Having worked with immigrants who have come to the United States from all over the world, I've learned how much more complex the reality is.

Many parents came to the United States specifically for its education system, and they care deeply about their children's future. But they bring with them the rules and expectations of their home countries. They tend to keep their distance from their children's school as a sign of respect. They trust their children's education to the teachers and would never question trained educators. Further, many do not know how to traverse the complicated U.S. system—how to access enrichment or remedial services for their child or even what options are available.

Such families rarely find a place in school. In South Africa and the United States, as well as other countries around the world, schools underestimate them because of stereotypical expectations of what constitutes "a good parent." But many individuals, like Mrs. Nyati and Mrs. Pepeta, defy expectations.

Revealing Families' Hidden Strengths

There's far more to many parents than what appears on the surface. I worked with an extraordinary high school student whose family moved to the United States from Sudan when she was 8 years old. Her father had been a lawyer and judge, owning three houses. But he saw the limited opportunities for his three daughters, and when given the chance a decade ago to come to the United States through his brother, a U.S. citizen, he moved the entire family. With limited English skills, his job opportunities were few. His brother, who was helping the family acclimate, died of cancer.

Today, the father delivers pizza, and the family lives in a small apartment. But his daughter is fulfilling his dream as she begins college. As she spoke of her father, her eyes welled with tears, "He may only be a delivery man, but I know he is so much more. I am so grateful to my dad for bringing our family here."

How do schools reach out to families like these? Perhaps the school translates a flyer for a family meeting into another language. Or the school hosts an International Dinner. But too often, there is little personal outreach that treats the families as individuals, connecting them to school in a meaningful way.

A student who moved to the United States from Pakistan when she was 12 described how frustrating it was for her parents and herself to negotiate school customs, particularly in high school: "The school did not help my parents understand how American schools operate." When the student became editor in chief of the school newspaper in 12th grade, her mother could not understand why she had to stay so late after school and literally dragged her daughter out by the ear one afternoon. At the student's request, the newspaper advisor met with her mother and helped the student explain some of the requirements of being an editor. Armed with this knowledge, the mother supported her daughter's decision and soon began bringing the entire newspaper staff

homemade food for their long editing evenings.

"The stereotype is that these families are a drain on our resources, but they have great strengths, and we need to tap into them," said Grace Valenzuela, program director of the Portland, Maine, Public Schools' Multilingual and Multicultural Center:

Immigrant and refugee parents have been able to survive extraordinary experiences in bringing their families here. Yet, once they are here, we disempower them. We need to give them the power to be in charge.

Opening the Door for Families

In South Africa, I felt humbled by working with families in the school where my husband, my adult daughter, and I have volunteered since 2008. Once given the opportunity to take part in a welcoming project that valued them, the families became more connected to the school. And they became empowered to advocate for their children at school, just as many of them had fought so hard against apartheid years earlier.

Back home, I have worked with school faculties and communities on strengthening school culture, creating an environment where students and families of all backgrounds are valued. Through family projects such as school quilts, community biographies, or group murals, families come together in a welcoming, nurturing environment. The families gain confidence in their role at school, and they learn the tools to be supporters and advocates for their children. I've seen true parent leaders emerge—parents who had little attachment to the school before the projects. As in South Africa, families share their dreams and appreciate the opportunity to gain the knowledge needed to help their children reach those dreams.

Not a Luxury

For many hard-working teachers and administrators, outreach to these families seems like an add-on. But family engagement is powerfully linked to student success. Research shows that, across races and income levels, students whose families are engaged tend to do better on tests, attend school more regularly, adapt to school better, and go on to postsecondary education.²

The research reflects what is lost to schools when some families remain disconnected. Those families can't share valuable insights about their children. They can't mentor and guide their children through their educational travels. They can't help strengthen the school for the benefit of all the students. Schools miss out on their potential assistance in reaching other families from their community or cultural group.

As I work with school faculties, I quickly acknowledge that intensive family outreach requires time and commitment. But so does classroom instruction. We would not expect students to learn effectively using outdated instructional strategies. We can't expect outdated parent engagement practices to do the job, either.

Schools need new parent engagement strategies that reflect the realities of today's diverse families. Schools that successfully build partnerships with families use practices that break the long-standing mold, such as the following:

Reach out to families with novel programs that are welcoming and nonthreatening. Back-to-school nights and parent organization meetings work for some families, but others need a less daunting first step. To begin drawing families in, teachers can invite them to a classroom celebration of students' writing where the children serve as guides and translators. An early-morning breakfast event gives families an opportunity to join their children at school and then walk them into the classroom and meet the teacher before going to work. Targeted, small-group meetings provide a chance to meet with other families from their culture or neighborhood, building the confidence to then take part in larger family events.

Take outreach to the community. Some families find it intimidating just to walk through the school doors. To connect with families in a more comfortable setting, schools can hold meetings in community rooms, libraries, or religious institutions in the neighborhood. A local factory's lunchroom is a great place to connect with parents who can't leave work. Home visits are the ultimate way to show a family respect. As one teacher said, "This is not just about transportation to school or convenience; this says that we respect you so much, we are willing to come to you." Some schools offer the option of a parent-teacher conference in the family's home.

Make contact personal, sharing good news as well as concerns. Most schools communicate largely through flyers and form letters; when they do make personal contact, it's usually just to deliver bad news. No wonder some families never want to pick up the phone if the call is from school. To build trust, teachers should reach out with a welcoming initial contact and positive news throughout the year. Whether through a phone call, a personal note, or a home visit, families need to hear what is going well with their child. This includes secondary schools, where contact with a parent can make the difference between an adolescent who flounders or one who has the essential connection to school.

Send out invitations to school events in multiple ways, the more personal the better. For parents with more social capital—those who know how school works and feel comfortable being there—a simple flyer home may be enough. But for many other families, a personal note makes a big difference. Parents tell me that the amount of information sent home by schools can be staggering, especially if they have children in more than one school. But the one envelope they always open is the one hand-addressed by the teacher. Even if the teacher can't write in the family's home language, the parent can get a relative or friend to translate.

Look for other ways to reach targeted groups. Most cultural groups read newspapers geared to their community, and reporters for those papers are eager to write about local school events. The reporters often speak English even if the newspaper is printed in another language. A community or religious leader who is known and respected by school families can also be a great ally in efforts to connect with diverse families.

Support families so they can support their students. Culturally sensitive training on parenting issues (such as workshops on child behavior or disciplining adolescents) as well as education issues (such as family literacy or math nights where parents and children learn together) can help parents play a positive role. Leadership development training is also important in creating a new generation of parent leaders who represent the diversity of the community.³

Hold targeted small-group meetings. As schools look for innovative ways to reach families, success can't be judged by the number of families who initially respond. Sometimes a smaller gathering is just what families need to feel comfortable. Then the snowballing can begin, as families invite their neighbors and friends. Future outreach efforts can be even more effective when the school collaborates with the new families who do become involved, learning firsthand what worked and what didn't.

Ask current family leaders to serve as mentors for newly involved families. To build a stronger school community, schools can pair newly engaged parents with long-active parents. Many families who are already active are eager to connect with new families; they just don't know how to get beyond their small circle of friends and acquaintances. As relationships develop, provide training to ensure that the perspectives and experiences of all families are respected, not just those who represent the "way we've always done it."

The Power of Families' Dreams

As schools grapple with ways to reduce the achievement gap, many of our students' families have dreams no one is asking about. Many are eager to help their children achieve those dreams, but don't know how. We need family outreach that respects their personal experiences, their culture, and their knowledge. Then we can build true partnerships with families that foster student success.

Videos

To hear the author speak about her work in South Africa and to view the story quilt project in the Eastern Cape elementary school described in this article, go to www.embracediverseschools.com/eileenkugler/south-africa/. To watch a video on the "Tellin' Stories" project, go to the Teaching for Change website at www.teachingforchange.org/parentorg/overview.

Endnotes

- ¹ The story quilt project is part of a parent engagement model called Tellin' Stories, developed by Teaching for Change (www.teachingforchange.org).
- ² Henderson, A. T., & Mapp, K. L. (2002). *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.
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Making the Most of School-Family Compacts

Anne T. Henderson, Judy Carson, Patti Avallone and Melissa Whipple

Three urban schools made their Title I school-family compacts a powerful tool for student achievement.

Wouldn't it be great if the administrators and teachers at a school—particularly a school with many at-risk students—could sit down with parents and exchange ideas about what part each might play in supporting students' learning? Imagine if parents could hear directly from teachers what teachers believe their kids most need to learn, how teachers plan to structure that learning, and precisely what parents can do at home to reinforce it. What if teachers could hear each caregiver's view on what most helps his or her particular child? And what if this meaningful interaction could happen through an existing protocol, one that most schools now perceive as a burdensome requirement?

As staff members in Connecticut's Department of Education and as consultants on school-family collaboration, we've worked with several elementary schools that initiated such meaningful conversations by transforming school-family compacts, which all Title I Schools are required to create, from boilerplate language into vehicles for collaboration. Creating the compact became a catalyst for authentic school-parent cooperation.

A Missed Opportunity—Seized in Connecticut

No Child Left Behind stipulates that each school in the Title I program must develop an agreement, or "compact," that outlines how parents, school staff, and students will share responsibility for improving academic achievement. Compacts describe how the school and parents can work together to help students achieve the state's standards.

For most schools, compacts are a missed opportunity. As Judy Carson—who supports family engagement in Connecticut schools—found in reviewing compacts submitted by the state's schools, such documents rarely described activities that directly affect learning. Most compacts parroted general language in the law about parents' responsibility to support children's learning, for example, by monitoring their school attendance or their TV watching. And most were gathering dust on the shelf. This is true across the United States; a report from the U.S. Department of Education concluded that the parent involvement requirements, including compacts, are one of the weakest areas of Title I compliance (Stevenson & Laster, 2008).

Research shows that all students benefit from family involvement in education, and low-income and minority students benefit the most (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Most parents want timely information about school goals and learning strategies so they'll know what to do at home to support their children's achievement. This is the kind of information compacts were intended to provide—but a document asking parents to pledge that they'll get their kids to bed on time doesn't provide it. So Carson and several colleagues in Connecticut's Department of Education decided that if school-family compacts have to be created, schools should use the process to spark authentic conversations and listen to parents' ideas about learning.

In 2008, the department initiated a program to improve school-parent compacts, bringing several consultants onto their team.¹ This team designed a training curriculum, "A New Vision of Title I School-Parent Compacts," that they offered as free professional development for Connecticut's urban school districts.

Connecticut launched the effort with a Compact Conference that summer. Participants from five urban districts across the state learned how to transform compacts into plans for partnership among teachers at common grade levels and among parents of learners in those grades. Revised compacts would list specific actions that parents, students, and teachers could take to improve performance; they would be linked to current school improvement plans and grounded in achievement data. Participants learned about promising practices to promote parent-teacher collaboration, explored practical home learning ideas, and made plans to seek parents' input. The state offered schools committed to this process follow-up support in the form of professional development and advice from team consultants. Here's how three urban elementary schools put this process into action, focusing on students' reading achievement.

Reaching Out to Wary Parents

Macdonough Elementary School in Middletown, Connecticut, serves 80 percent low-income students (the highest percentage in the Middletown School District). In 2008, Macdonough had high staff turnover and a reputation for being a "not-so-good" school in a run-down, working-class neighborhood. Although the school had recently improved under the leadership of principal Jon Romeo, word had not gone out beyond the immediate neighborhood. A redistricting plan to improve racial balance was poised to move one-fourth of the district's elementary students to different schools, including moving many new kids to Macdonough. Parents packed school board meetings to express concerns.

Romeo realized that Macdonough had to create positive relationships with new families fast and assure them that it would provide high-quality academics. When Romeo first heard about the program to improve Title I compacts, "To be honest, I groaned," he admitted. The school's compact hadn't been revised in a while and was sitting on the shelf. But the school needed to work more closely with families to close the achievement gap between its middleclass and low-income students. Romeo realized that co-creating a compact was a way to start; so he assembled a team of teachers, curriculum specialists, and parents to take this on.

<p>Sample School-Family Compact</p> <p>1st Grade Teachers Will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conduct daily small-group reading instruction. ▪ Read aloud each day to students. ▪ Provide take-home reading materials for students. ▪ Provide homework that supports topics learned at school. ▪ Take weekly trips to the school library. ▪ Keep families informed of children's reading progress and ways to support learning at home. 	<p>1st Grade Families Will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make reading a daily part of family time. ▪ Ask children questions about books they're reading. ▪ Visit the local library on a regular basis. ▪ Complete homework assignments with students. ▪ Attend family literacy events at Macdonough School. ▪ Stay in touch with teachers about reading progress.
<p><i>Source:</i> Macdonough Elementary School, Middletown, Connecticut</p>	

Drawing on what they learned at the 2008 Compact Conference and on help from consultant Patti Avallone, Macdonough's teachers invited families to family-friendly evening learning events, such as an author's tea, organized by grade level. Romeo confessed, "We were afraid if we mentioned compacts they'd stay away. We enticed them with a fun event featuring their children."

After each activity, teachers pulled parents into the library and asked them to share ideas on improving students' reading. Romeo talked to the group about grade-level goals, and teachers showed parents what reading instruction looked like in their child's grade. Families met in small groups, with a Macdonough staff member guiding each group's conversation. To encourage parents to open up, teachers asked, "What advice would you offer next year's parents to support children's reading?" Ideas poured out: Visit the library once a month, spend family time reading, write letters to other family members. "Teachers were impressed with parents' ideas and their obvious commitment to learning, and parents' eyes were opened to the school's intense focus on reading," Romeo recalled.

These gatherings were not a one-shot deal. After these initial conversations, teachers took parents' ideas and drafted compacts. There was a lot of back and forth at grade-level meetings between parents and teachers. For example, teachers told parents that they wanted to send home reading materials with students each night to help students get

into the habit of reading and that they'd like parents to monitor and guide their children's nightly reading. Parents were willing, but they asked the teachers to "tell us exactly what you want us to work on and how we can help."

Teachers were surprised; they'd never thought of telling parents what strategies they used in class. Teachers showed parents, for instance, about making text-to-self connections with books. Once parents learned that relating what their kids were reading to something in their lives—like comparing a character's trip to a recent family trip—is motivating and helps comprehension, they said, "Oh, we can do that." Through such exchanges, many people had their fingerprints on the finished compacts (see "Sample School-Family Compact," p. 50).

As redistricting went into effect, Macdonough used the momentum to promote relationships. Teachers took walks in the neighborhood, during which they gave books to families and discussed improvements to the school. A back-to-school picnic enabled teachers and parents to socialize informally. At the school's annual open house, teachers shared concrete information about what students would be learning and doing in class. School staff met with new families to invite them to help the school become the best it could be, using the compacts to explain how families might help improve student success in reading.

News began to spread that the school was improving. In 2008, a state advocacy group named Macdonough one of the 10 most improved schools in Connecticut.

Bringing Reading Strategies Home

At M. D. Fox Elementary School in Hartford, literacy coaches Rosana Bannock and Elise Francis initiated the compact-creating process. The school serves 900 children; 70 percent are Latino, and many others are refugees from Bosnia, Thailand, and Laos.

Through flyers and personal phone calls, Bannock and Francis invited parents to a meeting in the school's library that featured a presentation on developing compacts and how important parents are to the process. After the presentation, parents broke into groups according to their children's grade level. Teachers shared with each group tips they could use to help their kids succeed in school, and then asked two questions: What do teachers need to do to help students? and What can the school do to help parents support their children?

Bannock and Francis circulated the parents' ideas to other Fox parents, who checked off the ideas most important to them. Teachers identified recurring themes that they used to construct the final compact for parents' approval. The exchange was a learning process, noted Francis. "We had assumptions about what parents know and can do [to help children learn], and they're much more willing to do things than we thought." Bannock explained how the discussions boosted school attendance:

Parents know their kids need to get to school on time, but single moms with four and five kids are struggling. As a result of the compact conversations, teachers have more sympathy for what families are going through, and grandparents are filling in to help kids get to school.

Teachers designed specific activities for different grade levels in response to parents' suggestions. For example, parents said they didn't understand what children learn in kindergarten—do they just play or do they learn to read? Teachers responded with a three-day kindergarten orientation for parents at which they gave parents learning materials and showed them how to support reading at home. An astounding 95 percent of families came.

Pushing For Pride in Student Work

Renata Lantos, principal at Bielefield Elementary School in Middletown, also had students' reading on her mind. Bielefield's attendance zone is the largest in the Middletown district, and more than one-half of its students are from low-income families. Although reading achievement is now improving steadily, at the time of compact creation, it was below average for the state.

After attending the Compact Conference, Lantos realized she and her staff had to revise their compact, which consisted of general compliance statements. Two teachers developed a presentation for families that explained the schools' reading goals. They linked practical strategies for improving reading skills to these goals and showed how these strategies could be outlined in the compact.

For example, Bielefield teachers now assign each student books that fit that student's reading level. Teachers have agreed to help students select "just-right books" and provide parents with reading materials connected to the books each week; parents agree to ensure that their children read regularly, encourage them to share and use new vocabulary, and use the materials the teacher sends home to have "book talks." Students agree to read these books regularly, keep a reading record, and build a list of new words they learn.

During follow-up conversations, a major issue came up: Students needed to take more pride in their work. They were handing in subpar work that showed a lack of motivation. "The whole building got involved," recalls Lantos. "Parents had great ideas, such as focusing on 'pride in work' in the newsletter and exhibiting student projects." At each grade level, students discussed what taking pride in your work means.

Teachers constructed a rubric that pinpointed three levels of student effort and time on task. Students described the basic level as "No effort. I worked way too quickly, and I didn't reread or revise my work. The paper is not my best and neatest." The top level is "My best effort. I thought and tried my hardest. I spent enough time to give my brain quality time. I carefully reread and revised my work." Teachers sent the rubric home, and parents signed off on reading it. Parents agreed to regularly review their children's work and discuss with them the meaning of pride. During parent-teacher conferences, teachers refer to the rubric.

Lantos says the result has been a huge improvement in student work: "Even 2nd graders get it, like the one who wrote: 'Now I know what quality work looks like.'" All Bielefield students have produced at least one "pride paper" that meets the top-level criteria on the rubric.

Keys to Success

We have discovered practices that help turn compacts into catalysts for action. The most important thing is to create a setting for parents and teachers to talk about how to help the kids—and to get to know one another. At Macdonough, Romeo asked staff members to facilitate meetings with families to ensure teacher buy-in. The process went from a conversation between a self-selected group of teachers and parents, to discussions among many teachers, to one with the entire parent teacher association. Parent leaders who emerged went to follow-up compact conferences, which strengthened their capacity to engage other families.

Continuing follow-up by the principal is important. Administrators should affirm practices that teachers are already doing—such as book drives and trips to the library—and explicitly link existing practices to the compact and the school improvement plan. This takes teachers' actions beyond "random acts of family engagement" and integrates them into a systematic plan for improving achievement (Weiss, Lopez, & Rosenberg, 2010).

Working with grade-level colleagues inspires teachers. We found that developing compacts for each grade level made a big difference. At M. D. Fox, the literacy coaches facilitated grade-level meetings and brainstormed specific activities for teachers in each grade.

There is a striking difference between the school-family compacts of participating schools before and after this improvement effort. New compacts are more focused on student learning and linked to school data. They are stimulating new, creative activities in schools. Connecticut's Department of Education will be launching the program statewide as a best practice for Title I parent involvement, leveraging the language of the law to create a powerful strategy for parent-teacher collaboration.

Tools for Engagement

The following books and websites provide resources for engaging families in students' learning.

- *Beyond the Bake Sale* by Anne T. Henderson, Karen L. Mapp, Vivian Johnson, and Don Davies (The New Press, 2007). See especially Chapter 5.
- Connecticut State Department of Education's web page on compact tools (www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2678&q=320734).
- Family Involvement Network of Educators (www.finenetwork.org).
- National Network of Partnership Schools (www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/ppp/index.htm). See especially the compilation of promising practices.
- San Diego Unified School District's website on family engagement (www.sandi.net/parentoutreach).

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Endnote

¹ Other important partners were the state Parent Involvement Resource Center and the Capitol Region Education Council.

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A Missed Opportunity—Seized in Connecticut

No Child Left Behind stipulates that each school in the Title I program must develop an agreement, or "compact," that outlines how parents, school staff, and students will share responsibility for improving academic achievement. Compacts describe how the school and parents can work together to help students achieve the state's standards.

For most schools, compacts are a missed opportunity. As Judy Carson—who supports family engagement in Connecticut schools—found in reviewing compacts submitted by the state's schools, such documents rarely described activities that directly affect learning. Most compacts parroted general language in the law about parents' responsibility to support children's learning, for example, by monitoring their school attendance or their TV watching. And most were gathering dust on the shelf. This is true across the United States; a report from the U.S. Department of Education concluded that the parent involvement requirements, including compacts, are one of the weakest areas of Title I compliance (Stevenson & Laster, 2008).

Research shows that all students benefit from family involvement in education, and low-income and minority students benefit the most (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Most parents want timely information about school goals and learning strategies so they'll know what to do at home to support their children's achievement. This is the kind of information compacts were intended to provide—but a document asking parents to pledge that they'll get their kids to bed on time doesn't provide it. So Carson and several colleagues in Connecticut's Department of Education decided that if school-family compacts have to be created, schools should use the process to spark authentic conversations and listen to parents' ideas about learning.

In 2008, the department initiated a program to improve school-parent compacts, bringing several consultants onto their team.¹ This team designed a training curriculum, "A New Vision of Title I School-Parent Compacts," that they offered as free professional development for Connecticut's urban school districts.

Connecticut launched the effort with a Compact Conference that summer. Participants from five urban districts across the state learned how to transform compacts into plans for partnership among teachers at common grade levels and among parents of learners in those grades. Revised compacts would list specific actions that parents, students, and teachers could take to improve performance; they would be linked to current school improvement plans and grounded

in achievement data. Participants learned about promising practices to promote parent-teacher collaboration, explored practical home learning ideas, and made plans to seek parents' input. The state offered schools committed to this process follow-up support in the form of professional development and advice from team consultants. Here's how three urban elementary schools put this process into action, focusing on students' reading achievement.

Reaching Out to Wary Parents

Macdonough Elementary School in Middletown, Connecticut, serves 80 percent low-income students (the highest percentage in the Middletown School District). In 2008, Macdonough had high staff turnover and a reputation for being a "not-so-good" school in a run-down, working-class neighborhood. Although the school had recently improved under the leadership of principal Jon Romeo, word had not gone out beyond the immediate neighborhood. A redistricting plan to improve racial balance was poised to move one-fourth of the district's elementary students to different schools, including moving many new kids to Macdonough. Parents packed school board meetings to express concerns.

Romeo realized that Macdonough had to create positive relationships with new families fast and assure them that it would provide high-quality academics. When Romeo first heard about the program to improve Title I compacts, "To be honest, I groaned," he admitted. The school's compact hadn't been revised in a while and was sitting on the shelf. But the school needed to work more closely with families to close the achievement gap between its middleclass and low-income students. Romeo realized that co-creating a compact was a way to start; so he assembled a team of teachers, curriculum specialists, and parents to take this on.

<p>Sample School-Family Compact</p> <p>1st Grade Teachers Will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conduct daily small-group reading instruction. ▪ Read aloud each day to students. ▪ Provide take-home reading materials for students. ▪ Provide homework that supports topics learned at school. ▪ Take weekly trips to the school library. ▪ Keep families informed of children's reading progress and ways to support learning at home. 	<p>1st Grade Families Will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make reading a daily part of family time. ▪ Ask children questions about books they're reading. ▪ Visit the local library on a regular basis. ▪ Complete homework assignments with students. ▪ Attend family literacy events at Macdonough School. ▪ Stay in touch with teachers about reading progress.
<p><i>Source:</i> Macdonough Elementary School, Middletown, Connecticut</p>	

Drawing on what they learned at the 2008 Compact Conference and on help from consultant Patti Avallone, Macdonough's teachers invited families to family-friendly evening learning events, such as an author's tea, organized

by grade level. Romeo confessed, "We were afraid if we mentioned compacts they'd stay away. We enticed them with a fun event featuring their children."

After each activity, teachers pulled parents into the library and asked them to share ideas on improving students' reading. Romeo talked to the group about grade-level goals, and teachers showed parents what reading instruction looked like in their child's grade. Families met in small groups, with a Macdonough staff member guiding each group's conversation. To encourage parents to open up, teachers asked, "What advice would you offer next year's parents to support children's reading?" Ideas poured out: Visit the library once a month, spend family time reading, write letters to other family members. "Teachers were impressed with parents' ideas and their obvious commitment to learning, and parents' eyes were opened to the school's intense focus on reading," Romeo recalled.

These gatherings were not a one-shot deal. After these initial conversations, teachers took parents' ideas and drafted compacts. There was a lot of back and forth at grade-level meetings between parents and teachers. For example, teachers told parents that they wanted to send home reading materials with students each night to help students get into the habit of reading and that they'd like parents to monitor and guide their children's nightly reading. Parents were willing, but they asked the teachers to "tell us exactly what you want us to work on and how we can help."

Teachers were surprised; they'd never thought of telling parents what strategies they used in class. Teachers showed parents, for instance, about making text-to-self connections with books. Once parents learned that relating what their kids were reading to something in their lives—like comparing a character's trip to a recent family trip—is motivating and helps comprehension, they said, "Oh, we can do that." Through such exchanges, many people had their fingerprints on the finished compacts (see "Sample School-Family Compact," p. 50).

As redistricting went into effect, Macdonough used the momentum to promote relationships. Teachers took walks in the neighborhood, during which they gave books to families and discussed improvements to the school. A back-to-school picnic enabled teachers and parents to socialize informally. At the school's annual open house, teachers shared concrete information about what students would be learning and doing in class. School staff met with new families to invite them to help the school become the best it could be, using the compacts to explain how families might help improve student success in reading.

News began to spread that the school was improving. In 2008, a state advocacy group named Macdonough one of the 10 most improved schools in Connecticut.

Bringing Reading Strategies Home

At M. D. Fox Elementary School in Hartford, literacy coaches Rosana Bannock and Elise Francis initiated the compact-creating process. The school serves 900 children; 70 percent are Latino, and many others are refugees from Bosnia, Thailand, and Laos.

Through flyers and personal phone calls, Bannock and Francis invited parents to a meeting in the school's library that featured a presentation on developing compacts and how important parents are to the process. After the presentation, parents broke into groups according to their children's grade level. Teachers shared with each group tips they could use to help their kids succeed in school, and then asked two questions: "What do teachers need to do to help students?" and "What can the school do to help parents support their children?"

Bannock and Francis circulated the parents' ideas to other Fox parents, who checked off the ideas most important to them. Teachers identified recurring themes that they used to construct the final compact for parents' approval. The exchange was a learning process, noted Francis. "We had assumptions about what parents know and can do [to help children learn], and they're much more willing to do things than we thought." Bannock explained how the discussions boosted school attendance:

Parents know their kids need to get to school on time, but single moms with four and five kids are struggling. As a result of the compact conversations, teachers have more sympathy

for what families are going through, and grandparents are filling in to help kids get to school.

Teachers designed specific activities for different grade levels in response to parents' suggestions. For example, parents said they didn't understand what children learn in kindergarten—do they just play or do they learn to read? Teachers responded with a three-day kindergarten orientation for parents at which they gave parents learning materials and showed them how to support reading at home. An astounding 95 percent of families came.

Pushing For Pride in Student Work

Renata Lantos, principal at Bielefield Elementary School in Middletown, also had students' reading on her mind. Bielefield's attendance zone is the largest in the Middletown district, and more than one-half of its students are from low-income families. Although reading achievement is now improving steadily, at the time of compact creation, it was below average for the state.

After attending the Compact Conference, Lantos realized she and her staff had to revise their compact, which consisted of general compliance statements. Two teachers developed a presentation for families that explained the schools' reading goals. They linked practical strategies for improving reading skills to these goals and showed how these strategies could be outlined in the compact.

For example, Bielefield teachers now assign each student books that fit that student's reading level. Teachers have agreed to help students select "just-right books" and provide parents with reading materials connected to the books each week; parents agree to ensure that their children read regularly, encourage them to share and use new vocabulary, and use the materials the teacher sends home to have "book talks." Students agree to read these books regularly, keep a reading record, and build a list of new words they learn.

During follow-up conversations, a major issue came up: Students needed to take more pride in their work. They were handing in subpar work that showed a lack of motivation. "The whole building got involved," recalls Lantos. "Parents had great ideas, such as focusing on 'pride in work' in the newsletter and exhibiting student projects." At each grade level, students discussed what taking pride in your work means.

Teachers constructed a rubric that pinpointed three levels of student effort and time on task. Students described the basic level as "No effort. I worked way too quickly, and I didn't reread or revise my work. The paper is not my best and neatest." The top level is "My best effort. I thought and tried my hardest. I spent enough time to give my brain quality time. I carefully reread and revised my work." Teachers sent the rubric home, and parents signed off on reading it. Parents agreed to regularly review their children's work and discuss with them the meaning of pride. During parent-teacher conferences, teachers refer to the rubric.

Lantos says the result has been a huge improvement in student work: "Even 2nd graders get it, like the one who wrote: 'Now I know what quality work looks like.'" All Bielefield students have produced at least one "pride paper" that meets the top-level criteria on the rubric.

Keys to Success

We have discovered practices that help turn compacts into catalysts for action. The most important thing is to create a setting for parents and teachers to talk about how to help the kids—and to get to know one another. At Macdonough, Romeo asked staff members to facilitate meetings with families to ensure teacher buy-in. The process went from a conversation between a self-selected group of teachers and parents, to discussions among many teachers, to one with the entire parent teacher association. Parent leaders who emerged went to follow-up compact conferences, which strengthened their capacity to engage other families.

Continuing follow-up by the principal is important. Administrators should affirm practices that teachers are already doing—such as book drives and trips to the library—and explicitly link existing practices to the compact and the

school improvement plan. This takes teachers' actions beyond "random acts of family engagement" and integrates them into a systematic plan for improving achievement (Weiss, Lopez, & Rosenberg, 2010).

Working with grade-level colleagues inspires teachers. We found that developing compacts for each grade level made a big difference. At M. D. Fox, the literacy coaches facilitated grade-level meetings and brainstormed specific activities for teachers in each grade.

There is a striking difference between the school-family compacts of participating schools before and after this improvement effort. New compacts are more focused on student learning and linked to school data. They are stimulating new, creative activities in schools. Connecticut's Department of Education will be launching the program statewide as a best practice for Title I parent involvement, leveraging the language of the law to create a powerful strategy for parent-teacher collaboration.

Tools for Engagement

The following books and websites provide resources for engaging families in students' learning.

- *Beyond the Bake Sale* by Anne T. Henderson, Karen L. Mapp, Vivian Johnson, and Don Davies (The New Press, 2007). See especially Chapter 5.
- Connecticut State Department of Education's web page on compact tools (www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2678&q=320734).
- Family Involvement Network of Educators (www.finenetwork.org).
- National Network of Partnership Schools (www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/ppp/index.htm). See especially the compilation of promising practices.
- San Diego Unified School District's website on family engagement (www.sandi.net/parentoutreach).

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Endnote

¹ Other important partners were the state Parent Involvement Resource Center and the Capitol Region Education Council.

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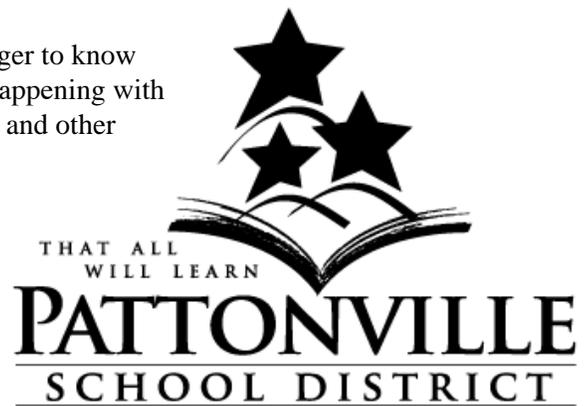
COMMUNICATION TIPS FOR TEACHERS

1. COMMUNICATE EARLY AND OFTEN.

Teachers have a built-in audience in the form of parents, who are eager to know what is happening in the classroom, and more specifically, what is happening with their own children. Provide frequent communication on these topics and other important issues, weekly if possible.

2. OPEN THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION.

As school starts, send home a letter of introduction to your parents, letting them know a little about you and ways they can keep in touch with you. Provide important phone numbers, web site addresses for homework assignments (if applicable), your e-mail address and other important information. Make them feel welcome in approaching you on matters related to their children. Let them know what to expect in the coming year and what types of things their children will be learning so they can reinforce those lessons at home.



3. COMMUNICATE FACE-TO-FACE AS OFTEN AS POSSIBLE.

The more difficult the situation you're talking about, the more important it is to do your communicating face-to-face. In the Hierarchy of Effective Communications, one-to-one, face-to-face communication is ranked No. 1 for being most effective, followed by small group discussion/meetings (2), speaking before a large group (3), and a phone conversation (4).

4. PROVIDE QUICK RESPONSES. ANTICIPATE QUESTIONS.

Return e-mail and telephone messages within 24 hours. Even if you cannot provide immediate answers to a question, return the call to let that person know that you will have to get back with them. This will eliminate frustrations and misunderstandings.

5. SHARE THE GOOD NEWS.

Call or e-mail parents and let them know if their child has done something good, made a significant improvement or is simply just doing a consistently great job. Send home notes indicating the same. Don't let the only contact you have with a parent be when something goes wrong. Develop a positive relationship with parents up front so that, should something negative happen, you have a good basis from which to start your discussions.

6. SHARE THE GOOD NEWS, PART II.

If you've got something great going on in the classroom, if you're doing something new, unique or different, contact community-relations (via e-mail or phone - internal extension 1025) and let us know about it so we can share the good news with our community. If you have a special event coming up, let us know about it two to three weeks prior to the event so that we can give proper notice to the news media if appropriate.

7. BE AN AMBASSADOR FOR YOUR SCHOOL AND YOUR DISTRICT.

Understand that what you say to friends, neighbors and people in the community has an impact on how well the district is perceived. An Education Week article stated that more than 70 percent of parents say they rely on personal observations and conversations and not the local news media to gather information about their local schools. As an employee of the district, you are considered by people you know as an expert on what is happening in Pattonville, so it's critical you know all the facts and speak accurately about the district.

PATTONVILLE SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS

(OVER)

8. PROVIDE COURTESY AND GREAT SERVICE TO ALL THOSE YOU COME IN CONTACT WITH (PARENTS, STUDENT AND COWORKERS).

Think about how you feel when you approach a salesperson who ignores you until he or she finishes a personal phone call. Sixty-eight percent of customers move on to other service providers because they've had a negative employee contact, only 14 percent because they were dissatisfied with the product or service. Consider the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." In every situation, model kindness, courtesy and prompt service. Return calls and e-mail promptly and make sure to follow-through on promises. As a public institution, we are here to serve - children, families, our community and each other. And what a great model we show our students when we treat those around us with dignity and respect.

9. HELP PARENTS UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF THEIR ROLE IN THE EDUCATION PROCESS AND WHAT THEIR ROLE IS.

According to John Wherry, a parent involvement expert, "By far, the most important parent involvement happens at home - Reading to children, being seen reading, setting an example, showing interest in school work, and much more!" Provide training and support for parents. All parents want the best for their children and want to help them succeed. Provide them with meaningful ways they can help at home and in the classroom. Be aware of their home or work situation and respectful of their time and needs. Above all, help them understand they are the first and most influential teacher of their children.

10. BE BRIEF AND TO THE POINT.

Our society is bombarded with messages. In order to get the public's attention and keep it, you must be brief and to the point. Parents can't digest lengthy newsletters or notes. They need short articles that are broken up on the page by graphics and headlines. (Consider how the successful "USA Today" newspaper looks). One sheet of paper is best. Use a 4th to 6th grade reading level. Remember, 80 percent of people will spend just 30 seconds reading what you send home. Edit your communications to the most important points you want parents to remember. NEVER use educational jargon and acronyms.

11. STICK TO THE FACTS.

Always tell the truth and don't speculate. If you don't know the answer to something, say you don't know and that you'll get back to the person with an answer. Be sure to follow-up. Speculating spreads rumors that may not be accurate.

12. DO A GOOD JOB.

It sounds so simple, but 90% of good public relations is simply doing a good job.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MEDIA EXCLUSIONS

Any parent who does not want his/her child to be interviewed, photographed or videotaped by newspaper, television, radio media, the Pattonville school-community relations department or any district department/program for the purpose of news coverage or other district projects may complete a media exclusion form provided each year with the individual school's "back-to-school" materials. Any child who has one of these completed forms in his file will not be included in any publicity-related materials produced by the child's school or the district (newsletters, press releases, etc.). Forms must be filled out annually to continue the exclusion.

Please familiarize yourself with the children in your class who have a media exclusion form on file (check with your school secretary for a list). We cannot use any photos/interviews/video footage of children in your class with this designation, so we will need to know this before we covering your event.

For more information, call our office at our extension, 1025. Thank you.

PATTONVILLE SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Mickey Schoonover, Director of School-Community Relations
(314) 213-8025 (internal 1025)

A PRINCIPAL'S TOP 10 LIST FOR SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATIONS

1. COMMUNICATE EARLY AND OFTEN.

Institutions live or die by public opinion. It is important to dispel misperceptions about the quality and safety of public schools. We need to help our “customers” discover that we are giving them what they want. And remember this...you have to deliver a message 7 to 9 times in 7 to 9 different ways for it to really reach your audience. In a crisis, it is important to communicate the facts as soon as possible with staff, parents and the public. Most problems an organization has faced can be traced back to communication problems, and nationwide, most administrators lose their jobs because of communication issues. It's one of your single-most important roles as a leader.

2. COMMUNICATE FACE- TO-FACE AS OFTEN AS POSSIBLE.

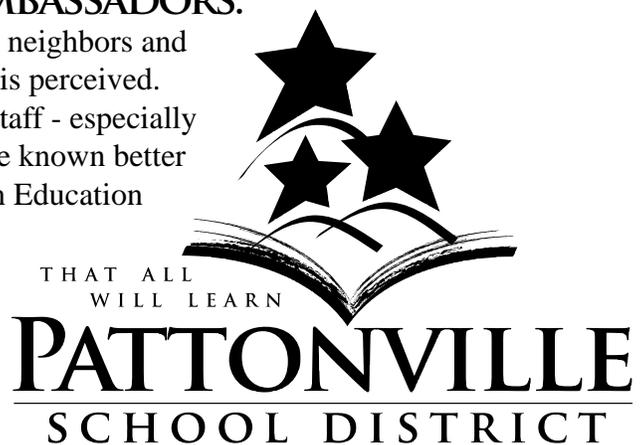
The more difficult the situation you're talking about, the more important it is to do your communicating face-to-face. Nationwide, only 22% of parents say they get useful information about their schools from radio, TV and newspapers. In Pattonville, only 2.5% percent of our residents rely on TV for news about their school district, 18.4% on the Post Dispatch, and 20% on the Suburban Journal. In the Hierarchy of Effective Communications, one-to-one, face-to-face communication is ranked No. 1 for being most effective, followed by small group discussion/meetings (2), speaking before a large group (3), and a phone conversation (4). Newsletter articles and news carried in the media are toward the bottom of the list. Remember... students are one of your audiences, too!

3. DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR COMMUNITY.

The late PR Guru Pat Jackson said, “Public relations is developing relationships which change attitudes that bring about desired behaviors.” Involve your community in making decision and coming up with solutions. When evaluating your school's programs, seek input from your community about how you're doing and how you can improve in areas ranging from instruction to communication. Use their input to improve. Find out who the opinion leaders are in your community (the people that everyone listens to and trusts, and they're not just parents) and get to know them. Include them in your communication loop.

4. START WITH YOUR STAFF TO BE YOUR AMBASSADORS.

Train your staff to understand that what they say to friends, neighbors and people in the community has an impact on how the district is perceived. As such, every employee is a PR ambassador. Include all staff - especially support staff - when communicating to employees. They are known better in the community and trusted more than administrators. An Education Week article stated that more than 70% percent of parents say they rely on personal observations and conversations and not the local news media to gather information about their local schools. Your staff should be among the first to know about any important news.



5. INSIST ON EXEMPLARY COURTESY AND CUSTOMER SERVICE FOR ALL VISITORS (PARENTS, STUDENTS, ETC.).

Did you know dissatisfied people tell as many as 16 other people about a bad experience. Word of mouth is a powerful thing. What's worse, only 4 percent of unhappy customers bother to complain. For every complaint we hear, 24 complaints are communicated to others, but not to us. Think about how you feel when you approach a salesperson who ignores you until he or she finishes a personal phone call. 68% of customers move on to other service providers because they've had a negative employee contact, only 14% because they were dissatisfied with the product or service. Here's Consultant Bill Banach's ABCs of Customer Service: A) Say "hello." B) Ask "How are you?" C) Say "goodbye." Minimize inconveniences for your "customers" (and these include other staff, parents, students, community members, etc.), and delight them by doing more than they would expect. A little goodwill and positive attitude goes a long way.

6. HELP PARENTS UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF THEIR ROLE IN THE EDUCATION PROCESS AND WHAT THEIR ROLE IS.

According to school PR expert John Wherry, "By far, the most important parent involvement happens at home - Reading to children, being seen reading, setting an example, showing interest in school work, and much more!" Provide training and support for parents. Help them understand they are the first and most influential teacher of their children. Let them know we count on them for their help and we value them as part of our school family.

7. BE BRIEF AND TO THE POINT.

Our society is bombarded with messages. In order to get the public's attention and keep it, you must be brief and to the point. Parents can't digest lengthy newsletters. They need short articles that are broken up on the page by graphics and headlines. One sheet of paper is best. Use a 4th- to 6th-grade reading level. Remember, 80 percent of people will spend just 30 seconds reading what you send home. Think about the newspaper "USA Today" and its simple, brief format. It's easy to read and understand in a short amount of time. If you have key messages you want to make sure people receive and understand, highlight those in your headline or in a bulleted sidebar so those that don't read your article and skim your newsletter will at least "get" your main points. When being interviewed by TV media, say whatever you want to say in 8 seconds (the average sound bite on TV). Plan accordingly and practice what you want your message to be no matter what the question is. NEVER use educational jargon. PS: Just say "no" to acronyms! Most people don't know what they stand for.

8. NEVER LIE.

Never, never, never lie. If you don't know the answer to something, say you don't know and that you'll get back to the person with an answer. Be sure to follow-up. Stick to facts and don't speculate.

9. DO A GOOD JOB.

It sounds so simple, but 90 percent of good public relations is simply doing a good job.

10. DEVELOP A COMMUNICATIONS PLAN.

Just like anything else, communication is most effective when researched, planned and evaluated. Find out who your audiences are, where they would like to get their information and plan measurable objectives to accomplish this. Involve your staff in getting this done. Communications plans should be updated yearly.

AISR Speaks Out: Commentary on Urban Education

What Can Community Organizing Teach Us about Parent Engagement? Five Simple Ways to Rethink the Bake Sale

Published on September 15, 2011

Author: Joanne Thompson with Contributor Soo Hong

Over the past several years, more and more evidence has emerged that effective parent engagement can positively affect school culture, working conditions, and student achievement.

Over the past several years, more and more evidence has emerged that effective parent engagement can positively affect school culture, working conditions, and student achievement (Henderson and Mapp, 2002). A school that actively welcomes and sees parents as important stakeholders with valuable knowledge and expertise can build trust and support throughout the community that is necessary to build and sustain reform. But when we think about what parent engagement usually means, the first things to come to mind are bake sales, PTA meetings, and parent-teacher conferences. Although individual teachers can and do find ways to reach parents across a school community, these efforts are often isolated and fall short of creating a school-wide vision for parent engagement. With little training or expertise in community affairs, school staff often need support to make dynamic shifts in how they work with families.

There are many ways that strong community organizing groups can facilitate more meaningful relationships between families and schools. These groups often have staff who speak the languages of a community and are tuned in to the experiences, dilemmas, and assets of neighborhood. Dr. Soo Hong of Wellesley College has spent the last four years exploring the work of one successful community organizing group in Chicago, the Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA). LSNA has partnered with eight neighborhood schools to build a model of parent engagement that is unlike any other.

At a [webinar hosted by the Annenberg Institute](#) for planning grantees of the Nellie Mae Education Foundations District-Level Systems Change initiative (DLSC), Dr. Hong presented findings from her book, *A Cord of Three Strands*, on five LSNA strategies that are relevant to anyone seeking to increase parent engagement in schools.

1. Focus on the needs and experiences of families first: Bake sales, open houses, and parent-teacher conferences are often shaped by the preferences and views of schools rather than families. LSNA is focused on the experience of families first. When working with Mexican immigrant mothers who are not accustomed to parent presence in schools, LSNA introduces them to the ways parents *can* be involved. By highlighting the

assets and building the participation of bilingual parent leaders, schools can also develop a rich resource of individuals who bridge across school staff and families.

2. Promote authentic relationships and engagement, not just a revised calendar of activities: As they try to become more effective with “hard to reach” parents, schools translate newsletters into different languages and plan events at more family-friendly times. These revised plans and activities are a step in the right direction, but schools need to design strategies that bring school staff and families into conversation and dialogue. In LSNA schools, a parent mentor works with a teacher daily in a classroom (other than their child's) to support student learning. These collaborative working relationships and opportunities for dialogue and relationship-building become the core to newfound mutual understandings of family life and school culture.

3. View parents as assets, not deficits: When schools struggle with low levels of parent involvement, they often wonder why parents don't care or aren't interested in their child's education. Based on this belief, many parent involvement programs are designed to educate parents or equip them with skills they may be lacking. LSNA sees each parent as a child's first teacher who has keen insight into their own children and the broader community. Parents are successful in connecting to children across a school community and are often the most effective in drawing in new parents to participate in the school. In this and many other ways, parents are seen as allies and leaders in the larger effort to improve schools.

4. Broaden, don't limit participation: After LSNA organizers build a program that brings parents into schools, they immediately shift their attention to the parents they didn't reach. Rather than relying on a few successful events or programs that attract the same group of interested parents, LSNA organizers make every effort to broaden participation. This requires building a portfolio of programs and opportunities that meet different needs and expectations within the community.

5. Transform families, schools, and communities: When schools focus on parent programs that single mindedly seek to alter parenting practices at home, the responsibility for change rests solely on families. Addressing the dilemma of parent engagement should be a shared effort that asks not only how parents can understand schools and more effectively support their children at home, but also how schools can alter their beliefs about parents and their strategies for parent engagement to transform a school culture.

This approach requires time, patience and planning. It is rooted in the slow and patient work of relationship-building and the belief that hope and healing must replace the separation created by distrust and misunderstanding. Through the work of community organizing groups like LSNA—that are founded in building community voice, promoting justice, and shifting power imbalances—we can build a new and transformative model for parent engagement in schools.

RESOURCES

Henderson, Anne, and Mapp, Karen. (2002). *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement*. National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools. > [Download PDF](#)

Hong, Soo. (2011). *A Cord of Three Strands: A New Approach to Parent Engagement in Schools*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Priority Schools Campaign

OPEN CAFÉ

NEA FAITH-BASED OUTREACH INITIATIVE

A Priority Schools Campaign Resource

PURPOSE OF FAITH-BASED OUTREACH INITIATIVE

The purpose of NEA faith-based outreach initiative is two-fold: (1) to mobilize national support and involvement from faith-based community for NEA's Priority Schools Campaign (PSC) and (2) to offer faith-based outreach assistance upon request to PSC intensive support school sites.

AVAILABLE FAITH-BASED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT

- A Guide for Developing Faith-Based Community/School Partnerships is available for conducting outreach to community faith-based leaders and establishing ongoing partnerships with them.
- Direct on-site technical assistance to plan and implement the suggested Guide strategies is available upon request. Technical assistance is also available via conference calls as well as through the internet.
- The following faith-based PSC outreach materials are also available upon request:
 - (1) A preliminary listing of all houses of worship and their ministers in the surrounding community for each PSC intensive support school site;
 - (2) A draft introductory letter that could be sent to a local faith-based leader regarding the Priority Schools Campaign's efforts to assist in closing the achievement gaps for students in the community's intensive support site school and requesting an initial meeting to solicit the leader's involvement and support for that effort; and
 - (3) A draft church bulletin framework that provides general information about the intensive support site school, its needs, and solicits ideas from its members as to how they collectively could provide support for the school and its students.

Steps to Access the PSC/Faith-Based Initiative Resources

Dr. Nesa Chappelle nchappelle@nea.org in External Partnerships and Advocacy is the lead for NEA's Faith-Based Initiative. If you are interested in these resources, please inform the PSC staff person assigned to work with your school.

NEA'S GREEN ACROSS AMERICA INITIATIVE

A Priority Schools Campaign Resource

PURPOSE OF NEA'S GREEN ACROSS AMERICA

Working with a range of outstanding environmental, energy and sustainability partners, NEA's Green Across America (GAA) supports educators and their students with resources aimed at providing a healthy learning and work environment; encouraging interest and engagement in science, technology, engineering and mathematics; developing workforce skills for the green economy; and promoting environmental stewardship. The sample resources listed below are available from GAA partners to PSC intensive support sites (ISS) **upon request**.

U.S. Green Building Council will provide a copy of the *Green Existing Schools Project Management Guide*. Once a critical mass of ISS has been identified, USGBC will provide a webinar on guide usage. Free professional development resources and training with green school experts can be provided along with links to local USGBC chapters for hands-on support to recommend ways to transform existing schools into healthier, more sustainable and efficient facilities in which to learn and teach.

Project Learning Tree, an award-winning environmental education program for PreK-12 educators, will provide resources from its *GreenSchools!* program. *GreenSchools!* provides a blueprint for educators, students, environmental and health advocates, school board members, parents and community members to teach, learn, and engage in the creation of green and healthy learning environments. To accomplish this goal, *GreenSchools!* combines environmental education, service learning, and student leadership. Components of the *GreenSchools!* program made available to ISS will include standards-aligned Project Learning Tree curriculum materials, school investigations (audits), and professional development for students and adults.

Dow Corning, working through NEA, will provide copies of *A Clean Planet: The Solar Power Story* to ISS serving grades 5-8 while supplies last.

National Environmental Education Foundation is working with GAA on a free webinar series to address popular "green" topics of interest to ISS. The series, leading up to the 2nd Annual Green Schools National Conference in Denver, February 2012, will tentatively address school buildings as green teaching tools, greening the schoolyard (gardens and habitats), and going green through the curriculum. A wealth of additional environmental resources is available online (www.classroomearth.org)

National Wildlife Federation offers ISS innovative environmental education programs such as *Eco-Schools USA* and *Schoolyard Habitats*.

National Audubon Society will provide *Audubon Adventures* classroom kits to ISS teachers of grades 3-5. Aligned with national standards, the kits promote positive attitudes about nature and provide exciting resources to bring science to life. NAS will also connect ISS to local Audubon chapters to provide additional resources and support, including *Audubon at Home* and the *Great Backyard Bird Count*.

On request, additional support and technical assistance may be available for specific environmental or sustainability needs not listed above from a growing list of partners including: **Earth Day Network**, **Will Steger Foundation**, the **North American Association for Environmental Education** and/or others.

Carolyn Breedlove cbreedlove@nea.org is the manager responsible for NEA's Green Across America. If you are interested in receiving any of the listed Green partners' support for your school, please contact the Priority Schools Campaign staff assigned to your school.

Virtual Learning Communities

NEA's Priority Schools is pleased to announce the debut of our virtual mentoring pilot for intensive support sites.* Forty-one accomplished teachers—many of them National Board Certified Teachers and/or mentors in their own high-needs schools—are ready to serve as virtual mentors to their peers in priority schools. The mentors were trained in collaboration with our partner, The Center for Teaching Quality, which has considerable expertise in cultivating teacher leadership to address student learning.

The mentoring will take place in a number of theme-based, virtual-learning communities or VLCs. Mentors will work in pairs or groups to support teachers according to teacher interests, needs, and availability. What exactly the guiding themes may be, depends on what teachers would like to explore about their practice, but some possibilities include: classroom management, differentiated instruction, National Board or Take One!, family-school-community partnerships, technology in the classroom, ELL, etc. With over forty trained mentors, there's a broad range of expertise at all levels to tap.

For any particular themed VLC to launch, a minimum of twenty mentees is required. Teachers can sign up alone or in cohorts. The service is free. See the FAQs at the link below for more information. All a teacher needs to do is fill out the online form, and we will take it from there.

<http://neapriorityschools.org/virtual-learning-community/>

In addition, please take a copy of our FAQ brochure and of our flyer postcard that includes the URL for the interest form.

Please contact me directly if you have additional questions, but be sure to read the FAQs and interested teachers should complete the interest form—both on the webpage—first as they will surely answer much that one may wonder.

Jennifer Locke, NBCT
Senior Policy Analyst
Teacher Quality - NEA
(202) 822-7509

*The service is a pilot open only to invited sites. If you are receiving this message, consider your site invited.



NEA's Quality School Program and Resources, English Language Learner Culture and Equity Cadre is intentionally designed to increase the classroom capacity of educators, help them meet the educational needs of ELLs, and dispel the myth that unions block meaningful school improvement, including improvement of ELL student achievement. In fact, according to NEA members, teachers lead reform! To ensure access to equal educational opportunity, the Cadre intentionally incorporates culture and equity, high standards in language development, language acquisition and academic content, improving classroom conditions, effective use of formative and summative assessments, evidence-based research instructional strategies and demographics into a new and exciting professional development module entitled, "English Language Learners: Culture, Equity & Language Training Module For Preparing ELLs for Success, College and Beyond."

NEA's "English Language Learners: Culture, Equity & Language Training Module for Preparing ELLs for Success, College and Beyond" is a professional development resource inspired by NEA's core foundational principles of "culture, equity, adequacy and sustainability". Evidence-based research and classroom-focused instructional and advocacy strategies are integrated into the module to help educators:

- *Engage ELLs in English language development and academic content mastery*
- *Recognize and build on demographic realities, cultural and equity assumptions, educational theory, and culturally and linguistically relevant instruction*
- *Create classroom and school environments that facilitate grade-level and developmentally appropriate language and content mastery*
- *Absorb, understand and capitalize on language acquisition theory*
- *Recognize language development stages and promising instructional practices for instruction*
- *Identify appropriate ELL instructional strategies aligned to standards and objectives differentiated instructional delivery*
- *Find innovative ways to motivate ELLs to comprehend and practice academic language skills that are carefully structured and allow students to demonstrate growing proficiency while simultaneously mastering academic content*

The ELL training module supports educators in the application of the best research-based ELL culture and equity practices in their classrooms and to further their professional development, while closing the achievement gaps for ELLs.

The NEA Priority Schools Campaign is a key priority throughout the organization to help members become effective leaders, advocates and practitioners in closing achievement gaps for culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students. In addition, NEA

proactively helps state affiliates inform state and local public policies and secure funding to transform schools and increase academic achievement for all students.

A unique aspect of NEA's work is the emphasis placed on keeping the learner at the center of change and promoting a deep respect and appreciation for the cultural and linguistic strengths students bring to the academic environment, even in the nation's struggling schools. NEA is committed to championing this vision!

Recently, QSPR has delivered ELL Culture and Equity professional development to the following Priority Sites:

- *Belmont High School*, Dayton, OH; [Demetrice Davis, Education Reform Consultant - davisdem@ohea.org]
- *Horizonte Magnet High School*, Salt Lake, UT [Sara Jones, IPD- sjones@uea.org]
- *Gilcrease Elementary School*, Tulsa, OK [Dottie Hager, Associate Executive Director - dhager@okea.org]
- *Rancho HS ,Doris Hancock ES, & Kit Carson ES*, Clarke County, NV [Craig Stevens, Director Education Policy - craig.stevens@nsea-nv.org]
- *North High School* Des Moines, Iowa. [Cindy Swanson, T&L Specialist - cindy.swanson@isea.org]

Upcoming QSPR English Language Learner Culture and Equity Cadre PSC activities include:

- *Oregon EA* [Beth Anne Darby, Assistant Executive Director- lindsey.capps@regoned.org]
- *Washington EA* [Ann Randall, Federal Gov't Liaison- ARandall@washingtonea.org]
- *Belmont HS*, Dayton, OH [Demetrice Davis, Education Reform Consultant - davisdem@ohea.org]
- *Howenstine Magnet HS*, Tucson, AZ; [Lisa Guzman, Field Organizing & Services – lasa.guzman@arizonaaea.org]
- *Augusta Schools A-C* in Augusta, GA. [Sandy Schwellinger, Executive Director – sandy.schwellinger@gae.org]

Please Contact:

Linda Ana Cabral, Associate Director Quality School Programs and Resources English Language Learners Culture & Equity Program and Policy Telephone: (202) 822-7733
Email: lcabral@nea.org

William Moreno III, Senior Policy Analyst Quality School Programs and Resources English Language Learners Culture & Equity Program and Policy Telephone: (202) 822-7866 Email: wmoreno@nea.org



<http://www.nea.org/ell>

NEA Public Engagement Project (PEP): A Priority Schools Campaign (PSC) Resource

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES TO TRANSFORM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The NEA Public Engagement Program (PEP) is a model for family/school/community dialogue that can assist any School in gaining community support for its efforts to close student achievement gaps. In the last few years we've expanded our model to include the ACTION needed to ensure that all students learn. Our enriched model — **Closing Achievement Gaps through Community Conversations that Lead to Collective Action** — combines the power of many NEA departments working together to deliver a range of products, tools, resources, proven strategies, and services that support schools and communities as they work to close achievement gaps.

THE PROCESS

Through funds provided by the NEA specifically targeted to supporting Priority Schools in their transformation efforts, The PEP program typically involves a 4-step process:

- 1) **ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY.** The local Association works to establish an Organizing Coalition Committee, comprised of a wide variety of community stakeholders including: parents, businesses, grassroots political organizations, faith-based groups, and ethnic minority organizations. The Coalition then initiates and moderates a Community Conversation focused on how to ensure the success of all children in an identified school, feeder pattern, or district. NEA staff will train local community members to facilitate small group discussions within the Conversation.
- 2) **IDENTIFY THE CRITICAL ISSUES.** With assistance from NEA staff, the Coalition Committee — including selected Community Conversation participants — meets to analyze the Community Conversation data and to identify the community's top three priorities as elicited during the Conversation.
- 3) **AGREE ON PRIORITIES & CREATE AN ACTION PLAN.** The Coalition Committee hosts a second Community Conversation, focused this time on coming to a common understanding of the community's priority areas for improving student outcomes. The group then develops an action plan that addresses the changes they seek.
- 4) **MOBILIZE THE COMMUNITY.** Guided by the plan of action, community members work together towards improving student success. NEA staff is available, by request of the Coalition Committee, to help build capacity through skill-building sessions, trainings, or focused actions tailored for the community.

If you are interested in engaging your community in the PEP process or need more information, please contact NEA External Partnerships & Advocacy staff: Roberta Hantgan (rhantgan@nea.org) or Brenda Vincent (bvincent@nea.org).

Public Engagement Project (PEP) Implementation

PEP Implementation in Priority Schools Campaign Targeted Sites

Linden Community – Columbus, OH

PSC State Contact: Demetrice Davis, (614) 227-3100, davidem@ohea.org

Tulsa , OK

PSC State Contacts: Margaret Bujold, 918-665-2282 x290, mbujold@okea.org

Dottie Hager, 405, 523-4315, dhager@okea.org

PEP Implementation in Priority Schools Campaign Targeted States

Alabama (Selma)

Arkansas (Little Arkansas)

California (Davis, San Jose, Merced, Coachella)

Colorado (Westminster)

Florida (Franklin County, Gadsden County, Leon County)

Georgia (Clayton County)

Iowa (Cedar Rapids)

Maryland (District Heights)

Mississippi (Homes County)

Nebraska (Grand Island, Lincoln, Winnebago)

New Jersey (Patterson)

North Carolina (Charlotte-Mecklenburg)

Oklahoma (Tahlequah, Weatherford, El Reno)

Wyoming (Wind River Reservation)



Parent/Teacher Home Visits: Forging Partnerships That Increase Student Success

Since 1998, the Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project non-profit members have created stronger home/school partnerships that support students and transform schools. Home visits lead to increased parent involvement, reduced disciplinary problems, improved attendance, and increased student achievement. Home visits also lead to trusting, respectful relationships between parents and teachers, creating the foundation for understanding and cooperation between home and school that is critical to every student's success. Families report greater understanding of graduation requirements, student status and available site based resources - if needed. Educators report greater understanding and connection to their entire school community and each student's individual learning needs. Studies of successful home visit pilots have documented the many benefits of home visits, including:

Home Visits Create Partnerships:

- Increasing parental involvement
- Developing trust and understanding among parents and teachers
- Identifying common goals for students
- Helping parents learn how to better help their children

Home Visits Improve School Climate:

- Reduced absenteeism
- Fewer suspensions and expulsions
- Improved communication between home and school
- Shared accountability

Home Visits Increase Student Achievement:

- Improved test scores
- Higher school-wide API scores
- Improved accountability for students, parents, and teachers

Schools and districts in eleven states have adopted our model. Priority Sites include:

Salem, OR - Roberts High School, Early College High School [Lindsey Capps, Assistant Executive Director, lindsey.capps@oregoned.org]

Montgomery, AL - Bellingrath Middle School, Capitol Heights Middle School, Southlawn Middle School [Tyna Davis, Manager Education Policy & Professional Practice, tynad@alaedu.org]

Upcoming activities include Romulus Middle School, Romulus, MI [Frank Ciloski, Professional Development & Human Rights Consultant, fciloski@mea.org]

Home visits work for parents. They work for educators. And, most importantly, they work for students. For more information about Home Visits contact:

Carrie Rose, Director, The Parent-Teacher Home Visit Project
www.pthvp.org home-visits@sbcglobal.net 916/448-5290



What is KEYS?

KEYS 2.0 is a comprehensive, research-based, and data driven continuous school improvement program grounded on **42 Indicators of School Quality** that are clustered around six “Keys.”

- *Shared Understanding and Commitment to High Goals* (5 Indicators)
- *Open Communication and Collaborative Problem Solving* (9 Indicators)
- *Continuous Assessment for Teaching and Learning* (5 Indicators)
- *Personal and Professional Learning* (11 Indicators)
- *Resources to Support Teaching Learning* (5 Indicators)
- *Curriculum and Instruction* (7 Indicators)

The KEYS Data

At the heart of the NEA’s KEYS program is a survey that gathers the perception from all school stakeholders on how their school stacks up against every indicator in each “Key” area. School results are presented in bar graphs that illustrate the level of consensus among survey takers, how the school compares with all schools that took the survey, as well as with schools that are at the 90th percentile of the scale. Survey results belong to the school and are held *strictly confidential*. The decisions on what, to whom, when, and how to share the results rest on the hands of the district and school leadership teams made up of district, school, and association leaders acting in accordance with previously agreed upon guidelines memorialized in a memorandum of understanding.

The KEYS Process

Stakeholders can use KEYS either as a complete step-by-step guide for improvement or as the assessment component of an improvement program that a school already has in place. To begin the KEYS process:

- Potential KEYS users contact the NEA state affiliate and/or local office
- NEA staff or state KEYS coaches provide training to school KEYS coordinators and facilitators
- Districts register their schools and school KEYS facilitators complete the school’s demographic form
- School community (educators, ESPs, administrators) takes the online KEYS survey in either English or Spanish. Parents including community members with no children in school take the parents and

community surveys in either English or Spanish that are also online. All survey questions have been normed and all indicators correlate positively with conditions present in high performing schools.

All survey participants enjoy complete anonymity.

- Surveys close 21 days after being opened to receive input by at least 80% of expected respondents. Surveys can be re-opened for an extra 10 days when requested.
- System automatically generates survey results in bar graph form for analysis and use as basis for action and decision-making.

The Power of KEYS

To Turn Around Priority Schools:

- Provides baseline data essential for measuring long-term continuous school improvement
- Helps schools establish priorities and target efforts on areas needing improvement.

To Promote and Strengthen Positive Relationship within the School Community:

- Offers a partnership opportunity among all school stake-holders in addressing issues of mutual concern
- Builds trust between and among school/district management and staff
- Gives a voice to all members of the school community in the school improvement process.
- Promotes buy-in and collaborative effort in decision-making and problem-solving

NEA KEYS and PSC Sites:

- KEYS is now implemented in more than 40 states with about 2,000 schools. KEYS has been introduced to and being implemented in several NEA's PSC sites, including:
 - Montgomery County School, AL (tynad@alaedu.org)
 - Des Moines School District, IA (cindy.swanson@isea.org)
 - Richmond School District, CA (jrobb@cta.org; mfong@cta.org)
 - Tulsa School District, OK; (dhager@okea.org)
 - Howenstine Magnet High School, AZ (lisa.guzman@arizonaea.org)

For More Information, Contact NEA Quality School Programs and Resources Department:

Sonia Yilmaz (Syilmaz@nea.org); Robin Butterfield (Rbutterfield@nea.org), Danilo Lunaria (Dlunaria@nea.org), Jacques Nacson (Jnacson@nea.org), Romaine Hodge (Rhodge@nea.org), or www.KEYSonline.org.



TLC³ for E

**Flip It
By Evo-Day**

**scores that dip
a graduation rate slip
under funding starts the crack
break your district's back
when the PLA label comes along
you must flip it
progress must be seen before too long
you must flip it
when something's going wrong
you must flip it**

**now flip it
into shape
add Thinkfinity
get straight
go forward
move ahead
try to change it
change your fate
so flip it
flip it good**

**when a good time turns around
you must flip it
the district will never live it down
unless you flip it
no one gets away
until they flip it**

**i say flip it
flip it good
i say flip it
flip it good**

TLC³ for E

T =

Technology:

Feeling crunched for time? I think we have found an approach to create more instructional time by using technology via the:

1. Flipped Model of Instruction – check out our story using the link below:
<http://www.flippedhighschool.com/>
2. Thinkfinity – to find and align classroom activities to support the flipped model, check out this link: <http://www.thinkfinity.org/>

L =

Literacy:

Are you finding it difficult to incorporate literacy into your instruction?

Any time you bring technology into your curriculum, you have a great opportunity to infuse information literacy.

It is also wise to consider traditional literacy when implementing classroom strategies.

C³ =

Content, Curriculum, and Creativity:

Are you looking for pre-designed lessons that will drive an aligned curriculum for free?

Check out the resources offered via



and this brief introductory video:
http://video.thinkfinity.org/pd/video/What_is_Thinkfinity/

You will also find that creativity is still the main teacher characteristic that drives a successful learning experience in the TLC³ for E approach.

for E =

for Educators:

Looking for a complete approach to reform your school or teaching practices?

TLC³ for E offers an all-inclusive approach for improving your school's performance. Please contact me if you desire more information:
Michael Ward - 586-596-0019 - michaelfay169@sbcglobal.net

Priority Schools Campaign

PARTICIPANT DIRECTORY

Priority Schools Campaign

**PARTNER
DIRECTORY AND
RESOURCES**

Priority Schools Campaign

**SPEAKER BIOS
AND
PRESENTATIONS**

Leadership that Improves Learning Results: Who, What, and How

Joseph F. Johnson, Jr., Ph.D.
Executive Director
National Center for Urban School Transformation

NEA's Priority Schools Forum:
Change, Challenge, and Collaboration
November 11, 2011

National Center for Urban School Transformation



Dedicated to identifying, studying, and promoting the best practices of American's highest achieving urban schools in a manner that supports urban districts in transforming teaching and learning.

<http://www.ncust.org>



SAN DIEGO STATE
UNIVERSITY

Learn more at our annual symposium on high-performing schools



May 23, 24, 25

San Diego's Mission Valley Marriott Hotel

Register teams now at:

<http://www.ncust.org>

NCUST IDENTIFIES, CELEBRATES, AND STUDIES

Non-selective, urban schools (serving primarily students from low-income families) that demonstrate high achievement for all students.

These schools evidence:

- High proficiency rates for all groups
- High graduation rates for all groups
- High rates of access to challenging programs for all groups
- Strong academic progress for students with disabilities
- Low rates of suspension/expulsion for all groups
- Other indicators of student success/achievement

Go to www.ncust.org to see 2012 application & criteria



The Center sponsors the National Excellence in Urban Education Award Program, annually identifying some of the nation's highest performing urban elementary, middle, and high schools, and alternative schools.

Since 2006, we have awarded 48 schools from 15 states.

2010 NCUST AWARD WINNERS

- Horace Mann Elementary, Glendale, CA
- International Elementary, Long Beach, CA
- Lemay Elementary, Los Angeles
- Nueva Vista Elementary, Los Angeles
- Whitefoord Elementary, Atlanta
- Horace Mann Dual Language Academy, Wichita, KS
- Branch Brook School, Newark, NJ
- Charles Lunsford School, Rochester, NY
- Marble Hills High School, Bronx, NY
- Escontrias Elementary, El Paso
- Hambrick Middle School, Houston,
- Nathan Adams Elementary, Dallas,
- Stephens Elementary, Houston

2009 NCUST AWARD WINNERS

- Bonham Elementary, Dallas, TX
- Bursch Elementary, Compton, CA
- Fallon Park Elementary, Roanoke, VA
- Franklin Town Charter High, Philadelphia, PA
- Golden Empire Elementary, Sacramento, CA
- Highland Elementary, Silver Springs, MD
- Ira Harbison Elementary, National City, CA
- Lawndale High School, Los Angeles, CA
- Kearny School of International Business, San Diego, CA
- KIPP Adelante Academy, San Diego, CA
- Montebello Gardens Elementary, Los Angeles, CA
- World of Inquiry School, Rochester, NY

2008 NCUST AWARD WINNERS

- Louisa Alcott Elementary, Cleveland, OH
- Bridesburg Elementary, Philadelphia, PA
- William Dandy Middle School, Ft. Lauderdale, FL
- Dreamkeeper's Academy, Norfolk, VA
- Franklin Elementary, Bakersfield, CA
- Henderson Middle School, Richmond, VA
- MacArthur High School, Houston, TX
- Signal Hill Elementary, Long Beach, CA
- Southside Museums Elementary, Miami, FL
- Harriet Tubman Blue Ribbon School, Newark, NJ
- Tucker Elementary, Long Beach, CA

Profiles of Two Schools

NCUST Winner

CA
San Diego Unified
9-12
453
73%
43%
12%
14%
23%
31%
74%
87%
838

State:
District:
Grade Span
Enrollment:
% Low-Income
% Latino
% Black
% White
% Asian
% Eng. Learners
% Prof. English
% Prof. Math
API

Neighboring School

CA
San Diego Unified
9-12
505
65%
39%
19%
19%
20%
15%
47.6%
52%
744

Profiles of Two Schools

NCUST Winner

FL

Broward

6-8

1,010

73%

7%

87%

3%

1%

3%

60%

79%

State:

District:

Grade Span

Enrollment:

% Low-Income

% Latino

% Black

% White

% Asian

% Eng. Learners

% 8th Prof. Reading

% 8th Prof. Math

Neighboring School

FL

Broward

6-8

891

77%

9%

83%

3%

2%

6%

41%

50%

Profiles of Two Schools

NCUST Winner

NY
Rochester City
PK-6
334
93%
4%
94%
2%
0%
1%
78%
100%

State:
District:
Grade Span
Enrollment:
% Low-Income
% Latino
% Black
% White
% Asian
% Eng. Learners
% 6th Prof. Reading
% 6th Prof. Math

Neighboring School

NY
Rochester City
PK-6
381
96%
8%
87%
4%
0%
2%
46%
58%

**What have we learned
about these high-
performing schools?**

LEADERSHIP MATTERS

Every high-performing school we have awarded has **a team of dedicated leaders (including teachers, administrators, and other personnel)** who work together to establish three school-wide characteristics.

CHARACTERISTIC #1

High-performing schools have climates that nurture the commitment and engagement of teachers, parents, and students.

The Climate of High-Performing Schools

- Students are eager to attend school. They believe they are likely to succeed academically. They perceive that adults in the school care sincerely about their success.
- Teachers believe they are part of a team that is making a powerful difference in the lives of students. They believe that administrators care sincerely about their success.
- Parents believe that educators have their children's best interests at heart. They feel welcome at school and they believe that educators appreciate whatever small or large contributions they make to their child's education.

How Do Leaders Build and Sustain A Great Climate?

1. Leaders make everyone feel valued, respected, and appreciated.

Students, parents, teachers, and support staff know they are valued. They identify and resolve issues promptly and professionally. They evidence great integrity and sincerity.

How Do Leaders Build and Sustain A Great Climate?

- 2. Leaders value improvement and growth. People feel like they can take risks and try to improve because they know their efforts will be appreciated and supported. Leaders ensure that professional development is not “an event,” it is a culture that pervades the school. People are constantly learning to improve their craft.*

How Do Leaders Build and Sustain A Great Climate?

3. Leaders keep conversations constructive.

Leaders refuse to be passive when others choose to be negative. Respectfully, but clearly, administrators and teacher leaders speak out when others claim that goals are unattainable. Leaders use research and data to focus on opportunities to improve, not on reasons to blame.

How Do Leaders Build and Sustain A Great Climate?

- 4. Leaders keep attention focused on the impact of everyday efforts on students. Communication frequently, consistently, and in multiple formats conveys the impact of everyday school actions on student lives.*

How Do Leaders Build and Sustain A Great Climate?

5. Leaders promote ambitious goals that generate enthusiasm and build a sense of mission.

Leaders push beyond compliance and encourage everyone to embrace goals that will make a difference in students lives.

People commit to goals they see as worth their effort.

How Do Leaders Build and Sustain A Great Climate?

6. *Leaders build hope.*

Leaders give students, parents, teachers, and support staff reasons to believe that their efforts are worthwhile. College and careers are constant topics of focus.

Policies are designed/implemented to nurture, sustain, and rekindle hope.

How Do Leaders Build and Sustain A Great Climate?

7. Leaders celebrate progress frequently. Frequently, leaders celebrate improvements (both formally and informally). They find elements of success worth celebrating in results others see as failure. They are skillful at acknowledging everyone who contributed to successes.

How Do Leaders Build and Sustain A Great Climate?

8. *Leaders build leaders.*

Leaders create platforms for the leadership of many others who want to influence school improvement. Leaders distribute leadership opportunities in ways that build the capacity of individuals to contribute to the school's success.

CHARACTERISTIC #2

**High-performing schools have
challenging, meaningful,
focused curricula.**

The Curriculum in High-Performing Schools

- Instructional objectives are focused toward high levels of mastery. Students are expected to be able to apply, discuss, debate, analyze, and explain the concepts and skills they are asked to learn. Learning is deep and meaningful.
- Teachers are more focused upon generating mastery than they are focused upon complying with a pacing chart or a teacher's manual. Often they cover fewer objectives; however, students are much more likely to master the objectives taught.
- Students receive a rich, balanced curriculum. Art, music, physical education, and other “non-tested” subjects make learning more interesting and enjoyable.

How Do Leaders Build and Sustain Strong Curricula?

1. Leaders help educators focus on key academic content.

Leaders encourage teachers to teach a few concepts to mastery rather than “cover” everything. Leaders help educators reach common understandings about what rigor and depth “look like.” They engage teachers in using assessment data to identify critical content.

How Do Leaders Build and Sustain Strong Curricula?

- 2. Leaders structure opportunities for teachers to learn content to greater levels of depth. Leaders create opportunities for teachers to work with each other to learn more about critical content. These opportunities are not structured to promote blame or shame. Instead, these opportunities provide a collegial way to build upon strengths and deepen levels of content understanding.*

How Do Leaders Build and Sustain Strong Curricula?

- 3. Leaders engage teachers in designing and implementing assessments that provide concrete, common understandings of the levels of mastery students should attain. Common assessments drive attention to deeper levels of understanding. By engaging in assessment design, teachers gain perspective on the levels of understanding students must acquire.*

How Do Leaders Build and Sustain Strong Curricula?

4. Leaders measure and communicate progress toward goals regularly.

Goals become real as baseline measures and regular measurements of progress are collected, posted, discussed, disaggregated, acted upon, and celebrated promptly and regularly. Leaders make data accessible and actionable. Data are not collected unless there are specific plans to act upon results.

How Do Leaders Build and Sustain Strong Curricula?

5. Educators help parents and students know which key learning objectives students need to master.

Parents and students feel empowered when educators regularly share information about the key learning objectives to be taught and strategies they can use to enhance learning.

CHARACTERISTIC #3

**In high-performing schools,
instruction is focused upon
generating student mastery.**

Instruction in High-Performing Schools

In most schools, one can find at least one classroom where excellent teaching occurs regularly. In the highest performing schools, excellent, effective instruction occurs in almost all classrooms. Effective instruction results in high percentages of students mastering the specific content taught with deep levels of understanding.

How Do Leaders Build and Sustain Instructional Effectiveness?

1. Teachers and principals share a common understanding of effective instruction.

Teachers and administrators regularly make time to see and discuss effective instruction.

Teachers regularly identify elements of effective instruction in their own teaching and in the teaching of others. Regular, detailed conversation nurtures a common vision of effective instruction.

How Do Leaders Build and Sustain Instructional Effectiveness?

2. Leaders pay close attention to instructional effectiveness.

Leaders visit classrooms frequently to gauge student learning. They constantly seek evidence that students are learning what their teachers are teaching. Regularly, leaders share this evidence in ways that build the capacity of teachers from day to day, creating a culture of professional growth.

How Do Leaders Build and Sustain Instructional Effectiveness?

3. Leaders inspire effort toward better instruction.

Leaders inspire educators to maximize their efforts in support of students. Educators learn that 1) better instruction will have a powerful impact on students' lives, 2) leaders are committed to supporting teachers and building their capacity to excel, and 3) together, success will be attained.

How Do Leaders Build and Sustain Instructional Effectiveness?

4. Leaders help educators support each other in learning how to teach students more effectively and efficiently.

Leaders provide time and support in a manner that helps educators learn that one of their primary roles is to support the ongoing learning of their colleagues.

How Do Leaders Build and Sustain Instructional Effectiveness?

5. Leaders help everyone remember that learning should be interesting and exciting. Leaders help educators teach in ways that students like to learn. They encourage teachers to build upon students interests, backgrounds, cultures, and prior knowledge. They help educators consider how they can make learning enjoyable.

How Do Leaders Build and Sustain Instructional Effectiveness?

6. Improvement is celebrated. Lack of effort is not tolerated.

Leaders communicate their passion to transform relationships, teaching, and learning through their actions. They acknowledge and celebrate improvements and they make clear that a lack of effort is a disservice to the team, a disservice to students, and therefore will not be tolerated.

Equity and Excellence Are Attainable!

- You can help make any school a high-performing school for all students.
- It is not easy! Often, changes take two to four years before they bear substantial results. Nonetheless, mortals prove that it can be done.
- The well being of our society depends upon our ability to create many more high-performing schools. Our students deserve nothing less.

TEACHING THAT IMPROVES LEARNING RESULTS

Joseph F. Johnson, Jr., Ph.D.
Executive Director
National Center for Urban School Transformation

NEA's Priority Schools Forum:
Change, Challenge, and Collaboration
November 11, 2011

National Center for Urban School Transformation

NCUST



National Center for Urban School Transformation

Dedicated to identifying, studying, and promoting the best practices of American's highest achieving urban schools in a manner that supports urban districts in transforming teaching and learning.

<http://www.ncust.org>



SAN DIEGO STATE
UNIVERSITY

Learn more at our annual symposium on high-performing schools



May 23, 24, 25

San Diego's Mission Valley Marriott Hotel

Register teams now at:

<http://www.ncust.org>

NCUST IDENTIFIES, CELEBRATES, AND STUDIES

Non-selective, urban schools (serving primarily students from low-income families) that demonstrate high achievement for all students.

These schools evidence:

- High proficiency rates for all groups
- High graduation rates for all groups
- High rates of access to challenging programs for all groups
- Strong academic progress for students with disabilities
- Low rates of suspension/expulsion for all groups
- Other indicators of student success/achievement

Go to www.ncust.org to see 2012 application & criteria



The Center sponsors the National Excellence in Urban Education Award Program, annually identifying some of the nation's highest performing urban elementary, middle, and high schools, and alternative schools.

Since 2006, we have awarded 48 schools from 15 states.

**What have we learned
about these high-
performing schools?**

TEACHING MATTERS

Across the various elementary, middle, and high schools we have awarded, we find eight common teaching practices that influence student learning results.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING IS FOCUSED ON GENERATING MASTERY

In effective lessons, educators:

- Create and maintain clarity about what students are expected to learn
- Focus persistently on the objective to be mastered
- Focus on generating a depth of understanding
- Maximize the use of every instructional minute
- Are driven, not by textbooks, worksheets, pacing guides, or scripts. Instead, educators are driven to lead each child to greater academic mastery.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING IS FOCUSED ON ACQUIRING EVIDENCE THAT ALL STUDENTS UNDERSTAND

In effective lessons, educators:

- Engage all students in demonstrating their levels of understanding throughout the lesson
- Refuse to allow students to sit passively and fail
- Attend carefully to evidence of student understanding throughout the lesson
- Adapt instruction when student mastery is not evidenced
- Conclude by checking student understanding

EFFECTIVE TEACHING INTRODUCES CONTENT CLEARLY, CONCISELY, AND LOGICALLY

In effective lessons, educators:

- Know the content they intend to teach thoroughly
- Prepare thoroughly and anticipate possible misunderstandings
- Present key concepts in an organized manner, based on a logical task analysis
- Teach strategies so students can acquire information on their own
- Keep presentations of information brief
- Wait to present a second concept until students demonstrate that they understand the first concept

EFFECTIVE TEACHING INTEGRATES LESSON VOCABULARY INTO SPOKEN VOCABULARY

In effective lessons, educators:

- Pre-identify key lesson vocabulary that influences understanding of the lesson content
- Educators provide multiple opportunities for all students to practice using key lesson vocabulary in spoken sentences and conversation

EFFECTIVE TEACHING INTRODUCES CONTENT IN WAYS THAT “CONNECT” WITH STUDENTS

In effective lessons, educators:

- Present key concepts in ways that build upon students’ background, culture, and interests
- Present key concepts in ways that build upon students’ prior knowledge
- Make the content “real” for students
- Recognize when students are not understanding and find other ways to explain concepts when necessary
- Scaffold down and enrich upward based on levels of student understanding

EFFECTIVE TEACHING HELPS STUDENTS PRACTICE NEW SKILLS WITH HIGH LEVELS OF SUCCESS

In effective lessons, educators:

- Allow students to practice independently only when they have substantial evidence that independent practice will be meaningful and successful
- Monitor independent practice (and/or give students ways to monitor their own practice) and intervene when necessary

EFFECTIVE TEACHING LEADS STUDENTS TO BELIEVE THEIR ACADEMIC SUCCESS IS VALUED

In effective lessons, educators:

- Maintain a clean, attractive classroom
- Express a genuine interest in each student's ideas
- Demonstrate courtesy and respect in all interactions
- Provide specific praise in response to student effort
- Post high-quality student work frequently
- Give students the tools needed to evaluate the quality of their work (rubrics)
- Provide visual aids that can help students succeed

EXCELLENT TEACHING LEADS STUDENTS TO LOVE LEARNING AND WANT TO LEARN MORE

In effective lessons, educators:

- Help students understand the importance of the content to be learned
- Demonstrate enthusiasm for the content
- Provide opportunities for students to use technology and/or manipulate objects in ways that reinforce lesson objectives
- Integrate material from other disciplines in teaching lesson objectives
- Provide students leadership opportunities
- Encourage student-to-student interaction

CONSISTENCY OF IMPLEMENTATION

- In high-performing urban schools, most of these eight practices are found abundantly in most classrooms.
- The presence of these practices is not accidental. In high-performing schools, teachers and administrators work hard to support each other in developing and refining these practices.
- Implementation improves over time with support, practice, feedback, more support, more practice, and more feedback.

An Overview of School Turnaround

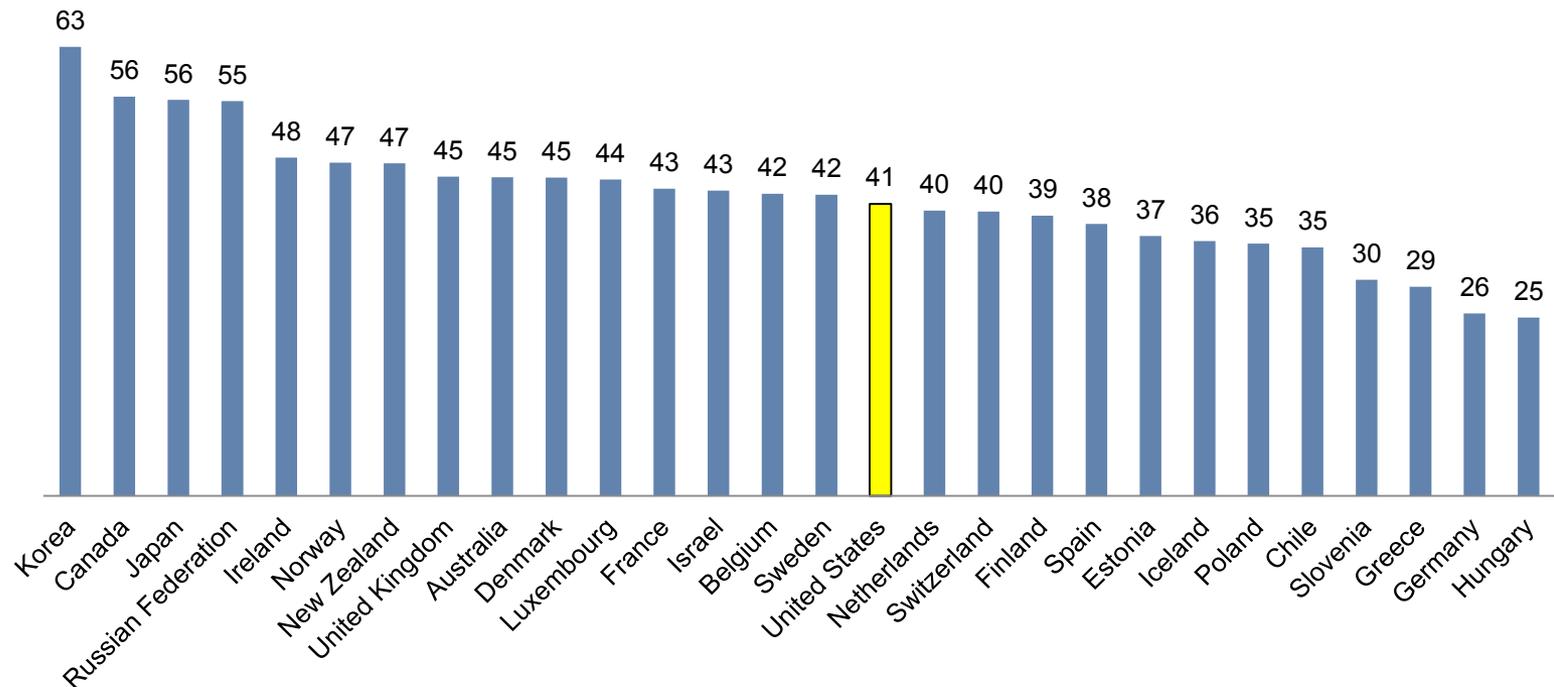


November 12, 2011

The U.S. ranks 16th in the world in college attainment.

2

Percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds who completed an associate's or higher degree (2009)



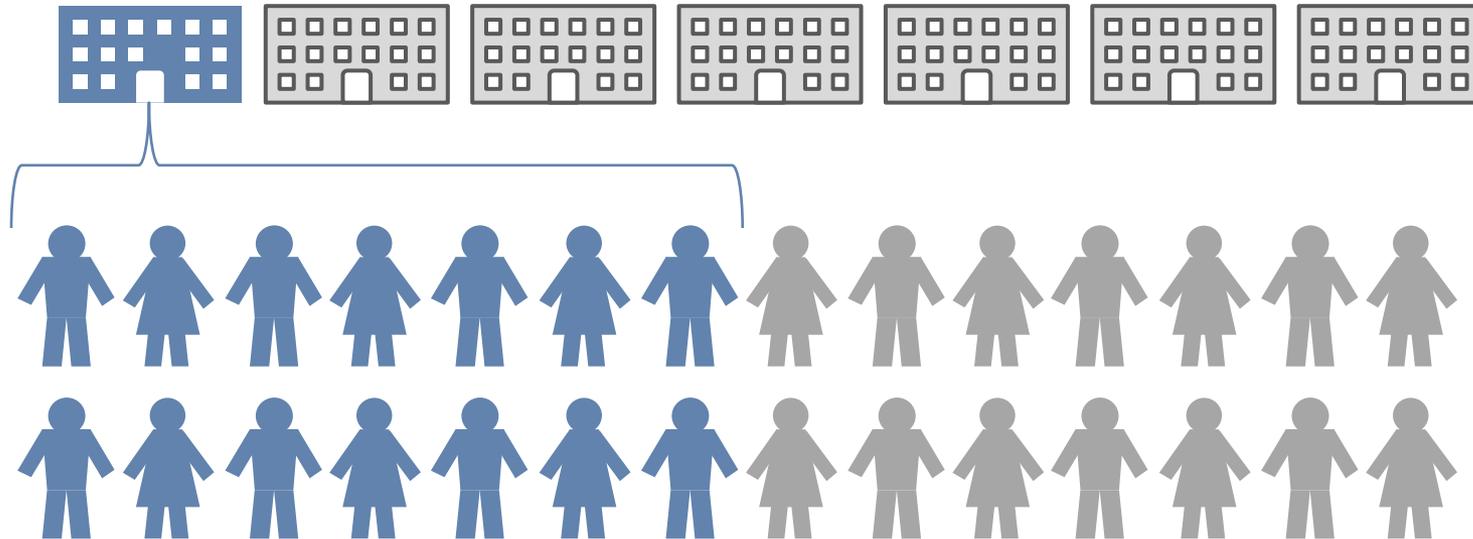
Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Education at a Glance 2011

“By 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world.”

- President Obama, February 2009

Fewer than 15% of high schools produce half of the nation's 1.2 million dropouts.

3



Source: Robert Balfanz and Nettie Legters, Locating the Dropout Crisis (2004)

“It’s time for all of us, no matter what our backgrounds, to come together and solve this epidemic. Stemming the tide of dropouts will require turning around our low-performing schools. Just 2,000 high schools in cities like Detroit, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia produce over 50% of America’s dropouts...Let us all make turning around our schools our collective responsibility as Americans.”

- President Obama, March 2009

To help achieve the President's 2020 goal, ED has focused much of its K-12 strategy on four key reform areas.

4



**Implement
college- and career-ready
standards**



**Recruit, retain, and support
effective teachers and
leaders**



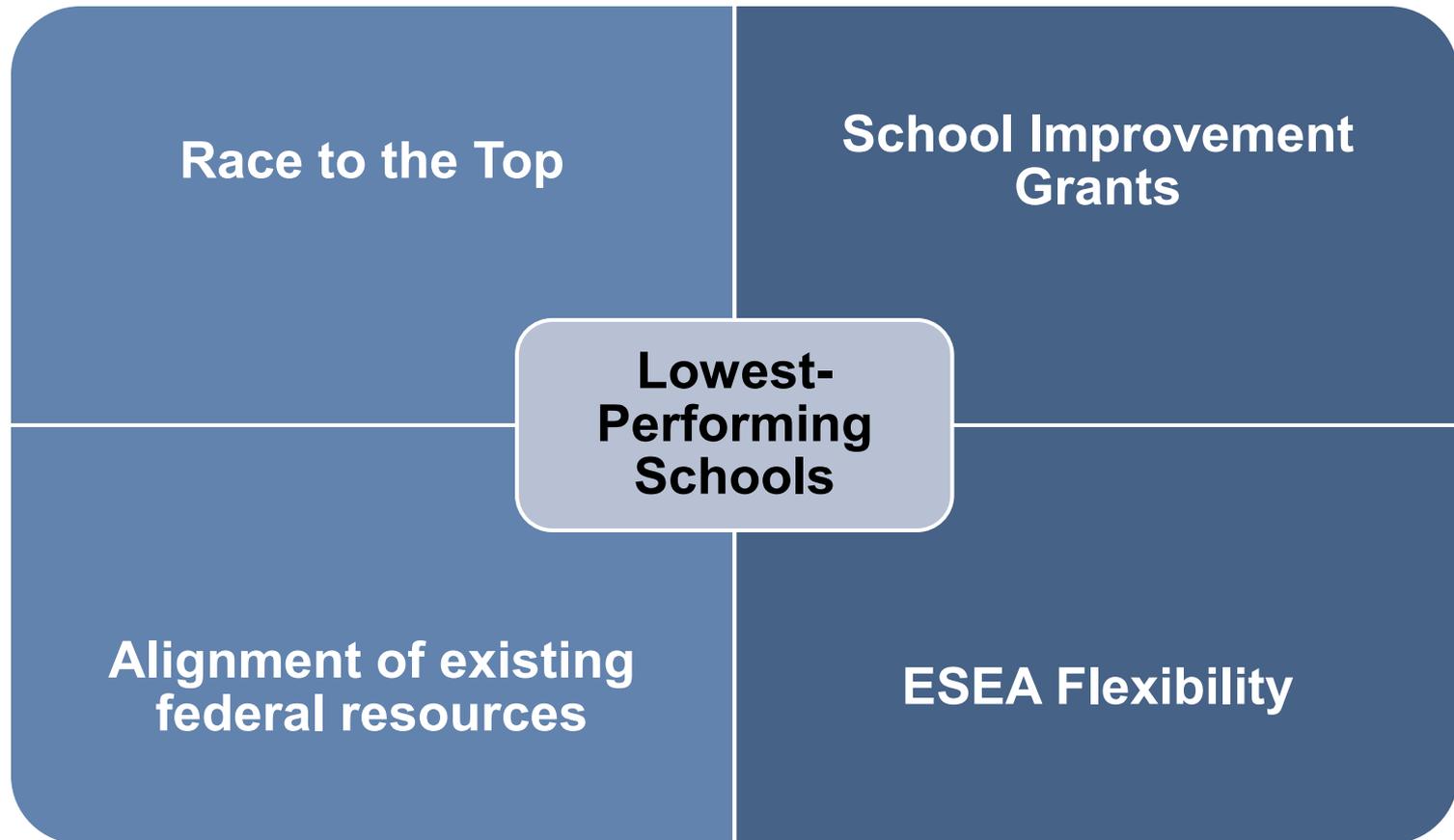
**Build robust data systems
that track student progress
and improve practice**



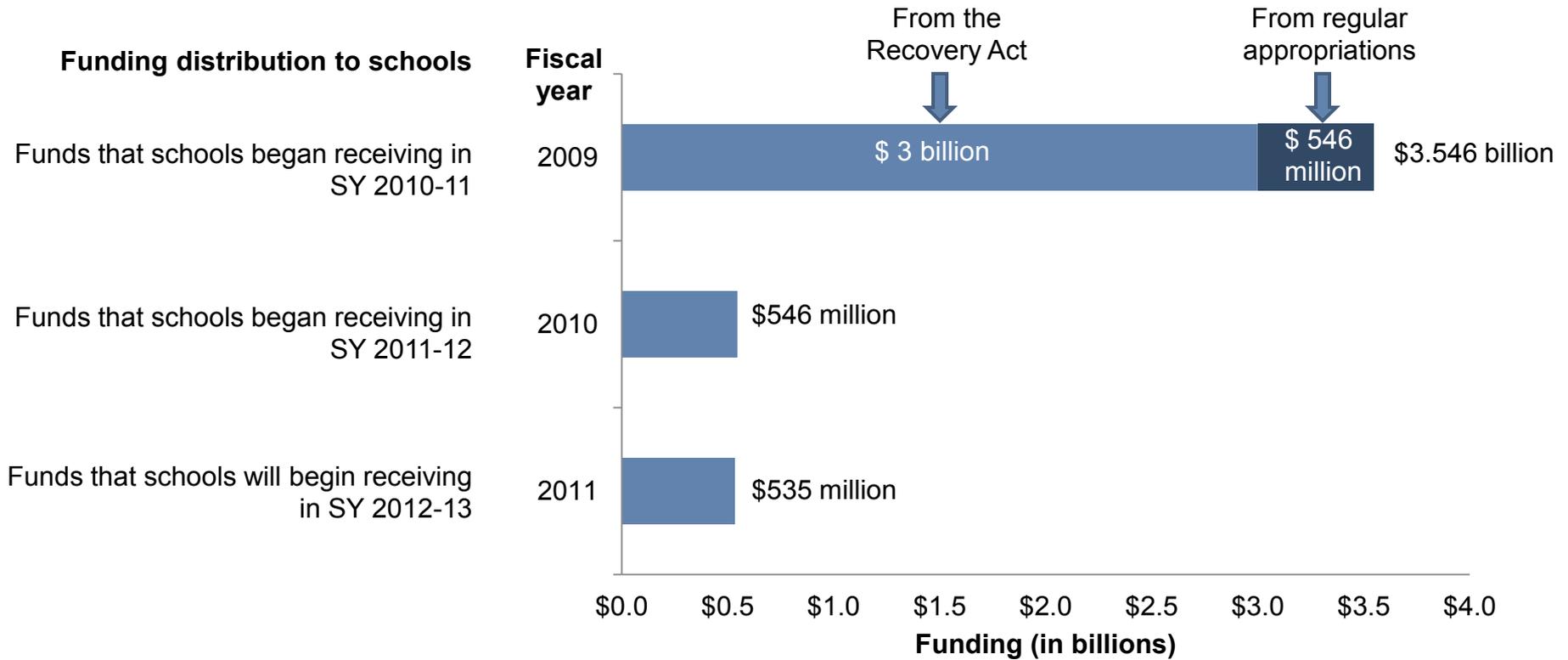
**Improve student learning
and achievement in our
lowest-performing schools**

ED is focusing much of its resources and attention on helping states and districts turn around the lowest-performing schools.

5

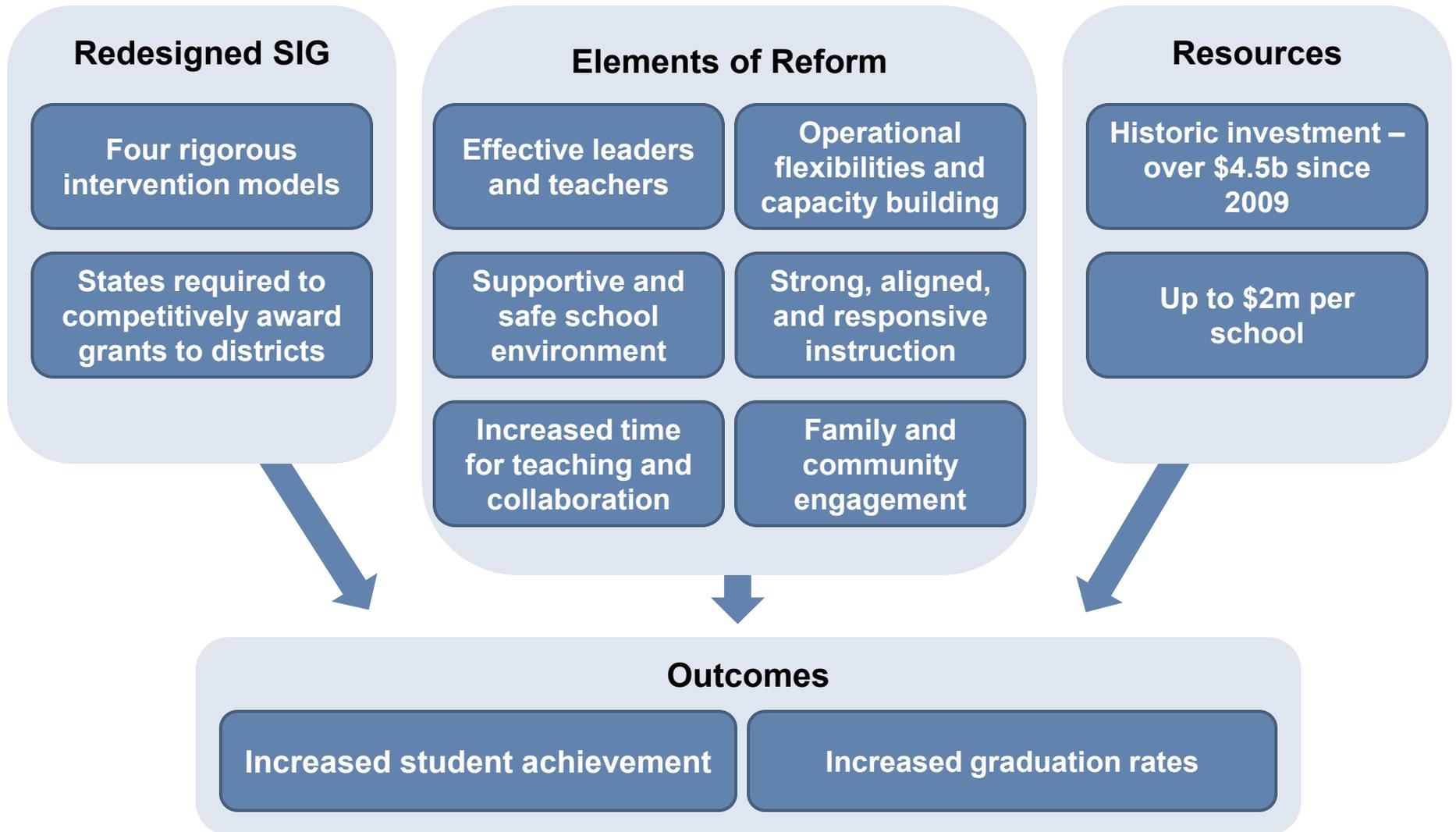


An unprecedented amount of funds have been committed to SIG – over \$4.5 billion since 2009.

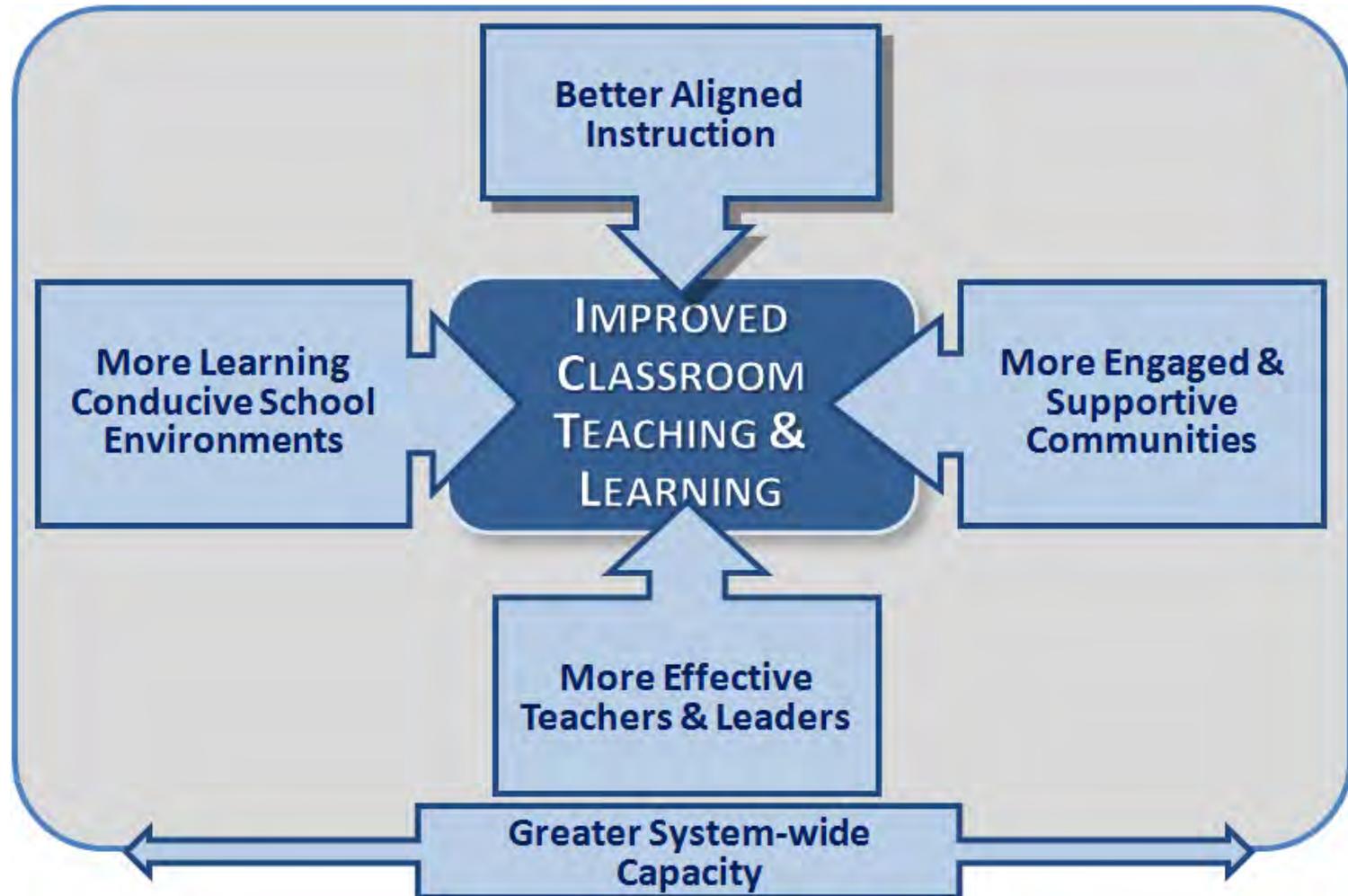


The redesigned SIG program requires rigorous interventions and dramatically increases resources for the lowest-performing schools.

7

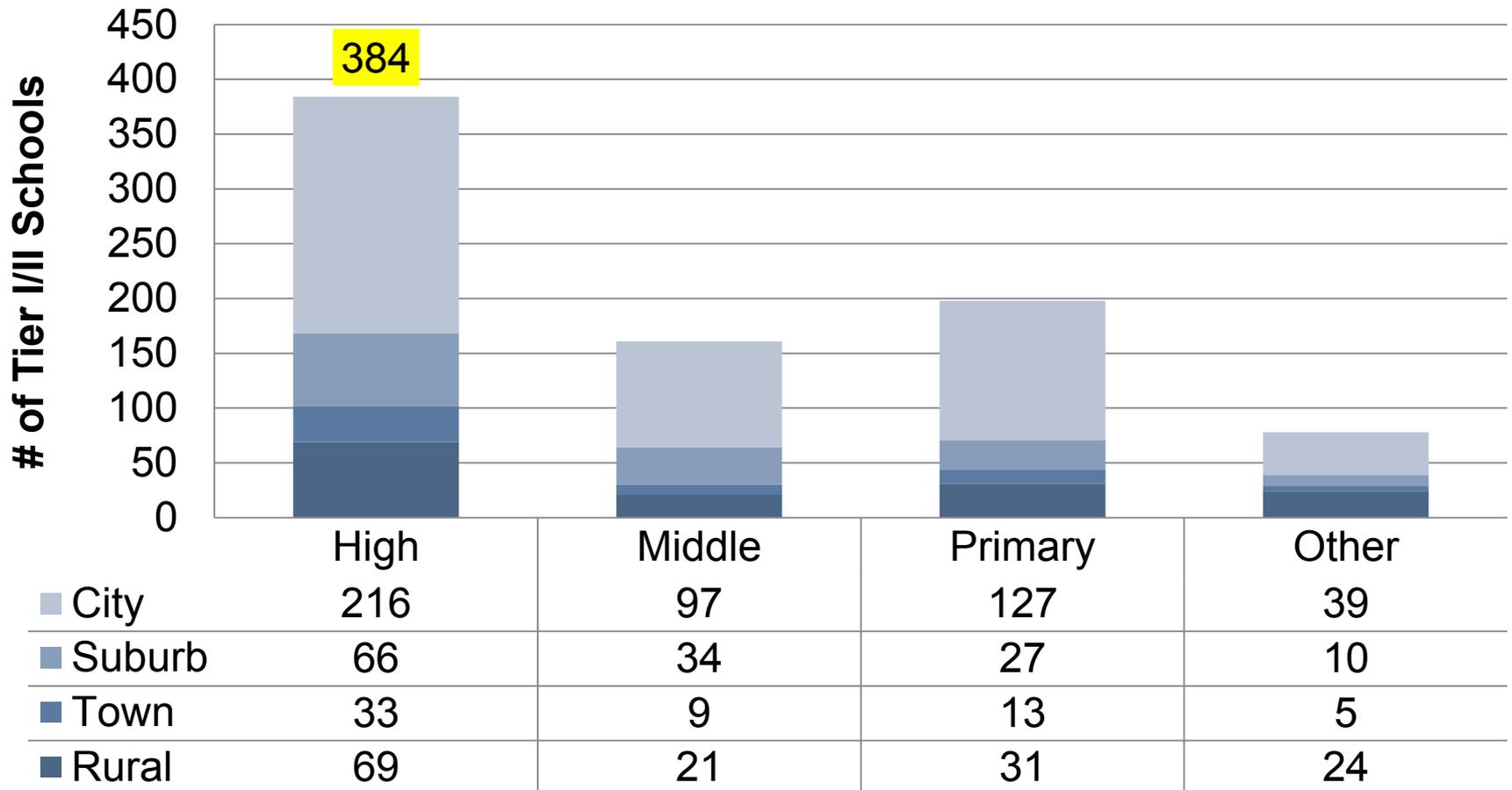


Improving classroom teaching and learning is at the center of ED's K-12 and turnaround strategy.



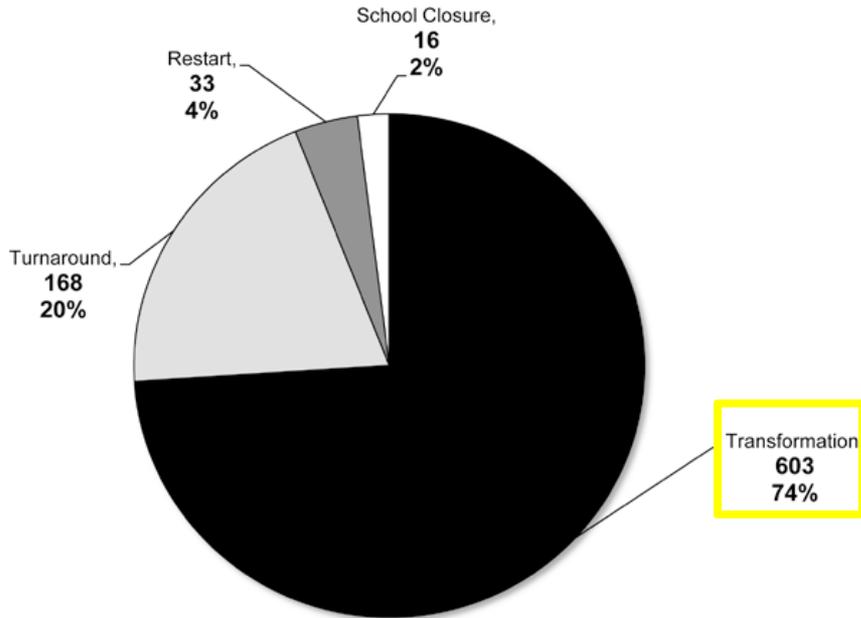
Of the 826 SIG Tier I/Tier II schools in Cohort 1, over 45% are high schools.

Number of Tier I/II by Level and Geography



Transformations make up 74% of all Tier I/II schools and 95% of all rural Tier I/II schools in Cohort 1.

Percent and Number of SIG-Awarded Tier I and Tier II Schools Implementing Turnaround, Restart, School Closure, and Transformation Models

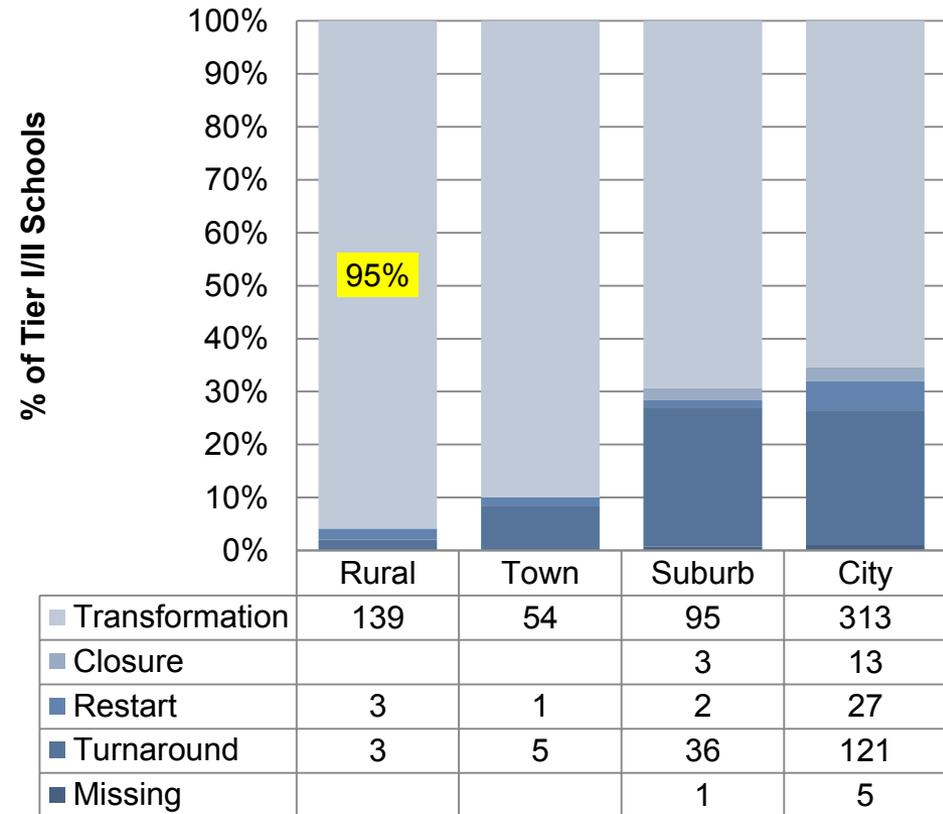


Source: SEA Web sites.

Notes: Analysis was based on 820 SIG-awarded Tier I and Tier II schools in 49 states and D.C. Information on intervention models was not available for all six SIG-awarded schools in RI. As of March 21, 2011, SIG award information was unavailable for HI.

Tier III schools are excluded from the exhibit since federal rules do not require Tier III schools to implement one of the four intervention models.

SIG Awarded Schools by Model Selected (Percent)



SIG-awarded schools in Cohort 1 serve a high proportion of low-income and African-American and Latino students.

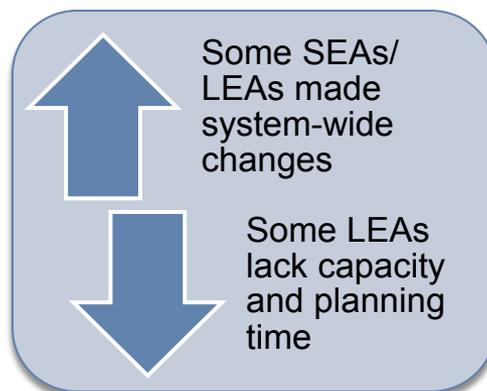
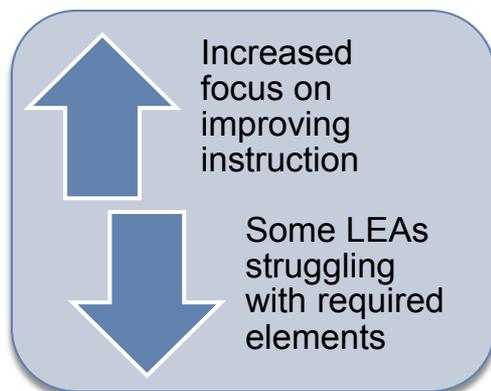
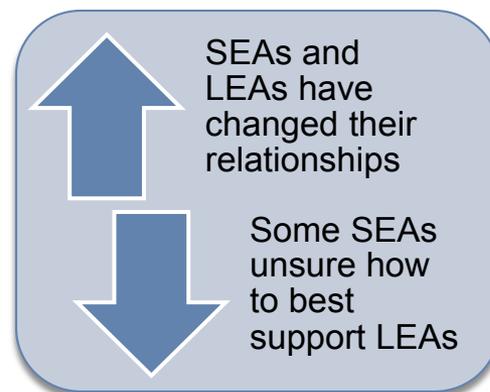
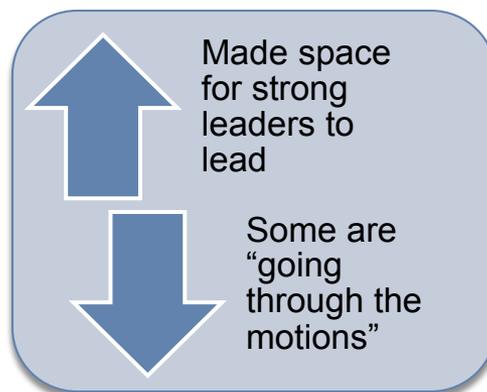
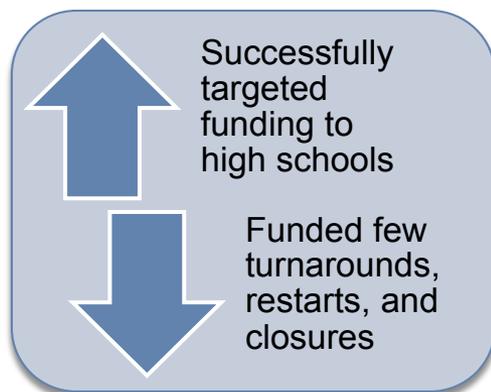
	2008-2009	2009-2010
Characteristics	Universe of Schools	SIG-Awarded Tier I/II Schools
Free and Reduced-Price Lunch (school average percent of students)	44.7%	77.7%
Race/Ethnicity (school average percent of students)		
White	55.0%	17.2%
African American	17.0%	44.3%
Hispanic	21.5%	32.6%
Native American	1.3%	1.8%
Asian (and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander)	4.7%	2.9%
Total School Enrollment (school average)*	516	676.6
Total Number of Schools	98,648	826
Total Number of Students	~50 million	549,414

Note: This includes the 49 states (Hawaii unavailable) + DC. This is adapted from the IES SIG-baseline report (May 9, 2011).

*The school averages are higher than the #students divided by #schools because schools without student counts were removed.

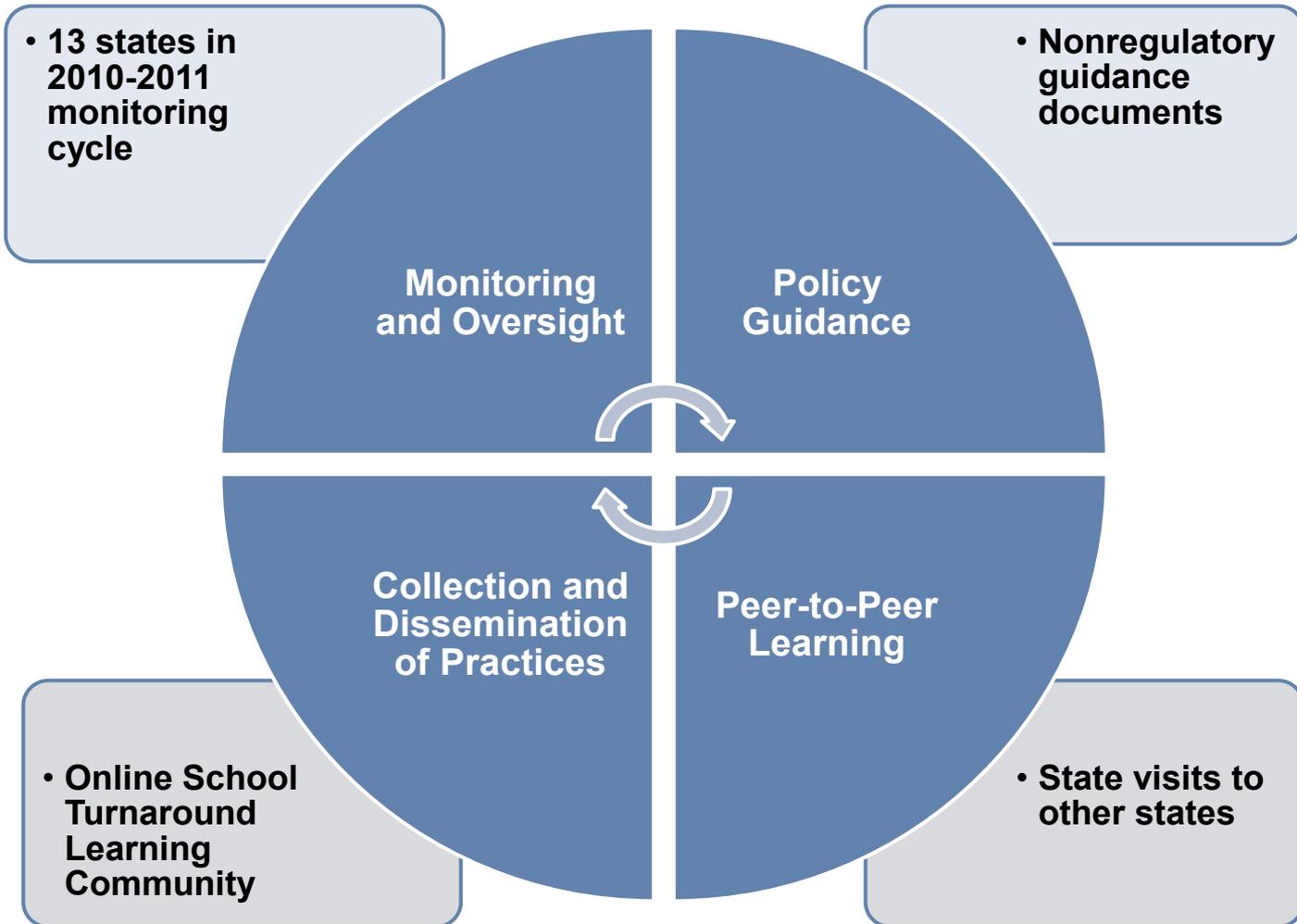
States and districts are using SIG funds to dramatically change the way they support their lowest-performing schools, but they face some challenges.

12



ED is addressing challenges through monitoring, guidance, and technical assistance.

13



“You are proving the naysayers wrong – you are proving that progress is possible.”

- President Obama, March 2011

On September 23, the Administration announced a plan for ESEA flexibility in exchange for reforms that adhere to four critical areas.

15

1. **College- and career-ready expectations for all students**
2. **State-developed differentiated recognition, accountability, and support**
3. **Supporting effective instruction and leadership**
4. **Reducing duplication and unnecessary burden**

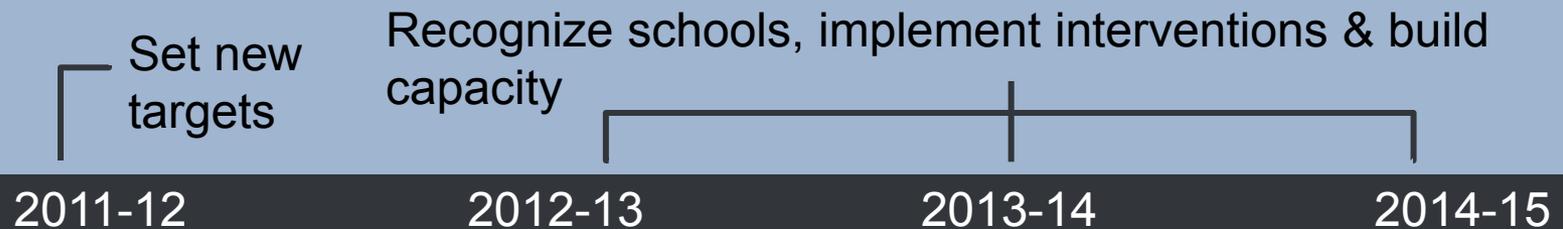
“We’re going to let states, schools and teachers come up with innovative ways to give our children the skills they need to compete for the jobs of the future.”

- President Obama, September 2011

The new differentiated recognition, accountability, and support system includes focus on lowest-performing schools.

16

- Develop system to ensure continuous improvement in all Title I schools
- Set ambitious but achievable performance targets
- Provide recognition for high-progress and highest-performing schools
- **Effect dramatic, systemic change in the lowest-performing schools**
- Identify and implement interventions in schools with the greatest achievement gaps and with subgroups that are furthest behind
- Build state, district, and school capacity to improve student learning in all schools



The differentiated accountability system must identify “priority schools” to receive interventions aligned with turnaround principles.

A “priority school” is identified as among the lowest-performing schools in the state, and a state’s total number must account for at least 5% of Title I schools. Priority schools include:

- the lowest 5% of Title I schools based on achievement and progress on statewide assessments;
- a Title I-participating or a Title I-eligible high school with a graduation less than 60%; or
- a Tier I/II SIG-awarded school

Turnaround Principles

Strong leadership

Effective teachers

Redesigned schedules for additional time

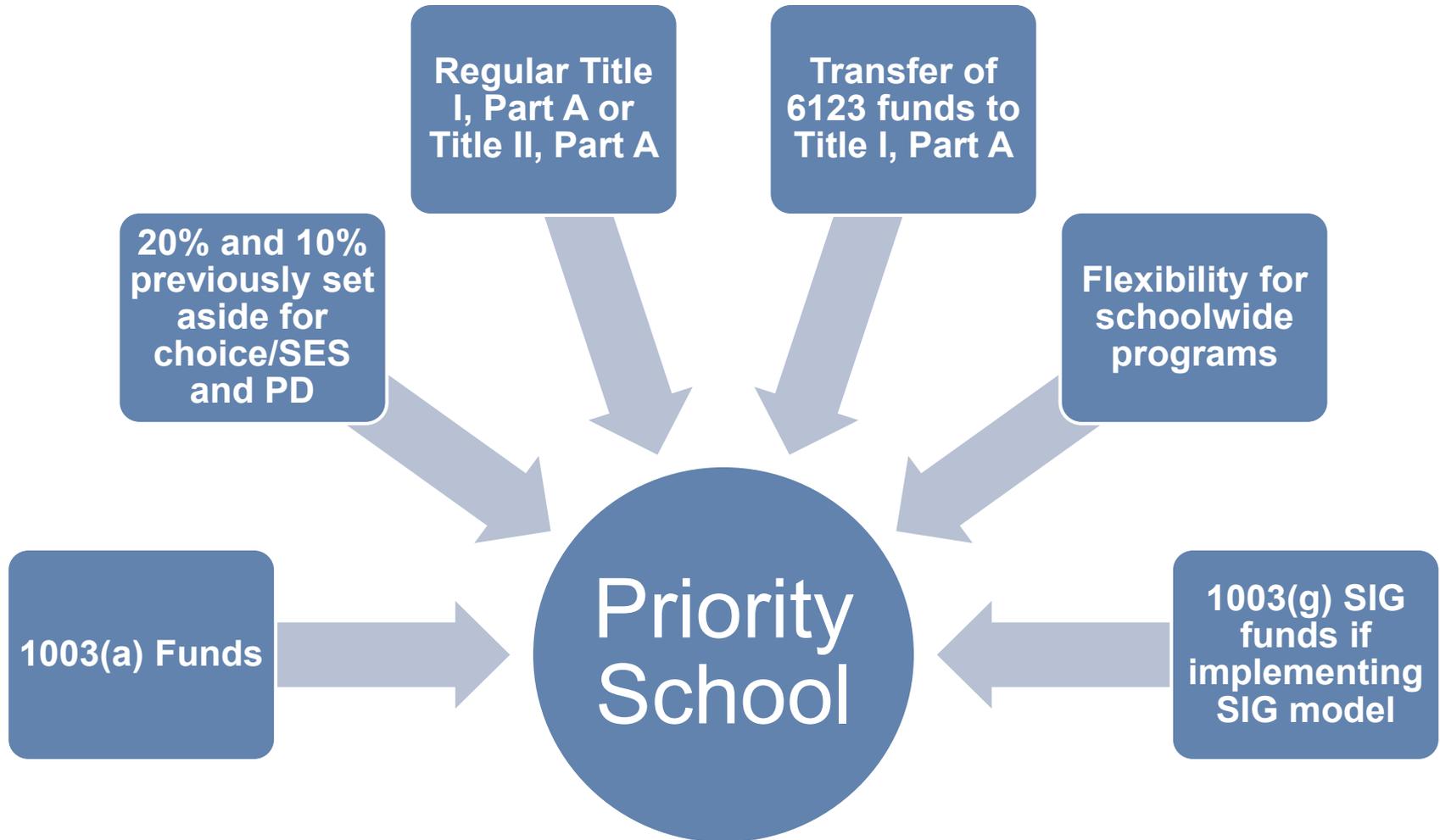
Rigorous and aligned instructional program

Use of data for continuous improvement

Safe and healthy students

Family and community engagement

ESEA flexibility offers states relief from certain NCLB provisions, including provisions relating to use of federal education funds.



Policies that Support and Sustain School-Based Reform

PERA and SB7

Mary Jane Morris

Director, Center for Educational Innovation

Illinois Education Association

November 12, 2011

Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.

- Henry

Ford



History of Education Reform

Illinois Education Association

Our mission is to effect excellence and equity in public education and to be THE advocacy organization for all public education employees

IEA Reform Agenda



- *“I know what you’re against. What are you for?”*
- Consortium for Educational Change – 1987
- RISE – 1997, 2004
- Priority One – 2009

The 2010 Attack

- Fundraising
- Contributions
- Grand Alliance—Various business groups
- Legislation passing in other states
- Performance Counts proposal
- December lame duck hearings
- *“Unless the unions present credible alternatives, Performance Counts will become law during the January lame duck session.”*

Mobilization and Response



- IEA, IFT, CTU
- *Accountability for All*
- January hearings
- Senator Lightford

The Performance Evaluation Reform Act

- Foundational for SB7
- Passed in January, 2010
- Changes evaluation procedures for teachers and principals.

Performance Evaluation Advisory Council

- 32 educators, union and association leaders from K-12 and higher education
- 18-month process ... and counting
- 3 subcommittees: teachers, principals, training
- Regular meetings open to the public
- Comprehensive website <http://www.isbe.net/peac/>

Student Growth

- Incorporation of Student Growth in Evaluation Plans:
 - Included components:
 - How student growth/indicators will be used
 - Relation to evaluation standards
 - Assessments/indicators to be used and their weight
 - Growth measure methodology
 - Other evaluation criteria and their weight

Multiple measures required

Key Components

- Student growth data will be used to inform teacher evaluation
 - Multiple measures must be used
 - State test is not a growth model – not used
- Joint labor/management committee to work together as equals in determining substance of local plans
- If joint committee cannot reach agreement the areas of disagreement default to state plan

State Plan

- Performance Evaluation Advisory Council meeting monthly
- Making recommendations to ISBE on key issues
- Decisions so far: Danielson Framework will be the model for state

Other Components of the State Plan

Establishing guidance (rules) and then a model on the following:

- Weight (floor)
- Attendance
- ELL
- Mobility
- Measures

More Performance Evaluation Legislation

- All evaluators must pass an independently developed pre-qualified assessment before they can complete evaluations.
- This occurs in 2012
- All evaluators must be trained. Training must be rigorous
- Barrier to peer evaluation is removed if union agrees.

Evaluation Legislation

- Beginning 2012-2013 school year:
 - 4 ratings categories for tenured teachers (adds “needs improvement” and changes “satisfactory” to “proficient”)
 - Professional development plan for tenured teacher receiving “needs improvement”
 - Formative evaluation of tenured teacher receiving “needs improvement” in subsequent year; summative evaluation remains on cycle

Think about this year

- With current evaluation system:
- Think about the changes from 3 summative ratings to 4 summative ratings.
- What constitutes a summative rating of excellent, proficient, needs improvement, unsatisfactory

Timeline

Can move up timeline if union agrees in writing
But can't be before 2013 (SB7)

- 20% lowest performing – 2015 -2016
- All remaining districts – 2016 - 2017

Senate Bill 7

- Issues:
 - Attaining tenure
 - Accelerated tenure and tenure portability
 - Filling vacancies
 - Dismissal of tenured teachers
 - RIF
 - New Mediation Procedures
 - Teaching and Learning Survey
 - Certification Suspension, Revocation, Limits
 - School Board training

Immediate Effect

- The new mediation procedures
- Certification suspension, revocation, limitation
- Filling Vacancies
- RIF language unless spelled out in your contract then grandfathered until 2013
- Dismissal
- School board training

Certification

- State superintendent can revoke, suspend or limit a certification based on performance
- Must consider a variety of factors
- Teacher can appeal to state certification board
- 2 Unsatisfactory ratings within 7 years

Mediation Procedures

- Transparency
 - After mediation if at impasse
 - Share final proposals with mediator
 - Have time to bargain
 - If not settled, release publicly
 - Can bargain
 - If no agreement can strike

Filling Vacancies

- Applies to non-recall positions
- District must base selection on certification, qualifications, merit and ability (including performance evaluations) and relevant service
- Seniority is a tie-breaker
- Relevant service is bargainable

RIF

- Grouped according to position, certifications, qualifications first
- Then performance
- Then experience

- 4 groups
- Joint committee

Qualifications

- District can add qualifications other than legal only if done before May 10th the year before the RIF list is determined
- And must be in job description by May 10th

4 Groups

- Group 1 – any non-tenured teacher who does not have a summative rating before the RIF list is compiled.
- Group 2 – any teacher with a needs improvement or unsatisfactory in one of their last two evaluations
- Group 3 – proficient teachers
- Group 4 – Excellent rating two out of the last three evaluations with a proficient.

Joint Committees

- Equal representation union/management
- Can agree to other criteria for group 4
- Can agree to other criteria that moves teachers from Group 2 to Group 3
 - Example – any teacher with a needs improvement coupled with a proficient or excellent moves to Group 3
- If can't agree, default to law's definition

RIF Order

- Group 1 – district discretion
- Group 2 – Inverse seniority within averages
- Group 3 – Inverse seniority
- Group 4- Inverse seniority
- Recall rights:
 - Groups 1 and 2 – consideration
 - Groups 3 and 4 – automatic recall

Dismissal

- Streamlined
- HO trained and certified
 - Paid by state or split by teacher union and district

PERA DISMISSAL PROCESS

- Optional for district – HO makes a recommendation to board
- If district decides to use this process:
 - School board members must have evaluation training (separate and apart from mandatory school board training as part of law)
 - District must use a second evaluator in the remediation process
- Teacher can appeal

Attaining Tenure

- Proficient/excellent ratings in 2 of last 3 years, w/ proficient/excellent required in 4th year.
- Three excellent ratings in a row.
- If awarded tenure with a PERA evaluation, then can attain tenure in new district in two years with two excellent ratings.

Mandatory School Board training

- Minimum of four hours in the following topics:
- education and labor law, financial oversight/accountability and fiduciary responsibilities
- within first year of first term elected to after 6/13/11

How might your team begin a similar campaign to support school reform in your state?

Contact: Mary Jane Morris

Email: maryjane.morris@ieanea.org

Web: www.ieanea.org and www.cecillinois.org

Tel: 630.495.0507

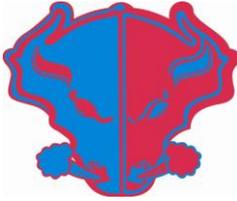


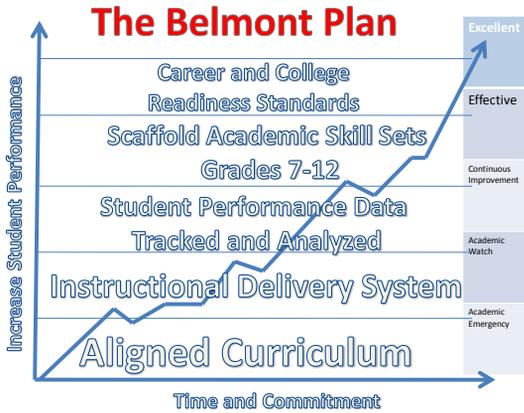
Priority Schools Campaign

TEAM PRESENTATIONS

Belmont High School

Empowering your teachers



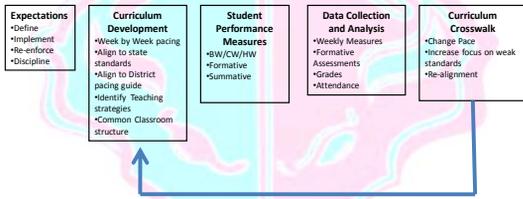


WARNING



Start with Expectations

Belmont System



Stage One

Asking the right questions

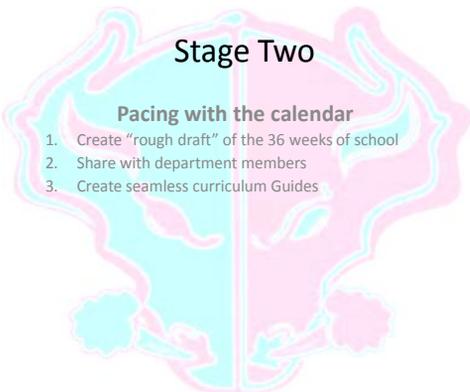
1. On your own fill out the questions in your packet

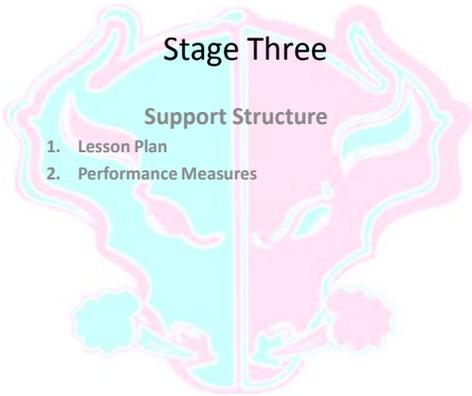


Stage Two

Pacing with the calendar

1. Create "rough draft" of the 36 weeks of school
2. Share with department members
3. Create seamless curriculum Guides







Collective Bargaining Agreement

Contract Addendum

Paragraph 205 of the 2009-2010, 2010-2011 Collective Bargaining Agreement By and Between the Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation and the Evansville Teachers Association states, " For the 2009-2011 contract, the ETA and the EVSC agree to jointly develop the concept, design, and structure of Equity Schools. ETA members shall ratify the plan design prior to the implementation of Equity Schools."

EQUITY SCHOOLS

Where Excellence and Quality Unite In Transforming Youth

The components of the EQUITY School Project are as follows:

- I. EQUITY Schools
 - A. Schools will be identified by use of a rubric.
 - B. The identified schools are:
 1. Delaware Elementary School
 2. Howard Roosa Elementary School
 3. McGary Middle School
 - C. The number of schools was limited to three due to EVSC's capacity to adequately support them.

- II. EQUITY Academy
 - A. Academy content:
 1. Using data to build curriculum
 2. Developing activities for the classroom
 3. Interdisciplinary planning
 4. Cultural competency
 5. Quality curriculum development
 6. Seamless integration of technology through the use of student netbooks
 - B. The academy will have teacher, administrator, and counselor tracks.
 - C. Teachers and administrators from EQUITY schools are automatically enrolled in the academy unless an individual removes him/herself.
 - D. Teachers and administrators from non-EQUITY schools may apply to be a part of the academy. Selection will be based upon a rubric.
 - E. PD rate will be paid for all academy classes.
 - F. Completion of the academy and demonstrated mastery of the academy curriculum will be required to apply to teach in an EQUITY school. Mastery will be identified by a rubric.
 - G. An academy mastery stipend of \$1,000 will be paid to all graduates.
 - H. Teachers from EQUITY schools may remain after successful completion of the academy.
 - I. Openings in the EQUITY schools will be filled by voluntary transfers (as defined in the contract) from academy graduates.

III. Autonomy of EQUITY schools

B. The EQUITY staff of each school will determine

1. Length of the school year
 - a. Student days will increase a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 20
 - b. Teacher days will increase a minimum of 15 and a maximum of 25 (days beyond student days will be used as data/collaborative days)
 - c. All teacher days beyond 183 will be paid at the daily rate (see the table below)
2. Waivers for regulations
3. School design and governance
4. Resource allocations

IV. ETA and EVSC may unilaterally withdraw from the EQUITY process for the following school year thus ending the EQUITY program.

EQUITY SCHOOLS

Excellence and Quality Unite In Transforming Youth

A collectively bargained school improvement process between the Evansville Teachers Association and the Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation

Demographics of the targeted students

	Free and Reduced Lunch	White	Black	Hispanic	Multiracial
Elementary 1	93%	74%	13%	2%	12%
Elementary 2	94%	42%	41%	4%	13%
Middle School	81%	54%	33%	3%	10%

Elementary School 2 and Middle School were in the lowest category of schools based on the state differentiated accountability model adopted to meet NCLB requirements. Elementary 1 was in the next level of need.

Nature of the intervention and Association role

At the bargaining table the school administration concerns were met and included in the contract about the fate of the schools placed in the lowest category of differentiated accountability. The EQUITY framework was jointly developed at the bargaining table and subsequently ratified by the membership and approved by the Board of School Trustees.

The bargained agreement includes:

The establishment of An EQUITY Academy

- Teachers and administrators from EQUITY schools are automatically enrolled in the academy unless an individual removes him/herself. A successful exit from the academy is required to teach in an EQUITY school.
- Demonstrated mastery of the academy curriculum is required to apply to teach in an EQUITY school. Mastery is identified by a rubric.
- Teachers and administrators from non-EQUITY schools may apply to be accepted into the academy. Selection is based upon a rubric.
- Openings in the EQUITY schools are filled by voluntary transfers (as defined in the contract) from academy graduates.
- PD rate is paid for all academy classes.
- An academy mastery stipend of \$1,000 is paid to all graduates.
- The academy has teacher, administrator, and counselor tracks

- Academy content:
 - Using data to build curriculum
 - Backwards design for assessment and instruction
 - Developing activities for the classroom
 - Interdisciplinary planning
 - Cultural competency
 - Quality lesson development
 - Seamless integration of technology

Association Role

The contract language includes a provision that either side can stop the process should it be determined necessary. The Association continues to be a partner in the process through the creation of an Equity Team made up of Association leadership and school administration. Issues and concerns are brought to the table and consensus is used to determine outcome and directions.

Academic and non-academic student outcomes

Increased student achievement is the academic outcome we are striving for through the Equity Schools and academy. We know from research, one way to improve student achievement is to change classroom instruction. Through the Equity Academy we are working to change how teachers teach. Expected non-academic outcomes: to improve student attendance, develop positive attitudes toward school and engage families in shared responsibilities of life-long learning.

Factors to support sustainability

Stimulus monies initially were used to create and sustain this process, now monies from the General Fund sustain this process. The concepts being used in the academy are research based /good practices. These concepts are aligned with the professional development goals for our entire school district. Teacher participants not currently teaching in the Equity schools will actively contribute to a school culture that supports the success of others and engages in collaboratively seeking solutions to challenges within the school. Continued support through other professional development opportunities will allow teachers in the Equity schools and non-Equity schools to continue to grow professionally. The district is seeking additional resources to support these opportunities.

EQUITY Schools ISTEP Spring 2011 Total % Passing

<u>School</u>	<u>3rd grade</u>	<u>4th grade</u>	<u>5th grade</u>	<u>6th grade</u>	<u>7th grade</u>	<u>8th grade</u>
Delaware						
English/Language Arts	+2%	+22%	+3%			
Math	+11%	+29%	+29%			
Howard Roosa						
English/Language Arts	+7%	+10%	+7%			
Math	+7%	+4%	+3%			
McGary						
English/Language Arts				+5%	+1%	+7%
Math				+2%	-5%	+7%

Data Driven School

Patrice Faison, Principal
Angelo Kidd, Western Region Superintendent
Angela Farthing, NCAE
Elizabeth Foster, GCAE
Gina Jacobs, Community Volunteer Coordinator
Sabrina Peacock, Classroom Teacher

"Building a Culture of Excellence"

Oak Hill's Story

Our Mission Statement

Students at Oak Hill Elementary will learn to exhibit behaviors of high moral character in order to succeed academically and become productive citizens in their community.

"Building a Culture of Excellence"

How Did I Get Here??

- o Hiring Quality
- o Aesthetic of the building
- o Community and Parent Involvement
- o Professional Development
- o Data and Instructional Practices that Work

The Community at Our Feet

- My Guardian Angel
- Gina's Story

HIGH POINT UNIVERSITY



"Volunteers make a difference at Oak Hill" ~High Point Enterprise

The Community at Our Feet





Where am I?

- Cleaning of the Building
- Added
- Landscaping
- Lights
- Color
- Requirement





Hiring a Quality Staff

- o Value Added Data
- o Some Experience and Where
- o Mini lesson observation as part of interview process
- o Dialogue with candidates about the mini lesson
- o Discovering High Expectations
- o Building the Culture

Growing Together

- o SIOP
- o Balanced Literacy
- o Cooperative Grouping
- o Undoing Racism
- o Explicit Teaching
- o Literacy Team Focus
- o CARE
- o ELL
- o District Support and Freedom
- o KEYS



The Results are IN

- o Highest Composite Growth in our District
- o 19.4 Gain



Road Map to Success

- o Data Driven Instruction
 - o Common Assessments
 - o Benchmark
 - o Dibels, TRC, and Progress monitoring
 - o Data Notebook
- o Focused Professional Learning Communities
- o Lesson Plan
- o Intervention and Enrichment Groups
- o Immediate and Consistent Feedback
- o Professional Development based on Data
- o Higher Order Thinking Questions

Driving Along to Success

- o Protected Time
- o Extra Personnel
- o Push In
- o Highlight experts in the building
- o Constant Reflection
- o Instructional Leadership



What about the Next Year?

- o Redirecting focus on literacy based on data throughout year
- o Finding additional time for teachers to collaborate
- o Educating our parents and community about our needs
- o Ongoing Professional Development with NCAE
- o Ongoing collaboration with GCAE



Thank you for your time.

Questions??????

a tour of Husky rules and expectations!

welcome to school

West Seattle Huskies!

Give Me
5



That means... voices off and hands up. Time to Listen

Sit up 

Listen 

Ask & Answer Questions 

Nod 

Track the Speaker 

**Students,
Check
Your
SLANT!**

Show that You're Listening and Learning!

Practice Your SLANT Now!



Huskies Care!



Take time to know the rules and Show that you CARE!

Husky PAWS the Basic Expectations

P: Prompt & Prepared

A: Always Respectful

W: Working Hard

S: Safe



An Example of Positive Behaviors PAWS



Prompt & Prepared

Get a good night sleep
Remember your Homework Folder
Get to School ON-TIME!

Always Respectful

Older children care for younger children

Working Hard

Homework Done and Ready to Turn in

Safe

Walking on the sidewalk when possible
Following rules

PAWS and Husky Bucks!



You can earn bucks, and win a PRIZE!



Any adult in the school, or driving a bus can give you a Husky Buck!



One student from every class will win a prize during the week from a Husky Buck drawing. The more bucks you earn, the better your chances!

Share a time when you received a Husky Buck with your neighbor.

Husky Bucks

- We have different kinds of Husky Bucks. Some are big and some small. They come in different colors. But they all have one thing in common...

WEST SEATTLE ELEMENTARY		Room: _____
Husky Bucks		
To: _____		
<input type="checkbox"/> Prompt/Prepared		Date: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Always Respectful		
<input type="checkbox"/> Working Hard		
<input type="checkbox"/> Safe		
Adult Signature: _____		

See Our **HUSKY**? He's on every kind of Husky Buck!

In the Hallways & on Stairs

Remember...

Straight 

Right 

Quiet 

Polite 

We show **RESPECT** in the Hallways and on the Stairs!

Husky Bathroom Rules

Quiet Voices 

Wash Up
One Squirt of Soap... One Towel 

Clean Up
Trash in the Can 

Back to Class 

In the Bathroom

Why Rules for the Hallways, Stairs & Bathrooms?

 Loud Students in the Hallways make it tough for other students to learn. We are all Self Managers!

Dirty Bathrooms are no fun to use. Huskies show they CARE by picking up after themselves! 

Without Rules, it's tough to Learn!



Huskies on the Playground

Care for Equipment



Slides go DOWN
and Woodchips on the Ground



You can **RUN** on the
Grass and Blacktop



Be a Friend... show that You CARE!

Bulldogs are Cute. Bullies are NOT!



Everyone Feels Welcomed.

Everyone Feels Safe.

No Gossip.

No Violence.

No Threats.

We are Kind to Everyone.



You can earn Husky Bucks for yourself and Husky PAWS for your Class!

Rules for the Cafeteria

These rules apply to Breakfast and to Lunch!

Enjoy Eating with Your Friends!

- Stay seated
- Inside voice
- Raise your hand for help
- Clean up after yourself
- No sharing food



You can eat your lunch & visit with your neighbor.

If your entire class does a good job, Your class can earn a Husky Paw! 5 Paws = Extra Recess!

We're all Huskies... even when we're

On the BUS



Keep it SAFE & Show You CARE!



Husky Bus Riders

Quiet Voices

In Your Seat

Just like the Driver!

Hands to Yourself



Listen to the Driver

Remember Bus Drivers can give Husky Bucks too!

Can You REMEMBER Your PAWS?

P: Prompt & Prepared

A: Always Respectful

W: Working Hard

S: Safe



One Last Thought...

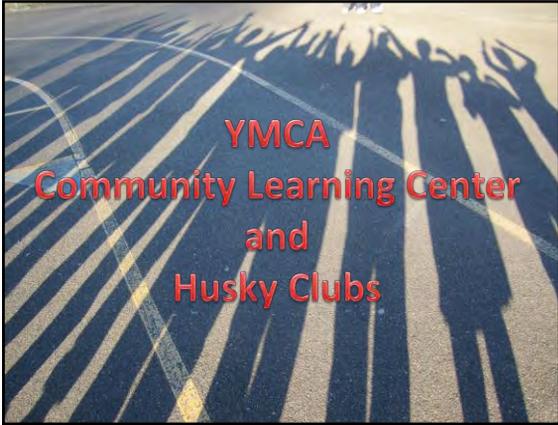
- Attendance Matters!!!
- It is important that you come to school EVERY day, on-time.
 - When is it okay to miss school?
 - When you are sick. Make sure an adult calls the school to let us know so that we don't worry about you.
- Why do you think it is important to be at school?
 - When you're not at school... You're not learning.
 - You are IMPORTANT!

A banner with a blue and grey background on top, a dark grey and orange background in the middle, and a green grass border at the bottom. The text "welcome to school" is in green, "West Seattle Huskies!" is in white, and "a tour of Husky rules and expectations!" is in grey.

welcome to school

West Seattle Huskies!

a tour of Husky rules and expectations!



Extended Learning Opportunities
at West Seattle Elementary

- Homework Tutoring and Academic Support
- Afterschool Enrichment
- Community Involvement and Volunteerism
- Summer Programming
- Arts and Music Curriculum
- Mentoring
- Elongating the School Year by Nearly 800 Hours



















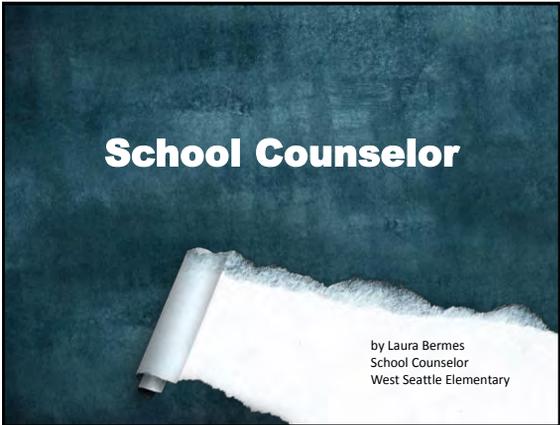






Wraparound
Educational
Service & Support

or services offered
by the...



School Counselor

by Laura Bernes
School Counselor
West Seattle Elementary









1 RECOGNIZE
YOUR
WORKING
IN A **system**



EVEN
SMALL
CHANGES
MAKE
A DIFFERENCE







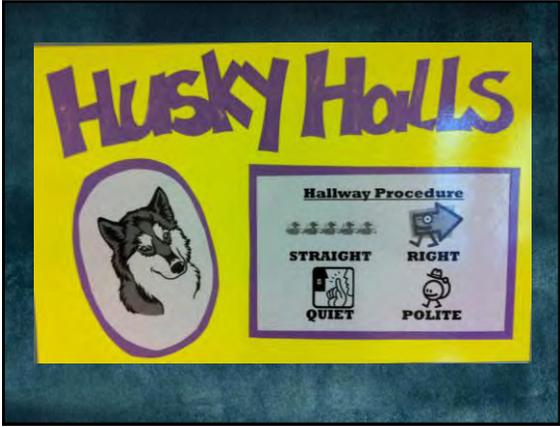


SYSTEM Efforts
PBIS SIT/RTI
ATTENDANCE
Second Step
Steps to Respect **BLT**
FAMILY ENGAGEMENT



OUTCOMES
Office Referrals for Behavior (SWISS) 
 Attendance Rate
School Climate as measured by SET 















Great Public Schools for Every Student

National Education Association
1201 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036-3290
neaprioritieschools.org

The Obama Administration Education Strategy

Jo Anderson, Jr.

U.S. Department of Education

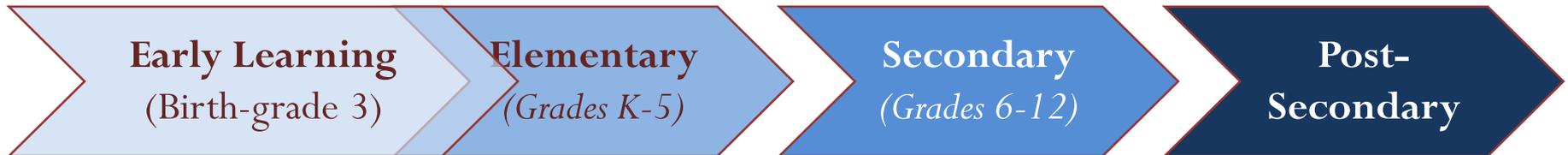
Senior Advisor to the Secretary of Education

Office of the Secretary

Overarching Goal

“By 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world.”

President Barack Obama, February 24, 2009



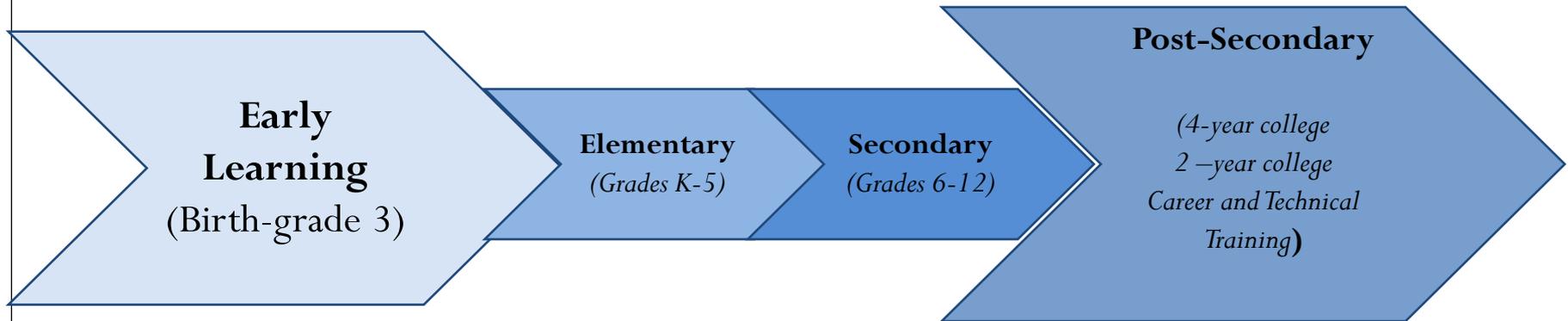
Goal: All kindergarten students arrive ready to learn and remain on track to 4th grade.

Goal: All students enter middle school with foundational skills to tackle advanced subjects.

Goal: All students graduate high school on time prepared for at least one year of post-secondary.

Goal: All graduates have opportunities for success in the 21st century economy.

Bookends for K-12 Agenda



Early Learning Goals:

- ✓ Increase Access
- ✓ Improve Quality

Post-Secondary Goals:

- ✓ Improve Readiness
- ✓ Increase Access and Affordability
- ✓ Improve Completion Rates

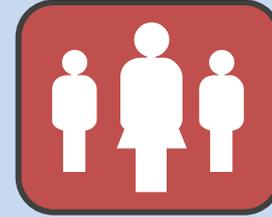
Our Theory of Action for K-12 Reform



Four Assurances



Raise **standards**
and improve
assessments.



Recruit, retain & support
effective educators, and
ensure equitable distribution.



Build robust **data systems**
that track student progress
and improve practice.

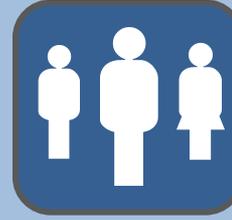


Turn around **low-performing schools**, focusing on dropout factories and their feeder schools.

Core Areas for ESEA Reauthorization



**College- and
Career-Ready
Students**



**Great Teachers
and Great
Leaders**



**Meeting the
Needs of Diverse
Learners**



**A Complete
Education**



**Successful, Safe
and Healthy
Students**



**Fostering
Innovation and
Excellence**

ESEA Flexibility Core policies

Set a high bar for students and schools

Protect all students

Provide flexibility to move forward with reform

“We’re going to let states, schools and teachers come up with innovative ways to give our children the skills they need to compete for the jobs of the future.”

- President Obama

FLEXIBILITY TO IMPROVE ACHIEVEMENT AND INSTRUCTION

- Flexibility regarding the 2013-2014 timeline for achieving 100 percent proficiency
- Flexibility regarding district and school improvement and accountability requirements
- Flexibility related to the use of Federal education funds

“This voluntary opportunity will provide educators and State and local leaders with flexibility ... to improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, increase equity, and improve the quality of instruction.”

– Secretary Duncan

PRINCIPLES FOR IMPROVING ACHIEVEMENT AND INSTRUCTION

1. **College- and career-ready expectations for all students**

2. **State-developed differentiated recognition, accountability, and support**

3. **Supporting effective instruction and leadership**

4. **Reducing duplication and unnecessary burden**

PRINCIPLE 1: COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY EXPECTATIONS

- Adopt college- and career-ready standards in reading and mathematics
- Transition to and implement standards statewide for all students and schools
- Develop and administer aligned, high-quality assessments that measure student growth
- Adopt corresponding English language proficiency standards and aligned assessments

Adopt CCR standards

2011-12

Implement CCR standards and pilot assessments

2012-13

Administer assessments

2013-14

2014-15

PRINCIPLE 2: DIFFERENTIATED RECOGNITION, ACCOUNTABILITY & SUPPORT

- Develop system to ensure continuous improvement in all Title I schools
- Set ambitious but achievable performance targets
- Provide recognition for high-progress and highest-performing schools (Reward Schools)
- Effect dramatic, systemic change in the lowest-performing schools (Priority Schools)
- Identify and implement interventions in schools with the greatest achievement gaps and with subgroups that are furthest behind (Focus Schools)
- Build state, district, and school capacity to improve student learning in all schools

Set new
targets

Recognize schools, implement interventions & build capacity

2011-12

2012-13

2013-14

2014-15

Principle 2: TURNAROUND PRINCIPLES

- Provide strong leadership
- Ensure that teachers are effective and able to improve instruction
- Redesign the school day, week, or year
- Strengthen the school's instructional program
- Use data to inform instruction
- Establish a school environment that improves safety and discipline and address other non-academic factors
- Engage families and community

Note: A priority school that implements one of the four SIG models satisfies the turnaround principles.

PRINCIPLE 3: SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION AND LEADERSHIP

NCLB

Focused exclusively on a teacher's entering qualifications



ESEA Flexibility

States and districts develop teacher and principal evaluation and support systems focused on improving teacher and leader effectiveness

Static; no emphasis on improvement



Evaluation and support systems must provide useful feedback and guide professional development

Divorced from student achievement and instructional practice



Must take into account multiple measures, including student growth and measures of professional practice

Ignored need for better school leaders



Focus on supporting and improving leaders

PRINCIPLE 3: SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION & LEADERSHIP

- Teacher and principal evaluation and support systems that:
 - Will be used for continual improvement of instruction
 - Meaningfully differentiate performance
 - Use multiple valid measures, including student growth
 - Evaluate teachers and principals on a regular basis
 - Provide clear, timely, and useful feedback
 - Will be used to inform personnel decisions

Adopt state
guidelines

2011-12

Develop
local systems

2012-13

Pilot local
systems

2013-14

Implement
local systems

2014-15

WHAT DOES “SIGNIFICANT” STUDENT GROWTH MEAN?

- SEA discretion
- But must pass peer review
- Formula versus Professional Judgment
- Consequential but not determinative

WHAT DOES “OTHER MEASURES OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE” MEAN?

- SEA discretion
- Observations, teacher portfolios, student and parent surveys
- Comparable across schools and LEAs
- Consistent rubrics, inter-rater reliability, tracking distribution

WHAT FREQUENCY OF EVALUATION CONSTITUTES “REGULARLY” EVALUATING EDUCATORS?

- SEA discretion
- Must be often enough to inform professional development, improve instruction, and inform other personnel decisions
- May vary depending on experience level or past evaluations

RIGOROUS & COMPREHENSIVE STATE-DEVELOPED PLANS

Encouraging ongoing state and local reform and innovation by supporting state plans to:

- Develop coherent and comprehensive systems that support continuous improvement
- Tailor systems to the needs of the state, its districts, its schools, and its students
- Engage teachers and their representatives and other stakeholders in the development of the State plan

WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT THIS WORK?

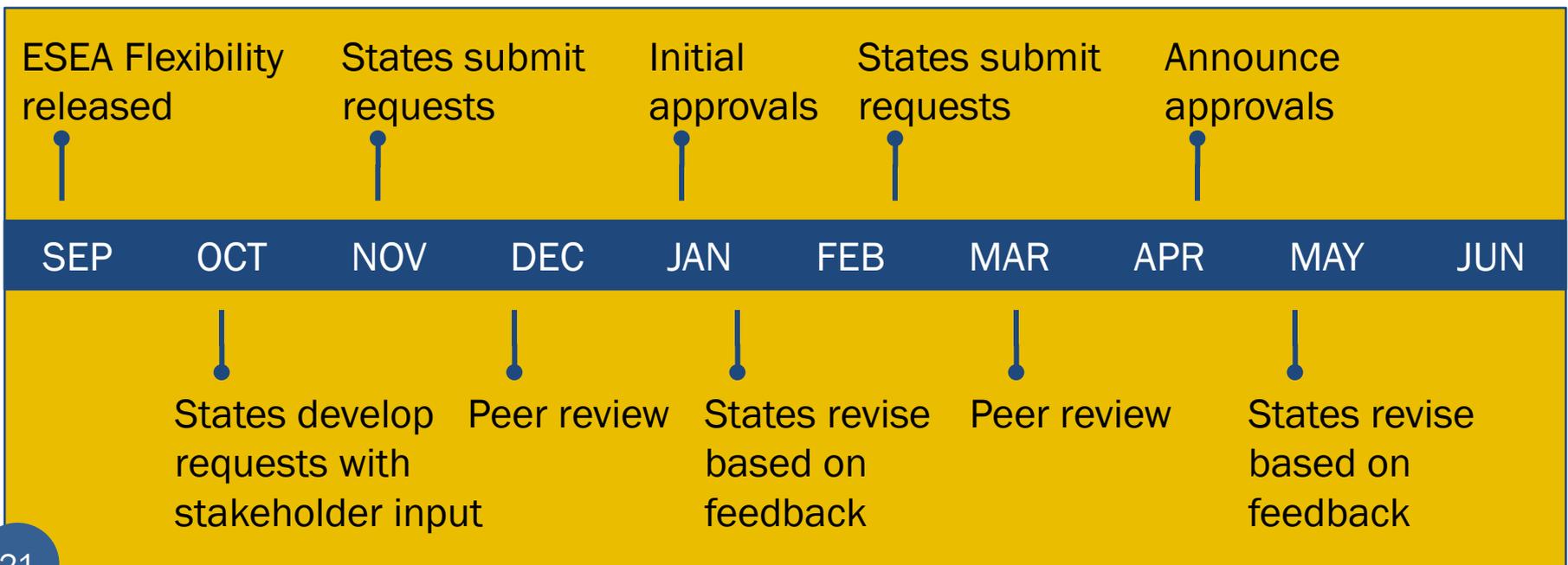
- Freedom from 20% set-aside for SES and choice and 10% for professional development
- Title I, Part A and Title II, Part A allocations
- School improvement funding reserved under ESEA section 1003(a)

HOW DOES ESEA FLEXIBILITY RELATE TO HQT?

- Does not waive HQT
- Does give flexibility around HQT improvement plans
- SEAs should begin using effectiveness data to address equitable distribution

PROCESS AND TIMELINE

- New partnership with States to support innovation and reform
- Peer review to help maintain a high bar and ensure accountability
- Provide feedback, technical assistance, and additional opportunities for States to submit requests



RESOURCES

- ESEA Flexibility Web Site:
<http://www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility>
 - ESEA Flexibility
 - Request
 - Peer review guidance
 - FAQs
- Questions, comments, etc.:
ESEAflexibility@ed.gov

American Recovery & Reinvestment Act

\$98.2b

Largest one-time federal education investment in history to save jobs and drive reforms.

Formula Funds

Historic influx of funding to all states to save jobs, ensure stability, and provide base level of funding to create foundation for reform.

SFSF: \$48.6b

IDEA: \$12.2b

Title I: \$10b

Ed Tech: \$650m

(and other funding streams)

Competitive Funds

Targeted, competitive grants to support states and districts in taking on ambitious reforms.

RTT: \$4.35b

SIG: \$3.0b

i3: \$650m

SLDS: \$250m

(and other funding streams)

State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) – 2009

- **\$30 Billion – Saved 288,000 teachers jobs**

Education Jobs Fund – 2010

- **\$10 Billion – Saved 134,000 teachers jobs**

THE AMERICAN JOBS ACT

Will invest \$25 Billion in School infrastructure that will focus on schools in most disrepair.

- 325,000 Construction Jobs.

Will invest \$30 Billion to retain, rehire, and hire teachers.

- 400,000 Educator Jobs.