

Archived Information

The Equity and Excellence Commission
A Report to the Secretary

COMPENDIUM: INDEPENDENTLY AUTHORED MATERIALS BY EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE COMMISSION MEMBERS

FOR
EACH
AND
EVERY
CHILD

A STRATEGY
FOR EDUCATION
EQUITY AND
EXCELLENCE

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COST EFFECTIVENESS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

By Michael A. Rebell and Jacquelyn Thompson

Since 1975, when Congress adopted the Education of All Handicapped Children’s Act,¹ the predecessor of the current Individuals with Disabilities Act (“IDEA”), the number of students receiving special education services and the cost of those services has skyrocketed.² Currently, there are approximately six million students receiving special education services nationwide.³ Much of this increase was to be expected since, as Congress itself noted at the time of the adoption of the law,⁴ millions of students with disabilities were being excluded from school or receiving educational services that did not meet their needs. Nevertheless, the manner in which the law has been implemented in many states has resulted not only in the appropriate provision of services to many students with disabilities who had previously been excluded or underserved, but also in the placement into special education of many students who could be better served in appropriate general education programs, with appropriate supports and services.

¹ PL 94-142, 1975 S 6.

² See, Richard Rothstein and Karen Hawley Miles, *Where’s the Money Gone?* (Economic Policy Institute, 1995) and Juan Diego Alonso and Richard Rothstein, *Where’s the Money Been Going?* (Economic Policy Institute, 2010) (nine-district study found that the proportion of school district budgets for special education services rose from 3.7% to 17.3% from 1967 to 2005 and that expenditures for special education rose 1539% during that time period).

³ U.S. Department of Education, Data Accountability Center, available at <http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/statetables/09stbyprogram.pdf>.

⁴ Congress specifically stated in the “findings and purposes section” of the original act that “one million of the handicapped children in the United States are excluded entirely from the public school system;” and “there are many handicapped children throughout the United States participating in regular school programs whose handicaps prevent them from having a successful educational experience because their handicaps are undetected.” PL 94-142, 1975 S 6, sec. 3(a).

Such a high incidence of special education placements substantially raises overall costs, since average per capita spending for students in special education is at least double the per capita spending for students in general education.⁵ This does not mean, of course, that states should now order local school districts to reduce their incidence of special education by establishing arbitrary referral quotas or by pressuring principals and teachers to reduce referrals, regardless of actual student needs. Such policies would clearly be illegal.⁶ What the states should do is to analyze why in many states large number of students are being evaluated and provided special education services when many of them might be more appropriately served by much less costly general education programs.

Almost half of the six million children receiving special education services have been diagnosed with specific learning disabilities, and, according to the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education, about 80% of these students received this diagnosis simply because they cannot read.⁷ The Commission found that early intervention programs can substantially reduce referrals of students with purported learning disabilities, and that classroom-based approaches involving positive discipline and classroom management can also

⁵ See, THOMAS PARRISH ET AL., STATE SPECIAL EDUCATION FINANCE SYSTEMS, 1999-2000 (Washington, D.C., American Institutes for Research, 2004.) (finding that the cost of educating students in special education is more than twice the cost of educating other students.)

⁶ See, e.g. Jose P. v. Ambach, 557 F. Supp 1230, 1238-8 (D.C. N.Y., 1983) (court holds pattern and practice of teacher referrals being denied or delayed by principals and special education administrators to be in violation of federal law.)

⁷ President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education, A New Era: Revitalizing Special Education for Children and Their Families, p. 3 (2002).

prevent and ameliorate social and emotional disabilities.⁸ These findings and recommendations spurred Congress to permit use of a portion of IDEA funds to support early intervening services in general education. The IDEA regulations now require that prior appropriate interventions in general education be provided for children suspected of having a specific learning disability,⁹ and permit school districts to use up to 15% of their federal IDEA funds to support early intervening services such as Response to Intervention (RTI) programs for students in general education.¹⁰

RTI is a framework that integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavioral problems. It provides opportunities for schools to identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions, make data based decisions to adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions, and identify students with learning or other disabilities.¹¹ This approach is aligned with high quality school improvement practices and requires access to formative and summative achievement data, on-going progress

⁸ *Id* at 22-23

⁹ 34 CFR § 300.309 (b).

¹⁰ 34 C.F.R§ 300.226(a).

¹¹ National Center on Response to Intervention, www.rti4success.org. For detailed explanations of RTI, its significance and issues involved in its proper implementation, *see, e.g.* David W. Barnett, Edward J. Daly, III, Kevin M. Jones and F. Edward Lentz, Jr, *Response to Intervention: Empirically Based Special Service Decisions From Single-Case Designs of Increasing and Decreasing Intensity*, 38 J.SPEC. EDU 66 (2004); Douglas Fuchs, Lynn S. Fuchs, *Introduction to Response to Intervention: What, why, and how valid is it?*, READING RESEARCH QUARTERLY 93 (2006); HOWARD KNOFF, IMPLEMENTING RESPONSE-TO-INTERVENTION AT THE SCHOOL, DISTRICT, AND STATE LEVELS: FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENT, DATA-BASED PROBLEM SOLVING, AND EVIDENCE-BASED ACADEMIC AND BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS(2009.), and the website of the and of the National Association of State Directors of Special Education, <http://www.nasdse.org/Projects/ResponsetoInterventionRtlProject/tabid/411/Default.aspx>.

monitoring of student response to instruction, team-based problem-solving, and assumes a sound core instructional program in reading and math, as well as intentional approaches to teaching behavioral norms. Implementation requires systematic training and coaching for school staff to achieve fidelity across practices.

This model not only creates efficiencies, but more importantly can effectively support improved achievement for students. In addition, the practice can reduce the number of students who, as a result of learning struggles that go un-addressed, are unnecessarily referred to and frequently determined eligible for special education services (i.e. the default system for struggling learners). It appears, however, that RTI is currently being implemented in a superficial manner, if at all, in many states and school districts. Appropriate use of well-designed RTI programs would allow states to both improve services for students and reap substantial cost savings by reducing referrals to special education. For example, it has been estimated that New York State could save \$800 million by reducing its current 17% special education incidence rate to the national average rate of 13%.¹²

¹² Statement of Stephen Frank, Director, Education Resource Systems, at meeting of the New York State Regents State Aid Group, September 13, 2011.

Early Learning as a Path to Equity: The Case of New Jersey

By Linda Darling-Hammond, Sandra Dungee Glenn, Ralph Martire, Marc Morial,
Michael A. Rebell, David G. Sciarra, Randi Weingarten and Dennis Van Roekel

In several rulings in the *Abbott v. Burke* equity litigation, the Supreme Court ordered high quality preschool be provided to all three and four year olds in New Jersey's 31 poorest school districts, referred to as "Abbott" districts.¹ The Court specified that the State and local districts should utilize existing child care and Head Start programs, wherever feasible, and ensure all programs in public schools and private providers, meet standards of quality recommended by the research: full-day, full school year programs; small class size; certified teachers and trained aides; developmentally appropriate curriculum, linked to state K-12 academic standards; and adequate state funding to support delivery of high quality early learning across the diverse program settings.²

A key part of the Abbott rulings is the mandate that all lead teachers acquire a Bachelor's degree and an early childhood credential by September of 2004, an order that many states would consider impossible to implement. In 2000, only 15% of early childhood teachers in private settings met these criteria. By 2004, approximately 90% of the Abbott districts' early childhood teachers had a Bachelor's degree and were at least provisionally certified. By 1997, 97% were fully certified and college-educated.³

Quality indicators based on observations of activities and interactions in preschool classrooms increased dramatically over this time – with the number of classrooms rated near the top of the scale doubling to 72 percent between 2003 and 2007, and evidence about student learning following suit. The National Institute for Early Education Research assessed more than 1000 kindergarten students from Abbott districts in 2006 and found that those who had attended two years of preschool cut the "vocabulary gap" in half.⁴ Districts like Union City and West New York, which could track individual students, found that those who attended preschool performed significantly better on state tests by third grade than those who did not have preschool, actually exceeding the state average proficiency rate on language arts tests.⁵

This impressive transformation suggests how it is possible to provide access and raise quality in a short period of time. Researchers note that these outcomes were especially associated with the investments in teacher quality. To accomplish this, New Jersey created a specialized P-3 certification with multiple preparation routes, including pre-service and in-service training with mentoring and supervision. Teachers pursuing their degrees were provided with full-tuition scholarships, tuition coupons, and loan forgiveness; a substitute teacher pool was created to give teachers time to attend school; and laptop computers were provided to provide access to distance learning opportunities.⁶ The state created a statewide professional development center to help students get access to information and training. The state and private foundations provided grants to help build the capacity of colleges to provide early care and education courses, including on nights and weekends, and the state developed articulation agreements between two-year and four-year institutions so that transfers would be seamless. Finally, the state created salary parity for teachers working in *Abbott* pre-k

classrooms in all settings, so that these better-prepared teachers would not leave the preschool sector for better-paying jobs in elementary schools.

¹ Abbott v. Burke V (1998); Abbott v. Burke VI (2000); Abbott v. Burke VIII (2002)

² Mead, New America Foundation (2009)

³ Bueno, Darling-Hammond, & Gonzales (in press); MacInnes, G. (2009). In plain sight: Simple, difficult lessons from New Jersey's expensive effort to close the achievement gap. NY: The Century Foundation, p. 47.

⁴ Frede, E., Jung, K., Barnett, W.S., Lamy, C.E. & Figueras, A. (2007). The Abbott Preschool Program longitudinal effects study. Early Learning Improvement Consortium and New Jersey Department of Education.

⁵ MacInnes (2009),p. 48.

⁶ Ryan, S. & Ackerman, D. (2004). Creating a Qualified Preschool Teaching Workforce, Part 1: Getting Qualified: A Report on the Efforts of Preschool Teachers in New Jersey's Abbott Districts to Improve their Qualifications. National Institute for Early Education Research.

**To Ensure Every American Child Receives a High Quality Education,
the Federal Government Must Significantly Enhance its Investment in Public Schools**

By Linda Darling-Hammond, Sandra Dungee Glenn, Ralph M. Martire, Marc H. Morial,
Michael A. Rebell, Jesse Ruiz, David G. Sciarra

1. **Introduction.**

Americans believe every child, regardless of race, ethnicity or social class, should receive a high quality, academically rich and rigorous public education. This makes sense. After all educational attainment is more closely correlated with economic viability today than ever before. In fact since 1980, the only cohort of workers in America that have realized real, inflation adjusted growth in income have college degrees.¹ Unfortunately, the public education system in America has for generations failed to live up to this commonly shared belief.

To be sure, numerous factors have played a role in keeping the U.S. public education system from meeting the goal of providing every child with a quality education. That said, one core issue that must be reformed if we are to eliminate some of the most significant barriers to educating all of America's children is both clear and compelling: it is the way America funds public schools. To date, the nation as a whole has consigned the primary responsibility for funding a child's education to state and local governments. As it stands today, only about nine percent of total education funding is provided by the federal government,² a decline from 12% in 1980.³ Obviously, this means state and local governments fund over 90% of the cost of educating America's children. Given the widely varying fiscal and economic capacities to fund education that exist from state to state and community to community, not to mention the vagaries of state and local politics, this highly uncoordinated system has led to predictable results. Far too many schools simply have insufficient resources to cover the costs of providing their students with a quality education. This is particularly the case in poor, low income and increasingly middle income areas. In addition to

¹ State of Working Illinois, 2008, <http://www.ctbaonline.org/All%20Links%20to%20Research%20Areas%20and%20Reports/Workforce%20Dev/SWIL08.pdf>

² Kathy Checkley, "Money Matters: A Primer on K-12 School Funding," The Center for Public Education, National School Boards Association, <http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=lvIXliN0JwE&b=5118661&ct=6857721>.

³ Ibid

frequently being inadequate, educational resources are often inequitably distributed across states, between districts within states, and even between schools within districts.

The bottom line is clear: children in America receive qualitatively different educations simply based on the state in which they were born, the district in which they are enrolled, and the school to which they are assigned. This is the legacy of relying primarily on state and local resources—which vary dramatically from state to state and school district to school district—to fund education. Making up differentials between what low and middle income communities can afford to spend on education and what it actually costs to educate their children will be difficult indeed under the current funding system, in large part because the federal government plays such a small role in investing in the education of our nation’s children.

2. The Case for a New Federal Role

It’s not as if the nation wasn’t warned about the consequences of its flawed approach to education funding. In fact, addressing educational funding disparities existing at the state and local levels was one of the key focus areas of the report: “Schools, People, Money; the Need for Educational Reform,” issued by President Nixon’s Commission on School Finance in 1972.

In that report, the Nixon Commission explicitly recognized three key factors that remain germane today. First, it found that the growing nexus between economic opportunity and education had elevated concerns about the consequences of school funding disparities from the local to the national level. According to the Nixon Commission:

“The workforce has become more and more a national pool of human resources. As a result, the **disparities and inadequacies in educational quality and opportunity, once matters largely of local concern, have become a major national interest as well.**”⁴

As all Americans now know, the advent of globalization has only made this economic change more compelling.

⁴ 1972 Nixon Report, pg. 23 (Emphasis Added)

Second, the Nixon Commission specifically found that **“money can help solve many of the educational problems that have surfaced in recent years.”**⁵ Indeed, the Nixon Commission found that many of the problems with education funding equity and sufficiency were the direct result of antiquated state school funding formulae, which were over-reliant on local property taxes and based on “state fiscal considerations rather than education objectives as such.”⁶

“Thus, school finance is still largely thought of in terms of “property valuation per pupil,” “equalized tax base,” “foundation program,” per-pupil expenditure,” and other strictly dollar considerations. **Rarely has the structure concerned itself, except inferentially, with the educational needs of our children.**”⁷

In other words, state-based education funding has historically been driven almost entirely by state and local fiscal capacity, rather than the actual costs of educating different children with varying needs—a reality that still exists today.

Third, the Nixon Commission recommended that the federal government address educational disparities by:

- identifying national educational “needs and deficiencies,” and then encouraging the states and local governments to direct their attention to resolving those needs and deficiencies;
- providing assistance to the states (substantive and financial) **“when the scope of the problem or the achievement of a solution is beyond the political or financial capacity of the states”**;⁸
- **“providing incentives and mechanisms designed to more nearly equalize resources among the states for elementary and secondary education”**;⁹ and

⁵ 1972 Nixon Report, pg. 24 (Emphasis Added)

⁶ 1972 Nixon Report, pg. 26

⁷ [Id]

⁸ [Id at 24] (Emphasis Added)

- providing guidance and incentives that would encourage states to reform their respective fiscal policies in a manner that would **“increase their ability to finance their educational systems.”**¹⁰

It has been more than forty years since the Nixon Commission admonished state governments to reform their respective fiscal policies in a manner that would ensure every child received a quality public education. Yet, over that time period funding disparities from both sufficiency and equity standpoints in many states have worsened, significant achievement gaps persist, and all too often local finance and governance systems continue to allow for, and in many ways encourage, inefficient and ineffective resource utilization. There is little consistency from school to school, much less state to state. As a result, inequality is not only systemic and persistent, but many schools are left with financial resources that simply fail to cover the cost of providing the high quality, rigorous education all children deserve.

In the four decades that have followed the 1972 Nixon Commission report, the federal government has indeed attempted to encourage states to redress educational funding inadequacies and inequities utilizing the limited tools of incentives and mandates that were suggested by the Nixon Commission, all without dramatically moving the needle forward. First, there were the various standards-based and school choice initiatives that emerged in response to the clarion call made in the “A Nation at Risk” report issued under the Reagan Administration in 1983. The authors of that report were not subtle. They cautioned America that: “the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and a people.”¹¹ Next came the accountability metrics implemented in the wake of No Child Left Behind.¹² But despite all the federal rhetoric and financial incentives devoted to public education over the last four generations, nothing has been significant enough to motivate the states to implement education funding systems that are both fair and cover the actual costs of providing a quality education to a diverse population of children. Even the numerous mandates from the feds focused on enhancing the academic performance of students have failed

⁹ [Id]

¹⁰ [Id] (Emphasis Added)

¹¹ “A Nation at Risk”, pg. 1.

¹² The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Public Law PL107-110

to make the difference desired, because mandates that are not accompanied by the resources needed to implement them cannot succeed.

The bottom line is clear, 40 years of limited federal efforts focused on strong rhetoric, small financial incentives and unfunded mandates have proven insufficient to the task. Funding for public education remains inequitable and inadequate across our great nation.

It is time for the federal government to assume a new, significantly enhanced role in funding education, because one of the core concerns voiced by the Nixon Commission has indeed come to pass. That is, when it comes to educational funding excellence, equity and adequacy, the “scope of the problem or achievement of a solution “has indeed proven to be” beyond the political or financial capacity of the states.”¹³ As it concerns the quality of his or her education, it should not matter whether a child lives in rural Mississippi, inner city Chicago, Illinois, or Westport, Connecticut. After all, irrespective of his or her state, city or town, that child is an American, and our entire nation has a fundamental responsibility to ensure that child receive a high quality education.

Hence to realize the meaningful, effective education reform called for by the Nixon Commission back in 1972, America must make a new, strong national commitment both to how it funds education and how it ensures that money is well spent. That is why it is essential to implement this Commission’s recommendations for significantly enhanced federal investments in public education as soon as practicable. For investing more as a nation in our children is not just the right thing to do—it is also crucial to overcoming decades of unsatisfactory progress and creating an American educational system that is truly equitable and excellent.

¹³ 1972 Nixon Report, pg. 24

The Fair Funding Challenge: Ensuring a Meaningful Educational Opportunity For All Students

By Linda Darling-Hammond, Sandra Dungee Glenn, Ralph Martire, Marc H. Morial, Michael A. Rebell, Jim Ryan, David G. Sciarra, Randi Weingarten and Dennis Van Roekel

Equity is a cornerstone of public education in the United States. At this critical moment in our nation's history, equity means ensuring all students, including poor (at-risk) students, English language learners, students with disabilities, and students of color receive a meaningful educational opportunity. At this moment of rapid change in our nation, a meaningful educational opportunity must, at a minimum, mean the opportunity for all students to achieve rigorous academic standards and graduate high school with the skills necessary for employment in a competitive global economy and to be capable citizens in our 21st century democratic society.

The Equity Commission is charged with tackling one of the most pressing obstacles to advancing equity: ensuring all public schools have the resources needed to provide rigorous curriculum in a broad range of content areas, delivered by well-trained teachers, and supported by effective school and district leaders. Equity also requires additional resources for schools with high concentrations of low income (at-risk) students and students with other special needs. At-risk students, and concentrated student poverty in districts and schools, require additional resources to support effective programs and intervention strategies, such as high quality preschool and full-day kindergarten, extended learning time, family engagement, smaller classes in the early grades, academic assistance for struggling students, social and health services, and school and district wide improvement initiatives.

The provision of resources to deliver rigorous standards and high outcomes is, therefore, an essential precondition to the national effort to give all students access to a meaningful educational opportunity, one that will prepare them to assume the responsibilities of citizenship and succeed in the 21st century economy. This need becomes even more compelling as states move to strengthen academic rigor through Common Core standards and other initiatives.

The Current Condition: Resource Disparity within States

Although the United States is rhetorically committed to equity, our nation has slipped further from this goal over the last 30 years. Despite the vision of equal educational opportunity announced by the United States Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education* almost 60 years ago, the concentration of poverty and racial isolation in our public schools has increased in recent decades. By 2007, three-quarters of the nation's black and Latino students attended predominantly minority schools, up significantly from the low point of 63% in 1980. The proportion of students of color in intensely segregated schools has also increased. About 4

in 10 African American and Latino students attend schools with a minority enrollment of 90-100%. These are almost always schools with concentrations of students in poverty. Meanwhile, the average white student attends a school where 77% of the students are white and many fewer live in poverty.¹

This growing "de facto" socio-economic and racial segregation, coupled with the continuing reliance on local property wealth as a major component of school funding, has also increased the disparities in the level and distribution of essential resources - including well-qualified teachers and leaders - exacerbating inequitable learning opportunities and outcomes in our public education systems .

Currently in America, public education is primarily a state responsibility. The States control over 90% of all of the funds made available to schools, in the form of state and local revenue. The federal government, through Title 1, IDEA and other targeted funding, contributes 8-10%.

With a few exceptions, current state school funding mechanisms have no demonstrable relationship to the cost of delivering rigorous standards and high outcomes to all students. Few states have even made the effort to determine the cost of achieving their own established content and performance standards, or how the cost of achieving those standards vary across diverse student populations and geographic locations.

As a result of the lack of effort and the absence of federal direction focused on reforming state school finance systems to better deliver resources to deliver equitable opportunity to achieve common standards, most states continue to:

- Underfund, in some cases dramatically so, the resources necessary for all students to achieve common academic standards across states, and
- Allow for disparities, often substantial, in the funding and resources available in high wealth, low poverty districts/schools and low wealth, high poverty districts/schools within states.²

These systemic inequities manifest what is, perhaps, the most striking and consistent feature of public school funding in the United States since the 1950's: students with the greatest needs – and their schools – generally are afforded fewer resources to achieve state-mandated standards than their peers in more affluent communities.

¹ Orfield, G., *Reviving the Goal of an Integrated Society: A 21st Century Challenge*, Los Angeles, CA: The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles at UCLA, pp. 12-14.

² "Is School Funding Fair? A National Report Card," B. Baker, D. Sciarra, D. Farrie (Second Edition 2012)

In most states, the highest-spending districts typically spend two to three times what lower-spending districts can afford. In California, for example, the spending differences across districts ranged from \$6,032 to \$18,025 per pupil in 2009, even excluding the top 5 percent of districts. In New York, the range in that year was from \$8,542 to \$20,763 (excluding the top 5 percent of spenders, some of which had budgets of more than \$50,000 per pupil.³) In Illinois, operating expenditures in k-12 districts range from a low of \$6,061 per student to a high of \$22,561 per student. In high school districts, the range is even greater: from \$6,361 to \$27,379 per pupil. As in many other states, high-poverty districts in Illinois typically spend one-third less than low-poverty districts -- \$8,707 per pupil on average, as compared to \$11,312 per pupil -- although they serve the greatest concentrations of students with high levels of need.⁴

These disparities translate into real differences in the opportunities available to children. They influence the expertise and experience of staff, the size of classes, the availability and quality of books, curriculum materials, libraries, computers, science labs, facilities, support personnel, and instructional specialists. As a consequence, they directly affect the opportunity made available to children to learn the content and skills expected of citizens in the 21st century. In far too many communities, children attend schools with crumbling buildings, large and growing class sizes, inadequate books and materials, lack of access to a curriculum to prepare for college and careers, and a revolving door of teachers -- many inexperienced and underprepared. Simply put, these children are denied a viable opportunity to learn.

State control over public education finance means that the level and allocation of funding within states is determined by the political processes and interaction of the three branches of government in state capitols across the nation. It also means that state aid formulas tend to be determined each year by legislatures in which communities with the greatest need for state support lack political clout; school aid levels are subject to year-to-year fluctuations based on fiscal conditions or partisan political agendas; and are heavily reliant on the local property wealth and, increasingly, private contributions and donations. Indeed, most states still finance more than half or more of total school spending through property taxes and other local taxes, perpetuating the same deep disparities between low-wealth, high poverty and higher wealth, low poverty communities that was the centerpiece of the unsuccessful

³ Frank Adamson & Linda Darling-Hammond, Funding Disparities and the Inequitable Distribution of Teachers: Evaluating Sources and Solutions. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, Vol. 20, No. 37 (November, 2012). <http://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/view/1053>

⁴ Bruce Baker, David Sciarra and Danielle Farrie, *Is School Funding Fair?*, A National Report Card, Second Edition 2012. NJ: Education Law Center and Rutgers University.

challenge to Texas school finance in the US Supreme Court's *Rodriguez v. San Antonio* case forty years ago.

The systemic inequity in the way the states currently fund public education, coupled with the unwillingness of many states to provide funding at the level necessary to give all students the opportunity to meet state standards, is a root cause of the lack of real progress that has been made over the past decade in overcoming achievement gaps and meeting the proficiency goals set forth in the No Child Left Behind Act. Testimony presented at the Equity Commission's field hearings highlighted these deep, persistent resource deficits and disparities. For example, Martha Infante, a teacher in a middle school in South Central Los Angeles, described the glaring lack of the most basic staff, program and services, resulting in overcrowded classrooms, almost no guidance counselors, a dearth of professional development, high teacher turnover, and other serious deficits that impair the delivery of rigorous standards to the at-risk students and students with special needs attending her school.⁵ In sharp contrast, David Cohen, a teacher at Palo Alto High School, described the high levels of funding, including over \$3 million in private contributions, in this low poverty, high wealth district, along with the rich array of rigorous courses, effective teachers, academic supports, and extra and co-curricular activities made available to his students.⁶

It is for these reasons that we strongly support the school finance and efficiency recommendations set forth in the Commission's report. It is critical that, as the states push forward with demanding higher expectations of students, schools and districts, that push be matched by long overdue school finance reform driven by concretely linking school funding to the resources needed in local communities to reach those expectations, especially in our nation's high poverty, racially isolated schools and districts. While we urge states to take up this challenge on their own, we know from the historical record since *Brown* that significant federal intervention and oversight is vitally necessary to achieve the fair and equitable school funding required to deliver meaningful educational opportunities to all students.

Implementation of the Commission's recommendations is long overdue. We must as a nation, and in our states, launch a renewed effort to eliminate the stubborn and persistent resource disparities and inadequacies that drag down American public schools. Now is the time to take the bold and courageous action to make certain that all of our students have access to the meaningful educational opportunities that they – and the nation – must secure. In articulating

⁵ Remarks by Martha Infante, Equity and Excellence Commission, San Jose, April 21, 2011.

⁶ Comments by David B. Cohen, Equity and Excellence Commission, San Jose, April 21, 2011.

this vision for its own state, a landmark court ruling on education equity articulated the vision that now must drive this national call to action:

"Our constitution requires that public school children be given the opportunity for a thorough and efficient education. That constitutional vision irrefutably presumes that every child is potentially capable of attaining his or her own place as a contributing member of society with the ability to compete effectively with other citizens and to succeed in the economy. The wisdom giving rise to that vision is that both the child and society benefit immeasurably when that potential is realized."⁷

⁷ Abbott v. Burke IV, 1997.

Funding Effective School Reform: The Case of Massachusetts

By Linda Darling-Hammond, Sandra Dungee Glenn,
Marc Morial, Randi Weingarten and Dennis Van Roekel

For the last decade, since about 2002, Massachusetts has led the states in student achievement on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, after strong improvements that occurred over the course of the previous decade. The story of this meteoric rise began in 1992 with a court decision in *Hancock v. Driscoll* requiring an overhaul of school funding in the state. The school finance formula adopted in 1993 as part of Massachusetts' Education Reform Act stimulated substantially greater investments in needier schools through a weighted student formula which aimed to equalize funding and local effort simultaneously and added funding increments based on the proportions of low-income students and English language learners in a district.

This progressive approach helped boost educational investments and achievement as the state undertook a comprehensive reform featuring new standards and assessments demanding more intellectually ambitious teaching and learning. In addition to much greater and more equitable funding to schools, the initiatives included statewide standards for students, educators, schools and districts; new curriculum frameworks to guide instruction and state assessments; expanded learning time in core content areas; investments in technology; stronger licensing requirements for teachers; and more access to high-quality learning opportunities for teachers and school leaders. In 1994, the state adopted a state plan for professional development, the first in Massachusetts' history, which led to the establishment of intensive summer institutes in content areas like math and science, dedicated funding to districts to support professional development for every teacher, requirements for recertification based on continuing education, and a new set of standards and expectations for local evaluation. The *Attracting Excellence to Teaching* program was created to subsidize preparation for qualified entrants into teaching.

In addition, the level of state funding for local early childhood programs increased by 500 percent in the first four years of the reform, and by more in the years thereafter. A Commission on Early Childhood Education was launched to create a plan for an early education and care system for the state. Demonstration sites were established for model preschool programs, and hundreds of Community Partnerships for Children grants were awarded to expand access to early education for children in need.

By the year 2000, Massachusetts had underwritten these reforms with more than \$2 billion new state dollars to its public schools, greatly expanding the state share of funding and enhancing equity. University of Chicago economist Jonathan Guryan (2001) examined the effects of these investments and found that increased educational funding for historically low-spending districts led to improved student achievement in all subject areas, especially for traditionally low-scoring students. By the year 2002, the state had dramatically improved overall achievement and sharply reduced its achievement gap. Massachusetts demonstrates how investments, wisely

spent and in concert with a systemic approach to reform, can make a difference in educational outcomes.

Lessons Learned from IDEA

By Jacquelyn J. Thompson

Since the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) over 35 years ago, we have learned a few lessons that should inform future policy-making in education. The IDEA has allowed us to experience the positive power of educational entitlement and progress toward equity for an underserved group of learners. The IDEA has provided a demonstration of partnership between federal and state enforcement of education policy, and all of its challenges. The development and governance of state systems of supervision for special education, and subsequent delivery of services at the local level, have provided myriad lessons in variations of finance, oversight, adherence to the intent of the law, as well as variations in quality of services provided.

Specific to considerations of equity and excellence in education, the lessons learned from the IDEA include, but are not limited to, the following.

- Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirements provides a floor for State and Local fiscal obligations to the education of a vulnerable group of learners. Without this floor or minimum requirement of state and local effort, *there is evidence/it is likely* that the entitlement would be in sentiment only. In recent times, several states have requested a waiver from the MOE requirement. In the few cases where it was granted, States found that their federal share of the IDEA funds would be reduced proportionately – this provides equity in the provision of funds to all states.
- Balanced/weighted funding formula provides an approach to equity. The IDEA directs funding to states using a formula based on multiple indices: total population, a poverty index, and a fixed date count of children with disabilities. States then distribute a federally defined “flow-through” amount to districts (using the said formula). States also have some discretion in prioritizing the use of a smaller amount of “administrative set-aside” funds. These funds can be targeted to both compliance and results needs, such as: monitoring, data collection, alternate assessment, professional development, technical assistance, and other areas outlined in regulation. Thus, while the total amount of federal funds awarded to states only provides between 12-17% of the total added costs of special education, the use of funds are supportive of the requirements of the statute. The weighted or balanced federal formula does not create an incentive to inappropriately increase the number of eligible children, and it considers the impact of poverty and total population – an attempt at equity.

- Shared enforcement of requirements promotes accountability. Since the 2004 re-authorization of the IDEA, state accountability for compliance with statutory requirements has become the driving focus of the work of state education agencies. Annual Performance Reports (APRs) requiring detailed data on 20 “results” and “compliance” indicators now drive accountability efforts. State APRs generate federal “Determinations” or status of each state (against these 20 indicators) on an annual basis. A range of statutory enforcement strategies can be leveraged by the US Department of Education, based on these Determinations. These range from “Meets Requirements” or “Needs Assistance” to more extreme levers such as encounters with the US Department of Justice (for egregious non-compliance). States, in turn, have established similar accountability processes for local educational agencies, creating a consistent approach to meeting the requirements of IDEA across the country.
- State discretion in implementation generates wide variance in models of educational service delivery and expenditures. For example, eligibility is determined through a prescriptive procedure of multi-disciplinary evaluations, assessment and agreement by an individual education program team (IEPT) determining eligibility status. Procedural requirements are found in federal statutory and regulatory requirements. However, state regulations that are promulgated to implement the federal requirements vary as to the finite boundaries of various categorical eligibility determinations. The incidence of special education eligibility varies across states, and within states the incidence can be widely variable across districts. The national average for special education eligibility is slightly over 13% of a school district’s total student population (National Center for Education Statistics). Individual state incidence (eligibility) ranges from less than 8% to over 20% (The Pew Center on the States, 2012). At the local level, the range is similar, and can vary widely even across districts within a single state. Needless to say, such variance also creates wide ranges of variance in expenditures.

While there are many more lessons learned from the IDEA, these four provide considerations relative to policy development that can impact equity.

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One Vision, Seven Strategies

By Karen Hawley Miles

With Karen Baroody

Behind *One Vision, Seven Strategies*

This publication summarizes the vision and urgency for transforming education systems now. The vision has evolved from Education Resource Strategies (ERS) work with urban districts around the country. ERS is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping urban school systems organize talent, time and money to create great schools at scale. *One Vision, Seven Strategies* is a call to action, launching our new campaign, *School System 20/20*.

School Systems 20/20 presents our seven strategies for transforming education systems so that all students succeed. The campaign provides a vision and tools to help get there. Join our efforts to transform systems so every school can be a great school.

Commissioner Karen Hawley Miles is founder and Executive Director of ERS.

Karen Baroody is Managing Director of ERS.

One Vision, Seven Strategies: School Systems for the Information Age

Karen Hawley Miles and Karen Baroody

The “American Dream” is under duress as the economy slows, incomes stagnate and upward mobility is more limited than at any time in recent history. Despite a steady increase in per-pupil spending on public schooling over the last decades, not enough students graduate with proficiency in reading and math. And, despite some progress over the past decade, students living in poverty, and who are African American or Hispanic still lag far behind white students with more means.¹

Yet not all schools are failing. There are many exemplary schools including urban schools that are succeeding despite high poverty rates, and growing numbers of district leaders taking courageous steps toward real and lasting improvement. To achieve our ambitious performance goals for all students, school-level change alone is not the answer. We need to raise our sights and reorganize the entire educational structure in which our schools function.

New Structure for New Goals

Unlike most industries where resource use and organization have changed dramatically over the past few decades, the fundamental school structures and patterns of spending in education have remained largely unchanged. Yet they were established to deliver on completely different goals than those we are trying to achieve today (see figure).

The organizational practices and structures that grew out of these historical objectives largely dictate how schools look today:

- Teachers in isolated classrooms, paid based on number of years and courses taken, with few options to leverage and grow expertise without leaving the classroom.
- Age-graded, subject-specific classes that vary little in size by subject, grade or student need.
- School days organized into short rigid time blocks for 6.5 hours a day, 180 days a year.
- Students who fall behind get pulled out of mainstream classes for extra help.

THEN	NOW
Provide access to subject matter	Ensure student learning
Prepare and sort students for range of jobs requiring different levels of knowledge and expertise	Ensure ALL students are prepared for college and career
Prepare students for predictable jobs	Build skills to participate in information age and engage in life-long learning for rapidly changing world

These legacy structures are reinforced by local and state funding systems, staffing practices, union contracts, and even state laws stipulating everything from class size to teacher salary. This inhibits movement toward new ways of organizing education to align with today's goals and realities.

What are those realities? Research shows that students begin at different points and learn at different rates. It also shows that high-performing schools rely on teams of teachers with the combined expertise to use data to continually improve their practice and to adjust their lessons and student grouping to meet individual needs. Just as you can't fit a square peg into a round hole, we won't achieve our vision of proficiency for all students in a system that was built to deliver *access* for all, but *mastery* for only some.

So how do we bridge the gap between access and mastery? There is no shortage of opinions on this subject. "Eliminate teacher tenure." "Pay teachers for performance." "Extend the school year and increase instructional time." "Spend more on [fill in the blank] programs." The list goes on and on.

But while each idea for "fixing" education may have merit, they all share a critical flaw: They take a one-dimensional view of the problem. They focus on the need for change in a specific area, ignoring the larger picture of how all the pieces work together to achieve overarching objectives.

Three E's of educational progress

Tinkering won't do. To achieve the aggressive goals we've set for public education, we need reorganize our fundamental educational structures. We need to adopt an integrated "systems level" approach to accomplish the three E's of American education:

- *Excellence for all*

We need an approach that acknowledges that different students succeed in different ways. While some students thrive in a school with a traditional schedule, others may need an extended day or access to social and health services. For students who fail to thrive in one situation, we need the flexibility to provide effective alternative settings free from the stigma of “pull outs.” We need structures that allow for sharing of innovative practices. We need the ability to assign talented staff to schools with the greatest needs, while providing all employees with growth opportunities. Most importantly, we need to promote a collective vision of excellence that drives support from the entire community—a community that shares the goal of creating an educated citizenry with 21st century skills.

- *Equity*

We need structures designed to deliver educational quality across the board. It is not enough to have a few successful schools scattered through a city or ringing an urban area. There are natural geographic boundaries in communities, but those boundaries should not be barriers to high-quality schools and programs. A commitment to educate all children well is both philosophical and pragmatic. Americans believe in and support the opportunity for everyone to be educated—and to expect an equitable return on their investment.

- *Efficiency*

We need to structure educational organizations to make the most of taxpayer investments. This means finding innovative ways to organize, talent, time and technology and to achieve greater economies of scale in operations and school support.

One vision, seven integrated strategiesⁱⁱ

In our work with urban districts, we have developed a multi-dimensional vision for restructuring public education for today’s goals and realities. This vision is built around seven transformational strategies for organizing resources—people, time, and money—to support the creation of high-performing schools at scale.

These strategies should not be viewed as “best practices” or “success factors” that can be implemented independent of each other. Instead, they should be seen as an integrated set of seven strategies for transforming education to meet our new goals for learning.

1. Define information-age standards for learning and align curriculum, and instruction and assessment.

Too many states and districts have goals for learning that do not include the content knowledge, critical thinking skills, creativity and collaboration that 21st century jobs will require. The Common Core Standards, now adopted by 45 states and 3 territories, are an important first step. Such standards provide the foundation for organizing instructional materials and strategies to accomplish them. Common sets of standards enable teachers within schools, schools within districts, and districts across states to share best practices and set benchmarks. Effective assessments, both standardized and teacher developed are critical for teachers and school leaders to continuously adjust instruction and to ensure that students learn the material. It makes no sense for individual schools to be recreating scope

and sequence and developing formative assessment tools completely on their own without leveraging these efforts across systems and states.

2. **Restructure the teaching job.**

Teaching effectiveness is the single most important in-school predictor of student achievement. Having a high performing teacher for four years in a row can close the achievement gapⁱⁱⁱ. And, the evidence is mounting that teachers who team with other effective teachers get better results than those who don't or can't.^{iv} This virtuous cycle begins with attracting high potential teachers to consider the teaching profession. Then, school systems need to attract top candidates, develop them throughout their careers, and reward them for success. To do this, they must restructure the teaching job to emphasize teacher teams, differentiated roles, and more flexible job definitions and schedules. A more effective system will include new ways to attract and hire top talent, support and develop individuals throughout their careers, retain effective teachers and evaluate effectiveness. Districts must identify struggling teachers and provide sustained support to help those with potential to become better educators—and remove those who don't. They need ways to reward teachers who excel in the classroom and/or who take on challenging assignments or leadership responsibilities. And they need to provide the best teachers with opportunities for advancement that do not require them to leave the classroom full-time and forever.

3. **Match teachers and time to students through strategic school designs.**

Information age teaching jobs will require new ways of organizing schools that enable teacher collaboration and leverage teaching expertise cost-effectively. This means each school must have a coherent instructional model, and then organize to support this vision in four important ways:^v

- **Teaching effectiveness:** Build teaching teams that maximize combined expertise and have time for collaboration and access to expert support.
- **Instructional time:** Vary time based on subject and student priorities in order to ensure student learning and engagement.
- **Individual attention:** Create targeted individual attention for students by providing and continuously adapting schedules, groupings and delivery models in response to student needs and create personal relationships between students and teachers.
- **Special populations:** Implement cost-effective strategies for students with special learning needs that integrate with general education and emphasize ongoing assessment and response.

Though schools will find many ways to organize against the principles above, the traditional concept of “one teacher/one class/one course” is no longer valid. Students spend time with different teachers or other adults with specific skills, grouped with different students, for varying lengths of time, studying different subjects or skills, depending on what their learning needs are on that day, or during that week or month. Some students may master what is now considered a year-long “course” (or a year's worth of material) in four or five months; others may need longer than a year. They may spend part of the day in online learning environments with 50 other students, and part of the day in small instructional groups of four to six. Students who struggle receive additional support and attention right away, and as much as possible in the general education environment.

There is no reason to invent these new ways of organizing, one by one experiencing the inevitable failures that come with trial and error. School systems have an important role to play to help accelerate or “scale” high-potential models developing innovative templates for staffing, scheduling, and professional development to serve different numbers and combinations of students with specialized learning needs (such as special education or English Language Learners) that schools can use as a starting point. New school designs will also require removing barriers to flexible scheduling and grouping of teachers and students.

In addition to supporting new models for school organization, most school systems need to take a critical look at their programs and portfolios of schools and how these align with student needs. Being strategic about the array of schools and programs can significantly reduce costs while enhancing program effectiveness.

4. Build and reward school and district leader capacity.

Moving to a model that fosters each principal’s capacity to initiate, lead, and maintain instructional improvements requires that districts set a context for school leader success. They must clearly define what effective leaders need to know and be able to do. These standards of excellence will help them to hire the right leaders and place them in situations where they can be successful. They will also allow districts to measure the performance of school leaders and to hold them accountable, while providing the right career support. Being deliberate about consistent, district-wide leadership development will also ensure a ready pool of high-potential leaders to draw on as opportunities arise.

5. Revise funding systems.

To ensure that all schools reach high standards, school systems must ensure that the level and type of resources match the needs of students. Despite the best intentions, current resource allocation practices result in wide funding variances across schools, even adjusting for differences in student needs, and do not do a good job of matching resources—not just funding level, but also staff skills and capacity, and student and teacher time—to student needs and schools’ instructional models. Most systems will need to adjust the way they allocate resources to schools, giving the most support to schools and students with greatest need, and give resources to schools in ways that best support their school designs. Many systems may also need to adjust their school portfolio to ensure that the mix of school grade levels, sizes and programs are appropriate to meet student needs cost-effectively.

6. Redesign central system offices.

System operations must be reorganized to move from industrial-age control models designed to ensure compliance to systems that use data and technology to empower local school leaders and teachers, customize service to schools, and improve efficiency. Centralized systems should be used to assess and provide what each school needs. New systems of accountability should empower and expand upon the success of high-performing schools while providing support to underperforming schools *before* they fail students. School districts need an explicit strategy for turning around very low-performing schools that is integrated with the overall reform plan, and operations must be redesigned and streamlined to reflect this new service and support function.

7. Leverage partnerships with families, communities, and outside experts.

Shifting from traditional models in which needy students are often separated from the general education classroom to more integrated and cost-effective models of serving students will require districts to partner in new ways with families, communities, and outside expert providers. School systems should partner with other social service providers and combine resources to ensure integrated delivery and a “whole child” focus. In addition, most communities have myriad other resources—community colleges, local business and artists, youth service organizations—that would benefit from strong schools and may be able to cost-effectively augment or expand support in relevant areas. In some instances, community partnerships can even provide creative and cost-effective instruction to supplement instruction provided by classroom teachers. Finally, numerous suppliers are organizing to provide online and other instructional offerings that expand curricular offerings and provide additional options for matching students with instructors at lower cost and, sometimes, higher quality.

Making these changes will not be easy. Each is a significant undertaking, yet all are necessary to build the educational systems we need. Implementing them means dismantling structures, processes, policies, and regulations that have, in many cases, existed for decades. It means changing the way teachers, school and district leaders think about and do their jobs. It means changing the way we all think of a “class” or even a “school.” It will be messy, politically charged and emotionally difficult. But continued failure to provide our nation’s children with the education they need and deserve is not an option.

Current energy around real reform combined with extreme budget pressure is creating momentum toward tackling longstanding barriers to innovation and improvement. But attacking the problem school by school is not enough. And even boldest changes implemented in isolation will not achieve the change we need. We need to take a multi-dimensional approach and fundamentally reorganize education to meet our goals of excellence, equity and efficiency for all students. The time is now.

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Learn More

These publications and tools are available on ERStrategies.org.

ResourceCheck

Assess Your District Resource Choices

Description: Organized around ERS' *Seven Strategies for District Transformation*, this quick, online self-assessment allows you to see how your district's decisions compare to best practices.

Link: http://www.erstools.org/assessments/resource_check

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Discover the power of trade-offs to improve student achievement

Description: *School Budget Hold'em* is an interactive game to explore trade-offs school administrators can make to protect investments in student performance in challenging budget times.

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Restructuring Resources for High-Performing Schools

A Primer for State Policymakers

Description: With millions of dollars inadvertently trapped by state policies each year, and with continued budget shortfalls and pressing student achievement obligations, this paper identifies four ways policymakers can make a difference.

Link: http://erstrategies.org/resources/details/restructuring_resources

Possible Pull Quotes

- "To achieve our ambitious performance goals for all students, school-level change alone is not the answer."
- " Just as you can't fit a square peg into a round hole, we won't achieve our vision of proficiency for all students in a system that was built to deliver *access* for all, but *mastery* for only some."
- "Having a high performing teacher for four years in a row can close the achievement gapⁱⁱⁱ."
- "New school designs will also require removing barriers to flexible scheduling and grouping of teachers and students."
- "To ensure that all schools reach high standards, school systems must ensure that the level and type of resources match the needs of students."

Recommendation Regarding English Language Learners

By Dr. José M. Torres

with support from Dual Language Education of New Mexico's Edward Tabet-Cubero, David Rogers, and Attorney, Jim Lyons

As the only Commissioner on the Federal Commission on Equity and Excellence in Education who is a sitting superintendent, I offer the following perspective on what I see as necessary to ensure equity and excellence for English Language Learners (ELL). From my perspective, equity and excellence are two sides of one coin; one cannot exist without the other. One cannot have equity without excellence. One cannot have excellence without equity. And when it comes to the education of language minority students, it seems to me to be the highest injustice, the largest inequitable practice that we would consider that a student would need to lose a language to learn a language. In my School District, a school district of 41,000 students, the second largest in Illinois, Elgin School District U-46, we have begun to transform all of our language instruction programs to dual language because we believe and sufficient research supports that well-implemented dual language programs will close the gap for English Language Learners while providing enrichment opportunities to English only students to learn a second (or third) language.

More than one in five students in US schools possess a primary home language other than English, and approximately half of those students are considered limited English proficient or English language learners.¹ The US Department of Education predicts that one in 4 students will be identified as an ELL by 2025.² English language learners are and will continue to be the fastest growing sub-group of students in US schools, and their academic success is paramount to the country's future economic viability. The large gap in achievement between ELLs and their native English-speaking peers demonstrates that ELLs have not been provided equal opportunity to learn and demonstrate their knowledge on valid and reliable assessments. This is due to a system that has perpetuated low expectations for these students, relegated them to classrooms with teachers ill-prepared to meet their instructional needs, and forced them to take invalid standardized assessments in English that are more a test of their English proficiency than their actual content knowledge and skills.

Jim Lyons states that the United States' one-language educational standard is an irrational impediment to economic development, innovation, and growth. It delimits the scale of trade—both in goods and ideas—and reduces the Nation's productive potential. The one-language standard minimizes the likelihood that U.S. students will be able to meet the challenges and to seize the opportunities ahead. English proficiency (only) is too low a bar for students who must compete and collaborate in a complex, dynamic, culturally and linguistically diverse global environment.

Some have characterized students who possess a language other than English as an academic and financial drain on our public schools. However, these students possess the

potential to be an asset to our school system as well as our economy. After all in our schizophrenic language policies, we exterminate students' native language in early childhood and elementary education and later, require a "foreign" language for college admission. Often times, the very students who lost their language in their elementary years are required to take a language course to graduate from high school and enter college. These students bring the resource of diverse languages to the classroom and workplace that is needed for the country to compete in a 21st century global economy. Rather than foster their academic and linguistic growth in their native languages and simultaneously capitalize on those languages by offering English proficient students the opportunity to learn other languages from their peers, US public schools systematically eradicate languages other than English at the elementary level then turn around and require foreign language study at the secondary level. As a candidate in the 2008 presidential election, then Senator Obama observed, *Understand that my starting principle is everybody should be bilingual or everybody should be trilingual. "...We as a society do a really bad job teaching foreign languages, and it is costing us when it comes to being competitive in a global marketplace."*³

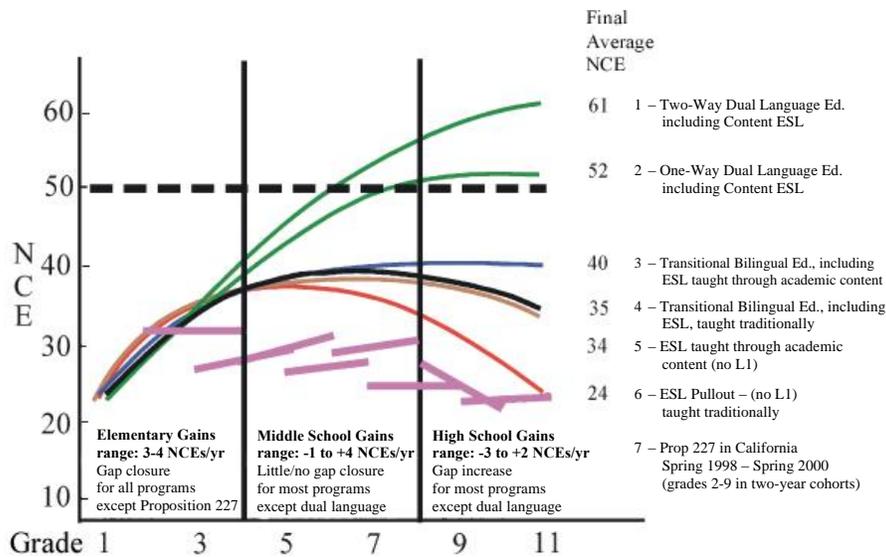
Students are most apt to acquire native-like proficiency in multiple languages when they begin learning them at an early age. Two-way dual language programs offer native English speaking students and native speakers of other languages to learn language from and alongside one another in fully integrated classrooms. And over thirty years of research and five independent meta-analysis have proven that dual language programs are the *only* programs that result in a complete closing of the achievement gap between ELLs and their native English speaking peers.⁴ This closing of the gap over time is demonstrated in figure 1 below, which represents over 6,000,000 student records on English reading tests.⁵

If the evidence is so clear that dual language programs not only close the achievement gap for English language learners, but also offer English-speaking students the best opportunity to become fully proficient in a second language, then why is it that there are not more programs available across the country? As described by the US Department of Education and the White House in their report, "Winning the Future: Improving Education for the Latino Community," there are examples around the country such as the Saint Paul Public School District that have begun to close the gap for English learners through the implementation of dual language, but such models are few and far between. Our programs in School District U-46 are another example of this model. US schools need a long-term vision for success for English learners and language study, as well as the political will to utilize students' native languages for content instruction as they acquire English proficiency through the most effective ELL program model, which is dual language. Only then will we reach our aim of equity and excellence in education.

**English Learners’ Long-Term K-12 Achievement
in Normal Curve Equivalent (NCEs)
on Standardized Tests in English Reading
Compared across Seven Program Models**

(Results aggregated from longitudinal studies of well -implemented, mature programs in five school districts and in California (1998 -2000))

- Program 1: Two-way Dual Language Education (DLE), including Content ESL
- Program 2: One-way DLE, including ESL taught through academic content
- Program 3: Transitional BE, including ESL taught through academic content
- Program 4: Transitional BE, including ESL, both taught traditionally
- Program 5: ESL taught through academic content using current approaches with no L1 use
- Program 6: ESL pullout - taught by pullout from mainstream classroom with no L1 use
- Program 7: Proposition 227 in California (successive 2-year quasi-longitudinal cohorts)



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Footnotes/Citations:

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Reforming Exclusionary School Discipline Policies as a Strategy for Equity & Excellence

By Ben Jealous and Marc H. Morial

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF)

National Urban League

UNCF

Introduction

More than ever, our national prosperity and the foundation of our democracy depend on our ability to fully educate all of our children. But, each year millions of our children are pushed out of school through exclusionary discipline practices such as suspension, expulsion, and referral to law enforcement for offenses that can and should be handled in school. This trend, often referred to as the “School-to-Prison Pipeline,” disproportionately affects African-American¹ children and those with special needs by pushing them out of school, thereby denying far too many students the opportunity to realize their potential.

The disproportionate use of exclusionary discipline is, in part, both a response to and a consequence of schools’ lack of resources to meet student needs. We see this at the classroom level in the form of teachers who lack the updated training and access to specialized colleagues that would allow them to individualize instruction. And those resource inequities coalesce at the school level when administrators lack the funding for specially trained staff to diagnose learning disabilities, support students learning English, coach teachers in differentiating instruction, or connect troubled families with community-based resources. Insufficient and inadequate resources are further compounded by the pressures placed on schools and educators to produce high test scores. This toxic mix of elements debilitates schools and renders many of them unable to serve an increasingly diverse mix of students well. One unacceptable response is to push out students that schools lack the resources to serve through suspension, expulsion or referrals to the criminal and juvenile justice systems.

The individual cases of exclusionary discipline vividly illustrate this issue and its implications.

Tragically, children like six-year-old Salecia Johnson, who was handcuffed and taken to the police station for throwing a temper tantrum at her elementary school in Milledgeville, Georgia, are being denied a meaningful chance to learn.² With disciplinary rates now more than double what

¹ Though this document focuses on exclusionary discipline and African-American students, reflecting the constituency of the organizations which assembled it, its conclusions and recommendations apply to the wide range of students currently being pushed out of school through punitive policies and practices, to the detriment of their personal achievement and our nation’s collective advancement. Moreover, reforms which expand opportunity for students most disproportionately impacted by inequitable discipline policies will benefit all students by improving their schools’ climate and prospects for learning.

² Jeff Martin and Jeri Clausing, *Police Handcuff Georgia Kindergartner for Tantrum*. ASSOC. PRESS (April 19, 2012).

they were in the 1970s, this type of treatment is all too common, especially for African Americans, and must be reckoned with if we truly wish to graduate all children.

Disproportionate use of exclusionary discipline

The last two decades have seen a tremendous spike in the use of exclusionary discipline in schools. Over 3,000,000 students were suspended in 2009-2010, the most recent year for which national data are available.³ These discipline rates are compounded by severe racial disparities, especially for African-American students. According to the U.S. Department of Education, “across all districts, African-American students are over 3½ times more likely to be suspended or expelled than their white peers.”⁴ A recent study of school discipline in Texas by the Council of State Governments found race to be a *predictive factor* for disciplinary action: African-American students were 31% more likely to be disciplined for discretionary offenses in schools compared to their white or Latino counterparts, and over 80% of African-American male students had been suspended or expelled at least once during middle or high school.⁵ And in New York City, data reported through the Student Safety Act reveals that in 2011, more than 95% of the students arrested in the city’s schools were African-American or Latino.⁶

Sadly, African-American students not only receive the lion’s share of exclusionary discipline in schools, they also receive harsher treatment. While white students are disproportionately likely to be disciplined for “objective” offenses, such as alcohol possession, students of color are disproportionately likely to be disciplined for “subjective” offenses like disorderly conduct and disrupting public school.⁷ Even when students of different races/ethnicities are penalized for the same offenses, African-American students receive harsher punishments for engaging in the same behavior as students from other backgrounds.⁸

³ DANIEL J. LOSEN & JONATHAN GILLESPIE, OPPORTUNITIES SUSPENDED: THE DISPARATE IMPACT OF DISCIPLINARY EXCLUSION FROM SCHOOL 6 (The Center for Civil Rights Remedies at The Civil Rights Project, 2012).

⁴ Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, Civil Rights Data Collection Summary 2 (2012). <http://ocrdata.ed.gov/Downloads/CMOCRTheTransformedCRDCFFINAL3-15-12Accessible-1.pdf>. Despite comprising only 18% of students in the Civil Rights Data Collection sample, African-American students were 35% of students suspended once, 46% of those suspended more than once, and 39% of students expelled. Furthermore, the CRDC indicates that “Over 70% of students involved in school-related arrests or referred to law enforcement are Hispanic or African-American.” Id.

⁵ TONY FABELO et al., BREAKING SCHOOLS’ RULES: A STATEWIDE STUDY OF HOW SCHOOL DISCIPLINE RELATES TO STUDENTS’ SUCCESS AND JUVENILE JUSTICE INVOLVEMENT, x, 40-46, (2011). http://knowledgecenter.csg.org/drupal/system/files/Breaking_School_Rules.pdf.

⁶ NEW YORK CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION, SSA REPORTING ON ARRESTS AND SUMMONES, (2012). <http://www.nyclu.org/files/releases/School%20Safety%20Fact%20Sheet%202011-2012.pdf>.

⁷ M. Karega Rausch and Russell Skiba, *Unplanned Outcomes: Suspensions and Expulsions in Indiana* Education Vol .2 Policy Briefs 2 (Summer 2004). http://ceep.indiana.edu/projects/PDF/PB_V2N2_UnplannedOutcomes.pdf

⁸ RUSSELL SKIBA et al., RACE IS NOT NEUTRAL: A NATIONAL INVESTIGATION OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN AND LATINO DISPROPORTIONALITY IN SCHOOL DISCIPLINE, 40 *School Psychology Rev.* 85, 102 (2011). <http://www.nasponline.org/publications/spr/40-1/spr401Skiba.pdf>.

While school safety is critical to ensuring that students are able to learn, excessive exclusionary discipline does not make schools safer; instead, it threatens both student safety and academic performance. The American Psychological Association has found no evidence that the use of suspension, expulsion, or zero-tolerance policies has resulted in improvements in student behavior or increases in school safety.⁹ Indeed, such practices have *negative* effects on student academic performance: students who are suspended and/or expelled, especially those who are repeatedly disciplined, are far more likely to be held back a grade, drop out of school, or become involved in the juvenile or criminal justice system than their peers.¹⁰ Students who are arrested are twice as likely to drop out as their peers.¹¹ Excessive use of exclusionary discipline harms not only the individual student being disciplined, but the whole school: schools with high suspension rates score lower on state accountability tests than other schools, even when adjusting for demographic differences.¹² Our national over-reliance on exclusionary discipline is severely hampering students' ability to complete school on time, if at all. Put simply, when a student is not in school, she cannot learn, and we are pushing far too many children out of school.

The push-out phenomenon has a palpable effect on our nation. Aside from the moral injustice of denying children educational opportunity, there are also economic consequences. In 2011, approximately 1.2 million students did not graduate from high school; the estimated lost lifetime earnings for that class of dropouts is \$154 billion.¹³ School-based arrests have placed such a drain on state funds that fiscally conservative organizations, such as the Texas Public Policy Foundation, have begun calling for reforms to rethink school-to-court referral practices.¹⁴ Clearly, pushing students out negatively affects America's bottom line.

⁹ HOWARD L. TARAS et al., COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL HEALTH, AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS – POLICY STATEMENT: ORGANIZATIONAL PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE AND DEFINE THE CHILD HEALTH CARE SYSTEM AND/OR IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN, <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprevention/download/pdf/1206.pdf>.

¹⁰ TONY FABELO et al., BREAKING SCHOOLS' RULES: A STATEWIDE STUDY OF HOW SCHOOL DISCIPLINE RELATES TO STUDENTS' SUCCESS AND JUVENILE JUSTICE INVOLVEMENT, xi-xii, (2011). http://knowledgecenter.csg.org/drupal/system/files/Breaking_School_Rules.pdf. See also, RUSSELL SKIBA ET AL, ARE ZERO TOLERANCE POLICIES EFFECTIVE IN THE SCHOOLS? A REPORT BY THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION TASK FORCE (2006); Centers for Disease Control, *Health Risk Behaviors among Adolescents Who Do and Do Not Attend School – United States, 1992*, 43 MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY WEEKLY REPORT, 129 (Mar. 4, 1994).

¹¹ Gary Sweeten, *Who Will Graduate? Disruption of High School Education by Arrest and Court Involvement* 23 JUST. Q. 462 (2006).

¹² SKIBA & PETERSON, THE DARK SIDE OF ZERO TOLERANCE: CAN PUNISHMENT LEAD TO SAFE SCHOOLS?, Phi Delta Kappan Jan. 1999, at 372-376. <http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/20439450?uid=3739584&uid=2129&uid=2&uid=70&uid=4&uid=3739256&sid=21100974521363>.

¹³ ALLIANCE FOR EXCELLENT EDUCATION, THE HIGH COST OF HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS: WHAT THE NATION PAYS FOR INADEQUATE HIGH SCHOOLS, (2011).

¹⁴ RIGHT ON CRIME, PRIORITY ISSUES: JUVENILE JUSTICE (2010), available at <http://www.rightoncrime.com/priority-issues/juvenile-justice/>.

National education policies may contribute to this trend. The current focus on standardized test scores in evaluating schools, teachers, principals, and students appears to have created unintended incentives for struggling schools to push out students whose performance on tests may threaten the school's standings.¹⁵ These schools are sanctioned for lower performance rather than receiving support in the areas they need it, reinforcing the idea that schools must improve test scores by any means.¹⁶

Remedying disproportionate use of exclusionary discipline

Our nation is based on the ideal of equal opportunity. Sadly, for many African-American students, this ideal is absent from their educational experience. If we are ever to truly provide equal educational opportunity for all of our children, we must address the alarming rates at which African-American students are pushed out of our nation's schools.

Thankfully, there are proven solutions to securing school safety that do not rely on exclusionary discipline. School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports ("SWPBS") is an evidence-based approach to improving school discipline being implemented in over 10,000 U.S. schools. Effective implementation of SWPBS has been shown to reduce disciplinary rates and improve student attendance, academic achievement, and perceptions of school safety.¹⁷ Implementation of Restorative Justice, another best practice in school discipline, resulted in a 40% drop in suspensions and a 60% drop in arrests in Denver Public Schools.¹⁸ Bi-partisan support from multiple stakeholders (including lawmakers, families, and educators) for efforts to improve school discipline have resulted in significant changes in the disciplinary policies and practices of school districts such as Baltimore¹⁹ and Los Angeles (L.A. Unified School District)²⁰, and at the state level in Colorado²¹; Florida²²; Louisiana²³; and Maryland²⁴ among others.

¹⁵ ADVANCEMENT PROJECT, TEST, PUNISH, AND PUSHOUT: HOW "ZERO-TOLERANCE" AND HIGH-STAKES TESTING FUNNEL YOUTH INTO THE "SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE" (2010); ADVANCEMENT PROJECT, EDUCATION LAW CENTER OF PENNSYLVANIA, FAIRTEST, FORUM FOR EDUCATION AND DEMOCRACY, JUVENILE LAW CENTER, AND THE NAACP LEGAL DEFENSE AND EDUCATIONAL FUND, INC., FEDERAL POLICY, ESEA REAUTHORIZATION, AND THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE (2010).

¹⁶ Manny Fernandez, *El Paso Schools Confront Scandal of Students Who 'Disappeared' at Test Time*. NEW YORK TIMES (Oct. 13, 2012).

¹⁷ ROBERT H. HORNER et al., A RANDOMIZED WAIT-LIST CONTROLLED EFFECTIVENESS TRIAL ASSESSING SCHOOL-WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS, 11 J. POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTIONS 133 (2009).

¹⁸ ADVANCEMENT PROJECT, TEST, PUNISH, AND PUSHOUT: HOW "ZERO-TOLERANCE" AND HIGH-STAKES TESTING FUNNEL YOUTH INTO THE "SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE" 36 (2010).

¹⁹ Liz Bowie, *Baltimore County School Board Eases Discipline Policy*. BALT. SUN (Jun. 12, 2012).

²⁰ DISCIPLINE FOUNDATION POLICY: SCHOOL-WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT, available at: http://notebook.lausd.net/pls/ptl/docs/PAGE/CA_LAUSD/LAUSDNET/OFFICES/SCHOOL_OPS/SCHOOL_OPERATIONS_DIVISION/DISCIPLINE_FOUNDATION_POLICY/DISCIPLINE_FOUNDATION_POLICY_BULLETINS/DISCIPLINE%20FOUNDATION%20POLICY.PDF.

²¹ Colo. H.B. 1345 (2012).

To address the high and racially disparate rates of exclusionary discipline, we provide below several specific recommendations. While some of these recommendations advocate change at the federal level, schools and communities can pave the path to improvement by adjusting their practices and responses to school conditions.

School, district, and state-level practice recommendations

1. Implement evidence-based approaches to improving school discipline.

Such initiatives, including SWPBS and Restorative Justice programs, provide demonstrably effective frameworks through which schools may reduce reliance on exclusionary discipline while also positively restructuring school culture by improving student behavior, academic achievement, and attendance.

2. Collect, analyze, and publically report disciplinary data.

To ensure that implementation of best practices like SWPBS and Restorative Justice are effective, all schools (including charter schools and alternative schools) must collect and analyze their discipline data and share it with all educational stakeholders, including parents and community members. This data should be disaggregated by race, gender, socioeconomic status, disability, and English proficiency, and be further disaggregated by gender to provide for more informed decision-making. Armed with this data, school staff and leadership can better identify patterns of exclusionary discipline. Schools can compare data to their student populations, with neighboring schools, or the district to identify high or racially disparate rates. Problematic rates of exclusionary discipline may then be addressed through targeted professional development, the deployment of additional school-based supports and services, and improved classroom management structures, practices, and policies.

3. Revise state law and school district policies to curb the use of suspension, expulsion, arrest, and referral to alternative school.

The great majority of school suspensions and school-based arrests are for minor misbehavior. For example, in California, almost half of all suspensions are for “willful defiance.”²⁵ And in Florida, almost 70% of the state’s 20,000 school-based arrests in 2007 were for misdemeanors—a revelation which prompted a significant change to state law.²⁶ States and school districts

²² Fla. S.B. 1540 (2009).

²³ La. Act 136 (2010).

²⁴ MD. REGS. CODE tit. 13A. (2012).

²⁵ Susan Frey, *Multiple Bills to Reform School Discipline Laws Get Hearing in Sacramento*. EDSOURCE (JUN. 27, 2012) available at <http://www.edsource.org/today/2012/multiple-bills-to-reform-school-discipline-laws-get-hearing-in-sacramento/15769>.

²⁶ FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE, *DELINQUENCY IN FLORIDA’S SCHOOLS: A FIVE YEAR STUDY (2004-05 THROUGH 2008-09)* 1 (2009).

should limit the use of suspension, expulsion, arrest, and alternative schools to incidents that pose risks to school and student safety. They should also require the use of more inclusive, non-exclusionary practices to address more mundane student misbehavior.

Federal policy recommendations

4. Require annual reporting of disciplinary indicators collected in the 2012 Civil Rights Data Collection (conducted by the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights).

The U.S. Department of Education’s most recent Civil rights Data Collections (“CRDCs”) have required states and school districts to report an expanded set of indicators, including more indicators related to climate and the use of exclusionary discipline. Again, this data should be disaggregated by race, gender, socioeconomic status, disability, and English proficiency, and be further disaggregated by gender. Although the most recent CRDC recorded data from a record number of schools and districts, the Department of Education should replace the sample method and instead convert the CRDC into a true universal data collection that includes data from all schools and districts, including all charter schools and alternative schools. Finally, this data should be publically reported in accessible formats, building upon the enhanced accessibility of the most recent CRDC data.

5. Include school discipline data as an indicator of school success and improvement in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Federal policy should require that unusually high and/or racially disparate rates of exclusionary discipline trigger mandatory technical assistance and support, rather than punitive sanctions, from federal, state, and local educational agencies.²⁷ Schools that exhibit excessive or disparate disciplinary data should be supported in adopting effective, positive approaches to improving school climate and limiting the use of exclusionary discipline.

6. Hold federal grant applicants and recipients to a high standard.

The U.S. Department of Education should closely examine discipline data for schools, states, and districts as part of assessing applications for competitive funding. And, similar to requirements in the Race to the Top-District grant competition, applicants with high or racially disparate discipline data should be compelled to create and implement discipline reform plans based on evidence-based practices in order to receive federal competitive grant funding. In addition, these requirements should be added to the existing set of “global priorities” for federal competitive education grant programs, such that they may be used as a lever in future grant programs to encourage discipline reform.

7. Provide additional resources to support disciplinary reforms.

²⁷ A model for this approach is evident in the process required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which is designed to eliminate such disparities. 20 U.S.C. § 1412(a)(22).

Many school districts need additional funds and technical assistance to replace exclusionary discipline methods with: (a) effective, evidence-based school-based discipline frameworks that will be implemented in a culturally relevant manner, such as SWPBS and Restorative Justice programs; and (b) increased reliance on school-based service providers such as mental health practitioners, school social workers, school psychologists, school counselors, and school nurses. Commitments to use these interventions may also be encouraged and rewarded through competitive preferences in federal funding competitions.

8. Promote inter-agency and multi-stakeholder cooperation and innovation.

On a larger scale, the federal government can also provide additional funds for comprehensive local or regional strategies involving multiple stakeholders – including, but not limited to, schools, the justice system, parents, and students – to reduce the use of exclusionary discipline and the number of students entering the juvenile and criminal justice systems from school.

9. Redirect students toward schools and away from justice system involvement.

Federal policy should require states to establish procedures for the prompt reenrollment of students in schools upon return from expulsion and juvenile justice placement, and for facilitating the transfer of credits earned during those placements. In too many school districts, students are often relegated to alternative education settings without being offered an opportunity to reintegrate into mainstream education. But federal funding can promote innovative practices aimed at ensuring the educational success of students reentering school from expulsion and juvenile justice placements.

10. Mitigate the perverse incentives of test-based accountability.

While standardized tests can serve an important diagnostic function, their misuse can also undermine pedagogy. Federal policy can help to deemphasize standardized tests, and the collateral consequences of misplaced reliance on scores, by developing and implementing school, teacher, and student assessment mechanisms that rely on multiple sources of diverse evidence of learning.

Conclusion

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, the the National Urban League and UNCF are all committed to dismantling the “School-to-Prison Pipeline” and promoting quality education for all students. Progress in our efforts to improve educational opportunity by curbing the high and racially disparate rates of exclusionary discipline will be illustrated by the following indicators:

- Annual rates of suspension, expulsion and referral to law enforcement – particularly those implemented under zero-tolerance policies – should decrease.
- Grade-level promotion rates and high school graduation rates should increase.

- Differentials should narrow between the discipline rates of African-American students and students of other racial and ethnic groups.
- Schools should see a redirection of resources away from punitive measures and toward inclusive, evidence-based practices such as Restorative Justice and School-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (“SWPBS”).

Equipping schools to address student needs constructively – rather than turning to the disproportionate application of exclusionary discipline policies – will pay dividends in both equity and excellence. The strategies for making school discipline policies more equitable are supported by research on school improvement. Their implementation has the potential to expand learning opportunities for substantial portions of the student population currently being underserved, and in turn, advance our collective march toward excellence.

Rural Students and Communities

By Doris Williams

Knowledge will forever govern ignorance, and a people who mean to be their own Governors must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives.

- James Madison

Nearly 10 million students attend public schools in rural places in the U.S., comprising almost 20 percent of all students enrolled in the nation’s public education system.¹ Public education policy has either ignored their existence or forced upon them the ill-fitting policies and programs designed primarily to address the challenges of their more urban and suburban counterparts. The urgent need to improve the outcomes of public education in America should never become a battle between rural and non-rural places. Yet, advocates for rural education are in a constant battle to have their voices heard above the clamor of urban-centric reform to bring attention to the inequities and the unique challenges and opportunities of rural schools, students, and communities. Ignoring or paying only passing attention to rural education comes at a heavy price – low academic achievement, concentrated and persistent poverty, deep and abiding economic and political oppression – all threats to the exercise of democracy and the guarantee of “domestic tranquility.” At the same time, rural education has the largely untapped potential to inform education and community reform in ways that will help ensure genuine access to a quality education for all children, an informed citizenry, a viable democracy and a thriving economy.

The Rural Imperative

One-third of public schools in the United States are in locales designated as rural by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). There is wide variation among states with rural schools ranging from 6.6% of public schools in Massachusetts to 78.6% in South Dakota. More than half of all rural schools are in 15 states – South Dakota, Montana, Vermont, North Dakota, Maine, Alaska, Nebraska, Wyoming, Arkansas, Oklahoma, West Virginia, Iowa, Mississippi, New Hampshire, and North Carolina. At the same time, more than half of all rural students in the United States attend schools in 11 states, including, in order of rural enrollment size, Texas, North Carolina, Georgia, Ohio, Florida, Tennessee, Virginia, New York, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Alabama. The four states with the largest rural enrollments—Texas, North Carolina, Georgia, and Ohio—serve one-fourth of all rural students in the United States.²

¹ Strange, M., et.al. (2011) Why Rural Matters 2011-2012: Statistical Indicators of the Condition of Rural Education in the 50 States. The Rural School and Community Trust; p. 1.

² Ibid.

In 22 states, half or more of all rural school districts are considered small, that is, they enroll fewer than the national median enrollment of 537 students. The largest rural school districts are concentrated in the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic, the result of repeated consolidations over the years.³

The numbers clearly indicate that America cannot meet its public education challenge without supporting and learning from its rural schools and communities. These schools and communities are not microcosms of urban and suburban places. They operate in unique contexts – cultural, economic, ecological and historical – and require responses designed especially to address their unique challenges and build upon the unique opportunities they present.

Rural Disparities

Multiple disparities impact rural student access to a quality public education—among them, the differential funding available to support public education. The Rural School and Community Trust found that, excluding funds for capital construction, debt service, and other long-term outlays, “most states provide a slightly disproportional amount of funding per pupil to rural districts.”⁴ The researchers attribute this finding to the fact that many state formulas take into account poverty levels, which tend to be higher in rural districts, and per pupil fixed costs, which are also higher for small districts. But, this finding also suggests that *adequacy* is just as important a goal as equity in the quest for quality education. Further, the generalization of this finding does not hold for all states. In Mississippi, for example, where 54.7% of students attended a rural school district, only 47.2% of state funding went to rural districts.

There are also wide disparities *within* the rural subset of public schools. Many state funding formulas leave capital expenditures, transportation, teacher pay supplements and, in some cases, benefits, for local governments to provide. Property taxes, local sales taxes, fines, and forfeitures provide the local portion of school funding. Obviously, low-income rural communities with low property values and low sales tax incomes are at a distinct disadvantage here.

Another Rural Trust study examined high school dropout rates and related factors in more than 600 rural high schools in 15 Southern and Southwestern states. These schools are in districts that are among the 800 poorest rural school districts in the United States. Seventy-seven percent of the “Rural 800” districts and 97% of Rural 800 students are in those 15 states. Almost 60% of students in these districts are children of

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

color. They are twice as likely to be English language learners as other rural students and 24 percent more likely than students in all other districts.⁵

The Rural Trust study revealed the magnitude of the disparities between rural and non-rural school districts, and between the poorest and the most affluent rural districts. For example,

- Title I eligibility rate in the Rural 800 districts in the 15 states more than doubled that of all other districts, including other rural districts.
- Rural schools in these districts operated with less state and local per pupil funding (\$7,731) compared to other rural districts (\$8,134) and non-rural districts (\$9,611).
- Only 6 in 10 students in these districts graduated high school, compared to 70% among other rural districts and 67% among non-rural districts.

While these districts are racially diverse with children of color comprising more than half of the student populations, nearly half (47%) of students in the lowest graduation-rate quintile are African American.⁶ In fact, rural African Americans and Latinos are twice as likely as non-Hispanic Whites to drop out of high school.⁷

The study identified 20 Rural 800 districts within the 15 target states with graduation rates and reading and math proficiency rates in the top 20%. These districts tended to be smaller than other Rural 800 districts. More importantly, they differed substantially in racial and ethnic composition from Rural 800 districts as a whole. Eighty-three percent of students in the high-performing, high-poverty districts were White; less than one percent of them were English language learners.

In nine states, more than half of all rural students live in poverty, based on their eligibility for free and reduced priced meals.⁸ New Mexico leads the nation with respect to the percent of rural students living in poverty (81%); however, eight other states reflect comparable conditions of poverty for their rural students: Louisiana (68%), Mississippi (64%), Arkansas (59%), Oklahoma (59%), South Carolina (57%), Kentucky (55%), West Virginia (53%) and Alabama (51%).⁹

Indeed, race and poverty intersect to increase the risk of inequity and academic underperformance in rural places. For example, 13 states have a concentration of

⁵ Johnson, J., et.al. (2010) *The Rural Dropout Problem: An Invisible Achievement Gap*. The Rural School and Community Trust; p. 3.

⁶ Ibid., p. 14.

⁷ Williams, D. & Mann, T. [Eds.] (2011) *Early Childhood Education in Rural Communities: Access and Quality Issues*. Fairfax, VA: UNCF/Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute.

⁸ Johnson, J. & Strange (2009), p.8.

⁹ Ibid.

students of color in their poorest rural communities. Nine of these 13 states are West of the Mississippi River, where rural Latino/a and Native American students and families are concentrated, with other states in the Southeast serving as the home to a concentration of African American students and families.¹⁰

Federal education policy and funding must be designed to 1) encourage states to make equitable investments in public education for all children, and 2) target federal assistance and funding to ensure the existence of a high quality educational baseline that gives every child the opportunity to become career and college ready and able to exercise the full freedoms and responsibilities of a democratic society.

Uniqueness of the Rural Challenge

Rural schools are similar in many ways to non-rural schools, but operate in contexts that pose challenges that require unique responses. First, rural schools and districts vary in size, from the one-room, one-school districts in the remote locales of Montana, to the more highly consolidated, larger schools and districts in the Deep South. Available resources vary even within the subset of places designated as rural – from “high-amenity” communities of choice serving predominately White students, to high- poverty communities disproportionately serving high needs students of color. This diversity of contexts indicates that there can be no canned approach to addressing issues of disparity in rural education.

One of the greatest challenges that rural school districts face is hiring and retaining A critical mass of highly effective teachers, an area that affects student outcomes and is directly related to funding. Salaries are lower; benefits, supports, and special services are more difficult to access; and smaller staffs mean multiple course preparations across multiple subjects, requiring multiple certifications for teachers.

There are other factors limiting the ability of rural places to attract and retain teachers. Teachers and school leaders are professionally and personally isolated as they are often the most highly educated people in the community. There are limited choices for housing, entertainment, and social networks. There are fewer jobs for spouses in local labor markets and fewer opportunities for teachers to supplement their incomes with summer employment. However, the technology is available to change these realities and it is doing so in many places. All rural communities must have access to that technology, including the broadband access that can help reduce isolation and support alternative economic opportunities.

Uniqueness of the Rural Opportunity

Rural schools and districts are often small. Many times, they are centers of community life, holders of the most valuable real estate, the largest employer and an assemblage of

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 14.

the most highly educated people accessible to the community. This combination of characteristics makes for exciting research potential and adaptation of educational models that speak to the uniqueness of rural places and the development of the whole child.

Open spaces and natural resources make excellent laboratories for place-based learning that connects STEM and other academic areas to the economic, social, and environmental concerns of the community. Such practice could provide models for leveraging limited resources to meet the pressing needs of rural communities while helping rural schools and communities improve together. Rural education can provide models for parent and community engagement and for the development of engaging, challenging, and relevant educational experiences for children of all abilities and backgrounds.

Righting the Wrongs in Rural Education: Recommendations

Research has confirmed that the Southeast (South Carolina, North Carolina, and Florida), the Mid-South Delta (Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana), the Southwest (Arizona and New Mexico) and Appalachia (Kentucky and Tennessee) are among the nation's highest priority rural education districts and communities.¹¹ Multiple indicators in each of these states, and others, clearly demonstrate the importance of rural-specific strategies to remedy past and present inequities and provide adequate resources to support educational equity and excellence in rural places.

To that end, federal policy and funding should:

1. Make equity a priority in Title I and other educational funding programs, ensuring that educational excellence is not the privilege of the elite but a right of citizenship in the United States of America. Reduce the impact of number weighting in the allocation formula while increasing the effect of concentrated poverty such that places with high concentrations of poverty are not funded at a lower per pupil level than places with higher numbers but lower concentrations. See <http://www.formulafairness.com> for more extensive discussion of inequities in Title I funding of high-poverty rural schools.
2. Promote equity over competition in public school funding. Many rural districts do not have the personnel, resources, or experience to compete with better resourced districts for federal funding. Competition under such conditions will either widen the gap between poor rural and other districts, or make poor rural districts the step children of urban-centric education reform organizations.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 18.

3. Fund research on rural education that allows rural places the opportunity to develop, refine, and scale up innovations that speak to their unique challenges and strengths. Establish and adequately fund an office of rural education research and innovation within the Department of Education.
4. Establish a National Rural Teacher Corps through targeted scholarships, housing assistance, and other incentives. Such an effort could be a hybrid of the former National Health Service Corps, the Ozarks Teacher Corps and the growing number of grow-your-own teacher development programs. It should encourage the development of rural education programs within teacher education programs and connect teacher preparation to rural schools to provide prospective rural teachers the benefits of learning to teach in a rural setting.
5. Incentivize and fund partnerships between and among educational, social service, and economic development entities to provide decent and affordable housing for teachers and critical services for children and families in high need, low-income schools and districts. Various state- and locally-sponsored housing and scholarship incentive programs for hard-to-staff schools and full-service community schools provide excellent models for these kinds of partnerships.
6. While acknowledging and preserving the rights and responsibilities of states, federal funding and strategies should speak boldly to the issues of race and poverty in places that have demonstrated over long periods of time a lack of will to provide a quality education for all children. The “achievement gap” should be attacked for what it is – the result of inequitable treatment and opportunity across great divides.
7. Invest in rural education leadership development that includes school- and district-based leaders as well as policy makers at the local level.

If America is to remain a free democracy, we must arm all of our citizens with “the power knowledge gives.” That means we must educate all children at high levels, rural children included.

Resources:

Johnson, J., et.al. (2010) *The Rural Dropout Problem: An Invisible Achievement Gap*. Washington, D.C.: The Rural School and Community Trust

Strange, M., et.al. (2011) *Why Rural Matters 2011-2012: Statistical Indicators of the Condition of Rural Education in the 50 States*. Washington, DC: The Rural School and Community Trust

Williams, D. & Mann, T. [Eds.] (2011) *Early Childhood Education in Rural Communities: Access and Quality Issues*. Fairfax, VA: UNCF/Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute

School-Based Health Clinics

By Michael A. Rebell

The grant program that the commission has recommended in our main report should support programs involving the appointment of full time health coordinators in schools with large populations of low income students and the establishment of health clinics in schools in areas that lack easy access to hospitals or community health clinics. Health coordinators can establish programs with near-by health facilities to ensure that students receive regular examinations and treatments, and they can work with parents, teachers, social workers and other school personnel to promote continuing follow-up activities. For schools that are not near accessible community health facilities, the most effective way to promote health and the development of positive health habits and behaviors is to create a health clinic on or near school premises. The presence of school-based health clinics has been shown to result in decreases in hospitalization for children with chronic or pre-existing conditions, and in significant reductions in absenteeism due to illness.

In theory, school based health clinics can be established on a large scale basis in low income neighborhoods with virtually no increase in federal or state financial support since virtually all at-risk students are covered by Medicaid and the state Children's Health Insurance Program; in addition, most other students will be covered by private insurance as the Affordable Health Care Act becomes fully implemented. In practice, however, lack of stable, guaranteed funding is the main reason why only a few such school-based health clinics have, in fact, been established in the past. Under current law, school-based health clinics cannot qualify as Medicaid eligible facilities and they can only receive Medicaid re-imburement through contractual arrangements with other community facilities, and in accordance with a myriad of state and federal regulatory requirements.¹

The federal government should establish a school wide health center initiative on a three year demonstration basis in six or more locations in different types of communities in different states. If the experience with this initiative is successful, the model should be widely disseminated throughout the country on a phase-in basis thereafter. The initiative would utilize existing Medicaid and State Children's Health Insurance Program funding sources and would not require the creation of a new funding program. It would channel existing Medicaid funding to school-based health centers, stabilize funding for such centers and allow them to provide services to all children in a Title I school.

¹ Alanna Beckman and Lois K. Backon , Report on SBHC Financial Sustainability (Family and Work Institute, 2012).

A school should be eligible for school wide funding for its school-based health center (SBHC) if at least 75% of its students come from families whose income is at or below 200% of the federal poverty level. If a school is eligible, all students in the school will be entitled to receive health center services at no charge to them or their families.

A “school-based health center” for these purposes would be an entity as defined in 42 U.S.C.A. § 1397jj(c)(9) and that provides, at a minimum, comprehensive health services during school hours to children and adolescents in accordance with established standards, community practices, and state laws. The center would operate in co-operation with a local hospital, public health department or community health facility. It would cover the following types of services:

- a) An annual “early periodic screening, diagnostic and treatment health check ups and necessary follow-ups
- b) Treatment of minor, acute, and chronic medical conditions and referrals to, and follow up for, specialty care
- c) Mental health assessments, crisis intervention, counseling, treatment and referral to a continuum of services including emergency psychiatric care, community support programs, inpatient care, and outpatient programs
- d) Dental services
- e) Vision services (including eyeglasses prescriptions)
- f) Health education services

The school-based health center would receive an annual per capita fee for each child enrolled in the school. This fee would be based on the average Medicaid reimbursement rates in the state for the recommended average utilization of the covered services for the student population in the school, and a supplemental allotment for the costs of student enrollment. Responsibility for these payments would be shared by the federal and state governments in accordance with a formula based on the ratio of Medicaid eligible students (133% of the federal poverty rate) and State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) eligible students (200% of the federal poverty rate). The Medicaid sharing rate would apply to the proportion of Medicaid eligible students in the school and the SCHIP sharing rate would apply to the proportion of SCHIP eligible students in the school.

An “SBHC Access Card” should be provided to all students in the school, and students would be required to swipe the cards in order to utilize health center services. These cards will be linked

to a computerized data system that will a) validate their current Medicaid and/or SCHIP eligibility; b) inform Medicaid and SCHIP of each specific service being provided; and b) generate reimbursement from private insurance companies for students who are not Medicaid or SCHIP eligible.

School-based health centers would be required to work with the school to conduct a comprehensive assessment of student health needs, particularly those that are having the greatest impact on learning; identify and commit to specific goals and strategies that address those needs; create a comprehensive plan, including benchmarks for assessing success and numerical targets for student utilization of health services; conduct an annual review of the effectiveness of the plan; and revise the plan as necessary.

Statement on Charter Schools

By David G. Sciarra, James E. Ryan and Randi Weingarten

This Report contains a brief discussion on "Charter Schools and Choice," noting the growth of these schools in recent years. The Report calls on states to "monitor the performance" of charters and to undertake research to "understand the effects of charters on equity and access."

As states authorize more charter schools and those schools enroll greater numbers of students, especially in high poverty communities, concerns have arisen over their effectiveness and impact on the equitable delivery of high quality public education to all students in the communities in which they are located.

As this Report correctly notes, the limited research available shows many charter schools perform on assessments at the same level or below district-run schools, and some charters rank among the states' persistently lowest performing schools. Data is also beginning to show that charter schools do not always serve students comparable to those enrolled in district schools, particularly the very poor and those at-risk of academic failure, students with disabilities, and those learning English. In addition, financial mismanagement and irregularities among charters is becoming a recurring problem in many states. For example, in New Jersey since 1996, nearly one-third of all authorized charter schools have surrendered their charters or had their charters revoked, mostly due to mismanagement.

Also, because many states require charter authorizers to perform only perfunctory evaluations, little is known about what works -- and what doesn't -- in charter schools. Lessons learned about both how successful practices might help improve public education and how to avoid or correct unsuccessful practices are lost. And charters are not required, typically, to disclose contributions, grants, and other support from private and foundation sources, giving some select charters a distinct advantage over other charters and district schools and again depriving the public of knowledge crucial to assessing the performance of charter schools.

There is wide variation in how states authorize, regulate and hold charters accountable for academic and fiscal performance. Reform of those laws is essential -- and urgently needed -- to make certain that these schools operate equitably, effectively, and with full accountability to communities they serve. States, through their charter laws, must ensure charter schools make a solid contribution to the overall improvement of public education in their host districts -- for every student, including those with diverse needs, and not just for those attending charters.

Among the basic areas most in need of state policy reform include:

- Encouraging innovation, such as giving priority to multi-district charters that seek to serve a socio-economically and racially diverse student body, or that address the needs English language learners or students at-risk of dropping out
- Ensuring that charter schools are not impeding access, through means explicit or subtle, to any and all students who are eligible to enroll, including very low income students, English language learners, and students with disabilities.
- Requiring public transparency in the lottery process; in maintaining waiting lists and documenting transfers and attrition; in adhering to state and federal due process in student discipline matters; and by disclosure of annual budgets, including funds and other support received from private sources.
- Evaluating the academic and fiscal performance of charters on an ongoing basis, and funding independent, quality research on charter programs, practices and performance
- Establishing local education collaborations between districts and charters to facilitate community-wide efforts to improve performance and accountability, strengthen professional development, and collect and disseminate data and research, especially in high poverty communities where both district and charter schools are in dire need of high quality technical assistance and support

The number of charter schools is increasing, with growing debate about their proper place in state public education systems. To ensure equity and excellence in those systems, states must create a policy environment built on the expectation that charters will be fully accountable to the public, and operate effectively and equitably in the communities they serve. After all, the states have the responsibility to ensure students the quality education they must have to succeed and are legally entitled to receive, regardless of how the state allows its local schools to be governed.

Statement on the Educational Impact of Immigration Status

By Thomas A. Saenz

As the Commission report discusses, there are a number of external factors that have an undeniable – and undeniably disparate – impact on the educational experience of students in schools. As a consequence, these factors also have a significant impact on educational achievement, contributing to the education gaps that Latino and African American students continue to experience and that our nation must successfully address in order to ensure our continued economic and political success in the future. However, one significant external factor that our report does not discuss, but which affects millions of students, is immigration status.

Thirty years ago, in the case of *Plyler v. Doe*, the United States Supreme Court held that our Constitution guarantees access to public elementary and secondary school for all students, regardless of immigration status. In support of the decision, the Court majority noted that many of the currently undocumented students would adjust their status at some point in their lives and be expected to contribute to the nation's economic development. That conclusion remains true today, particularly as the near-term prospect of federal immigration reform, including a program to provide legal protections to those millions of undocumented immigrants who have lived here for years and contributed to our national economy, has improved in recent months. Indeed, federal immigration reform that includes such a program could obviate many of the educational impacts of immigration status if the program is broadly available and successfully reaches and includes the vast majority of undocumented individuals in the United States.

The issue of federal immigration policy is beyond the scope of the Commission, but unless and until federal immigration reform is achieved and implemented, we must acknowledge the significant educational effects of immigration status. For example, students who are themselves undocumented face an uncertain prospect of being able to access higher education. The national landscape with regard to such access is decidedly mixed. While over a dozen states have enacted laws to permit high school graduates, regardless of immigration status, to pay reduced tuition rates at public universities and colleges, two-thirds have not provided such affordability for undocumented students, and some states have actively restricted undocumented students' ability to enroll in public universities. With respect to private universities, affordability also varies, but lack of eligibility for federal student loans and grants impedes access for undocumented students. With the uncertainty of access to higher education, and the increased importance of such further education in today's economy, some undocumented students may conclude that achievement in public school is less important. (Of course, this is by no means universal. Many undocumented students have thrived at school and gone on to success in higher education; some of these students have taken a leading role as "DREAMers" in advocating immigration reform.)

In addition, undocumented students face the daily fear of being apprehended and placed into removal proceedings. These fears persist despite the fact that school sites have generally been deemed off limits to federal immigration enforcement. Even if

school may be a safe place, students have fears and concerns about what may happen outside of school. These fears are heightened in jurisdictions where local or state policymakers have opted to engage in local enforcement of immigration laws despite the serious constitutional questions around such efforts. For example, one question under a blanket state mandate of local enforcement is how it would be implemented with regard to school-based law enforcement officers.

Fears regarding heightened enforcement and the prospect of deportation or removal are not confined to students who are themselves undocumented. Many United States citizen schoolchildren today have one or both parents who are undocumented. For these students, particularly those of elementary school age, concern and fear that a parent might be picked up and detained during the school day can be a major distraction from the task of learning.

These are just a few examples of how immigration status may affect educational achievement. Other issues include harassment of students because of their own or their parents' actual or presumed immigration status, access to field trips at government buildings or other sites, access to extracurricular enrichment programs and opportunities, and other barriers to a full and equitable educational experience.

The Commission report does not address these issues, in part because they are bound up with issues of public policy related to immigration enforcement that are beyond the scope of this Commission and upon which it can express no opinion. Moreover, as noted above, it is possible that congressional legislation may soon resolve these issues for a number of the affected students. Still, the importance of these issues should not be discounted as external factors with a significant impact on the challenge of ensuring equity and excellence in our education system.

Statement of Matt Miller**Columnist, Washington Post; senior fellow, Center for American Progress**

I'm writing briefly to suggest a few ways the media, educators and foundations might follow up on the issues raised by the Commission to advance the national conversation and promote changes in public policy.

The Media

While there are many issues the press could pick up on in the report, the most underreported and consequential is *the link between deep inequities in school finance (at the district level in many states, and at the school level even in states where per pupil district funding is similar) and deep inequities in the caliber of teacher that schools in affluent and poor neighborhoods can attract and retain*. This injustice might be the subject of columns and editorials at both the local and national level, and also the subject of well-reported feature pieces or investigations in print and electronic media that bring these facts to life and give the story a human dimension.

For editorial boards and columnists, one possible template for the argument would run something like this:

-Everyone now agrees effective teaching is the key driver of student achievement (and thus of children's life chances, to the extent schools can shape them).

-The distribution of effective teachers is radically unequal in the US, in a way that is unique among wealthy nations.

-This inequity is intimately related to funding inequities. Funding inequities at the district level *lead to* inequities in teacher quality, while within districts, funding inequities *are effectively created by* teacher quality inequities. (That's because at the school level within districts, higher salaries go to more experienced teachers concentrated in better off neighborhoods, and lower salaries to the novices who tend to be concentrated in lower income schools; this pattern is often masked by district accounting practices that use only average district salaries to show what schools "spend").

-Money isn't everything -- this must be noted -- but teacher/principal salaries are the biggest portion of school budgets, and thus fundamentally relevant to attracting and retaining talent.

-In particular, disparities in school funding between poor areas and their nearby affluent communities matter, because the competition for teaching talent takes place in local labor markets (in many states – like Illinois, Pennsylvania and New York – such between-district disparities remain significant).

- In many states these disparities occur because the US, alone among advanced nations, relies heavily on local sources of finance for school funding.
- This local finance mechanism actually gives wealthier areas a hidden tax break that is not well understood– because property-rich locales can tax themselves at lower rates and generate more spending per pupil than can property-poor areas that tax themselves at higher rates.
- The result, unsurprisingly, is that the best teachers gravitate toward lower poverty schools over time, often in affluent suburbs – which pay more, have easier to teach kids, and better working conditions (which are also related to finance inequities in terms of facilities, safety, etc. It should be easy to document the “facilities gap” here with photos and descriptions of the contrast, etc.). We effectively rely on “the missionary plan” to staff schools in poor neighborhoods – and all the evidence shows that “the missionary plan” isn’t working.
- To be sure, there are examples where plenty of money goes into poor districts with bad results. It doesn’t make sense to invest more in such places until management can be improved. But these areas are exceptions in America, not the rule.
- Broadly speaking, if we truly want to remedy the inequitable distribution of teaching talent – and improve the proportion of effective teachers in the nation’s poorest schools – we must address America’s uniquely inequitable system of school finance, so that schools in poorer neighborhoods have the wherewithal to compete for talent.
- Until we take on this issue – about which there has been a conspiracy of silence among education reformers, because of fear of stepping on the third rail of “local control and funding” of schools, or from reluctance to challenge districts that systematically assign less qualified and experienced teachers to poor children – we will only be tinkering around the edges of America’s educational woes, and will doom millions of children to the sidelines of the global economy...

Television, radio and internet producers, as well as longer-form or narrative print journalists, might bring these issues to life by finding two schools to compare that are only a few miles apart but which have very different spending per pupil, and thus different ranges of teacher and principal salaries and caliber of staff, and also very different kinds of facilities. The story could be told through the eyes of two children, or two teachers, or two families – and the teacher corps might be compared in terms of such key metrics as the proportion who teach “out of field,” or the proportion who are inexperienced, poorly trained, or who were dismal students themselves. The Education Trust, The Council on Great City Schools and the Education Law Center are good resources to tap for a start on such research. In some cases districts will need to be aggressively prodded to share salary data at the school level.

In any such pieces, it's important to note that in poor schools across America there are thousands of talented, dedicated teachers working their hearts out for kids under impossibly tough conditions. But it is these teachers who have told me with passion over the years how mediocre too many of their colleagues are. All the research shows that after several years with unqualified teachers many of these kids can never catch up. Nothing could be more unjust.

Educators and Foundations

What if we had a passionate, articulate corps of high school juniors and seniors in high poverty schools who became the face of a new movement for educational justice? Might that not shake up the debate? I'd urge teachers and other educators at the local level to use this report as a starting point for recruiting and training such a corps and preparing them to make a difference while still in high school. I can imagine a special cross-disciplinary class or seminar being developed, perhaps called "School Finance Inequity: Issues and Action" (or something like that). It should be seen as an honor to be selected for this class. The kids would study the history of movements for social change, examine the nature and impact of inequities in education today, and investigate their manifestation in their local area. They'd write reports, make short films (i.e. comparing their poorly funded school with nearby well-funded ones), and write op-eds for local newspapers or blogs. They would be trained in speaking, advocacy and outreach to become effective champions for reform. They would meet with editorial boards and public officials to press their case. They would dream up and organize creative campaigns (and even protests) to get the media to cover these issues more routinely. They might find counterparts in affluent schools with whom to join hands in eye-catching calls for reform.

These are just early thoughts on which others can surely improve. Interested foundations might work with local schools (or an eventual national network) to develop relevant curriculum and training programs, as well as to make various experts and resources available. A near-term goal might be the creation of a national corps of, say, 500 students each year (25 each in the top 20 high poverty districts) who become smart, sophisticated activists, and part of a growing reform network in the years ahead. Nothing seems more powerful (or more likely to garner media attention) than students who themselves are victims of educational injustice calling attention to what's wrong and speaking out forcefully for change.

* * *

Transforming the Teaching Profession

By Randi Weingarten

American Association of School Administrators
American Federation of Teachers
Council of Chief State School Officers
Council of the Great City Schools
United States Department of Education
Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service
National Education Association
National School Boards Association

Improving student learning and educational equity require strong, consistent, and sustained collaboration among parents, teachers, school boards, superintendents and administrators, business leaders, and the community. And such improvements require that we all take responsibility for the academic and social well-being of the students in our charge. It is in this spirit of collaboration that we offer this joint statement on elevating the teaching profession to improve the education of our students.

THE CHALLENGE

The education system we created in the 20th century served our nation well. We were a world leader in universal high school attendance and in higher education attainment, and we opened our doors to all students. And though our educated citizenry helped fuel a sustained period of rapid economic growth, the goal of educating all students to the same high levels has not yet been realized. The fast-paced, dynamic, global world of the 21st century places new demands on all of us, as citizens and as workers. To productively engage in our democracy and compete in our global economy, all students will need strong, well-rounded academic foundations; cultural and global competencies; the ability to collaborate, communicate, and solve problems; and strong digital literacy skills. And their teachers and principals – who are critical to ensuring this high-quality education – need a similar and wide range of knowledge, skills, and strategies to guide their students. Now more than ever, to meet the challenges that confront us, we must take bold steps to transform and elevate the teaching profession to ensure that highly skilled and effective educators are at the helm.

THE GOAL

There is no one path to success. Different districts, schools, principals, and teachers will employ different approaches and take different pathways. But the goal remains constant: that every student exits high school prepared for postsecondary study, well-informed as a citizen, and

ready for the workplace. We therefore judge our success in transforming the teaching profession by our students' outcomes:

- High levels of student achievement, judged by multiple measures that assess students' ability to understand and apply the knowledge and skills that matter most to their readiness for college, careers, and citizenship;
- Increased equity, judged by continuously narrowing the gaps in achievement and opportunity between more and less privileged populations of students; and
- Increased global competitiveness, judged by American students' academic performance on internationally benchmarked measures.

THE ELEMENTS OF A TRANSFORMED PROFESSION

The core elements of a transformed profession will include—

1. A Culture of Shared Responsibility and Leadership: In a transformed profession, educators take collective ownership for student learning; structures of shared decision-making and open-door practice provide educators with the collaborative autonomy to do what is best for each student; and the profession takes upon itself the responsibility for ensuring that high standards of practice are met. In this professional culture, teachers and principals together make the primary decisions about educator selection, assignment, evaluation, dismissal, and career advancement – with student learning at the center of all such decisions.

2. Top Talent, Prepared for Success: Students with effective teachers perform at higher levels; they have higher graduation rates, higher college-going rates, higher levels of civic participation, and higher lifetime earnings. Thus, attracting a high-performing and diverse pool of talented individuals to become teachers and principals is a critical priority – whether these are new graduates or career switchers, and whether they enter the profession through traditional or alternative pathways. We must support programs that prepare highly effective educators and offer high quality and substantive curricula and clinical preparation experiences. We should expand the most successful programs, help other programs improve, and close down the lowest-performing programs if they fail to improve after receiving support. Preparation should include significant clinical opportunities that involve highly effective teachers or principals to oversee, mentor, and evaluate aspiring educators (preferably in the school environments in which the candidates will ultimately work). Further, aspiring educators must meet a high bar for entering the profession, demonstrating strong knowledge in the content they teach; have mastered a repertoire of instructional strategies and know when to use each appropriately; have the dispositions and aptitudes to work effectively with students

and with colleagues; and are learners themselves who know how to plan purposefully, analyze student learning outcomes, reflect on their own practice, and adjust as needed.

3. Continuous Growth and Professional Development: Effective teachers and principals are career-long learners. Effective schools and districts are learning communities where teachers and principals individually and collaboratively continuously reflect on and improve their practice. Such communities of practice thrive when there is structured time for collaborative work informed by a rich array of data and access to internal and external expertise. We must take seriously the need to evaluate the efficacy of professional development so that we can more methodically improve it, channeling our investments into activities and supports that make a difference. From induction for novice teachers designed to accelerate their growth and development, to replicating the practices of the most accomplished teachers, professional development is a critical lever of improvement.

As a profession, we must develop greater competency in using it.

4. Effective Teachers and Principals: Effective educators have high standards of professional practice and demonstrate their ability to improve student learning. Thus, effectiveness must be evaluated based on measures of student academic growth, evidence from classroom and school practice, and contributions to colleagues and the school community. The results of the evaluations should guide professional support and development and inform personnel decisions such as teacher and principal assignments, the granting of professional status (e.g., tenure), promotion to leadership roles, and dismissal for those who, despite receiving support, are ineffective. Good evaluation systems should provide feedback to educators from both colleagues and supervisors that is meaningful, credible, and actionable, and should use evidence-based processes that are fair, accurate, and transparent.

5. A Professional Career Continuum with Competitive Compensation: Educators are one of our nation's most valuable resources. We must create a profession that attracts great people into our schools and classrooms – and keeps them in the profession. To do this, we need to offer educators career pathways that provide opportunities for increasingly responsible roles, whether they choose to stay in the classroom, become instructional leaders, or move into administration. And these roles must be coupled with compensation that is high enough to attract and retain a highly skilled workforce; reflects the effectiveness, expertise, and contributions of each educator; and is consistent with the societal regard accorded to comparable professions.

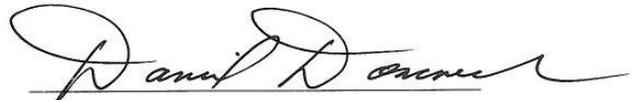
6. Conditions for Successful Teaching and Learning: High-functioning systems can amplify the accomplishments of their educators, but a dysfunctional school or district can undermine the impact of even the best teachers. We need schools and districts whose climates and cultures,

use of time, approaches to staffing, use of technology, deployment of support services, and engagement of families and communities are optimized to continuously improve outcomes for the students they serve. Further, we must be prepared to get the best teachers and principals to the highest-need students (including low-income students, minority students, English learners, and students with disabilities), and to ensure that all students have access to the other resources (such as technology; instructional materials; and social, health, and nutritional services) necessary to support their academic success.

7. Engaged Communities: Finally, no community can flourish unless its children are safe, healthy, well-nourished, and well-educated; and no school can be a strong pillar of a thriving community without deep community responsibility for and ownership of the school's academic success. Thus, recognizing that the fate of communities and their schools are inextricably linked, we must make schools stronger by educators embracing community resources, expertise, and activities; and we must make communities stronger by anchoring them around highly effective schools.



Arne Duncan
U.S. Secretary of Education



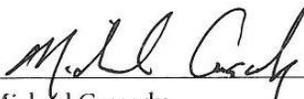
Daniel A. Domenech
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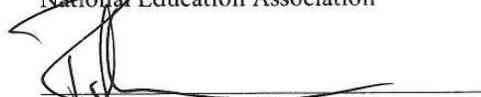
Anne L. Bryant
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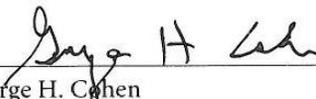
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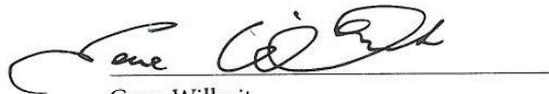
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