



A Union of Professionals

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AMERICAN Educator

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND IDEAS

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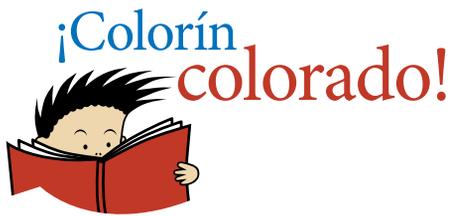


ILLUSTRATION BY RAFAEL LOPEZ

Looking for ways to support your English language learners and immigrant families? Visit www.ColorinColorado.org, the most widely used online resource for educators and families of ELLs. Whether you need information on culturally responsive instruction, the best multicultural children's books, or creating a welcoming classroom, **Colorín Colorado** is here for you!

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Protecting Our Country's Proud Immigrant Tradition

RANDI WEINGARTEN, AFT President

THE CURRENT DEBATES over immigration are personal for me. Like many Americans, I am the granddaughter of immigrants. My mother's parents fled pogroms in Russia and Ukraine; my father's family had faced anti-Semitism in Austria. They worked hard as merchants in the Bronx and in Nyack, New York, and were proud of their children's military service and careers as engineers, teachers, nurses, and lawyers. My family's immigrant story connects me to other immigrants, whether they're from El Salvador, Syria, or Sudan. America would not be the country we know and love without our long and enriching immigrant tradition.

I have always been grateful to live in a country that welcomes the world's "tired and huddled masses." But our tradition of welcoming immigrants is threatened by lawmakers and xenophobes and nationalists who are spewing fear and hate. One of the most callous demonstrations of this was President Donald Trump's decision this fall to terminate the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program that protects more than 800,000 young undocumented immigrants brought to the United States as children, many of whom know no other home.

The young people covered by DACA, appropriately known as Dreamers, are woven into our communities. Thousands are first responders, nurses, firefighters, lawyers, and community and union activists throughout the country. And 20,000 DACA recipients are filling critical teacher shortages as bilingual educators. Trump promised that he would treat Dreamers with "great heart." But terminating DACA is absolutely heartless and cruel.

We in the AFT feel this urgently. Our members who work in public schools educate children who carry with them constant, crippling terror and uncertainty because of their immigration status. Children should be free to learn and live

without fear, but that is not possible when they have to wonder who immigration agents will pick up next. And the AFT has members in each of our divisions who are covered by DACA but now live in fear of having their lives destroyed.

Jessica Esparza's parents brought her to the United States from Mexico when she was 11 years old. She did not have

reversal has thrust her back into the uncertainty she lived with for years as she pursued her American dream to become a teacher, despite her fears that her immigration status would make that impossible. DACA allowed her to realize that dream; it also made it possible for her to return to Mexico for the first time in 16 years to visit her grandmothers, one

The United States' cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity is an asset, not a liability.

proper documentation, but she did have a passion to pursue her own American dream, to become a registered nurse. Jessica excelled in school, and in 2012, through DACA, she was granted a work permit and a Social Security number that allowed her to earn her nursing license and work as an RN. She is now a member of the Washington State Nurses Association and treats cancer patients and patients with chronic conditions. Jessica often translates for Spanish-speaking patients, who are clearly relieved to have such critical conversations in their primary language.

Lee-Ann Graham is a DACAmented paraprofessional in the New York City public schools and a proud United Federation of Teachers member. She's also a leader in UndocuBlack, a network founded by black undocumented immigrant youth that works to highlight and address the diversity of our undocumented population. Lee-Ann strives to transform learning environments to respond to the needs of undocumented students.

Areli Zarate is a high school teacher and department chair in Austin, Texas, and is on her way to becoming certified through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Trump's DACA

of whom died months after her visit. Areli is awaiting a decision on her renewal and praying that she can continue teaching.

Without congressional action by March 2018, Dreamers will be deported or have to live in the shadows. We need to end the political gridlock and enact comprehensive solutions to our broken immigration system. That starts by providing pathways to citizenship for millions of students, families, and neighbors working and living alongside us who are at risk of being deported. Congress must pass the Dream Act—a clean version, not one that only protects Dreamers in exchange for funding for a border wall, increased immigration raids, detention centers, and policies that separate families and cause constant fear and uncertainty.

The AFT will continue to fight to protect undocumented students, refugees, individuals with temporary protective status, and their families from the threat of deportation. The United States' cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity is an asset, not a liability. It is the wonderful realization of the "pluribus" in "e pluribus unum." A nation built by immigrants should welcome those in pursuit of the American dream, not pull up the ladder behind us.

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OUR MISSION

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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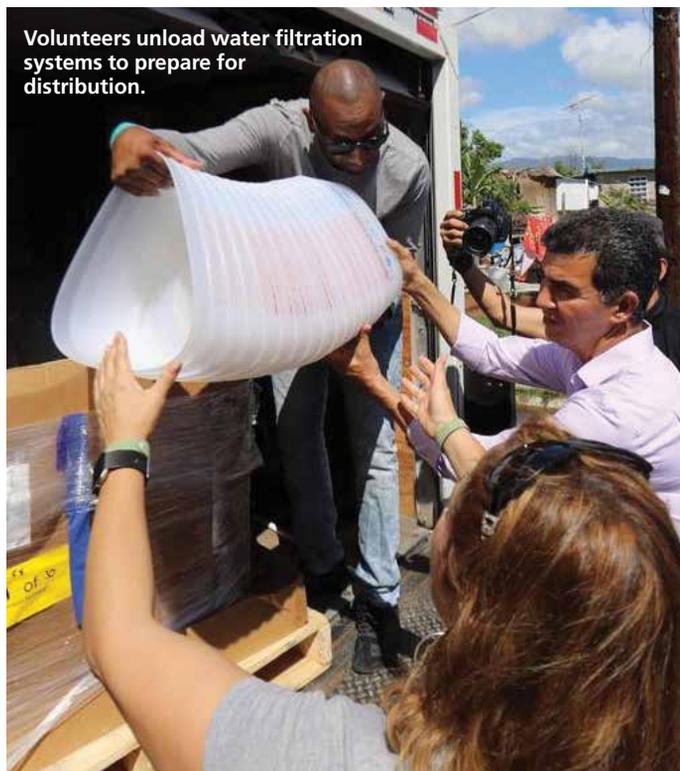
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PUBLIC SECTOR CHALLENGE RESURFACES

The U.S. Supreme Court agreed in September to hear *Janus v. AFSCME, Council 31*. This case threatens to upend more than 40 years of precedent affirming the legality of having workers pay their fair share of costs tied to collective bargaining, contract administration, and union work on matters affecting wages, hours, and other conditions of employment. The court deadlocked on a case in 2016 involving the same issue, leaving intact a lower court's decision to uphold fair-share fees. Now, with Justice Neil Gorsuch on the bench, the court will revisit a standard that has stood since the high court's 1977 decision in *Abood v. Detroit Board of Education*. This fall, the AFL-CIO adopted a resolution urging the court to reaffirm its long-standing position rather than imposing a national "right to work" landscape that is "designed to silence worker voices by making it harder to organize, harder to build solidarity, and harder to assert our rights, thereby aggravating the imbalance in our economy." A ruling is expected by mid-2018. For more on *Janus*, visit www.bit.ly/2rEMfMq.

OPERATION AGUA FOR PUERTO RICO

Responding to the water crisis following summer hurricanes in Puerto Rico, the AFT has taken a leading role in Operation Agua, a partnership to crowdsource contributions and to provide safe drinking water across the island. One month after the storms, more than 1 million people still lacked running water, with many resorting to using contaminated streams. Operation Agua's initial goal is to purchase and distribute 100,000 individual water filtration systems for households and classrooms, along with 50 large-capacity clean-water devices needed by nonprofit organizations, union offices, schools, and other community-based groups. Learn more and donate at www.aft.org/operation-agua.



Volunteers unload water filtration systems to prepare for distribution.

DIEGO TRAVERSO, OPERATION BLESSING

SURVEY REVEALS STRESSED EDUCATION WORKFORCE

A survey of nearly 5,000 educators, released this fall by the AFT and the Badass Teachers Association, shows that nearly two-thirds of educators usually feel stressed out, twice the level felt by workers in the general population. Most educators surveyed also feel demoralized and disrespected by state and federal officials, especially by Education Secretary Betsy DeVos. A similar survey was conducted two years ago, and the biggest difference between 2015 and 2017 is a jump in the number of educators reporting that their mental health was not good for seven or more days in the month leading up to the survey: from 34 percent to 58 percent. The study purposefully oversampled members of the Solvay (New York) Teachers Association and the North Syracuse (New York) Education Association—educators who work in strong collaborative labor-management environments—and it finds that educators in those systems report less stress and are less likely to leave the profession. The survey is available at <http://go.aft.org/AE417news1>.



UNION JOINS SUIT AGAINST DACA CANCELLATION

The AFT has joined a landmark lawsuit against the Trump administration's move to cancel the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which permits undocumented immigrants who arrived in the United States as children to work and live free from the threat of deportation. The suit argues that the termination of DACA violates the Constitution; it also calls for an immediate halt to the program's rescission and requests an order prohibiting the government from using information to identify, detain, or deport DACA recipients. There are 20,000 bilingual educators in the United States who would be affected by the termination. The amended complaint is available at <http://go.aft.org/AE417news2>.

AFT STANDS AGAINST WEAKENING TITLE IX

AFT leaders defended crucial protections for college students at a fall U.S. Department of Education hearing. The union argued against temporary guidelines, issued by Secretary Betsy DeVos, that undercut regulations to help deter sexual assault on campus and to hold for-profit colleges accountable for fraud and exploitation. Some of the most charged testimony involved Title IX elements that protect sexual assault survivors. AFT President Randi Weingarten urged the department to preserve those safeguards and expressed dismay over moves to set back progress on campus safety. The department is seeking public comment before issuing permanent regulations. Read more at <http://go.aft.org/AE417news3>.

You Are Welcome Here

Reassuring Immigrant Students and Families in Northwest Indiana



The photos in this article are from “Educating Students and the Community in an Age of Immigration Uncertainty,” a daylong conference held in August and sponsored by the Hammond Teachers Federation, the Hammond school district, and more than 40 organizations.

BY JENNIFER DUBIN

Words can inspire hope or they can instill fear. Speaking at the third and final presidential debate in October 2016, Donald Trump chose fear. “We’re going to secure the border, and once the border is secured at a later date, we’ll make a determination as to the rest,” he said. “But we have some bad hombres here, and we’re going to get them out.”¹

Shortly after Trump became president, a dozen seniors in a U.S. government class at George Rogers Clark High School in the Hammond, Indiana, school district rode a bus 160 miles south to Indianapolis, where they met with their state representatives and senators, observed committee hearings from the balcony of the General Assembly, and participated in a rally to support public education.

Jennifer Dubin is the managing editor of American Educator. Previously, she was a journalist with the Chronicle of Higher Education. To read more of her work, visit American Educator’s author index at www.aft.org/ae/author-index.

Kyle Kwasny, their teacher and chaperone, recalls that the field trip went well and that students learned a great deal. But another 10 students who had expressed interest in attending didn’t show up. The next day, Kwasny asked them what had happened. The students told him their parents were afraid to sign the permission slips. “Why?” he asked. Because their parents were undocumented immigrants, they said.

At the time, Trump had been president for less than two months. Cities nationwide were experiencing stepped up immigration enforcement, and Hammond was no different.

About 25 miles from downtown Chicago, the city of Hammond is one of 19 municipalities that constitute Lake County in northwest Indiana. The northern part of the county, where the Hammond schools are located, is home to a growing Hispanic population that has become increasingly fearful, given the nativist rhetoric emanating from the White House.

In January 2017, one week after taking office, Trump issued an executive order giving immigration agents greater leeway in enforcing federal laws and deporting undocumented immigrants.² In February, news accounts reported a surge in immigration raids in California, Kansas, New York, North Carolina, Texas,



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ADAM DERSTINE, ILLUSTRATIONS BY JING JING TSONG

and Virginia, resulting in hundreds of arrests.³ Raids also took place in Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, and Wisconsin. In Indiana, 52 arrests were reported.⁴

In March, video of a teenage girl sobbing as Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents arrested her father on the way to school in Los Angeles went viral.⁵ Throughout the summer, other harrowing stories continued to make headlines, including one of an undocumented high school student arrested by ICE days before graduation,⁶ and another of two undocumented brothers, both standout high school soccer players, who were deported after one of the boys voluntarily checked in with immigration officials to report that he had won a college scholarship and would be relocating.⁷

in August, the HTF partnered with the Hammond school district and more than 40 organizations to hold “Educating Students and the Community in an Age of Immigration Uncertainty.” The day-long event at Morton High School in Hammond was a success; more than 400 people attended.

The HTF, with its 950 members, is among the smaller AFT locals. But the challenges facing immigrant students and educators in Hammond are no less formidable than the ones facing immigrant students and educators elsewhere. The success of this conference, both in terms of participation and collaboration, speaks to the power of this labor-management partnership and how the union and the school district galvanized a community to act on an issue as divisive and intractable as immigration.

Parents worried that signing a school document, such as a permission slip, might invite unwanted questions about their immigration status.



In Lake County, these accounts alarmed many residents, especially Hammond’s teachers, who say their students constantly worry their parents won’t be there when they get home from school. “Kids are asking, ‘Am I going back to Mexico? What’s going to happen to me?’” says Patrick O’Rourke, the president of the Hammond Teachers Federation (HTF). In his 43 years as president, O’Rourke had never seen such angst in his city. He and his fellow HTF officials couldn’t believe the element of fear pervading their schools. They were stunned to learn that parents worried that signing a school document, such as a permission slip, might invite unwanted questions about their immigration status. So erring on the side of caution, they kept their children home. O’Rourke says the fear was also making it harder for teachers to do their jobs. As educators know all too well, and as research shows, if children are scared, they can’t learn.⁸

In March, still seething at the idea that fear prevented students from participating in a field trip, O’Rourke read articles in the Spring 2017 issue of *American Educator* on the need to support Latino children and families.* He shared copies of the magazine with others in the district and also discussed the issue with Miriam Soto-Pressley, the HTF’s educational issues chair, whose first language as a child was Spanish. In the last few years, Soto-Pressley has traveled to Austin, El Paso, Miami, and West Palm Beach to help facilitate conferences, sponsored by the American Federation of Teachers, geared toward English language learners (ELLs) and their teachers. These conferences focused on how to apply for U.S. citizenship, understanding the federal Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, and sharing educational resources.

O’Rourke and Soto-Pressley decided the Hammond school district needed to hold its own conference to educate teachers and parents about the government’s authority and limitations with regard to immigration. The conference would also enable educators to reassure the Hispanic community that—in schools, at least—families had nothing to fear. So on a Saturday morning

A History of Ethnic Diversity

The northern part of Lake County, which includes cities such as East Chicago, Hammond, and Whiting, has long been a melting pot in terms of ethnic diversity. In the middle of the 20th century, the region’s once-vibrant steel industry attracted many immigrants with the promise of steady union jobs. The majority of these workers came from Eastern Europe, and a fair number also hailed from south of the U.S.-Mexico border. But more than 20 years ago, the number of jobs in the steel mills began to decline. And while Eastern European immigration had long since tapered off by then, immigration in the county began to increase among Latinos seeking a better life.

Today, 47 percent of the 13,868 students enrolled in Hammond’s schools are Hispanic. At Clark High School, where Kyle Kwasny teaches, that figure is 71 percent.

When Greg Ruiz first began working with English language learners in Hammond 25 years ago, only a handful lived in the district. Now, 10.7 percent of Hammond’s students are ELLs, and they attend each of its 23 schools.⁹ To put that figure in context, only 4.5 percent of students in the state of Indiana are ELLs.¹⁰

Two years ago, teachers in the district’s Language Development Program began holding a free English-language boot camp for parents and students during the summer. Ruiz teaches some of the four-hour sessions, held over 15 days, where breakfast and lunch, as well as child care, are provided. For parents, the classes also continue during the academic year, while their children attend school. About 30 parents and 60 children registered for the program this summer, paid for with Title I and Title III funds (federal funds targeted to high-poverty schools and schools with large numbers of ELLs, respectively).

While such classes show the district’s support for immigrants, many immigrants have remained skittish in the wake of the presidential election. Ruiz says a parent recently told him she was putting together a document—an agreement with family members—stating who would care for her children if she were deported. “With tears in her eyes, telling me that,” he says, shaking his head.

*The complete issue is available at www.aft.org/ae/spring2017.

Those outside the public schools have also noticed the fear among residents who may be undocumented. Frank Mrvan, the North Township trustee, a locally elected official in Lake County, says that many immigrants have receded from public life. He has seen a decrease in undocumented immigrants seeking help from his office, which provides emergency assistance to families when they can't pay utility bills or if they face eviction. Immigrants unauthorized to be in this country but who have lived and worked here for years are in increasing danger of being exploited, he says. "If a contractor says, 'Thank you for your work, but we're not going to pay you today,' what route does that individual have to recover that money? None."

For Mrvan, there's a big difference between protecting our country's borders and citizens from terrorists and violent criminals, and deporting law-abiding people. It's a difference our country's broken immigration system has yet to resolve. And it's at the heart of why Patrick O'Rourke and 20 others spent the summer organizing this conference in northwest Indiana.

Given their ties to the community, Mrvan and Ruiz agreed to help. So, one morning in July, they and other members of the conference planning committee sit around a table in the resource center of Morton High School to talk logistics. "My goal is to raise \$30,000 in the next two weeks to fund this," O'Rourke says to the group, adding that local radio stations have assured him they will feature spots leading up to the event. Theresa Mayerik, the school district's assistant superintendent, says the district will soon send home letters in English and Spanish encouraging families to attend.

Mayra Rodriguez-Alvarez, a graduate of Hammond High School and a recent graduate of Valparaiso University Law School, suggests asking immigration attorneys to volunteer at the conference to answer attendees' questions in a closed setting. She knows firsthand the complexities of immigration law, having helped her husband, who had been undocumented, obtain his green card in April. Members of the group nod enthusiastically at the idea.

César Moreno-Pérez, of the AFT's human rights and community relations department, however, cautions that might be too much to do in one day. Based on his work helping to plan other AFT-sponsored conferences, he suggests holding a follow-up conference strictly for people to consult with attorneys. "You don't want this to be a one-off but a foundation to build on," he says. To that end, the group agrees to create a sign-up sheet for those attending the conference to meet with lawyers at another time. (That meeting took place on a Saturday in September, where seven lawyers helped 25 people with their immigration paperwork free of charge.)

Jose Bustos is pleased that free legal consultations (which can cost as much as \$1,000) will eventually be offered. "The fear and anguish that exists in our communities is tremendous," he tells the group. A former union organizer with the Service Employees International Union in Chicago, Bustos now works at the Immigrant Support and Assistance Center in East Chicago. The organization, where Rodriguez-Alvarez volunteers, has received many calls from immigrants too scared to go outside their homes, Bustos says. Recently, a woman called his office after unsuccessfully trying to get food assistance from the local Salvation Army. She said the receptionist questioned her about her halting English and her



Those outside the public schools have also noticed the fear among residents who may be undocumented.



immigration status, prompting the woman and her children to quickly leave, not only without the food they needed but also scared that immigration authorities would be called. “What can I do to protect me and my kids?” she asked the center.

Moreno-Pérez says that Steven Monroy, a legislative staff attorney at the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), has agreed to give a presentation on knowing your rights and how families can protect themselves during an ICE raid at home or work. MALDEF has given similar presentations in conjunction with the AFT since the Obama administration first announced DACA in June 2012.

In addition to focusing on legal questions, Moreno-Pérez suggests the conference in Hammond also highlight AFT resources such as

munity Committee, Catholic Charities, and the Hammond Education Foundation, line the hall outside the auditorium. Inside the school’s resource center, volunteers provide free child care. They supervise more than 80 young children, whose parents have dropped them off to read books, watch movies, and play games.

Before the workshops begin, attendees find seats in the auditorium to hear from a range of speakers. Walter Watkins, Hammond’s superintendent, reassures families that administrators and staff members will do what they can to help. Dale Melczek, the recently retired bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Gary, reaffirms the church’s support for refugees and leads the audience in a prayer. Anna Mamala, the vice president of the Hammond Board of School Trustees, reads a resolution the board passed in March

A resolution the school board passed in March reaffirms the district’s “commitment to creating a safe and supportive learning environment for all students regardless of immigration status.”



Colorín Colorado, a website for teachers and families of ELLs, available at www.colorincolorado.org. “Parents have to see that the teachers union is at the intersection of this work,” he says. To emphasize that point, the group decides they will ask Mary Cathryn Ricker, the executive vice president of the AFT, to speak at the event.

O’Rourke then mentions the need to include a session on how residents can advocate for welcoming city ordinances, which various city councils have passed in recent years. The ordinances, which fall just short of declaring that they are sanctuary cities (that is, cities that limit their cooperation with federal immigration enforcement), are meant to reassure undocumented immigrants that city resources will not be used to enforce federal immigration law. So far, Gary is the only city in Lake County to have passed such an ordinance.¹¹ But O’Rourke hopes the rest of the county will follow its lead.

At some point in the discussion, committee members feel compelled to ask a basic question, given the climate of fear: Should the conference require registration? Doing so would certainly help them plan for the appropriate number of free lunches and backpacks with school supplies to distribute at the end of the day. But asking an already nervous population to submit their personal information seems unwise. So they ultimately agree that registrations aren’t necessary and decide to accept both walk-ins and registrations online.

Though the group has successfully addressed that concern, another one hangs in the air: What if the individuals this conference is meant to help are too afraid to attend?

A Day Devoted to Immigration and Education

On August 5, committee members are visibly relieved to see that their concern has proven unfounded. By 9 a.m., the parking lot of Morton High School is nearly full, and the building inside buzzes with activity as 60 volunteers wearing bright orange T-shirts welcome families to the conference.

Resource tables piled high with free children’s books, handouts, and school supplies, and staffed by representatives from various sponsoring organizations, such as the Hammond Hispanic Com-

munity Committee, Catholic Charities, and the Hammond Education Foundation, line the hall outside the auditorium. Inside the school’s resource center, volunteers provide free child care. They supervise more than 80 young children, whose parents have dropped them off to read books, watch movies, and play games.

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reaffirming the district’s “commitment to creating a safe and supportive learning environment for all students regardless of immigration status.”

The morning’s most high-profile speaker is Carolyn Curiel, a native of northwest Indiana. A 1972 graduate of Morton High School, Curiel served as the U.S. ambassador to Belize under President Bill Clinton and is now the founder and executive director of the Purdue Institute for Civic Communication at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana.

In her speech, Curiel briefly recounts her career as a journalist, her immigrant grandparents’ experience, and the challenges that immigrants, undocumented or not, currently face. “In our time now with immigration policy in question, there are a lot of people fearing an ultimate rejection,” she says. “They’re concerned for their futures, their well-being, and the well-being of the people they love. And I want everyone here who is in a precarious position like that to look around the room and realize that you have a lot of help.”

For the rest of the morning, that help takes the form of nine conference workshops held in classrooms throughout the school. For instance, Miriam Soto-Pressley, from the HTE, gives a presentation on helping parents become more involved in their children’s education. And Joanne Anderson and Ingrid Miera, ELL trainers with the AFT, lead a workshop on how educators can support immigrant students and families.

Meanwhile, in the auditorium, Steven Monroy, from MALDEF, holds two sessions, one in English and one in Spanish, on how families can protect themselves from an ICE raid. “A warrant should be no older than three months,” Monroy says. He points to a photograph of an actual warrant that he shows on a screen. A warrant must also have a judge’s signature, he adds. And he emphasizes that during a raid, people have the right to videotape the police.

Meanwhile, the AFT’s César Moreno-Pérez gives a presentation titled “Protecting Our Children & Families from the Threat of Deportation.” Standing in a room filled to capacity with educators, Moreno-Pérez rattles off some statistics: There are 43 million immigrants in this country.¹² Eleven million of them are undocu-

mented.¹³ More than 5.9 million children live in mixed-status households.¹⁴ Between 54,000 and 68,000 children in Indiana have at least one parent who is undocumented.¹⁵

He reminds participants of the need to transform classrooms and schools into sanctuary places of learning free from racism, discrimination, bullying, and the threat of deportation. Then he briefly explains the relationship between schools and immigration enforcement. First, thanks to the 1982 U.S. Supreme Court case *Plyler v. Doe*, all students, regardless of immigration status, have the right to a public education. Second, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) prohibits schools from sharing students' personal information with anyone, including ICE. Moreno-Pérez also explains that a Department of Homeland Security memo governing where ICE activities can take place makes clear that ICE cannot be present at schools, hospitals, churches, demonstrations, or funerals, unless there is an immediate threat to national security or a signed judicial warrant.

Moreno-Pérez then quickly recaps DACA, the federal immigration program that gives undocumented immigrants who meet certain requirements a reprieve from deportation as well as the opportunity to obtain a Social Security number and a renewable work permit. At the time of the conference, Trump had not yet announced his plans to rescind the program.¹⁶

As part of this presentation, Karen Reyes, a DACA recipient and teacher from Austin, Texas, shares her story. At age 2, her mother brought her to this country from Mexico. In high school, she realized that pursuing higher education as an undocumented student

would be a challenge. But with the help of guidance counselors and teachers, she persevered. She applied to college, secured scholarships, and earned both an undergraduate and a graduate degree.

Because of DACA, Reyes, now 29, was able to apply for and accept her dream job: teaching preschool students who are deaf or hard of hearing. As a “DACAmended” teacher, she is active in her union, Education Austin,* which she says recently held a citizenship drive that helped 112 eligible permanent residents fill out their applications.

Reyes then reminds educators of their power. She urges them to lobby their legislators in favor of DACA and the Dream Act and to reject any anti-immigrant legislation. “Be an active advocate,” she says. “Don’t just say I support the immigrant community.”

At the end of her presentation, audience members give Reyes thunderous applause. They had listened to every word with rapt attention.

“The Best of Us Will Triumph over the Worst of Us”

Throughout the day, conference-goers hear of the many positive steps Lake County officials have taken in recent years to support the immigrant community. Long considered a blue dot in a red state, Lake County is one of only four in Indiana that went for Hillary Clinton in the presidential election. So the audience is hardly surprised to hear Frank Mrvan, the North Township trustee, praise a couple of well-known progressives in attendance.

*For more on Education Austin’s work supporting the immigrant community, see <http://go.aft.org/AE417link1>.



Long considered a blue dot in a red state, Lake County is one of only four in Indiana that went for Hillary Clinton in the presidential election.



First, he mentions the work of his father, Indiana state Senator Frank Mrvan. In 2013, Senator Mrvan, a longtime Democrat, tried to introduce legislation allowing undocumented immigrants with tax identification numbers to apply for driver's licenses, but the idea never got a hearing. He is now trying to introduce legislation to allow undocumented students in Indiana to pay in-state, rather than out-of-state, college tuition. Currently, at least 18 states allow in-state tuition rates for undocumented students. Indiana, however, is one of three states that prohibit it.¹⁷

After recognizing his father for his efforts, the younger Mrvan asks Calvin Bellamy to stand. Fifteen years ago, as president of Calumet Bank, Bellamy "took the courageous move," Mrvan says, of allowing people with tax identification numbers to open up

13-year-old, who has autism, became terrified that his father would be deported. "He worries so much," Christian says, putting his arm around him.

Christian says he often tells his children not to worry, but he admits that if he's driving and sees a police car right behind him, he gets nervous. "If anything happens..." he says, as his voice trails off.

"I work hard," he says. "I pay my taxes. I tell my kids, if I get my papers today, I will join the National Guard tomorrow. That's how much I love this country." Tears well up in his eyes, and to comfort him, his wife rubs his arm.

Christian is proud that his family's pastor, Steve Munsey, of the Family Christian Center, a megachurch in Munster, Indiana, spoke at today's conference. (O'Rourke invited Munsey after the

State Senator Frank Mrvan is trying to introduce legislation to allow undocumented students in Indiana to pay in-state, rather than out-of-state, college tuition.



bank accounts so they could avoid paying exorbitant fees when cashing their checks elsewhere. O'Rourke later tells me that not everyone in Lake County applauded the move; many vehemently opposed it. But in allowing undocumented immigrants to open accounts, Bellamy enabled them to save their money and build credit. As Bellamy rises, the audience loudly applauds, just as it had done minutes ago for Mrvan.

Toward the end of the conference, Mary Cathryn Ricker, the executive vice president of the AFT, thanks everyone for attending and strikes a reassuring tone. "This is an age of immigration uncertainty," she says. But "by coming here today, those of us in this room are certain about something. We are certain that the best of us will triumph over the worst of us."

Such words are exactly what many in the audience wanted and needed to hear. Still, conference attendees are reluctant to speak with me for this article. Several decline, even when Greg Ruiz, from the school district's language department, offers to translate as they share their thoughts.

A family of four, however, is among the few who agree to be interviewed. To protect their privacy, I tell them I will not publish last names. Sitting in the high school cafeteria eating the free lunch provided, Christian, 43, says he found out about the conference thanks to a phone call from his oldest son's school; he came to learn more about immigration. Originally from Panama, he moved to this country in 1989 to escape the violence that broke out when the United States invaded Panama to oust Manuel Noriega.

Although he has a Social Security number and a driver's license, Christian is not a citizen. He says he came to the United States on a special visa he received when his uncle worked for the U.S. Air Force. Because his immigration status is murky—he says he's not sure if the visa is still good—he is working with a lawyer in Chicago.

An electrician who earns about \$50,000 a year, Christian says it will probably cost him \$4,000 in legal fees by the time he becomes a citizen. He pays taxes and owns his home. But the house is in his wife's name, since she recently became a citizen.

Their two sons, 13 and 12, were born in this country and attend Hammond public schools. During the presidential campaign, his

pastor asked him in July to promote the conference to his congregation of 30,000 members, many of whom are Hispanic.) Christian found Munsey's words of welcome reassuring and is pleased that his pastor is becoming more involved in issues related to immigration.

As his sons quietly eat, Christian says that immigrants, like him, just want to make a living and a better life for their kids. "That's all we want."

His family is grateful for all the supports the school district has put in place for his autistic son. In his class of 25 students, there are two teachers and two assistant teachers, and his son works with a paraprofessional who shadows him all day long. "I love Hammond because I know where my taxes go," Christian says—to his sons' terrific public schools.

A week after the conference, O'Rourke is proud of how it all turned out. "I've got businesses that have called me and said, 'What's the next step? How can we help?'" he says. He adds that the chair of the Lake County Democratic Central Committee has also assured him that the organization is going to focus more on immigration as a matter of social justice.

But the most moving experience for O'Rourke happened on Monday morning, two days after the conference. As he drove to the union office, his cell phone rang. In halting English, a woman told him she had attended the conference and wanted to thank him for organizing it. "I feel loved, and I feel more secure," she told him. O'Rourke thanked her for coming. When he asked if he could get in touch with her again, she told him no. She preferred not to give her name or information. O'Rourke understood. "I have a feeling she was undocumented."

He reminded her that if she or anyone she knew needed to speak to an attorney about any situation happening in their lives, they could do so for free at another conference he was helping to organize. This one would be at Morton High School on Saturday, September 23.

"Thank you. Muchas gracias," she said warmly and hung up. □

(Endnotes on page 41)

Fully Realizing the Civic Potential of Immigrant Youth



BY REBECCA M. CALLAHAN AND
KATHRYN M. OBENCHAIN



Over the course of a few cold days last February, immigrant families and their allies in Austin, Texas, were shaken by a series of raids as immigration officers descended upon the city. After all was said and done, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials arrested 51 undocumented immigrants, most of whom had no criminal record.¹

As the community raced to respond to the shock, teachers sought to protect their students. Reports flooded in of children being returned to school when bus drivers found no one to pick the students up at their stops, of teachers waiting with children until late into the evening when a relative was finally identified, of empty classrooms over the next several days, and of students who would never return. Families hurried to sign guardianship papers to protect their children in case they were ever detained or deported.

Educators saw an increase in students from immigrant families both wanting and needing emotional support; many students who came to school were distracted and worried, anxious that their parents wouldn't be there when they came home. Grades began to slip, and attendance began to drop. In a matter of days, numerous immigrant children and children of immigrants,* many of them U.S. citizens, were withdrawn from school or simply stopped attending—their parents, fearing deportation (for AFT resources, see page 12), retreating from public view.

In the following weeks and months, school communities responded by identifying and providing resources to advise families about their legal rights and to help them navigate the system should they be faced with immigration officers and/or deportation. Educators' mobilization efforts and outreach provided the basis for a

communication network focused on immigrant families' safety and well-being.

Teachers concerned about the psychological well-being of immigrant families at one school shared with us a guide to creating an emergency student action plan that they sent home with their students to help prepare families if confronted by ICE officials. With room for the names and phone numbers of teachers and other important adults in children's lives, the guide prompts families to gather key documents and information in one place. The very act of creating this action plan also helps families take comfort in being proactive and planning ahead to ensure that someone will care for their children.

In this article, we step back from the immediate aftermath of those ICE raids—in Austin and numerous other cities around the United States—to consider the role U.S. schools and educators play in the civic growth of immigrant youth. Our purpose is to show educators how to build on the civic potential of immigrant youth and prepare them for an active role in public discourse, or what has been called “enlightened political engagement.”

Professor Walter Parker suggests that enlightened political engagement is a core goal of education. Specifically, he frames democratic enlightenment and political engagement as two distinct and necessary dimensions to enlightened political engagement. Democratic enlightenment encompasses the knowledge of democratic traditions, principles, and political institutions; a commitment to justice; and the disposition for tolerance. Political engagement, on the other hand, refers to the actions and activities found in civic participation. According to Parker, the synthesis of these dimensions promotes “wise participation in public affairs,”² or what he terms enlightened political engagement. To ensure that future generations actively and wisely participate in American democratic traditions, teachers of today's immigrant students will want to focus not only on democratic ideas and knowledge, but also on civic activities and actions.

*We define immigrant youth as all children of immigrant parents, both those children born outside the United States (first generation), and those born in the United States (second generation).

Fostering Civic Voice

Since the earliest one-room schoolhouses, a core purpose of American education has been to create a well-informed citizenry,³ yet political forces often limit schools' ability to work toward this goal.⁴ We developed this article, in part, in response to the challenging political context in which we find ourselves—both as researchers invested in American students' civic education and as teachers of immigrant youth.

As educators, we take our charge to nurture students' democratic dispositions seriously. In doing so, it is essential to consider the growing diversity of the U.S. student population, where children in immigrant families now account for one in four K–12 students.⁵

The social studies curriculum is one space where students learn about those democratic dispositions, and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in the United States. This overarching purpose is present in civics, economics, geography, and history content, all part of social studies. Researchers have found a strong relationship for immigrant youth between taking social studies courses and voting in young adulthood, but not for children of U.S.-born parents.⁶ In addition, other work has found patterns of limited social studies enrollment overall, especially in honors and Advanced Placement classes, among immigrant youth, which we hypothesize prevents many of these students from realizing their full civic potential.⁷

Most social studies content incorporates American sociocultural and historical narratives that may be less familiar to the children of foreign-born parents.⁸ For instance, when immigrant students learn the history of Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, and Malcolm X, they come to understand that the legacy of slavery continued to affect race relations long after the end of the Civil War, and still does so today. Manifest Destiny and American exceptionalism are associated with particular narratives that frame the United States in a specific and positive way.

Teachers will want to be aware that these “familiar” narratives may not be familiar at all to their students' foreign-born parents, who may or may not have been socialized into these particular perspectives. Explicit experiences with and knowledge of these narratives better positions immigrant students to navigate the civic contexts of their new homeland, actively engaging in public discourse and championing the rights of their communities. Knowledge of these narratives does not necessarily produce unquestioning acceptance; rather, it provides background information to better

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understand the perspectives that these narratives may foster.

Given the significant relationship between academic attainment and civic involvement, secondary school teachers and counselors can help to ensure that immigrants are appropriately enrolled in challenging social studies courses. Immigrants' access to rich social studies content in honors and Advanced Placement courses will help ensure that democratic traditions not only survive but thrive.

observe and internalize how their parents are treated outside the home.

Immigrant parent engagement can be as simple as providing translators and services in families' native languages, outreach to the communities where parents live and work, and support for teachers to connect with parents on their terms.[†] This includes hiring immigrant educators in leadership positions and providing professional development opportunities for teachers to understand immigrant families. Together, these actions

leadership skills. Extracurricular activities place students in contact with a variety of peers and adults as they engage in academic competitions (e.g., science, math, engineering, and technology challenges, National History Day), service organizations (e.g., Key Club, 4-H), and speech and debate clubs. In addition to contributing to the development of civic identity, these interactions promote civil discourse and problem solving,¹⁴ essential skills for democratic citizens. Just as important, educators can foster immigrant students' civic voices by drawing on their inherent strengths. More than two decades ago, researchers coined the term "immigrant optimism" to explain the academic advantage children of immigrant parents repeatedly demonstrate relative to their peers, pointing to immigrant parents' relatively high expectations.¹⁵ Likewise, advocates for bilingual education have long cited research documenting a bilingual advantage among immigrant youth.[‡]

Well-developed bilingualism and biliteracy are linked to numerous academic, cognitive, and professional advantages,¹⁶ similar to the ability of immigrant students to navigate and negotiate two or more cultures and perspectives.¹⁷ Teachers can



Even in this precarious time, with nationalism on the rise, we believe that educators and schools are well positioned to foster civic participation among immigrant youth.

Even in this precarious time, with nationalism on the rise, we believe that educators and schools are well positioned to foster civic participation among immigrant youth. Strong civic actors recognize their own abilities to *act on* their communities in public and productive ways and to the benefit of the public or common good.⁹ Without this commitment and a deep knowledge of American history, even the strongest of republics will eventually crumble. As educators, we miss an opportunity to strengthen and fortify our rich democratic traditions when we fail to recognize the civic potential of immigrant youth to fully engage in and commit to our republic.

Ensuring Cohesive School Communities

Together, teachers and administrators set the tone of the school community. School leaders not only can provide clearly articulated policies and procedures to engage immigrant families, but also can model inclusiveness for all faculty, staff, and students. Making immigrant parents feel welcome at school is critical,¹⁰ as children

validate immigrant parents and help incorporate them into the school community.

Both studying academic subjects such as reading, writing, math, social studies, and science, and forging bonds with adults and peers, are part and parcel of what we do in school. They form the center of a student's educational universe, especially during adolescence, when academics and social involvement coexist. Extracurricular experiences contribute to students' educational success,¹¹ with evidence to suggest particular relevance for Latino and immigrant youth.¹² In fact, immigrant youth may be particularly predisposed to volunteer in their communities and take on leadership positions.¹³

Educators can actively recruit and support immigrant youth in extracurricular activities, where they can develop a sense of belonging and commitment, as well as

capitalize on these immigrant advantages in their instruction. The ability to make sense of diverse perspectives is a core tenet of American democracy, and immigrant students experience this firsthand as they encounter diverse perspectives in their daily lives.

A strong civic identity includes a sense of membership in and commitment to improving one's community.¹⁸ Simply living in a particular country or community guarantees neither a robust civic identity nor a connection to that place in particular.¹⁹ One need look no further than the anti-immigrant rhetoric that has driven many notable state and local education policies²⁰ to understand that immigrant students' educational experiences are shaped not just by curriculum and instruction, but also by the current political climate.

(Continued on page 41)

[†]For more on parent engagement, see "Connecting with Students and Families through Home Visits" in the Fall 2015 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/fall2015/faber.

[‡]For more on the history of bilingual education, see "Bilingual Education" in the Fall 2015 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/fall2015/goldenberg_wagner.

Creating Sanctuary for Students Fearful of Deportation

WHILE MOST SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN of immigrants are U.S. citizens, many live in households that include people with various immigration statuses and fear that they or their family members will be deported. The AFT has been hearing from members all around the country that children are showing signs of social-emotional stress as a result of being undocumented themselves or knowing that a family member is undocumented.

Deportations separate families and leave many more in fear of separation. Teachers, counselors, and other school personnel are often the first to address the mental health concerns of their students regarding immigration, and have witnessed firsthand the negative impact on students' ability to focus in school.

Children involved in or fearing deportation raids may experience emotional and behavioral changes, sleep and eating disturbances, excessive crying, anxious behavior, nightmares, aggressive and withdrawn behavior (especially in older youth), poor academic performance, and social withdrawal and isolation.

Schools should be safe havens for all students and families, including unaccompanied and refugee children, regardless of citizenship status and national origin. To ensure that all children feel safe, welcomed, and supported—no matter where they or their parents were born—educators can do the following:

- Make students feel comfortable by talking to them with a colleague who can help with counseling needs one-on-one, away from peers.
- Offer students the chance to express themselves privately through drawing, artwork, or writing. This can be an important safety valve during particularly stressful periods and also can provide a way for students to respond to events in or beyond the classroom.
- Give students strategies to manage stress: ask what they do when they feel stress, anger, sadness, or other difficult emotions. They may never have thought about it before! Offer some additional ideas for managing difficult emotions, such as taking a couple of deep breaths, sitting in a quiet corner to calm down, drawing or writing, exercising, or talking to a friend or trusted adult. Consider inviting a school counselor into the classroom to lead a discussion and share strategies.
- Contact local and national organizations, such as the National Immigration Law Center, United We Dream, and First Focus, that support and provide resources for immigrant families. The Immigration Advocates Network offers resources by state: www.bit.ly/2zJdBK.
- Ensure the classroom atmosphere is nonthreatening. Find ways to involve apprehensive students, such as by creating a buddy system so that peers make students feel welcome and by introducing them to supportive and helpful personnel in the building. Just as important, reach out to families through an interpreter or materials written in their home language.

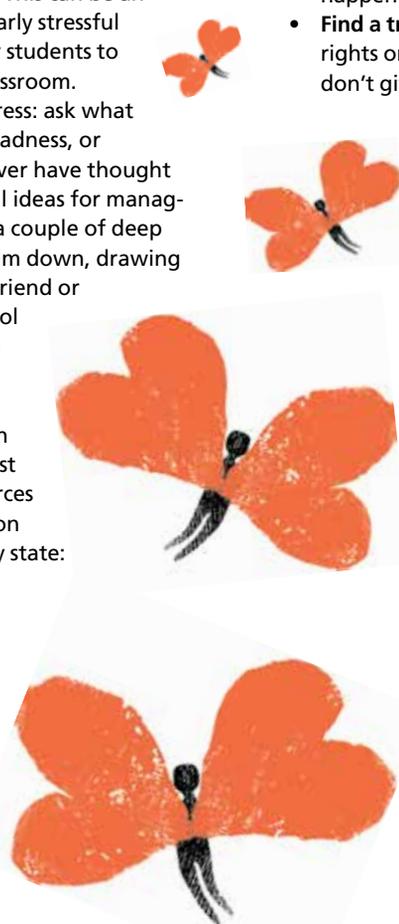
What Educators Should Know about the Rights of Immigrants and the Threat of Deportation

Under federal law, all children, regardless of their citizenship or residency status, are entitled to a K–12 education. Unless the Department of Homeland Security's sensitive locations policy is reversed, it will continue to limit immigration enforcement from taking place at "sensitive locations." These include schools, licensed daycares, school bus stops, colleges and universities, educational programs, medical treatment facilities, and places of worship. Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), schools are prohibited, without parental consent, from providing information from a student's file to federal immigration agents if the information would potentially expose a student's immigration status. School districts are responsible for ensuring the safety and well-being of all students.

What Students and Families Should Do If ICE Authorities Come to Their Homes

- **Do not open the door** without them passing a signed warrant under the door.
- **Do not say anything** beyond "I plead the Fifth and choose to remain silent."
- **Do not sign anything** without speaking to an attorney.
- **Document and report the raid** immediately to the United We Dream hotline (844-363-1423). Take pictures, videos, and notes. Write down badge numbers of agents and exactly what happened.
- **Find a trustworthy attorney** by contacting a local immigrant rights organization. If detained, you may be able to get bail—don't give up hope!

—AFT EDUCATIONAL ISSUES DEPARTMENT



AFT Resources on Immigrant Rights

Immigration: Protecting Our Students
<http://go.aft.org/AE417tft1>

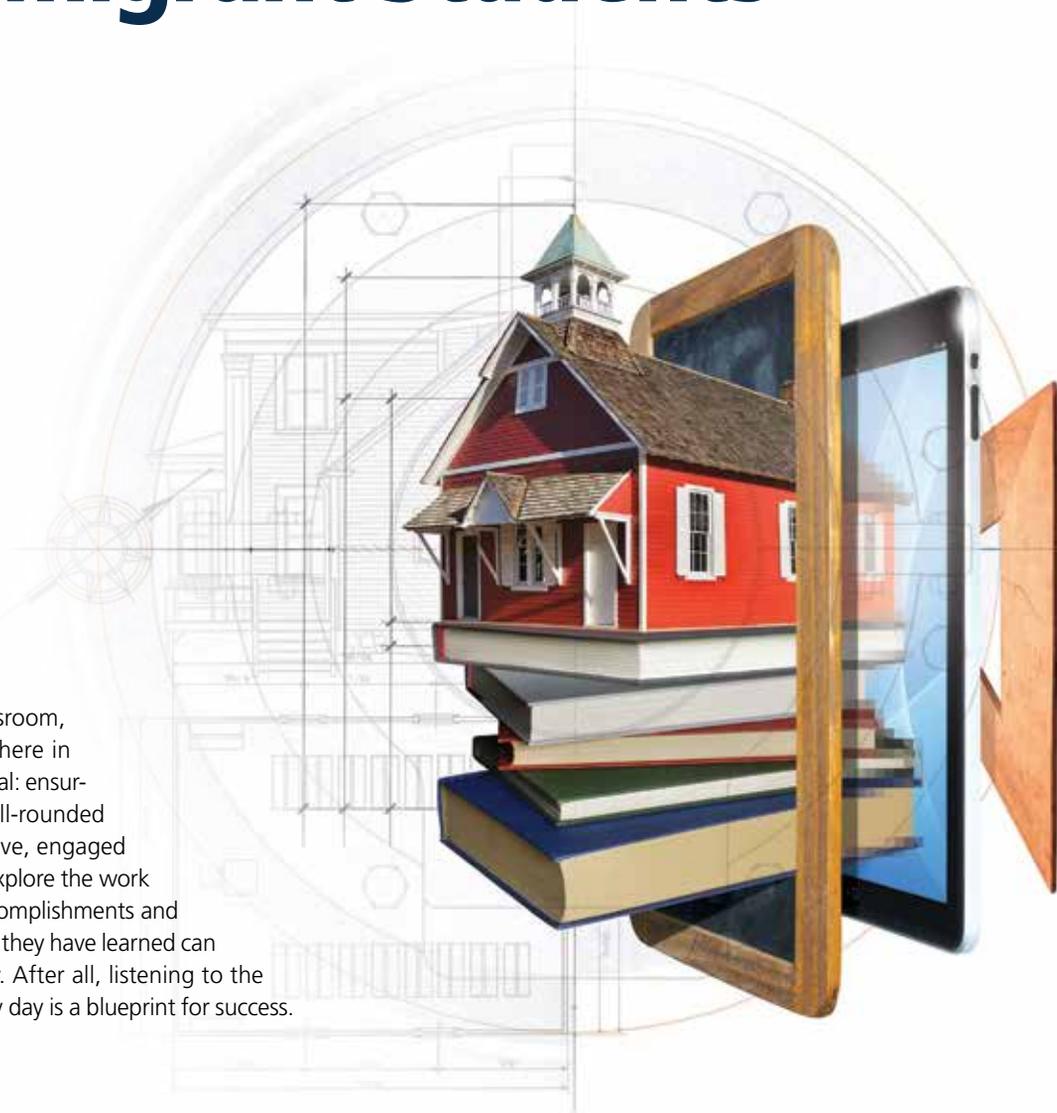
Know Your Rights
<http://go.aft.org/AE417tft2>

School Response Plan (scroll down to "Threats to Immigrants")
<http://go.aft.org/AE417tft3>

A Guide for Educators and School Support Staff
<http://go.aft.org/AE417tft4>

Serving and Supporting Immigrant Students: Information for Schools
<http://go.aft.org/AE417tft5>

Celebrating the Voices of Immigrant Students



Professional educators—in the classroom, library, counseling center, or anywhere in between—share one overarching goal: ensuring all students receive the rich, well-rounded education they need to be productive, engaged citizens. In this regular feature, we explore the work of professional educators—their accomplishments and their challenges—so that the lessons they have learned can benefit students across the country. After all, listening to the professionals who do this work every day is a blueprint for success.

BY MARY ANN ZEHR

Stories matter. They illustrate our successes and failures, joys and heartbreaks. Telling our stories helps us understand ourselves and each other, and build community. That’s why storytelling belongs in the classroom, especially mine. All of my students are English language learners (ELLs), and many have experienced trauma in the process of immigration. Telling their stories helps them to heal and to understand who they are. That, in turn, helps make them resilient and, no less important, helps them progress academically.

Mary Ann Zehr is in her seventh year teaching English language learners in the District of Columbia Public Schools and is a member of the Washington Teachers’ Union.

My school’s leaders stress that I need to teach my students how to write analytically. They ask teachers of all disciplines for samples of formal “evidence-based writing” several times a year to ensure students can produce such work. I agree that high school students need to learn how to write analytically so they can succeed in college and careers, and so I assign my students several analytical essays each year. But to support them in their social and emotional development, I give them opportunities to tell their personal stories too.*

In doing so, my students realize they don’t experience the angst of immigration and adolescence alone. They see that many of their peers have also survived trauma or have had similar difficulties adjusting to a new school or a new language and culture.

*For more on social and emotional development, see the article on page 16.

Sharing in this way also can improve their fluency in English and lets them see themselves as writers, which builds their confidence and builds community as well. I hope this article encourages other teachers to assign this kind of writing, too.

I teach English and history in the International Academy at the Francis L. Cardozo Education Campus in Washington, D.C. The academy, part of the Internationals Network for Public Schools, enrolls students who have arrived in the United States in the last several years. Many crossed the U.S.-Mexico border as unaccompanied minors, coming from El Salvador, Honduras, or Guatemala, but some come from other countries, such as Eritrea,

I began to incorporate storytelling during my first year at Cardozo in classes for 9th- and 10th-graders. For a unit on immigration, students read excerpts of the book *Enrique's Journey: The Story of a Boy's Dangerous Odyssey to Reunite with His Mother*, by Sonia Nazario. Spanish-speaking students who had just arrived read the excerpts in Spanish as well.

The book tells the true story of an impoverished teenager from Honduras who rides freight trains across Mexico and crosses the Rio Grande to reach his mother in the United States. Enrique's journey is treacherous. While Enrique is riding a freight train, some men beat him up badly enough that he almost dies. Eventually, he recovers from his injuries and reunites with his mother in North Carolina, after not seeing her for more than a decade.



Telling our stories helps us understand ourselves and each other, and build community.

Sierra Leone, and Vietnam. My students' lives in this country are not easy. Quite a few juggle work and school. And those who are undocumented feel especially isolated amid the current anti-immigrant rhetoric.

When I first started working at Cardozo's International Academy in 2015, I hesitated to ask students to share their stories. I worried it might create distrust in the classroom or cause them to relive trauma. But when I eventually—at first, cautiously, and then, over time, more confidently—provided open-ended opportunities for them to talk about their lives, they responded positively.

Writing stories has played a powerful role in my own life. One of the reasons I majored in English in college was to explore my identity through writing. I was raised as a Mennonite, and some of my family's cultural practices differed from those of my peers in the public schools I attended. My elementary and secondary teachers did not create opportunities for students to write and share their stories. Nevertheless, as a child I kept personal journals, and in college I had chances to write and reflect on my life in assignments. Writing helped me decide which parts of Mennonite culture to keep and which to discard. I want to give my students, who may feel torn between cultures, an opportunity to sort out their identities through writing.

After earning a bachelor's degree in English and a master's degree in journalism, I became a journalist. For 14 years, I wrote for *Education Week*, a national publication focused on schools. There, I interviewed young people to illustrate how education policy plays out in practice. For more than a decade, I specialized in writing about ELLs, and it was their stories that prompted me to become a teacher. One student I recall meeting was Morry Bamba, a teenager from the West African nation of Guinea. Bamba, who hadn't attended school in his home country, began to learn English—and even how to read—at the age of 15, after moving to the United States and enrolling in a New York City public school. He expressed immense gratitude for how his teachers had helped him, and I wondered if I too could make a difference in young people's lives through teaching. In 2011, I became a teacher of English as a second language in the District of Columbia Public Schools.

In response to the readings, I asked students to share with the class something that happened on their trip to the United States. Quite a few said that, like Enrique, they had traveled on freight trains to cross Mexico, on their way to the United States. Although some chose to relay details as unrevealing as "I ate Mexican food," others discussed their journeys at length. One student recalled the three hours he traveled while crammed inside a box in the luggage area of a bus. Another student captivated us with his story of a Mexican cartel kidnapping him and demanding a ransom. His parents, who lived in the United States, sent money to the kidnappers to attain his release. Given that he had survived this harrowing experience, he relished the chance to share it. This student often wasn't engaged in class, but I was struck by how animated he became while telling his story. When he and his peers shared such traumatic experiences, I listened respectfully and always made sure to tell each one of them, "I'm sorry that happened to you, and I'm glad you are now safe."

Based on *Enrique's Journey*, I asked students to write an essay on whether, given the myriad risks, immigrants should come to the United States. Everyone in the class wrote that immigrants should come. Many shared that immigrants from Central America leave their countries because they feel as if they have no choice: they are poor and want a better life, or they fear gang violence. In assigning the essays, I gave students the option not to share their own stories if they felt uncomfortable doing so; they could write about their own experiences or those of classmates they had interviewed, or they could use information about immigrants from other sources.

The following school year, I switched to teaching English to 11th- and 12th-graders, and I incorporated another project to engage students in writing their stories. I called it a "collective diary." I particularly liked how this project enabled students to reflect on any aspect of their lives. While some students chose

to write about immigration, others wrote about completely different topics, such as their experiences working in D.C. restaurants.

Seniors kept diaries in class about daily events. They also studied those written by other teenagers. They read diary entries collected by Alexandra Zapruder in the book *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust*. I asked students to reflect on this essential question while reading: "How do the diary writers express their humanity?" After we finished the unit, I "published" diary entries from 46 seniors in a collective diary titled "Everyday Cardozo."

How did I ensure this unit was challenging? For one, the diary entries included sophisticated syntax and vocabulary. Students had to look up new words and learn how to use them. Also, I engaged students in discussions as part of a Socratic seminar.

"You may not think your lives are interesting, but they are," I told them, urging them to imitate the writers of *Salvaged Pages* by sharing facts, emotions, and opinions. "What do you want to tell the world?" The deep reflections of the teenagers from this book inspired my students to engage in some deep reflection of their own.

"I want Americans to know that as an immigrant, I also have feelings," one of my students wrote. "I can feel the pain of being far away from my family. I also get scared, knowing I can be deported to my home country. People in this country don't know that if we come here it is because we don't have other options."

As was true of the diary writers from *Salvaged Pages*, my students didn't sugarcoat their experiences. In the book, Moshe Flinker, who was living in exile in Belgium after fleeing his home country of Holland, wrote, "During recent days an emptiness has formed inside

me. Nothing motivates me to do anything or write anything, and

no new ideas enter my mind; everything is as if asleep."

With a similar melancholic tone, one of my students wrote about his feelings: "Some days I feel sad to be in this country. I feel alone. I miss my family a lot. When things get hard I just want to talk with somebody. ... I feel really tired many days but I have to work. I have to do something. Bills won't get paid by themselves. I really wish my real family could be here with me. I am really sure that could help me a lot."

Some diary entries were lighthearted. I learned that a common experience of my students who work as food runners in restaurants is to accidentally take a plate of food to the wrong table. Some managers take such mistakes in stride. Others don't.

Zapruder visited my classes through the PEN/Faulkner Writers-in-Schools program,* and students discussed the book with her. They shared that they could identify with the fear and uncertainty expressed by some of the diarists during the Holocaust because they also feel uncertainty and fear about their future. (Zapruder visited in February 2017, when students were hyper-aware of President Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric.)

For the collective diary, I asked each student to submit three entries, and I chose one or two from each person to publish. I gave students a draft copy and asked for their approval to publish it. I wanted students to feel safe in sharing, so I didn't include their names. When one student decided he didn't want to have a diary entry published, I honored his request. I made 70 copies of the publication and slipped each one into a shiny pocket folder provided by my administrators. My students agreed I could invite teachers and staff in our school to open houses for readings of "Everyday Cardozo."

On open-house day, I set out juice, cookies, and muffins and displayed the publication on a table dressed up with a tapestry from Guatemala and a bouquet of red-orange roses. Attendance by the seniors on that day was stronger than it had been for a couple of weeks. Some students chose to read aloud their own diary entries, but most read entries written by others. Several visitors, including the principal, attended.

I could tell students were excited at the prospect of sharing their work. During the open houses, they used formal manners, introducing themselves before they read, applauding for each other, and listening attentively. No one refused to stand up and read a diary entry, and no one betrayed to the visitors who had written what. To me, that signaled their respect for the stories and for each other. When one staff member visited a class after the students had completed their readings, the students volunteered to repeat the program just for her.

After the open houses, every student took home a copy of "Everyday Cardozo." Over the years, I've noticed that if students don't care about a text or handout, they "accidentally" leave it behind. But that didn't happen this time. Some students even asked if they could take home individual roses from the bouquet on the publication table, and of course I told them they could. I could think of no better way for them to capture the moment. To me, the flowers fittingly symbolized their budding recognition of the beauty of their own self-expression. □

*For more about this program, see www.penfaulkner.org/writers-in-schools.



The Evidence Base for How Learning Happens

A Consensus on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development



BY STEPHANIE M. JONES AND JENNIFER KAHN

Compelling research demonstrates that the success of young people in school and beyond is inextricably linked to healthy social and emotional development. Students who have a sense of belonging and purpose, who can work well with classmates and peers to solve problems, who can plan and set goals, and who can persevere through challenges—in addition to being literate, numerate, and versed in scientific concepts and ideas—are more likely to maximize their opportunities and reach their full potential.

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Educators understand the benefits of educating the whole child, and have been calling for more support and fewer barriers in making this vision a reality. Similarly, employers recognize that social and emotional development, along with content knowledge, is crucial to preparing the future workforce with the life skills employers increasingly need and value.¹

Given the substantial amount of time children spend in them, schools are an important and powerful influence on children's development in all areas. They are a critical context in which to intentionally and productively cultivate social and emotional development.

While many schools and districts are pursuing this work, their success so far has been impeded by education policies—and practices in some schools—that are predicated on a narrow vision of student success. Fortunately, the federal Every Student Succeeds Act and growing efforts at the state and local levels to make social and emotional development a priority are beginning to change the landscape. This convergence of support from the education and business communities and shifts in the policy landscape creates a rare window of opportunity

to highlight and build upon the powerful body of evidence that establishes social, emotional, and cognitive competencies as essential to learning.

Seizing on this momentum, the Aspen Institute's National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development united a broad alliance of leaders to speak with a unified voice about the urgency of integrating social and emotional development into the fabric of K-12 education. The commission convened a group of scientists, researchers, and academics across disparate fields to develop consensus statements on what research says about integrating social, emotional, and academic development. These consensus statements were recently published in *The Evidence Base for How We Learn: Supporting Students' Social, Emotional, and Academic Development*, from which this article is drawn.

The Intertwined Nature of Learning and Development

Decades of research in human development, cognitive and behavioral neuroscience, educational practice and policy, and other fields have illuminated that major domains of human development—social, emotional, cognitive, linguistic, academic—are deeply intertwined in the brain and in behavior. All are central to learning. Strengths or weaknesses in one area foster or impede development in others; each domain intersects with the others. For example, social development has critical cognitive elements that govern the processing of information from the social world and drive subsequent attributions that result. Similarly, cognition and emotion work in tandem. Lacking a core skill like self-control can inhibit cognitive information processing that depends on the emotions of the individual and the actual situation.

We recognize the deep connections among these areas and the importance of each one, but often conversations about academic learning leave out the body of evidence that highlights a set of skills and competencies that are primarily social and emotional. What we refer to in this article as social and emotional learning and development encompasses cognitive, social, and emotional processes, skills, and competencies. Not only do these important skills facilitate academic learning, but we know that the quality and depth of student learning is enhanced when students have opportunities to interact with others and make meaningful connections to subject material. Promoting social and emotional development includes enhancing the skills that students and adults in schools and in other settings possess and demonstrate, and depends on features of the educational setting itself, including its culture and climate.

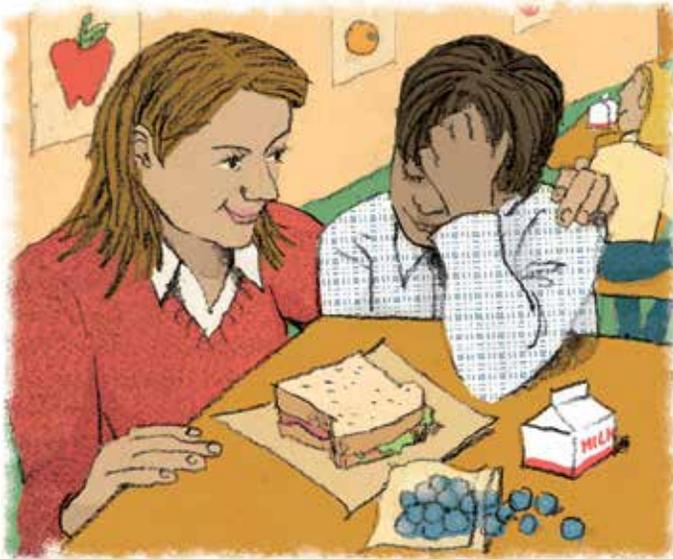
A challenge here is that public debates about social and emotional development suffer from the same issue that plagues many education concepts: not everyone can quite agree on what it is. To some, social and emotional development involves a set of tools for learning, whereas others see it as a way of promoting resilience in the face of both normative and traumatic stresses. Still others emphasize the importance of neurocognitive skills or frame it as a morality and character-building exercise. This lack of consistency doesn't mean that social and emotional competence is "soft," immeasurable, irrelevant, or faddish. It means that social and emotional development is multifaceted and is integral to academics—to how school happens, and to how learning takes place.



Educators understand the benefits of educating the whole child, and have been calling for more support and fewer barriers in making this vision a reality.

Taken together, social and emotional development comprises specific skills and competencies that students need in order to set goals, manage behavior, build relationships, and process and remember information. Moreover, these skills and competencies are fundamentally tied to the characteristics of settings that can be intentionally structured to nurture their development. Looking across a variety of disciplines, organizing systems, and correlational and evaluation research, and reflecting the intertwined nature of human development described above, at least a dozen specific social and emotional skills are clearly linked to school and life success² and are relevant for both students and the adults who teach and care for them.³

In the broadest terms, these skills can be grouped into three interconnected domains: (1) cognitive skills, including executive functions such as working memory, attention control and flexibility, inhibition, and planning, as well as beliefs and attitudes that guide one's sense of self and approaches to learning and growth; (2) emotional competencies that enable one to cope with frustration, recognize and manage emotions, and understand others' emotions and perspectives; and (3) social and interpersonal skills that enable one to read social cues, navigate social situations, resolve interpersonal conflicts, cooperate with others and work effectively in a team, and demonstrate compassion and empathy toward others.



Social, emotional, and cognitive development are deeply intertwined and together are integral to academic learning and success.

Drawing on evidence from a range of disciplines and perspectives, it is clear that social and emotional skills and competencies develop in a complex system of contexts, interactions, and relationships.⁴ Therefore, schools and other organizations that work with children must promote development across multiple areas and address the skills and beliefs of educators and other adults in schools; organizational culture, climate, and norms; and routines and structures that guide basic interactions and instruction. As described in greater detail below, such approaches are most effective when designed to match the needs and opportunities of specific contexts, organizations, and communities.

Social, Emotional, and Academic Development Matters

1. Social, emotional, and cognitive competencies develop throughout our lives; are essential to success in our schools, workplaces, homes, and communities; and allow individuals to contribute meaningfully to society.

There is a substantial and rigorous body of evidence showing that students learn more and classrooms are more effective when children and adolescents have the skills and competencies to manage emotions, focus their attention, successfully navigate relationships with peers and adults, persist in the face of difficulty,

learn from and apply academic content, and problem solve.⁵ Interest in this area is high, and with good reason: there is now a strong body of evidence from large-scale experimental studies showing that high-quality preschool and school-based programming focused on social and emotional development make a positive difference for children's academic achievement and behavior. Moreover, during the past 30 years, demand in the labor market for individuals who possess this body of skills has increased.⁶

To date, we've learned that, in addition to broad improvements in social, behavioral, and mental health outcomes,⁷ programming in social and emotional learning across the school years drives increases in executive functioning, self-efficacy, persistence, prosocial behavior, grades, and scores on standardized tests.⁸ Children with stronger social and emotional competencies are also more likely to enter and graduate from college; succeed in their careers; have positive work and family relationships, better mental and physical health, and reduced criminal behavior; and become engaged citizens.⁹

2. Social, emotional, and cognitive capabilities are fundamentally intertwined—they are interdependent in their development, experience, and use.

Research in human development establishes that social, emotional, and cognitive development are deeply intertwined and together are integral to academic learning and success.¹⁰ Indeed, many social, emotional, and cognitive capacities are processed in the same parts of the brain,¹¹ and this plays out in behavior when, for example, fear impedes our ability to process information.

Studies of effective early childhood and school environments¹² confirm that academic skills in the first years of schooling are entwined with the ability to regulate emotions and behavior and to engage in positive social interactions with peers and adults. Similarly, academic behaviors in the later years (e.g., attendance) are closely tied to students' social, emotional, and behavioral functioning.¹³ We also know that classroom instruction and academic activities that connect rigorous cognitive challenges with social interaction or that spark students' emotions result in deeper, longer-term learning.¹⁴ In practice, efforts that approach these domains from a lens of integration—addressing social, emotional, and academic development together—are likely to be the most effective and sustainable.¹⁵

3. Engaging in effective social and emotional learning-informed programs and practices can improve teacher effectiveness and well-being.

In addition to individual student outcomes, attention to social and emotional development leads to safe, well-functioning schools and classrooms characterized by supportive culture and climate, positive relationships, effective classroom management, deeper learning, and reduced behavioral problems.¹⁶ Not only is there compelling evidence that a focus on social and emotional skills is central to effective classroom management,¹⁷ but promising evidence shows¹⁸ that discipline policies in schools founded on core principles of social and emotional learning can shift race and gender disparities in the application of punitive discipline practices.*

*For more on positive school discipline, see the Winter 2015–2016 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/winter2015-2016.

Moreover, there is now a small, but growing, body of evidence suggesting that interventions addressing teacher-specific social and emotional competencies result in improvements in a variety of indicators of teacher well-being, including reductions in stress and burnout,¹⁹ which in turn can reduce rates of teacher and administrator turnover.²⁰ Teachers also report greater job satisfaction when their students are more engaged and successful, and we know that student motivation and engagement is closely linked to experiences with instructional content and approaches that reflect students' social and emotional worlds.²¹

Social and Emotional Skills Are Malleable

1. Social, emotional, and cognitive competencies can be taught and developed throughout childhood, adolescence, and beyond.

Social, emotional, and cognitive skills are not predetermined by one's genetic blueprint. Rather, our genes interact with experience so that these skills emerge, grow, and change over time, beginning in the earliest years and continuing throughout childhood and adolescence. Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that social and emotional learning skills are malleable over long periods of development, whereas some core cognitive skills become less so as children get older.²²

Although more research is needed in this area, two important developmental principles are at play. First, some skills act as building blocks, serving as a foundation for more complex skills that emerge later in life. For example, regulating and managing one's emotions is fundamental to resolving complex social conflicts, and identifying basic emotions in oneself is essential to being able to regulate them effectively. This suggests that children must develop certain basic social, emotional, and cognitive competencies before they can master others.

Second, as the environments in which children learn, grow, and play change, so do the social, emotional, and cognitive demands placed on them. This suggests that certain social, emotional, and cognitive skills should be cultivated or taught before others, and within specific grades or age ranges, and that instruction in these domains should be developmentally sequenced and age-appropriate.²³ Documenting the typical developmental progression of these skills and, critically, their variability between individuals, cultures, and contexts, represents a major research opportunity.

2. Contexts and experiences can be shaped in ways that positively affect children's social and emotional learning and their academic and life outcomes, and there are programs and practices that have been proven to be effective at improving social and emotional development.

Social and emotional skills can be intentionally cultivated with high-quality practices, programs, and interventions²⁴ in both school and out-of-school settings.²⁵ For example, in a seminal review of more than 200 school-based, universal social and emotional learning (SEL) programs spanning grades K–12, researchers demonstrated that students who participated in evidence-based SEL programs showed significant improvements in social and emotional learning skills, behavior, attitudes, and academic performance, as well as reduced emotional distress and conduct problems.²⁶ Results from this study also indicated that programs were most effective when they employed evidence-based skills-

training practices. Specifically, these programs conformed to the acronym SAFE, meaning they included sequenced activities to teach skills, actively engaged students in learning skills, focused time on SEL skill development, and explicitly targeted SEL skills.²⁷

A follow-up study revealed that participants continued to demonstrate positive benefits for an average of 3.75 years following participation, indicating the long-term benefits of SEL interventions.²⁸ Furthermore, interventions were beneficial across populations, regardless of race/ethnic or socioeconomic background.²⁹ Other approaches to intervention that emphasize one aspect or domain of social, emotional, and cognitive skills—those focused on executive functions, mindfulness, or growth mindsets, for example—have also been shown through rigorous evaluations to be effective.³⁰

Teachers report greater job satisfaction when their students are more engaged and successful.

Schools Play a Central Role in Social, Emotional, and Academic Development

1. Schools can have a significant influence on social, emotional, and academic development. The wider community (families, community institutions, etc.) must be engaged to enhance the strength, depth, and pace of acquisition of these competencies.

Given the substantial amount of time children spend in school, interacting with other students and adults, early childhood educational settings and schools are a primary and critical context for intentionally and rigorously building and cultivating social, emotional, and academic skills. At the same time, families and other community institutions play an essential role in building and supporting these skills.³¹ The inclusion of families and out-of-school-time organizations in such efforts allows for learning and reinforcement to continue across contexts.³²

2. Social, emotional, and academic development is an essential part of preK–12 education that can transform schools into places that foster academic excellence, collaboration and communication, creativity and innovation, empathy and respect, civic engagement, and other skills and dispositions needed for success in the 21st century.

Integrating a focus on social and emotional development into the structures and practices of schools and schooling is a path to creating safe, supportive school environments that are conducive



Classrooms characterized by warm and engaging teacher-student relationships promote deeper learning among students.

to learning. One of the most enduring, repeated, and substantial effects of SEL and related interventions (those focused on executive function or self-regulation, for example) is changes in the culture and climate of classrooms, including organizational, instructional, and behavior management practices.³³ It is clear that such interventions shape not only individual outcomes but also broader, classroom- and school-level outcomes tied to a range of important school experiences.³⁴

Students with strong social and emotional skills are also more likely to initiate and sustain positive relationships with peers and adults, participate in classroom activities, and engage in learning.³⁵ In addition, classrooms characterized by warm and engaging teacher-student relationships* promote deeper learning among students: children who feel comfortable with their teachers and peers are more willing to grapple with challenging material and persist at difficult learning tasks.³⁶ Curriculum and instructional practices that deliberately integrate or interweave

*For more on the importance of educator-student connections, see "It's About Relationships" in the Winter 2015–2016 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/winter2015-2016/ashley.

academic content with social and emotional themes and/or skills are likely to be the most sustainable and effective. There are a growing number of examples of such practices in the field.³⁷

3. Effective implementation is necessary to improve outcomes and for all children to benefit.

A growing body of research highlights the importance of effective implementation of social and emotional learning and related interventions and strategies.³⁸ Unsurprisingly, evidence indicates that high-quality implementation is positively associated with better student outcomes.³⁹ Schools and other settings that merely give "lip service" to social and emotional learning, but do not have clear and consistent programs or strategies, will not show commensurate outcomes for students. Monitoring implementation is essential for program impact and for providing valuable guidance in terms of continuous program improvement.⁴⁰ A focus on implementation advances research, practice, and educational policy because it can lead to better decision making and better services for students.⁴¹

Conditions for effective implementation are known. For example, social and emotional learning should be developmentally and culturally aligned to the needs of students and integrated across settings, including the school, home, and community.⁴² For skill building in these areas to permeate across settings, students need continuous, consistent opportunities to build and practice these skills, which means that adults must agree on consistent practices across classrooms and other school contexts.⁴³

4. For social, emotional, and academic development to thrive in schools, teachers and administrators need training and support to understand and model these skills, behaviors, knowledge, and beliefs.

Students are more likely to benefit from social and emotional learning when staff members receive training, and when the program or strategy is implemented well and embedded in everyday teaching and learning.⁴⁴ However, today's teachers typically receive little training (both pre-service and in-service) on how to promote these skills or deal with peer conflict or social and emotional development overall.⁴⁵ As a result, teachers report limited confidence in their ability to respond to student behavioral needs and, in turn, to support students' social and emotional development.⁴⁶

When teachers receive training in specific evidence-based programs or strategies that affect teaching and learning in the classroom, they feel better equipped to propose and implement positive, active classroom management strategies that discourage students' aggressive behaviors and promote a positive classroom learning climate.⁴⁷ In addition, teachers who have knowledge about child and adolescent development are better able to design and carry out learning experiences in ways that support students' social, emotional, and academic competencies, and enhance student outcomes.⁴⁸ Ultimately, training should be embedded in educators' pre-service and in-service experiences, and administrative and supervisory support should be integrated in ongoing ways.

It is difficult for adults to help students build these skills if they themselves do not possess them. Research indicates that teachers

with stronger social and emotional skills have more positive relationships with students, engage in more effective classroom management, and implement their students' social and emotional programming more effectively.⁴⁹ Critically, not only teachers but district administrators, principals, and other school staff need professional training and support in social and emotional development and related practices.⁵⁰

Focusing on Social and Emotional Development Is Worth It

1. Supporting social, emotional, and academic development is a wise use of public resources, because there can be long-term social and economic benefits to society when schools implement and embed evidence-based programs that promote social and emotional as well as cognitive development.

Relatively low-cost SEL and related interventions can deliver substantial returns on investment. For example, a benefit-cost analysis of prominent SEL interventions revealed a positive return on investment averaging a yield of \$11 in long-term benefits over a range of outcomes for every \$1 invested.⁵¹ Evidence from national and international settings indicates that individuals with higher social and emotional competencies tend to have higher labor market earnings.⁵² Research and theory also suggest that these skills are likely to lead to gains in labor productivity, which include increased long-term employment and taxable earnings.⁵³ Similarly, reductions in violence, drug use, delinquent behavior, and mental health problems—as a result of stronger social and emotional skills and competencies—are likely to lead to a decreased need for government services and, ultimately, less expenditure of public money.⁵⁴

Building social and emotional skills and competencies also has important value from a public health perspective. Universal school-based programs focused on these skills have the capacity to influence short- and long-term physical and mental health outcomes for all children. By facilitating the development of skills such as how to manage emotions, such interventions can serve as important protective factors and change the way individuals adapt to their environment and respond to stress.⁵⁵ Likewise, the inability to cope effectively with stress or regulate one's emotions is associated with numerous diseases that influence the physiological response system.⁵⁶ This is particularly relevant for children exposed to chronic stress often associated with poverty, violence, and substance abuse, conditions that have long-lasting consequences for learning, behavior, and general physical and mental well-being.⁵⁷

2. All students, regardless of their background, benefit from positive social and emotional development. At the same time, building, nurturing, and integrating social, emotional, and academic development in preK–12 can be a part of achieving a more equitable society.

It is clear that supporting positive social, emotional, and academic development is highly valuable for the success and well-being of individuals, schools, and society at large. Interventions designed to build social and emotional skills have been shown to be effective for all children and youth, regardless of geographical setting or socio-demographic background.⁵⁸

We do know that children exposed to adversity, trauma, and stress are particularly susceptible to challenges in these areas,⁵⁹

and that those with different geographic, socioeconomic, gender, and racial/ethnic backgrounds can experience the same environment differently. Importantly, this work is especially relevant for supporting low-income or at-risk students, providing them with a set of skills that can buffer exposure to adverse experiences or difficulty in school.⁶⁰

These issues are very complex, and supporting children and adults to cope with or manage systemic and enduring inequities is not a sustainable pathway to a more equitable society. However, focusing on social, emotional, and academic development can contribute to an important shift toward a society where all children and youth can learn and succeed.

Interventions designed to build social and emotional skills have been shown to be effective for all children and youth.

Integrating social and emotional development with academic instruction is foundational to the success of our young people and, therefore, to the success of our education system and society at large. All children deserve the opportunity to learn the skills they need to succeed as individuals and as contributing, engaged citizens.

With these guiding principles and the collective expertise and influence of the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development's Council of Distinguished Scientists, we are well positioned to bring about meaningful and sustainable change, placing the integration of social, emotional, and academic development at the forefront of education practice and policy. □

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Moving Beyond the Failure of Test-Based Accountability



BY DANIEL KORETZ

Pressure to raise scores on achievement tests dominates American education today. It shapes what is taught and how it is taught. It influences the problems students are given in math class (often questions from earlier tests), the materials they are given to read, the essays and other work they are required to produce, and often the manner in which teachers grade this work. It can determine which educators are rewarded, punished, and even fired. In many cases, it determines which students are promoted or graduate.

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This is the result of decades of “education reforms” that progressively expanded the amount of externally imposed testing and ratcheted up the pressure to raise scores. Although some people mistakenly identify these test-based reforms with the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) enacted in 2002, they began years earlier, and they will continue under the somewhat less draconian Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) that replaced NCLB in 2015.

Examples abound of how extreme—often simply absurd—this focus on testing has become. In 2012, two California high schools in the Anaheim Union High School District issued ID cards and day planners to students that were color-coded based on the students’ performance on the previous year’s standardized tests: platinum for those who scored at the “advanced” level, gold for those who scored “proficient,” and white for everyone else. Students with premium ID cards were allowed to use a shorter lunch line and received discounts on entry to football games and other school activities.¹

Newspapers are replete with reports of students who are so stressed by testing that they become ill during testing or refuse to

come to school. In 2013, for example, eight New York school principals jointly sent a letter to parents that included this: “We know that many children cried during or after testing, and others vomited or lost control of their bowels or bladders. Others simply gave up. One teacher reported that a student kept banging his head on the desk, and wrote, ‘This is too hard,’ and ‘I can’t do this,’ throughout his test booklet.”²

In many schools, it is not just testing itself that stresses students; they are also stressed by the unrelenting focus on scores and on their degree of preparation for the end-of-year accountability tests. Test-based accountability has become an end in itself in American education, unmoored from clear thinking about what should be measured, how it should be measured, or how testing can fit into a rational plan for evaluating and improving our schools.

The rationale for these policies is deceptively simple. American schools are not performing as well as we would like. They do not fare well in international comparisons, and there are appalling inequities across schools and districts in both opportunities for students and student performance. These problems have been amply documented. The prescription that has been imposed on educators and children in response is seductively simple: measure student performance using standardized tests and use those measurements to create incentives for higher performance. If we reward people for producing what we want, the logic goes, they will produce more of it. Schools will get better, and students will learn more.

However, this reasoning isn’t just simple, it’s simplistic—and the evidence is overwhelming that this approach has failed.

Ironically, our heavy-handed use of tests for accountability has also undermined precisely the function that testing is best designed to serve: providing trustworthy information about student achievement. It has led to “score inflation”—that is, increases in scores much higher than the actual improvements in achievement they are supposedly measuring. The result is illusions of progress; student performance appears to be improving far more than it really is. This cheats parents, students, and the public at large, who are being given a steady stream of seriously misleading good news.

Perhaps even worse, these bogus score gains are more severe in some schools than in others. The purpose of test-based accountability is to reward effective practice and encourage improvements. However, because score inflation varies from school to school and system to system, the wrong schools and programs are sometimes rewarded or punished, and the wrong practices may be touted as successful and emulated. And an increasing amount of evidence suggests that, on average, schools that serve disadvantaged students engage in more test preparation and therefore inflate scores more, creating an illusion that the gap in achievement between disadvantaged and advantaged children is shrinking more than it is.³ This is another irony, as one of the primary justifications for the current test-based accountability programs has been to improve equity.

In *The Testing Charade: Pretending to Make Schools Better*, my new book from which this article is drawn, I document the failures of test-based accountability and describe some of the most egregious misuses and outright abuses of testing, along with some of the most serious negative effects. Neither good inten-

tions nor the value of well-used tests justifies continuing to ignore the absurdities and failures of the current system and the real harms it is causing. My book, however, is not an argument against accountability. My experience as a public school teacher, my years as a parent of children in public schools, and my decades of work as a researcher in education have made clear to me the need for more rigorous and effective accountability in public education. But there are more sensible ways to go about this than the ones we have used in recent years.

Our heavy-handed use of tests for accountability has undermined precisely the function that testing is best designed to serve: providing trustworthy information about student achievement.

Here I present some options for doing better. In making specific suggestions, I frequently refer to “accountability.”

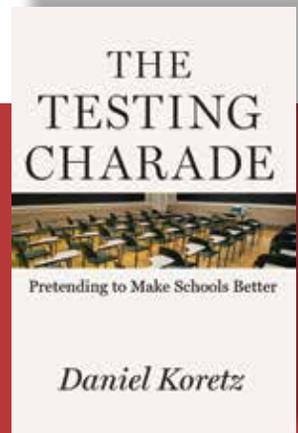
I don’t mean by this a system—like our current one—in which each school and often each teacher has one or more numerical targets and reaps punishments or rewards on that basis. Rather, I am using the term in the more general sense of monitoring how well teachers and schools perform and using a variety of methods to induce—and enable—poor performers to do better.

We Must Measure What Matters

The starting point has to be deciding what matters most. There is room to argue about this, and the list could become quite long, but I’ll start with what I’ll call the Big Three: (1) student achievement, (2) educators’ practices, and (3) classroom climate.

There isn’t much controversy these days about the Big Three. Even within the constraints of test-based accountability, many states and districts are trying out

The Testing Charade, by Daniel Koretz, is published by the University of Chicago Press, which is offering *American Educator* readers a 20 percent discount off the purchase of the book through December 31, 2018. To order, visit www.press.uchicago.edu or call 800-621-2736 and use sales code AD1670.



ways of measuring both practice and classroom climate. There is, however, argument about how to measure the Big Three and about how much weight each should be given. In most districts, test scores still swamp everything else. Indeed, ESSA *requires* that test scores swamp everything else.

Let's start with student achievement. Perhaps surprisingly, given the many pages I devote in my book to all the flaws and unintended consequences brought about by testing, I'll begin by saying that standardized tests should be a part of any system of monitoring and accountability. Many critics of our current system blame standardized tests, but for all the damage that test-based accountability has caused, the problem has not been testing itself but rather the rampant misuses of testing.



The strongest argument for using tests in a system of monitoring is precisely the fact that they are standardized: ideally, students everywhere confront the same tasks, administered and scored the same way. This stands in stark contrast, for example, to high school grades, which vary in rigor from one school to another and even from one classroom to another. Standardized test scores mean—or ideally they *can* mean—the same thing regardless of where students attend school, and that in turn allows us to answer critically important questions, such as whether the achievement gaps between minority and nonminority students have really narrowed in recent years.

The rub, of course, is the caveat “ideally they can.” The pressure of accountability has undercut precisely this advantage of standardized tests. Even leaving aside cheating, some schools engage in far more bad test prep than others, often causing comparisons based on scores to be completely misleading. For example, in some places standardized tests have created an illusion that the achievement gap between disadvantaged and advantaged students has narrowed far more than it actually did. That's because of high stakes, not flaws in the tests.

So, I should be more precise: we ought to start with standardized tests *if and only if we take steps to dramatically reduce bad test prep and inflated scores.*

What's the solution? Precisely what the designers of standardized tests have been telling us to do for more than half a century,

and what the Finnish, Dutch, and Singaporean systems do routinely: use local measures of student achievement—that is, measures not imposed from afar. These local measures include both the quality of students' work and their performance on tests designed by educators in their schools, both of which go into the grades that teachers assign. In addition to providing a far more complete view of students' learning, using these local measures—along with standardized tests when we have good ones—would give teachers more of an incentive to focus on the quality of assignments and schoolwork rather than just preparing students for a single end-of-year test.

Beyond the Big Three, I'll add one more: what are often now called “soft” or “noncognitive” skills—attributes such as persistence, the ability to work well in groups, and so on. E. F. Lindquist, the same pioneer of achievement testing who warned that tests must be used in conjunction with local measures of learning, also cautioned—more than half a century ago—that skills of this sort that can't be captured by standardized tests are a critically important goal of education.⁴ This may strike some hardheaded advocates of accountability as “soft,” but recent research has begun to confirm the wisdom of Lindquist's advice: soft skills affect how well students do long term, even after they leave school. And research suggests that teachers' influence on these soft skills is distinct from their impact on students' scores. (For more on social and emotional development, see the article on page 16.)

For example, a 2016 study by Kirabo Jackson, an economist at Northwestern University, showed that teachers vary in their impact on absences, suspensions, high school completion, and later college enrollment, separate from their influence on test scores.⁵ While it is not at all clear yet how measures of these outcomes can be incorporated into an accountability system, it is certain that we want to encourage teachers to help students develop them, and holding teachers accountable for scores won't accomplish this.

We Must Build a Sensible Accountability System

Measuring a broad range of important things is an essential first step, but it's not in itself enough to create reasonable incentives. I'll suggest four additional steps.

The first may seem self-evident, but it is routinely ignored regardless: *the system has to emphasize what's important.* The weight we give to various measures should, as much as possible, reflect their actual importance. It simply won't suffice to tell districts that they need to throw in one or more measures in addition to test scores. Unless the others are made to matter, test scores will still trump all the others. If the quality of instruction and classroom climate are truly important, educators need to know that they really count.

The second step is to *create the counterbalancing incentives* that are largely lacking in our test-based accountability systems. In our test-based accountability system, everyone, from a teacher's aide to the district and state superintendents, has the same incentive: to raise test scores. No one has a strong incentive to worry about *how* scores are raised—for example, to tamp down bad test prep. This is why districts sometimes provide bad test-prep materials and why administrators pressure teachers to use them.

The third step requires *looking well beyond what happens on any single day in the classroom*. William H. Schmidt at Michigan State University, who has devoted much of his career to international comparisons* of both student achievement and curricula, argues that in many countries, evaluations of schooling include monitoring how well educators are teaching the intended curriculum—that is, the curriculum that is supposed to be taught. One of the most common inappropriate responses to test-based accountability has been to stop teaching the entire intended curriculum, cutting back on or completely dropping whatever happens not to be on the test. The test essentially *replaces* the intended curriculum. To tamp this down, one has to compare what is called the “implemented curriculum”—that is, the content that is actually taught in a school—with the intended. This means that, from time to time, someone would have to examine teachers’ syllabi, and often some of their lesson plans.

Monitoring how well the curriculum is taught is essential for a second, perhaps even more important, reason: it is one way to combat the impoverishment of instruction in untested subjects that test-based accountability has caused. A common response by educators to testing in a limited number of subjects has been to take time away from other subjects, sometimes virtually or entirely eliminating them from instruction. In the current system, no one has any incentive to tell teachers that a week of social studies isn’t enough or that art class shouldn’t be used to drill kids with math test-prep materials.

Finally, *targets have to be reasonable*: the goals facing educators have to be ones that they can reach by legitimate means. This requires practical targets for both the amount of improvement and the time allowed to accomplish it. The time span must take into account the year-to-year fluctuations in scores that arise from both differences among cohorts of students and the often unavoidable trial and error in improving instruction, because ignoring these makes annual targets a recipe for failure.

There is room to argue about how best to determine what is reasonable, but the principle is inescapable. If we demand more than educators can deliver by teaching better, they will have to choose between failing and cutting corners—or worse, simply cheating. This may sound obvious as a general principle, but, in practice, it will be both controversial and difficult to implement. Demanding big and rapid gains makes for good press and often good politics, so persuading policymakers to be realistic won’t always be easy.

Use Tests Sensibly

Time after time, as bad news about test-based accountability began to accumulate, its advocates insisted that if we just substituted better tests—what they considered “better” varied from one instance to another—the system would right itself. They maintained that the negative effects on instruction and score inflation would be brought under control and that we would finally get the promised improvements in learning. This didn’t happen, and while I don’t want to disparage efforts to improve tests, these arguments missed the main story. The chief problem was never the

tests themselves. It was the misuse of tests, which was often worsened by successive reforms.

We shouldn’t rely on tests when we don’t have appropriate and sufficiently high-quality tests to use. As much as is practical, we need to avoid relying on arbitrary performance standards, and we need to set realistic goals for improvement. We need to use test scores in conjunction with a wide variety of other measures, and we need to balance the incentives to raise scores. We need to take steps to reduce inappropriate test prep.

We must *stop pretending that one test can do everything*. It’s now common to claim that a test designed and used for accountability can also provide honest monitoring of progress and good diagnostic information for teachers. The fact that some are making this claim is hardly surprising; accountability testing has already swallowed a great deal of school time, and with our current incentives, few people want a second measure that might distract from the all-important goal of ratcheting up scores on the accountability test. However, it just isn’t so, particularly given the pressures in our system to raise scores.

We need to use test scores in conjunction with a wide variety of other measures, and we need to balance the incentives to raise scores.

A corollary is that we need to *curtail sharply the use of the “interim” or “benchmark” assessments* that are widely used to predict how students will score at the end of the year. Many of these tests are just facsimiles of parts of the end-of-year summative test, designed to mirror not only the content of the summative test but also how that content is presented. Currently, students in many districts spend a huge amount of time over the course of the school year taking them. This is a waste of instructional time, and it is a recipe for score inflation. Obviously, tests used during the course of the year should reflect the same curriculum—the same domain—as the summative test, but they shouldn’t be mirror images. They shouldn’t be test prep.

Finally, a recommendation for a truly fundamental shift: we should consider turning the current approach on its head and *treating scores as the starting point rather than the end of evaluation*. I’ve stressed repeatedly that scores alone, whether high or low, aren’t enough to tell us why students are performing as they do. Low scores, however, are an indication of likely problems. Rather than treating these low scores as sufficient to label a school a failure, we could use them to target other resources used for evaluation.

*For more on what international comparisons can tell us about American education, see “Puzzling Out PISA” in the Spring 2015 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/spring2015/schmidt_burroughs.

Provide Support to Teachers

Teachers can't do it all—especially teachers in many low-performing schools. This fact is widely accepted in principle, but it is often ignored in practice. We will need to take this far more seriously than we have if we are to achieve the large gains in student learning and, in particular, the big improvements in equity that reformers have promised us for years.

The supports we should provide are of three types. The first is *better initial training and ongoing support* for teachers already in the workplace. Many teachers simply don't have the skills needed to produce the improvements we want, particularly for disadvantaged children. There is nothing new about this recommendation. For decades, American experts in teacher training, such as Linda Darling-Hammond of Stanford University, have been pointing to the need for better training and internships.*



The second category is *in-school supports*: supplementary classes, longer school days, smaller classes, and the like. The third is *out-of-school supports*; one that has received a great deal of attention in recent years is high-quality preschool, which can improve the long-term prospects of disadvantaged kids.

Why are recommendations for more support controversial? One reason is money. It is vastly cheaper to buy a test, set arbitrary targets, and pretend that the problem is solved. A second is timing. It takes time for these supports to work. Test scores can be improved very rapidly—even in the space of only two or three years—if one turns a blind eye to fraudulent gains.

There is one additional, less obvious reason why the importance of support might be controversial: its implications for setting targets. Just as the improvements we can reasonably expect depend on the circumstances confronting any given school, they also depend on the amount of support we are willing to provide to the educators who work in it.

For example, consider two hypothetical elementary schools that are located in very poor neighborhoods and that largely serve highly disadvantaged students. Assume that the teachers in the

two schools are comparable in quality. Students in the first school have access to high-quality preschools, health screening, and a school breakfast program. The second school has none of these. It would be unrealistic to expect students in schools like the second to match the performance of kids in schools like the first, and expecting similar performance would necessarily cause you to conclude—falsely—that teaching in the second school is of lower quality. Once again, this points to the importance of knowing about the context in which a school operates and to the need for professional judgment.

In this brief article, I could only describe some of the steps we should take to replace test-based accountability with something more effective. I couldn't describe in detail the failures of test-based accountability or the principles underlying the alternatives I recommend here. I discuss these in depth in *The Testing Charade*.

Implementing these recommendations will be a daunting task. To start, it will require a great deal more work than simply testing students. Even if well designed, a new system will also require patience; the obstacles to improvement are substantial, and nothing will produce gains as rapid as the bogus gains in scores we have become accustomed to with test-based accountability. And a better system is likely to be considerably more expensive—if one doesn't count the cost of the countless hours of potential instructional time we are now tossing away for test prep and excessive testing.

And we need to face up to two basic facts about interventions in complex systems such as education: most interventions, even very good ones, will have side effects we don't want, and none will work exactly as planned. The implications of this are clear. We need to monitor—routinely—the effects of any new interventions, and we need to be prepared to face the music and make mid-course corrections when warranted. We expect this in fields like medicine and auto safety, and we ought to demand it in education as well.

No matter how large, however, these difficulties don't provide an excuse to continue on the current path. The strategy of test-based accountability has failed, and tinkering around the edges won't change that. Everyone with a stake in our educational system—including parents, employers, educators, and most importantly students—deserves better. □

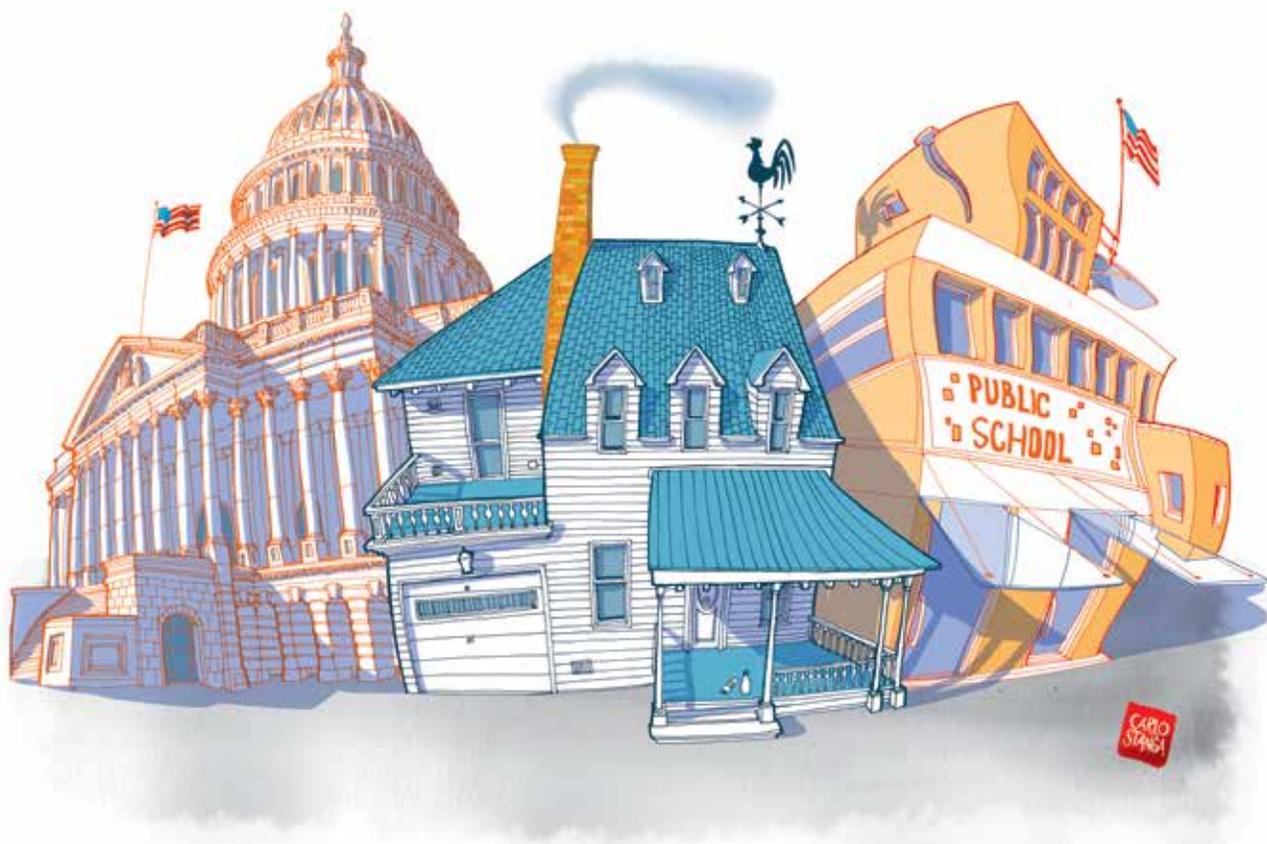
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Lessons Learned in School Reform

Of Policy, Parents, and Practice



BY FREDERICK M. HESS

It's been three decades since I started substitute teaching for beer money in Waltham, Massachusetts, back in the 1980s. It's been a quarter century since I stopped teaching high school social studies in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. It's been two decades since I first started teaching education policy at the University of Virginia. And it's been 15 years since I became a scholar of education policy at the American Enterprise Institute, a Washington, D.C., think tank.

In other words, I've been in and around schooling for a long time. And, while I'm not the quickest study, like anyone who's spent more than five minutes in education, I've got a gut reaction to the term "school reformer." For some, it summons images of heroic

charter school leaders. For others, it brings to mind "deformers" bent on destroying public education.

For me? It's something a bit different: I find myself wondering why the handiwork of passionate, well-meaning people so often disappoints. And, in the spirit of full disclosure, I say all this as someone who, for many long years, has been labeled a school reformer.

Now, a few reformers will deny that reform has disappointed. They'll argue that dozens of new teacher-evaluation systems have delivered, never mind the growing piles of paperwork, dubious scoring systems, or lack of evidence that they've led to any changes in how many teachers are deemed effective or in need of improvement. They'll insist that the conception and rollout of the Common Core State Standards went swimmingly, never mind the politicized mess, half-baked implementation, or fractured testing regime. They'll tell you it doesn't matter that the U.S. Department of Education's School Improvement Grants

didn't move test scores or that *Education Next* reports that charter schools are less popular today than they've been in 15 years.

I'm going to set such claims aside. Having spent a *lot* of time with reformers over the past 25 years, I can confidently report that most will privately concede that much didn't work out as hoped or as they'd anticipated. If you think I'm wrong, that things are working out splendidly and just as advertised, then feel free to skip this article and my recent book, *Letters to a Young Education Reformer*.

Now, at this point, there are those who will sigh, "Of course those reforms didn't work! They were never supposed to!! They've all been part of an ideological crusade to undermine democratic schooling and privatize public education." They'll argue that two decades of school reform, from No Child Left Behind to Race to the Top, was never really intended to be about improving schools. If this is how you see things, you too will probably want to skip this article. Because, after long experience, I've found that the lion's share of reformers—whatever they get right

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or wrong—are passionate and sincere about wanting to make schools better.

But, if we can agree to set aside hyperbolic claims that reform has “worked” and avoid suggesting that missteps are just part of an evil scheme, we can get to the question I want to discuss: Why have good intentions and energetic efforts so often disappointed? What exactly have we learned from all of this?

What I’ve Learned

On this count, I think I have something useful to share. I want to talk about three lessons I’ve learned along the way.

The Role of Policy

Policy turns out to be a pretty lousy tool for improving education because policy can make people do things, but it can’t make them do them *well*. And, when it comes to improving schools, doing things well is pretty much the whole ball game. As a policy wonk with a PhD in political science, this realization pained me to no end. Now, don’t get me wrong. I still think policy has an important role to play. Our schools and systems were never designed for what we’re asking them to do today—to rigorously educate every child in a diverse nation. Making that possible will indeed require big changes to policies governing staffing, spending, and much else. That’s why I’m a school reformer. But policy is better at facilitating that kind of rethinking than at forcing it.

Reformers, for instance, have attempted time and again to devise policies that would “turn around” low-performing schools.

There was the 1990s-era Comprehensive School

Reform Program, the interventions mandated by No Child Left Behind, and the Obama administration’s \$7 billion School Improvement Grants program. Unfortunately, the research has found no evidence that any of this worked consistently. Indeed, a recent federal evaluation of the School Improvement Grants program couldn’t unearth any significant effects on learning, no matter how the data were diced. Schools can turn around—we just don’t have a clue about how to make this happen via policy.

Policy is a blunt tool, one that works best when simply making people do things is enough. In schooling, it’s most likely to work as intended when it comes to straightfor-

Educators are deeply versed in the fabric of schooling and experience the unintended consequences of reforms.

ward directives—like mandating testing or the length of a school year. Policy tends to stumble when it comes to more complex questions—when *how* things are done matters more than *whether* they’re done.

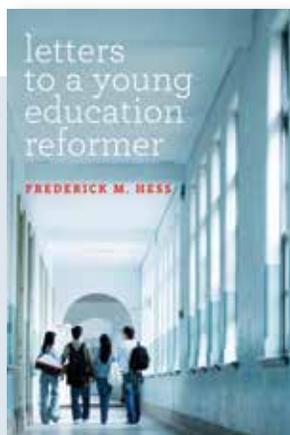
Here’s what I mean: Say a governor wants to mandate that all schools offer teacher induction based on a terrific program she’s seen. Her concern is that if the directive is too flexible, some schools will do it enthusiastically and well, but those she’s most concerned about will not. So, she wants to require schools to assign a mentor to each new teacher. But then she worries that the “problem schools” will treat the mentoring as busy-work. So, she also wants to require that mentors meet weekly with their charges and document that they’ve addressed 11 key topics in each session. But this still can’t ensure that mentors will treat their

duties as more than box-checking, so she wants to require...

You see the problem. Then it gets worse. Far too often, in fact, policy unfolds like a children’s game of telephone. In Washington, D.C., federal officials have a clear vision of what they think a change in guidance on Title I spending should mean. But when officials in 50 states read that new guidance, they don’t all understand it the same way. Those officials have to explain it to thousands of district Title I coordinators, who then provide direction to school leaders and teachers. By that point, bureaucracy, confusion, and nervous compliance can start to become the law of the land. Now, multiply that a hundredfold for the deluge of state and federal rules that rain down. When all this doesn’t work out as hoped, there’s a tendency for those responsible to insist that the policy is sound and any issues are just “implementation problems.” I’ll put this bluntly: there’s no such thing as an implementation problem. It took a while, but I eventually learned that what matters in schooling is what actually happens to 50 million kids in 100,000 schools. That’s *all* implementation. Calling something an implementation problem is a fancy way to avoid saying that we didn’t realize how a new policy would really work.

We Can’t Patronize Parents... or Give Them a Free Pass

We’ve mucked up the relationship between parents and educators. We’ve lost the confidence to insist that parents have to do their part. Now, it’s important here to remember that the conviction that every child can learn—and that schools should be expected to teach every child—was not always the norm. It represents a tectonic shift and a hard-won victory. Back in the 1980s and 1990s, American education paid a lot of attention to the quality of parenting and far too little to the quality of teaching and schooling. Complaints that parents weren’t doing their part too often seemed to be an excuse for leaving kids behind. I taught and mentored student teachers in that era, in a number of schools across several states, and can testify that it wasn’t unusual to hear educators declare that certain students were unteachable and that it was their parents’ fault.



Letters to a Young Education Reformer, by Frederick M. Hess, is published by Harvard Education Press, which is offering *American Educator* readers a 20 percent discount off the purchase of the book through January 31, 2018. To order, visit www.harvardeducationpress.org or call 888-437-1437 and use sales code AE17RH.

Today, that mindset is regarded as unacceptable. Teachers are expected to teach every child. That's a wonderful thing. I fear, though, that the insistence that parents do their part has been lost along the way. Talk of parental responsibility has come to be seen as little more than a case of blaming the victim. The result is that we just don't talk very much anymore, at least in public, about whether parents insist that their kids do their homework or respect their teachers. When students are truant, we hesitate to say anything that would imply parents are at fault. When only a handful of parents show up at parent-teacher meetings, reformers are conspicuously mum. If they do take note, it's usually only to lament that parents are overworked and overburdened.

Obviously, these are thorny questions. Parents frequently *are* overburdened. But there's a necessary balance here, and we've managed to tip from one extreme to the other. Education is always a handshake between families and schools. It can help to think about this in terms of healthcare. When we say people are good doctors, we mean that they're competent and responsible; we don't mean that they perform miracles. If a doctor tells you to reduce your cholesterol and you keep eating steak, we don't label the physician a "bad doctor." We hold the doctor responsible for doing her job, but expect patients to do their part, too. When the patient is a child, the relationship is the same—but the parents assume a crucial role. If a diabetic child ignores the doctor's instructions on monitoring blood sugar, we don't blame the doctor. And we don't blame the kid. We expect parents to take responsibility and make sure it gets done.

When it comes to the handshake between parents and educators, though, that same understanding has broken down. Talk of parental responsibility is greeted with resistance and even accusations of bias. Yet parents have an outsized impact on their children's academic future. Children whose parents read to them, talk to them, and teach them self-discipline are more likely to succeed academically.

The point is decidedly *not* to scapegoat parents or to judge them. I know all too well how tough and exhausting parenthood can be. The point is to clarify for parents what

they should be doing and help them do those things well. Today, we ask educators to accept responsibility for the success of all their students. Good. How students fare, though, is also a product of whether they do their work and take their studies seriously. Some of that truly is beyond the reach of educators. So, by all means, let's call teachers to account—let's just be sure to do it for parents, too.

The Crucial Partnership between Talkers and Doers

School reform isn't about having good ideas—it's about how those ideas actually work for students and educators. This can be



hard for those gripped by a burning desire to make the world a better place in a hurry. Reformers need to sweat things like perverse incentives and paperwork burdens—even when they'd rather focus on larger issues like equity or injustice. They must consider how reforms will affect the day-to-day lives of students, families, and educators. It can seem like good ideas and good intentions should count for more than they do. They don't.

Most educators innately know all this, of course. After all, they spend their days working in schools. They tend to think granularly, in terms of individual students, curricular units, and instructional strategies. Educators are deeply versed in the fabric of schooling and experience the unintended consequences of reforms. This is why it's easy for them to get so frustrated with self-styled reformers.

Educators are right to be skeptical. Reformers and practitioners will inevitably see things differently. But what frustrated teachers can miss is that this is OK, even

healthy. Educators are looking from the inside out, and reformers from the outside in. In all walks of life, there are doers and there are talkers. Doers are the people who teach students, attend to patients, and fix plumbing. Talkers are free to survey the sweep of what's being done and explore ways to do it better.

Ultimately, serious and sustainable school reform needs to be profoundly pro-doer. When talkers wax eloquent about students trapped in dysfunctional systems, they often forget that many teachers feel equally stymied. The bureaucracy that reformers decry can also infuriate and demoralize the teachers who live with it every day. Educators see when policies misfire and where existing practices come up short. Talkers have the time to examine the big picture, learn from lots of locales, and forge relationships with policymakers. Talkers have the distance to raise hard truths that can be tough for educators to address simply because they strike so close to home. But it's ultimately the doers—the educators—who have to do the work, which means talkers need to pay close attention to what educators have to say. There's a crucial symbiosis here: teachers and talkers need each other.

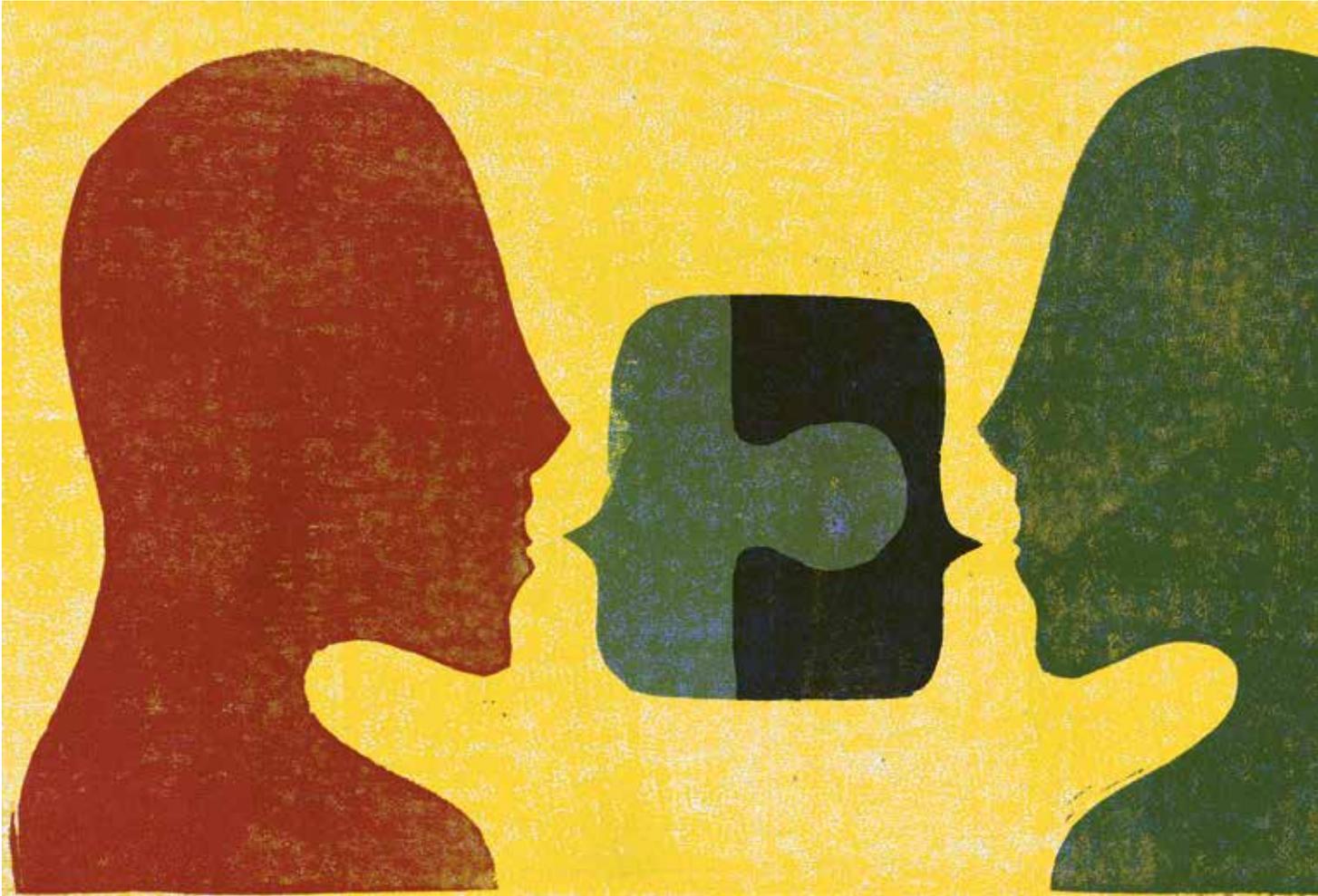
How I Hope to Do Better

Look, I'll offer a confession: I'm not an especially nice guy. When I suggest that talkers and doers need to listen to those who see things differently, that policymakers are well-served by humility, or that reform needs to work for teachers as well as students, it's not because I want everyone to get along. It's because education improvement is hard work. Doing it well is at least as much about discipline and precision as it is about passion. What I'm counseling is not niceness but *professionalism*. This means listening more deliberately and speaking more selectively. It's tough to listen, though, when we're constantly shouting at one another.

It may not fit the tenor of the times. But I've learned that, if we're to do better going forward, we all need to respect the limits of policy, ask more of parents, and appreciate the symbiosis of talkers and doers—while also always remembering that in schooling, it's the doing that counts. □

The Profession Speaks

Educator Perspectives on School Reform



BY BRETT GARDINER MURPHY

For more than 20 years, members of what has come to be known as the education reform movement have told a largely singular story about public education in the United States. It's a story that has crossed party lines unlike any other in recent memory. This movement has pushed relentlessly for accountability-based reforms to improve a failing system and solve our country's problem of inequality.

Their story goes something like this: The education system in the United States once ranked at the top in the world, but today we find our position slipping. For this to change, we need a system of standardized exams that can provide clear data about where students are succeeding and failing and that tell us what we can

do to make up the difference. If we find that teachers are not helping students fulfill their potential, we must hold them accountable and, if necessary, replace them with quality teachers who can get the job done. If a school is failing to meet students' needs, we must immediately improve or close it and provide better choices for families, so that children are not relegated to a poor education based on their zip code.

When No Child Left Behind became law in 2002, it almost tripled the number of required state tests overnight.¹ In a 2015 survey, teachers reported that their students spent an average of 19 days out of the school year taking district- and state-mandated tests.² Schools in areas targeted by education reformers were often subjected to even more required testing by their local districts. One study found that by high school, city kids spent 266 percent more time on local testing than their suburban peers.³ And that didn't even count the amount of time that teachers spent within classes preparing students for the tests and having them take practice exams, or the ways in which pedagogy itself changed to align more closely to the tests.⁴

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Almost everything in public education—from evaluating teachers, to choosing which schools needed to be improved or shut down, to deciding whether new charter schools were successful or not—became connected to these exams. By 2016, 42 states relied on test scores in their teacher evaluation systems,⁵ but the systems were notoriously flawed. Today, teachers report



In an attempt to open up the real worlds of our schools to policymakers, reformers, journalists, and the public at large, I decided a book by classroom teachers was needed.

the lowest morale in decades,⁶ fewer college students plan to become educators,⁷ and teacher shortages are rampant in nearly every state.⁸ Schools with the highest numbers of low-income students and students of color are still served by the most inexperienced teachers with fewer credentials, and they experience the highest rates of teacher turnover.⁹

From 2001 to 2013, 21,010 schools were closed, a disproportionate number of which served low-income black and brown students.¹⁰ Meanwhile, a series of new charter schools promised to raise student outcomes, as measured by test scores, faster than traditional schools. As a result, the number of charter schools grew more than 300 percent during almost the same time period, and 2,000 new charter schools were added in the past five years alone.¹¹

I taught in a traditional public high school in Harlem at the height of the testing craze and when charter schools were spreading like wildfire throughout New York City. One year, I had a group of students who had been part of an entire grade that was removed from their charter school because of underperformance. The fol-

lowing year, I watched other students get accepted into a different charter school only to end up right back with us six months later when the school deemed they “were not a good fit.”

When I left that school for another high school in Brooklyn, I taught a student who worked hard to improve her academic standing over her four years with us only to not be allowed to graduate because she was a few points away from passing one of five required standardized exams. She became increasingly anxious about taking tests, broke down crying one day out of frustration and fear, and started to be unresponsive in conversations about her future. I also saw teachers change their curriculum from a dynamic project-based model with real-world applications to focus on test preparation, because their tenure applications had been denied due to inadequate test scores. All this for a test that students weren’t required to take and had no reason to be invested in.

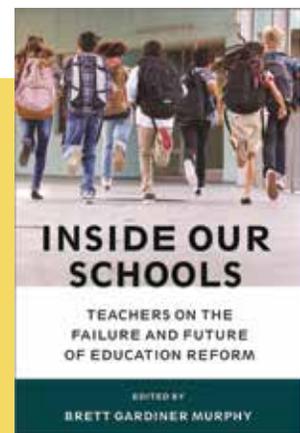
Nearly every time a new policy came through from on high, it was painful. In a scene common in schools across the country, our principal would share a new dictate with us, and, immediately, teachers around the room could see why this was a terrible idea for our students. It is confounding how people so removed from schools can create policies that are no more than large-scale experiments, often tried out on our nation’s most vulnerable children.

In an attempt to open up the real worlds of our schools to policymakers, reformers, journalists, and the public at large, I decided a book by classroom teachers was needed. I started gathering stories from educators around the country. I asked them to share their perspectives on the accountability-era reforms and the alternatives they were building to create a more equitable education for their students. By getting an inside view of how these policies were experienced by real people and reading about the care, passion, and intelligence with which many teachers try to provide a high-quality education, I hoped to inject a bit of reality into education and restore some humanity to a field overrun by data sets and platitudes.

Sharing Their Stories

To find the teachers for the collection, I reached out to teacher activist groups, teacher unions, community-based organizations, professors in colleges of education, education writers and commentators, and parent organizations to see if they knew teachers who would be interested in writing about their experiences. As you

Inside Our Schools, edited by Brett Gardiner Murphy, is published by Harvard Education Press, which is offering *American Educator* readers a 20 percent discount off the purchase of the book through January 31, 2018. To order, visit www.harvardeducationpress.org or call 888-437-1437 and use sales code AE17BM.



might imagine, many teachers have stories about how policies connected to accountability-based reform have affected their work; the problem was finding the time to write. In the end, I compiled and edited 25 stories from teachers across the United States into *Inside Our Schools: Teachers on the Failure and Future of Education Reform*. The contributors range from kindergarten teachers to college educators, first-year teachers to 20-year veterans. They are Montessori teachers, special education teachers, and teachers of English language learners. They teach in big schools, small schools, traditional public schools, magnet schools, and charter schools.

Despite their different geographic zones and school types, these educators present some important commonalities. Their stories are deeply personal, giving us a look at the students and families in the crosshairs of test-based accountability while also sharing their thoughts and feelings as they navigate various obstacles. And, they offer an alternative vision of the ways in which teachers are already rethinking education, as Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos claims we should start doing.¹²

The book is organized around the recurring buzzwords the mainstream education reform movement has used to define its policies: accountability, quality, choice, failure, and equity. Chapter introductions explain today's hot-button education issues, providing the context necessary for any reader to have a clear sense of the state of education policy and research in each of these areas. But, by design, the testimony of teachers makes up the bulk of the book. It is through the experiences and voices of teachers that readers can visualize life in public schools in ways that usually go unseen by those who are not educators.

In the chapter of the book titled "Failure," for example, teachers unpack the caricatures of "bad schools" portrayed by many reformers as hopeless institutions where young people's dreams wither and die. These educators show the nuances at play in schools labeled "failing." In one story, K. Jennifer Oki, a former teacher in New York City, describes reading the account of her school drawn up by city officials, aired in a public hearing about the school's closure. Her story, "On Dissonance and Light: How to Tell a Story of Success or Failure," contrasts their vision of her school with what she experienced as a founding teacher there. She writes,

I cannot reconcile this with the school I knew; I do not recognize it. I *do* recognize the teachers that parents describe going above and beyond for their children. I recognize the colleagues that teachers reference as they explain how their peers make do with little, work within constraints, [and] handle oversized classes and undersized classrooms. I remember our [special education teacher support services] room in a converted closet, our special education pull-out students literally relegated to a place where we tuck things away, and the converted "classrooms" in the basement when we were stretched for space.

Her essay presents a complicated image that is rarely found in stories about public schools, and the narrative form allows for the kind of context that numbers alone belie. Oki does not shy away from sharing how she thinks the school should have been better,

but she shows us how the decisions made at the time seemed sensible within a "rigged system" set up by local, state, and federal education policy. It is this real-life complexity with which educators and policymakers must contend if we are serious about improving all schools.

The book also provides numerous examples of how we could do "reform" better. The last story of the "Failure" chapter explores the possibilities for school improvement from the bottom up, guided by teachers and families working together. Liz Sullivan details how one school in Oakland, California, successfully undertook this process. Her story, "From Whittier to Greenleaf: A Community-Based Transformation Story," reads like a suspense novel, from the early days of organizing within the school, to an attempted charter school takeover in the middle of improvement



efforts, to meetings led by administrators, families, and teachers to reimagine what their school could be. Through this years-long process, she writes, the school has become a place where "parent volunteers proudly wear school t-shirts, photos of every student adorn the leaves of a tree painted in the entryway, and the quiet buzz of student conversation spills out into the hallways."

Each of the chapters proceeds in a similar fashion. In the "Accountability" chapter, we hear about how testing has narrowed instruction and disempowered English language learners and special education students. But the chapter ends on a high note with the story of a public high school that has been given the freedom to use performance-based assessments. In the "Quality" chapter, teachers discuss their disillusionment with an alternative certification program and with unfair evaluation systems, while others describe the success of teacher-led inquiry groups and student surveys as alternative models to provide educators feedback and help them improve. In the "Choice" chapter, we hear one teacher's demoralizing experience at a no-excuses charter school but also get a look inside a union-led, community-based charter school and an innovative teacher-led STEM (science,

technology, engineering, and math) school. Reading about these experiences helps us connect policies to real people and pushes us to visualize what might be possible for our own schools.

The last chapter of the book tackles the biggest problem facing our public education system today: equity. While reformers have centered their focus on accountability through test scores, they've all but ignored the resegregation of public education,¹³ the cutting of school budgets and broader social services since the 2008 recession,¹⁴ and the role of zero-tolerance discipline in pushing students of color, LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning) students, and students with disabilities into the school-to-prison pipeline.¹⁵ Teachers in the book discuss how they build a more just education within their own classrooms, respect their students, understand their socio-emotional needs,



Teachers have rightfully pointed out that we are rarely asked into the conversations and meetings where decisions are made.

implement restorative justice programs, advocate for culturally responsive pedagogy, and provide space for their students to critically analyze the world around them.

The “Equity” chapter also makes clear that teachers and policymakers must have a better connection in our joint efforts to improve public education. As educators, we have a lot of work to do to ensure that our classrooms and schools work for *all* our students, but we can't provide everything that young people and their families need without broader systemic changes.

With the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), we are now starting the next phase of reform. States have submitted their ESSA plans, with some doubling down on the current path and others making changes that allow schools the resources and space to improve. The plans so far are a mixed bag and will require continued attention and pressure. At the federal level, DeVos has made clear her efforts to radically restructure public education through a system of “choices” that includes a dramatic increase in charter schools alongside voucher programs for private schools.

In the past, teachers have rightfully pointed out that we are rarely asked into the conversations and meetings where decisions are made. At this moment, the stakes are too high for us to wait for an invitation. Privatizers will continue to promote an image of public schools that suggests we are all failing and nothing positive is happening in our classrooms. Our stories are needed to disrupt this picture.

Say what you will about how the Internet has shortened students' attention spans, it has democratized whose point of view can be heard, including our own. I started a website connected to the book, InsideOurSchools.com, where anyone involved in public schools—teachers, parents, and students—can upload their stories through videos, audio recordings, or written reflections. It's just one of many ways that we can use our voices in the years ahead.

The point is not that everything is fine the way it is now; the injustices that have thrived in our public education system throughout history need to be dismantled and repaired. But the people closest to our schools—teachers, in collaboration with families and students—should be a big part of building, testing, and implementing the next steps for a public education focused on equity. The 25 teachers who wrote for *Inside Our Schools* are direct evidence of that, and there are thousands more teachers with stories and perspectives that need to be heard. In our current context, it is doubtful we're going to be offered a platform from which to speak. It's time that we make our own. □

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Remote But Not Removed

Professional Networks That Support Rural Educators



BY DANETTE PARSLEY

Alex Andrews teaches high school English in an Alaskan village along the Bering Sea, roughly 400 miles west of Anchorage. Of the village's 750 residents, almost all are Alaska natives. Poverty is high in the area, and many residents hunt and fish for their sustenance. As a social activity, students like to play basketball. Many have never left the village.

Partly because of the vast distances between communities that have no access to roads, the students Andrews teaches in the Lower Kuskokwim School District can feel cut off from the rest of the world. The district is about the same size geographically as the entire state of Ohio. As a result, students don't get many opportunities to meet others beyond their immediate community.

Danette Parsley is the chief program officer at Education Northwest, where she leads initiatives like the Northwest Rural Innovation and Student Engagement Network. Parts of this article appeared in Parsley's blog entry "Building a Professional Network of Rural Educators from Scratch" for the Albert Shanker Institute on October 5, 2016, available at www.shankerinstitute.org/blog/building-professional-network-rural-educators-scratch.

Isolation doesn't just affect students, however. Teachers in remote rural areas also don't get many opportunities to communicate and collaborate with other teachers. "I felt stranded," Andrews says of his first years teaching in western Alaska. "It was as if no one else was going through the same struggles."

Across the country, slightly more than 25 percent of public schools are classified as rural, and approximately one out of every 15 schools is located in a remote setting more than 25 miles away from the nearest population center.* While the daily interactions between students and teachers might mirror that of their urban and suburban counterparts, the conditions that rural teachers face differ a great deal.

For example, in the Pacific Northwest, stories abound of rural teachers wearing many hats because school staffs are small. Districts also struggle to find qualified teachers willing to move to remote areas. Most significant, though, is that teachers face extreme isolation. It's not uncommon for a rural teacher to be

*See "Number of Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, by School Urban-Centric 12-Category Locale and State or Jurisdiction: 2013-14," in National Center for Education Statistics, *Rural Education in America*, table A.1.a.-2, accessed September 13, 2017, <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ruraled/tables/A.1.a.-2.asp>.

the *only* third-grade teacher or the *only* social studies teacher in a district with fewer than 400 kids. In many rural areas, the nearest teacher for the same grade level or content area might work 100 miles away. This kind of isolation makes it hard for teachers to bounce ideas off colleagues who teach in similar contexts or to receive professional development.[†] And it can put quite a bit of stress on novice teachers, who are also trying to adjust to a new profession.

“My first year teaching was the hardest year of my life,” says an educator from rural Idaho. “I questioned my decision to become a teacher.”

Rather than let the challenges caused by teacher isolation persist, a number of groups in the Pacific Northwest, led by Educa-



tion Northwest, where I work, decided to join together and create a vehicle for collaboration. The groups—including state education agencies and a handful of small rural districts that accepted our invitation to participate—decided to establish a professional network of rural educators with the goal of providing support to help their colleagues succeed and encourage them to stay in the profession. Thus, the Northwest Rural Innovation and Student Engagement (NW RISE) Network was created.

With the network now in its fourth year, we are seeing the powerful difference it’s making for both teachers and students. For example, Andrews and his students engaged in a project crafted with his NW RISE colleagues called “Day in the Life.” The purpose was for students from remote areas to engage with each other over their daily schedules and routines. Andrews’s students used an online discussion board, writing posts about their interests, hobbies, and experiences living in a rural community. They also shared descriptions of their lives—with some students presenting their daily activities through PowerPoint presentations and time-lapse videos.

“The project gave students from multiple states greater insight and much more personal perspective on the lives of their peers who were also living in small rural communities,” Andrews says. “Many students at the start of the project wrote something along the lines of, ‘I don’t enjoy living in a rural community because there is nothing to do, and everybody knows everybody’s business.’ That was blown out of the water once the students began to respond to each other. It was as if they began to see through the eyes of others not just how unique their personal experiences were but also how similar they were to others living in similar areas and communities.”

The network also enabled Andrews to partner with fellow educators who felt isolated. Thanks to NW RISE, he can now share instructional practices and educational resources as well as engage in meaningful discussions about teaching and learning—things many educators in urban and suburban areas take for granted. The network “gives me a boost by showing me that I’m not alone,” he says. “There are people in my corner, and I can do this.”

In this article, I take stock of what we have learned in the four years since we helped establish the network. I also share our key

takeaways to help other groups interested in creating education networks with similar goals. While these lessons and strategies stem from our experience of specifically leading a network of rural educators, much of what we have learned could readily apply to other groups of educators looking to benefit from connecting with others.



Teachers in remote rural areas don't get many opportunities to communicate and collaborate with other teachers.

Making Connections to Strengthen Teaching and Learning

Educator networks are not a new idea, but the concept has really taken off in the last few years as a strategy for increasing innovation and building community. Because access to collaborative opportunities is limited in rural districts, networks are particularly promising for those districts.

At Education Northwest, a nonprofit providing applied research and technical assistance services for more than 50 years, our role has been to plant the seeds of NW RISE and provide “backbone” support, such as facilitating meetings, while intentionally stepping back and letting the network determine its own direction.

Our purpose in the beginning was to foster a sense of professional belonging among educators from rural and remote districts, providing a space for teachers to hone classroom practices and increase student engagement. After starting in 2013 with nine small school districts (averaging about 225 students each) in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington, the network now includes more than 30 school systems and serves as a professional community connecting rural teacher leaders, principals, and superintendents as well as state education agency staff members in the Northwest.

[†]For more about educator collaboration, see the Summer 2017 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/sites/default/files/ae_summer2017_ed_reform.pdf.

It's common for members of NW RISE to tell us the network is reversing some of the effects of isolation.



When we started, we had an evidence base to guide us but no actual blueprint for how to put together a rural educator network. Some models now exist, but there still isn't much information on how to create education networks from scratch, particularly those that bring together geographically dispersed rural educators.

We started with a dual premise: that teachers are the most important within-school factor that affects student learning and achievement, and that teachers working with teachers is key for improving instructional practice. Given that rural schools often have only one teacher per grade level or content area, and offer educators rare opportunities to share resources and best practices with colleagues in similar roles, we designed the network to offset these challenges.

Early on, NW RISE decided to have teacher leaders and administrators work together in groups composed of colleagues in similar positions from other districts. While members of these groups mainly interact virtually, they also meet face-to-face during the network's semiannual meetings, facilitated by Education Northwest.

Both online and in person, such work enables teachers like Amy Hill to share resources, learn new skills, and acquire new contacts for their colleagues back home. Hill teaches second grade in the Glenns Ferry School District near the Snake River in Idaho. In a community of fewer than 2,000 people, she says that the school is the heart of the town.

By participating in NW RISE, Hill says she has grown as an educator and that it has made a positive difference in the way she teaches. In particular, she points to her collaborations with other elementary school teachers, from both Idaho and outside the

state, as crucial. For example, a project on sharing information about each school helped her students learn about other areas outside of their own. It helped her students see how other small schools are like theirs and how they are different. "When you have that kind of connection, you can bounce ideas off each other," she says. "You get encouragement, and you know where you can get help." After an NW RISE in-person meeting, Hill leaves rejuvenated and full of ideas about things to try in her classroom. At the most recent meeting in June 2017, for instance, she learned how to merge academic, social, and emotional learning, and now regularly uses that approach in her classroom.

It's common for members of NW RISE to tell us the network is reversing some of the effects of isolation. When we ask teachers for feedback, they often emphasize how invaluable it is to connect with peers who are "just like them" and really understand their teaching situation. It paves the way for different, more meaningful conversations that lead to changes in practice. For example, one teacher



noted that when districts partnered to create a common writing rubric that students could use to score each other's work and provide feedback, student engagement increased and teachers gained greater insight into writing instruction and student progress.

One of the most significant findings of our annual member survey shows the positive effects of teacher collaboration across districts and states. More than 90 percent of teachers participating in this year's survey reported that their participation in NW RISE has increased their access to useful ideas and resources (with half of those teachers reporting this case to a "great extent"). Additionally, four out of five teachers indicated that they use ideas and resources from NW RISE in daily practice.

We also learned about the way NW RISE strengthens educator relationships within the same district or school. Roughly three-quarters of teachers in this year's survey said that NW RISE participation has increased collaboration with district peers. Approximately the same number reported that NW RISE has benefited classroom practice in their school by increasing their desire to find helpful resources and share with colleagues outside their school.

Quite a few NW RISE educators have commented how funny it now seems that it took joining a cross-state network spanning a vast geography to connect with schools just down the road. Clusters of districts within relative proximity now enjoy extending their network connections. For example, one group of Idaho districts now pools resources to bring in speakers and engage in professional development activities, such as book studies, that bring educators from a range of districts together. This helps stretch limited resources while building another layer of network support closer to home.

Of course, students are the ultimate beneficiaries of their teachers' participation in NW RISE activities. More than 90 percent of teachers report that NW RISE has improved student engagement in their school, with roughly the same number indicating that NW RISE has improved student learning in their school. Students participate in a wide range of activities based on

their teachers participating in NW RISE, including cooperative learning in which students analyze each other's work through technologies such as Google Docs and Skype.

Just as important, the network enables teachers to develop and carry out project-based learning.* For example, science students from various NW RISE schools took field trips to local power sources and made videos of their visits, which they then shared with their peers at a distance. Such projects can increase student engagement, as the students who made these videos became fully involved in the project so they could make sure the students outside their communities could learn just as much from the experience as they did.

Lessons Learned

As I mentioned earlier, we started NW RISE guided by evidence but without a specific blueprint to follow. Nevertheless, we have learned so much over the last four years:



Invest time in planning. Once we hatched the idea for a network and assembled a core group of folks committed to making it a reality, we were eager to get to the launch point. But because our participating members came from a wide geographic region with different priorities and contexts, it was crucial to spend substantial time and energy to create a shared vision and common goals.

Centralize coordination, decentralize leadership and action. It's crucial for members to freely collaborate with minimal outside interference. Education Northwest's role as network organizer, or the "backbone" of the network, is to provide essential logistical support so members can focus on the work of the network. We also bring in network experts Andy Hargreaves and Dennis Shirley, from Boston College, as partners who help the network meet its goals and provide participants with access to evidence-based practices and outside examples. We steer lightly, helping empower the network to develop its own direction. As a result, we have seen the steering committee and other network leaders over time take more and more ownership of the network.

Provide members plenty of autonomy and support to maximize time and benefits of collaboration. All formal NW RISE activities are designed to maximize collaboration time. In the early stages, however, some "job-alike groups," which include teachers from the same grade or subject area, asked for a higher level of structured support to get going. To meet that request, we started providing optional discussion and planning templates for each working session. We want to ensure members spend the bulk of their time and energy focused on what they want to accomplish.

Recruit with care. When creating a network with sustainability and potential expansion in mind, it's important to choose the first round of participants carefully. A personal approach can go a long way. During the formation of NW RISE, one state education

agency staff member reached out personally to district leaders with whom she had collaborated previously. She followed up those initial conversations with formal invitations, an approach that proved more successful than that of another state where staff members found little interest in forming a network after making initial contact through a form email.

It's also important to recruit participants who have some key commonalities to help encourage engagement and keep activities relevant. For NW RISE, we sought out small, rural, and isolated K-12 districts. We are now at the point that recruitment happens very naturally—often with individual members talking with peers about this vibrant community that they help create and lead.

Consider ways to manage growth. We launched the network with a relatively small number of highly invested, motivated districts willing to try translating the initial network design into reality. The first year was filled with lots of excitement along with some challenges that led to productive design adjustments.

It quickly became clear that what the teachers and administrators value most about the network is the opportunity to talk with colleagues from other towns who are experiencing similar issues and have similar roles. Because of this, these "job-alike" groups became a central organizing feature. At the same time, we faced the challenge of not having enough members in certain grade levels and subject areas for all of these groups to be successful. So now we carefully monitor job-alike membership and spread the word to district members when a particular group could benefit from additional members.

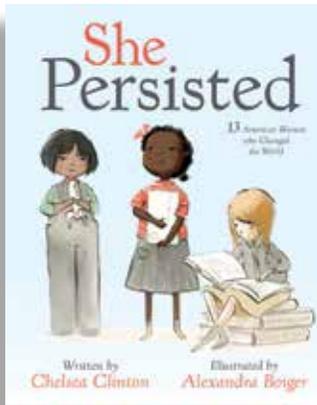


The steering committee also carefully deliberated about how much and how fast to grow the network. If we remained too small for too long, we risked limiting the stimulation and diversity needed to meet member needs. And if we grew too fast, we risked the loss of network identity and the special "small community" feel that makes participating so appealing. Ultimately, we decided that growing over the course of four years to about 40 school sites seemed about right.

Build in evidence gathering early on. It's important to begin evaluating activities and outcomes as early as possible—but not

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*For more on project-based learning, see "Project-Based Instruction" in the Fall 2016 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/fall2016/duke.

SHE PERSISTED: 13 AMERICAN WOMEN WHO CHANGED THE WORLD

On that infamous night in February, when Senate Republicans silenced Sen. Elizabeth Warren as she spoke critically of Jeff Sessions, then the attorney general nominee, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell defended the move. “Sen. Warren was giving a lengthy speech,” he said. “She had appeared to violate the rule. She was warned. She was given an explanation. Nevertheless, she persisted.”

Warren’s defiance and McConnell’s rebuke—*nevertheless, she persisted*—immediately set off a fire storm on social media and became a rallying cry emblazoned on bumper stickers, T-shirts, and yard signs. Soon after, the sentence also became the title of a children’s book, *She Persisted: 13 American Women Who Changed the World* (Philomel Books).

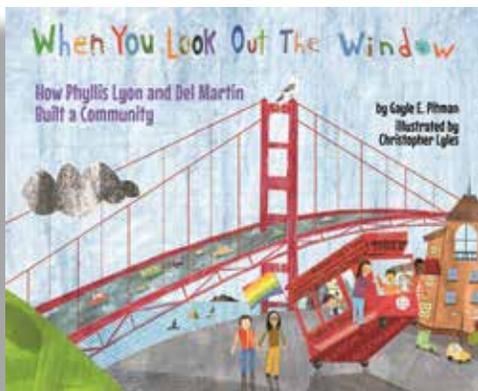
Written by Chelsea Clinton and illustrated by Alexandra Boiger, the book would make a helpful addition to the classrooms of educators looking to supplement their lessons on current events and American history for children ages 4–8. From the first page, in language that young children can easily understand, the book acknowledges that society still expects women to act a certain (read: subservient) way. “Sometimes being a girl isn’t easy,” Clinton writes. “At some point, someone

probably will tell you no, will tell you to be quiet and may even tell you your dreams are impossible. Don’t listen to them. These thirteen American women certainly did not take no for an answer. They persisted.”

These sentences are printed above a beautifully illustrated drawing of a diverse group of children wandering the halls of a museum lined with portraits of famous women, some of whom are mentioned in the pages that follow. A painting of Maria Tallchief, a dancer of Native American heritage, standing with her arms gracefully in the air, hangs between portraits of Ruby Bridges and Sally Ride. The book devotes two pages to each woman’s powerful example of persistence with a short description of the challenges they overcame. For instance, the book recounts how Bridges was 6 years old when she integrated an all-white elementary school in New Orleans, and it tells how Ride became the first American woman to fly into space.

While Elizabeth Warren herself is not one of the 13 subjects, Clinton notes in the dedication that the senator did in fact inspire the book. And in another nod to Warren’s actions on the Senate floor, the illustration on the opening page includes a bust of Coretta Scott King; after all, it was King’s 1986 letter describing Sessions’s abysmal civil rights record that Warren was reading when her male colleagues interrupted her.

It’s also worth noting that on this page, steps from King’s bust, hangs a portrait of a woman wearing a red pantsuit. That woman, not mentioned in the book, has also inspired a generation of women and girls to persist. Her name is Hillary Clinton.

WHEN YOU LOOK OUT THE WINDOW: HOW PHYLLIS LYON AND DEL MARTIN BUILT A COMMUNITY

There’s nothing like a children’s book to teach students about our shared humanity regardless of religion, race, gender, or sexual identity. For educators seeking resources on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) history,

friends fell in love and then bought a house where they enjoyed looking out the windows at their beautiful city. But, at the time, San Francisco was an unwelcoming place for gays and lesbians. “We saw empty, quiet streets,” Pitman writes. “Doors tightly shut. So many women who didn’t have rights.” Images of scared and angry people fill the next few pages, showing the hostility and fear directed toward those who were gay.

On the following page, though, the sun begins to shine, with the rest of the book depicting the positive changes that Lyon and Martin worked so hard to achieve. Colorful images of smiling people at various San Francisco landmarks, such as City Hall, the Moscone Convention Center, the LGBT Community Center, and the Castro District, as well as rainbow flags flying high, show a more inclusive city.

When You Look Out the Window: How Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin Built a Community (Magination Press), written by Gayle E. Pitman and illustrated by Christopher Lyles, is more than a heartwarming story—it’s an effective teaching tool.

The book, geared toward children ages 4–8, recounts the lives of “one of San Francisco’s most well-known and politically active lesbian couples.” Lyon and Martin met in 1950, when LGBTQ people faced even more hostility and prejudice from the larger society than they do now.

The book, in which Pitman writes as Lyon and Martin with one voice, begins with an illustration of the couple overlooking the Golden Gate Bridge. The first pages explain that the two

Pitman, a professor of psychology and women’s studies at Sacramento City College, has included in the book a note to parents, caregivers, and educators explaining that although there is greater acceptance of LGBTQ individuals in our society today, “many students have never learned anything about LGBTQ history.” It’s important for them to do so, Pitman writes, so that children who identify as LGBTQ can see themselves represented in history and literature. It’s also crucial for children to read stories about people who are different from them so they can “develop the ability to step out of their own personal frame of reference, and view the world through a different lens.”

What Parents Want from Public Schools

TO AMPLIFY THE VOICE of public school parents—a perspective that too often goes unheard—the AFT asked 1,200 parents across the country about their priorities for education and ideas for improving it. Based on the interviews, which were con-

ducted this past summer by Hart Research Associates for the AFT, it's clear that parents want safe, welcoming, and well-funded neighborhood public schools.

Several themes emerge from the survey:

Parents want access to a good neighborhood public school much more than increased choice of schools:

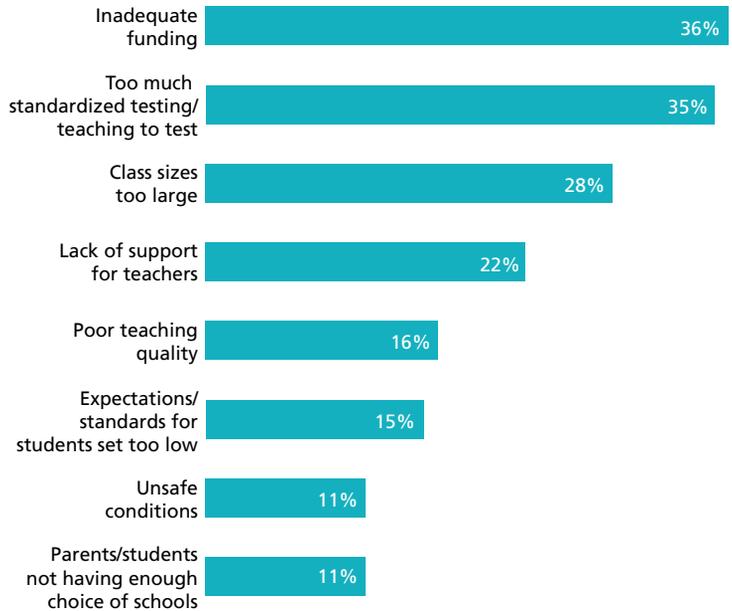
Asked about their two biggest concerns in education today, parents responded:

I want a **GOOD QUALITY** neighborhood **PUBLIC SCHOOL** I can send my children to

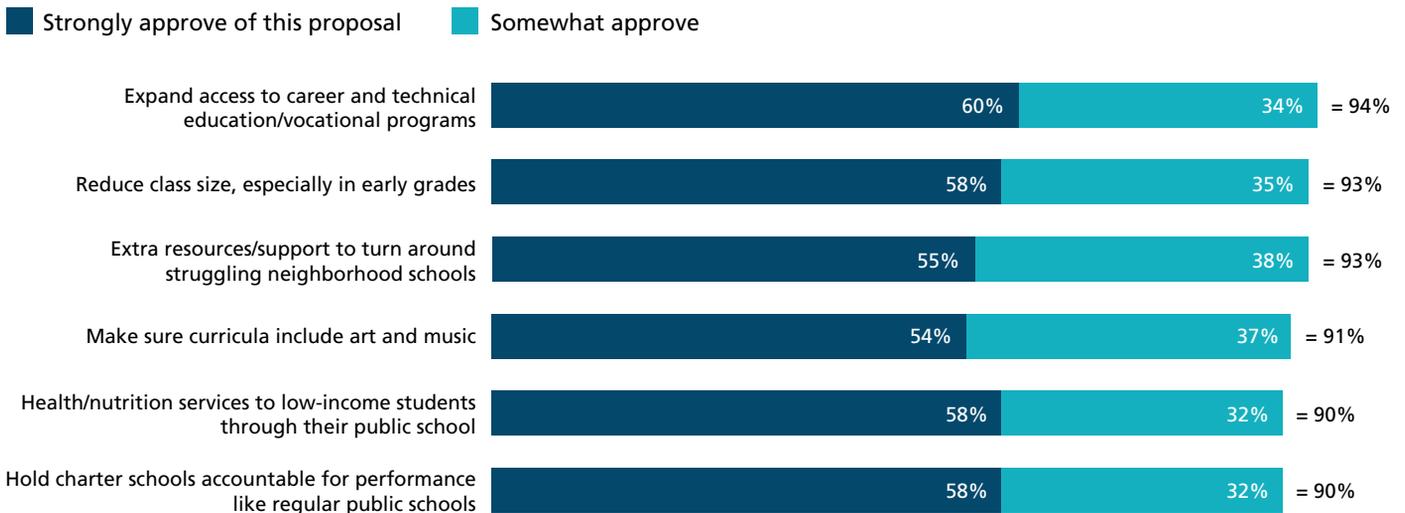


I want to have **MORE CHOICE** of which schools I can send my children to

Their highest priorities for these schools are providing a safe and secure environment, developing their children's knowledge and skills, and ensuring equal opportunity for all kids.



Parents' education agenda focuses on investing in traditional public schools, in particular:



They strongly *oppose* shifting resources from traditional public schools to fund either charter schools or vouchers.

Conversations on Racism in the Classroom

RACISM IS NOT A NEW PROBLEM. It pervades our institutions, including our schools. It shows up in the books we read with our students and in the history we teach them—and in the omission of some heroes and events from those books and from our teaching.

When teachers see tangible examples of racism in the curriculum and in the way students treat each other, they can intervene and turn these instances into teachable moments. They can also be more intentional about teaching students to combat prejudice and practice tolerance, by incorporating resources from Share My Lesson and our partners.

Set Up Your Classroom for Success

To help students build trusting relationships with their peers, try engaging them in “The Heart Exercise.” Centered around the topic of bullying, this exercise takes students on an emotional journey (in small groups) that leads to deeper awareness of others’ experiences and greater compassion and understanding.

Also, take a look at your curriculum and ask yourself: “Does it leave out people of color?” If not, how are they presented? From there, you can make choices to include books with diverse characters in your curriculum content.

For book recommendations, visit Share My Lesson’s “PreK–12 Guide to Summer Reading Lists,” which features the Anti-Defamation League’s list of best multicultural and anti-bias books, with dozens of options for all ages.

Looking for lessons on certain themes or groups of people? Then visit Share My Lesson’s “Addressing Racism and Stereotyping” collection, which houses many content-based lessons on police brutality, lynching, and racial profiling, among other topics. Although some subjects may be uncomfortable to teach, addressing them head-on sends a message to students that such acts are wrong.

Do Your Homework

Before teaching content about racism or starting class discussions, you may want to learn more about the diverse experiences of people of color. Start by picking up *Between the World and Me*, a memoir by Ta-Nehisi Coates. Or join one of Share My Lesson’s webinars from our “Identity, Race, and the Classroom” series, with speakers from the AFT and Facing History and Ourselves.

For supporting students of color who identify as LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, plus), seek out resources to help you understand the vast range of backgrounds from which students come. For example, check out “Shared Differences: The Experiences of LGBT Students of Color in Our Nation’s Schools” from GLSEN (the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network), Share My Lesson’s “Guide to Summer Reading for Teachers,” and Teaching for Change’s Social Justice Books project.

Start an Ongoing Conversation

Keep in mind that film can also be a powerful medium to spark classroom discussions. For instance, “Racism Is Real,”

by Brave New Films, compares the experiences of two young men based on race. This digital clip and others like it are available in Share My Lesson’s racism collection.

To ensure you and your students are prepared for constructive conversations around race, consider reviewing the National Association of School Psychologists’ guide “Talking about Race and Privilege: Lesson Plan for Middle and High School Students.” Finally, keep in mind that these conversations will be difficult but are often rewarding, and that students’ attitudes won’t necessarily change in one class period but will evolve over time.

—THE SHARE MY LESSON TEAM



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Recommended Resources

“The Heart Exercise for Groups”

<http://go.aft.org/AE417sml1>

“PreK–12 Guide to Summer Reading Lists”

<http://go.aft.org/AE417sml2>

“Addressing Racism and Stereotyping” collection

<http://go.aft.org/AE417sml3>

“Identity, Race, and the Classroom”

<http://go.aft.org/AE417sml4>

“Guide to Summer Reading for Teachers”

<http://go.aft.org/AE417sml6>

“Racism Is Real”

<http://go.aft.org/AE417sml7>

“Shared Differences: The Experiences of LGBT Students of Color in Our Nation’s Schools”

<http://go.aft.org/AE417sml5>

Teaching for Change’s Social Justice Books project

<http://go.aft.org/AE417sml9>

“Talking about Race and Privilege: Lesson Plan for Middle and High School Students”

<http://go.aft.org/AE417sml8>

Have questions or comments about our resources? Send an e-mail to help@sharemylesson.com.

TEACHER UNIONS AND GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES

Education International's 2017 report "Organising Teaching: Developing the Power of the Profession" (www.bit.ly/2A3Mqlx) focuses on the so-called global educational reform movement, its impact on the teaching profession, and the ways that deep and often troubling reforms put teacher unions in a unique and crucial position to defend the working conditions and professional status of their members. It highlights best practices for renewal, organization, and growth by teacher unions in the following countries: Chile, Kenya, New Zealand, Poland, Scotland, Turkey, and the United States. It also suggests strategic pathways for teacher organizations, such as connecting the industrial and the professional workforces, organizing around ideas, and building democratic engagement.

EXEMPLARY TEACHERS ON EVALUATIONS

A recent survey of winners and finalists for State Teachers of the Year provides a unique look into evaluation systems and forms the basis of "State of the States' Teacher Evaluation and Support Systems: A Perspective from Exemplary Teachers." The 2017 publication (www.bit.ly/2AgcDOZ), part of the Educational Testing Service's Research Report Series, draws on survey and focus-group responses from 266 state winners and finalists. Among its major findings: fewer than one in five respondents had confidence that standardized test scores—and schoolwide averages based on those scores—reflect a fair component in their evaluation.

UNDERSTAFFING IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Economic Policy Institute (EPI) crunched recent numbers from the U.S. Department of Labor to reveal precipitous and chronic understaffing in public schools (www.bit.ly/2yvRKAe). Along with job losses from the Great Recession, austerity budgets at all levels have cut public education jobs by 128,000 in the last nine years. (The total public education workforce stood at 7.96 million in September.) Factor in the number of jobs that should have been created just to keep up with rising student enrollment, and "we are currently experiencing a 327,000 job shortfall in public education," EPI warns. That labor shortage translates into problems such as larger class sizes and fewer teacher aides, guidance counselors, and extracurricular activities.

STRONG UNIONS, STRONGER COMMUNITIES

A new report coauthored by the AFT; the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; the National Education Association; and the Service Employees International Union highlights places where members of labor unions have used their right to organize and their collective voice to fight for improvements that benefit all working families. "Strong Unions, Stronger Communities" (<http://go.aft.org/AE417res1>) offers case studies that touch on a variety of pursuits, such as helping high school students start careers in nursing and helping hospitals and airports respond to the Ebola virus.

You Are Welcome Here

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Engaging Immigrant Students

(Continued from page 11)

In fact, the large-scale immigrant rights marches of 2006 were organized and run largely by U.S.-born children of immigrants, frustrated with the virulent anti-immigrant sentiment aimed at their parents.²¹ It is in the best interest of our nation, our communities, our schools, and our students to nurture a healthy civic identity in immigrant youth. If, as a nation, we frame our demographic diversity as a strength rather than as a liability, we can fully realize the civic potential of immigrant youth and, ultimately, of our republic.

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Rural Educator Networks

(Continued from page 37)

before members are ready. Network leaders might hesitate to collect data (such as evidence of student achievement, classroom instructional artifacts, job-alike project plans, and member perceptions) from the get-go because they fear participants might feel too vulnerable, or they worry about detracting from the network's core purpose. It won't take long, however, for members and sponsors to feel the need for data and evidence to improve the network, monitor progress toward meeting stated goals, and gauge levels of return on resource investments.

Diversify funding while maintaining mission integrity. While educator passion and expertise drive the best forms of teacher professional development, obtaining funds to cover items such as teacher time and travel is almost always a challenge. When building a network, it's a major responsibility of the network leaders and the backbone organization to create a stable resource base so that participants can focus on developing professionally and collaboratively without funding distractions.

Often, networks start with a single source of funding and build from there. In the case of NW RISE, we started with some funds from the U.S. Department of Education-funded Northwest Comprehensive Center* as well as some modest but critically important member travel support from state education agencies. Since then, districts have emphasized the importance of contributing and have taken on resource commitments, such as paying for substitute teachers to allow time for teachers to collaborate with network peers. We have also begun to diversify funding by partnering with local foundations with complementary goals.

As we look ahead, we aim to grow NW RISE—as a network and as a concept—over the coming years.

When we think of growth, we plan not only to increase the number of sites that participate in NW RISE but also to expand the network's active participation within sites. The goals are to increase the number of opportunities for teachers to find collaborators by bringing more districts and schools into the fold and to build the capacity of existing network members to increase student engagement and professional learning within their district or school.

We also look forward to supporting the formation of NW RISE subnetworks. These subnetworks mostly include state affiliates of NW RISE or subsets of districts near each other.

One powerful example is from Alaska's Lower Kuskokwim School District, where Alex Andrews teaches. Because the district is made up of 22 remote villages, the district itself has formed LK RISE based on a similar network model and guided by teacher leaders who have been active participants in NW RISE.

We take pride in the organic formation of subnetworks like these that are designed to meet regional needs or specific interests. Our hope is that, through NW RISE and other emerging networks, all rural educators will have the opportunity to find each other, collaborate, and grow professionally, with the goal of promoting student engagement and success for rural students wherever they may be. □

*To read more about the center, see <http://nwcc.educationnorthwest.org>.

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