

Education Matters

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School Violence

Warning signs teachers must learn to discern

By Robert Cornuke



Violence in schools is not new. In seventeenth century France, citizens walked past schools in dread of marauding students. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, headmasters in England often solicited help from the military due to disruptive students. Horace Mann, the famed promoter of American education, described schools in 1843 as being “filled with idleness and disorder.” The unruly lineage of students past, which was basically the mischievous actions of hooligans and troublemakers, has been eclipsed by a new cultural phenomenon called “student rampage killers.” These student terrorists are without an ideological core, but they are hell-bent on revenge.

In the most tragic of scenarios, a school killer can emerge from the shadows of societal obscurity and, unfortunately, due to our headline-hungry media, be catapulted into instant celebrity. Killers often see a school shooting-spree as an opportunity to satisfy a grudge, while at the same time gaining an epitaph of fame.

By most socially accepted calibrations, some

killers were never considered to be potential for homicidal machines. They often came from homogeneous middle class families that bely most concerns. These students were most always socially arthritic but, other than personality deficiencies, displayed little to be overly concerned with. But under their skin they were ticking emotional time bombs that had been smoldering for some time ready to explode.

Many student killers, however, had deeper emotional dysfunctions that were well known to mental health professionals. However, this information may have never been relayed to teachers due to confidentiality protocols. It was cross-communication privacy constraints that caused a system failure in the case of the Virginia Tech school shooting in 2007. That college campus rampage killer had a history of serious mental illness, but much of that information was suppressed from school officials, and tragically, thirty-two students and professors lost their lives.

Student killers, however, most always reveal warning signs of potential impending violence,

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without the need of any mental health care provider for detection. It has been shown that almost every school shooter has leaked to someone in word or print his intent to carry out revenge actions. These pre-incident indicators, however, are often tragically undetected until it's too late. For instance, a student's bragging about some form of revenge could be disregarded as nothing more than brash words siphoned from juvenile bravado. But words are often warning flares in a dark sky.

Many teachers today fear that they are unqualified for assessing and forecasting violent behavior by a student and often defer to inaction if confronted with such weighty decisions. A leading expert on violent behavior, Gavin de Becker, wrote:

We want to believe that with all the possible combinations of beings and human feelings, predicting violence is as difficult as picking the winning lottery ticket, yet it usually isn't difficult at all. We want to believe that human violence is somehow beyond our understanding because as long as it remains a mystery, we have no duty to avoid it, explore it, or anticipate it. We feel no responsibility for failing to read signals if there are none to be read. We can tell ourselves that violence just happens without warning, and usually to others.

Educators are our best defense in school crisis situations. They are often frontline protectors with intuition as well as keen observation skills. For example, English and art teachers are in an advantageous position to detect violent traits in students because they can closely monitor creative writing assignments and art projects. These class assignments may reveal latent violent traits encrypted in student creative expressions.

Columbine High School

One student killer at Columbine High School, named Dylan Klebold, leaked his violent nature to Judy Kelly, his instructor. His creative writing assignment turned in was so ghastly, vicious, and sadistic that the teacher found it necessary to meet

with the parents. The parents, however, dismissed the writing assignment as merely a creative form of expression, nothing to be worried about. Subsequently, the counselor confronted Dylan, but he downplayed his vile composition as just another creative writing assignment. The matter was soon forgotten; that is, until the day Dylan entered Columbine and acted out the very words he had written. Twelve students and a teacher were shot to death that day, with the assailants, Klebold and Harris, taking their own lives.

A simple writing assignment became a warning alarm that the teacher heard loud and clear; unfortunately, others in key positions of authority failed to see the impending gravity of it all. If these people of influence had heeded the intuitive worry of that attentive teacher, then many lives may have been saved.

Learn to Discern

The FBI warns us, however, not to take every school assignment with a violent theme and make the author out to be a killer. After all, many students are fascinated with the macabre; however, when that general interest morphs into an addicted need to talk about sick and twisted violence all the time, then interaction becomes compulsory. For that matter, any historical pattern that can reveal a proclivity for violent behavior should be monitored. Vigilance, with a reasonable follow-through by teachers, can save lives. It should be noted here, however, that an educator needs to balance any course of action with common sense. Any suspected student need not be falsely labeled with the stigma of a "violent offender" if falsely misjudged. But if we are to err, it should fall on the side of overall school safety.

If a student threatens peers with angry cursing and always blames others, he should be scrutinized. If a student has continual bouts of depression, listens to songs that promote violence, or is infatuated by violent computer games, gory movies, and satanic cults, we should pay close attention to his actions. If the student has abuse at home, talks of suicide, is often being bullied, has a historical pattern of cruelty to animals, has a dark fascination with firearms, explosions, knives, and what carnage

they could reap, then this student has emotional deficiencies that warrant some form of practical intervention.

Teacher as Sentinel

When a teacher embarks on his career, he envisions passing on a legacy of learning that changes students as well as society, for the better. He is not thinking of being a hallway policeman or criminal psychologist or needing to defend himself from a violent unstable student. But the realities of our culture are such that a teacher needs to see himself as a watchman stationed on the ramparts of the city walls. A teacher today needs to have keen ears and the probing eyes of a sentinel. He needs to have a vigilant inquisitive mind, but more importantly a caring core, which has always been the mortar that binds together the building bricks of knowledge. It is because a teacher is all this and more that we can build a better tomorrow.

I have been involved in law enforcement and international security, as well as being a survival specialist, for most all my adult life. Violence has been my nemesis, a vile opponent that seems to endlessly wander this world seeking whom it may devour. But those who are ensnared in violent self-justified solutions to satisfy their lust for revenge are always nothing more than pathetic failures. The DNA imprinted on the goodness of humanity will always trump an evil action. This was the case at a school in Littleton, Colorado, where a close friend of mine lost his precious daughter Rachael Scott. Rachael was the first girl killed at Columbine while eating lunch on small patch of grass under a warm springtime sky. Rachel, like many others killed that day, left a legacy of hope by the lives they led. Her true life story is changing everything!

Rachel also left penned words that have inspired me in a moving way, as they also have inspired millions of others. Rachael wrote in her diary that acts of kindness will start a chain reaction. Today an organization based on her stirring words is named Rachael's Challenge and has become the largest nonviolence school program in the world, proving the point once again that the goodness in humanity will always trump evil.

Words are powerful things as evident by the story of Rachael Scott. For a teacher, words are the most potent tools available in his arsenal of guidance. Words can educate the mind with facts as well as be a rudder for the heart of students steering them in a new direction, far away from the rocky shoals of violence and revenge. Language is the mediator of all behavior! ■



Robert Cornuke is a former FBI-trained police investigator from California. He has also been an educator and authored eight books. He is president of the BASE institute, having lead over forty research expeditions worldwide. Bob has appeared on the CBS television special Ancient Secrets, NBC's Dateline, MSNBC, Fox, ABC, History Channel, Good Morning America, CNN, and Ripley's Believe It or Not. He has traveled across Afghanistan during US bombing strikes on

a video-and-photographic assignment. Bob has been knighted by the Sovereign Medical Order Hope for his charity work in Ethiopia, and has earned a Ph.D. from Louisiana Baptist University.

AAE and Indiana

New Partnership Announced between the AAE and the Indiana Public Charter Schools Association

The Association of American Educators (AAE) and the Indiana Public Charter Schools Association (IPCSA) are pleased to announce a new partnership to support Indiana's charter school teachers. AAE, the premier national, nonunion teacher association, will offer teachers and other employees of IPCSA member schools full membership in AAE to boost IPCSA's offering to their individual charter educators while also giving an option to educators that is both economical and procharter.

"We are thrilled to partner with IPCSA to provide professional membership and benefits to the Indiana's phenomenal charter school educators," said AAE Executive Director Gary Beckner. "This partnership will allow both organizations to better support charter school teachers as professionals."

As part of the partnership, teachers of member IPCSA schools are invited to join AAE for \$15 per month. Teachers are then eligible for great benefits and services, teacher scholarships, and classroom grants as well as a cohesive voice on education policy issues that affect the classroom.

"Whether an educator works in a traditional, charter, virtual, or parochial school, he needs the peace of mind of solid protection so that he can focus on students in the classroom," said Beckner. "As an advocate for educators, we firmly believe that no teacher should be without individual professional liability insurance. AAE provides this and much more at a fraction of the cost."

AAE's partnership with IPCSA is just the latest in a series of formal partnerships with charter school associations in both California and Utah. Offering unmatched professional benefits, AAE's services and vision for educators continue to resonate with the charter community nationwide.

IPCSA President Russ Simnick praised the partnership as a welcome addition. "Our alignment with AAE allows us to expand our offerings as an association. We are pleased to build on our network of resources for Indiana's charter schools with this new program that offers quality professional benefits to our individual educators."

For more information about AAE in Indiana, visit www.aateachers.org/Indiana.



Laying the Foundation

Training teachers, raising rigor, and boosting college and career readiness

Challenging students early in their academic careers is key to improving college and career readiness, but many teachers are struggling to determine exactly how to raise rigor in their classrooms. With the wide-scale adoption of the Common Core State Standards, this uncertainty is particularly prevalent, as the pressure to enhance academic success permeates school districts across the United States.

Ruston High School English teacher Emily Howell, who was recently named 2012 Louisiana High School Teacher of the Year, used to be among the teachers not quite sure how to augment a curriculum with the rigor necessary for students to grow. In 2009, that changed when she became one of eight English teachers from across her district to attend a Laying the Foundation Year One Summer Institute.

“Before we were trained with Laying the Foundation, we had honors classes, and I didn’t really know how to teach honors differently than my regular classes,” said Howell. “When I went to Laying the Foundation, I realized what it meant to have a truly rigorous curriculum, and my

teaching was never the same again.”

A division of the National Math and Science Initiative, Laying the Foundation (LTF) is dedicated to providing the best content-based pedagogy-driven teacher-to-teacher training, supported by rigorous classroom-ready lessons and web-based resources to improve the quality of math, science, and English instruction. Having

trained more than 36,000 sixth- through twelfth-grade teachers to date, LTF understands the importance of helping students achieve college and career readiness through first training, mentoring, and then empowering the teacher corps.

Achieving college and career readiness

Rigorous, vertically aligned K-12 curriculum is essential to adequately preparing students for success beyond high school. Initiatives such as the Common Core State Standards have taken some of the groundwork out of ensuring that lessons connect across grade levels. To achieve goals of vertical alignment on quality material, ongoing professional development for teachers is important. Such professional development not only allows teachers time to renew their interest in the material, it also keeps districts from educating in a silo.

The role of teachers

Teachers are the main factor in determining students’ growth and achievement in the classroom. To reach their full potential, students need educators who are effective in teaching skills, as opposed to works, through scaffolding lessons to meet the needs of a classroom of diverse ability levels. LTF’s lessons, labs, and formative assessments are based on a cumulative progression of skills and concepts for math, science, and English. Moreover, LTF lessons serve as tools that teachers can infuse into their curriculums

to raise rigor for their students.

As a current AP English teacher and LTF trainer phrased it, “If your toolbox is limited with educational strategies, then you think rigor is more or you think rigor is a long project, as opposed to understanding that rigor is relative and needs to be crafted according to the human beings in your room.”

Teachers as trainers

LTF is a teacher-to-teacher professional development program. Many trainers are also currently employed by school districts, and use the methods with their own students. This allows LTF trainers to share with the teachers they are training where their own students struggle. School districts may elect to send highly qualified teachers as candidates to LTF Train the Trainer events, with the goals of developing a cadre of mentors within the district, building capacity for future training, and ensuring sustainable implementation.

About Laying the Foundation

To adapt to the changing tides of education and to better serve teachers, LTF has recently embarked on a few new initiatives. First, it has made a commitment to enhancing STEM education. Second, it has moved to a blended learning model, integrating online student assessments with the traditional face-to-face training program. Finally, it has become one



of the leading providers of teacher lessons and activities aligned with the Common Core State Standards. All of these components contribute to LTF’s ultimate goal of helping students across the country excel academically and in the work force.

In the words of LTF President Dave Saba, “We didn’t start out to create a program to meet Common Core State Standards—we created a program to build academic excellence in our teachers so that they could deliver challenging lessons to ensure that more students were college and career ready.” ■

To learn more, visit www.ltftraining.org.

Pages or Screens?

The educational downside of technology

By Gideon Rappaport, Ph.D.

Dr. Gideon Rappaport is an AAE member and English teacher. His article is in response to past Education Matters articles advocating for technology advancements. If you are an AAE member and would like to contribute an article to the newsletter or respond to an existing article or blog post, let us know. Email info@aaeteachers.org for more information.

I have taught English at upscale independent high schools since 1985. My sophomore syllabus has changed little over the years: *Sir Gawain, The Canterbury Tales, Macbeth*, and *A Tale of Two Cities* have generally won my students over.

About ten years ago, my sophomores started complaining that the homework burden was too heavy. In the forty-five minutes that they owed me on four nights per week, they could not get the reading done. I had not significantly altered the number of pages I expected them to read on any given night, and I knew they were not less capable than their predecessors. What was it?

One day it occurred to me to ask for a show of hands: “When you are reading your English homework, how many of you have the computer on?” A majority of hands went up. “iPod?” A somewhat different but equally substantial majority. “Instant messaging?” Nearly all. “TV?” Many. “Video games?” A substantial minority. “Do you have your own phone in your room?” Yup.

I had my answer. They couldn’t get a scene of *Macbeth* or two chapters of Dickens read in forty-five minutes because they had no uninterrupted reading time. So I wrote out a page called “How To Do English Homework.” It consisted essentially of my saying “turn off all electronic devices.” I listed all I could think of and update it each year—“texting” and Facebook have replaced the antediluvian I.M.

But it gets worse. Recently the problem has become not simply interruptions. Almost all my present sophomores cannot remember a time when they did not have


cell phones, and the effect on their minds of their use of electronic screens has been decisive. Nearly all of them—except for the vestigial book lovers or those whose parents shut down electronics on school nights—have an attention deficit. They simply cannot concentrate on any challenging text for more than a very few minutes without feeling the compelling need to look at an electronic screen.

My theory about why this has happened is only reinforced by recent research on how technologies are “rewiring” the teenage brain: Everything a young person sees on a screen—laptop, smart phone, video game, iPad—is instantly comprehended. The medium is pitched so that no degree of concentration and no more than a second or two are required for grasp of its content. Of course concentration is required to advance in video games, and we are told that such activities enhance hand-eye coordination. But nothing in the way of extended thought is required to “get” what is being delivered by a screen. If anything appears that is not instantly grasped, an instantly graspable explanation is only a click away.

The result is that children raised on screens have hours of experience of instant comprehension and no experience of the rewards of attention paid to a challenging text over time—even minutes, let alone hours or weeks. When they are confronted by the kind of literature that requires such effort, their first and almost unconquerable reaction is “I can’t understand this—it’s too hard.” Then they a) conclude that they are stupid, b) look for a screen to help them satisfy the teacher’s unfair expectations, and (if screens are forbidden) c) quit and wait for an explanation in class.

Raised on screens, the students are not to blame for this response. But it accounts for their feeling that we expect of them too much reading that is too hard and for their resort to Sparknotes and other online cheat channels that they consider lifelines. They now go online to not only plagiarize essays but also just to find out what happened in the story.

Railing against this technological threat to reading, I wondered whether I had become a Luddite. Articles like Karen Faucett’s “Virtual School” in the June 2011 *Education Matters*, or Jill Newell’s “Natives and Pioneers: Digital Educa-



Everything a young person sees on a screen is instantly comprehended. The medium is pitched so that no degree of concentration and no more than a second or two are required for grasp of its content.

tion for Students and Teachers” in July, or the AAE Member Survey in November (in which it was reported that 58 percent agree with replacing textbooks with “digital content”) made me feel like Cassandra. Who is talking about the actual downside of getting with the technology program?

I am not in principle opposed to the appropriate use of digital technology, but then I already know how to read with concentration when I need to. My students do not, and I see nothing in the latest technopedagogies that will change that.

Studies are now demonstrating the obvious, as “studies” so often do: The multitasking in which our students are trained by their machines in fact reduces the quality of the work done on any one task. There are studies demonstrating that being raised on screens actually trains the brain not to be able to think deeply.

Some of my students confess to spending four hours a night on Facebook. Many are texting all day. Low English grades cause them to ask what they can do for extra credit. My response is often to suggest an experiment: For a month turn off all screens and beeps when doing homework; let’s see whether your grades improve. They react as if I were asking them to give up oxygen, but, *mirabile dictu*, it often works.

Cassandra or no, I maintain that we must do our best to break our students of their addiction to screens. If we don’t, we will bequeath to our heirs a society run by speedily multitasking illiterates. ■

Gideon Rappaport is an English teacher at La Jolla Country Day School in La Jolla, California, and a theatrical dramaturge.



New Report

Status of Charter School Unionization

A new report by the Center on Reinventing Public Education at the University of Washington sheds light on the status of charter school unionization nationwide. In a climate where charter schools laws are changing dramatically and teacher union membership is declining, the prospect of charter schools unionizing has become a very real threat to the flexible, innovative environments these schools were meant to cultivate. This report attempts to analyze the status of unionization by examining why teachers unionize and the diverse collective bargaining agreements of unionized charters; however, it misses the mark in addressing the disconnect between the charter movement and bargaining agreements in general.

Breakdown of Trust

In examining the data, the report finds that roughly 12 percent of the nearly 5,000 American charter schools are unionized. Of those 12 percent, half are required by state law to be part of the local district contract. The other 6 percent are unionized because either the founders chose to do so, or because the teachers voted to unionize. Notably, when charter schools unionize against the interests of the school's culture or administration, survey respondents say it is "most commonly a result of a breakdown in trust between labor and management or just poor treatment of employees."

This "breakdown in trust" is at the heart of why most charters unionize, and what unions are looking for in trying to gain

membership in the charter school movement. When teachers at a Chicago charter voted to unionize a few years ago, the school's director said simply, "Charter schools have been too successful for the unions to ignore." Union leaders know that the charter movement is here to stay, and while they have spent millions of dollars lobbying to stop their expansion, their efforts have proved unsuccessful. Seemingly the unions are operating under the "if you can't beat them, unionize them" school of thought.

Teacher unions are recognizing that charters are a resource for supplementing their free-falling membership nationwide. In luring disenfranchised teachers to the union, NEA and AFT operatives set their sights on charter schools in the midst of turbulent transition and reap the benefits of more dues-paying members.

The fact is unionization of charter school teachers has become a high-profile issue. Evidenced by the national media coverage of some of the smallest charters falling prey to union interests, the stories produce a fire storm of activity, legal challenges, and heated rhetoric about what charter schools were designed to operate as in the first place.

While the report finds that many of the collective bargaining agreements are more flexible than their traditional public counterparts, the very notion of charter school unionization is a severe blow to the overall charter ethos. Stifling contracts and unnecessary rules are the antithesis of the innovative, collaborative, and transparent environments charter schools were designed to cultivate.

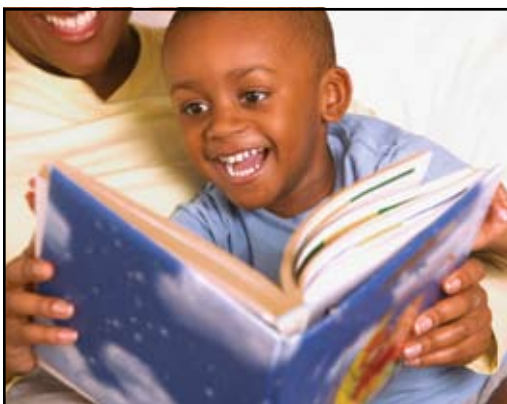
In recognizing why these schools turn to the union, it is perfectly understandable for a professional educator to worry about job security under new leadership or during a turbulent period. However, teachers and administrators desperately need to know that charter school teachers have options that don't include spending upwards of \$1,000 a year on a union.

The nonunion movement is a perfect option for teachers in charter schools looking for membership in a professional association. The Association of American Educators is not only a fraction of the cost at just \$15 per month, but also supportive of the charter school philosophy. In serving charter school members from coast to coast, AAE recognizes the need for professional services, such as legal and liability coverage, via a modern, professional, and affordable approach.

This report should serve as a wake-up call to the charter school movement nationwide. Teachers and administrators, examine the options and investigate a system that will work for your school. Union representation eliminates the environment that gives charter schools an edge. Don't let it happen in your school. ■



Alexandra Schroeck is AAE's Manager of Communications and Legislative Affairs. She has served in a communications capacity for a Washington, D.C.-based trade association and on Capitol Hill for the then-ranking member of the House Congressional Committee on Education and the Workforce.



National Children's Book of the Year Award Contest

The National Children's Book of the Year Award Contest is open to anyone who is interested in being a published children's book author. Last year, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)—the sponsor of the contest—received more than 1,000 entries.

Entries can be submitted until February 15, 2012. If you would like more information about the National Book Award Contest, call the NAESP Foundation at 800-386-2377 or download an entry form from www.naesp.org.

Member Receives Prestigious Award

Science teacher Jeff Wehr honored in Washington, D.C.

Science teacher, Jeff Wehr, a member of Northwest Professional Educators (an affiliate of AAE) at Odessa (WA) High School was one of only three recipients in the nation to receive the Siemens Founders Award.

This award is given in recognition of an individual or school for encouraging students to participate in math, science, or technology research programs and efforts to provide the necessary support consistent with the Siemens Foundation mission of enhancing math and science in American high schools.

The Siemens STEM Academy provides an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., presenting the award during a black-tie ceremony.

Along with the honor, the Siemens Foundation provides an opportunity to participate in a summer research immersion program at Oak Ridge National Laboratories (ORNL) in Tennessee this summer. The program is a two-week professional development course designed to empower teachers to bring the excitement of authentic research into the classroom and inspire

students to pursue science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education.

Working in small groups, teachers will collaborate with ORNL scientific teams to conduct individually designed research projects that will give them real-world experience to bring back to their classrooms. This immersion into authentic research, professional scientific collaboration, and educational enhancements will provide insight, resources, and scientific contacts to the participating teachers.

Hundreds of educators apply to attend this elite research retreat, yet only twenty are selected each summer. Having been selected for the Siemens Founders Award, Wehr has automatically been accepted into the summer program along with the other two Siemens Founders Award recipients.

Source: www.kxly.com



Jeff Wehr

School Choice Week Calendar – Celebrate Teachers with AAE

AAE will be celebrating educators in all settings as part of National School Choice Week, January 22-28th. Visit aaeteachers.org for more information on events.

Monday, January 23, 2012

The Columbia Club, Indianapolis, IN
www.aaeteachers.org/Indiana for more information

Thursday, January 26, 2012

eStem Charter School in Little Rock, AR
www.astapro.org for more information

Friday, January 27, 2012

Sheraton Salt Lake City, UT
www.aaeteachers.org/Utah for more information

Saturday, January 28, 2012

www.coloradoteachers.org for more information

JANUARY 2012						
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The Power of Five

Keys to successful schools

By Peter Murphy

A few years into my New York charter experience, by the early 2000s, I came to the informal conclusion that effective high-performing schools are about 90 percent the same, and that distinctions among good charter school models are on the margins. I cannot make any research or scientific claim to this “90 Percent Rule,” but I believed it based on several years of assisting charter school founders to create and open new charters in New York State.

I was reminded of this by a new preliminary research paper by Harvard University-based researchers Will Dobbie and Roland Fryer recently issued by the *National Bureau of Economic Research*. It examined data from thirty-five New York City charter schools to determine school effectiveness.

The authors of the study found that roughly half the variation in a school’s effectiveness was influenced by five policies or practices:

1. Frequent teacher feedback
2. Using data to drive instruction
3. Strong emphasis on tutoring
4. Increased instructional time
5. A focus on high expectations for student academic achievement

In other words, the more a school deploys these educational practices, the higher its academic results. These are very familiar approaches to education to anyone with any time spent in charter schools, especially the higher performing charters.

The researchers also found that the use of these five policies was similar among schools with three different emphases or philosophies of education, including the “no excuses” model that characterizes many charters operated by charter management organizations; the “whole child” approach that emphasizes the social and emotional needs of students; and a model focused on selection and retention of teacher talent.

The upshot is that however you label a school or to whichever educational philosophy one adheres, effective implementation of at least these five best practices, the study shows, greatly influences positive student outcomes. For charter schools, student outcomes more than anything else is what matters and is how they achieve renewal to remain in operation.

Having worked with many charter school founders and operators over the years who represent diverse philosophies and educational approaches, the successful charters always seem to come back to effective implementation of at least these five policies, regardless. The significance of this new paper is how it quantifies the impact of these familiar best practices.

Traditional educational “inputs” of dubious effect

Perhaps more interesting, at least from a public policy standpoint, is another salient finding in the study: “input measures” associated with a traditional resource-based model of education, including class size, per-pupil expenditure, teacher certification, and teachers with advanced degrees, “are not correlated with school effectiveness” in the sample of charter schools



used in the study. Further, the authors suggest that increasing resource-based inputs “may actually lower school effectiveness.”

Such educational “inputs” in fact dominate the policy discussion in public education as though children’s academic success hangs in the balance. Smaller class size, more per-pupil funding (which charters naturally seek as well) and rigid, status quo teacher certification rules are among the most important and only issues uttered by teacher unions. This, in turn, is commonly reflected in the views and discussion at the Regents and legislator levels in state government.

To be fair, the Education Department, particularly since the brief tenure of Commissioner David Steiner, has nudged the discussion toward use of data to drive instruction and teacher evaluation. But we remain a long way from that emphasis since the politics of education always come back to being dominated by monetary issues, apart from any relationship to higher student outcomes. ■

Peter Murphy writes for The Chalkboard—a blog hosted by the New York Charter Schools Association (NYCSA). Vist <http://blog.nycsa.org>.