

Weighing Teacher-Preparation Programs

By Frederick M. Hess



Fred M. Hess

Teacher Quality is the most important educational factor influencing student learning. The issue gained new salience in 2002 when President Bush signed the No Child Left

Behind Act, mandating that all states provide a

“highly qualified teacher” in every classroom by 2006. Today, states are scrambling to locate those teachers, and universities are struggling to provide them.

The Education Commission of the States (ECS) last July issued a report, funded by the U. S. Department of Education, that seeks to inform these efforts by codifying what we know about the effects of existing teacher-preparation efforts. The report seeks to address vital but unanswered questions—primarily: “How can teachers be trained and educated to ensure they are effective?”

What Little We Know

The report is forced to consider how much we actually know about teacher preparation. The depressing answer: “Not much.” Of the eight questions the report lays out, it finds that the evidence is inconclusive or nonexistent on four, and provides only limited direction on three others.

The report reviews ninety-two rigorous research studies of teacher preparation con-

ducted over the past twenty years. This represents nearly the entire body of sound empirical research on teacher preparation. While the researchers originally considered more than 500 studies for inclusion, less than 20 percent met the basic standard of research that reaches conclusions on the basis of “systematic observation rather than...opinion.”

The skimpieness of the research constitutes a damning indictment of the ongoing research on teaching and teacher quality being pursued in schools of education. The authors conclude, “It is clear that sweeping structural changes are required if research in education is to live up to its potential.”

Limits of Coursework

Perhaps the most significant finding is that there is only scant evidence that pedagogical coursework, the training in which teacher-preparation programs specialize, improves teacher effectiveness. The research does not indicate whether pedagogical knowledge and skill are “best acquired through coursework, field experience, or on the job.”

This is comparable to finding that medical school training has only a small and uncertain effect on medical treatment, and that even this slight effect might be traced to simple experience rather than any training.

The report does, however, provide solid support for the intuitive notion that the most effective teachers are those with the most content knowledge. While the findings suggest college students aspiring to teach should take enough courses to gain substantive knowledge, there is no evidence that a major or a graduate degree in a subject necessarily provides added benefit to those teaching it.

What’s more, given the impassioned defense that teacher-training programs make of their arrangements with local school districts, there is no research making the case that “high quality” field-based experiences

enhance teacher effectiveness. This finding is especially important because these efforts are the crux of many training programs.

Accreditation Limits

The most relevant finding for college trustees may be that there is no evidence that graduates of accredited preparation programs are any more effective or any more likely to remain in the classroom than

are those from unaccredited programs. This is critical because the dominant accreditation body, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), has been blasted by some critics for being more interested in promoting a normative agenda than with ensuring teacher effectiveness.

Despite the critics’ charges, several states and about 100 teacher-education programs recently have opted to pursue NCATE accreditation for the first time. Their interest, it appears, has been fueled by the belief that NCATE accreditation reflects a commitment

to “standards” or to “quality” teacher preparation. The ECS report, however, suggests that there is no evidence that NCATE accreditation offers any assurance of program quality.

The obvious implication of all this is that trustees cannot presume that teacher-preparation programs on their own campuses are using proven methods. Boards should encourage these programs to monitor results, preferably by tracing the classroom performance of program graduates.

What is Missing

The ECS report is planned as part of a series on teacher quality. As such, it does not try to address the topics of teacher recruitment and retention, teacher certification and licensure, or professional development. For instance, the researchers do not consider whether teacher-training programs may be dissuading potentially talented teachers by creating unnecessary barriers to the profession,

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Clearly, some teacher-training programs are better than others, and the entire sector (some 1,300 nationwide) should not be painted with a broad brush.

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Do You Remember When...

Dear AAE,

The following was sent to me and I am sharing this with you today because it ended with a "double dog dare" to pass it on. If you are old enough to remember what a double dog dare is, read on. And remember that the perfect age is somewhere between old enough to know better and too young to care.

Do You Remember When...?

- All the girls had ugly gym uniforms?
- It took five minutes for the TV warm up?
- Nearly everyone's Mom was at home when the kids got home from school?
- Nobody owned a purebred dog?
- A quarter was a decent allowance?
- You'd reach into a muddy gutter for a penny?
- Your Mom wore nylons that came in two pieces?
- All your male teachers wore neckties and female teachers had their hair done every day and wore high heels?
- You got your windshield cleaned, oil checked, and gas pumped, without asking, all for free, every time?
- And you didn't pay for air? And you got trading stamps to boot?
- Laundry detergent had free glasses, dishes, or towels hidden inside the box?
- It was considered a great privilege to be taken out to dinner at a real restaurant with your parents?
- They threatened to keep kids back a grade if they failed...and they did?
- No one ever asked where the car keys were because they were always in the car, in the ignition, and the doors were never locked?
- Stuff from the store came without safety caps and hermetic seals because no one had yet tried to poison a perfect stranger?
- Being sent to the principal's office was nothing compared to the fate that awaited the student at home?

Didn't that feel good, just to go back and say, "Yeah, I remember that"? **EM**

—Karen Linnebur,
Coffeyville, KS

Letters To The Editor

Happy Camper in the Great Northwest

Dear AAE,

I just wanted to take a moment to thank you again for your swift response this year to two major issues of mine. One, of course, was the writing of my religious objector letter. The letter was approved and now my agency fee is being directed to the Shriner's Hospital here in Spokane. The other issue, the problem with my performance on the job, has cleared up nicely. I appreciate the way you quickly and effectively assisted me on these two matters.

Thanks so much. I am now "advertising" for NWPE and AAE on the bulletin board in my room.

—George Brown
Cheney, WA

Dear AAE,

As a member of AAE, concerned professional educator, and parent, I was overjoyed to see our organization participating in the NCLB panel with Secretary Paige, that discussed the needed and welcomed changes to the law. With all the negativity swirling within the ranks of my fellow teachers and others "concerned" with education regarding the No Child Left Behind law and the Highly Qualified Teacher provision, your presentation helped to reiterate the real reasons for my being in this profession in the first place: the love of learning and children.

—Joe Salvo
Naples, FL



A Tip of the Hat

An Association of American Educators

member in Gadsden, Alabama, Lori Howell, has been nominated for entry in the Jacksonville State University Teacher Hall of Fame.

Lori, pictured here with her school district superintendent, Tom Sanders, exemplifies the professional standards for which AAE members all across the nation are recognized.

Congratulations Lori! We are proud to be associated with you. **EM**

Editor's Note—

If you or a fellow AAE member has received an award or honor this school year that you would like us to know about, please drop us a note. We would love to share more success stories with our colleagues.



Deconstructing the Urban NAEP Results

By Abigail Thernstrom and Stephan Thernstrom

In the effort to reform American education, big-city school systems are where the action is. But remarkably, until now nobody could answer with a modicum of reliability a rock-bottom question: How are students faring academically in Los Angeles relative to those in Atlanta? There just wasn't enough information to make those kinds of city-to-city comparisons.

It is thus a very welcome development that the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has embarked on a "trial urban district assessment" that looks at fourth- and eighth-grade student performance in ten cities.

What does this "trial" assessment—let's hope it continues—tell us? At heart, the lesson is: Schools matter. Students who appear demographically similar learn more in some educational settings than in others.

For example, compare Houston and Washington, D.C. The comparison is politically fraught: Secretary of Education Rod Paige's record as superintendent of Houston Independent School District is under attack, as part of a general effort to discredit the No Child Left Behind reforms that are partly based on "the Houston miracle." The new NAEP data provide ammunition for supporters of the testing and accountability provisions in the federal legislation. Houston does consistently well, while NAEP scores in the nation's capital are dismal.

On the 4th grade math test, an abysmal 64 percent of students in D.C. public schools lacked what NAEP defines as the minimal "basic" command of the subject expected of all students. But in Houston, only 30 percent of fourth-graders fell below the basic level—a big contrast. By 8th grade, the percentage with a less-than-basic command of math rose to 48 percent, still far better than D.C.'s 71 percent. Similar differences between the two cities showed up on 4th and 8th grade reading tests.

Of course, in all ten cities, the "Below Basic" figures tell only part of the story. Intercity differences may simply reflect variations in demographic makeup. The schools in D.C. have a much higher proportion of black students than those of Houston. Los Angeles, which ranks near D.C. at the bottom, has many more Hispanics than New York City, whose scores tend to cluster near the top, like Houston's.

Because of this, you need to break down the data by race and class. It might be, after all, that the higher concentration of Hispanics in Houston is obscuring African-American scores that are as poor as those in D.C., where black performance cannot be concealed by averaging.

In fact, that's not the case. On 4th grade math tests, for instance, blacks in Houston came in first (average score 221), while those in D.C. placed last (average of 202). That 19-point gap is huge. On the 2003 national NAEP math assessment, black 4th-graders scored an average of 27 points lower than whites. Given the magnitude of the racial gap in academic achievement across the nation, the difference between average white and black scores is naturally likely to be greater than the difference between black student scores in two cities. But the difference in NAEP scores between black students fortunate

enough to attend the Houston schools, and those unfortunate enough to be enrolled in the D.C. system, was a surprising two-thirds as large as the national black-white gap.

D.C.'s Hispanic 4th-graders were also at the bottom, while Houston's were again at the top, with a gap of 21 points between them. The national gap between whites and Hispanics in 2003 was also exactly 21 points—suggesting, again, the magnitude of the disparity between the two cities.

Black 8th-graders in D.C. again came in last on the math assessment—19 points behind top-ranked Houston. Hispanics also did poorly in the nation's capital, but those in Los Angeles did even worse, scoring 21 points below Houston.

The data are thus imperfect; nevertheless, they're good enough to allow us to draw some conclusions. Most non-Asian minority students qualify for the federal lunch subsidy, and thus controlling for income might be expected to provide little additional information. Indeed, that turned out to be the case. Black 4th-graders in L.A., for example, scored 14 points below those in Houston, but that difference only rose to 16 points when more affluent kids were removed from the calculation. Thus, with respect to black and Hispanic youngsters, family poverty does not alter the basic story: Houston and New York ahead, Los Angeles and D.C. behind.

What to conclude from these numbers? The new NAEP data reveal consistent inter-city differences when we look just at black and Hispanic scores. African-American and Latino kids are faring much better in Houston and New York than in D.C. and Los Angeles. (Atlanta scores also hover near the bottom, but those in the five other cities in the study generally fall somewhere in the middle.) The racial gap in academic achievement has not disappeared—whites and Asians still outperform blacks and Hispanics nationwide—but the urban comparisons add a new dimension to our understanding of that gap.

Per pupil spending and class size do not explain these large inter-city differences. The district that tops the nation in most of the comparisons is Houston, yet District of Columbia schools spend 75 percent more per pupil. Further, the pupil-teacher ratio is about a third higher in D.C. San Diego is indistinguishable from Los Angeles in both expenditures per pupil and pupil-teacher ratios, yet it outperforms its Southern California neighbor, by an average of more than 8 points, in every comparison that can be made. Its students also almost always do better than those in D.C. and Atlanta as well, despite those cities' greater spending and lower student-teacher ratios. New York and Boston, to be sure, spend a lot and do comparatively well. But New York usually does better than Boston, even though the student-teacher ratio is more than 40 percent higher in the Big Apple.

Recent attacks on Houston's education reform record make that city's impressive accomplishments particularly noteworthy. It's not possible, in the available space here, to review the errors made by Houston's critics; suffice to say, they do not stand up to scrutiny. And that's good news for America's black and Hispanic students: testing and accountability, done well, can make a difference. **EM**

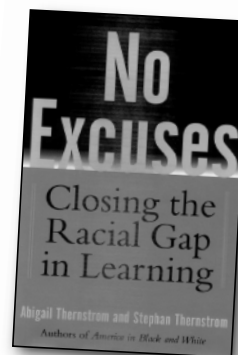
Abigail Thernstrom is a member of the Massachusetts State Board of Education and a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute. Stephan Thernstrom is a professor of history at Harvard University. They are coauthors of the recently published book

No Excuses: Closing the Racial Gap in Learning (Simon & Schuster).

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NEA-Funded Report Comes to NEA-Funded Conclusions

Last month the Civil Rights Project (CRP) of Harvard University released “Inspiring Vision, Disappointing Results: Four Studies on Implementing the No Child Left Behind Act.” In the introduction, Gary Orfield notes, “At first glance, it might seem surprising that a research center focused on civil rights should undertake a major study of education reform.” Well, surprising or not, it wasn’t a big drain on CRP’s resources because NEA put up the money for the report. To its credit, CRP doesn’t hide the fact, noting the “generous support from the National Education Association.”

The four studies conclude that NCLB is an expansion of federal power at the expense of local control, that the law enacts heavy mandates but provides limited resources, that the choice options don’t work, and that the supplemental services provision should be eliminated.

The report’s acknowledgements include the statement that “the views and opinions expressed in this report are solely those of the authors and should not be attributed to the NEA.” This will be remembered as the most pointless disclaimer in education research history. **EM**

Source—*The Education Intelligence Agency’s (EIA) Communiqué*. You may find more information about EIA at www.eiaonline.com.

The Other Gender Gap

The women’s movement has taught us many things, one of the more surprising being that boys are not performing in school as well as they might.

Three decades ago reformers’ attention was focused on the “higher-education gap”—the fact that not as many girls went on to college, graduate school, and professional school as boys. Advocates of equality between the sexes fought hard to create gender-specific education programs, fair admissions policies, and professional societies for women. Their efforts were reward-

ed: from 1970 to 2000 the number of women attending college rose by 136 percent, graduate school by 168 percent, and professional school by 853 percent.

Yet soon the higher-education gap opened again—but this time girls were on the other side of it. In the late 1970s more girls than boys began to enroll in college, and the disparity has since increased. Today women make up approximately 56 percent of all undergraduates, outnumbering men by about 1.7 million. In addition, about 300,000 more women than men enter graduate school each year. (The gap does not particularly affect professional school; almost as many women as men attend.) In short, equal opportunity brought an unequal result.

The continuing advance among girls has thrown a spotlight on the stagnation of boys. During the past decade the percentage of boys who complete high school (about 70), enter college (about 40), and go on to graduate school (about 8) has risen only slightly or not at all. And this despite the fact that the economic payoff of higher education has never been greater. Whereas girls continue to demonstrate that society has not yet reached any “natural” limit on college-attendance rates, boys have somehow gotten stuck.

Boys’ educational stagnation has long-term economic implications. Not even half the boys in the country are taking advantage of the opportunity to go to college, which has become almost a prerequisite for a middle-class lifestyle. And languishing academic attainment among a large portion of our population spells trouble for the prospects of continued economic growth. Unless more boys begin attending college, the nation may face a shortage of highly skilled workers in the coming decades. **EM**

Source—*Marshall Poe is a staff researcher for The Atlantic Monthly*. Reprinted with permission.

Has Your School Added the Sport of Cup Stacking?

How about it? Is your school in with the times? If you’re scratching your head wondering what the heck is cup stacking, you might be interested in Carol Martini’s story. She’s a physical education teacher at Andover High School in Massachusetts. When she first heard about cup stacking, she was “100 percent skeptical,” she said. “My first question was, What does cup stacking have to do with physical education?”

Although reluctant, Carol attended a cup-stacking workshop (that’s right, a cup-stacking workshop) at the 2002 Southern/Eastern District AAHPERD convention in Baltimore after a former student urged her to go. She was intrigued. She

went home and introduced it to her classes, and now she’ll tell you that she and her students are hooked. “My high school kids love it!” Carol has incorporated cup stacking into a variety of settings at her school. She uses it for warm-ups and cool-downs and in cooperative activities. “It can be very active in a nontraditional manner,” she said.

Carol is a strong advocate of kinesthetic activities. “Cup stacking appeals to the kinesthetic learner,” she said. She also has taken time to read up on current brain research that confirms the benefits of students activating both sides of their brains and bodies. “With cup stacking, students are crossing the midline in a really enjoyable and unique activity.”

Ask Carol now how she feels about cup stacking, and she’ll tell you that she went from a “complete skeptic to a complete addict.” By the way, you P.E. teachers might recognize Carol’s name. She was just named **the 2002 NASPE National Secondary School Teacher of the Year**.

If you’re still skeptical, or think we’re pulling your leg, visit www.speedstacks.com or call 1-877-GOT-CUPS (468-2877). **EM**

New Front in the Math Wars

One never ceases to be amazed by the inanity of many so-called “experts” in testing and instruction. In Illinois (which recently adopted a cracker-jack set of assessment benchmarks; see <http://www.edexcellence.net/foundation/gadfly/issue.cfm?id=120#1514> for more detail), the experts are bemoaning a new testing program that they say will dumb down math by focusing overmuch on basic computational skills.

Twenty percent of the new test items will be what snippy math educators disparage as “naked math,” i.e. number problems that emphasize computation rather than application to “real world” situations. Such an approach, of course, used to be called “math” before the experts got hold of it. So far, the state testing division is standing firm. Keep watching Illinois for this latest skirmish in the math wars that have pitted reformers and concerned parents against the “experts.” **EM**

Source—*Education Gadfly, a weekly bulletin of news and analysis from the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation*. For more information, visit www.edexcellence.net.

Questionable Choices

In its March 2004 newsletter, the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) urged members to support and attend the Freedom of Choice Rally in the nation’s capital.

Considering it was the NJEA, one might naturally think this would have something to do with school choice and vouchers, but that assumption would be wrong. It was, instead, an invitation to an abortion rights rally that read in part that the Association's Women in Education Committee, "with approval from the NJEA Executive Committee, will charter two buses for members."

Several union members were miffed. "I do not feel that my union dues should support this, nor do I think that a union whose sole purpose is to represent those in the field of education should be supporting something that has nothing to do with education," offered NJEA member and teacher Mary Kreiss-Papalski. **EM**

Source—*Newsletter of the Center for Education Reform*, 202-822-9000, www.edreform.com.

Study Claims School Facilities Impact Teacher Retention More Than Pay

A particularly interesting recent study by Jack Buckley, Mark Schneider, and Yi Shang looks at the impact of the quality of school facilities on teacher retention in urban school districts. Using data from a survey of K-12 teachers in Washington, D.C., the study finds that quality of the school building plays an important role in a teacher's decision to leave their school. In fact, they claim that teachers' frustration with rundown school buildings contributes more to teachers' decisions to leave than dissatisfaction with pay.

This study will surely resonate with anyone who has ever worked in the classroom. Buckley et al. review five environmental factors that have been shown to affect both teacher attrition and student achievement—poor indoor air quality, inability to control classroom temperature, inadequate lighting, insufficient amount of natural light, and excessive external noise. Of particular note, a study by the Heschong Mahone Group found that students with the most classroom daylight progressed twenty-six percent faster in one year on reading tests than students who received the least amount of natural light. Assuming the Heschong Mahone Group is not a skylight installation firm—that is a remarkable finding. Check out this study—it's brief and it offers an unusual perspective on teacher attrition and student achievement. <http://www.edfacilities.org/pubs/teacherretention.pdf>. **EM**

Source—*Teacher Quality Bulletin*, a weekly publication of the National Council on Teacher Quality. For more information, visit www.nctq.org.

Local-Flex Allows Seattle School Districts to Consolidate Federal Funds to Meet Local Needs

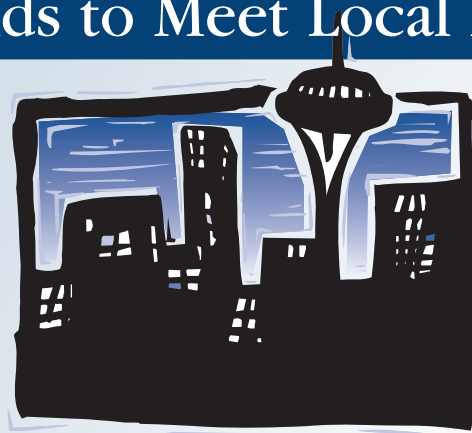
The Seattle Public School District is the first in the nation to win approval of its plan to use an unprecedented flexibility provision of the No Child Left Behind Act, thus enabling the district to target certain federal funds to meet the unique needs of its students, Acting Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education Ron Tomalis announced.

Tomalis joined Seattle Public Schools Superintendent Raj Manhas for the announcement at the Madrona K-8 school in Seattle.

The Local Flexibility Demonstration Program (Local-Flex) allows approved school districts to consolidate certain federal formula grant funds to meet local priorities in exchange for increased accountability for student academic progress.

Tomalis said, "We know that every state and community is different—that's why the law is flexible and gives states and school districts the ability to focus resources on their individual needs. Today, we're pleased to announce that Seattle is the first school district in the nation to take advantage of Local-Flex, and we encourage other districts to follow Seattle's lead and take advantage of one of the law's untapped flexibility provisions to boost student achievement."

To be eligible for the program, local school districts must submit an application that consists of a five-year plan that shows how the district would consolidate funds to improve student achievement and make continued academic progress as defined by the state. The application must also show how the district would narrow achievement gaps among students.



All applications must include academic achievement data, specific and measurable annual education goals that the district proposes to achieve under Local-Flex, and strategies for meeting those goals. School districts are selected on a competitive basis; up to eighty local school districts may be selected.

Local school districts may consolidate formula grant funds under the following programs: Teacher and Principal Training and Recruitment, Education Technology, Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities, and Innovative Programs.

Seattle's Local-Flex plan seeks to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools that failed to make adequate yearly progress and in schools that may have met adequate yearly progress but still failed to meet the needs of the lowest-performing underserved students.

The plan's strategies include improving teacher knowledge and skills in research-based practices and strategies, using data to improve instruction, improving beginning teacher quality, and enhancing technology in instruction. These activities will translate into additional services for the targeted schools such as expert coaching for teachers in reading and mathematics; and mentors for beginning teachers, among others.

Seattle's plan also addresses other specific areas of need within the context of its large, urban school district, including substance abuse prevention and intervention, additional assistance to support students on long-term suspension as they re-enter regular school settings, and extra counseling and tutorial services for Hispanic students in schools with the largest Latino populations. **EM**

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Seattle's plan also addresses other specific areas of need within the context of its large, urban school district.

Court



Watch

Louisiana Teachers File Suit Claiming State Teachers Union Lied

The Associated Professional Educators of Louisiana (A+PEL) (An AAE affiliate) has filed a defamation lawsuit against the Louisiana Federation of Teachers in 4th District Court.

According to the lawsuit, which represents only one side of a legal issue, the union “circulated a propaganda sheet to teachers and other persons associated with the Monroe City school system” in October 2003.

The lawsuit lists six defamatory statements allegedly contained in the union brochure, including that A+PEL does not have “strong local chapters or experienced staff to fight for teachers rights,” that it wants to give money to parochial schools, and that the organization sought to dissuade former Gov. Mike Foster from giving support personnel pay raises. A+PEL strongly denies all of these contentions.

Steve Monaghan, Louisiana Federation of Teachers president, prepared a written e-mailed response:

“The Louisiana Federation of Teachers and its local affiliates stand by the accuracy of its publications. We are confident that once this matter goes through the judicial process, the Louisiana Federation of Teachers (LFT) and its local affiliate will be completely vindicated.

Associated Professional Educators of Louisiana’s Executive Director Polly Broussard, responded that “Mr. Monaghan’s statement is, like the LFT document distributed in Monroe, both arrogant and incorrect.” **EM**

Weighing Teacher-Preparation Programs

(Continued from page 1)

although the flood of talented applicants into “alternative certification” programs such as Teach For America or Troops to Teachers suggest that this is a concern. Nor do the researchers try to determine whether teacher-preparation programs are imposing meaningful quality control in their admissions or evaluation processes.

Trustees and Alternatives

The absence of evidence that traditional preparation makes any difference raises doubts about the wisdom or value of retaining the near-monopoly long enjoyed by college- and university-based training programs.

Increasing numbers of teachers, now 10 percent or more, are entering the profession through nontraditional training programs. States are also permitting new providers—including community colleges—to start offering licensed programs.

Members of traditional schools of education, both individually and through the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, label such reforms as “anti-education” and “anti-teacher.” But these individuals are not dispassionate observers.

Clearly, some teacher-training programs are better than others, and the entire sector (some 1,300 nationwide) should not be painted with a broad brush. In looking at programs on their own campuses, trustees should examine the school’s reputation, philosophy, and outcomes before deciding whether to boost or reduce a program.

However, rather than automatically supporting efforts to head off new approaches to training K-12 education providers, trustees should encourage partnership with reformers and legislatures to help produce the teachers we need. **EM**

Dr. Frederick M. Hess is the Director of Education Policy Studies and Resident Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C.; web-site: www.aei.org. Hess researches education policy and is also the Executive Editor of Education Next. His education training (M.Ed., teaching and curriculum, Harvard University; Ph.D., government, Harvard University) and considerable experience in education research will cause serious attention to be paid to the release of his latest book Common Sense School Reform, Palgrave Macmillan publishers. Look for a review of Common Sense School Reform in the next edition of Education Matters.



AAE: Your Voice in Washington, D.C.



You should know that the Association of American Educators played a key role in helping to bring about the changes reported in the article on next page. AAE leaders traveled to many states to meet with State Department of Education officials regarding more effective ways to implement NCLB without placing undue burdens on teachers. AAE was recognized for that contribution by both the USDOE and the U.S. House of Representatives. Also, AAE leaders presented at a nationally televised USDOE press conference (see above photo) to explain why these changes and others like them would begin to provide some welcome relief to America’s teachers.

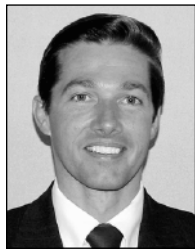
Quote of the Month

“If a doctor, lawyer or dentist had 40 people in his office all at one time, all of whom had different needs, and some of whom didn’t want to be there and were causing trouble, and the doctor, lawyer or dentist, without assistants, had to treat them all with professional excellence for nine months, then he might have some conception of the classroom teacher’s job.”

—First Lady, Laura Bush

New Flexibility in the Highly Qualified Teacher Requirements of No Child Left Behind

A Report from Our Washington, D.C. Office Director, Tracey Bailey



Tracey Bailey

On Monday, March 15th, the U.S. Department of Education and Secretary Paige rolled out the latest in a series of administrative and regulatory changes to No Child Left Behind. This is the fourth such announce-

ment in the last six months. All of these changes have been designed to give more flexibility and latitude to teachers and states as they interpret and implement the No Child Left Behind Act at the state level.

For example, in December we were pleased when the USDOE issued a new regulation providing greater leniency in the testing and reporting requirements for Special Education students. We described those changes in detail in our January newsletter.

This past month the changes are all about flexibility and some needed relief for teachers!

Specifically, the USDOE issued new administrative guidelines regarding some of the "Highly Qualified Teacher" provisions of NCLB. The teachers who benefit most from these changes include **rural teachers, science teachers,** and teachers currently teaching in **multiple-subject areas.** Further, the U.S. Department of Education also reinforced four areas in which states are strongly encouraged to make full use of existing flexibility in the NCLB law.

The USDOE fact sheet, which follows below, describes each change in detail:

New Flexibility

Rural Teachers

Approximately one-third—or almost 5,000—of all school districts in the United States are considered rural. As Department officials have traveled the country listening to teachers and state and district officials, they frequently have heard that the highly qualified teacher provisions of the *No Child Left Behind* law don't adequately accommodate the special challenges faced by teachers in small, rural districts. Often, the teachers in these areas are required to teach more than one academic subject. This new flexibility is designed to recognize this challenge and provide additional time for these teachers to prove that they are highly qualified.

Under this new policy, teachers in eligible, rural districts who are highly qualified in at least one subject will have three years to become highly qualified in the additional subjects they teach. They must also be provided professional development, intense supervision, or structured mentoring to become highly qualified in those additional subjects.

Science Teachers

Science teachers, like rural teachers, are often needed to teach in more than one field of science. Some states allow such science teachers to be certified under a general science certification, while others require a subject-specific certification (such as physics, biology, or chemistry). In science, where demand for teachers is so high, the Department is issuing additional flexibility for teachers to demonstrate that they are highly qualified.

Now, states may determine—based on their current certification requirements—to allow science teachers to demonstrate that they are highly qualified in either "broad field" science or individual fields of science (such as physics, biology, or chemistry).

Current Multi-subject Teachers

Current teachers do not have to return to school or take a test in every subject to demonstrate that they meet highly qualified requirements. *No Child Left Behind* allows states to create an alternative method (High, Objective, Uniform State Standard of Evaluation, or HOUSSE) for teachers not new to the field—as determined by each state—to certify they know the subject they teach. But, for multi-subject teachers, this alternate process could become unnecessarily protracted and repetitive as they go through the HOUSSE process for each subject.

Under the new guidelines, states may streamline this evaluation process by developing a method for current, multi-subject teachers to demonstrate through one process that they are highly qualified in each of their subjects and maintain the same high standards in subject-matter mastery.

Existing Flexibility

A common theme emerged from frequent meetings, visits, and listening sessions with teachers and state and local officials across the country: states haven't been taking full advantage of flexibility (in requirements and

in funding) already at their disposal through No Child Left Behind. Outlined below are some of these untapped areas:

HOUSSE for Current Teachers

No Child Left Behind does not require current teachers to return to school or get a degree in every subject they teach to demonstrate that they are highly qualified. The law allows them to provide an alternate method (HOUSSE) for experienced teachers to demonstrate subject-matter competency that recognizes, among other things, the experience, expertise, and professional training garnered over time in the profession.

Middle School Teacher Requirements

Importantly, states have the authority to define which grades constitute elementary and middle school. States may determine, by reviewing the degree of technicality of the subject matter being taught and the rigor of knowledge needed by the teacher, whether demonstrating competency as an elementary or as a middle school teacher is appropriate. In addition, states may approve rigorous content-area assessments that are developed specifically for middle school teachers aligned with middle school content and academic standards.

Testing Flexibility

NCLB provides flexibility in developing assessments for teachers to demonstrate subject-matter competency. States may tailor teacher tests to the subjects and level of knowledge needed for effective instruction.

Special Education Teachers

The highly qualified teacher requirements apply only to teachers providing direct instruction in core academic subjects. Special educators who do not directly instruct students in core academic subjects or who provide only consultation to highly qualified teachers in adapting curricula, using behavioral supports and interventions, or selecting appropriate accommodations, do not need to demonstrate subject-matter competency in those subjects.

Congress, in the context of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) reauthorization, is considering modifying how the highly qualified teacher provisions of NCLB apply to special education teachers. The Department looks forward to working with Congress in addressing this need. **EM**

Schools Within Schools—

Latest education “reform” idea sounds great. Is there a downside?

By Donna Garner



Donna Garner

The education establishment in Texas is ecstatic—more money is coming its way. Bill Gates and Dell Computers have gone together to pump \$55 M into what is called the Texas High School Project. The one prob-

lem: Strings are attached. One of these strings is that schools that apply for the grants will have to cap their enrollments at 400 students. I like the idea of having small high schools, but I don't like the idea of breaking down already-in-existence high schools into “Schools Within Schools” (SWS).

In the SWS model, high schools that are over 400 students must be broken into “houses.” Each house has a principal, a counselor, a set of teachers, and a set of students (9th–12th grades). Each house, for instance, contains four English teachers (I, II, III, IV), four math, four science, four social studies, etc. Students in a house will take classes from the teachers who are a part of that particular house; this is to help teachers and students develop positive relationships that will continue from year to year. The idea is to make students feel they are important individuals rather than just a number on a list.

The premise of SWS sounds great, and I can see why people would applaud such an idea. After all, students need mentoring. They need caring adults to take a personal interest in them and to help them plan for the future. Students need to feel connected to their schools, and it is this feeling of connectedness and self-worth that may help teens avoid risky behaviors.

The idea is sound, but it is in the nuts and bolts that the system breaks down. Why must there always be a downside when it comes to a new education fad? Maybe classroom teachers who work each day in the trenches with the students need to be made a vital part of the brainstorming sessions before new education ideas are promoted to the public.

In education several guiding principles must not be defied. One of these principles is this: In order for teachers to coordinate their efforts and their curriculum, and to strengthen departmental policies that increase learning and decrease grade inflation, teachers who teach the same courses must be given the opportunity to align themselves daily; this is called horizontal alignment. (It is similar to a group of dentists getting together frequently to make

sure they are all keeping up with the latest techniques.)

For the sake of the students, it is terribly important for an English I teacher to communicate regularly with other English I teachers. English I teachers gain strength and insight from their fellow colleagues. They share grading standards, questions, comments, ideas, and changes with one another to make sure that all students are receiving the same level of delivery. Many times these important exchanges are done informally, perhaps even between classes, since in the traditional school configuration, English I teachers are usually located in proximity to each other in the school building.

In the SWS model, an English I teacher is not put in the same house with other English I teachers; he is not even put in close proximity in the school building to other English I teachers. He is located close to teachers assigned to the same house but who teach English II, III, and IV. Because the curriculum and the needs of students vary tremendously at each grade level, it does little good for an English I teacher to dialogue daily with English II, III, and IV teachers. English IV teachers have very different problems from those of a freshman English teacher. (Dentists need to spend their valuable time meeting with other dentists rather than meeting with cardiologists, podiatrists, or brain surgeons.)

Typically the early high school years are spent teaching students the more explicit, foundational skills, while the later high school years are dedicated to the teaching of more sophisticated concepts. Vertical alignment (French I - IV) should definitely take place within departments at various times during the school year, but horizontal alignment must take place daily for teachers to make sure they are covering and evaluating the curriculum similarly.

Can an English III teacher draw support and strength from a U. S. history teacher who is in his same house? They can certainly try to encourage each other but because of the course content each teaches, their problems are very different. Even if they share the same students, the problems faced

by an English III teacher who is teaching five strands of curriculum (composition, literature/reading, grammar, spelling, and vocabulary) per course are very different from a U. S. history teacher who is teaching one strand of curriculum, usually chronologically organized. A calculus teacher has a very different set of problems compared to those of a Biology I teacher. A German teacher has very different concerns from those of a journalism teacher, a physical education teacher, or an art teacher.

The Schools Within Schools model destroys horizontal alignment because teachers are physically located in the school building within close proximity to those teachers who are in the same house. Their planning period is scheduled with the teachers in their same house. Teachers meet with the principal and counselor in their own house. All business is basically handled through the house model, which breaks down interactions and communication with faculty members in the

other houses. Teachers who teach in a SWS model typically end up feeling very isolated from their fellow teachers who teach the same subjects they teach but in other houses. When the house system prevents teachers from doing day-to-day horizontal alignment, the tendency is for them simply to seclude themselves in their own classrooms, thus hindering one of the supposed advantages to SWS—better communication.

Another big disadvantage at the high school level of SWS is the course-scheduling problem. What high

school is large enough to have four Advanced Placement English teachers (I, II, III, IV) in it? How many schools have a big enough high school staff to have four Spanish teachers (I, II, III, IV), four French teachers (I, II, III, IV), four German teachers, four Advanced Placement math teachers, four choir teachers, and four art teachers all in the same house? The reality is that a house will have only one calculus teacher in it, but many of the students in the house will never take calculus. How can a calculus teacher truly be a role model or mentor to a student who never even takes the teacher's class?

★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Maybe classroom teachers who work each day in the trenches with the students need to be made a vital part of the brainstorming sessions before new education ideas are promoted to the public.

*Continued on page 9
See... “Schools Within Schools”*

New Resource—

Teach Them All to Read: An Online Seminar

Announcing a new online seminar titled *Teach Them ALL to Read*. The seminar is designed for elementary school teachers, special education teachers, ELL and Title I personnel, staff development specialists, and principals. It is based on the best-selling book, *Teach Them ALL to Read: Catching the Kids Who Fall Through the Cracks*, published by Corwin Press (2002) and chosen as the California ASCD Seminar Book for 2002-2003.

The seminar version of the book contains nine units that cover all of the essential instructional components of reading recommended by the Report of the National Reading Panel, the No Child Left Behind Act, Early Reading First, and Reading First, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

It includes PowerPoint slides with voice narration, a Discussion Forum for ongoing interaction with other seminar participants, as well as personalized implementation profiles containing over one hundred online links to research, information, and programs that showcase the best in reading instruction.

The seminar is available as a stand-alone staff development opportunity for individuals, a two-hour course for university or continuing education credit through Chapman University in Orange, California, or as a group e-learning experience led by an on-site facilitator.

Go to <http://www.elainemcewan.com/seminar/> to read more about the seminar.

Go to <http://www.elainemcewan.com/seminar/overview/slide1.htm> for a free slide preview of this unique e-learning experience.

Teach Them ALL to Read: An Online Seminar is an answer to the time and resource constraints of obtaining or providing quality staff development.



“Elaine McEwan has captured all of the essential concepts that teachers (and principals) need to know about reading and packaged them with appealing graphics and her interesting narration. What a resource. How could anyone not like this course! I’m ready to sign up.” —Mary Damer, Project PRIDE Literacy Coach, Northern Illinois University. **EM**

Schools Within Schools—

(Continued from page 8)

For the fundamental idea of the house to work effectively (providing opportunities for students, teachers, principals, and counselors to establish close relationships with each other), the same students are supposed to stay within the house for four years. However, it is obvious that the whole principle of SWS breaks down over elective offerings. There is no way that most high school students are going to be able to schedule all their required courses (9-12) from among the teachers assigned to their houses; therefore, students are forced to break out of their houses, particularly for electives.

Then, too, students who fail classes and have to repeat them (e.g., those who have to take both English I and II during the same semester) present a problem. Scheduling those students within their houses is almost impossible. What happens to new students who may not be taking the same track of classes that the majority of their fellow house students is taking? As the high school years go by, many students are forced to break out of their houses and the whole basis for establishing houses is lost.

If a student is forced to break out of his house because of scheduling conflicts, who is his principal? Who is his counselor?

Is he assigned to the principal who was over his original house, or does he go to the principal who is over the new house? Who is the student’s counselor? Is it the person with whom he established a trusting relationship while residing in his last house, or must he form another relationship with the counselor assigned to his new house? If the student changes to a different principal or to a different counselor, all past advantages of a personal relationship are lost and the whole reason for SWS is lost.

At best, course credits and scheduling are nightmares at the high school level particularly with the ever-changing state-mandated graduation requirements. To add yet another limiting factor such as keeping students within a certain house makes scheduling almost impossible. Each time a student breaks out of a house, the whole premise of SWS is diluted. Add to that the definite problem of teachers being prevented from doing daily horizontal alignment, and you have real grounds for asking the question, “Of what value is Schools Within Schools anyway?”

A better solution to large, impersonal high schools would be for state legislators and local school boards to cap the size and amount of money that is spent on constructing new high schools. “Build them and they will come” is unfortunately true. If districts build huge, monolithic structures, of course those buildings will soon fill up with large numbers of students.

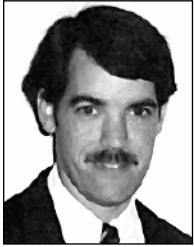
What is the answer for large high schools that have already been built? To help students feel connected to large high schools, educators need to focus their attention toward making sure students master their basic skills in K through 8. Students who are successful in their high school classes generally like school, and they have more time to participate in extracurricular activities; such involvement usually expands their feelings of connectedness to their peers. If standards in K through 8 are realistic, clearly stated, and increase at each grade level in depth and complexity, ninth graders will be prepared and eager to move into the new challenges of high school life.

I appreciate Gates and Dell wanting to help students to achieve, but I wish they would invest their money in something else besides the Schools Within Schools model. **EM**

Donna Garner is an AAE advisory member. Donna taught at Midway High School in Hewitt, Texas for over twenty-six years. She was appointed by President Reagan and reappointed by President Bush to the National Commission of Migrant Education, and was appointed by Texas Education Commissioner Mike Moses to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) writing team for English/Language Arts/Reading. As a result she was instrumental in creating the Texas Alternative Document (TAD) for English/Language Arts Standards guide. Donna can be reached at wgarner1@hotmail.com.

New National Certification Study Full of Surprises

By Michael Antonucci, Executive Director of the Education Intelligence Agency



Michael Antonucci

Education Intelligence Agency (EIA) has been among the skeptics regarding national certification of teachers. The amount of money funneled to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)

since 1987, coupled with the bonuses and fees paid by various states to national certification awardees and applicants, has been enormous. Yet there has been little attention paid to what we are getting for our money and no large-scale empirical study of the effects of national certification on student achievement. Until now.

Dan Goldhaber and Emily Anthony of the Urban Institute released a reported titled, "Can Teacher Quality Be Effectively Assessed?" (available in full at

(<http://www.crpe.org>). Goldhaber and Anthony matched more than 600,000 student records with more than 32,000 teachers in North Carolina, covering school years 1996-1999 and grades 3-5. They concluded that nationally certified teachers "appear to be more effective than their noncertified counterparts."

That sentence was all national certification supporters needed to hear. "New research underscores the importance of NEA's support of and promotion of National Board Certification," announced the union. NBPTS Chair Roy E. Barnes added that the study "provides state and national policy-makers with proof that National Board Certification is a smart investment."

Ay, there's the rub.

As is usually the case in education research, the report's findings are far more equivocal than is reported in the newspaper

headlines. The report shows no signs of bias, and, to their everlasting credit, Goldhaber and Anthony actually address the cost-effectiveness issue.

First, let's look at the actual gains achieved by students of national board certified teachers (NBCTs) when compared to others. Goldhaber and Anthony found that teachers who never applied for national certification increased their students' reading scores by 5.69 points, and math scores by 9.75 points. Teachers who applied for national certification, but failed to achieve it on the first try, increased their students' reading scores by 5.83 in reading, and 9.14

in math. NBCTs increased student reading scores by 6.18 points in reading and 10.21 points in math.

Goldhaber and Anthony themselves call the differences "relatively small."

Goldhaber and Anthony estimate direct payments to NBPTS at over \$350 million, not counting the additional bonuses and fees paid to teachers who underwent the national certification process. The authors conclude that national certification is much less cost-effective than even class size reduction – another

highly expensive program – but may be more cost-effective than paying a premium for teachers who hold a master's degree since the evidence on the value of this credential is "quite mixed," according to the authors.

The most fascinating part of this story is not the report itself, which, by the standards of the education field, is as good a piece of empirical research as one may hope to find. No, the fascinating part is the NEA's applause. Let's summarize what Goldhaber and Anthony have done:

- Used the standardized tests of students to measure teacher effectiveness (strictly a no-no per NEA Resolution B-57).

★ ★ ★ ★ ★
As is usually the case in education research, the report's findings are far more equivocal than is reported in the newspaper headlines.

- Chose North Carolina to study because that state administers standardized tests annually, beginning in third grade (a major NEA complaint against NCLB).
- Concluded that national certification is a better investment for public school systems than a master's degree (a hallmark of the traditional salary schedule championed by NEA).
- Found that going through the national certification process itself "does not appear to make teachers more effective." (contrary to the testimonials of NBCTs).
- For all these compromises, the union (and the rest of us) gets an extra half-point in reading and math. Goldhaber and Anthony's report, rather than close the book on national certification's effectiveness, seems to have opened up volumes of questions. **EM**

For more information on the Education Intelligence Agency, visit www.eiaonline.com

New Resource— New USDOE Teacher E-mail Resource

The U.S. Department of Education is launching a new online resource especially for teachers. This innovative electronic news bulletin, called *The Achiever* is specifically designed for classroom teachers.

Subscribers to the bulletin will also view timely updates on education policy, promising practices, educational and governmental-sponsored professional development opportunities, and news from the field. The bulletin's format is designed to compliment the busy teacher's schedule.

To sign up, send e-mail message to teachers@ed.gov. **EM**



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