

*Eighth*

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***Illinois Education Research Council***

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**Compendium  
of  
Abstracts**

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# **A Critical Ethnographic Case Study of The Illinois College and Career Readiness Act at Shawnee Community College**

Erin Castro, *Department of Educational Policy Studies*  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

## **Introduction and Overview**

Often thought of as the great equalizer, education in the United States was (and arguably still is) considered to hold the promise of equal educational opportunity, particularly for historically marginalized students. Recent research on educational attainment, however, illuminates a different reality. It is becoming increasingly clear that racial and ethnic minorities and poor students in this country continue to bear the brunt of inequitable educational policies throughout all levels of the education pipeline (Bowen, Chingos, McPherson, 2009; Orfield, 2009). As Bowen et al. (2009) argue, the rate of overall educational attainment in the United States has slowed considerably in the last decade, particularly for racial and ethnic minorities and poor students as educational disparities along these demographic lines continue to increase.

The emergence of a college and career readiness framework seeks to redress this disconnect within the K-16 public educational system. There is a gap between current secondary education expectations and the kinds of achievement necessary to successfully pursue postsecondary education and that gap is widening. Programs designed to close this gap do so in the spirit of college readiness, aiming to ensure all students who graduate from high school are prepared to succeed in college. In general terms, college readiness refers to a students' ability to enroll in and successfully complete credit-bearing coursework at the collegiate level (Conley, 2007). However, as educational researcher David Conley argues, the current discourse of college readiness suffers from an identity crisis in that it lacks an interpretive paradigm to better understand and make sense of programs and services employed in its name. Without an interpretive framework that explicitly considers the context in which such programs are offered, we are left without a nuanced understanding of success of these programs. Furthermore, and more pressingly, we are left without a comprehensive understanding of what it means to be college ready.

## **The Illinois College and Career Readiness Act**

In 2007, the Illinois General Assembly passed The College and Career Readiness (CCR) Act in an attempt to reduce statewide remediation at the community college level. Addressing remedial education represents an urgent need for the state of Illinois since community colleges spent over \$120 million dollars offering remedial coursework to students in 2007 (PACCS, 6). Furthermore, the increased need for remedial coursework indicates a growing gap between high school graduation requirements and the kinds of knowledge, skills and awareness that are required to be successful in future college and career activities. This persistent gap disproportionately affects poor students and students of color in the State of Illinois.

Challenging the successful implementation of state policies like The CCR Act are sociopolitical, economic, and issues of (in)visibility that plague rural areas. Moreover, underlying remedial education are important concerns about postsecondary access for traditionally marginalized students, students of color and impoverished students, who are severely overrepresented in remedial programs (Attewell, Lavin, Domina, and Levey, 2006; Shaw, 1997). Because of the lack of focus on remedial education in low-income rural communities and the absence of theoretical frameworks to make sense of current programs and services, the purpose of this study is to explore the implementation of the CCR legislation at Shawnee Community College, located in rural southern Illinois.

## **Methodological Approach and Significance of Study**

This project is a critical ethnographic case study of the implementation of The College and Career Readiness Act at Shawnee Community College located in Ullin, Illinois. Shawnee Community College serves the southern-most districts in the state, three of which were placed on the poverty warning list in 2007, indicating that immediate corrective should be taken.<sup>1</sup> All five partner high schools working with Shawnee Community College on the CCR Act failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for at least two years and in one of the high schools, Cairo High School, all of the students are on free and reduced lunch (Illinois Report Card, 2009).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Massac, Pulaski, and Union counties were placed on this list considering factors such as income and poverty, employment, health and education, graduation rates, teen birth rate, and housing. For more information, see The Heartland Alliance, a nonprofit organization dedicated to human needs and human rights: [www.heartlandalliance.org](http://www.heartlandalliance.org).

<sup>2</sup> For additional information on the other four partner high schools working with Shawnee Community College, see the Appendix.



## **Conceptual and Theoretical Framework for This Study**

Two critical issues guide this study. The first is a lack of knowledge about how current programs offered under the umbrella of college and career readiness (and how they affect those in isolated rural communities) leaves us with the inability to craft policy with the specific needs of such communities in mind. The second is a response to David Conely's call for a conceptual framework to guide the discourse of college and career readiness as a way to understand if and how universal definitions of college readiness are interpreted and mobilized. Taken together, these issues open up the possibility of undertaking research that is both timely and urgent, and offer insight into policy design and policy consequences.

In an effort to gain a more contextualized understanding of what it means to be college and career ready, this project will use critical theories to bring to the forefront the analyses of sociopolitical factors and the way these affect policy implementation. The current mechanisms used to understand college and career readiness rely largely on a deficit model, placing the onus of responsibility for success (and failure) on the individual student and by extension, the community college. Theories grounded in a critical tradition challenge such deficit-oriented models. One of the goals of a critical social science is to widen this lens and look at the collection of forces that shape the experiences and outcomes of educational policy. Critical theories offer the analytic tools to answer Conley's call for an interpretive framework as critical social science in general aims to integrate theory and practice toward change.

# **Critical Institutional Supports for African-American STEM Student Transition: High School to Higher Ed**

Diane Fuselier-Thompson, *Educational Policy Studies*  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

## **A. ABSTRACT**

The underrepresentation of African-American engineering students in higher education is a multi-faceted and complex issue of great concern to the advancement of science, national productivity, business and industry. This study begins with an ethnographic study on the campus of a selective Midwestern Predominantly White Institution and focuses on identifying critical Institutional supports that strengthen access and contribute to the successful transition of African-American engineering students from high school to postsecondary education. The ethnographic study is followed by a larger mixed methods study that examines minority STEM students on nine selective PWI campuses and the range of institutional supports available to support a successful college transition and degree attainment.

The study further examines how ethnographic inquiry can be integrated into an actionable plan for organizational change in targeting issues of engagement and persistence for students historically underrepresented in higher education.

## **B. DESCRIPTION**

Tinto's theory of academic persistence posits that academic success is predicated on four areas of student development of a student's academic and social integration and that the more a student becomes socially integrated into their campus environment, the more likely the student will persist towards degree completion. Yet Tinto's theory of campus assimilation and academic progress does not account for the enormous increase in diverse and multicultural students that are currently enrolled on college campuses and the unique cultural attributes they bring. Tinto's theory did not consider the ethnic, gender and cultural juxtapose and was instead predicated on a psychosocial model of behavior stemming from non-conformity to a predominantly white male middle class value system and cultural orientation. Can the low persistence rate among non-majority students suggest their resistance to the norms of this white male middle class system and instead a value system that represents their own cultural norms? Can a strong cultural orientation among minority high school students suggest a predisposition for resistance in a predominantly white institution? Are institutional intervention programs with cultural components more effective in providing academic and social integration for African-American students in the STEM fields? What institutional supports are critical to the social, cultural and academic development of students in a multicultural environment? How can ethnographic researchers integrate their research into actionable plans for use by teachers, administrators and policy makers in support of the successful retention and persistence among non-majority students? The findings may have particular significance for successful academic and social integration throughout the educational pipeline from K-20.

## **C. METHODOLOGY**

A simple random sample of first and second year African-American students, who were currently enrolled as undergraduates at a predominantly white four year selective research institution in the State of Illinois were selected to be interviewed. Each eligible member of the sampling group had declared or was intending to declare a STEM major. Participant observation methods were used to conduct face to face interviews with students on campus using open-ended questions in a semi structured format. The institutional setting has a lengthy history of recruitment and institutional support for African-American students and a mission statement of inclusiveness and commitment to diversity. This method of inquiry worked best for the population being studied particularly due to the small numbers of available participants among the target population. Both the interviewer and respondents were members of a minority group, students attending the same institution and the majority of respondents were first generation college students as was the interviewer. The reflexivity of the researcher contributed to an overall positive environment of cultural sensitivity, particularly with regard to questions about race, gender and ethnicity and served to minimize perceptions of a power relationship, while gaining the trust of the respondents.

## **D. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

Although small scale data collection for this project is complete, it remains a work in progress to develop a framework for a larger scale quantitative survey that could result in a plan for action-based research integration for organizational changes in the institutional supports for African-American STEM education. The preliminary findings suggest that

African-American engineering students who have significant cultural orientation (i.e. students from minority serving high schools) benefit from culturally based institutional support that encourages their academic transition and integration from high school to predominantly white postsecondary institutions, while encouraging persistence towards academic goals consistent with their white counterparts with the same or similar academic preparation. Another dominant theme among respondents was that of 'Parentis locus' or having accountability on their academic progress to an authority or parental figure.

#### **E. SIGNIFICANCE TO EDUCATION**

The preliminary findings suggest that culturally based institutional programs at predominantly white institutions may benefit African-American and other non-traditional students in their transition and completion of postsecondary education. This information becomes particularly important and useful for teachers, administrators and policy makers in designing curriculum, programs and policies that integrate multicultural components that celebrate the continuous integration of multicultural values into a pipeline of K-20 education that has traditionally supported a cultural norm that has been white, middle class and male. The results of this study are expected to provide insight into the important institutional supports necessary to develop cross cultural learning opportunities that will benefit the academic achievement of all students consistent with the university's mission of diversity and inclusiveness. These findings support a larger scale inquiry using a mixed methods approach to assess cultural interventions that inform organizational change, policy decisions and educational reform.

## **The Impact of Dual Credit on the Illinois Community College System**

Scott J. Parke, Ph.D., *Senior Director for Research and Policy Studies*,  
Nathan Wilson, *Director for Research and Policy Studies*,  
Jo E. Bernard, *Assistant Director for Research and Policy Studies*  
Michelle Dufour, *Assistant Director for Research and Policy Studies*  
Illinois Community College System

At the national and state level, policy makers are calling for more college graduates. Since dual credit instruction strengthens the educational pipeline by expanding access and opportunity, it is a key ingredient as higher education strives to meet these elevated expectations through the delivery of high quality courses and programs (Boswell, 2001). Dual credit provides many advantages: allows an academically qualified high school student to earn credits that simultaneously count toward a high school diploma and a college degree; helps students make a smooth transition from high school to college; saves students and parents' money; and has the potential to shorten the time to a college degree or certificate (Boswell, 2001; Andrews and Barnett, 2002). This session will provide information about dual credit course and enrollment trends in the Illinois Community College System. Information will be furnished overall, by broad program area (PCS), and about the top ten dual credit courses (SU/SR). During the session, comparative data will be provided from national sources and selected other states.

# **The Relationship of the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (PTELL) to Student Learning**

Guy Banicki, *Educational Administration and Foundations*  
Neil Sappington, *Educational Administration and Foundations*  
Illinois State University

The discussion of public education funding has been acrimonious, controversial, and is sure to be debated well into the future. The State of Illinois has a complex formula for computing State Aid for school district funding but the percentage of state revenue to schools has decreased and local property taxation has been the majority source of funding for public education. With the economy being in recession there is no discussion of increasing State revenues to further fund our schools.

In addition to the fiscal fiasco with our economy our constituents have the perception of “failing schools” caused by test scores on the ISAT and PSAE not reaching the levels of achievement required by the No Child Left Behind federal legislation of 2002. Increased emphasis is being placed on this single test score as the barometer of success or failure of each local school.

Before NCLB was enacted the Illinois General Assembly passed legislation in 1991 that limited the amount of local property taxes that may be levied for all municipal forms of government which included public school districts. The legislation is known as the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (PTELL.) This legislation limits the amount of property taxes that can be levied based upon the lesser of either a maximum of 5% or the Consumer Price Index which most recently has remained under 1%.

The PTELL legislation permits counties to conduct referenda to decide whether to impose this tax cap or not. Currently thirty-eight counties of one hundred two have approved tax caps for their municipalities including the local school districts. These thirty-eight counties that represent tax-capped districts have approximately 75% of the State’s population.

This paper will discuss the study of the relationship of PTELL to student learning. Comparisons were made between those schools that are under the tax caps with the schools that have not been affected by tax caps. This study will analyzed test scores by District type and PTELL status, to determine if PTELL legislation is affecting student learning as measured by test scores.

No Child Left Behind requires annual testing of students to demonstrate whether adequate yearly progress is being made by the student population as measured by student achievement. For public schools in Illinois student learning can be quantitatively measured using two testing instruments, the Illinois State Achievement Test (ISAT) and the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE). High Schools also administer the ACT test. The ISAT is used in the elementary and junior high schools while the PSAE is used at the High School level.

School districts across the state will continue to assess, annually, the progress of their students on the ISAT or PSAE and strive to increase the scores to demonstrate improved student learning. At the same time, the PTELL districts will further erode their financial base undercutting revenue used to defray costs associated with instruction.

Since 1991 when tax cap legislation was passed numerous studies have been done analyzing the consequences of this new law. In 1997 a study in Cook county and surrounding collar counties had a limited effect on school district operating expenditures but no effect on school district instructional spending (Dye & McGuire,1997)) Again in 1998, school districts in the Chicago metropolitan area had limited evidence of tax caps and their effect on student performance ( Downes , Dye, & McGuire,1998).

Much of the research was conducted shortly after the tax cap legislation was approved therefore significant differences were not observed in these earlier studies. Additional research was needed to further investigate any relationship between property tax limitations and student achievement on a larger scale. In a study of all Unit School Districts in Illinois, (Manahan,2009) there was no significant relationship between PTELL and ISAT test scores for each of three years studied including FY 2006, FY 2007, and FY 2008. The results of the study did suggest that there was a significant relationship between PTELL and student achievement in terms of the three year trend differences over this timeframe.

Studies have shown property tax limitations are associated with lesser levels of services (Figlio, 1997). Directing additional revenues to school instruction can impact success in test scores .

This paper will discuss the relationship of a School District's tax-cap status (PTELL or not) and test scores on the ISAT, PSAE, and ACT. The tax-cap status and the type of district (Unit, Elementary, and High School) are the independent variables. The dependent variable will be student achievement as measured by the ISAT scores in elementary school districts and unit school districts. In high school districts and unit school districts the PSAE scores and ACT scores will be the dependent variables representing student achievement. School District organization will also be studied as an independent variable. Unit Districts will be compared with Elementary Districts on ISAT scores in both PTELL counties and non-PTELL counties. Unit Districts will be compared with High School Districts on the PSAE and ACT test scores in PTELL counties and non-PTELL counties.

The results of this study will be shared with participants at the presentation.

# **Squandered Opportunities: How Formative Reportage of High-Stakes and Benchmark Test Results Misses What's Most Important About What Students Know and Are Able to Do**

Paul Zavitkovsky, *Urban School Leadership Program*  
University of Illinois–Chicago

## **Purpose Of Research**

Standards-based curriculum reform began with the promise of bringing greater clarity to what we expect teachers to teach and what we expect students to know and be able to do. Since the passage of No Child Left Behind, high stakes assessment has assumed an especially prominent role as an instrument of reform, first as a summative measure of instructional effectiveness and second as a formative method for passing back information to teachers and parents about where instruction must be further improved.

There is now substantial evidence that summative grading and reporting of high-stakes achievement in grades three through eight has been deeply compromised in Illinois and across the nation by internal inconsistencies, questionable psychometrics and poor alignment with high school and post-secondary outcomes. Less attention, however, has been given to formative/diagnostic reportage, both from the tests themselves, and from the wide range of commercially-produced “benchmark” assessments that are now widely used to augment the high-stakes testing process

The purpose of this study is to illustrate that formative reportage of standardized test results is also deeply flawed. Specifically, the study illustrates that widespread use of “standard strands” to report results from the ISAT and many commercially-produced benchmark tests:

- • ignores generally accepted rules of construct validity;
- • systematically misrepresents what students know and are able to do; and,
- • promotes curricular reductionism that diminishes instructional effectiveness, especially with chronically underachieving populations.

Equally important, the study illustrates that reportage by “standard strand” squanders opportunities to report high-stakes and benchmark test information in ways that:

- • provide deeper insight into what students know and are able to do; and,
- • support more intentional instruction and practice of higher order analytic operations that are closely associated with higher test scores

## **Methods Of Inquiry**

The study is built around two major forms of analysis. The first form of analysis examines and illustrates high levels of covariance across ISAT “standard strands”:

- • for all ISAT grades and subjects tested statewide during the four years between 2006 and 2009; and,
- • for commercially-produced, ETS benchmark exams in reading and math that are administered for formative purposes in grades three through eight in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS).

The second form of analysis examines a likely source of covariance by rank-ordering item-level, correct-response frequencies by standard strand. Regrettably, ISAT test items are not retired annually and made available for public examination. However, CPS reports ETS benchmark results three times annually by item and strand for all students tested. Since overall ETS benchmark scores are closely correlated with ISAT scale scores, rank-ordering correct-response frequencies by standard strand for ETS items provides a promising surrogate for item-analysis of the ISAT itself.

## Summary Of Findings

- • Consistent co-variation of average, ISAT percent-correct-by-standard-strand across all subjects and grades at the school, district and state-wide level from 2006 through 2009
- • Consistent co-variation of average ETS benchmark percent-correct-by-standard-strand across all subjects and grades at the school, Area and district-wide level for both fall and winter test administrations.
- • Consistently wide variations of correct-response frequencies *within content strands* on all ETS benchmark tests administered
- • Similar rank-ordering of correct-response frequencies (easiest 1/3, middle 1/3, most difficult 1/3) across all sample groups for all ETS benchmark tests administered.

Consistently wide variations of correct-response frequencies *within content strands* indicates that the factors which make questions harder or easier for students to answer have little or nothing to do with the “standard” that is ostensibly being tested.

Similar rank-ordering of correct-response frequencies *across sample groups* means that the factors which make questions harder or easier for students to answer are roughly similar regardless of the overall achievement level of the population being tested.

## Implications For Illinois Education

Parents and school personnel have to trust psychometric professionals to report complex test results in ways that accurately represent what students know and are able to do. Continuing to report standardized results in “standard strands” that have little or no construct validity violates that trust. At best, reportage by “standard strand” misrepresents what is and isn’t being accomplished in the classroom. At worst, it reinforces rote instruction of basic skills at the expense of richer, more rigorous forms of teaching and learning.

Good information is wasted when it is represented and reported in ways that miss what makes it good. Item-level analysis of standardized test results can provide especially powerful insights into analytic capacities that are closely associated with better test performance. Annual retirement and timely, user-friendly reportage of high-stakes test items by correct-response frequency could provide a powerful fresh start toward meeting the many unmet promises of the standards and accountability movement.



## **Piloting the Charlotte Danielson “Framework for Teaching” in Chicago Public Schools**

Eric Brown, *Research Analyst*

Claire Durwood, *Policy and Outreach Associate and Research Assistant*  
Consortium on Chicago School Research at The University of Chicago

This presentation will detail Chicago Public School’s piloting of a teacher evaluation system that relies upon the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching and the mixed-methods study of that pilot program. Given the increasing focus on revitalizing teacher evaluation in the United States, the goal of the first year of this study was to explore the emergence of new approaches to teacher evaluation and to consider innovative research and evaluation methods to document and promote effective implementation. Schools were randomly selected for participation in the Excellence in Teaching pilot. At the school level, teachers were randomly selected to be evaluated by a school administrator and external observer utilizing a modified version of the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching. Both parties go into the classroom simultaneously, observe a lesson (usually 30-45 minutes), and align their evidence from the observation with the Framework to assign a level of performance for 10 components. These ratings were analyzed using the Many-Facet Rasch Measurement (MFRM) method and hierarchical logit models. Principals and teachers were also interviewed using a semi-structured interview protocol and were asked questions about: (a) the professional development they and their teachers received; (b) their perceptions of the Framework; (c) their implementation of the evaluation system; (d) the pre- and post-conferences they had with their teachers; and (e) their perception of school change that had resulted (or could result) from implementing the Framework. Early findings indicate that elementary teachers struggle more with the instructional aspects of teaching than with establishing procedures within the classroom environment. Further, there are some areas where principals need more support in using the Danielson Framework, though principals generally like the Framework as a teacher evaluation tool.

## **Student Teaching as a Recruitment Tool for Schools and Districts?**

Michelle Reininger, Ph.D., *Assistant Professor*  
Northwestern University

Student teaching is often cited as a critical aspect of traditional teacher preparation programs (Andrews, 1964; Griffin, 1989; Zeichner, 2002). Research studies have documented how student teaching experiences encourage new teachers to develop educational philosophies, acquire a notion of what good teaching is, learn from a range of teachers with a variety of teaching styles, and affirm their career decisions (Applegate, 1985; Erdman, 1983; Seiforth & Samuel, 1979). In line with a trend of expanding the number of student teaching and school experience opportunities within teacher preparation programs, more researchers are examining closely what is occurring during student teaching and how this critical component of new teacher training can be enhanced (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998; Guyton & McIntyre, 1990).

The purpose of this study is to understand the types of experiences student teachers have in the Chicago Public School (CPS) system and to determine which factors/experiences are related to (a) satisfaction with the student teaching experience and (b) a desire to pursue a permanent teaching position in CPS. We begin with a demographic profile of student teachers in CPS and the types of schools in which they have their student teaching placements. We also examine the characteristics of the schools in which student teachers are placed and look at the pedagogical areas where student teachers say they felt both well- and ill-prepared during their placements. This study treats teacher candidates' beliefs and attitudes not just as outcomes, but also as predictors for whether they plan to seek employment in the same district in which they student taught. Understanding student teacher satisfaction is critical not just for the student teachers in their professional development, but also for the universities that prepare them, the school districts that employ them, the schools and communities that hire them, and the policymakers who study them.

## **The Growing Latino Population: Enhancing Participation and Success in Illinois Community Colleges and Adult Education**

Karen Hunter Anderson, Ph.D., *Vice President of Adult Education and Instructional Support*  
Scott Parke, Ph.D., *Senior Director for Research and Policy Studies*  
Nathan Wilson, *Director for Research and Policy Studies*  
Illinois Community College Board

The purpose of the session is to establish the importance of Latino student populations to Illinois' future competitiveness; examine selected performance and progress measures for Latino students along with comparative data; and invite dialogue about proposed Community College System Latino Advisory Committee strategies for engaging Latino students in education and training and elevating their performance. The project documents growth among Latino populations in Illinois, and provides participation and graduation trends among Latino students in Illinois community colleges and adult education. The research includes information about performance indicators for Latino populations along with comparative data on minority and majority students. Performance Measures cited in the analysis include: Retention Rates, Transfer Rates, Graduation Rates, and Student Advancement Rates. During the session, selected results from Illinois' National Reporting System will also be provided

## **Resiliency in Action: Experiences of African American and Latino Males Entering Postsecondary Education**

Lorenzo DuBois Baber, *Assistant Professor*  
Brandon H. Common, *doctoral student*  
*Department of Education Organization and Leadership*  
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Postsecondary persistence and degree completion has garnered attention among academic scholars and public policy makers (Bowen, Chingos, & McPherson, 2009; Rosenbaum, Deil-Amen, & Person, 2006; Sacks, 2007). Recent data suggests that educational attainment in the United States has slowed considerably, influenced by low achievement rates among African American and Latino populations. Among the 25-year and older population, the percentage of Caucasian who report having a bachelor's degree is nearly double the percentage among African Americans and almost three times the percentage among Latinos (United States Census, 2004).

In investigating underlying trends among African American and Latino students, there is evidence of widening gaps based on gender/sex. Nationally, while 47% of Caucasian undergraduate students are male, men comprise just 37% of the African American undergraduate population and 42% of Latino college students. In Illinois, the gender gap is evident across all postsecondary sectors - public community colleges (38% of African American students and 45% of Latino students are male); public four-year institutions (36% of African American students and 44% of Latino students); and private four-year institutions (35% of African American students and 37% of Latino students).

The increasing desire for a more educated workforce by employers coupled with changing demographics provides economic and social incentive for states to address the low persistence and degree completion rates among African American and Latino males. In their comprehensive review of research on college students, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) summarize evidence on the positive economic benefits of postsecondary education for individuals. A postsecondary degree (associates or bachelors) appears to provide a net advantage over a high school degree in earnings, stability of employment, and career mobility. From a community perspective, college graduates are more likely to engage in civic events; are less likely to be imprisoned; are more positively active in the lives of their families; and they are less likely to participate in negative health behaviors.

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of African American and Latino male students as they prepare to transition from secondary education to postsecondary education. Through observations and interviews, we focused on identifying the various challenges and sources of support for these students. This study is part of an evaluation of the College and Career Readiness Act (CCR) of Illinois (Public Act 095-0694). The CCR is pilot program through seven community colleges in the state designed to aid in student transition from secondary to postsecondary education by reducing the need for remedial coursework upon entry into college. During our initial assessment of programs, we found very few Latino and African American males participating in CCR programs. As a result, we began to develop a secondary study focused on males of color and their experiences during their transition process.

Strategies for the selection of participants reflect a focus on capturing the transitional experience for African American and Latino males who participated in the CCR intervention programs offered at the following community college sites - Moraine Valley Community College, Shawnee Community College, and Southwest Illinois Community College. Researchers contacted program coordinators for participant recommendations. Eleven male students were interviewed - nine African American males and two Latino males. Students ranged from juniors in high school to first-year students in college, capturing a critical period of transition from the secondary system to the postsecondary system. A semi-structured interview protocol served as a guide for 45-60 minute conversations with students.

Utilizing several theoretical frameworks - Cultural Capital Theory, Critical Race Theory (CRT), and Masculinity Theory - several themes related to transitional experiences are emerging from this study. It appears that educational transition stages for African American and Latino males is influenced by resources that 1) consistently promote educational aspirations, 2) provide information about multiple pathways to college 3) counteract negative structural observations and/or personal experience. Collectively, these resources appear to provide male students with academic, social, and cultural resiliency to persevere even through the most difficult circumstances and events. Additionally, information from students in this study suggests that these forms of resiliency are interconnected - all three must be present during the transition stages for success.

In investigating the experiences of African American and Latino male students, our initial findings provide valuable insight for teachers, administrators, researchers, and policymakers. Foremost, we must understand the value of providing positive examples and role models from the community for African American and Latino males. Secondly, we must encourage collaborative efforts among African American and Latino males so they view peer support as a source of strength rather than a sign of weakness. Finally, understanding the persistent stereotyping influences in the lives of young African American and Latino males, we must pay attention to the institutional and social influences that shape (or misshape) postsecondary aspirations and success.

## Discussions Accelerate the Language Development of English Language Learners

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The purpose of the reported study is to investigate the effects of an approach to classroom discussion, called Collaborative Reasoning, on the English language development of Spanish-speaking fifth graders. Limited oral English proficiency has been identified as one of the most important reasons why English language learners (ELLs) lag behind native English speakers in reading comprehension and writing skills. However, traditional literacy instruction for ELLs too often features individual seatwork and teacher-directed whole class instruction. Fast-paced low-level question-answer routines limit students' opportunities to talk, formulate their own questions, and express extended ideas. Further, the oral English support that is available for ELLs has neglected academic language and higher-order cognitive tasks — that is, language for explaining, knowledge building, reasoning, problem-solving, and decision making.

An alternative peer-led open-format discussion approach, Collaborative Reasoning (CR), was employed in this study aiming to promote ELLs' oral and written English development. In CR, students learn to use the discourse of reasoned argumentation to discuss texts that they have read. A Big Question central to the issues in each text is discussed in small heterogeneous groups. Students are expected to present their positions on the Big Question, support the positions with reasons and evidence, carefully listen, evaluate, and respond to one another's arguments, and challenge when they disagree. CR features open participation in which students speak freely without being nominated by the teacher. Students are encouraged to manage all aspects of discussion as independently as possible.

### Method

**Participants.** Seventy-five Spanish-speaking ELLs from four fifth-grade classrooms, including two mainstream classrooms and two sheltered bilingual classrooms, participated in the study. The classrooms were from one school that served urban low to middle SES families in the Chicago area. One mainstream classroom (N=19) and one sheltered bilingual classroom (N=13) were randomly assigned to implement CR discussions while the other two classrooms (N=43) served as controls.

**Procedure and materials.** Prior to the intervention, the four participating teachers attended a half-day workshop on CR. All students completed three English proficiency tests: vocabulary checklist, sentence grammaticality judgment, and Gates-MacGinitie reading comprehension. A questionnaire about home language and literacy practices was completed by the students' primary care givers.

Students in the CR classrooms then participated in 8 CR discussions in heterogeneous small groups for four weeks with 2 sessions per week, each approximately 20 minutes long. Students in the control classrooms continued their regular language arts lessons. The first author videotaped all discussions and provided in-class coaching to teachers while they facilitated CR.

After the intervention, students were assessed on English listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Listening and reading comprehension were assessed with Sentence Verification Technique (SVT) tests, in which students listened to or read passages and then responded YES or No to a series of test sentences, mixing original sentences, paraphrased sentences, meaning changed sentences, and distracters. Reading was also assessed with three fill-in-the-blank cloze passages with content words deleted at random. Speaking was assessed with a storytelling task using a wordless picture book, *Frog, where are you?* (Mayer, 1969). Reflective essay writing was prompted by the story *The Pinewood Derby* (McNurlen, 1998). Finally, all students completed one questionnaire about their motivation and engagement in discussions and another questionnaire on their attitudes toward English learning.

**Transcription and Coding.** SALT software (Miller & Chapman, 2003) was used to transcribe and code students' storytelling and reflective essays. Students' storytelling and essays were analyzed for language measures (length, vocabulary diversity, syntactic complexity, rate and fluency) and narrative quality. Reflective essays were also coded for reasons, uses of evidence, counterarguments, and rebuttals using NUD\*IST 6 (QSR, 2002).

## Results and Discussion

CR significantly improved students' listening and reading comprehension. Students' in the mainstream classroom who participated in CR performed significantly better than mainstream students in the control group on listening and cloze reading tests. However, there was no difference on the performance on listening and cloze reading between CR and control groups in the bilingual classrooms. Both mainstream and bilingual CR students performed significantly better than control students on SVT reading comprehension.

CR had a significant impact on students' English speaking and writing performance in both mainstream and bilingual classrooms. CR students produced longer and more coherent stories than control students. Children's ability to produce coherent stories probably is improved because CR leads to deeper reading of stories, enabling students to obtain a better understanding of narrative structure. Also, language-rich CR discussions provided students opportunities to practice English speaking through extended meaningful communication.

The reflective essays written by the CR students were longer; contained more diverse vocabulary; and contained a significantly greater number of satisfactory reasons, counterarguments, and uses of text evidence. These findings suggest that students acquired reasoning skills from participating in oral CR discussions which enabled them to transfer to an individual written task. Finally, CR discussions also significantly enhanced students' interest and engagement in discussions, perceived benefits from discussions, and attitudes toward learning English.

The current study has implications for the effective literacy instruction of ELLs. The results offer evidence that engaging English language learners in language-rich discussions accelerates receptive and expressive language development. Despite the short duration of the intervention, lasting only about 160 minutes in total over one month, participating in CR discussions significantly impacted ELLs' language development, thinking and reasoning, motivation and engagement, and English learning attitudes. CR appears to help bridge a serious gap in the education of ELLs, providing them opportunities otherwise limited in today's schools to use English for extended meaningful communication.

# Reading and Writing with the WWW: Supporting K-12 Struggling Readers

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World Wide Web (the Web) online reading provides a different environment for reading than offline/printed text reading. The Web may be viewed as “global hypertext”, which includes not only interlinked texts but also images (including moving images), icons, and sounds (Bolter, 1998, p. 7). The findings of studies that examine online and offline reading demonstrate some similarities and some differences between the two processes (e.g., Coiro & Dobler, 2007; Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear & Leu, 2008; Leu, Zawalinski, Castek, Banerjee, Housand, Liu & O’Neil, 2006). For example, reading ability, skills, and strategies might influence text comprehension both in reading offline printed texts and reading online hypertexts. However, the concept of text can change on the Web. The number and the order of the hyperlinks accessed may lead to various texts and, ultimately, to various text constructions (e.g., Salmerón, Cañas, Kintsch & Fajardo, 2005). The navigational paths might vary with interest and motivation (e.g., Protopsaltis & Bouki, 2005). Prior knowledge, as well as individual skills in navigation of hypertext, might influence text construction and aid comprehension. It seems that readers with low prior knowledge and low online reading skills might struggle within online reading comprehension, while high online reading skills might mediate poor offline reading skills (Coiro, 2007). The efficiency of hypertext use (navigation) may also contribute to hypertext reading and comprehension (e.g., Wenger & Payne, 1996).

Taking into consideration traditional approaches to offline reading and the demands of new literacies, the present study examined how we can support struggling readers and their interaction with the Web.

## Method

An experimental pretest-posttest control group design was used to examine the effects of intervention in information problem solving and management. Specifically, this design involved two groups of seventh and eighth grade struggling readers who were matched on several variables that were controlled (i.e., verbal and perceptual abilities, Internet skills, reading comprehension). The students were randomly assigned to the treatment and control groups. The intervention consisted of teaching information problem solving skills with the Big6 Skills (e.g., Eisenberg & Berkowitz, 1999) to the treatment group. Both groups were provided with an essay map graphic organizer. The analyses were performed using a repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA). When there was a significant mean difference, an effect size (ES) was computed. All analyses were set at level of 0.05. Additional quantitative analyses took into account prior knowledge, motivation, and gender. Qualitative data were gathered through a semi-structured questionnaire.

Participants. Twenty students with reading difficulties in grades seven and eight in a Midwestern (Illinois) K-12 non-public school participated in this study. Both the treatment (n=10) and control group (n=10) had an equal number of seventh and eighth graders in each group. The students were included if they met the following stepwise criteria: (1) the student is identified by the school as a student with a learning disability LD; (2) the student has an average verbal IQ (85 or greater); (3) the student has no sensory or motor deficits or social/emotional disorder; and (4) English is the student’s first language.

For the purposes of information search, the Web portal was created within a Google account. The selected Web pages were uploaded on the Page Creator. The topics related to social science (e.g., three branches of the government, Constitution, etc.) and science (e.g., electricity, electrical safety, conductors, etc.). Each topic linked to three Web sites. The students wrote expository texts based on their research.

## Results

Writing – text quality. A repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed that there was a significant difference between pretest and posttest scores for both the control and the treatment group in writing quality,  $F(1,18) = 38.41$ ,  $p < .001$ . The interaction between time of testing and group was not significant.

The writing quality also was measured on four traits: topic focus, organization, sentence length and variety, and mechanics of language use. Paired samples t-tests were performed on these measures. There were significant differences in posttest scores for the treatment group on three measures: topic focus,  $t(9) = -7.57$ ,  $p = .001$ , organization quality,  $t(9) = -4.33$ ,



$p = .002$ , and sentence length and variety,  $t(9) = -3.10$ ,  $p = .013$ . There were significant differences in posttest scores for the control group on two measures: topic focus,  $t(9) = -3.97$ ,  $p = .003$ , and sentence length and variety,  $t(9) = -7.57$ ,  $p = .001$ .

Writing – text length. Descriptive statistics for the means of pretest and posttest text length indicate that the control group on average used more words in their reports at pretest ( $M = 63.20$ ,  $SD = 31.09$ ) than the treatment group ( $M = 48.80$ ,  $SD = 35.19$ ). However, the treatment group almost doubled the number of words from pretest to posttest ( $M = 92.20$ ,  $SD = 49.03$ ), while the control group used fewer words at posttest ( $M = 54.50$ ,  $SD = 38.74$ ). Accordingly, a repeated measures ANOVA showed a significant difference between the groups in text length,  $F(1, 18) = 13.09$ ,  $p = .002$ , with a large effect size ( $ES = 1.70$ ).

Navigation. Descriptive statistics for the means at pretest and posttest for navigation scores indicate that the control group on average opened more links during their searches at pretest ( $M = 1.40$ ,  $SD = 0.70$ ) than the treatment group ( $M = 1.20$ ,  $SD = 0.63$ ). However, the treatment group on average almost doubled the number of links opened from pretest to posttest ( $M = 2.30$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ), and the control group scored lower than the treatment group at posttest ( $M = 1.90$ ,  $SD = 0.88$ ).

Prior knowledge, motivation, and gender analyses. There were no significant differences (t-tests) between the groups at pretest and posttest on prior knowledge, motivation, and gender.

The study concludes with instructional and policy implications.

# Untying the Knot of Anxiety Among 3rd Grade Students Through the Implementation of Relaxation Techniques

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to alleviate the negative effects that self-perceived levels of test anxiety have on third-grade students. The participants in this study consisted of 177 third-grade students at two Midwestern public elementary schools. The Westside Test Anxiety Scale (WTAS), elevator breathing, and guided relaxation were utilized to manage levels of anxiety. Participants were randomly assigned to a treatment group that received relaxation training or a control group that did not receive the relaxation training. The results indicated that the relaxation intervention had a significant effect in reducing test anxiety in the treatment group. In contrast, no significant decrease in test anxiety was found among the control group. This study highlights the implications for counselors, parents, and teachers working with elementary students.

## Methodology

Data collection took place at two Midwestern public elementary schools in separate school districts. All third-grade students were invited to participate in the study. Those students who returned a signed parental consent form participated. The students at one of these schools comprised the control group while the other school's students served as the experimental group. All participants were given the WTAS as a pre-test measure and a short demographic questionnaire to complete.

Members of the experimental group were taught relaxation techniques by one of the investigators. Training took place two days a week at school over a five-week period. On training days, the participants either stayed in their classrooms or moved to another location within the school building. During training, relaxing music was played in the background. While in training, participants in the experimental group were taught both deep breathing exercises (i.e., elevator breathing; Teel, 2005) and progressive muscle relaxation (i.e., guided relaxation for children; Teel, 2005b). At the conclusion of the five weeks, all participants in both the experimental and control groups completed the WTAS (Driscoll, 2007) as a post-test measure.

The present study tested three hypotheses: 1) The pre-test and post-test differences for the experimental group will show a significant decrease in anxiety level, 2) The pre-and post-test differences for the control group will show no significant decrease in anxiety levels, and 3) There will be a significant post-test difference in anxiety levels between the experimental and control groups.

## Data Analyses

In an attempt to ameliorate the effects of large differences in sample sizes between the experimental and control groups ( $N = 124$  and  $N = 53$ , respectively), the experimental group was partitioned into two subgroups using the SPSS random selection routine. The two subsamples consisted of 29 females, 27 males and 32 females, 36 males, respectively. The control group consisted of 28 females and 25 males. Pre- and post-test differences were analyzed for each experimental subgroup as well as for the control group. Post-test differences between each experimental subgroup and the control group were also conducted. Both pre- and post-test differences, as well as differences between the experimental groups and the control group were tested using a dependent t-test analyses.

## Results

Table 1 contains the separate descriptive and inferential statistics for the pre- and post-test differences for each of the groups (i.e., both experimental subgroups and the control group). For both experimental subgroups, significant differences between the pre-test and post-test means were found ( $t(55) = 2.24, p < .05$  and  $t(67) = 4.07, p < .05$ , respectively). These results indicated that the relaxation intervention had a significant effect in reducing test anxiety. By contrast, no significant difference was found between the control group's pre- and post-test means ( $t(52) = 0.39, ns$ ). These findings supported the first two hypotheses tested in this study. Post-test differences between the respective experimental subgroups and

control group yielded non-significant results ( $t(107) = -0.79$ , ns, and  $t(119) = -0.57$ , ns, respectively). These findings did not support the third hypothesis tested in the study.

Table 1  
*Descriptive and Inferential Statistics*

Group	Mean / sd (pre-test)	Mean / sd (post-test)	<i>t</i> -value (pre – post)	df	alpha
Experimental 1	2.5 (.89)	2.3 (.88)	2.24 *	55	.88
Experimental 2	2.8 (.87)	2.3 (1.02)	4.07 *	67	.89
Control	2.4 (.84)	2.3 (1.17)	0.39	52	.75

\*  $p < .05$

### Summary of Findings

The analyses in this study yielded mixed results. The present results supported the first hypothesis. The experimental group was taught two relaxation techniques, deep breathing and muscle relaxation after which the experimental group showed a significant decrease in anxiety. In contrast, a group of their peers, receiving no relaxation training, conveyed no significant difference in test anxiety. The results support earlier findings that relaxation techniques can be learned and utilized successfully by young children (Zaichkowsky & Zaichkowsky, 1984; Lohaus & Klein-Hessling, 2003). Thus, the first two hypotheses presented above were supported. Students receiving relaxation training achieved a significant reduction in test anxiety scores, and students receiving no training demonstrated no significant decrease in test anxiety scores.

By contrast, the third hypothesis presented in this study was not supported by the findings. No significant difference in test anxiety scores between the experimental and control groups was found. In an attempt to avoid practice effects and the influence of demand characteristics we used an experimental group comprised of third grade students that attended a different school district than the students in the control group. Therefore, we think it is highly unlikely that communication between the two groups and competition between the members had any effect on the study, and even more unlikely that they would be able to guess that our study was predicting a statistical interaction and artificially produce one (Heppner, Linlighan, & Wampold, 1999).

### Implications

High-stakes testing appears to be the ‘norm’ in the American public schools and children need interventions to combat the adverse behavioral, cognitive and physiological effects (Carter, Williams, & Silverman, 2008). The results of the present study along with previous work demonstrate that children can benefit from relaxation training (Zaichkowsky & Zaichkowsky, 1984). These findings may have implications for psychological intervention. It is unlikely that high-stakes testing will be eliminated or significantly reduced in the near future (No Child Left Behind Act, 2002; Triplett & Barksdale, 2005). Therefore, schools can play a role in addressing test anxiety by incorporating intervention programs such as relaxation training into the curriculum (Cheek, Bradley, Reynolds, & Coy, 2002). School counselors and teachers can have a scheduled time of the day to teach students how to respond to physiological and psychological responses to anxiety and stress through the utilization of relaxation training.

The interventions discussed in this article are brief and not difficult for children to learn. These interventions and techniques can be implemented in the academic environment to mediate anxiety and can be generalized to life skills. Another implication of this research is to alert administrators, parents, and teachers that children are experiencing adverse effects from having pressure to perform and that there is a need to address this with children (Cheek et al., 2002). If performance anxiety is not addressed in elementary school, it could continue into adulthood impacting quality of life and career paths (Miller, Morton, Driscoll, & Davis, 2006). Lastly, the tone that the school sets can have an effect on student performance and anxiety, and ultimately their love for learning (Triplett & Barksdale, 2005). A warm and energetic environment can elicit greater success and psychological equilibrium in children.

## **Generation Y: Generating Change to Advance the Teaching Profession**

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The number of Gen Y teachers (those born between 1977-1995) has doubled in just four years and by 2020 members of Gen Y are projected to make up approximately half of the overall workforce. With funding from the Joyce Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Learning Point Associates and Public Agenda conducted an in-depth study of the workplace needs and preferences of teachers from Generation Y. The purpose of this research is to enhance our understanding of this incoming generation to aid leaders in the education field in recruiting, developing, and retaining effective Gen Y teachers.

Toward these aims, the research involved collecting both qualitative and quantitative data on Gen Y and non-Gen Y teachers in Illinois and elsewhere in the country. Between December 2008 and October 2009, eight focus groups with Gen Y teachers were conducted and 890 public school teachers (including an over-sample of 290 Gen Y teachers) were surveyed by telephone. One focus group took place in Chicago, IL, and 49 telephone survey respondents were public school teachers from Illinois.

Study participants were asked a range of questions about teacher quality policies across the career continuum, including induction, tenure, professional development, working conditions, compensation, pensions, and performance evaluation, as well as more general questions about their plans to remain in the profession and other pertinent issues to those who seek to attract and retain strong teachers.

A number of interesting findings emerged from the national study. First, we found that Gen Y teachers have a strong desire for sustained, constructive, and individualized feedback from principals to help them become more effective in the classroom. While the majority of teachers from all generations prefer such feedback, Gen Y teachers are more inclined to desire this feedback. This is in line with research on Gen Y in other professions.

Second, we found that Gen Y teachers are more open than previous generations to paying teachers based on performance but that they are highly skeptical of using student test scores as a measure of their performance. Moreover, Gen Y teachers (as all teachers) see paying for performance as the least important policy option for improving teacher effectiveness and retention; having meaningful learning opportunities, reducing class size, increasing parental involvement, and raising salaries across the board still rank higher.

Third, we found that many Gen Y teachers view removing ineffective colleagues from the classroom as a way to boost teacher effectiveness and think that unions sometimes protect ineffective teachers, yet they feel it important to preserve tenure protections.

Finally, in contrast to conventional wisdom and general career patterns among Gen Y workers, it was found that most Gen Y teachers believe they will stay in education, if not the classroom, for the long haul, with 56 percent intending to remain classroom teachers for life and 98 percent intending to remain either in the classroom or in another capacity in the field of education for life.

This presentation will discuss the qualitative and quantitative findings from the Illinois-based focus group and survey results in the context of the wider national study findings. In general, the findings for Illinois mirrored the national findings. For example, the large majority of Illinois respondents prefer principals who observe regularly and provide detailed feedback to help them grow over principals who give only general feedback less often. This is particularly the case for Gen Y teachers, 80 percent of whom preferred such principal feedback, although 60 percent of non-Gen Y teacher respondents from Illinois feel concur.

About two-thirds of Illinois Gen Y and non-Gen Y teacher survey respondents favor or strongly favor paying teachers more if they consistently work harder and put in greater time and effort. But less than half (43 percent of Gen Y respondents from Illinois and 33 percent of non-Gen Y respondents) support tying teacher pay to student test scores.

For about 90 percent of Gen Y respondents from Illinois, their decision to enter the profession was either strongly or primarily motivated by a desire to help put underprivileged kids on the path to success. This is the case for about 60 percent of non-Gen Y respondents from IL. This is in line with the national findings, which revealed that 77 percent of Gen Y teachers and 67 percent of non-Gen Y teachers were motivated to be teachers for this reason.

Researchers consistently find that teachers are the single most important school-level factor influencing student achievement. And research on Generation Y suggests that they have many qualities that would make them excellent teachers – a high value for education, a commitment to creating a better world around them, and strong moral values. Yet teacher shortages remain a perennial problem in certain subjects and geographic areas in Illinois. This study illuminates ways that forward-looking leaders in the research and policy communities can maximize the full potential of Gen Y teachers to create a world-class teaching force and education system.

# Years One to Five: Results of the Illinois Teacher Graduate Fifth-Year Assessment

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## Purpose of the Research

The Illinois Teacher Graduate Fifth-Year Assessment was conducted for the first time during the Spring of 2009, and represents an extension of the Illinois Teacher Graduate Assessment project, which has surveyed Illinois first-year teachers on an annual basis since 2005. The purpose of this research is to ascertain:

- The school employment history of teacher education program completers who are employed in public schools in the fifth year following program completion;
- The degree to which these teachers use the state's professional teaching and student learning standards in their teaching;
- The self-reported efficacy of these teachers in relation to a defined set of educational work tasks, along with their perceived growth in efficacy during their careers;
- The mentoring, professional growth, and graduate school experiences of these teachers in the first five years following program completion;
- The career satisfaction and future plans of these teachers.

## Methodology

**Design:** The study was conducted through the use of an online survey instrument completed by teachers employed in Illinois public schools who completed their initial teacher certification programs during the 2003-04 academic year in any one of the twelve Illinois public university colleges of education. Each participant was invited through an invitation mailed to the participant's place of employment.

**Sample Size:** 2,740 teachers were invited to participate in the survey.

**Response Rate:** 1,071 (39.1%) teachers completed the survey.

**Site/Participant Selection Criteria:** University Title II records and Illinois State Board of Education Teacher Service Record data were matched to produce the list of participants for the study. Participants had to have completed an initial teacher certification program at any one of the twelve Illinois public university colleges of education during the 2003-04 academic year and have been employed in a certificated position in an Illinois public school district during the 2008-09 school year. All participants (n = 2,740) who met these criteria were invited.

**Data Collection Method:** Data were collected through an online interface on a website developed and hosted by the Illinois Teacher Data Warehouse at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Potential participants received a "prereminder" post card, a survey invitation letter with survey website log-on directions, and up to two reminder post cards and two reminder phone calls over an eight-week period during the Spring of 2009. Upon the completion of data collection, data were transformed into Excel and SPSS files for analysis.

**Data Analysis:** All data were analyzed descriptively for this study, and at two levels: (1) a state aggregate level; (2) the individual institutional level, for each of the twelve participating public universities. The state aggregate results will be reported in this presentation.

## Summary of Findings

- **Employment history:** Participants reported employment rates in public schools in a range from 79% (first year) to 100% (fifth year); in a variety of positions (contracted teacher, substitute teacher, noncertificated employee, and administrators), in as few as one school to as many as five separate schools. Just over half report having moved to standard teacher certification and having received tenure.

- *Use of the state’s professional teaching standards:* Participants reported using fifteen individual professional teaching standards “most” or “all” of the time in a range from 74% (Standard 9 – the role of the community in education) to 97% (Standard 11 – education as a profession and professional conduct).
- *Current self-efficacy and growth in efficacy in professional work tasks:* Participants reported being “moderately” or “very” successful in eighteen works tasks in a range from 50% (teaching English language learners) to 97% (working in the school environment).
- *Mentoring, professional support, professional growth, and graduate school experiences:* Participants reported mentoring rates between 59% (first year) to 14% (fifth year); participation rates in fourteen professional growth activities between 22% (being a mentor teacher) and 100% (district workshops); and enrollment in or completion of eleven areas graduate degree programs in a range from 0% (school psychology) to 31% (elementary education).
- *Career satisfaction and future plans:* 97% of participants were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the decision to become a teacher; 92% were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the preparation they received from their teacher education program. 50% of participants plan to remain in teaching as long as possible; 16% plan to continue teaching but take a break to care for family; 9% will continue teaching but seek a position in a different school or district; 17% will continue in education but seek a different role; 4% will continue for a few more years; 1% plan on leaving teaching as soon as possible; and 2% are currently in a non-teaching role and plan on remaining in education as long as possible.

### **Implications for Illinois Education**

This study’s results indicate a high level of satisfaction with teacher education preparation and career satisfaction. In combination with the results of the same cohort’s responses to the 2005 first-year Teacher Graduate Assessment, it can be seen that early-career teachers show general growth in all areas of the state’s professional teaching standards as well as reported self-efficacy in relation to the professional work tasks of educators. The value placed on various professional growth activities reported by participants holds some promise for informing the developmental and support programs offered by schools and districts to their early-career teachers. Future correlational and comparative analyses may also yield some insight into relationships among teacher preparation, professional growth, task efficacy, and career satisfaction factors as well.

## **Illinois Class of 2002: A Longitudinal Study of Participation and Completion Rates by Enrollment Patterns Six Year After High School**

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Illinois Education Research Council

In 2003, the Illinois Education Research Council (IERC) began to follow the members of the Illinois public high school class of 2002 (the Class of 2002) on their journeys through postsecondary education. After six years there is a wealth of higher education information on these students.

There is significant talk across the country and in the state of Illinois of what knowledge can be gained from a longitudinal data system. The Class of 2002 analysis illustrates the many enrollment patterns and all the varied ways students complete degrees and certificates at the two and four year levels. Currently, many studies of higher education enrollment and graduation are analyzed from an institutional perspective, while this study follows the ways the individual student navigated the higher education system. The students are analyzed by their initial level of enrollment in higher education and 1) whether they achieved an implicit outcome (e.g., bachelor's degree completion for those enrolling at four year institutions) and 2) how long it took to achieve the outcome. The study also looks at outcomes by several student characteristics in addition to select characteristics of the institutions in which the students enrolled. Recommendations for further investigation and policy implications will also be provided.



## **Beyond Proficiency: Thinking Longitudinally to Advance Our Understanding of Our Core Policy Challenges**

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Forum on the Future of Public Education  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Illinois is embarking on a multi-year effort to build an integrated P-20 longitudinal data system. When this system is complete, Illinois' researchers, policymakers, and practitioners will have dramatically improved capabilities to identify and explain leaks in our educational pipeline. However, the system itself will not lead to improved policy and practice. Educational leaders and researchers in Illinois will need to learn to think longitudinally to design, refine, and utilize a powerful integrated data system.

In this session, Debra Bragg, Peter Weitzel and other representatives from the Forum on the Future of Public Education will

- a) share results from some preliminary research on data capacity in Illinois' school districts
- b) discuss key longitudinal questions in the draft of the Illinois Research Agenda
- c) outline a process for moving from a general notion of problem to theory building/ descriptive research and ultimately to specific hypothesis testing and experimentation.

# Support Services for Students at the City Colleges of Chicago: The Lay of the Land

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## Research Purpose

This study examines the educational context of the seven City Colleges of Chicago in comparison to other two-year postsecondary institutions in Illinois and the nation. We describe the sociodemographic characteristics of the student populations and their academic outcomes; institutional factors such as size, cost, and geographic location; and we place special attention on the availability of support services that may facilitate students' educational persistence through program completion or transfer. We consider a wide array of supports, including services that support students academically, financially, and in their career planning, as well as services that address other important student needs, such as child care, transportation, health, and counseling. Our focus on the City Colleges of Chicago takes into account support services that are provided by the college itself as well as services that are available through other local institutions.

## The Relevance of Student Supports for Community College Students

It is important to better understand the factors that influence persistence at community colleges because these schools constitute an increasing sector within higher education: community colleges enroll 40 percent of all undergraduates (McIntosh & Rouse, 2009) and associate degrees account for about a third of all post-secondary degrees awarded (NCES, 2007). At the same time, educational persistence is a serious problem at community colleges (see Table 2): nationally, only 30 percent of first-time, full-time students who begin at a community college seeking an associate's degree had attained it within three years (McIntosh & Rouse, 2009). Low levels of persistence are not a surprise once we consider the characteristics of students who attend community colleges. Prior research shows that community college students are likely to be financially disadvantaged and academically underprepared (McIntosh & Rouse, 2009). For those who are first-generation students, many are unfamiliar with college culture, practices, and expectations (Roderick et al, 2009; Roderick et al, 2008). Since community colleges are also the most likely educational choice for vulnerable youth (McIntosh & Rouse, 2009) and persistence in college pays off in the labor market (Snyder, Dillow & Hoffman, 2009), it is important to examine what happens after students enter community college and how these colleges can best support students after admission.

## Methodology

This study takes a mixed method approach and employs data from a variety of sources in order to develop a more complete picture of the contexts of the seven City Colleges of Chicago. Data regarding the types of student services offered at the City Colleges of Chicago were collected through a systematic review of each of the colleges' websites. Descriptive analysis of student and college characteristics used institutional level data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data Set. Additionally, we have documented the existence of local organizations with which the colleges might partner to provide additional student supports, enumerating and photographing community-based organizations within a one-mile radius of each of the City College of Chicago campuses. We also identify promising implementation strategies based on our review of recent literature. This analytic approach allows us to describe the range of student supports provided by each college, illustrate gaps or overlaps in existing service-provision, and provide insight into potential service delivery mechanisms that could maximize the effectiveness of current services provided.

Table 1: Summary of data collection and analytic approach

Relevant factors	Data source(s)
Availability of different student support services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• City College websites/marketing materials</li><li>• Interviews with City College administrators</li></ul>
Implementation processes of student support services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of recent literature, demonstrations, and evaluations</li></ul>
Description of student characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data Set (IPEDS)</li></ul>
Description of institutional characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data Set (IPEDS)</li></ul>
Support services in the local context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fieldwork documenting local community-based organizations, including photographs</li></ul>

## Results

Consistent with the national pattern, the academic outcomes of Illinois community colleges are poorer than those at Illinois' four-year public institutions (see Table 2). Of course, the missions and student populations of these types of institutions are very different from each other. There is also tremendous variation among community colleges in the state. As a system, the City Colleges of Chicago have similar, but slightly inferior outcomes than other community colleges in the state. Our findings indicate that there is substantial variation among the seven City Colleges of Chicago, both in terms of student population and the support services available to them. Furthermore, while all the City Colleges of Chicago are in urban areas, the availability of alternative local sources for support services varies dramatically.

Table 2: Student academic outcomes in Illinois, by different types of college<sup>1</sup>

	All public four-year colleges in IL		All public two-year colleges in IL		City Colleges of Chicago	
	Average	Number of Institutions	Average	Number of Institutions	Average	Number of Institutions
Full-time retention rate	75%	11	57%	48	46%	7
Part-time retention rate	49%	11	33%	48	29%	7
Graduation rate total cohort	50%	11	23%	48	7%	7

### Implications of Current Study for Illinois Education

The City Colleges of Chicago provide a landscape for exploration of student services in an urban community college context. This study provides an overview of each of the City Colleges of Chicago's student population and the student supports offered. Finally, we map support service providers within a one-mile radius of each campus. By describing the systems of supports available at City Colleges of Chicago, we will be able to develop new and improved indicators of institutional practices and processes that can supplement existing efforts on data collection and analysis such as IPEDS. This study sheds light on promising services and implementation practices that can effectively help urban students achieve their educational and workforce training goals.

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<sup>1</sup> This information is drawn from 2007 IPEDS data. While retention rates are defined as the proportion of degree- or certificate-seeking students who return to their program of study after one year, graduation rates are defined as the proportion of degree- or certificate-seeking students who complete their program of study within 150% of the standard length of the program.

## **A “Whole Person” Model of Early Intervention at Wright College**

Steve Robbins, *Vice President of Research*  
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Retention and successful completion of classes for first-year students has always been a challenge, especially for community colleges. This project is a joint effort between ACT and Wilbur Wright College. Wright College’s Early Intervention System seeks to incorporate research combining cognitive and psychosocial factors to identify at-risk students from a whole-person perspective. The comprehensive system not only targets new incoming students by assessing risk, but includes ongoing assessment and support mechanisms to ensure their continued success.

Wright College administered COMPASS (an achievement and placement test) and SRI (a measure of psychosocial and study skills factors) to students in several foundational skills courses. Course instructors were asked to provide behavior ratings of their students to assess how behavioral factors might impact student achievement during such courses. Outcomes were assessed at the end of the term.

A successful outcome was defined as both staying enrolled throughout the duration of the course and obtaining a “pass” rating for the course. COMPASS and SRI scores were each predictive of whether students successfully completed the foundational skills course. Faculty behavior ratings also were predictive of successful course completion. When combined, these three pieces of information (i.e., COMPASS, SRI, and behavior ratings) provided a more robust prediction of course completion.

Findings suggest that using a “whole person” approach to identify and intervene with at-risk students is an effective method for facilitating student success. That is, institutions using a wide range of information to identify at-risk students can have increased confidence in their identification process. Further, by using a wide range of information (including psychosocial strengths and weaknesses) to match students to services, institutions are more likely to impact student success and avoid a “one-size-fits-all” approach to service delivery.

## Merit Pay for Teachers: A Time to Give It a Chance

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Recently the Illinois Legislature passed a law that will change the way teachers in Illinois are evaluated. It will require that measures of student growth be a significant factor in rating teacher performance. Although the implementation of this new evaluation process parallels a merit pay process, it is a step short of paying teachers based on that student growth, the focus of this research. A significant flaw with the salary schedule approach currently used is that the very best teachers receive the same salaries as the very worst. Many non-educators feel that because of tenure's protection, teachers don't work as hard as they can. Many taxpayers are convinced that students would learn more if teachers were motivated by fear of losing their jobs. If one believes that additional pay will motivate teachers to work harder, then one must also believe that teachers know what to do to improve student achievement and that they aren't doing it because they aren't sufficiently motivated (Gratz, 2009). This can be very insulting to teachers. In my 26 years as an Illinois superintendent and one who observed teachers in classrooms over 50 hours per year, I rarely saw poorly motivated teachers. I saw teachers who were frustrated that so many of the conditions needed to learn were out of their control, specifically the skills with which students entered their classrooms. It is never as simple as "motivation."

### What is merit pay?

Merit pay can apply to many different salary structures. It can be pay based on a teacher's role as a mentor teacher, a lead teacher, a career ladder of increasing responsibilities, or even a teacher who has earned National Board Certification. Most people think of merit pay as a teacher's salary or a raise that is based in whole or in part on student performance. That is the definition this research will use.

### Can merit pay work?

I recently reviewed the teacher evaluation plans of 20 selected school districts in Illinois. These 20 districts had an average percentage of 86% of their students meeting or exceeding the Illinois State Standards. The review found that none of them evaluated their teachers based on measures of their students' performance. The closest any one of these districts, Glenbrook High School District 225 for example, came to utilizing their students' performance in the teacher evaluation process was by allowing their experienced teachers to self-select their professional development project. One of this district's professional development options was to examine student achievement data and use that analysis to enhance instruction and assessment (Glenbrook District 225, 2009). Otherwise 20 of the top districts in Illinois don't use merit pay and don't need to because their student performance is so high.

In October of 2009, I surveyed 208 Illinois teachers by asking for a response to this statement: *"For me to accept a situation where my salary would be based on how my students performed on a standardized test, the following conditions must be present..."* The teachers were asked to select 8 conditions of a merit pay plan from a list of 15. Below are the top 8 conditions in order of teachers' preference with the corresponding approval rates.

Teachers should be involved in the planning and development of the process. **68%**

Class make-up should have a fair distribution of ability levels, special education students, etc. **65%**

Student support services must be available to assist struggling students. **65%**

Students prior knowledge and/or ability must be taken into consideration in the testing process. **59%**

Students' attendance must be taken into consideration. **57%**

The evaluation process should also include observations and professional development. **52%**

The meeting of a standard must be part of the criteria rather than just rewarding the top scorers. **49%**

Class size must be taken into consideration. **48%**

The fact that teachers want to be involved in the planning and development of the process is no surprise. The importance of teacher involvement, the number one ranked condition, confirms that nobody likes having something done to them. Involving teachers in the planning fosters ownership and allows for the conditions that are important to teachers be

considered It has shown to increase the likelihood of success as occurred in the formation of Denver’s merit pay plan. The merit pay plan in Minneapolis was first opposed by the teachers’ union, but then was supported by it when the union’s voice was sought to help the program be successfully implemented (Dillon, 2007). State level programs that have encountered the least opposition are those that have involved teachers either in developing district applications or at the school level in choosing to participate in state programs (Chait & Miller, 2009).

The second ranked provision, balancing class make-up, would create the feeling that all teachers had relatively similar workloads. It is an interesting selection because it gets to the fairness issue that teachers feel they should all be on a level playing field.

The third provision, the need for student support services, recognizes the fact that good education is a team responsibility. A school can’t just assign a group of students to a teacher and say, “Now teach them and if you do well, we’ll pay you extra.” You can offer all the money in the budget, but it is impossible for one teacher to adequately service all students alone.

The fourth provision, that students prior knowledge and/or ability must be taken into consideration in the testing process, is another way of describing student growth. Rather than meeting a certain standard, having the students take some type of pre-test and then a post-test would be a more accurate measure of what a student learned in a particular school year. These value-added assessments have a strong appeal conceptually because they appear to level the playing field between schools in affluent areas and those in low socioeconomic areas (Kappan, 2009).

*So yes, merit pay can work if teachers are involved in the adoption process and efforts are made to make the money-earning conditions as fair as possible. And when teachers are involved in its development, multiple measures of teacher performance will be an integral part of the process.*

#### **Can it work better than the current approach?**

In considering this question, the key is whether merit pay raises student achievement because that is what is meant by “better.” Basically, there is little to no evidence that merit pay raises student achievement much higher than any other salary compensation approach.

So the answer to the question as to whether merit pay works *better* is no. Although a school district may show some growth on tests, it will be short term and relatively insignificant.

#### **Can teachers afford not to try it?**

Test-based pay is more useful politically than it is effective educationally (Gratz, 2009). Illinois legislators have known for years that they are underfunding the schools in the state, primarily the poor ones. But they don’t do anything about it. If the only way to get adequate funding for schools is for teachers’ unions to say, “We’ll try merit pay,” then maybe teachers should agree for the sake of the future of school funding. It may be the only way to convince the public and legislators that teachers do not fear being held accountable.

# **State Policies on Human Capital Resource Management in Education: Illinois in the Context of the Midwest Region**

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## **Background**

Training, recruiting, developing, and supporting talented and effective educators throughout their careers is known as human capital resource management (HCRM) in education. HCRM has been identified in recent literature as one of the ways in which districts and states may increase school effectiveness<sup>1</sup> and improve student learning (Heneman & Milanowski, 2004; Odden & Kelly, 2008; Wurtzel & Curtis, 2008). Often, however, HCRM policies are designed piecemeal, lacking alignment and cohesion (Odden & Kelly, 2008).

At the urging of the seven Chief State School Officers in the Midwest region, REL Midwest has conducted a policy scan in seven states in the region, including Illinois, around six areas related to HCRM: preparation, recruitment, induction, professional development, compensation and incentives, and working conditions. Seven briefs, one for each state, have been developed to provide a snapshot of state-level policies. In addition, a regional summary describing trends across the Midwest has been developed and disseminated to policymakers. This presentation will provide a regional overview of the HCRM landscape and then describe in-depth Illinois's state-level policies and supports. All work on this project has been completed.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this research is to inventory and describe all state policies – including programs and initiatives, legislation, statutes, administrative code, and other formally adopted policies - around components of educator quality. In addition, this research provides policymakers with information on the context within which these policies emerged with respect to the impetus for policy development, stakeholder engagement, barriers and facilitators to implementation, and the coordination of policy initiatives. In doing so, the authors hope to inform researchers and policymakers on the current landscape of HCRM policies in Illinois and the Midwest and the context within which they were developed. The presentation will summarize existing state-level policies and contextual information from the Midwest region. The paper presented will also focus on Illinois exclusively and describe the state policies that exist in each HCRM area as well as the extent to which these policies address more than one area.

## **Methodology**

The study aimed to answer the following research question:

What are current state policies in the seven REL Midwest states in the human capital resource management areas of preparation and licensure, recruitment, induction and professional development, and compensation and working conditions?

To answer this question, researchers conducted a scan of publicly available information related to the four HCRM areas in each state, including Illinois. Additionally, semi-structured phone interviews were conducted with state personnel to determine the policy context using a protocol developed by the research team. All IRB procedures and processes were strictly adhered to.

The information collected was then codified by HCRM area and information type. To ensure consistency in coding, multiple coders were assigned to code and review collected data. Researchers defined policies as comprising three broad groups: (1) programs and initiatives, (2) legislation, and (3) statutes, administrative code, and other formally adopted policies. State context was defined as pertaining to (1) impetus for policy development, (2) stakeholder engagement, (3) facilitators and/or barriers to implementation, or (4) coordination of policy initiatives. The HCRM areas were defined as the four areas of the research question: preparation and licensure, recruitment, induction and professional development, and compensation and working conditions. Guiding definitions for both policy type and HCRM area were developed to further ensure consistency in coding.

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<sup>1</sup> Although there is a growing literature on HCRM, the impact of these policies on school effectiveness has not been subjected to rigorous study.

## **Findings**

This study presents several interesting findings about the HCRM landscape both regionally and within the state of Illinois. With respect to regional state context, findings include: (1) Leadership at high levels is crucial to driving reforms in educator quality; (2) Broad stakeholder engagement is crucial during the initial stages of policy development; (3) Difficulties posed by barriers to implementation were alleviated by collaboration among agencies and other stakeholders; constant communication and trust; the use of technology; and the creation of task forces to facilitate discourse; and (4) States have a great need for cross-organizational structures to help facilitate and coordinate policy initiatives.

In addition, many policies were found throughout the region that address each HCRM area in creative and innovative ways. Examples include Illinois's Grow Your Own Initiative, Indiana's newly adopted Rules for Educator Preparation and Accountability (REPA), Wisconsin's Quality Educator Initiative, the Iowa Professional Development Model, Quality Compensation in Minnesota, and the Ohio Teaching and Learning Conditions Survey. These policies, as well as others, will be discussed in the presentation.

In Illinois specifically, many policies were found that address teacher retention and recruitment from diverse candidate pools. In addition, Illinois has taken steps towards improving its leadership preparation programs. These and other state policies will be discussed in the presentation.



## **Factors That Influence Academic Success for Disadvantaged Youth: A Preliminary Study of Illinois Steps AHEAD/GEAR UP**

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The Illinois Steps AHEAD (Attaining Higher Education through Academic Development) (ISA)/GEAR UP program provides after-school educational enrichment services and post-secondary scholarships for disadvantaged students in Illinois. The six-year program began in 2006 and is implemented across the state of Illinois in an after-school program setting in 21 community-based organizations. The goal of ISA is to increase the number of low-income students prepare, qualify, attend and succeed in post-secondary education. The program is funded by the U.S. Department of Education and administered by the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS). The main components of the program include: academic support and tutoring, college preparation services for youth and their families, and scholarships.

The Center for Prevention Research and Development, Institute of Government and Public Affairs at the University of Illinois serves as the statewide evaluator for the (ISA) program. The primary purpose of the evaluation is to assess the effects of program services impact academic outcomes, educational expectations, and the likelihood of a successful transition to post-secondary education. The research incorporates a mixed-method approach of quantitative and qualitative data elements. The quantitative data includes surveys collected from program staff, youth, and parents. The qualitative element includes site visits and focus groups with youth and parents. Attendance records at the program sites are gathered on an ongoing basis from the IDHS eCornerstone database, a web-based client information system. The results for this presentation are derived from an analysis of youth survey data as well as youth report card grades from 2008/09. A total of 1,013 youth participating in the ISA program completed a survey in the spring of 2009. This represents an 80% response rate for the youth survey. These survey data were then matched using individual identification numbers to report card grades for the 2008/09 academic year, resulting in a sample of 510 youth who had both a survey and report card available for the analyses.

Results show that ISA serves a highly disadvantaged population comprised primarily of poor, racial/ethnic minorities residing in large and medium Illinois communities. Results of the correlational analyses show strong positive associations between youth attitudes about their education and the grades they earn on report cards. The strongest association is between youth academic expectations and report card grades (semester one, semester two, and final) in core academic subjects (.50, .42, .47 respectively). This association indicates that the higher youths' expectations for educational attainment, the higher their grades are as well. Other positive correlations were found between youth self-aspirations and report card grades (.21-.23), youth academic expectations and parental support for education (.41), and youth reports of a supportive and fulfilling Illinois Steps AHEAD program environment and academic expectations (.30). Interestingly, the correlational analyses also revealed the importance of a supportive relationship between Illinois Steps AHEAD program staff and youth. Youth reports of the helpfulness of the program were positively associated with the level of support they felt from a program staff member (.31 to .36).

Regression analyses show that academic expectations and study habits are strong predictors of whether youth report that they have better grades compared to the previous year. Further, if a youth increased his academic expectations, we would also expect him to be more likely to report better grades. Results show that self-aspirations, parental support, time spent on homework, and grades compared to last year were strong predictors of academic expectations.

The results have implications for improving the way that programs like ISA design services, hire and train staff, and engage youth and their parents in educational activities that may predict entry and success in post-secondary education. Limitations of the study will also be discussed.

## **What Matters for Staying On-Track and Graduating in Chicago Public Schools: A Focus on Students with Disabilities**

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In the United States, students who are identified as having a disability receive individualized services based on their strengths, weaknesses, and educational goals. Despite this individualized approach to supporting students, many students in special education continue to perform below their non-disabled peers. In an earlier Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) report, *What Matters for Staying On-Track and Graduating in Chicago Public High Schools*, Elaine Allensworth and John Easton found that course performance during the freshman year—including grades, course failures, absences, and on-track status—could be used to identify students at risk of dropping out of high school. These findings provide educators with tools to identify at-risk students at an early stage in their high school career, potentially reducing the risk of students dropping out. This is a promising approach, but questions remained after the first report about whether the early-warning indicators could be used in the same way for students with disabilities as for other students.

In this report, we look at the freshman year course performance of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) students who receive special education services and ask whether grades, course failures, absences, and on-track status are useful for identifying students who are at risk of dropping out. We also examine how academic behaviors, such as attendance and study habits, affect course failures and grades of students with disabilities.

Students receiving special education services are a diverse group. We take this diversity into account by separately analyzing the course performance and academic behaviors of five groups of students with different types of special needs. These include students with learning disabilities, mild cognitive disabilities, emotional disturbances, speech/language disabilities, and physical/sensory disabilities. In addition, we also consider the course performance and academic behaviors of a group of students who do not receive special education services but who have extremely weak academic skills: students who enter high school two or more years below grade level. These students have a prior achievement history that is similar to students with disabilities, and as a result, they may face similar challenges in their freshman year courses. But for unknown reasons, these students do not receive special education services in high school. A final group, students without identified disabilities, is included for comparison in each of our analyses. These students do not receive special education services and did not enter high school two or more years below grade level.

Consistent with the original *What Matters* report, most of the analyses in this report are based on information about the cohort of CPS students who were first-time freshmen in 2004. When reporting graduation rates, we use information about the cohort of CPS students who were first-time freshmen in 2001. We report four major findings. (1) Students with speech/language disabilities and students with physical/sensory disabilities perform similarly to students without identified disabilities in their freshman year courses. (2) Freshman year course performance is a strong predictor of five-year graduation rates for students with disabilities and students who entered high school two or more years below grade level. (3) Higher absence rates are an important factor explaining why students with disabilities fail more classes and have lower grades than students without identified disabilities. (4) Students with learning disabilities and students with mild cognitive disabilities do not benefit as much from rigorous study habits as students without identified disabilities.

In the earlier *What Matters* report, the authors found that in order to improve graduation rates, educators should focus on students' freshman year course performance. In this report, we find the same is true for students who receive special education services and students who enter high school two or more years below grade level. Helping these students pass more courses and get higher grades during their first year in high school may be an essential step in reducing the likelihood of dropping out. One way to do this could be to focus on support measures that might boost attendance. Reducing absences is an important step in limiting course failures and improving GPAs.

While similar challenges exist for students who receive special education services and for students who are two or more years below grade level as for other ninth grade students, there are also some issues unique to this population. For example, many of these students may have disengaged from school as a result of their history of academic difficulties. Additional research should focus on the types of school environments that promote higher rates of attendance among students who receive special education services and those significantly below grade level upon entering ninth grade. School personnel should also consider how to help students who receive special education services—especially students with learning disabilities and mild cognitive disabilities—benefit more from studying. Although they report study habits that are equal to those of students without identified disabilities, they do not reap the same benefits.

## **Curriculum Reform in Chicago High Schools: The First Three Years of the Instructional Development System (IDS) Initiative**

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Chicago Public Schools (CPS) is currently implementing a series of curricular reforms initiatives at the high school level aimed at developing core curriculum materials in English, mathematics, and science. One of these initiatives, called the IDS reforms seeks to engage schools in intensive improvement following tested models that include high quality professional development and curricular materials. In this study we evaluated the implementation and the impact of the IDS reforms on CPS high schools. In particular we examined if the students attending IDS schools had improved educational experiences and academic outcomes when compared to similar students in non-IDS schools. We also examined the issue of school capacity in influencing the effects of curricular reforms. CPS schools participated in the IDS initiative in “waves,” which began by implementing the curriculum and teacher supports in the ninth grade. In the second year of implementation, both ninth and tenth grade teachers and students participated, and the program was rolled out to the upper grades one year at a time. Because the initiative began in 2006-07, ninth grade teachers in the first wave of IDS schools have the most data, having experienced three years of the reforms. The results of our analyses showed that IDS schools were very different from other schools in CPS in terms of student outcomes on standardized tests and grade points which were significantly lower. However, after controlling for prior ability of students, these schools were no different than other schools both before and after implementation of IDS. The only exception is that on the standardized test of 9th grade learning gains, the first wave of IDS schools performed significantly lower than non-IDS schools following three years of implementation. The third wave of IDS schools also had significantly lower outcomes both before and after reforms. We concluded that IDS did not improve overall student learning, and for the first wave of IDS schools, actually decreased overall 9th grade performance. We subsequently examined data from student and teacher surveys from 3 separate time points with reference to the first wave of IDS reforms: prior to IDS reform, one year after reform, and three year after reform. We specifically focused on the IDS levers of change which focused on instruction and teacher support. Our results showed a strikingly consistent pattern across a range of measures that the IDS theory of change had been structured around. This pattern showed a significant improvement on these measures followed by a significant decrease by the third year of reform. The specific measures we examined were the quality of professional development, program coherence, the quality of instruction in IDS schools, and the trends in these measures over time. We concluded that for the first wave of IDS schools, improvements in the intended levers of change were not sustained over time. Our third set of analysis sought to understand the context in which the IDS reforms took place. An important finding was that the IDS schools had significant problems with safety and classroom disruption prior to and during reforms. Teacher expectations for students were also generally low. The lack of a student centered learning climate in IDS schools likely negatively influenced the ability of IDS reforms to take root and succeed. We also found that in the year 2008-2009 several measures of school capacity such as leadership, professional community, and teacher-parent trust showed a significant decline in these schools. We concluded that the essential supports around instructional reforms in the IDS schools were not strong and were especially weak by the third year.

## **REL Midwest Research on Schools and Districts in Need of Improvement in the Midwest Region**

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REL Midwest at Learning Point Associates

### **Background and Purpose**

Under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2002), schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) in two successive years are identified as schools in need of improvement; districts that fail to meet AYP criteria for two successive years are identified as in program improvement. Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Midwest currently is conducting two studies that examine the implementation of the federal accountability laws within the Midwest region states, including Illinois.

The first study is designed to build an understanding of the characteristics of districts identified for improvement in the states of the Midwest. Each of the seven states in the Midwest region today has in place criteria and procedures that use assessment and accountability data to identify underperforming schools and districts. This study addresses the characteristics of districts in improvement status under ESEA or state accountability systems, characteristics of students served by those districts, schools designated as in need of improvement, and differences in classification between districts and schools.

The second study is a content analysis of the school improvement plans prepared by Midwest region Title I schools identified as in need of improvement pursuant to the federal accountability rules. Schools in need of improvement must submit school improvement plans that describe proposed activities aimed to improve student achievement. ESEA includes several requirements with regard to the inclusion of parent involvement and extended learning activities in school improvement plans. This study examines how parent involvement and extended learning activities are incorporated into the school improvement plans and how state education agencies in the Midwest region states support schools in the development of their school improvement plans.

### **Methods**

The first study builds upon the REL West studies of Arizona and California districts in need of improvement (Crane, Huang, Derby, et al., 2008a; Crane, Huang, Derby, et al., 2008b; Crane, Huang, Huang, & Derby, 2008). These studies present detail on how Arizona and California identify districts in need of improvement and analyze the characteristics of these districts. REL Midwest assembled demographic, performance, and statistical data from publicly available data sources into a longitudinal database that captures the descriptive and statistical detail of districts and schools in each state from the 2004–05 to 2008–09 school years and employed simple, descriptive statistics such as counts, percentages, measures of central tendency, and measures of spread.

The second study employs a similar methodology to that used by REL Northwest in its 2008 study of parent involvement activities in school improvement plans (Speth, Saifer, & Forehand, 2008). REL Midwest conducted interviews with state education agency Title I staff in order to understand how states support and monitor the school improvement planning process. REL Midwest then collected school improvement plans from Title I schools identified as in need of improvement based upon 2007–08 assessment data. Each plan was reviewed for the purpose of identifying parent involvement and extended learning activities. Activities were then coded using a coding checklist adapted from the REL Northwest study, which included categories aligned with ESEA requirements, research-based practices, and common parent involvement and extended learning activities. Various descriptive statistics are used to answer the study research questions.

### **Policy Implications for Illinois Education**

These studies examine how ESEA provisions regarding schools and districts in need of improvement are carried out in the Midwest region states, including Illinois. The presentations will discuss similar studies conducted by other regional labs. Illinois policymakers and practitioners will gain knowledge of how school and district improvement policies are implemented in Illinois, the Midwest region, and elsewhere in the United States.

## **Changes to Leadership Preparation Programs in Illinois: Research, Policy and Practice**

Erika Hunt, Ph.D., *Project Director*, IL-SAELP. Illinois State University  
Linda Tomlinson, Ph.D., *Assistant Superintendent*, Illinois State Board of Education

This session will focus on state policy changes to principal preparation in Illinois and the national and state research that support the recommendations. The history and context of state attention to principal preparation will be highlighted. The presentation will conclude with an overview of Illinois specific principal data and state and national studies on principal preparation.

## **Who Is Leading Illinois Public Schools?**

Brad White, *Senior Researcher*  
Illinois Education Research Council

In this session, we present the initial results from a multi-phase study of public school principals in Illinois. This first phase of the study provides an in-depth description of principals in the state via archival data from ISBE's Teacher Service Record and other administrative datasets. This work builds upon prior IERC studies of teachers in Illinois public schools and a 2004 RAND study of principals in Illinois by focusing on principal characteristics (including age, gender, and race), certification histories, and undergraduate and graduate college preparation. We expand this research to examine principals' previous administrative and teaching experience, as well as their achievement scores and college selectivity. Our analyses describe how principal qualifications have changed over time in Illinois schools and how they differ based on school characteristics such as student demographics, achievement, school level, geographic region, and locale. As with our studies of teacher quality in Illinois, we pay special attention to the distribution of these principal characteristics across different school types, especially disadvantaged schools and schools in Chicago.

## **And So It Goes: An Auto-Ethnographic Journey**

Jennifer Burisek, *6th Grade Reading/Language Arts*  
Westmont Junior High School

The literature speaks to ‘what works in schools,’ ‘what effective teachers do,’ . . . literature also suggests that the role of a teacher; the job of a teacher is not defined, and that ‘non-definition’ begs a host of frustrations for classroom teachers. The research question being addressed in this study is *if we know what works in schools, why don't we do it?* This poster session will share results of an auto-ethnographic study which was informed by participants.

## **Atlas of Education in the Midwest**

Matthew Burke, *Research Associate*  
Yinmei Wan, Ph.D., *Research Associate*  
Leslie Nysten, *Research Specialist*  
REL Midwest at Learning Point Associates

The use of geographic information system (GIS) technology is becoming increasingly important in the field of educational research and countless other research fields across this country. All educational data, from student-level to state-level, has a geographic component. Schools exist in physical spaces, students live in homes within cities located in different contexts and cultures, and parental characteristics differ across geographic regions. GIS systems enable us to represent student, teacher, parent, school, district, county, state and regional information geospatially, thus allowing for a greater number of comparisons to take place in an easier to understand manner. REL Midwest has begun the task of creating an Atlas of Education in the Midwest by gathering the most recent publicly available data from state Department of Education websites, the NCES Common Core of Data, and the U.S. Census Bureau and displaying these data in a series of maps for the states within the Midwest region. Our intention with this project is to create a consistent set of reference materials for stakeholders throughout our region.

REL Midwest is in the very beginning stages of this project. For the first round of the Atlas, district-level maps were created for six out of seven states from the REL Midwest region (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin) that display three different background variables: mother's educational attainment, percent of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, and percentage of minority students. Next, school-level high school dropout rates were displayed over the district-level variables. Displaying data in this way allows the viewer to quickly identify pockets of high and low performing schools, problem areas, and relationships between district characteristics and school outcomes. In addition, these maps allow stakeholders from Illinois and other states to make regional comparisons on a number of performance indicators. We anticipate that the first round of maps will be released in mid to late May of this year, and subsequent rounds will follow on a quarterly basis and will display different data types identified as areas of interest in our region. By presenting this project at this early stage we hope to gain valuable feedback and insight pertaining to the relevancy of the project to Illinois stakeholders, possible ideas for subsequent rounds of maps, and feedback on the utility of maps created thus far.



## **Challenges Using the IPEDS For Examining the Early Childhood Teacher Preparation Pipeline**

Brenda K. Klostermann, Ph.D., *Associate Director of Administration*  
Illinois Education Research Council

The purpose of this study is to examine the higher education pipeline of Early Childhood teachers in Chicago in order to make recommendations for strategies to increase the number of qualified Early Childhood teachers. Previous IERC research examining the supply of and demand for Early Childhood teachers in Illinois (Presley, Klostermann, & White, 2006) found that the city of Chicago will need to rely more heavily on the new certificant pipeline because the reserve pool of already qualified Early Childhood teachers is much less robust in the Chicago region. Further analysis using IPEDS data revealed that there are large leakages in this higher education pipeline.

This study focused on these leakage issues using a two-pronged approach:

- 1) A detailed analysis of enrollment and one-year persistence data of Early Childhood Education students from ten Chicago institutions; and,
- 2) A survey with Early Childhood Education students from the ten participating institutions, examining barriers preventing them from progressing in their program.

Results show the pipeline is slow moving due to the large percentage of “interested” students, many of whom are enrolled in eight or fewer semester hours. Barriers cited most often are related to under-preparedness (including passing the Illinois Basic Skills test) and financial issues. A full copy and executive summary of the report can be found at [ierc.siu.edu](http://ierc.siu.edu).

## **Chicago HOPES: An Educational Intervention Program for Homeless Youth in Chicago's Shelters**

L. Arthur Safer, *Visiting Professor*, Concordia University Chicago, *Emeritus*, Loyola University Chicago  
Tanner L. Kroeger, *AmeriCorps VISTA & Program Coordinator for Chicago HOPES*, Chicago Public Schools  
Susan L. Mann, *Principal Mentoring Coordinator*, Lake County Regional Office of Education,  
Educational Services Division

### **The Problem**

In 2008-2009 there were 12,685 Chicago Public School (CPS) students enrolled in Educational Support for Students in Temporary Living Situations (STLS) department, formerly the Homeless Education Program. The academic consequence of homelessness is shattering. Twenty-two percent of homeless students have repeated two grades, vis-à-vis 8 percent of permanently housed children. Homeless students are 1.5 more likely to perform below grade level in both reading and spelling, and they are 2.5 times more likely to perform below grade level in math. Third grade homeless students are more than two times as likely to fail a grade as their permanently housed peers. And some research suggests that homelessness can reduce the chances of high school graduation by more than 50 percent. (Duffield & Lovell, 2008)

### **Current Intervention**

To address this pressing and growing educational need, the Chicago Public Schools' Educational Support for Students in Temporary Living Situations, in 2006, through a grant funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service, added AmeriCorps VISTA corps members to the department as a response to the lack of intervention processes for homeless youth within the reach of CPS. Chicago HOPES provides tutoring programs based in the Chicago homeless shelters throughout the city. To date Chicago HOPES has tutoring programs in 26 shelters throughout the city.

The mission of Chicago HOPES is to empower students to succeed academically despite the challenges of homelessness. Its core values – literacy, math and independent learning – shape its highly structured programming, which aims to bring stability to the students' education and to build their basic skills necessary for academic success. The program is designed to serve its mission through one-on-one tutoring sessions. A secondary goal of the program, therefore, is to provide homeless students with positive role models who can help them develop basic social-emotional learning skills.

During the fall and spring semesters, the program conducts after-school tutoring sessions at homeless shelters two or three days per week. A team consisting of one coordinator, at least one certified teacher and a number of volunteer tutors staffs each session, which lasts between one to two hours. The sessions are divided between homework guidance and a student-specific lesson plan, which the certified teacher designs and the volunteer tutors facilitate. Every two weeks a session is devoted to an enrichment project sponsored by a local arts or science organization. These projects, which range from theatre games to science experiments, encourage students to explore their communities and themselves. Additionally, enrichment allows the program to access creative pedagogical means in an effort to develop the students' independent learning and social emotional learning skills.

### **Research Questions**

As Chicago HOPES expands, an essential element of its progress will be its ability to evaluate its programming and to make essential adjustments. This research will compliment a quantitative study currently in progress at the University of Chicago which evaluates the educational effectiveness of Chicago HOPES. By focusing on qualitative measures, this research will examine the organizational effectiveness of the program. These dual data sources will serve (1) to assess how Chicago HOPES might adjust organizationally and educationally to more effectively serve the academic and social needs of sheltered homeless youth within Chicago; and (2) to determine the portability and sustainability of the program components for implementation into different regional and national venues. Specifically, the research will attempt to ascertain: How managerial and educational roles are constructed among the VISTA members and other STLS staff members? How does the program connect and partner with community groups and agencies? To what degree do models of internal program oversight best accommodate success in large organizational configurations? How do these systems of role delineation, communication and oversight compare to similar programs nationally, if at all?

## **Data Collection, Analysis and Summary of Findings**

The collection and analysis of the data is in the formative stages and will not be complete until fall 2010. The utilization of qualitative methodologies through interviews, observation, surveys, and anecdotal data collection will be paired with scoring and student assessment data collected and analyzed through the quantitative documentation currently underway.

## **Further Research and Implications for Illinois Education**

It is the intent of this research to provide programmatic direction to Chicago HOPES by assessing how effective the after-school tutoring model is and by what other means might the program become more effective in addressing this intervention. Specific data will be available beginning fall 2010. The number of homeless students living in shelters in Chicago and Illinois is increasing and it behooves the Illinois educational community to closely examine viable intervention programs for homeless youth, for which Chicago HOPES may serve as a model in other venues. This research goal is consistent with the conclusion of the final report from the Office of Human Services Policy which stipulates that although there is much documented about homeless families and their circumstances there is very little known relative to intervention responses and models (Rog, Holupka.& Patton, 2007).

# A Comparison of Representations of Units of Length: A Microgenetic Analysis

Craig Cullen, *Assistant Professor*, Illinois State University  
Jeffrey E. Barrett, *Associate Professor*, Illinois State University  
Douglas H. Clements, *SUNY Distinguished Professor*, University of Buffalo  
Julie Sarama, *Associate Professor*, University of Buffalo

## Introduction

“Measurement plays a central role in reasoning about all aspects of our spatial environment. Measurement is critical for understanding the structure of shapes, using coordinate systems to determine locations in space, specifying transformations, and establishing the size of objects” (Battista, 2007, p. 891). Unfortunately, many students struggle to develop a solid foundation in understanding basic measurement concepts. For example, Bragg and Outhred (2004) state that when students are “asked to indicate which feature of the scale on a ruler is counted when measuring a length” (p. 160), many are likely to indicate the hash marks rather than the line segments defined by these marks. They suggest modeling a sweeping motion through the interval to help students identify the units of length.

Computer technology is becoming an increasingly important part of the modern classroom, providing teachers ways of illustrating abstract ideas and assessing students’ thinking. This fact makes it imperative that we “understand how and why technologies influence, and will continue to influence, mathematics education” (Mariotti, 2002, p. 695). One of the most widely used technologies is dynamic geometry environments (DGEs) (Becker, 2000). Although many mathematics teachers, as well as many researchers, focus their attention on the use of DGEs (McClintock, Zhonghong, and Raquel, 2002), there are aspects of this realm that need further investigation. This study compares students learning of linear units in different settings: a DGE setting, a simple manipulative setting and a control setting.

## Research Question

What type of instructional treatment supports students in coordinating media and tools for measuring with the conceptual schema of unit iteration? In particular, how do students’ reactions to a treatment focused on helping students develop a coordination between the markings on a ruler and the iteration of a unit of length, presented through GSP compare to the same treatment presented in a paper and pencil environment?

## Methodology

Our analysis compared the effects of presenting students treatments focused on developing a coordination between the markings on a ruler and the iteration of a unit of length. Thirty-six students, selected from kindergarten and Grade 2, were engaged in six weekly sessions, each consisting of three trials. Each of the 18 trials required the students to report the length of an object not aligned to the zero-point of a measuring tool as well as to describe their thinking. The correctness of the students’ responses was recorded as well as their unit identification strategy. The 36 students were randomly assigned into three groups, two treatment groups and one comparison group. The first treatment group interacted with a computer environment developed in Geometer’s Sketchpad (GSP), the second treatment group interacted with physical manipulatives (mimicking the experience on GSP), and the final group was a comparison group that received feedback but no additional visual support.

This data was analyzed using the microgenetic method (Siegler & Crowley, 1991). This method was developed to study change in a systematic manner and is most commonly known as the microgenetic method. According to Siegler and Svetina (2006) the microgenetic method has three main properties:

- (1) observations span the whole period of rapidly changing competence;
- (2) the density of observation within this period is high, relative to the rate of change; and
- (3) observations of changing performance are analyzed intensively to indicate the processes that give rise to them (p. 1000).

We followed this method by interviewing students once a week for six weeks, with three trials each week. The students’ responses on each trial were recorded in an attempt to pinpoint the genesis of the students’ change in strategy use as well as their ability to produce correct responses.

## **Conclusions**

The GSP and Non-GSP groups responded similarly in production of correct responses as well as in strategy use. Both treatment groups concluded the study with 80% or more success in the final two weekly sessions while the comparison group never reached the 50% mark. In both treatment groups, the point to midpoint (ptmid) strategy emerged as the dominant strategy, as it was used more than twice as much as any other strategy in all but the first weekly session. In contrast the comparison group continued to use the ineffective count tick marks (ct) and endpoint (ep) strategies throughout the study as well as the effective point to midpoint (ptmid) strategy.

Three strategies emerged throughout the study as highly effective. These effective strategies, point to midpoint (ptmid), sweeping the interval (swp), and spanning with fingers (spanf) were each used with more than 95% accuracy in each of the three groups. Each of these strategies focuses student attention to the intervals along the measurement tool, rather than the tick marks or numerals.

## **Implications**

When teaching students to measure length, their attention should be focused on the intervals of length defined by the tick marks. Students should not simply be taught to align the object to the end of the measurement tool and read the numeral below the far right of the object. Instead students should be guided to use the point to midpoint (ptmid), sweeping the interval (swp), or spanning with fingers (spanf) strategies to represent the number of iterations of the unit of length that are required to match the length of the object to be measured. Additionally, although Geometer's Sketchpad (GSP) was used with the students in a one-on-one setting, they were not using the software interactively. The success of the treatment presented through GSP in a non-interactive manner points to its potential to be used as a whole class demonstration tool with students as young as kindergarten to help students connect the markings on a ruler with the iteration of a unit of length.

## **Questions for Further Research**

Bragg and Outhred (2004) suggest using a sweeping motion through an interval to identify the units of length along a measurement tool. This study validates the potential of this strategy, which was used with 100% accuracy. Future research should investigate the possibility of guiding students to adopt this strategy with the use of a dynamic display on Geometer's Sketchpad.

# **Do Teachers Practice in Cultural Sensitivity Activities Influenced Children's Awareness about Diversity?**

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## **Purpose of the Study**

This study explores the relationship between preschool teachers teaching practice in implementing cultural sensitivity activities and children's awareness of diversity. Two research questions guided the study: 1. Do preschool teachers have the competencies in culturally sensitivity teaching? 2. Is there a relationship between culturally sensitive classrooms and children's awareness about diversity? The study was conducted in spring 2009 through spring 2010 in eleven preschools in East Central Illinois. Participants were randomly selected from the Eastern Illinois Area of Special Education database. Teachers' competencies in implementing culturally sensitive teaching were measured by the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale [ECERS] (Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 1998) and children's awareness in cultural sensitivity learning was measured by the Preschool Racial Awareness Measure II (Williams, 1972).

The study is based on the theoretical frameworks of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009), Bank's typology of multicultural education (2003), and Gonzales-Mena cultural sensitivity care (2001). Cultural sensitivity is "defined as an awareness of the nuances of culture so that a culture can be viewed objectively, evaluated, and appreciated as well as knowing that differences exist between cultures, but not assigning values to the differences" (Gonzalez-Mena, 2001, p. 5). For this study, children's awareness and understanding about cultural diversity is defined as "their physical knowledge in the multicultural stories, objects, and people based on the physical appearance" (Peterson & Felton-Colin, 2006, p. 21).

## **Methodology of the Study**

*Participants:* A total of 22 teachers and 127 children from 11 centers participated in the study.

*Instrument and Data Source:* Instruments and data source were derived from the following sources:

1. The Teacher Survey. The survey consisted of 34 items modified by the investigator based on the seven subscales (see details of the sub-scales in #2) in the preschool activities from the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale [ECERS] (Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 1998). The survey used a rating scale of Never, Seldom, Frequently, Always, Yes, and No.
2. The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale [ECERS] (Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 1998) {modified by the investigator}. Thirty-four items from seven subscales were selected to measure teachers teaching activities related to the cultural awareness in the classroom. The sub-scales were space and furnishing, personal care routine, language-reasoning, creativity, interaction, program structure, and parents and staff. The ECERS is scored on a 4-point scale with descriptors for 1 (inadequate), 2 (minimal) 4 (good), 4 (excellent). ECERS has "Subscale internal consistencies range from .71 to .88 with a total scale internal consistency of .92" (Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 1998, p.2).
3. Preschool Racial Awareness Measure II [PRAM II] (Williams, 1972) was used in two ways. One was used to the observe children's behaviors related to the understanding of the cultural awareness during teachers reading the multicultural story book, [Dooley, N. (1991) Everybody cooks rice] and second was used during the interview with children. This book is about different families around the world cook and prepared rice in a different ways and how the commonalties among different people bring them together. PRAM II has internal consistency of .80 and reliability of .55. PRAM II consisted of the 20 items checklist to be used during the book reading and five questions asking children during the interview. This instrument was used to measure children's knowledge about children from other ethnicities. During the interview children were asked to point out which pictures of children represent positive and negative behaviors. The children then were asked to match the children in pictures with the pictures of food that they eat at home to know their awareness about other cultures.

## **Data Collection Procedures and Analysis**

Data was collected during pre-and posttest period. Pre-test data was collected in spring 2009 and post-test will be collected at the end of spring 2010. The Teacher Survey, ECERS, and PRAM II will be utilized to collect the data during pre-and-posttest period. Pre-test data was collected to obtain the baseline information about teachers' level of

competencies in implementing cultural sensitivity activities, classroom environment and the level of children's awareness. During summer and fall 2009, classroom teachers were given two, two-weekend trainings by the investigator on how to plan and incorporate cultural sensitivity activities in the classroom. The teachers were provided materials and resources to assist them in implementing what they have learned during the trainings. Two weeks after completing the training, the investigator visited the schools to examine whether the teacher understood how to implement the activities. Data from pre-and post-test will be compared to find out if there are significant changes in teachers' knowledge and practices about cultural sensitivity. If any, are these changes influenced children's understanding of awareness about cultural diversity? Data was analyzed using two-way ANOVA to find out the level of teachers competencies in teaching and preparing cultural sensitive classrooms and Pearson correlation will be utilized to find out if there are correlations between teacher practices and children's increased in the awareness of cultural sensitivity.

### **Results of the Study**

Data reported that teachers were less competent in implementing culturally sensitivity teaching. Most of teachers used ethnic holidays and celebrations incorporated in the themes. They used play materials in the activities such as in the Chinese New Year, Cinco De Mayo, Hanukkah, Kwanza, Christmas. It appears that no centers were using ethnic foods as a regular part of meals/snacks and no centers encouraged parents to share family customs with children in class. Approximately 14% of classrooms always provide props in the dramatic play area that represent diversity, change centers and materials to create children's awareness about other cultures, provide ways to extend art activities that encourage diversity. Teachers provided multicultural materials in the learning centers such as multicultural dolls, chopsticks, photos, and posters.

No significant relationship was found between culturally sensitive classrooms and children's awareness. Children were observed recognized and used the play materials in the learning centers as play materials and do not associate with certain ethnicities. Children did not choose their playmates based on ethnicity; however, children did choose based on gender. Findings show that children did not associate ethnic foods as being representative of certain ethnic groups.

Data from teachers' survey and interview on their opinions and perspectives about teaching and preparing their classroom to include cultural sensitivity activities reported that, they expressed some level of discomfort due to the lack of training. Others were concerned that they were unsure or confused about children from other cultures (in which they have limited experience with these children in their centers). Some of them reported that have trouble to fully understand the cultural values and practices in those culture. They mentioned, for example, some teachers were unsure how to interact and communicate with Asian children who were quiet and shy in the classroom and seldom ask questions.

**Implications for Illinois Education:** This study hopes to make an ethical, appropriate, reliable assessment of the program on children's needs. Findings can be used in many ways. First, it can be used for the purpose of making sound decisions about teaching and learning, identifying significant concerns that may require focused intervention for individual children and families in Illinois. Second, it can be used to better serve children and families from diverse cultural backgrounds by addressing their needs. Third, culturally sensitive teaching practice could contribute to the improvement if educational outcomes for young racially, culturally and economically marginalized children. Fourth, this study could inform administrators and policy makers about teachers' professional development plans and program improvements

## **Early Care and Education in Downstate Illinois: An Analysis Using IECAM**

Susan Fowler, Ph.D., *Principal Investigator*, Dawn Thomas, Ph.D., *IECAM Project Coordinator*,  
and Bernard Cesarone, *Assistant Director of Technology*  
Early Childhood and Parenting Collaborative  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

This poster session will show results of an ongoing query related to the importance of early childhood programs to seek out and utilize multiple funding streams to provide high quality services for young children and their families, particularly those meeting at-risk criteria (i.e., poverty). Additionally, this poster session will allow IERC participants to conduct their own queries of the IECAM web-based tool related to various search parameters during the poster session.

The Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM) is a web-based tool that enables researchers and policy makers to develop tabular data and interactive maps describing the current range of early care and education services in Illinois by geographic entities. It was created at the request of the Illinois Early Learning Council and State Board of Education to enable various stakeholders to assess the needs of their county, township, state legislative district, municipality, and U.S. federal Congressional district for providing early care and education, as well as specialized programs, such as state-funded prekindergarten or Head Start. Using the data, the user can determine where new or expanded programs are most needed to help create a comprehensive early childhood system and to allocate resources in a transparent fashion. The current locations of early care and education programs can be superimposed on thematic maps that show the population of preschool children (in one-year cohorts, median family income, employment levels, working families, and Latino and African American population). Standard reports are also available to assist users in quickly gathering data for a specific geographic area and conducting comparisons across locations.

The geographic information data set on IECAM includes all licensed child care programs (2,399), licensed exempt child care programs (499) and family child care programs (8,432) plus data on Prek/PFA sites (1,627) and Head Start (656) and Early Head Start grantees (57) in Illinois. IECAM programmers have geocoded and aggregated the site locations in order to provide the data at up to nine different geographic locations.

The poster presentation will highlight examples of counties outside of Chicago and the collar counties which appear to have significant unmet needs in serving young children who are eligible for PFA services or Head Start services as well as examples of counties in which need is evident but not as pressing. An analysis based on the benchmarks identified by agencies in Illinois for determining family eligibility for early care and education services will also be emphasized. These include the following indices based on the poverty level of families (100%, 185%, and 200%) and the extent to which these various indices paint different pictures of need for services.

A descriptive analysis of the 13,670 data points will be provided in terms of the density of services available outside of Chicago and the Chicago metro area (CMA). Analyses were based on a comparison of demographic estimates for 2005 (source: 2000 census data) and of data on early care and education services to describe the potential gaps in services in counties for children at the poverty levels of 100%, 185%, and 200% under age 5 years. In addition, analyses of early care and education capacity will be evaluated and underscored in relationship to demographic parameters per county, including the number of English language-isolated families. An analyses and picture of the state of Illinois when a collaborative effort is made to serve young children in early care and education settings is presented.

Implications to be addressed will include a discussion of the current distribution of PFA and pre-k ISBE funded programs in the 95 counties outside of Chicago and the CMA and the identification of counties in which the need for future programs based on the 185% of the poverty level shall be identified. Likewise, the Head Start benchmarks of 100% will be used to identify the need for additional Head Start funding or programs in various locales of the state. The 200% benchmark used by IDHS for subsidies also will be assessed to determine the extent to which these benchmarks demonstrate similar or markedly different snapshots of certain counties. Implications will be highlighted for future funding of PFA and Head Start programs, as well as the identified need for family child care or group child care in specific locales.

The discussion during this poster session will also include ways in which the IECAM data can be used to establish need for programs, priority for areas to be funded in the future and priority areas to receive technical assistance to develop the capacity to be successful at acquiring future state or federal funds for serving income eligible children. Participants will be able to utilize the web-based tool to conduct queries related to specific geographic regions and various search parameters. The presenters bring to the table a broad range of expertise in the research of and information pertaining to early care and education, as well as data collection, analysis, and use of geocoding systems.



# **Hidden Learning and the Hidden Curriculum: Learning from Middle School Students' Engagement in an After-School Arts Program**

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## **Purpose of the Research**

Past research has demonstrated that the classroom is recognized as a space that provides a constant social context, and where struggles of power usually take place (Jackson, 1968; Apple, 1995). Extracurricular activities shape students' identities and school experiences (Oliver & Lalik, 2004), but due to the increased attention to standardization arts based instruction has decreased. Training in the arts (music in particular) is associated with high academic achievement (Wu & Chiou, 2008). Our study provides arts-based programs to middle school students in an under-resourced school. The study seeks to:

- Examine the relationship between students' engagement in an after-school arts program and students' learning experiences
- Examine and identify ways critical pedagogy in an arts based curricula may assist student agency in learning and enhance their school experiences
- Examine and identify which aspects of the hidden curriculum may shape students' learning experience

## **Methodology**

This study employs an interpretive/qualitative research methodology.

- Critical Theory (Freire, 1976)
- Curriculum Theory (Apple, 1996; Sleeter, 2007)
- Observations
  - Mondays 3:00-3:45- Dance –Centered Videos
  - Mondays 3:45-5:00- Dance Practice
  - Tuesdays 3:00-4:30-Art Class
- Field Notes
- Student Artifact (Art Work, Dance Performances)
- Responses from Dance videos and conversations centered on dance
- Student Focus Groups

## **Participants**

- 6th, 7th, 8th graders
- 20 students
- 19 girls; 1 boy
- 13 African-American students; 4 Caucasian Students; 2 Asian American Students; 1 Latino/a student
- Dance Team members (10 students)
- Art Class (10 students)

## **Data Analysis**

Primary sources are analyzed using an interpretive approach. Primary sources include the arts-based curricula and student generated artifacts (art work, dance performances/practices). Arts-based curricula, implemented in Illinois schools and based on National Standards, are interpreted through the lens of curriculum theory. Additional data (i.e. field notes and focus group interviews) is analyzed using open coding.

## **Findings**

Evidence suggests that students who participate in these after school arts program have more positive learning experiences in school than they did before they participated in the after school arts program. Findings from the study also indicate that instruction through critical pedagogical methods that encourage student agency in learning tend to create more meaningful learning opportunities for students. Students' engagement in arts-based programs also fostered critical thinking and critical discussions of social issues. Students' engagement in arts-based programs supported students' self-exploration of identity through expressions of aptitude, race, gender, and support.

## **Implications for Illinois Education**

This study was conducted in a small urban community in Illinois. Curricula for the arts-based program were designed to meet both national and Illinois state Fine Art standards. NCLB listed Fine Arts as one of the "10 core academic subjects", Fine Arts are qualified to receive federal funding. However, teachers and administrators have reported an increased time in English/Language Arts and Math instruction results in less time for Fine Arts instruction- up to a 50% decrease in instructional time. School districts that report any gains in NCLB testing have also reported averaged 97 minutes for arts compared to 568 minutes for reading (American for the Arts, 2009). At the same time, high stakes testing has a significant connection to decreased student engagement (Vadeboncoeur, 2006).

# **Last Chance Schooling: Giving African-American Girls a Second Chance to Dream**

Eleshia L. Smith, *Graduate Student*  
DePaul University

## **Problem Statement**

The issue of identity construction for African-American girls is a complex one. Their oppositional collective identity in many ways conflicts with what is expected in school. Right now, there is little in the literature that addresses these issues. Ponea (1997) argues we know little about the factors that contribute to their academic success or failure. Despite gains in academic achievement over their male counterparts, African-American females still struggle academically. Sadker (1994) states there is a growing recognition of the need to look at data for girls of color and validate whether assumptions hold for minorities and females overall for this subpopulation. My goal is to examine the tensions between these dialectical forces and the relationship to how well they do in school and how they make sense of that.

## **Purpose Statement**

By gaining a better understanding about African-American female identity construction, teachers can be more proactive and informed in their teaching. It's imperative that teachers find a way to get past these student's indifference, anger and apathy in order to improve the achievement gap between African-American female students and their white counterparts. For this present study, I focused on the notion of "care" and school structure and the relationship between these concepts in the academic reengagement of African-American female students.

## **Research Questions**

This present study attempts to understand this relationship between identity and classroom success by asking the following research questions:

1. How do schools support struggling African-American girls?
  - 1a. What does this support look like?
2. What do previously unsuccessful kids want from school?
  - 2a. What does this "success" look like?

## **Methods**

This study was conducted at a small racially segregated alternative high school located in a major metropolitan city. The school is mostly comprised of Latino and African-American students aged 16-20 years of age. Primary data was conducted using observations, interviews and limited archival data (i.e. school website). The researcher randomly selected the students after observing them during their English class. Fetterman (1998) argues that "making the choice to employ field methods involves a commitment to get close to the subject being observed in a natural setting, to be factual and descriptive in reporting what is observed, and to find out the points of view in the domain observed".

## **Findings**

Surprisingly, the results yielded little in support of the original aim of identity construction and self-efficacy in the classroom. While there was some mention of identity construction, this issue of care and the need for boundary setting emerged from the transcription of the interview transcripts and observations of all three participants. All the students felt that their home school was not serving their needs. Consequently, they lost interest, resulting in their being kicked out of school.

## **Conclusions And Recommendations**

Understanding how to serve failing students, especially minority children is one of the issues at the forefront of educational research. The complexities of improving the educational landscape for African-American females have finally come to the

forefront as well. This study suggests the need for a shift in research on African-American girls and the notion of care. These students are transcending race, class, and gender. Their needs are unique and must be treated as such. Future research should build on promising strategies of care and boundary setting in the reengagement of African-American students. More research needs to also examine the disconnect between goal setting and improved structure in schools. Many questions remain. What is the relationship between the student's goals and dreams for the future? How do structure, care and support influence them? What impact does "care" have on African-American females students goals and how? Can care negate issues of race and class? Educators must understand that by improving structure for their students, academic achievement will improve.

## **A Longitudinal Analysis of Children’s Unit Iteration Concepts for Length, Area, and Volume (Grades 2–4)**

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To promote students’ understanding of linear and area measurement, we want to help them gain a working definition of the unit concept. Students often have a procedural understanding instead of a more complete, conceptual understanding of measuring and units (e.g., Barrett & Clements, 2003; Clements, Battista, Sarama, Swaminathan, & McMillen, 1997; Kamii, 2006). Yet, unit iteration, at the center of unit concept understanding, is poorly developed in many of the Kindergarten through third grade curricula (Smith, et al., 2008; Smith, Males, Dietiker, Figueras, & Lee, 2008). Not only are unit concepts important for an understanding of measurement and number concepts, units are also important for the development of early-algebra and rational numbers concepts in later grades (Venenciano, Slovin, & DaSilva, 2009).

In keeping with the cognitive theoretical framework of Hierarchic Interactionism (Clements & Sarama, 2007), we employ *learning trajectories* (LTs) as research tools to characterize the level of thinking for a child or group of children with similar conceptual knowledge for measurement. Consequently, the LT indicates instructional tasks appropriate to the children’s level of thinking. We have used LTs to examine thematic aspects of measurement concepts, especially those related to unit, in teaching experiments with eight individual students. Our analysis involves predicting and then checking for student success or struggle, based on the current model for that student in relation to the LT (Steffe & Thompson, 2000).

We used the relational database, NVivo 8, to organize our data and investigate emergent patterns among our codes (from the LT). Students’ progress was consistent with the ladder-like model of levels in our Learning Trajectory for Length, including end-to-end collection counter, unit repeater, and consistent length measurer. Persistent themes accounting for students’ roadblocks included use of discrete models of quantity without noticing continuous quantity, assignment of zero at places other than zero on corresponding number lines, and tendency to dichotomize tick marks and spaces (gaps) for counting length units. Children’s difficulty in transferring unit concepts across dimensions to area or volume did not match the trajectory for length; a few students successfully used units to find volume while struggling with length unit iteration.

Learning to use large units of length (6–8 inches) rather than smaller, standard units (an inch or cm) helped students who struggled to iterate units notice and repair gaps or overlaps. Our findings indicate ways of reconnecting poorly understood procedures for measuring with a robust unit concept: (1) emphasizing unit-object ratios through comparisons, (2) using larger units to incorporate perceptual or motion schemes and number schemes to model unit iteration, and (3) coordinating continuous motion, intervals and the tick marks to demarcate the motion steps along a segment. These results support the claim that length unit iteration is strengthened as one coordinates active schemes for length as a collection of sticks and as motion steps indicated by tick marks (Chiu, 1996; Lakoff & Nunes, 2005). This may help students transfer unit concepts into other dimensions of volume and area.

### **ISU: Grades 2-4 Length, Area and Volume**

Students’ progress was consistent with the sequential model of levels in our Learning Trajectory for Length, including end-to-end collection counter, unit repeater, and consistent length measurer. Persistent themes accounting for students’ roadblocks included use of discrete models of quantity without noticing continuous quantity, assignment of zero at places other than zero on corresponding number lines, and tendency to dichotomize tick marks and spaces (gaps) for counting length units. Children’s difficulty in transferring unit concepts across dimensions to area or volume did not necessarily match the trajectory for length; a few students successfully used units to find volume while struggling with length unit iteration.

# Poetry Discussion: Guiding Elementary Students with Disabilities Toward Comprehension

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Discussion focused on read-alouds or student readings yields a framework for the discourse of students and teachers. During the past decade, literary researchers have used discourse analysis approaches to examine text comprehension, the use of cognitive strategies, and the kinds of instructional frames and supports necessary to facilitate text comprehension (Almasi, Mckeown, & Beck, 1996; Chinn, Anderson, & Waggoner 2001), as well as children's development of literary understanding (Sipe, 2000). Discussion of literary texts helps students to make sense of their world through building empathy, respect for the opinions of others, and taking ownership of the learning process (Ketch, 2006). It allows students to reflect on what was read, reveals their evolving thinking, and provides practice in the use of cognitive strategies modeled by the teacher. Yet, in classroom discourse, the genre of poetry is often placed on the back burner by many elementary school teachers, and even when poetry is used, it is done so generally for aesthetic purposes alone. Teachers tend to believe that having elementary students, particularly those with disabilities, access this genre might be beyond their interest, knowledge, and skill.

## Purpose

This research was conducted to examine and present the interpretive strategies used by elementary-aged students with disabilities as they discussed and constructed meaning from poetry read-alouds. It is guided by the following question: What are the interpretive strategies that students with disabilities use autonomously, or may be prompted to use, as they engage in poetry discussions?

## Methods

The research was conducted at a small elementary school in a Midwestern state. Participants were 6 African American students who were the full complement of the researcher's cross-categorical special education class. Five of the students were cognitively delayed, while 1 had a reading disability, and they ranged in age from 9 to 12 years. During the four-week data collection period, participants were audio- and video-taped discussing a total of five poems, selected based on similar themes to which students could perceivably relate.

## Results and Implications

This examination of the oral discourse of students with disabilities clearly showed that these students capably used a variety of cognitive and affective strategies to assist in their comprehension of poems. Furthermore, as the discussion sessions progressed, students increasingly used the Piggybacking, Affective Response, and Intertextual Connections strategies on their own, suggesting that they were becoming more acquainted with these strategies, and that they played a dominant role in their comprehension and interpretation of the poetry read-alouds. The researchers' questioning to elicit specific strategy use appeared to have served as a model of covert thought processes for the students to follow, enabling them more autonomy and less reliance on her cueing of strategy use. The poetry engagement and discussion empowered the students to gain knowledge from and react to the perspective and activities of others. It may be that poetry is not as elusive a genre as some might think. Poetry discussion, then, may serve as a viable vehicle for promoting the comprehension skills of students with disabilities.

## **Team Ideology and School Achievement Status: What's the Connection?**

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Improvement of achievement in middle schools is an issue that districts face. Teaching teams are used in over 80% of districts across the USA for middle schools. The current study investigated whether teacher ideology had any relationship with school achievement status.

Participants were given a questionnaire and a q-sort. Paperwork was completed at mandatory faculty meetings, which provided an acceptable rate of return. Demographic variables, including certification, teaching experience, teaming experience, and age, were used to identify patterns in ideological preference. Ideology for each of the 183 staff members was assigned from the results of the four-question q-sort. A total of 138 teamed teachers were then analyzed for congruency status among all team members. Using all staff data, a primary ideological classification was also derived for each school. Schools were separated by achievement status as indicated on Illinois School Report Cards from 2003, 2004, and 2005.

This study revealed a statistically significant relationship ( $p < .024$ ) between ideological congruence of teamed teachers and school achievement status. Achievement occurred more often at schools where teacher teams were organized by congruent ideologies, without regard for which ideology was expressed by the teachers. No statistically significant relationship was discovered when posing a particular ideology with student achievement status. All schools displayed a variety of ideologically based teams.

Data revealed no statistically significant relationships among any of the demographic variables and ideology. Interesting findings did occur related to teaching experience. Teachers that had over twenty-five years of experience held a distinct majority of staffers who self-identified Critical Theory as their primary ideology. While this data did not meet standards to be considered statistically significant for this research ( $p < .056$ ), the adjusted residual was  $|2.03|$  and warrants future investigation. Also on the interesting scale, no teachers in the youngest age category self-identified as Orthodoxy for their main ideology.

## Student Clubs and Activities: A Hidden Benefit of Equitable Funding

Joseph Matula, *Assistant Professor*  
Governors State University

When analyzing the disparity of funding among Illinois school districts, it seems that class size, technology, and curriculum offerings get most of the attention. The “haves” have low class sizes, current technology and a variety of curriculum offerings which the “have-nots” don’t. Advocates of a change in the emphasis of school funding on property taxes see the things that the wealthier school districts have and would like all children to have the same opportunities. Some feel this disparity is tied to racial bias (see *Chicago Urban League v. Illinois*). Others feel it is a fear of taxpayers in that any change will be interpreted as a tax increase and legislators who support it will surely lose their next election.

Meanwhile, as this scenario continues to play itself into a circular pattern year after year after year, the losers are the students of the “have-not” schools and society in general. Here is why. A benefit of the “haves” is the opportunity for their students to participate in school clubs or activities. The benefit of schools, primarily high schools, having clubs and activities for their students is both a common-sense characteristic and also a proven characteristic of effective schools.

A common-sense or logical reason for having many clubs and activities in which students can participate is that the participation of students develops a closer connection to the school. This connection keeps the students off the streets and away from the influence of gangs and other negative factors in the neighborhood. Participation in extracurricular activities gives the students opportunities to be involved in areas that interest them rather than just the prescribed curriculum. Certainly a student would find it motivational to go to school if he or she is enthused about participating in an after school club that day.

There is a plethora of research linking afterschool programs to better school performance of students in school. Among the many studies listed in a report by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) are:

- *No Child Left Behind: The Facts about 21st Century Learning* found that students who spend no time in extracurricular activities are 49% more likely to use drugs and 37% more likely to become teen parents than those who spend one to four hours per week in extracurricular activities.
- A *Harvard Educational Review* article found that participation in extracurricular activities in high school appears to be one of the few interventions that benefit, disadvantaged students as much or more than their more advantaged peers.
- The *Journal of Adolescent Research* reported that extracurricular activity participation is linked to lower rates of dropping out, greater civic involvement and higher levels of academic achievement.
- The *American Journal of Health Behavior* found that students participating in organized sports were 25% less likely to be current cigarette smokers.
- *Adolescent Time Use, Risky Behavior, and Outcomes: An Analysis of National Data* issued by the Department of Health and Human Services found that students who spend no time in extracurricular activities are 57% more likely to have dropped out of school by the time they would have been seniors, 35% more likely to have smoked cigarettes, and 27% more likely to have been arrested than those who spend one to four hours per week in extracurricular activities.
- Researchers Howard T. Everson and Roger E. Millsap, writing for the College Entrance Examination Board, found that participation in extra-curricular activities provides all students, minorities included, measurable and meaningful gains in their college admissions test scores.
- A study of nearly 22,000 students by a University of Colorado professor for the Colorado High School Activities Association indicated students who participate in some form of interscholastic activities have “significantly higher” grade-point averages than students who do not.



- Data obtained by Dr. Kevin J. McCarthy revealed participants in some form of interscholastic activities in Jefferson County high schools had an overall grade-point average of 3.01 on a 4.0 scale, while the GPA for non-participants was 2.44.
- Findings from the National Center for Education Statistics, *Extracurricular Participation and Student Engagement*, revealed that during the first semester of their senior year,  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the participants had no unexcused absences from school and  $\frac{1}{2}$  had never skipped a class, compared with  $\frac{1}{3}$  and  $\frac{2}{5}$  of non-participants, respectively.
- According to a survey by the New Mexico Activities Association found that high school students who compete in activities had a 2.80 grade-point average compared to 2.00 for non-participants.
- The American College Testing Service found the one yardstick that could be used to predict later success in life was achievement in school activities.

Now back to the school funding issue. Who do you think can afford more afterschool clubs and activities? Of course, the wealthier school districts can provide an abundance of clubs and activities for their students when compared to the less wealthy districts. In a comparison of Illinois school districts, I found that those with an EAV (Equalized Assessed Valuation) greater than \$100,000 per pupil provide 48% more clubs and activities than school districts with an EAV per pupil of less than \$100,000.

Looking at the extremes, New Trier High School has 151 clubs and activities, not even counting interscholastic sports, while Kankakee High School has only 17 clubs and activities. Some of these wealthier school districts have 80% of their students involved in at least one club or activity. When I see this disparity, I can't help but think of the quote of Martin Luther King, "*Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.*" My sample had 40 schools in it so there could be a school with more than 151 clubs, but I doubt it; and maybe even a school district with fewer than 17 clubs. Regardless as to whether more extreme schools exist, the point is made.

Many reasons exist as to why a high school has many or few clubs, i.e., the number of teachers who want to sponsor a club, the pay, student interest, etc. The less Illinois spends on equitable school funding, the more it will spend on future expenses that result from more kids on drugs, more kids in jail, more kids having kids, and more kids in trouble. The NFHS has researched various school districts' budgets across the country and found that activity programs made up only between 1 to 3% of the overall education budget in a school. However, in the Chicago Public Schools in 2007, after student activity programs received only  $\frac{1}{7}$  of 1% of its budget. In Charlotte-Mecklenberg, in 2008, their activity programs received only  $\frac{1}{3}$  of 1% of its budget. In the Seattle Public Schools, in 2008, only  $\frac{1}{9}$  of 1% was set aside for its activity programs.

Maybe Illinois can't afford to provide 151 clubs and activities for all school districts, but at least 50 clubs and activities can be part of the definition of an adequate education in Illinois.

# **Tree of Growth Model: Educator Dispositions**

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## **Purpose of Research**

The purpose of the study was to investigate participant recommendations on content form and medium for preservice social studies teachers in using resources focused on the Illinois Indians, an ethnic minority group relevant to the state of Illinois and US history. In addition, I explored how perspectives from three levels of educators informed those recommendations and gave meaning to multicultural education through use of Native American content.

## **Methodology**

The methodology employed for this study was that of a qualitative investigation utilizing multicultural education as a sensitizing concept, a combined viewing lens and iterative touchstone, throughout the study. The sample size encompassed fourteen southern Illinois educators across three levels: preservice teachers in elementary and secondary education programs; experienced educators in elementary and secondary classrooms; and social studies curriculum specialists who were formerly secondary classroom teachers. The response rate was 100%. Combination purposeful sampling, composed of criterion sampling and maximum variation sampling, was used. For all participants the criterion was that each one had to be capable of showing some experiential perspective on Native American content and relevant methods within a social studies context. Maximum variation sampling was utilized for flexibility and identifying central themes variation in subjects. The maximum variation sampling was reflected across: (a) two focus groups of preservice social studies teachers one elementary education and one secondary education; (b) two focus groups of experienced social studies/history teachers, grades three through twelve; and (c) interviews of two social studies curriculum specialists representing varied curricular experience. Variation in gender and geographic location within southern Illinois were represented across the focus groups and two interviewees. Interviews and focus groups directly engaged the participants in their real world educational settings. The preservice teacher focus groups took place in rooms in the College of Education quite familiar to these undergraduate students; the experienced teacher focus groups took place in a classroom and a teacher work room at the end of the school day; the interviews of the social studies curriculum specialists took place in conference rooms specifically related to their current educational roles. Data collection methods included: focus groups; interviews; gathering demographic data and critiques of eight medium artifacts relevant to social studies—used to situate the study's participants in terms of all Illinois educators, as well as in terms relevant to medium usage. Individual interviews and focus groups followed a semistructured interview approach. I utilized Illinois School Report Cards from the website of the Illinois State Board of Education to gather demographic data relative to the school districts of the experienced teachers and curriculum specialists. This data was used primarily to situate these educators in their teaching environments relative to multiculturalism. The artifacts I used as an avenue towards collecting data are examples of the eight mediums available to professors of preservice teachers as well as to experienced social studies teachers and the preservice teachers in their pre-collegiate and collegiate experiences. In utilizing criteria from J. A. Banks (2008; 2009) to critique the artifacts I situated these mediums within the multicultural discourse reflected in the literature. Then in analyzing references to specific medium usage by participants I also situated those educators within the multicultural discourse. I utilized a constant comparison method of data analysis (Bogdan & Bilken, 2003; Patton, 2002; Reed, 2004) as a strategy for continual comparison of all data sets to each other through the focus of the first two research questions as well as through the sensitizing concept of multicultural education. Analysis proceeded through data reduction and interpretation aimed at identifying categories and themes (Bogdan & Bilken, 2003).

## **Findings**

The participants unambiguously and unanimously recommended pedagogical content knowledge forms for use with preservice teachers in teacher education program. This accordant recommendation by participants fits well with particular aspects of the literature that are relevant to content: a constructivist approach, perceived objectivity, ethnocentrism, point of view, pedagogy and content. The participant consensus on the best medium to utilize with preservice teachers was the digital resources category, but one focus group pointed out practical problems in using the Internet at grades three and eight, instead recommending hands on museum discovery kits. Both experienced teacher groups also recommended children's literature for inclusion with grades three through eight. Perspectives from the three levels of educators emerged for each participant delineating experiential, pedagogical, and environmental dispositions related to how the participants informed these recommendations on form and medium.

## Implications for Illinois education

Data clearly reflects three important points: (1) the common Illinois social studies curriculum already includes placeholders for Native American content; (2) this commonality in curriculum across Illinois underscores an essential need for authentic Native American content in this state, now; (3) this essential need represents an enormous challenge to educators, and teacher educator, of social studies/history throughout Illinois. The gravity of this challenge is compounded by: (1) the Illinois certification system relevant to social studies; (2) the probable need for authentic ethnic content covering other marginalized ethnic groups in Illinois, such as Hispanic or Latino Americans, African-Americans, and Asian Americans. Educator dispositions pose another fundamental challenge for Illinois. I developed the conceptual Tree of Growth Model: Educator Dispositions to assist in visualizing how the interwoven dispositions might be reflected in a complex organic system. I recommend this model for further investigation of its conceptual usefulness relative to research and theory in teacher dispositions, particularly in terms of the challenges represented by teacher dispositions in integrating authentic ethnic minority content into a transformed curriculum, following J.A. Banks' (2006; 1988) "four levels of integration of multicultural education".

## Biographical statement

Dan Hechenberger earned a PhD in Education-Curriculum & Instruction, Social Sciences from SIUC in December 2009. His credits include: teaching elementary social studies methods for SIUC (four semesters); teaching secondary social studies methods for University of Illinois-Springfield (one semester); two years of doctoral fellowship; production of the documentary *The Early History of the Illinois Indians; curator of Illinois Indians-Relationships* — exhibited at Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site, Dickson Mounds-Illinois State Museum, SIUC Museum, and Mascoutah Heritage Museum; research assistantship with Grant Miller on the Think Like a Historian approach and NCATE review research on the social studies education program at SIUC; co-presentations with international colleagues Jorge Arevalo, Stella Iwuagwu, and Hsien-Chuan Lin at Phi Delta Kappa International's Summit on Global Education in Vancouver, BC, Oct. 2007, and at the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE) Conference in Dallas, Feb. 2009; co-presentations with international colleague Jaehwan Byun on arts-based teaching methods at ATE—New Orleans, Feb. 2008 and Milwaukee, July 2007; a presentation at the international 9th North American Fur Trade Conference and 12th Rupert's Land Colloquium in Clayton, MO; a presentation to the Illinois State Historical Society; founder and director and of the educational nonprofit Nipwaantiikaani beginning in 1996.

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