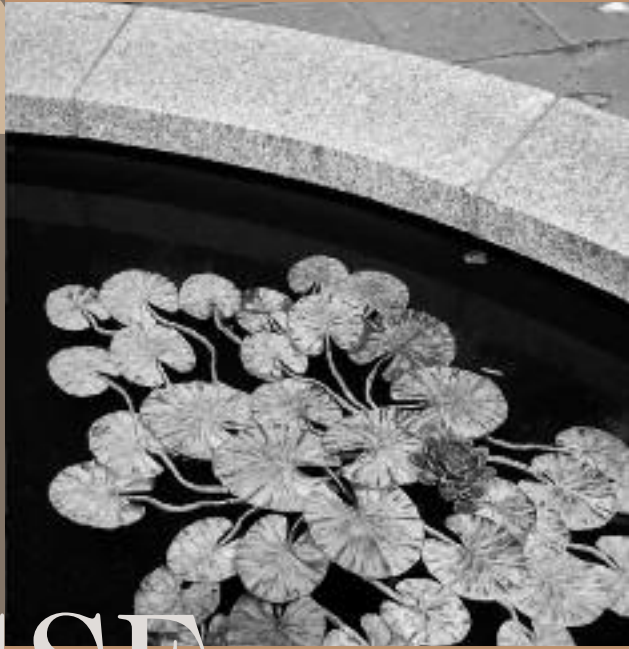


@Penn  
GSE  
@PennGSE



@PennGSE

A Review of Research

## School Reform That Matters

By Michael C. Johanek

A “loving critic” of the U.S., Dean Kishore Mahbubani at the National University of Singapore, suggests that “American society could ... fail if it does not force itself to conceive of failure.” Our “first systemic failure,” claims Mahbubani, is “groupthink,” evident in our collective inability to challenge the “manifest nonsense” from financial sector officials years ago. Today, “the *belief* that American society allows every idea to be challenged has led Americans to assume that every idea is challenged. They have failed to notice when their minds have been enveloped in groupthink.”<sup>1</sup>

Might this apply to our ideas about school reform? Have we slipped into groupthink, holding fast to our belief that X will lead to better outcomes for our kids, despite persistent evidence to the contrary?

### MORE INSIDE...

Updates on Research and Publications from the Penn GSE faculty

A publication of the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education (Penn GSE)

[www.gse.upenn.edu/review](http://www.gse.upenn.edu/review)

*Continued on page 3*

on the cover:  
*Lily Composition #3*, Anne Froehling,  
Steinhart Plaza, Bronze, 1993

# @ PennGSE

A Review of Research

is produced semiannually by the  
University of Pennsylvania  
Graduate School of Education,  
3700 Walnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19104-6216  
editor@gse.upenn.edu

Reproduction of these articles  
requires the written permission  
of the editor. ©2009 by the  
Trustees of the University of  
Pennsylvania. Please contact  
the editor for references.

**Tom Kecskemethy**  
Director, Communications

**Nancy Brokaw**  
Editor

**Contributing Writers**  
Liza Hill  
Wayne Kobylinski

**Nondiscrimination Statement**  
The University of Pennsylvania values diversity and seeks talented students, faculty and staff from diverse backgrounds. The University of Pennsylvania does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, color, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, or status as a Vietnam Era Veteran or disabled veteran in the administration of educational policies, programs or activities; admission policies; scholarship and loan awards; athletic, or other University administered programs or employment. Questions or complaints regarding this policy should be directed to: Executive Director, Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Programs, 3600 Chestnut Street, Sansom Place East, Suite 228, Philadelphia, PA 19104-6106 or 215 898-6993 (Voice) or 215 898-7803 (TDD).



# School Reform That Matters

By Michael C. Johaneck

*Continued from page 1*

Let's consider some 30,000-foot-view evidence. Our best collective achievement measure, long-term results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, remains distressingly flat; the progress of recent decades in narrowing group outcome differences has apparently stalled. "We do not see a lot of progress in closing the achievement gap," said Stuart Kerachsky, Acting Commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics, earlier this year.<sup>2</sup> Despite several billion dollars of philanthropy and federal support, high school graduation, while varying across states, has remained "essentially flat" since 2002.<sup>3</sup> In a recent analysis of our international performance, the U.S. appears not only weak, but wasteful: the "U.S. spends \$165 to get a point on PISA math, about 60 percent more than the OECD average."<sup>4</sup>

And what about specific reform ideas? Just as the limited impact of standards-based reform becomes clearer, efforts by the states and testing organizations to develop national standards are ramping up. One recent analysis of the impact of standards-based reform on the poverty gap predicts "as much rain as sunshine," acknowledging "unrealistic expectations," "inadequate implementation" and the need for "more rigorous research on a wider variety of educational practices. . . ."<sup>5</sup>

**Even recognizing some hard-won progress, we see little on the school reform landscape that bears credible evidence of potential for significant breakthrough.**

One recalls New York Education Commissioner Thomas Sobol's plea over a decade ago to move "beyond standards." Or Linda Darling-Hammond, 15 years ago, arguing that national standards and assessments diminished the "many pathways to learning," failed to advance resource equalization, and were already then proving to be "inappropriate vehicles for enhancing teaching and stimulating school change."<sup>6</sup>

Charter schools enjoy top billing as a reform item today, though recent research confirms that "in the aggregate, charter students are not faring as well as their [traditional public school] counterparts."<sup>7</sup> Reform cities like New York and Chicago, with promising work underway, have received bracing critiques.<sup>8</sup> Even recognizing valiant efforts and some hard-won progress—increased attention to subgroup performance, progress on longitudinal data systems, large district reforms, and a developing entrepreneurial sector—we see little on the dominant school reform landscape that bears credible evidence of potential for significant breakthrough.<sup>9</sup>

Though we may be tempted, we should not conclude an assessment like this with a knee-jerk abandonment of all current ideas. Given the deteriorating conditions affecting many youth, low-slope progress may well represent significant school impact. More ambitious standards, enhanced assessments, more varied and autonomous governance, better data systems, improved teacher pay schemes, and technology-enabled solutions will likely contribute to future progress. But if we persist in our current approach, we can anticipate decades of slow improvement.

Consider two Maryland communities—the City of Baltimore and Carroll County.

Drive the 45 minutes northwest from the inner city into the nearby county and the percentage of low-birth-weight babies drops in half, the infant mortality rate by more than two-thirds, and juvenile arrest rate by 80 percent.<sup>10</sup> In Baltimore, high school graduation rates are less than half of those in the surrounding area, a 47-point gap, the highest nationally. The suburban districts' average graduation rate ranks well ahead of all 50 principal large-city districts in the nation.<sup>11</sup> While diminishing schools' responsibilities for disparities in achievement and outcomes is inexcusable, ignoring the impact of the dramatically different contexts in which children are raised and educated is dangerously naïve. Considering these neighboring communities, do we find our key reform ideas—standards, charters, data systems, etc.—necessary? Yes, perhaps. Woefully insufficient? Yes, certainly. Knowing that these distinct contexts affect educational outcomes, why would we limit our educational policy solutions to a single institution in the community?

## Waste Management

“All waste is due to isolation,” John Dewey wrote in 1899. To escape our group-think, we need to overcome the wasteful isolation of *educational* reform within *school* reform. Dewey wrestled with this a century ago, and his work may help us reframe “education” so as to encompass the wider set of educating influences current reform often ignores. In our moment of fiscal crisis, we can overcome wasteful isolation at three levels.

First, “from the standpoint of the child,” claimed Dewey, “the great waste in the school comes from his inability to utilize the experiences he gets outside the school in any complete and free way within the school itself; while, on the other hand, he is unable to apply in daily life what he is learning at school. That is the isolation of the school—its isolation from life.” From here emanates a long painful history of efforts to “arouse in the child an interest in school studies.”<sup>12</sup>

Here are clear design implications for standards, curriculum autonomy, and accountability policies. Given that boredom, disconnection, and irrelevance contribute powerfully to students leaving school—a pernicious waste estimated at \$192 billion per cohort of 18-year-olds—we cannot treat this narrowly, as simply an instrumental need for more exciting curricular units, pedagogy, or school-work programs.<sup>13</sup> Relationships remain critical to impact. By design if not intent, schools waste resources through their isolation from the lives of their students and families, and then spend additional resources in programs intended to combat the “crisis” of dropouts, low graduation rates, chronic absences, and disengaged youth.

Second, we isolate schools from other youth and family services, despite overwhelming evidence that educational outcomes result from a range of factors. Scholars emphasizing an ecological tradition, from at least Bronfenbrenner to Spencer, have conceptualized the interplay of factors affecting youth educational development<sup>14</sup>, and empirical work decomposing student achievement variance provides ample evidence of school and non-school factors at play. Perhaps two-thirds of that variance is a function of factors external to schools—although many consider that estimate an optimistic interpretation of schooling's impact.<sup>15</sup>

Examining high school graduation rates, Balfanz *et al.* identified the local economy, “scale of population growth,” “speed with which the community is becoming multicultural,” “community’s commitment to public education,” and “youth labor market” as important factors to consider.<sup>16</sup> Exploring “the role of neighborhood disadvantage in explaining verbal ability,” Sampson *et al.* found the effect rivaled that of missing a year of school and concluded the need for “a more comprehensive approach to investing in and thereby improving the neighborhood contexts to which children are exposed as they develop cognitive skills ....”<sup>17</sup>

Two Penn colleagues recently looked at second-graders in a large Northeastern city, modeling by type and amount how their “multiple risk context ... is significantly associated with poor early educational outcomes.” The numbers are striking; 20 percent had already experienced homelessness, they suffered substantiated child maltreatment at four times the national average, and 70 percent lived in poverty. Of African-American boys, 39 percent had been exposed to toxic levels of lead.<sup>18</sup> “These findings underscore the injustice of holding public educators responsible *solely* for the educational well-being of our most vulnerable children.”<sup>19</sup>

Despite this evidence, students and families generally have to navigate isolated multiple agencies, with each agency, school included, struggling to get a complete enough picture to address cases efficiently and effectively. Indeed, absent cross-dataset modeling against student outcomes, the specific foundational drivers of student performance in a given community may be little understood.<sup>20</sup> Despite the promise of service integration under mayoral control, much of our school reform agenda continues to treat schools separately from other sectors that may, on the ground, be serving the same families and students.<sup>21</sup>

Groupthink?

## A Nascent Social Movement

The present fiscal crisis seems an opportunity to revisit this wasteful isolation of schooling from context, and several trends already are moving schools and other social sectors in this direction.<sup>22</sup> For example, 15 years ago Jefferson County, Kentucky, created the award-winning public partnership, Neighborhood Place, in part an outgrowth of school reform demands. Representatives from the school district, human service agencies, and community organizations developed an ongoing collaborative support structure for their overlapping client families.<sup>23</sup> Co-located services in 11 regional sites include health, mental health, juvenile services, school-related services, financial and housing assistance, and child and adult welfare services.

The out-of-school-time movement offers some notable efforts as well: community-responsive programming, extended hours for community use of schools, and significant partnerships with community organizations.<sup>24</sup> The community schools movement, currently enjoying a resurgence and broadened support, has been addressing this interplay of educational factors for years. In West Philadelphia, a health focus integrates science curriculum, vocational preparation, after-school programs, community needs assessment, and services. In Port Chester, New York, school officials created partnerships to address health issues, second language

concerns, after-school needs, and teacher preparation, building from community data collection and stakeholder participation.<sup>25</sup> Through efforts like Community YouthMapping and Y-Plan, many communities directly engage youth in the process of advising, data collection, and designing and implementing more integrated approaches to youth development, thus tapping “client” perspectives. In Hampton, Virginia, youth leaders work side by side with adult leaders in city planning, parks and recreation, neighborhood associations, and school systems.<sup>26</sup>

Nationally, attention to the Harlem Children’s Zone, along with similar zones across the country, and the federal Promise Neighborhoods initiative signals broadened interest in addressing youth development across agency boundaries; a prior federal cross-agency effort, the Shared Youth Vision Partnership, was initiated under the Bush administration.<sup>27</sup> Initiatives like Ready by 21, along with the growth of children’s cabinets, smart systems, and youth master plans in recent years, may reveal an emerging consensus from multiple sectors and across partisan lines. Each pushes beyond a single-agency “focus on narrow needs and supports,” and toward the less wasteful, more integrated “strategy for youth” that Timpane and Reich urged a decade ago.<sup>28</sup> Overseas, the need is not lost on our “competitor” nations; for example, ambitious efforts are underway in England, as it seeks nationally to integrate locally delivered services to youth and families, including, very preliminarily it seems, “inter-agency governance,” “pooled budgets,” a unified case management system, and “integrated front-line delivery organised around the child.”<sup>29</sup>

## Whence the Common Good?

Imagine a headline we’ll probably never read: “Less than Half of Local High School Graduates Vote—Superintendent Fired.”<sup>30</sup> We justify public subsidies to compulsory education by the assurance that it serves the common good, and yet our reform work barely speaks to any such collective measure.

Our groupthink is shaped by this third factor as well: school reform’s frequent isolation from broader public aims, especially democratic development. Here is a true accountability gap—and in the very outcomes by which we justify taxpayer support. Rather, our efforts to gauge public outcomes focus on economic development and are greatly overshadowed by the private goal of economic mobility, no doubt a legitimate end but certainly insufficient unto itself.

How do we fill this public accountability gap in education? As David Labaree has argued, “the increasing hegemony of the mobility goal and its narrow consumer-based approach to education have led to the reconceptualization of education as a purely private good.”<sup>31</sup> The stunning absence of this conversation in much K-12 policy belies the Commencement Day rhetoric and betrays the public trust; it also isolates from the wider civic discourse the experiences and insights of those working daily with the next generations of our polis. Notwithstanding the many civically engaged educators and community members, our national discussion of school reform remains too often isolated from larger conversations of our democratic identity, exactly in a moment of renewed civic engagement.

Why do we speak of improving the schools with rarely a reference to our

democratic development? Some argue that long ago school professionals struck a Faustian bargain: leave us alone in our school matters and we'll stay out of these larger issues, especially politics. As school systems developed, those working in them chose a narrowed profession over what some saw as a social prophetic role.<sup>32</sup> Those who have experienced any turbulent school board meetings lately can understand educator reluctance to seek a more heightened role in public or collective issues. Moreover, our ability even to measure the collective capacities involved remains limited; the development of what Raudenbush calls "eometrics" pales in comparison to our highly refined measures of individual capacities in psychometrics.<sup>33</sup> The time demands of the day job alone can be overwhelming, and serious job restructuring would need to precede increased work outside the school walls.<sup>34</sup>

Professional boundaries, budgets and all, urge school practitioners to stay within their sandbox, indeed to seek whatever buffer they can from the larger political fray.

**Isolating school reform from larger community dynamics inevitably leads to wasted initiative, wasted resources, and wasted time.**

But this isolating element of our group-think regularly undermines our ability to sustain improvement. In cities, for example, urban school leaders have "sought to insulate

themselves from the pressures that permeate municipal government." Instead of futilely attempting to isolate themselves, Frederick Hess argued a decade ago, "reformers of public schooling should seek political incentives that encourage the system leadership to focus on performance and long-term progress rather than public relations and short-term elixirs."<sup>35</sup>

Experience from various cities argues the necessity of political engagement; in the unsteady "punctured equilibrium" of reforming school systems, we need to renegotiate relationships among all players. However, systems rarely reform themselves. "Some form of civic mobilization seems essential," and this requires conscious efforts to reconcile different problem definitions, to build new institutional arrangements, and to create a new institutional legacy. This is politics of a very old sort. As Stone et al. argued after reviewing 11 school systems in depth, "Americans spent most of the twentieth century trying to get politics out of education. That was a mistake."<sup>36</sup> The evidence that collective forces can either sustain or undermine school improvement means that isolating school reform from larger community dynamics inevitably leads to wasted initiative, wasted resources, and wasted time.<sup>37</sup>

## Integration and Future Policy

When we isolate our school reform approaches from the lived experiences of children, from other service delivery, and from broader public goals, we ignore what we know about sustainable educational improvement. Why do we ignore the empirical evidence that demands an integrated approach to education? Why do we isolate our favorite initiative (Standards! Charters! Performance Pay!) and wave it on a banner pretending that it's a policy approach when thoughtful policy and reform demands so much more?

Dewey suggested an uncomfortable truth: mental sloth.<sup>38</sup> Favoring specific

variables avoids “the effort of thought,” he argued. “It is easier to see the conditions in their separateness, to insist upon one at the expense of the other, to make antagonists of them, than to discover a reality to which each belongs.”<sup>39</sup> Efficient educational development requires understanding and supporting interactions of children in their developmental ecology. That is the stubborn reality.

“Nothing that ever occurs in the social world occurs ‘net of other variables,’” observed sociologist Andrew Abbott. “All social facts are located in contexts. So why bother to pretend that they are not?” Per Abbott, the earlier “Chicago school,” a “contextualist, interactionist tradition,” bears revisiting if we wish to resolve messy issues that live on the ground and not just in our heads. “No social fact makes any sense abstracted from its context....”<sup>40</sup> “[T]he easy thing,” claimed Dewey, “is to seize upon something ... and insist upon that as the key to the whole problem. When this happens a really serious practical problem—that of interaction—is transformed into an unreal, and hence insoluble, theoretic problem.”<sup>41</sup>

Republican rural school principal Lyda Hanifan knew the practical implications of interaction in West Virginia last century. Decades later, socialist urban school principal Leonard Covello knew it, too. Many innovative school leaders know it today. “To single out the rural school and strive to improve it very greatly,” declared Hanifan in 1912, “without at the same time improving other rural conditions and institutions will result in failure.”<sup>42</sup> “First ... there must be an accumulation of community social capital.”<sup>43</sup> For Covello in New York City, “the surging life of the community ... the streets, motion pictures, dances, gangs, social clubs, churches, settlement houses, communal codes of morals and behavior are making daily and hourly impacts upon [a student’s] mind and consciousness. ... [The school must] see that the constructive forces in the community are drawn solidly together in support of educational programs for the development of the child and in behalf of a more wholesome community life.”<sup>44</sup>

When Lawrence Cremin wrote his magisterial history of U.S. education, he described shifting configurations of institutions educating Americans across three centuries—schools and colleges, yes, but also lyceums, churches, the penny press, YMCAs, mechanics institutes, newspapers, and so on. We continue this richly diversified American “paideia,” “compounded of evangelical pieties, democratic hopes, and utilitarian strivings,” and educate ourselves through an expanding range of institutions, experiences, and technologies. By not isolating education to schooling, nor schools from our wider community life, we honor this rich heritage. We may thus escape the bounded notions of our current reform groupthink, rooted in layers of wasteful isolation, and find common ground with the many innovators, past and present, who refuse to see educational improvement as less than our common effort to define ourselves anew.

*Michael C. JohaneK is a senior fellow at Penn GSE and the director of Penn GSE’s Mid-Career Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership.*

Footnotes are available online at [www.gse.upenn.edu/review/feature/johaneK#notes](http://www.gse.upenn.edu/review/feature/johaneK#notes).

# Research Notes

Penn GSE faculty and researchers explore the issues at the forefront of American education today, engaging in high-impact research, innovation, and training in public education, as well as in literacy, psychology, social policy, and higher and adult education. The following pages present a sampling of recent studies and findings from Penn GSE faculty and researchers.

## Doing the Math

Many schools—particularly those in urban settings—face a critical shortage of math and science teachers. Conventional wisdom tells us these shortfalls are driven in no small part by teacher retirements.

In a recent study using data from three National Center for Education Statistics data sets, Richard Ingersoll and David Perda found, on the contrary, that the new supply of math and science teachers is more than adequate to cover the losses from retirement.

For instance, about 22,000 newly qualified math and science teachers entered the pipeline in 2000—more than two and a half times the number who retired at the end of the previous school year. But factor in the rate of *pre-retirement* losses and the ratio narrows dramatically, with just over one new teacher for each one retiring or leaving the field. Prominent among the reasons given for leaving before retirement are pursuing another job and job dissatisfaction—two factors related to the workplace conditions.

“In our research,” the authors conclude, “we have found that schools with more support for new teachers, more general salary schedules, fewer student discipline problems, more adequate resources and classroom supplies, more effective leadership, and enhanced faculty input into school decision-making—all have significantly lower levels of teacher turnover.”

“The Mathematics and Science Teacher Shortage: Fact and Myth” is CPRE Research Report #RR-62, published by the Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 2009.

## What We Know about Professional Development

Education reform is often seen as synonymous with teacher professional development (PD). But how can we evaluate the impact of PD programs?

In a recent paper, Laura Desimone finds that there is an empirical consensus on five critical features of effective professional development: content focus, active learning, coherence, duration, and collective participation.

Based on those features, she proposes a conceptual framework for teacher learning—“a core theory of action”—for use in future empirical causal studies of the topic. This model is adaptable: “The framework I offer does not require situating the study of teacher learning in any one perspective,” she writes.

To explain the field’s historical reticence to acknowledge these points of consensus, Desimone turns to flaws in early validation studies that seem to have prejudiced researchers against certain types of measurement. Arguing that different methods have different strengths and weaknesses, she urges against “any automatic biases either for or against observation, interviews, or surveys.”

“The use of a common conceptual framework,” says Desimone, “would elevate the quality of professional development studies and subsequently the general understanding of how best to shape and implement teacher learning opportunities for the maximum benefit of both teachers and students.”

“Improving Impact Studies of Teachers’

Professional Development: Toward Better Conceptualizations and Measures” appears in *Educational Researcher*, 38(3).

### Also from Laura Desimone

Policymakers and researchers often turn to data from large-scale surveys to provide representative descriptions of the effects of education reform interventions. In a recent paper, Laura Desimone *et al.* consider the value that student reports of teachers’ instruction can play in these studies. Using National Assessment of Education Progress data, they compared the responses of middle-school students and their teachers to the same question about mathematics instruction.

Finding low correlations and small significant mean differences between student and teacher reports, the authors conclude that “caution should be exercised when using either teacher or student reports of instruction.”

“Survey Measures of Classroom Instruction: Comparing Student and Teacher Reports,” by Laura Desimone, Thomas Smith, and David Frisvold, appears in *Educational Policy*, May 2009.

## The Turn of the Page

How do children make sense of page breaks as they read picturebooks? In a novel, the breaks are arbitrary, but not so for picturebooks, which are carefully constructed by authors, illustrators, editors, and designers.

Until a recent study conducted by Lawrence Sipe and Anne Brightman, no research had existed on how children interpret page breaks. During a series of read-alouds of five picturebooks, Brightman, a classroom teacher, asked her second-graders to speculate on what happened “between” the pages.

A qualitative content analysis of the findings suggests at least seven different responses: speculating on what the characters might have done; creating imaginary dialogue; creating possible thoughts and feelings for the characters; talking about changes of setting; speculating on the amount of time that has passed between spreads; hypothesizing about the changes in the reader’s perspective; and observing a change from one literary genre to another.

Study findings offer evidence that when young readers speculate about what happens between pages, they build skills in meaning-making and literary interpretation. For Sipe and Brightman, the pedagogical implications are clear: “This study suggests the great benefits of embedding instruction within storybook readalouds, and thus understanding their great potential for increasing children’s thinking and literacy learning in general. Readalouds may be viewed as truly instructional time, rather than time-fillers or frills.”

“Young Children’s Interpretations of Page Breaks in Contemporary Picture Storybooks” appears in *Journal of Literacy Research*, 41(1).

## STEM Graduate Education and Minority Students

Recent years have seen a substantial increase in the number of underrepresented minority students earning bachelor’s degrees in science and engineering (up from 11.2 percent in 1995 to 13.9 percent in 2004). But on the road to the doctorate, their numbers decline precipitously. In 2004, only 6.9 of master’s degrees and 4.2 percent of doctoral degrees were earned by minority students.

In a recent investigation of possible institutional strategies to promote STEM degree attainment for this population, a group of Penn researchers identified four broad approaches: developing integrated support systems, ensuring inclusive curricula, promoting interactive classrooms, and increasing the availability of mentoring.

“The Path to Graduate School in Science and Engineering for Underrepresented Students of Color,” by Marybeth Gasman, Laura Perna, Susan Yoon, Noah Drezner, Valerie Lundy-Wagner, Enakshi Bose, and Shannon Gary, appears in *Standing on the Outside Looking In: Underrepresented Students’ Experiences in Advanced Degree Programs*, edited by M. Howard Hamilton, C. Morelon-Quainoo, S. Johnson, R. Winkle Wagner, and L. Santiago. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

## Students' Behavior vs. Teachers' Expectations

In a recent study, Duane Thomas *et al.* investigated the extent to which students' coping strategies and racial socialization experiences influenced how their teachers perceived their classroom behavior. The study of 148 African-American male students and their teachers found that rejection sensitivity, anger expression, and racial socialization all affected teachers' impressions of these students. Overt expressions of anger had the most powerful impact, and students adept at suppressing anger received more favorable teacher ratings—although prior research argues that they may do so at the cost of their emotional well-being.

In the current study, an appreciation of cultural heritage emerged as a protective factor: “The more youth were told about their cultural heritage..., the less likely they were to react to situations and engage in behaviors in the classroom that would put them at risk for negative evaluations.”

“Racial and Emotional Factors Predicting Teachers' Perceptions of Classroom Behavioral Maladjustment for Urban African American Male Youth,” by Duane Thomas, Stephanie Coard, Howard Stevenson, Keisha Bentley, and Pamela Zamel, appears in *Psychology in the Schools*, 46(2).

## Racism and the Role of Racial Socialization

In a recent paper, Howard Stevenson and Edith Arrington set out to investigate the role that racial/ethnic socialization and experiences of racism play in the development of racial identity for young African Americans.

Conducted with 108 sixth- through 12th-grade students, their five-year qualitative and quantitative research project collected longitudinal data about the mental health adjustment of African-American students attending four predominantly white independent schools.

Their findings revealed that exposure to racism was significant in the formation of students' racial identity—and that racial/ethnic socialization can mediate its influence.

The authors go on to argue that while “mainstream fit assimilation” may appeal to those uncomfortable with issues of race, its impact is far from benign: “Promoting the idea that one's learning and life experience is best situated within a pro-White context has implications for health and well-being” of African-American youth.

“Racial/Ethnic Socialization Mediates Perceived Racism and the Racial Identity of African American Adolescents” appears in *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 15(2).

## Teacher Turnover in General and Special Ed

In the past decade, researchers and policymakers have become increasingly concerned about teacher turnover and its impact on teacher shortages.

Using teachers' self-reports in the National Center for Education Sciences' Schools and Staffing Surveys and its Teacher Follow-Up Survey, Ed Boe *et al.* examined three components of the turnover phenomenon (attrition, teaching area transfer, and school migration) in two fields: special education and general education teachers.

Overall, the annual turnover rate in both fields increased steadily—by 60 percent—during the nine years studied (1991-1992 to 2000-2001). By the last year, the rate had reached 25.6 percent. Nonetheless, attrition was found to be lower in teaching than in other fields. Moreover, the research indicates that only about one quarter of teacher attrition in general education (one third in special ed) is attributable to dissatisfaction with the profession.

“The implication,” the authors write, “is that it will be more productive... to make shrewd investments in increasing teacher supply than in reducing attrition.”

“Teacher Turnover: Examining Exit Attrition, Teaching Area Transfer, and School Migration,” by Erling Boe, Lynne Cook, and Robert Sunderland, appears in *Exceptional Children*, 75(1).

## Evaluating Assessment-for-Learning Programs

In fall 2006, researchers at the Consortium for Policy Research in Education embarked on an evaluation of a federally funded improvement effort designed to enhance assessment-for-learning practices at high schools in ten states. This effort aimed at familiarizing states, schools, and teachers with assessment systems that allow teachers to better measure student progress and scaffold instruction accordingly. Teacher learning teams were created to implement this instructional practice in the classroom.

The final evaluation report, written by Elliot Weinbaum, provides an analysis of the implementation and impacts of the efforts, and a discussion of lessons learned. The evaluation focused primarily on two states, and data were gathered through on-site observations, interviews, and quantitative surveys.

Based on a detailed analysis of the program's implementation, the verdict was mixed. While some of the teacher learning teams did make progress, “significant growth was the exception rather than the rule,” Weinbaum writes. “Where it occurred, strong progress resulted from individual teachers or state leaders assuming strong leadership roles....”

“Learning about Assessment: An Evaluation of a Ten-State Effort To Build Assessment Capacity in High Schools” is available from the Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 2009.

## Serious Language Play

As part of an ethnographic study of children's language socialization conducted in northern Thailand, Kathryn Howard videotaped a group of school-aged children at play as they engaged in the kind of language games—riddles and puns—that are a favorite of children worldwide.

Specifically interested in how younger children are socialized into the practices of language play, Howard focused on five-year-old Song, one of the youngest participants in the group. Her analysis of the videotaped interactions revealed the ways in which Song, a preschooler among second-graders, was socialized into the practices of the language play of his big brother and his friends. Consistently positioned as the “patsy” in these word games, Song managed to seize center stage—if only momentarily—by using both synchronic and diachronic repetitions.

“The language play examined here has clear value for children's phonological, metalinguistic, and metapragmatic awareness,” Howard concludes. “Song was on the cusp of a new stage of life, but his participation in multi-age play groups at home provided a training ground in which he could develop the traditional competence valued by older children....”

“Breaking In and Spinning Out: Repetition and Decalibration in Thai Children's Play Genres” appears in *Language in Society*, 38.

## Language Learning in College

Why do college students sign on for the rigors of learning another language? Who are they, and how do they hope to use the new language?

Kathryn Howard *et al.* surveyed 401 students in their first year of a foreign language course at two universities. Forty percent of respondents were heritage language learners (HLLs), and they were composed of two sub-groups: 34 percent, “narrow HLLs” (indicating the language studied was regularly spoken at home) and, 66 percent, “broad HLLs” (indicating a familial connection, but little regular exposure, to the language).

The researchers tease out divergences and convergences among the three categories—the two HLL groups and the non-HLLs—and point to implications for college-level study. Among the issues they raise for future study are how to address competing preferences (e.g., non-HLLs' desire for sociocultural instruction in formal classrooms vs. narrow HLLs' interest in artistic and literary production in non-traditional settings); the role of identity formation, particularly for HLLs; the varying expectations of fluency, etc.

“Heritage Language Learners in First-Year Foreign Language Courses: A Report of General Data across Learner Subtypes,” by Rachel Reynolds, Kathryn Howard, and Julia Deák, appears in *Foreign Language Annals*, 42(2).

## What Education Gives Anthropology

“Linguistic anthropological approaches to language use have enriched our accounts of educational process,” writes Stanton Wortham, adding, “The reverse is also true.... New linguistic anthropological work on domains and trajectories in educational institutions will show how schools play important roles in the emergence of social relations across various timescales.”

Wortham defines linguistic anthropology through its focus on form, use, ideology, and domain and provides examples of research that focuses on these aspects.

*Form* here refers to those fractions of meaning that apply independent of context—phonological regularities and grammatical categories. To illustrate how researchers look at this phenomenon in an educational setting, Wortham cites, among others, a 2000 statistical analysis that traced how phonological differences contributed to a split between “jocks” and “burnouts.”

The term *use* points to the ways people marshal language for their own purposes, creating “sometimes-unexpected meanings in particular contexts.” As Wortham points out, “language use only makes sense as participants and analysts identify relevant context.” In 2005, Ben Rampton’s hybrid study of students’ emergent identities exemplifies this idea. Rampton describes the ways in which minority students employed language “crossing”—sprinkling their own language into the mainstream language—to contest and create relations around race and ethnicity.

Language *ideologies* identify particular types of language use with particular social types. “Language ideology,” Wortham explains, “has been an important topic for the linguistic anthropology of education because schools are important sites for establishing associations between ‘educated’ and ‘uneducated...’ language use and types of students.” Thus, he cites studies that describe how Singapore used its school system to establish Mandarin as the mother tongue of its ethnic Chinese population and how white many high school students adopt Black English Vernacular in a bid to be “cool.”

But Wortham cautions that “there is no one ‘macro’ set of models or ideologies universal to a group. Instead, there are models that move across domains ranging from pairs, to local groups, all the way up to global language communities.”

To illustrate the notion of *domain*, Wortham refers to a 2003 study that explored how institutionalized and local practices effected the “transformation” of a student’s identity from “low-achieving” to “disabled” during a two-year struggle with school authorities.

Focusing on domain and the trajectories across which ideologies move is a relatively new phenomenon in linguistic anthropology circles. Wortham hopes to see more: “We cannot fully understand how language constitutes social relations unless we move beyond the lone speech event....”

“Linguistic Anthropology of Education” appears in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 37.

## Children and the Problem of Respect

As the foundation of our ethical and political system, respect is, quite naturally, a cardinal virtue in schools. Yet, as Joan Goodman points out, “its meaning is muddled”—no more so than when applied to children.

In a recent article, Goodman considers respect “and the problem of children.” The Western philosophical tradition sees respect as including appreciation of universal human dignity, equality, and autonomy. Kant, Mill, and Rawls exclude children, however, from all but the most minimal respect while expecting them to show unilateral respect. Dewey and Piaget demur, calling for “greater mutuality” and granting children more autonomy and equality.

For her part, Goodman distinguishes between respect-due and respect-earned. In her formulation, respect-due is the appreciation of human dignity and, as such, should be granted unconditionally. Respect-earned, however, is “contingent upon meeting a set of expectations and is voluntarily conferred....” An incremental process, respect-earned is the product of a relationship of mutual esteem, one that moves toward equality.

“Nourishing respect-earned will enhance children’s moral development,” Goodman concludes, “by affording them opportunities to evaluate those qualities they find admirable, those individuals they desire to imitate; in so doing they draw closer to shaping an ideal worth striving toward.”

“Respect-due and Respect-earned: Negotiating Student-Teacher Relationships” appears in *Ethics and Education*, 4(1).

## Teacher Research: The Philadelphia Story

“A kind of theoretical hybrid,” teacher research draws on a variety of influences—ideas about the teaching of writing, democratic social theory, progressive education, and ethnographic research in education.

Susan Lytle, Dina Portnoy, Diane Waff, and Molly Buckley describe the intensely local, context-driven nature of this work by tracing the 20-year history of teacher research in a single site: the city of Philadelphia. As they write, “teacher research is continually being invented and reinvented by participants in the movement and is strongly informed by local conditions, agendas, and epistemologies.”

Their narrative unfolds over three distinct periods: a reform focused on comprehensive high schools (1989-95); a central-office approach focused on standards and assessments (1995-2002); and the current, state-mandated system (2002 to present). The authors highlight how, working “within, against, and beyond the system,” teacher research has sought to improve “the life chances of urban students and schools in a complex, embattled, and continually restructuring system.”

“Teacher Research in Urban Philadelphia: Twenty Years Working Within, Against, and Beyond the System” appears in *Educational Action Research*, 17(1).

## An Instrument for Measuring School Leadership

Again and again, research demonstrates that effective schools have effective leaders. But how do we know when effective school leadership is at work?

The development of school leadership has been hampered, in part, by the lack of technically sound tools for evaluating leaders' performance. In a recent paper, Andy Porter and colleagues lay out the conceptual framework for a leadership instrument under development—one that focuses exclusively on behaviors linked to student learning.

In describing their framework, the authors explain, “We propose to assess the intersection of *what* principals or leadership teams must accomplish to improve academic and social learning for all students (the core components), and how they create those core components (the key processes).”

The six core components they define are: high standards for student learning, rigorous curriculum, quality instruction, culture of learning and professional behavior, connections to external communities, and systemic performance accountability. The six key processes are planning, implementing, supporting, advocating, communicating, and monitoring.

The leadership behavior inventory being developed—called the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education—will profile performance across each of the core components and each of the key processes. That is, it will assess what leaders must do to improve student performance and *how* they do it.

“Assessing Learning-Centered Leadership: Connections to Research, Professional Standards, and Current Practices,” by Ellen Goldring, Andy Porter, Joseph Murphy, Stephen Elliott, and Xiu Cravens appears in *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 8(1).

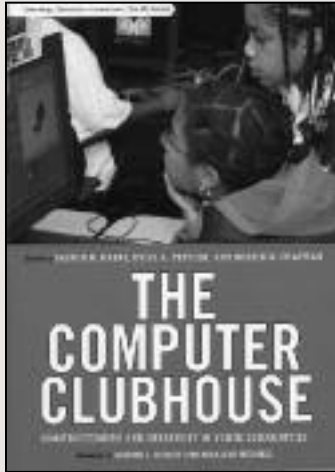
### Also from Andy Porter

The No Child Left Behind legislation requires the alignment of student achievement tests to content standards. When states want to find out whether their assessments are a reliable reflection of their content standards, they conduct content analyses of each set of documents. But how do they evaluate the reliability of those analyses?

In their investigation of the quality of content analyses, Andy Porter, Morgan Polikoff, *et al.* used data from two states in three grades in mathematics and English language arts and reading. Their study used a generalizability framework to estimate the reliability of the content analyses when averaged across analysts.

The authors report that their findings were encouraging: “The procedures followed by SEC [Surveys of Enacted Curriculum] from recruitment... [and] training of content analysts to performing the task and archiving the data appear to result in reliable data.” In their conclusion, they recommend that all content analyses based on the SEC make use of at least five raters.

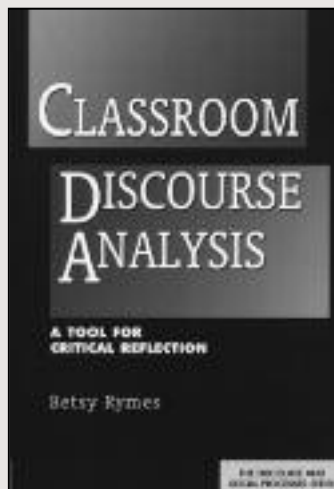
“The Quality of Content Analyses of State Student Achievement Tests and Content Standards,” by Andrew Porter, Morgan Polikoff, Tim Zeidner, and John Smithson, appears in *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*, Winter 2008.



**Yasmin B. Kafai, Kylie A. Peppler, and Robbin N. Chapman (Editors)**  
**The Computer Clubhouse: Constructionism and Creativity in Youth Communities**

Teachers College Press, 2009

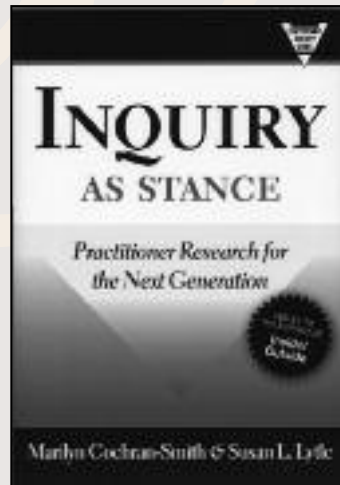
With over 100 sites worldwide, the Computer Clubhouse network provides out-of-school learning environments where young people from underserved communities work with adult mentors to develop and explore their skills in technology. This volume showcases research on the network and considers the implications of findings in the context of what it means to prepare youth to meet the goals of the 21st century.



**Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Susan L. Lytle**  
**Inquiry as Stance: Practitioner Research for the Next Generation**

Teachers College Press, 2009

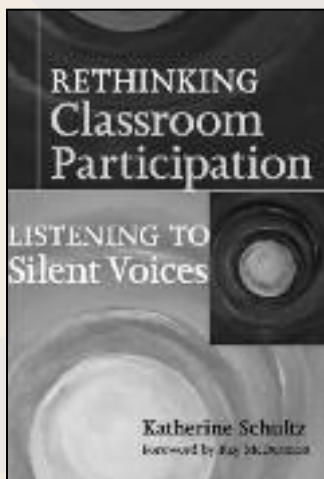
This sequel to *Inside/Outside: Teacher Research and Knowledge* proposes the notion of inquiry-as-stance as a challenge to the current arrangements and outcomes of schools and other educational contexts. The authors call for practitioner researchers in local settings to ally their work with others as part of larger social and intellectual movements for social change and social justice.



**Betsy Rymes**  
**Classroom Discourse Analysis: A Tool for Critical Reflection**

Hampton Press, 2009

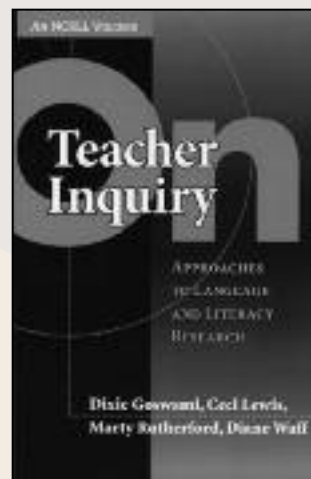
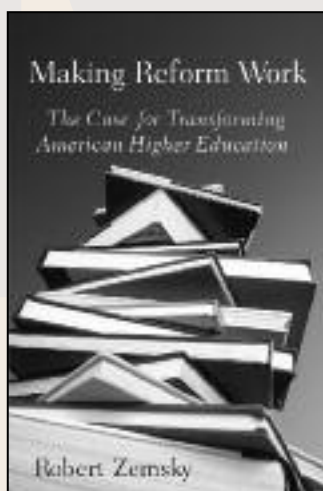
For teachers, teacher educators, and anyone interested in the insights to be gained from the analysis of talk in classrooms, this book makes discourse analysis accessible and encourages readers to investigate assumptions about what goes on in classrooms, what counts as knowledge, and how features of talk and interaction influence who gets to learn.



**Katherine Schultz**  
**Rethinking Classroom Participation: Listening to Silent Voices**

Teachers College Press, 2009

While many educators understand how to gauge learning by attending to student talk, few know how to interpret silence as a form of participation. Urging teachers to listen to student silence in new ways, *Rethinking Classroom Participation* offers real-life examples and proven strategies to include all students—those eager to raise their hands to speak and those who may pause or answer in different ways.



**Dixie Goswami, Ceci Lewis, Marty Rutherford, and Diane Waff**

**On Teacher Inquiry: Approaches to Language and Literacy Research**

Teachers College Press, 2009

An examination of the relationships among teacher research, teacher practice, and student learning, this book offers a framework, examples, and practical guidelines for teacher researchers on how to design and conduct individual and collaborative inquiries that build new knowledge and theories about teaching and learning.

**Robert Zemsky**  
**Making Reform Work: The Case for Transforming American Higher Education**

Rutgers University Press, 2009

*Making Reform Work* presents a diagnosis and reform agenda for the system of American higher education. Suggestions include a series of dislodging events—for example, making a three-year baccalaureate the standard undergraduate degree, Congressional rethinking of student aid in the wake of the loan scandal, and a change in the rules governing endowments—that could break the gridlock that today holds higher education reform captive.



Graduate School of Education  
**PennGSE**

3700 Walnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19104-6216

Non-profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit No. 2563  
Philadelphia, PA

**THE PENN GSE PODCAST**



Perspectives on education and  
social science from Penn GSE

[WWW.GSE.UPENN.EDU/PODCAST](http://WWW.GSE.UPENN.EDU/PODCAST)