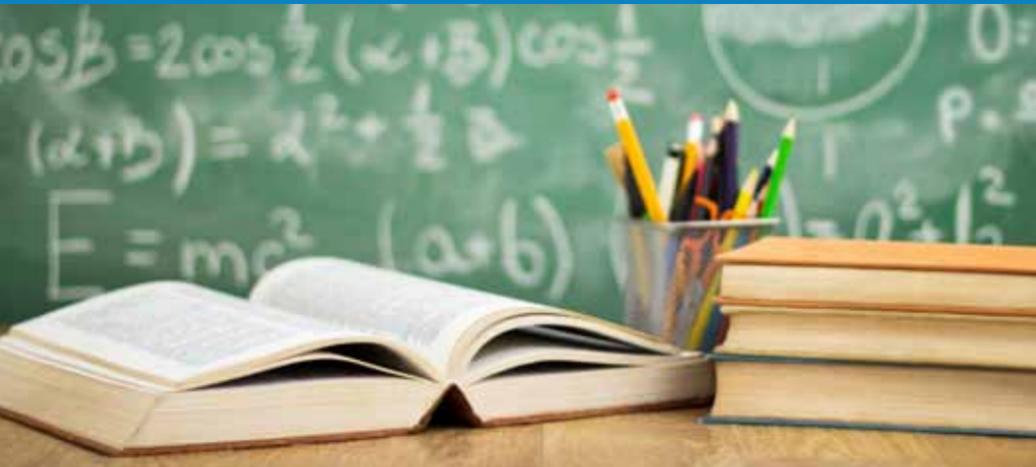


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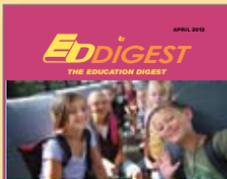
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Year in Review



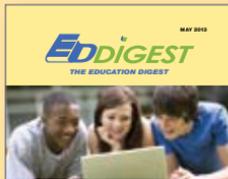
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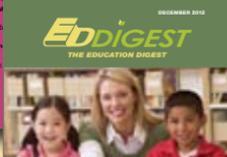
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Investing in Teachers Instead of Prisons

BY ARNE DUNCAN

From the U.S. Department
of Education

I want to tell you about something I'm not proud of.

Early in my time as CEO of Chicago Public Schools, we set out to make schools safer places for children and adults. Too many of our students were going to jail. So I asked if we could find out what time of day our kids were getting arrested. I figured that if we knew when the arrests were occurring—after school, I suspected—we could target an intervention to keep kids more engaged.

I didn't expect the answer: that the majority of the arrests were occurring during the school day, in our school buildings, mostly for nonviolent misdemeanors.

Those calls to the police, to put kids in jail? We were mak-

ing them. We were responsible. We had met the enemy, and it was us.

No one had set out to criminalize the behavior of students, or to start them down a path of incarceration. But those were the facts. And they are bound up with another set of facts. The fact that America has less than 5% of the world's population—and more than 20% of its inmates.

The fact that America locks up black people at a far higher rate than South Africa did at the height of Apartheid. That young men of color are six times more likely to be incarcerated than white males. That one out of every three black men in America is predicted to go to prison at some point in his life while just one in five of them receives a bachelor's degree.

We, as a country, must do more to change the odds. You

Condensed from a speech given by Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education, at the National Press Club, Washington, DC, on September 30, 2015.

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can reduce those statistics to numbers on a page. But there are people behind those numbers, in Ferguson and Baltimore and New York, and a hundred other places.

And that's why I want to lay out an idea that will strike some as improbable or impractical, but which I think is essential. It's about setting a different direction as a society, a different priority—one that says we believe in great teaching early in our kids' lives, rather than courts, jails, and prisons later.

In close to seven years as education secretary, I've had the chance to spend a lot of time bearing witness to great teaching and learning, and meeting young people who are finding ways to share their unique talents with the world. But I've also met a lot of young people whose lives have followed a different trajectory, and I think a lot about those young people.

There's Brandon, who at the age of 11 wrote graffiti on the bathroom wall in his Denver elementary school. His school called the police, and Brandon's act of vandalism became a criminal matter. Brandon was sentenced to what they called "community service" alongside adult offenders. He told me, "I was definitely the only 11-year-

old picking up trash on the side of the highway." It's mind boggling.

That experience also left him with a criminal record—and, years later, when he set out to become a police officer, the department turned him away because of that youthful mistake. I talked with him just a few days after he got that news, and he said, "It killed my sense of hope."

There's the young boy from Broward County Schools, who racked up almost 30 behavior referrals and received his first battery charge as a seven-year-old, after having an anxiety attack following the death of his grandfather.

And there are the young men I met recently in an Illinois prison, which I visited with Father Michael Pflieger. These young men were locked up for a variety of crimes they committed in their childhood years. They didn't make excuses or dodge responsibility, but many told us that from an early age they had to take care of their families, lacked meaningful job options, and felt alone in a world where nobody seemed to care about or believe in them.

What did these young people have in common? All had made bad choices, large or small. For

many, when they'd needed support, it wasn't there. For some, the system found ways to push them out rather than help them. And, as Father Pfleger wrote later, all of them were examples of unrealized potential.

The Power of Great Teaching

Every day, as a society, we allow far too many young people to head down a road that ends in wasted potential. Sometimes, we are complicit in the journey. We need to do more to change that. Let's fix our priorities—in a way that says something very different about what we expect from kids.

The bet we're making now is clear. In the last three decades, state and local correctional spending in this country has increased almost twice as fast as spending on elementary and secondary education. Ask yourself, "What does that say about what we believe?" Leaders at the state and local levels have the power to change that—to place a bet on getting it right with kids from the start, and on the power of great teaching in particular.

I'm not pretending that schools can do this alone—that they can replace efforts to deal with poverty, hunger, homeless-

ness, or other ills that affect our young people. But the facts about the impact of great teaching are too powerful to ignore. I haven't met a parent yet who needed to be convinced that it was important for her child to have a great teacher. Parents intuitively know what research tells us.

Evidence makes clear not just that teachers are the most important factor in a school, but how important they are—so much so that kids who have great teachers end up with months' worth more learning than kids who don't.

And the benefits of a great teacher prove out in life, not just in school. A single year with an excellent teacher rather than an ineffective one—a single year—has been shown to have benefits in lifetime earnings of a quarter-million dollars or more for that class—and a measurable impact on their likelihood of attending college and of having a child in their teenage years.

The linkage between education, or a lack thereof, and incarceration is powerful. More than two-thirds of state prison inmates are high school dropouts. And an African-American male between the ages of 20 and 24 without a high school diploma or GED has a higher chance of

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being imprisoned than of being employed.

Today, our schools suspend roughly three and a half million kids a year, and refer a quarter of a million to the police each year. And the patterns are even more troubling for children of color—particularly boys—and for students with disabilities.

We cannot lay our incarceration crisis at the door of our schools. But we have to do our part to end the school-to-prison pipeline. That's going to force us to have difficult conversations about race, which I'll get to in a moment. But I want to start by talking about new steps our states and cities can take to get great teachers in front of our neediest kids.

It's hardly a secret that it's challenging to recruit and keep fantastic teachers in the schools where the needs are greatest. The rewards of that work are extraordinary—but it's incredibly hard. So here's an idea for how you put a new emphasis on schools rather than jails.

If our states and localities took just half the people convicted of nonviolent crimes and found paths for them other than incarceration, they would save upwards of \$15 billion a year. If they reinvested that money into paying the teachers who

are working in our highest-need schools and communities—they could provide a 50% average salary increase to every single one. If you focused on the 20% of schools with the highest poverty rates in each state, that would give you 17,640 schools—and the money would go far enough to increase salaries by at least 50%.

I've long said great teachers deserve to be paid far more.

The benefits of a great teacher prove out in life, not just in school.

With a move like this, we'd not just make a bet on education over incarceration, we'd signal the beginning of a long-range effort to pay teachers what they are worth. That sort of investment wouldn't just make teachers and struggling communities feel more valued. It would have ripple effects on our economy and our civic life.

This isn't the only way you could redirect funds to attract and keep more talent in the most challenged schools. Alternatively, you could take just a quarter of the \$15 billion and

use it to support teacher leadership, creating five positions at each high-poverty school for accomplished teachers who'd mentor their peers—and giving those teachers \$25,000 pay increases. There are lots of ways to go about this and local leaders and educators will know what's best for their community. But the bottom line is that we must do more to ensure that more strong teachers go to our toughest schools.

Right now, in far too many places, glaring and unconscionable funding gaps create all the wrong incentives. To take just one example the Ferguson-Florissant school district in Missouri spends about \$9,000 per student. Eleven miles away, in Clayton, funding is about double, at \$18,000 per student. How is that a plan to give kids a fair start?

Getting It Right From the Start

Right now, far too much talent leaves our toughest schools, or never arrives. Let's challenge everything—and make that work the pinnacle of an educator's career. Let's invest more in the adults who have dedicated their professional careers to helping young people reach their full potential. And

let's place a new emphasis on young people as contributors to a stronger society, not inmates to pay for and warehouse.

I'm not naïve about doing all of this overnight. And for those already in the system, we can't just walk away from them—we also have to invest in education, career training, treatment, and support programs that help young people who are already involved in the criminal justice system become contributing members of society. That's why we are starting the Second Chance Pell program, to give those who are incarcerated a better chance at going to college.

To be clear, I'll repeat that we are talking about savings that come from alternative paths that involve only nonviolent offenders. This is not about being soft on dangerous criminals—this is about finding ways, consistent with wise criminal justice policies, to reapportion resources so we prevent crime in the first place.

I'm not suggesting that this is an either-or with other investments we know we must make inside and outside of education. But I'm convinced that making a historic bet on getting it right from the start would pay massive returns for families,

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communities, society, and our nation's economy.

According to a 2009 McKinsey report, the achievement gap between us and other top-performing nations is depriving the U.S. economy of more than \$2 trillion in economic output every year. A separate study found that a 10% increase in high school graduation rates would reduce murder and assault arrest rates by approximately 20%. And a 1% increase in male graduation rates would save up to \$1.4 billion in the social costs of incarceration. So you don't have to be a liberal romantic to like the idea of investing up front in kids.

I recognize that all this is ambitious. But, if we're serious about eliminating the "school-to-prison pipeline," a shift in funding is only part of what we need to do. In truth, there's a lot more we need to get right. As I said, that need goes way beyond education. What we do to take on poverty, to deal with violence, to support families, to promote integration of neighborhoods and schools, to expand jobs, and improve health, and much more—all of that is part of the solution.

In our schools, reducing the number of young people who end up behind bars, funda-

mentally, is about changing the odds for our most underserved students. That means following through on the difficult but vital work of turning around chronically low-performing schools, and helping educators continue progress in cutting dropout rates and improving graduation rates, which today are at historic highs. It means ensuring that all students—including and especially those in low-income communities of color—have access to high standards, aligned to the expectations of the real world, and challenging coursework that prepares them for college without time lost to remediation.

It means expanding the opportunity of quality preschool, whose power to reduce incarceration is well established. It means giving teachers the preparation and support they need—especially in high need schools. And it means ensuring that children go to school free from fear—whether from gun violence or bullying or racial or sexual harassment or assault. None of that work is new; all of it is essential to changing the odds.

Unfortunately, some in this country would have us move in exactly the opposite direction—by cutting the funds that states

and districts desperately need to make opportunity real for our kids. That's exactly what Republican budget proposals would do. They would cut funds for vulnerable students, support for teachers, job training, and preschool opportunities that we know help young people become productive citizens rather

When we become more aware of the biases we carry, we can learn how not to act on them.

than waste years behind bars. It is the foundation upon which academic success can be built.

Taking the essential steps to expand what we know works in education should be a no-brainer. But there's more to it than just budgets and policies. Perhaps the hardest step of all is taking an unsparing look at our own attitudes and decisions, and the ways they are tied to race and class. In the wake of Ferguson, Baltimore, and elsewhere, this has become a central discussion for many in America, and rightly so—if belatedly. Those of us in education cannot afford to sit back.

Let's recognize, up front, that this is among the hardest conversations we can have in education. People enter this field out of love for students and the genuine desire to see them excel and thrive. Yet we also know that suspension, expulsion, and expectations for learning track too closely with race and class. As the author Tanehi Coates recently pointed out, our high rates of incarceration, our high numbers of high school dropouts, and our high rates of child poverty are not unrelated problems.

As was true for me and my colleagues in Chicago, sometimes the facts force a tough look inwards. This is not just about explicit, obvious bias. Indeed, sometimes, when a genuinely transparent moment of bias arises, the whole country takes a breath.

A child holds a clock. And we see a bomb.

But more often, it's far subtler stuff, buried in invisible privileges and expectations we're not aware we hold. A psychology professor named Phillip Goff is working with police departments and school districts to help officers and educators become more aware of the implicit biases we all carry within ourselves. What Goff and others

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are discovering is that when we become more aware of the biases we carry—and we all carry them—we can learn how not to act on them.

It is painful to admit that one's own actions might be causing harm, particularly for those of us who have dedicated our professional careers to serving young people. When I found out what was happening in our schools in Chicago, it was like a punch in the gut. But, it forced us to analyze and change adult behavior in many of our schools. And the students we served were better off for it.

All of us have work to do. Not by asking teachers and principals to put up with more misbehavior, or to feel less safe themselves. Quite the opposite. Learning requires order, and unacceptable behavior is unacceptable behavior.

Facing Our Own Biases

Instead, we need to do the hard work of comprehending our own biases, and building supportive structures that help all children reach their full potential. This is what they're trying to do in Broward County. Three years ago, as Superintendent Robert Runcie put it, "our default response had become law enforcement." But hitting

rock bottom had been their wake up call, and it led him to insist that Broward County find a way to keep kids in classrooms and out of courtrooms.

Now, three years later—in partnership with folks like Goff, and thanks to the educators and staff who were willing to do the work—disciplinary incidents have been reduced by a quarter. And school-related arrests are down 63%. Part of the reason has to do with new systems the school district put in place. But the bigger change had to do with the way people saw themselves and the problem they were trying to solve.

It's difficult work, challenging centuries of institutionalized racism and class inequality. But I firmly believe a hard look at ourselves is an essential part of becoming the nation we strive to be—one of liberty and opportunity, regardless of the circumstances of your birth.

This work is deeply personal for me. I grew up in Chicago and formed some of my deepest relationships playing pickup basketball on the South Side, near the after-school tutoring center my mother started in 1961. For the young men I played ball with, there wasn't a lot of margin for error, and not a lot of second chances. ►

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Some of them ended up on a path toward a strong education—and that shaped their lives. One helped me run the Chicago Public Schools. Another, who never met his dad, and whose mom was largely absent, tutored me at my mom's tutoring center. Today, he is chief technology officer at Cisco and was named one of the 50 most important black research scientists in the country. Others—just as smart, and just as full of potential, promise, and energy—ended up on a different path, and they are in prison or dead. What they lacked was education opportunity, support, and guidance.

We cannot stand by while another generation of young people—from Chicago to Denver, and from Baltimore to Ferguson—faces the same choices. That's why we're in the fight we're in, to make opportunity real for those who were born without advantages, and who have lived and grown with struggle and fear. That's why I so strongly believe, as the President does, that we must be a nation of second chances. It's why we have to try new ideas and do everything we can.

All the ideas I've talked about today are part of that same fight. It's about educational

and economic opportunity. But it's bigger than that. It's a fight to increase social mobility and for social justice. For too many of our children today, it can literally mean the difference between life and death.

Our children and country deserve a different bargain, a different set of priorities. And, when we bet on the extraordinary potential of ALL of our children, when we bet on the transformative power of teachers, we cannot lose. ■



"It's a new idea—a cell phone booth where people can talk privately without disturbing others."

Common Sense on Common Core

BY BRUCE TAYLOR

From *Catalyst Chicago*

David Coleman and his team developed the Common Core State Standards in slightly less than a year between 2009 and 2010. That quick turnaround time begs the question, “How complicated can this be?”

But in the years since, education’s mandarins have produced landfills-worth of material to explain and promote the new standards—graphs, charts, curriculum documents, reference material, frameworks, and guidelines. Textbook publishers rushed out “old wine in new bottles,” by slapping on labels proclaiming, “Aligned with the Common Core!” Yet no one has comprehensively piloted this new paradigm, and no one can

provide enough longitudinal evidence on the effectiveness of any particular instructional approach for it.

The end result is a web of complexity that too often results in pedagogical overload for administrators and teachers who will have to do the work “in the trenches” of transforming teaching and learning. Yet what the education world needs right now is a dose of perspective and common sense when it comes to the Common Core.

Putting Content into Context

First, the shift to Common Core-focused instruction will have to take into account two contradictory realities. One is education’s obsession with the amount of content students

Bruce Taylor, a consultant and author of The Arts Equation and Common Sense Arts Standards, has served as a cultural envoy for the U.S. State Department and as director of education for the Washington National Opera. Condensed, with permission, from Catalyst Chicago, November 13, 2014. Read the entire article at www.catalyst-chicago.org.

should process and remember. For confirmation of this, just skim through any of today's 800- to 1,300-page high school textbooks. Juxtaposed with this focus on content is another reality: An unlimited amount of information is available, 24 hours a day, from practically anywhere on the planet, via the Internet. Further, the amount of information is increasing

**It will become
paramount for
students to learn how
to put content into a
productive context.**

at almost an exponential rate. Soon, technology will not only be able to provide content, but to furnish the answers to questions about content.

As a result, it will become paramount for students to learn how to put content into a productive context, rather than just know what that content is. The justification for the Common Core rests on one overriding, hoped-for outcome: That students will develop the ability to think, not just remember information.

As I deconstruct what Cole-

man and his team have wrought, I believe that the foundation of Common Core rests on thinking skills represented by about two dozen key terms. Each of these terms—such as analyze, evaluate, develop, main idea, infer, and theme—represents a specific cognitive process required for learning within the structure of Common Core. Understanding what these terms actually mean is more important than being able to recite simple definitions. For example, “metaphor” is often defined as “a comparative not using the words ‘like’ or ‘as.’” However, if you ask a student, “What does that actually mean?” you will often get a simple shrug of the shoulders. Indeed, “rock is a stone” is a comparative, but not a metaphor.

The more useful meaning of metaphor can be expressed as “understanding one thing in terms of another,” or describing something as being something else, even though it is not actually that something else, as in “He is the black sheep of the family.”

For students who enter school with a vocabulary deficit, it is all the more important for them to grasp the concepts inherent in each of the key terms that are the foundation of the Common Core's thinking skills.

Giving ‘Teaching to the Test’ a Positive Spin

While the upcoming Common Core-aligned assessments like the PARCC will focus exclusively on passages of text as the content of their tests, application of the thinking skills referenced above is not limited to the written word. “Content,” per se, can be anything—students can *analyze* a piece of music, *develop* a hypothesis, *interpret* data, *determine* a common theme that flows through an historical period, *compare* or *contrast* two images of the same subject, *evaluate* the claims made on a website, and so forth.

Each of those italicized words is embedded repeatedly in the Common Core English Language Arts standards and collectively they form the basis of PARCC questions and prompts. Lesson content used to develop students’ understanding can even come from the students’ own cultural and social contexts, not being limited to strictly academic material. Proficiency with these skills increases students’ development into competent adults.

Bottom line: The Common Core was devised not only as a way to level the pedagogical playing field from state to state,

but also to prepare students to grow up as capable adults in an increasingly complex, global, 21st-century economy and society that will require them to imagine things that do not yet exist, produce products and methods that matter to someone else, and communicate effectively with people different from themselves.

So if teaching through the prism of Common Core is intended to deepen students’ capacity to actually think in a variety of ways, and if assessments actually measure to what degree this has been attained, perhaps “teaching to the test” could take on a more positive gloss.

Ultimately, the Common Core has the potential for encouraging a greater interest in life-long learning as our children will live in a more dynamic world that will require constant adaptation to new and unfamiliar experiences. In spite of some current efforts to derail the implementation of Common Core, the train has left the station. If past precedents regarding educational reform are any indication, Common Core, or some manifestation of it, is on track to remain with us for at least the next decade. ■

Helping English Language Learners Succeed in School

BY EDGARDO “GARY”
CASTRO

From the *Virginia Journal of Education*

With students whose native language is anything from Albanian or Arabic to Urdu or Vietnamese, our educators are working in classrooms with already staggering—and still growing—numbers of English Language Learners (ELLs).

Some hard questions for both new and veteran teachers: What do we need to do to succeed with these students? How can we engage each and every ELL? How can we differentiate for them?

Let’s begin with these five recommendations, drawn from

research-based teaching strategies:

1. Learn as much as you can about your students. ELLs come with a myriad of background skills, experiences, or local and regional languages. There are free websites that could be helpful, like www.surveymonkey.com, where you can create your own questions based on grade level, subject, specific skills/talents and more. In my experience, the first few days back to school are a great time to begin a survey.

2. Foster ongoing relationships. Knowing each of your ELLs and making an effort to foster relationships will significantly affect learning. Small opportunities such as an informal

Edgardo “Gary” Castro teaches ELL students at Kiptopeke Elementary School in Cape Charles, VA. He’s a former Northampton County Teacher of the Year and a 2014 candidate for certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Condensed, with permission, from the Virginia Journal of Education, 108 (October 2014) 17-19. Read the article in its entirety at www.veanea.org.

Helping ELLs Succeed in School

chat when an ELL student goes to the cafeteria, playground, or even walking in the hallways can build a personal connection. I always ask a follow-up question, look back, and reflect on what the student likes or dislikes based on the survey I gave.

3. Connect with home, family, and the community. Knowing the family is as important as knowing the ELL student. Making home and family connections helps an ELL student feel welcome. At Kiptopeke Elementary School, we send postcards to students' families at least once every nine weeks, letting parents know of their children's strengths. Also, a positive phone call is a good way to start a relationship with parents. In addition, I try to connect with the community in ways as simple as grocery shopping, attending church, or even walking my dog.

4. Collaborate with colleagues. More than ever, our job is to collaborate. We dissect student data; we plan together; we adjust instruction based on colleagues' suggestions and recommendations; we continually learn, train, and attend professional development sessions. Strong collaboration with colleagues is the new norm. My advice: Accept it with open

mind, heart, and soul. It is for the good of all students.

5. Learn, explore, and try new teaching strategies. There are hundreds of teaching strategies for ELLs. However, they all boil down to identifying targeted needs for each student, based on his or her academic strengths and challenges. Check out some of the many resources available. One example is www.colorincolorado.org, which is a bilingual site for the families and educators of ELL students.

Differentiation

Differentiating instruction means teaching so that each student, despite varying abilities and backgrounds, has the tools and support he or she needs to succeed. That's exactly what you must do if you've got ELL students, so some of the general principles of differentiated instruction strongly apply. A few examples:

- **Variety.** Successful teachers understand the value of having a variety of research-based teaching strategies in their portfolio. "One size fits all" really fits very few.

- **Assessment.** Getting and giving feedback through ongoing, informal assessments is essential to bringing together student needs and your instruc-

Five Tips for Teaching

Kathleen Fay, coauthor of *Becoming One Community: Reading and Writing with English Language Learners*, offers five ways to help bring students up to speed:

1. Create opportunities for conversation. For example, pause during read-aloud, after solving a math problem, or before a writing exercise, and encourage students to talk about the lesson or assignment. If other students in the class speak the same native language, they may choose to pair off and speak in either language. This gives children the opportunity to check understanding or share thoughts with less risk than speaking out to the whole group. Buddy reading provides another great way to encourage productive chatter between peers.

2. Honor the languages represented in your classroom. Ask students to teach greetings in their native languages to the class and incorporate them into your morning rituals. Have the class learn how to count to five or say “Happy Birthday.” When students feel their native languages are valued, and you have taken the risk to learn a little about their culture, it establishes trust.

3. Find opportunities to use English authentically. Students could write a letter to the principal asking about a school rule, read a book aloud to younger students, or figure out how many school lunches need to be ordered for the 3rd-grade field trip.

4. Post your class schedule each day. A predictable routine is easier to follow. When students know what is coming—every day they’ll write stories at 2 p.m.—they will be better prepared to participate. You might add photographs or sketches next to tasks on the schedule to aid comprehension.

5. Don’t feel you must correct every grammatical mistake. Students could become discouraged if they are constantly corrected. Accept approximations and respond to the meaning behind the comment. It takes time to become fluent in a second language, and approximations are a natural part of language development.

Helping ELLs Succeed in School

tion. As with instruction, multiple methods of assessment are helpful.

- **Homework.** A little flexibility in homework assignments goes a long way. If all students are doing the same work, some will breeze through it without learning much, while others will find it too difficult to complete.

- **Grouping.** Having students work in small groups enables them to work together and to have access to the same content. Mixing up the groups allows you to match up students with different strengths for different activities.

- **Make it clear.** Giving your ELL students different ways to understand, like charts, material written in their first language, simplified instructions you create, and classroom discussion gives them the chance to keep learning at the pace of their peers as they also work on their English skills.

As I begin my 15th year of teaching, I understand more than ever that only good teaching strategies yield good student results. Some of the targeted methods I've had success using with ELLs include think-pair-share, manipulatives, the discovery approach, ongoing student assessment and data-gathering, hands-on activi-

ties, and, at the end of the day, spending some time reflecting on the lesson and considering what adjustments might be needed.

Another very effective strategy for me has been the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), made up of eight major components, spelled out on the SIOP website at <http://siop.pearson.com>, which I invite you to explore:

1. Lesson/teacher preparation,
2. Building background,
3. Comprehensible input,
4. Strategies,
5. Interaction,
6. Practice and application,
7. Lesson delivery, and
8. Review and assessment.

At the website, you'll find information, including instructional videos, on each component, along with tools and resources to help you make the most of SIOP, which is designed for all students but is particularly helpful to ELLs.

Let me close with these two quotes:

- *"If you honor growth, you will consistently do what is best for all kids."*—Linda Foote

- *"If we teach today as we taught yesterday, we rob our children of tomorrow."*—John Dewey. ■

Ending the 'Teacher Wars'

**An Interview with
DANA GOLDSTEIN**
From *NJEA Review*

Sometimes, it just doesn't make sense. How can teaching—a profession admired by so many Americans—be reviled by so many? In her book, *The Teacher Wars: A History of America's Most Embattled Profession*, Dana Goldstein explains that while the controversy surrounding teaching may seem like a recent development, it is deeply rooted in our nation's history. Educators have long been expected to solve societal problems that are outside of their control, such as racism, poverty, or the complications that arise from the influx of non-English-speaking immigrants. And when our schools are unable to singlehandedly address these issues, teachers get blamed. This vicious

cycle of high hopes followed by disappointment, coupled with the inevitable attacks on the profession, leaves many feeling dejected.

But there are reasons for optimism. After Goldstein's study of 200 years of public school teaching, she presents a path forward to creating a profession that receives the prestige it deserves.

The Teacher Wars debuted last Fall at #8 on *The New York Times* nonfiction bestseller list. It has been praised by those inside and outside the teaching profession as a well-researched and balanced look at teaching and the education reform debate. Goldstein spoke with *NJEA Review* editor Lisa Galley recently.

Galley: *What drew you to this topic? Why write a book about it?*

Dana Goldstein is a staff writer at The Marshall Project and a contributor to Slate, The Atlantic, and other magazines. Condensed, with permission, from NJEA Review, 89 (September 2015), 28-30, the official journal of the New Jersey Education Association.

Ending the 'Teacher Wars'

Goldstein: A lot of authors say that they wish they could have read the book that they write. That's how I felt when I was covering the 2008 Democratic primary.

I noticed that education was a flash point among candidates (Obama, Clinton, Edwards) who generally agreed on things. I was curious why we were arguing so much about teachers, even at the presidential level.

When I researched the history of teaching, I found there was lots of information, but it wasn't all in one place. I wish this book existed when I started out as an education writer.

Galley: *How can teaching be both idealized and resented?*

Goldstein: We have really high hopes for teachers. Over time, we've expected them to close cultural and racial gaps and to solve problems related to the clash between native-born Americans and immigrants. Today we expect them to close socio-economic gaps. We have a romantic idea of the amount of impact a teacher can have. When it turns out that teachers alone can't close gaps as quickly or completely as we hoped, disappointment sets in. It becomes convenient for people to blame teachers be-

cause it lets them off the hook.

This doesn't mean we can't expect a lot from teachers. For example, it is crucial that teachers work for social justice. But we can't become overly focused on teachers to the exclusion of other solutions. To do so shows a failure of political will and a lack of understanding of the social science and economics of poverty.

Galley: *Education has always been seen as a solution to inequality in America, but teachers know that they can only do so much. Can we have a productive national conversation about the effects of poverty on student achievement?*

Goldstein: Having a great teacher can help a kid dream bigger and that's something you can't measure. But it's depressing that we talk more about accountability than about raising the minimum wage of the parents. Teachers are rightly frustrated.

One of the early components of No Child Left Behind was a plan to address chronic absenteeism. Not only has that dropped off the agenda, but in Texas, truancy is criminalized. It has been proven that reducing chronic absenteeism can be effective in efforts to improve

student achievement. But this is work that social workers and support staff must do. Teachers can't add this to their plates.

Galley: *What was the most surprising thing you learned while researching and writing the book?*

Goldstein: I was surprised to find that certain reform ideas that are presented as innovative are actually not new. Merit pay based on student achievement gains, for example, is an idea that started in the early 20th century, re-emerged in the '60s, the '80s, and again today. The concept of "value-added" is also not new.

Galley: *Policymakers and the media routinely criticize teachers yet they also want to draw top college graduates to the profession. Why don't they see the disconnect here?*

Goldstein: This has been going on since the 19th century. There is a lack of data showing that graduates of elite colleges make better teachers yet many policymakers think this is the answer. Fixing working conditions for teachers is the only way to change the system.

Galley: *Speaking of working conditions, you write about the*

abundance of paperwork, especially with regard to teacher evaluation. Why is this such a problem?

Goldstein: When we overburden teachers and administrators with paperwork it takes focus away from improving instruction. When observers need to document 60 indicators in a single class period, they don't take it seriously. It's mind boggling. We need an evaluation system that is sustainable.

Galley: *In your research, did you find anything about how changes in parenting interplay with changes in attitudes about teachers?*

Goldstein: We've always hoped that teachers could make up for less than ideal parenting. That's one reason why we wanted women to replace men in the early 19th century.

"A Nation at Risk" [the 1983 report of President Ronald Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in Education] didn't just change education policy, it also changed parenting because there is a constant fear that my child is falling behind. It has contributed to the rise of helicopter parenting.

Galley: *Why does the public equate firing teachers with a*

Ending the ‘Teacher Wars’

more successful system of public education?

Goldstein: Some very prominent people have made that argument. Yes, we should get rid of bad teachers and attract and retain good ones. But this is a simplistic argument. Improving the quality of teaching will come from a greater focus on collaboration within the profession and teacher leadership. This will help replicate excellence and best practices. We need to replace the conversation about firing teachers with one about skill building.

Galley: *What do you see as the proper role of standardized testing in education?*

Goldstein: Research generated from test scores can show trends among large groups of teachers and students. It can help identify problems in the system. But we have to be careful what policies we tie to the research. Campbell’s Law tells us that when we tie incentives to a measure, the measure becomes less valuable.

When we focus too much on test scores, teachers are going to change the way they teach and test questions become the de facto curriculum. Harvard professor Daniel Koretz has shown in his research that tests

have limits. It’s a flawed argument to say that it’s okay to teach to a high-quality test.

Galley: *One of the recommendations you make is to “keep teaching interesting.” Explain this?*

Goldstein: For most teachers, year 20 looks a lot like year three in terms of how they spend their day. We know that by year seven or eight they are ready for a challenge, yet in most cases teachers are unable to move forward or be recognized for their successes.

Other countries allow good teachers to “keep it interesting” by writing curriculum, mentoring, and working on education policies. We haven’t made it easier for teachers move to leadership roles. If the excellent teacher doesn’t have time to share knowledge with colleagues, it’s difficult to replicate their best practices and the system suffers for it.

Galley: *What would you say to a career educator who feels vilified in today’s reform debates?*

Goldstein: I understand why you feel discouraged, but I’ve seen some changes in the reform debate.

For example, the Obama administration speaks far less

about how teacher accountability policies will fix poverty. Also, the idealization of the Teach for America model has receded. That has happened within Teach for America itself.

These changes stack up. If we're becoming more realistic about the quick fixes that have been advocated in the past, there's an opportunity to make real changes.

Galley: *How do we end the teacher wars?*

One thing we must do is acknowledge the many factors that impact children's lives. The child poverty rate is higher than before the recession. It's unacceptable to say that doesn't matter.

We need to look at schools but also beyond schools. We need to integrate our communities and make sure disadvantaged schools aren't clustered. Our kids should be growing up around kids who are different than themselves.

There's no one-size-fits-all solution in education. I think the whole conversation about career and college readiness is not realistic. There are some really good career and technical options for kids who may need more time to decide if they are going to continue their education. This is a forgotten group—it's incredibly important that we focus on providing them with a curriculum that serves them. ■

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Giving Undocumented Students Safe Harbor on Campus

BY SYLVIA MENDOZA

From The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education

Fear can overtake undocumented college students faced with the daunting tasks of applying for admission or financial aid. Not wanting to make waves, they don't know where to go for help without putting themselves or their families at risk.

At the same time, university staff might not know how to help those who are undocumented because they are not aware of resources. Referring them to other departments makes students feel they are getting the run-around. After so many referrals and no definitive guidance, they can give up. Between needs and reality, undocumented students can fall

through the cracks of the higher education system.

At Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU), there was never a formalized inclusive program to help faculty and staff prepare undocumented students for their higher education experience, explains Dr. Daniel Lopez, NEIU associate vice president of student affairs. "I've always known we have these students under the radar. I thought: What kinds of things can we do to serve students and be more innovative in our approach to them and their situations?"

The question was answered when NEIU President Sharon Hahs started a grant program for innovative ideas that could improve student success. Of the more than 60 applicants, Lopez's idea for "The Undocu-

Sylvia Mendoza is a regular contributor to The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education. Condensed, with permission, from The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education, 25 (October 4, 2015), 6-9. To read the entire article, visit www.hispanicoutlook.com.

mented Students Project” was one of 13 selected. Lopez clarifies that “undocumented” isn’t just a Latino issue. “We have Korean, East European, and many others. It is important to know that.”

The Safe Zone Concept

The goal is to educate and build awareness so that neither students nor employees feel threatened by the situation or each other. The project committee produced the *Faculty and Staff Undocumented Student Resource Guide*. Mirrored after the LGBT *Safe Zone* concept, the belief is that undocumented students also deserve a safe inclusive zone. “Sometimes they are questioned. Sometimes people say, “You are an undocumented. You shouldn’t be here.”

The students want to be there, to become educated. They just need guidance. The guide aims to educate and set right any misconceptions or inaccuracies in how undocumented students are portrayed. It defines an undocumented student. It explains how staff can become allies to them. It provides stats, data, resources, and institutional numbers.

On the guide’s cover, its vision is stated clearly: “All Stu-

dents are Welcome Here.” The welcome message explains that the purpose of the guide is to provide resources so that staff can better assist undocumented students and their families at all NEIU campuses, including admissions and financial aid guidelines and processes. Also included is pertinent federal and state legislation. A list of allies and departmental points of contact are part of the safe zone concept and can help make NEIU a more welcoming and inclusive place.

It is a step in the right direction. President Hahs says, “Over the years, the number of undocumented students at Northeastern Illinois University has grown. Northeastern has continued to welcome them, improve support for them, and celebrate their extraordinary accomplishments.

At the annual AAHHE (American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education) conference, Lopez and colleagues presented the workshop: “Transforming the University Environment to be Inclusive of Undocumented Students: Two Different Institutional Approaches in the Midwest.” Mostly they shared how being an inclusive campus is the right thing to do.

“Supportive environments

Giving Undocumented Students Safe Harbor on Campus

in educational settings are essential in ensuring the academic success of all students,” said Maria Luna-Duarte, interim director of Northeastern Illinois University El Centro and an Undocumented Students Project committee member. Her doctoral research and teaching experience explores the experiences of undocumented and formerly undocumented students’ transition to postsecondary education, and assesses their needs while developing strategies and programs to help them succeed.

“For undocumented immigrant youth this is particularly important because in addition to being first-generation in college, they are dealing with other stressors including the lack of financial resources, health and mental health issues, coping every day with their immigration status and the fear of deportation for them and their families.”

Training Staff to Become Allies

The Undocumented Students Project has proven incredibly successful. Lopez, an undocumented student himself in the '80s, received residency through the amnesty program at the time, but he was lost as

to how to navigate the world of higher education. “Even though I was in the National Honor Society, when it came to applying for college, I didn’t know the process or my options.”

What Lopez has come to believe is that it only takes one knowledgeable person to influence a life. An advisor helped Lopez enroll in community college and get a job there, which paid for his education. It was all he needed to get that jumpstart. From there he got a full ride for his bachelor’s degree at the University of Illinois, his master’s at Loyola, and for his PhD, he worked at Illinois State University.

That’s what he wants for undocumented students at NEIU. “I know how difficult it is, but I also know once they have guidance and resources, their own drive kicks in.”

Trained staff can offer undocumented students that guidance. The Undocumented Students Project offers a six-hour training program. Approximately 30 participants are trained per semester, especially front-line people so important to the process—in admissions, financial aid, and the Bursar’s Office. Participants earn a certification of completion and a decal that says “I’m an Undocumented

Student Ally.” When students see the decal, they know they can come to them specifically for direction, advice, or support on campus.

“Now there is a waitlist for employees who want to be trained,” says Lopez.

The training includes speaker panels—undocumented students talk about their stories and challenges so staff can see what they go through on a daily basis. A panel of current allies addresses issues they’ve confronted and resources they’ve found. There is also a panel of community members and organizations that help undocumented students outside of

campus, such as immigration attorneys, a Legal Assistance Fund, and notaries.

Comprehensive immigration reform will come, Lopez is convinced. For now, reaching undocumented students and helping them believe a safe zone is real can alleviate fears and let them get on with their education.

“I have not heard anyone on this campus say we should not work with undocumented students,” says Lopez. “We are not immigration. We are here to help. Once they are admitted to the school, it is our responsibility to educate them. That is all.” ■

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The Extra Time Payoff

Longer school days are raising instructional efficiency through joint planning and student data sharing.

BY DAVID A. FARBMAN

From School Administrator

Greg Fox could not contain his enthusiasm. As principal of Dr. Thomas S. O’Connell Elementary School West in East Hartford, CT, for the last three years, Fox led a school redesign that, beginning in September 2013, added 300 more scheduled hours to the school year for his 315 students.

“There’s no question, teaching and learning are different now,” says Fox, an educator for 19 years. “For the first time, we feel like we can meet the needs of every student. We’re able to really integrate inquiry-based learning. Having not only more class time, but three hours of

common planning time each week, makes what we do possible.”

O’Connell Elementary is just one of a rapidly growing group of schools that have added substantial time to their school schedule with the goal of bolstering student learning. From Chicago to New Orleans to Elizabeth, NJ, educators in school districts across the country have come to understand that more time in school can make an enormous difference in students’ education, not simply by increasing the quantity of time on task—a proven strategy to boost proficiency—but by substantially enhancing its quality. Adding school time, alongside effective planning, can make all

David A. Farberman is a senior researcher at the National Center on Time & Learning, Boston, MA. Condensed, with permission, from School Administrator, 72 (January 2015), 21-24. Published by the AASA, The School Superintendents Association, www.aasa.org.

the moments spent in school better.

And the pivot point on which this rising quality turns is how the expanded schedule opens up opportunities for teachers to collaborate. Meeting for extended periods at least twice a week, teachers reflect on their instruction, continuously viewing each lesson through the focal prism of what students have learned. From honest discussions, teachers then seek to make adjustments to their instruction with two aims — deepening the learning of all students and, simultaneously addressing individual student needs.

Raising Rigor

The teachers at Frank M. Silvia Elementary School in Fall River, MA, know this dynamic well. Eight years ago, the school serving 600 students, more than two-thirds of whom qualified as low-income, had a day that ran from 8 A.M. to 2:30 P.M. They struggled to get much more than a third of students to be proficient. In more recent years, however, with 800 students and an eight-hour day, the school has seen its proficiency rate double, and the school is one of only a handful in Massachusetts with growth rates in both

math and English language arts within the top 15% of all schools statewide each year for the past five years.

The secret to Silvia's success is no secret. The administrators and faculty have leveraged their longer day to spend countless hours talking about and then acting on ways to raise expectations for what should constitute high-quality work.

Teachers at Silvia meet in uninterrupted common planning time twice each week, 45 minutes each for math and literacy. (During this period, students are in music, art, or physical education.) There, they focus intensively on boosting instructional quality. The dean of teaching and learning, Sherri Carvalho, describes how the teachers have collaborated to set a norm for expectations using an example from 4th-grade literacy.

“In the past, teachers would just come up with their own open-response questions. Students would answer them, but when they'd come back to common planning there was no coherence on the team level,” says Carvalho, who reports to the school principal. “But now that they're creating those questions together, teachers share similar student work that they can have

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conversations about and, most important, they're coming up with good questions for their students to answer that will really make them think."

Essentially, teachers at Silvia hold each other accountable to make their instruction more challenging. Meg Mayo-Brown, superintendent of the 10,500-student Fall River district, explains the progression as generating a "common understanding

of what a rigorous task looks like and sounds like. Working together has this tremendous effect of raising the bar."

The advent of Common Core State Standards has driven the movement even further toward greater rigor, but Silvia teachers have been ready for the transition because they already had a lot of experience figuring out new ways to push their students. Now they are engaged

Additional Resources

The National Center on Time & Learning is a nonprofit that conducts research, provides technical assistance, and supports national, state, and local initiatives that add significantly more school time for academic and enrichment opportunities.

Some of the organization's informational resources of practical value at the district level are:

▶ ***The Case for Improving and Expanding Time in School***

—summarizes research exploring the effect of more time on student growth, as well as the studies on using teacher time to boost student outcomes.

▶ ***Financing Expanded Learning Time in Schools: A Look at Expanded Time in Five District Schools***—details how five districts leveraged federal, state, and local funding to support additional time and optimize learning.

▶ ***Time for Teachers: Leveraging Expanded Time to Strengthen Instruction and Empower Teachers***—examines 17 fast-improving schools using expanded school schedules. Six practices are described and analyzed.

▶ ***Time Well Spent: Eight Powerful Practices of Successful, Expanded-Time Schools***—offers an in-depth examination of 30 expanded-time schools serving high-poverty populations with records of student success and demonstrates how these schools leverage their additional time.

All reports are accessible at www.timeandlearning.org

in aligning all classroom work across the school to the Common Core, a process Principal Jean Facchiano describes as complex but achievable specifically because each teacher team has committed considerable time to content selection and the subsequent mapping of lessons to the standards during common planning meetings.

Teachers at O'Connell Elementary face the additional challenge of reshaping their classrooms to meet the robust requirements of the International Baccalaureate curricula, with a deliberate focus on inquiry-based and cooperative learning. The school made the transition to an IB school the same year it expanded its schedule, so teachers spend much of their two 90-minute common planning sessions each week examining how they might incorporate many more hands-on and group projects in classrooms, all of which are based on the IB units of study.

The change in educational approach is obvious. Where the 4th-grade math class used to tilt heavily toward the practice of arithmetic operations, students now regularly partake in lessons that revolve around the application of math skills and creativity toward solving real-

world problems, like organizing a grocery store and determining product prices.

The teachers readily acknowledge that the transformation of their individual classrooms—a transformation that aspires to build in coherence and a standard level of excellence across the school—began in the conference room, where the whole faculty advanced together toward a new way of engaging students in learning.

East Hartford Superintendent Nathan Quesnel observes, “When the teachers start sharing results and what works in their classrooms, the whole faculty starts to gravitate towards best practice. And this school has become a model for where we want others to go.”

Personal Needs

It is one thing to craft high expectations. It is another to get all students to reach them. Collaboration and review of student data also play a pivotal role in this objective.

Aura Ryder, a first-grade teacher at Silvia, says she and her colleagues are “talking deeply about data every week” to determine which centers, such as small-group reading or fluency drills using computers, are “relevant and necessary and

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which students need to spend time in each center.”

Teachers at O’Connell Elementary typically commit a full 90-minute session per week to reviewing various data about their students, from formative assessments to in-class work. Grade-level teams review each student’s performance and for those who are struggling, teachers develop a specialized plan. Plans usually consist of assigning students to small learning groups that hone in on practicing particular skills, such as reading fluency or phonemic awareness.

Leading each of these small groups are the teachers deemed most skilled in that area, not necessarily the students’ classroom teacher. “We share children,” explains Fox, O’Connell’s principal. “If we are going to make sure that every learner gets the optimal support he or she needs, then we need to take a team approach.”

The use of data to pinpoint student deficits and tailor instruction accordingly also relies on the integration of targeted intervention groups at Silvia, though these tend to be part and parcel of the full classroom, rather than take place during separate designated periods. Silvia’s long experience tracking

student proficiency and growth over time has allowed the teachers to be more confident in differentiating instruction within each classroom.

Silvia also has the unusual practice of publicly posting individual student performance (anonymously) on each formative assessment in every classroom, so the students and teachers are literally surrounded by achievement data. Still, it is only through the systematic review of student performance that takes place during grade-team meetings that teachers develop the means and methods to differentiate effectively.

Principal Objective

Providing more time in school is a resource, not a strategy. It can be used in ways that directly address the core mission of schools—advancing student learning—or it can be squandered in unstructured, unfocused moments that do little to promote growth. When it comes to spending added minutes, the paramount measure of its value is to what degree the *potential* additional opportunities for learning *actually* translate to more learning. To realize the potential, adults in the building must harness their collective energies toward elevating qual-

ity of instruction and individualizing support.

The collaborative planning meeting, whose fundamental objective is making sure that every student's time in school is productive and meaningful, is the epicenter of this process.

According to Mayo-Brown, most teachers had resisted common planning time because they experienced it as tightly managed by administrators.

But then they noticed their teacher colleagues at Silvia truly owned their twice-weekly sessions, and the school became the district's model for translating teacher conversations into productive and meaningful classroom time.

Similarly, in East Hartford, the O'Connell faculty stands out as not just having the advantage of additional class time, but making the best use of that time through the mutual accountability for progress the teachers devised in collaborative planning meetings.

As other schools seek avenues to expand learning time for students, they should consider how to integrate more learning and sharing time for teachers, as well. They likely will find that more time for teachers leads to not just more, but better time for students. ■

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Characteristics of Effective School Boards

BY CHUCK DERVARICS and EILEEN O'BRIEN

From *The Illinois School Board Journal*

What makes a school board one that positively impacts student achievement? From a research perspective, this is a complex question. It involves evaluating virtually all functions of a board, from internal governance and policy formulation to communication with teachers, building administrators, and the public. But the research that exists is clear: Boards in high-achieving districts exhibit habits and characteristics that are markedly different from boards in low-achieving districts. So what do these boards do?

Here are eight characteristics

of effective school boards based on research by the National School Boards Association's Center for Public Education.

1. Effective school boards commit to a vision of high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction and define clear goals toward that vision.

Effective boards make sure these goals remain the district's top priorities and that nothing else detracts from them. In contrast, low-achieving boards "were only vaguely aware of school improvement initiatives," according to the 2000

Chuck Dervarics is an education writer and editor, and Eileen O'Brien is an independent education researcher. Their work on this article was for the Center for Public Education, an initiative of the National School Boards Association. Condensed, with permission, from The Illinois School Board Journal, 83 (July/August 2015), 10-12. Published by the Illinois Association of School Boards, www.isbj.com/journal.

Lighthouse Study by the Iowa Association of School Boards. “There was little evidence of a pervasive focus on school renewal at any level when it was not present at the board level,” researchers said.

2. Effective boards have strong shared beliefs and values about what is possible for students and their ability to learn, and about the system and its ability to teach all children at high levels.

In high-achieving districts, poverty, lack of parental involvement, and other factors were described as challenges to be overcome, not as excuses. Board members expected to see improvements in student achievement quickly as a result of initiatives. In low-achieving districts, board members frequently referred to external pressures as the main reasons for lack of student success.

3. Effective school boards are accountability driven, spending less time on operational issues and more focused on policies to improve student achievement.

In interviews with hundreds of board members and staff across districts, researchers Richard Goodman, Luann Fulbright, and William Zimmerman found that high-performing

boards focused on establishing a vision supported by policies that targeted student achievement. Poor governance was characterized by such factors as micro-management by the board.

4. Effective boards have a collaborative relationship with staff and the community and establish a strong communications structure to inform and engage internal and external stakeholders in setting and achieving district goals.

In high-achieving districts, school board members could provide specific examples of how they connected and listened to the community, and board members received information from many different sources, including the superintendent, curriculum director, principals, and teachers. Findings and research were shared among all board members. By comparison, school boards in low-achieving districts were likely to cite communication and outreach barriers. Staff from low-achieving districts often said they didn’t know the board members at all.

5. Effective school boards are data savvy: They embrace and monitor data, even when the information is negative, and use it to drive continuous improvement.

A Dozen Danger Signs

More than 90,000 men and women are members of local school boards in the United States, all serving as trustees of the nation's public education systems. According to the National School Boards Association, these public officials serve on 13,809 elected or appointed boards in the U.S.

Although the study undertaken by the National School Boards Association Center for Public Education did not specifically focus on characteristics of ineffective school boards, it may be helpful to contrast some of the descriptions of ineffective boards mentioned in the research.

Ineffective school boards tend to:

- Be only vaguely aware of school improvement initiatives, and seldom be able to describe actions being taken to improve student learning.
- Be focused on external pressures as the main reasons for lack of student success, such as poverty, lack of parental support, societal factors, or lack of motivation.
- Offer negative comments about students and teachers.
- Micro-manage day-to-day operations.
- Disregard the agenda process and the chain of command.
- Be left out of the information flow, with little communication between board and superintendent.
- Be quick to describe a lack of parent interest in education or barriers to community outreach.
- Look at data from a “blaming” perspective, describing teachers, students, and families as major causes for low performance.
- Have little understanding or coordination on staff development for teachers.
- Be slow to define a vision.
- Not hire a superintendent who agreed with their vision.
- Undertake little professional development together as a board.

The Lighthouse Study showed that board members in high-achieving districts identified specific student needs through data and justified decisions based on that data. Board members regularly sought such data and were not shy about discussing it, even if it was negative. By comparison, board members in low-achieving districts tended to greet data with a “blaming” perspective, describing teachers, students, and families as major causes for low performance. In these districts, board members frequently discussed their decisions through anecdotes and personal experiences rather than by citing data. They left it to the superintendent to interpret the

data and recommend solutions.

6. Effective school boards align and sustain resources, such as professional development, to meet district goals.

According to researchers Peter LaRocque and Linda Coleman, effective boards saw a responsibility to maintain high standards even in the midst of budget challenges. “To this end, the successful boards supported extensive professional development programs for administrators and teachers, even during times of [fiscal] restraint.” In low-achieving districts, board members said teachers made their own decisions on staff development based on perceived needs in the classroom or for certification. ■

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LEADING BY EXAMPLE: Black Male Teachers Make Students 'Feel Proud'

Small but growing number of teacher-training programs say black men uniquely suited to help young black students excel.

BY KATY RECKDAHL
From *The Hechinger Report*

During his high school days, no football game could start without Louis Blackmon III: the team's center. Each play began with his snap.

Though Blackmon was renowned for his hustle on the field, he didn't put the same effort into the classroom. "In school, I was just an average guy," Blackmon said. Typically, he pulled Cs, with a few Ds, at

McDonogh 35 High School in New Orleans.

That led to heartbreak his senior year, when his ACT scores came back a few points below college-entrance standards. Almost overnight, he lost the attention of college scouts, who had told him he was a prime candidate for an athletic scholarship.

Yet today, Blackmon, now 21, is a standout student at Southern University at New Orleans, in the Honoré Center

Katy Reckdahl is a reporter based in New Orleans. Condensed, with permission, from a December 15, 2015, post on The Hechinger Report, a nonprofit news organization focused on inequality and innovation in education. To read the entire article, visit www.hechingerreport.org.

for Undergraduate Achievement, an intensive new program that gives full scholarships to young African-American men who show promise despite unremarkable transcripts.

All of the program's participants, known as "Honoré Men," study to become teachers—because the program's founders believe that promising young men who grew up in tough circumstances are uniquely equipped to connect in classrooms with youth facing similar challenges.

The Honoré Center is one of a small but growing number of specialized programs aimed at boosting the number of black male schoolteachers, who make up roughly 2% of the nation's teaching force.

The best-known example is South Carolina's Call Me MISTER program (Mentors Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models), which began in 2000 at Clemson University. Last year, a group of four small colleges and universities in Pennsylvania launched their own Black Men Teaching Initiative, which grooms black male high school students and teaching assistants to be teachers. Meanwhile, the Teacher Quality and Retention Program, run since 2009 by the Thurgood Marshall College

Fund, and the recently formed Boston Teacher Residency Male Teachers of Color Network, aim to support current black male teachers, who are more likely to leave the profession.

A Growing Imperative

The programs are a small part of a growing national imperative: to increase the number of black men working in the nation's public schools, where "minority" students now constitute a majority.

Honoré Center founders consider the program unique because it starts with an unlikely group of students, sometimes referred to by education analysts as "the bottom quartile" because they lack the requisite grades, test scores, and financial means to attend college.

"We take these young men who were expected to go to jail or graduate at only a 20% clip. And they're succeeding," said former Southern University president Ronald Mason, who designed the Honoré Center as a national pilot program with hopes of boosting the numbers of African-American males in two key areas: college graduates and teachers in urban schools.

Johnny Taylor, who heads up the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, said that success at the

Black Male Teachers

center will be “a key moment” within an array of often-disappointing programs. “There have been a lot of dollars expended on the black male over the past few decades, with little to show,” he said.

Mason sees Honoré Men as “hidden stars” who can, with several years of concerted investment, reach their full potential in a way that breaks through barriers. (The Honoré Center is part of Southern’s Five-Fifths Initiative, a name derived from the nation’s 1787 Three-Fifths Compromise, under which each male slave was counted as only three-fifths of a man.)

In exchange for a full scholarship—free room and board and a small monthly stipend—each Honoré Man receives a loan that is forgiven if he teaches in public school for at least two years. That commitment to putting more black male teachers in schools was a big selling point for the Louisiana legislators who helped finance the center, starting with its launch in 2012.

Incoming students must have a high school GPA of at least 2.0 and an ACT score between 14 and 19. Their income must also be low enough to qualify for a Pell Grant.

Basically, the program re-

cruits intelligent kids who lack resources, said Lt. Gen. Russel Honoré, the retired U.S. Army man and hero of post-Katrina New Orleans who, at Mason’s request, gave his name and oversight to the center. “All things being equal, the only difference between these young men and some kid going through prep school off his endowment and driving a new Mustang is money and opportunity,” Honoré said.

Incoming Diversity

Five years ago, in a commencement speech at New Orleans’ Xavier University, Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan kicked off an effort to increase teacher diversity. Duncan decried the lack of black teachers, noting that when he headed Chicago Public Schools, most of the students were black, but many schools lacked a single black male teacher.

Nationally, 16% of public school students are black, but the proportion of black teachers is less than half that: only 7% of the nation’s teaching force.

Jones and others note that black teachers were not always scarce—in 1950, half of all black professionals were classroom teachers working in the nation’s dual-race, segregated

schools. But in 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court declared segregated schools unconstitutional in its landmark decision *Brown v. Board of Education*. In the subsequent decade, roughly half of black teachers lost their jobs, as black students were sent to presumptively superior white schools to be taught by white teachers.

More than a decade ago, Thomas Dee, who now directs Stanford University's Center for Education Policy, completed a large-scale analysis of the impact of a teacher's race on student performance. Black children randomly placed with black teachers showed more improvement than black children taught by white teachers.

The experience of Honoré senior Dominique Carter, who is greeted by excited children when he arrives at his school-arranged tutoring job, reflects another research finding: Black teachers are more likely to believe in black students' ability to succeed. "I make them feel proud," Carter said.

Within the Honoré Center ranks, only one student, Donovan Woods, was regularly taught by black male teachers, at Dr. Martin Luther King Charter School in the Lower Ninth Ward.

Those male teachers prompted Woods to see his schooling through a different lens. "The difference between King and most other schools is that King is one big family," he said. "I feel like I could play a big part in a kid's life, because I've seen that, learned it, experienced it." When he graduates, he'd like to return to King to teach, he said.

For years, researchers have pointed out that black teachers teaching black children create bonds that resemble family connections and support. While white teachers are also capable of nurturing students, teachers who are ethnically similar to their students are more likely to live in the same neighborhoods and share common experiences.

Research indicates that environments like those at the King school are likely a rarity across the nation. According to one report, 40% of public schools lack even a single minority teacher and, even in urban areas, teaching staffs are predominantly white.

University of Pennsylvania researcher Richard Ingersoll, who has studied teacher diversity for decades, found that efforts to recruit more black teachers have actually been fairly suc-

cessful; the challenge is keeping black teachers in the classroom. According to Ingersoll's data, which tracked teacher turnover over a recent 20-year span, the annual rate of minority teacher turnover increased by 28%, with many teachers leaving due to a reported lack of influence within their classrooms and schools.

When placed against that backdrop, the results of Call Me MISTER are instructive: Of the 150 fully certified black male teachers who have graduated from the program since 2004, all are still working in education. "Nobody has quit," said program leader Jones. "The only ones not still in the classroom are principals."

Jones is encouraged that his data runs contrary to national trends. "The secret sauce? We believe in the ability of the youth to succeed," he said.

Jones witnesses his program's greatest moments after graduation, when a "Mister" returns to his hometown school, a place that often has no other black male teacher. "They own the place," he said. "They're treated with great reverence, great respect. That's what we promote—they are now called Mister, and we're changing the stereotype of black males."

On Track to Graduate

Desk legs scuff against the floor as the Honoré Men prepare for an evening session. Most have fresh haircuts, the result of a crackdown by residence coordinator James Riley, known as Coach, who makes sure that everyone follows curfews, cleans their rooms, and looks neat.

Warren Bell, the program's director, gives an approving nod at the newly shorn students in front of him. Then he sits at his desk and sighs, telling the young men that he has been waking up at 3:30 A.M., worried about how to keep them on track. "How do I get Honoré men to do what they're supposed to?" he asked them, fretting about whether to hold back stipends to get some of the newer students' attention.

Most Honoré Men are on track to graduate within five years as classroom-ready public school teachers. Of the 30 young men who have completed at least one semester at the Honoré Center since it began three years ago, 87% are still enrolled in college, with a retention rate that has increased over time.

Bell acts like a helicopter parent, nudging participants who become complacent and

interfering in nearly every aspect of their lives. Students must sign in each morning between 7:30 and 9:00 A.M. They must keep monthly academic calendars, turn in tutoring logs and weekly goal sheets on time, attend “Manhood Mondays” evening seminars, and track grades on all papers, exams, and quizzes.

Honoré Center participants are kept under close watch far beyond the classroom. They aren’t permitted to drink or use drugs; they can’t have overnight guests. They have strict curfews and can’t even go home to their families on weekends without permission. One of the students who left the program call the rules “intrusive,” a criticism that Bell has embraced. “We are a very intrusive environment,” he told a visitor proudly.

Yet some Honoré participants learn to appreciate Bell. Davon Leggett, an original Honoré student who withdrew from the program but continued his studies on campus, still made daily stops at Bell’s office. “Davon never gave up,” Bell said.

In August, Leggett was fatally shot near his family’s home in New Orleans, on his way to his neighborhood barber for a haircut. It was a dark

day at the Honoré Center.

After consulting with the registrar, Bell determined that Leggett’s classwork merited an associate’s degree. The day before Leggett was buried, Bell slipped the young man’s diploma into his coffin, before an audience of tearful Honoré Men.

Leggett never earned his bachelor’s or entered the classroom to teach, but in some ways, Leggett became the Honoré Center’s first graduate. His loss “reminded us why it’s so important to do what we do,” Bell said.

Blackmon, Leggett’s close friend, thinks that the program’s tight oversight is a must. After his father died from gun violence, Blackmon was raised by a strict mother who “refused to lose me to the streets,” he said. In recent years, he’s watched closely as his high school classmates dropped out of college, one by one. Only a few remain in school.

Next spring, Blackmon will become the first person in his extended family to earn a bachelor’s degree. He hopes his graduation starts “a domino effect” in his family, so that all of his cousins will see college as a possibility. It’s like football, he said. “The play starts with me.” ■

Shelter

From the Storm

Schools help support
poverty-traumatized students.

BY TERI CETTINA

From *Teaching Tolerance*

Maria Garcia teaches 2nd grade at a dual Spanish-English immersion school in San Francisco's low-income Bayview neighborhood. Many of the school's families live on very little; Garcia is accustomed to students coming to school in the same clothing day after day or complaining of empty stomachs.

Many low-income students take their circumstances in stride, but Garcia knows others aren't so lucky. Some kids are traumatized by daily experiences directly and indirectly related to living in low-income circumstances (unstable housing, food insecurity, loss of

utilities, lack of access to health care, school disruption, and exposure to community hardships like theft or violence). That was the case with Luciana.

Luciana was a transfer student from nearby Oakland. Garcia suspected Luciana might be experiencing poverty-related trauma because she often shared worries about her home life and the family's constant food shortage. And while she was initially affectionate and talkative, over the course of the school year, Luciana's behavior changed. She spaced out in class and sometimes fell asleep. She stopped participating in group activities. Most significantly, she was no longer open and chatty when Garcia pulled her aside to ask how she was doing.

Teri Cettina is a freelance writer specializing in parenting and education topics. Condensed, with permission, from Teaching Tolerance, 49 (Spring 2015), a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. To read the article in its entirety and for reproductions, visit www.tolerance.org.

Fortunately, the teachers, counselors, and administrators at Garcia's school had received training that expanded their understanding of trauma to include the potential effects of living in different types of poverty. They engaged a project called UCSF Healthy Environments and Response to Trauma in Schools (HEARTS), cosponsored by the University of California-San Francisco and San Francisco General Hospital. The goal: to help teachers and administrators understand how all kinds of trauma—including trauma induced by poverty—affect children and their ability to succeed in school. This understanding helps inform classroom-level responses, a critical piece of the puzzle because punitive discipline is not an effective intervention for poor behavior or school performance related to trauma.

Sharon Lacay, a clinical social worker with HEARTS, explains the need to extend the scope of trauma response beyond trauma caused by grief, loss, or abuse.

"Kids really can't learn efficiently if they're anxious or sad—to the point of being traumatized—about where they're going to live, or whether they'll have dinner that night," she says.

Through participation in HEARTS, Garcia learned that all kids respond to trauma differently: While some push their frustration and fear outward—lashing out at teachers or classmates—Luciana became withdrawn. "It's her own, quieter way of dealing with her anxiety related to her living situation," says Garcia.

Reaching Those in Need

The first step to helping poverty-traumatized kids is identifying them. The outward signs of poor living conditions are obvious in some cases: worn clothing, inadequate hygiene due to lack of electricity or running water, or attempts to sneak lunch food for later. But not all types of poverty look the same, and not every child who appears to be living in poverty is traumatized.

Robin Zorn, 2014 national school counselor of the year, says kids experiencing severe anxiety, sadness, or anger over their situation will show a range of symptoms similar to those associated with shock or abuse.

"They may have trouble making friends, since they don't trust those relationships will last," says Zorn.

Lacay adds, "Some traumatized kids act out toward other

Shelter From the Storm

students or their teacher—an attempt to show that they are in control of those relationships since they aren't in control of much else in their lives.”

Another telltale sign is hyper vigilance. Traumatized kids often startle easily or overreact to minor events. They may also become perfectionists in their schoolwork.

“This is a ‘survival-brain’ type of coping mechanism,” explains Lacay. “The child thinks, ‘If I do everything perfectly, we won’t have to move again, I won’t have to leave this school.’”

Classroom Strategies

Recognizing poverty-induced trauma is only the first step toward making a difference. Garcia knew that children in unstable circumstances could benefit from having trusted adults in their lives, so she began inviting Luciana to special, small-group lunches with her and a few other students. She also connected Luciana with a volunteer school mentor who met with her monthly at lunchtime.

Another area in which schools can help is access to basic needs. Although technically not the responsibility of the staff, many educators feel compelled to help. One approach is school-level collaborations

with community agencies. Zorn helped her school partner with a nearby church to put together weekend food bags for kids in need. Her school also refers parents to organizations that can help them find temporary housing, food vouchers, and other services.

Making calls or scheduling meetings with families whenever possible can also help, suggests Monica Dominguez, a school counselor in El Paso, TX. Opening the lines of communication informs teachers of what they can do to better support the student in extenuating circumstances that might otherwise go undetected.

“Maybe a student can’t finish certain assignments because he rarely has electricity for reading at night,” notes Dominguez. “Teachers can work with school officials on special accommodations like extra periods for the student to finish schoolwork or after-school tutoring.”

Young people experiencing trauma also may need some strategies—and spaces—to calm themselves when they’re too anxious to focus on classroom work. Dominguez advocates making peaceful spaces available within each classroom or in other supervised areas of the school. Younger kids

benefit from sensory toys like a box filled with rice, simple puzzles, and calming music heard through headphones. Older students can journal about their stress and fear, listen to music, or practice deep-breathing exercises.

Lacay notes that leading classes in simple body stretches or an eyes-closed visualization of a calming scene can take as little as two minutes and benefit all students without singling out those living in particularly tough circumstances.

Adopting a Trauma-Sensitive Lens

At Dominguez's school, teachers share stories and observations with the school's Response to Intervention (RTI) committee. Administrators, teachers, a social worker, a nurse, and Dominguez collaborate on how best to help poverty-traumatized students. The team brainstorms ways to support students in school and refers children and families to outside counseling when needed.

Garcia she says she's learned that helping her students manage poverty-related trauma is necessary if she's going to succeed in teaching them their letters and numbers. But per-

haps even more important, she understands that children living with trauma need the support and the confidence of educational community—often their main emotional resource outside their family.

Dominguez agrees. In addition, she says, when a teacher steps in to help individual students at risk, the entire classroom benefits. "You'll have a more calm, focused class with fewer distractions and outbursts," she says. Both kids and teachers will also have the chance to get to know students who might otherwise have been written off as discipline problems or kids who can't learn. That would be a mistake, says Dominguez. "You shouldn't underestimate these kids." ■



"Possessive pronouns? Um, iPod, yourPod, theirPod?"

Effectively Integrating Teacher Leadership into the System

BY KAREN HAWLEY MILES
From ER Strategies

Teacher leadership plays a critical role in schools that dramatically improve student performance. However, despite many well-intentioned efforts, teacher leadership initiatives rarely become a lasting part of the way schools and districts organize. The cause? Efforts are often implemented in a piecemeal fashion and/or trade-offs are not put in place to secure adequate resources to sustain them.

To support districts in establishing teacher leadership programs that stick, ERS created the “Teacher Leadership and Career Pathways Checklist,” comprised of what we call the “must-dos”

and “common missteps” for the six steps of program creation. The checklist builds on research and district experiences implementing teacher leadership, and it contributes new steps for how to successfully scale and sustain these efforts.

Why Are Teacher Leadership Roles So Important?

Strategic teacher leadership roles:

1. Extend the reach of excellent teachers through teaming. If we want to dramatically improve student performance, the impact of the best teachers must be extended and supported through teaming, which is the collaboration and support structures that help all teachers grow.

Karen Hawley Miles is president and executive director of Education Resource Strategies, Inc. Condensed, with permission, from information released February 1, 2016, by Education Resource Strategies Inc.

2. Keep great teachers in schools for longer. Robust pathways for teacher career advancement provide professional and financial incentives for taking on leadership roles, ensure accountability, and make the job more sustainable.

3. Make principal job more doable. Principals have the challenge of managing 40 to 100 teachers. When experienced teacher leaders take on the responsibility of managing small groups of teachers, principals increase their capacity to develop faculty in a way that focuses on school needs and improving student learning.

**Denver's Example:
Increasing the Capacity
of Principals by
Elevating Teachers**

In the 2013-14 school year, Denver Public Schools (DPS) Superintendent Tom Boasberg launched the Differentiated Roles (DR) pilot program in a multifaceted effort to reduce the managerial burden on principals; meet the goal of retaining, rewarding, and recruiting exceptional teachers; and support the development of teachers and the sustainability of their jobs. Rather than creating managerial roles, top teachers are elevated to the new Team Lead roles,

which simultaneously augments the capacity of the principal, enhances the teacher career ladder, and increases collaborative teamwork opportunities for teachers.

Team Leads manage small groups of fellow teachers for whom they provide real-time feedback, organize planning sessions, facilitate and participate in sharing ideas, and create opportunities for collaborative work. Team Leads split their time approximately in half between teaching in the classroom and working with other teachers, an innovative approach to the position.

Initial responses to the Denver pilot are positive, and it will move out of the pilot phase and expand to 115 schools for 2016-17 under the new name, Teacher Leadership and Collaboration (TLC). The New Teacher Project (TNTP) reported the impact TLC has on teacher work experiences:

- Team teachers receive almost twice as many observations.
- Three-quarters of team teachers believe their final growth and performance rating accurately reflects their teaching practice.
- Compared with schools not yet implementing TLC, a larger

Integrating Teacher Leadership into the System

percentage of team teachers report that feedback is useful and actionable.

- 84% of teachers agreed that team lead feedback is useful and actionable, the largest approval rating for any of the three feedback provider types across both pilot schools and those not yet implementing TLC.

While the student results are not yet measurable, teachers report a positive impact on their value proposition and work experience. In “Sharing the Load,” the Aspen Institute reports “the greatest impact is stronger instruction within the classroom. Teachers are getting feedback constantly. We’re in classrooms every week sharing best practices.”

The report “Transforming Schools,” released by Bain & Company, surveyed DPS teachers and found that teachers in the TLC pilot schools scored significantly higher on a job satisfaction scale than teachers in schools not yet implementing TLC. It should be noted that teachers historically score low on this scale, indicating a significant impact on staff morale.

If you want to learn more about Denver’s Teacher Leadership and Collaboration pilot program, watch the video *Teacher Leadership & Collaboration in*

Denver Public Schools at <https://vimeo.com/142668833>.

Designing Teacher Leadership Roles That Last

For districts to institutionalize teacher leadership roles effectively, leaders need to take two fundamental steps: First, leadership teams need to clearly define teacher roles, making sure each role supports and is accountable to student learning. Part of this step includes matching compensation and incentives to the level and type of a teacher’s work contribution. Second, leaders need to ensure sustainable sources of funding, most likely by making trade-offs such as shifting dollars from coaches to the new teacher leaders or re-allocating compensation dollars away from education credits and experience toward teacher leadership roles.

Why Are Teacher Leadership Roles a System Responsibility?

We see over and over again that high-performing schools incorporate strong teacher teams. These teams, however, need effective teacher leaders, and it is more effective and cost efficient to create these roles on a system

Teaching: Leadership and Career Pathways

Too often, district efforts to create teacher leadership roles don't last past the pilot phase. This checklist defines key steps to successful, sustainable, and scalable career pathways that strengthen school leadership, accelerate teacher and student learning, and enrich the teaching career.

Define New Teacher Roles that Integrate with Strategic School Designs

New teacher roles must be defined in ways that enable schools to leverage teacher expertise in priority areas and help lead teams to share the work of instruction, respond to student learning needs, and improve their practices.

Must-Dos: Define Teacher Leadership (TL) roles and responsibilities collaboratively, with all stakeholders, aligned to both district and school priorities.

Common Missteps: Schools are asked to implement roles defined in ways that don't match school needs or link to improved learning.

Refine Pipeline and Selection Process

Prepare and select the right people to match defined roles that meet district and school priorities.

Must-Dos: Identify high-potential teacher leaders early in their careers, and give opportunities to practice leadership.

Common Missteps: No clear eligibility, selection criteria, or process.

Manage Performance

Measure performance and student-learning impact of teacher leader roles for the purpose of improving selection and support and recognizing strong results.

Must-Dos: Define measurements of success in the short and long term as part of the design process.

Common Missteps: No evaluation of results, so roles and stipends become permanent and disconnected from contribution.

Integrating Teacher Leadership into the System

Support Leaders

Provide support to ensure the success of teachers in their new roles, as well as the principals who will manage and evaluate them.

Must-Dos: Create expectation and structures for release time for teacher leaders for their development and contribution to the TL learning community.

Common Missteps: Formal training for teacher leaders is nonexistent or doesn't include adult leadership skills, and principals receive minimal training to support these new leaders.

Secure Sustainable Funding

Fund TL roles at scale based on their value and by reallocating: (1) the components of teacher compensation spending and (2) the costs of the roles that teacher leaders offset.

Must-Dos: Define centrally the stipend or salary ranges for different role types, and align amounts to the level of responsibility and expertise required as well as the value of the investments they displace.

Common Missteps: Roles are funded through TIF or other temporary grants without a long-term strategy for sustaining them and without including the cost of release time required for some teacher leader roles.

Adjust Policy and Operations

Stage the process of implementation to ensure that required adjustments are made for support, supervision, union contracts, and expense and payroll systems.

Must-Dos: Systematically review key policy and operational barriers.

Common Missteps: No path for scale is planned for or discussed until the end of the pilot phase.

level rather than on a school level. In most cases, teachers need to learn new adult leadership skills to effectively play these roles. Building this capacity and working on the challenges inherent with introducing a new way of teaming can be hard to do school by school. The financial sustainability of these initiatives requires the shifting of resources that is easier and sometimes only possible on the system level. Additionally, teacher leaders can move within and across schools.

The “Teaching Leadership and Career Pathways Checklist”

Use our new checklist on pages 20-21 to guide your district past some of the common pitfalls around implementing teacher leadership roles. It defines six key steps to successful, sustainable, and scalable career pathways that strengthen school leadership, accelerate teacher and student learning, and enrich the teaching career.

Each step of the checklist includes three components: a high-level description of the step, “must-dos” highlighting specific actions, and “common missteps” indicating areas of caution. By placing common missteps alongside the must-

dos, this checklist underscores the degree of deliberateness each step requires.

For example, the penultimate step in the checklist is “Secure Sustainable Funding,” a step often placed in the second phase of implementation. Providing sustainable funding is pivotal to making the program stick; therefore, districts must define centrally the stipend or salary ranges for different role types and align them to the requisite level of responsibility and expertise as well as the value of the investments they replace. ERS has identified the common misstep of funding these roles through TIF or temporary grants without a long-term strategy for sustaining them and without including the cost of release time required for some teacher leader roles. Without prioritizing these considerations when creating teacher leadership roles, the program may not last past the pilot phase.

For more information on finding sustainable funding for teacher leadership roles, read our white paper “A New Vision for Teacher Professional Growth & Support” at www.erstrategies.org/library/a_new_vision_for_pgs, which provides six steps to a more powerful school system strategy. ■

The Power of Podcasts

BY CHRISTOPHER J. NESI

From *NJEA Review*

A podcast is a digital audio, video, or text file made available on the Internet for downloading to a computer or portable media player. It is typically available as a series, new installments of which can be received by subscribers automatically.

Podcast consumption and creation can fulfill two needs for an educator. Consuming podcasts is a great way to grow personally and professionally. Podcasts allow you to consume valuable content anytime and anywhere. You can use your morning commute to improve yourself and learn something new.

Podcasts are available on just about any topic you can imagine. If your passion is duct tape wallets or learning more

about technology integration strategies, there is a podcast for you.

I also encourage all educators to create their own podcasts. You are the expert in your field and it's time to realize the value and power of your own voice. Why not share your knowledge with the world?

Or have your students create their own podcasts. Students are always more engaged if you ask them to show what they know in a different way than a traditional assignment or assessment. The benefit for you is that grading a podcast will be a nice change of pace.

Where You Can Learn More

I entered the podcasting arena last year. My wife encouraged me to share my passion for education technology and

Christopher J. Nesi teaches social studies in New Brunswick (NJ) Public Schools. Condensed, with permission, from NJEA Review, 89 (October 2015), 44-45, the official journal of the New Jersey Education Association.

Additional Resources

Podcast Answer Man—podcastanswerman.com

The Audacity to Podcast—theaudacitytopodcast.com

School of Podcasting—schoolofpodcasting.com

Podcasters' Studio—podcastersstudio.com

Educational Podcasting Today—educationalpodcasting.today

Podcasts I Enjoy—pinterest.com/mrnesi/podcasts-i-enjoy

technology integration with the world. Enter the “House of #EdTech” podcasts where I explore how technology is changing the way teachers teach and the impact that technology is having in education. I interview teachers, leaders, and creative people (like you) and share their stories.

My podcast is released biweekly and is available on iTunes, Stitcher, and other outlets.

On Sunday nights at 8:30 P.M., Stacey Lindes (West Windsor-Plainsboro), A.J. Bianco (Ramapo Indian Hills), and I moderate a conversation that revolves around podcasting for teachers, students, and education in general. The chat runs for 30 minutes and consists of two questions.

#PodcastPD also runs live on blab.im. Blab is a website that allows users to have live video

chats with up to four people and also have participants in a text-based chat environment. As hosts, we can bring other people into the live conversation, just like a call-in radio show.

You can find great education-related podcasts through the Education Podcast Network (www.edupodcastnetwork.com). Content includes podcasts related to technology, leadership, and general education discussion.

Podcasting 101

You don't need to break the bank to enter the podcasting game. This is true for you as an individual and for your students. It's not hard to learn the basics of sound editing and podcasting best practices.

Following are my software and hardware recommendations for beginning podcasters.

Audio editors:



The Power of Podcasts

- Audacity (Win, Mac)—free
- GarageBand (Mac)—free
- TwistedWave (Chromebooks)—free

Microphones:

- Audio Technica ATR2100 USB/XLR (\$30-\$560) (Win, Mac, Chromebooks)
- AT2005 USB/XLR microphones (\$30-\$560) (Win, Mac, Chromebooks)

These two microphones are essentially the same and both allow for growth in podcasting. They can be connected via USB to your laptop/computer or to an audio mixer. These connections can also be made simultaneously.

Chromebook users:

- TwistedWave online audio editor
- Audio Technica ATR2100 USB/XLR or AT2005 USB/XLR microphones (\$30-\$560)

- Podcast media hosting via Libsyn.com or Blubrry.com (\$5/month)

Here's what you need to create to get you or your students podcasting.

- Audio files
- 64-bit, mono, MP3 file
- Media host
- Soundcloud, Pod-o-matic, Podbean, AudioMack
- Website/blog
- Google Blogger

The hosts listed above also give you and your students web pages that provide an RSS feed.

A podcast episode is created when an audio, video, or text file is associated with a blog post via a blog post enclosure. When your post is published, the media appears in the post's RSS feed to which people can subscribe. ■

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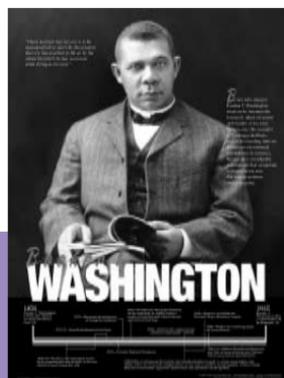
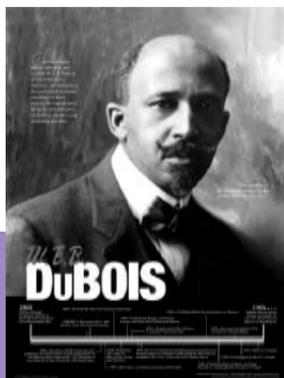
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