



AMERICAN Educator

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND IDEAS

A photograph of a classroom with several students sitting at desks. In the foreground, a young girl with long dark hair is looking towards the camera while holding a red pen over an open notebook. Other students are visible in the background, some looking down at their work.

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A Union of Professionals

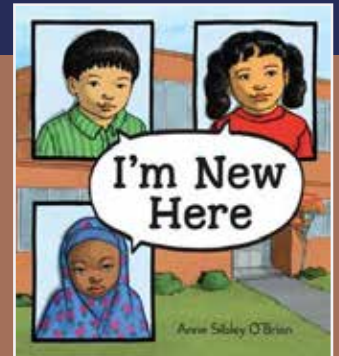
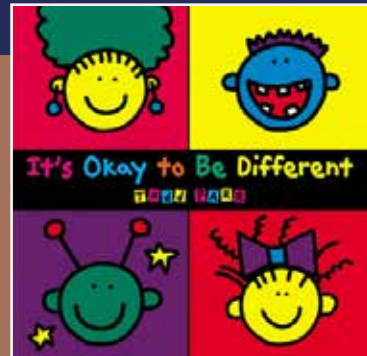
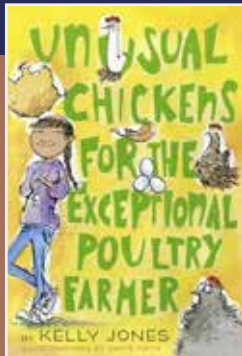


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Four Pillars for Successful Schools

RANDI WEINGARTEN, AFT President

EDUCATION WAS ECLIPSED by numerous other issues and controversies during the presidential election campaign. But if there was any question about the importance Americans place on public education, it was answered when Donald Trump nominated Betsy DeVos to be secretary of education. DeVos's nomination galvanized a passionate and dedicated force for our public schools: the public.

DeVos has spent decades as a lobbyist and cheerleader for alternatives to public schools: charter, virtual, private, and home schools. Her record of undermining public schools, her poor performance at her confirmation hearing, and Trump's pledge to pour \$20 billion into private school vouchers all sparked deep alarm. But DeVos's confirmation battle had a major silver lining: the public in public education has never been more visible or more vocal, and it is not going back in the shadows. An example of this is #PublicSchoolProud, a campaign to showcase the great things happening in public schools every day.

I sent an open letter to DeVos one week after she took office, voicing concern about her early actions and statements as secretary denigrating public schools, and inviting her to spend meaningful time in public schools. I've visited hundreds of schools across the country and have seen firsthand their struggles and successes. The American tradition of local control of public education has resulted in a rich array of approaches, designs, and programs. But there are common traits among all schools that are working as they should. I call them the four pillars of effective public schools: promoting children's well-being, supporting powerful learning, building teacher capacity, and fostering school and community collaboration. And the new federal Every Student Succeeds Act enables these pillars to become a reality.

Promoting Children's Well-Being

Education starts with meeting children where they are—emotionally, socially, physically, and academically. Every school must provide a safe and welcoming environment for all children. And instead of fixating on tests, we must focus on the whole child. Half of all public school students live in poverty, so confronting this reality is an absolute necessity. One way to help these students is through community schools—neighborhood public schools that meet kids' needs by coordinating partners and resources. New York City's Community Health Academy of the Heights is a great example. It offers supports like mental health counseling, a parent resource center, a food pantry, and a community health clinic. A variety of indicators, including large gains in academic achievement, attest to the academy's effectiveness.

Supporting Powerful Learning

Society rightly sets high expectations for our public schools—to develop students academically, for work, for civic engagement, and to lead fulfilling lives. The path to accomplishing these goals lies in powerful learning—learning that engages students and encourages them to question and collaborate. One way to inspire such learning is through project-based instruction, like in Corpus Christi, Texas, where students investigated the potential for humans to live on other planets. Career and technical education can also deeply engage students and help them to develop skills and knowledge they can use in the world of work.

Building Teacher Capacity

Becoming an accomplished teacher takes time, support, and an intentional focus, key features of the teacher residency model described in a new report by the Learning Policy Institute, which is excerpted in this issue of *American Educator*. New and veteran teachers alike benefit when they

have opportunities to share their expertise with colleagues. Teacher evaluation can also build capacity, and the AFT has fought against the broken test-based evaluation systems of No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top and pushed for evaluation systems that support both teacher growth and student learning.

The public in public education has never been more visible or more vocal, and it is not going back in the shadows.

Fostering School and Community Collaboration

Collaboration among educators, parents, and community partners is the glue that holds all this together. This is evident in the Progressive Redesign Opportunity Schools for Excellence program in New York City, also featured in this issue. Collaboration is essential—schools with parents, educators with administrators, and schools with community partners. When schools struggle, the response too often is “disruption”—mass firings, school closures, and district or state takeovers. Those approaches are indeed disruptive, but they are not effective.

The Path Forward

Advocates for public education were handed a stinging defeat in the presidential election. But out of defeat has emerged a dedicated and diverse alliance in support of public education as a public good—uniting parents, educators, students, civil rights groups, faith leaders, and many others. I believe that not only will my fellow champions of public schools be paying close attention to the actions of this administration, but that public education forever will be a driving factor whenever they cast a vote.



4 The Potential and Promise of Latino Students

BY PATRICIA GÁNDARA

Because Latinos comprise the largest minority group in the United States, our country's socioeconomic well-being is tied to their educational success. While the challenges related to Latino students often dominate education discussions, we must also focus on the many assets these young people bring with them if we are serious about helping them achieve.

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BY XIAODONG LIN-SIEGLER, JANET N. AHN, JONDOU CHEN, FU-FEN ANNY FANG, AND MYRA LUNA-LUCERO

The backstories of famous scientists may help students realize that their own struggles in science are not unique and can be overcome.



OUR MISSION

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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FOUR PILLARS OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

AFT President Randi Weingarten is urging the education community to steer clear of a new round of education wars by focusing instead on work that improves children's well-being, supports powerful learning, builds teacher capacity, and fosters cultures of collaboration. These are "the four pillars to achieve powerful, purposeful public education," Weingarten told a National Press Club audience in Washington, D.C., on January 9, and the underpinnings of these pillars spring directly from success stories based on AFT affiliates' work with district and community partners around the country. Read more at <http://go.aft.org/AE117news1>.



PAM WOLFE

Randi Weingarten at the National Press Club.

SAFE, WELCOMING SCHOOLS

Teams of educators, union leaders, administrators, and community leaders from more than 20 school systems nationwide gathered in New York City in January to work together to transform schools into the safe, welcoming environments that all students deserve. The setting was the 2017 Center for School Improvement Leadership Institute, cosponsored by the AFT and the Teacher Center at the United Federation of Teachers. The emphasis at the four-day meeting was on developing and identifying the tactics, training, resources, and rich community connections needed to move away from zero-tolerance discipline policies and establish a positive, inclusive tone in classrooms. Learn more at <http://go.aft.org/AE117news2>.

FREE TUITION GETS TRACTION

The New York Legislature is considering a plan to offer low- and middle-income state residents free tuition to state colleges and universities. Announced in January by Governor Andrew Cuomo, the Excelsior Scholarships would aid income-qualified students

accepted to State University of New York and City University of New York schools; free tuition would begin this fall for families earning up to \$100,000 annually, with limits rising over the next two years. Separately, authorities in San Francisco announced a deal in February to provide free tuition at the City College of San Francisco for residents, and books for low-income students, in the next school year. Read more about the San Francisco plan at www.bit.ly/2lhW7Go.

TRUMP'S EXECUTIVE ORDERS

In his first week in office, President Trump issued executive orders implementing his campaign promise to target refugees and immigrants. Signed in January, the executive order on immigration has been challenged in court. It temporarily banned nationals of seven Muslim-majority countries from entering the United States, and it came just days after an executive order threatening to withdraw federal funds from the more than 300 U.S. cities that have declared themselves sanctuaries for immigrants. In response to these and other executive actions, AFT members and union leaders have been actively engaged in protests, and the AFT is working aggressively to circulate information, updates, and resources to assist affected members and those they serve, and to help fight this outrageous abuse of power. Read more at <http://go.aft.org/AE117news3>.

GALVANIZED BY DEVOS

Betsy DeVos may own the dismal distinction of being the only Cabinet appointee in history who needed a vice president's tie-breaking vote to escape a stalemated Senate, but that may not be her only legacy, notes AFT President Randi Weingarten. During her confirmation hearing as President Trump's nominee for secretary of education, DeVos displayed a lack of knowledge, experience, and commitment to the mission of the department she now heads—and galvanized millions of Americans in the process. "The public in public education has never been more visible or more vocal, and it is not going back in the shadows," Weingarten said. "They will be fierce fighters on behalf of children." The full statement is at <http://go.aft.org/AE117news5>.

PUBLIC EDUCATION'S DAY OF ACTION

On the eve of President Trump's inauguration, tens of thousands of parents, teachers, students, and community members took part in the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools (AROS) National Day of Action. AFT members played a major role in the rallies, school "walk-ins," and other events in more than 200 cities and towns, highlighting the growing movement to fulfill the promise of public education. The

AROS day of action helped build momentum two days later for the historic Women's March on Washington. More than 1,200 AFT members bused to the union's national headquarters to join hundreds of thousands of marchers on the National Mall, and union members also played a role in marches in Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles, Miami, New York City, San Francisco, and scores of other cities. Read more about the AROS events at <http://go.aft.org/AE117news4>.



The Potential and Promise of Latino Students



BY PATRICIA GÁNDARA

By now, it is pretty much common knowledge that Latinos comprise the nation's largest minority group, both as a percentage of the population (17.6 percent)¹ and as a percentage of school-age students (25 percent).² That is, one in four K-12 students in the United States is Latino or Latina. While the related challenges are often overemphasized, the tremendous assets these young people bring with them are often overlooked.

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In 1980, Latinos were 6.5 percent of the total population and about 8 percent of the K-12 school population,³ and they were principally located in three states: California, New York, and Texas. They did not have a large presence in the rest of the country, where the notion of majority-minority populations was framed in terms of black and white.

The nation's population has undergone a massive shift in the years since 1980, when immigration began to soar, after historically low rates of Latino immigration between the 1930s and 1970s. The Latino school-age population has tripled since 1980, from 8.1 percent to its current 25 percent.⁴ The National Center for Education Statistics projects that by 2023, nearly one-third of all students will be Latino.⁵ However, in three states—California, New Mexico, and Texas—Latinos already account for more than half of all students.

It is important to note that this recent growth is overwhelmingly the result of native births. Contrary to much of the political rhetoric about insecure borders and uncontrolled immigration, more Mexicans have left the country in the last few years than have

entered it, and Mexican immigration is now at net zero.⁶ More than 90 percent of school-age Latino children are born in the United States.⁷ They are U.S. citizens and our responsibility. How we view these students—primarily as challenges or as assets—will determine to a large extent how we choose to educate them and the kind of success they are able to achieve.

A New Demographic Twist

Most Latinos live in what I call seven traditional settlement states: Arizona, California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and Texas. However, recently there has been a dramatic shift in where Latinos reside. New pockets of immigration have resulted in concentrations of Latino students in places that haven't had a substantial number of Latino immigrants before. The Latino population is growing faster in the South than anywhere else in the country. Between 1990 and 2014, the South's Latino school-age population grew by a factor of 10. Meanwhile, the Latino school-age population grew only 32 percent in the traditional settlement states. Today, Latino children fill classrooms in areas where a generation ago there was no Latino presence.

Not all of these immigrants are Spanish speaking, but the majority of them are. And not all Latinos are from the same country. About two-thirds are of Mexican origin and another nearly 10 percent are of Puerto Rican origin, but the rest come from a variety of Spanish-speaking nations (including Cuba, at 3.7 percent; the Dominican Republic, at 3.2 percent; the Central American nations, combined at 9.1 percent; and South America and elsewhere, at 10.4 percent), and they also come from different social classes and traditions.⁸ Nonetheless, it is possible to speak of Latinos as one group, since approximately three-quarters are from Mexico and Puerto Rico alone, and these students tend to share many demographic characteristics, such as low educational attainment, high rates of poverty, and a longtime presence in the continental United States.

The Challenges and the Possibilities

As a group, Latinos fall far behind both white and Asian students in academic achievement and educational attainment, largely because they begin school significantly behind their peers; they are the least likely of all subgroups to attend preschool. While Latino children have made significant gains over the last decade, only 52 percent of those ages 3 to 6 attend or have attended a preschool program, compared with an average of 61 percent for all children.⁹

Moreover, their achievement on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which tests a representative sample of all American students every two years in math and reading, lags behind that of their peers. In 2015, 26 percent of Latino students performed at the proficient level in fourth-grade mathematics, compared with 51 percent of white students and 65 percent of Asian students. In eighth grade, the performance of all students dropped, with 19 percent of Latinos scoring proficient, compared with 13 percent of African American students, 20 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native students, 43 percent of white students, and 61 percent of Asian students.¹⁰

Although these results do not differ significantly from the 2013 NAEP results, Latinos have made strides since 2000. Most of those gains happened in the first few years after 2000, after which NAEP

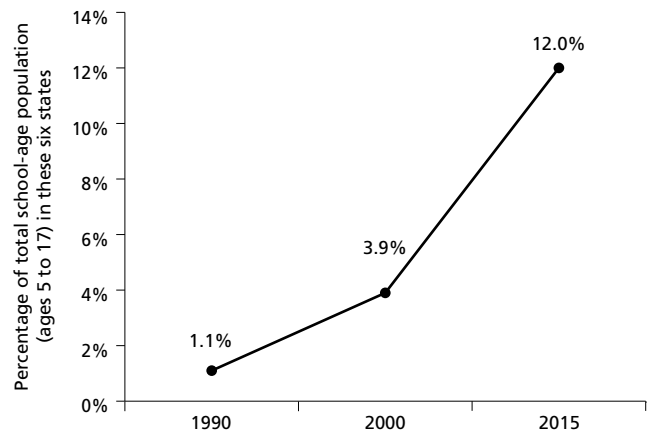
scores tended to flatten for all students. It's no coincidence this stagnation occurred at the same time as the narrowing of the curriculum and the fixation on high-stakes testing began under No Child Left Behind.

With respect to reading in 2015, just 21 percent of Latino students scored at the proficient level in fourth grade, compared with 46 percent of white students and 57 percent of Asian students. In eighth grade, the numbers were similar, with 21 percent of Latino students scoring proficient, compared with 44 percent of white students and 54 percent of Asian students. In sum, achievement gaps between Latino students and their white and Asian peers persist.¹¹

In recent years, Latino students have made progress in high school completion: 76 percent graduated with their class in 2014, compared with 61 percent in 2006.¹² Even so, this rate lags far behind graduation rates for white students (87 percent) and Asian students (89 percent).¹³

The gender gap in Latino high school graduation rates, on the rise since the 1980s, is also troubling, since high school and college completion, or at least some postsecondary training, is a prerequisite for gaining access to the middle class. In 2013, 82.6 percent of Latinas graduated from high school, compared with 74.1 percent of Latino males.¹⁴ While 43 percent of white students and 66 percent of Asian students completed at least a bachelor's degree by age 29 in 2015, only 21 percent of African American students and 16 percent of Latino students did so.

Percentage of Latino K–12 Students in Six Southern States, 1990–2015



Southern States	1990	2000	2015
Alabama	0.7%	1.9%	6.7%
Arkansas	1.1%	4.2%	11.0%
Georgia	1.6%	5.4%	13.9%
North Carolina	1.0%	5.2%	14.9%
South Carolina	1.0%	2.5%	8.1%
Tennessee	0.8%	2.3%	8.4%

SOURCE: AUTHOR'S CALCULATIONS OF 1990 AND 2000 U.S. CENSUS "5-PERCENT PUBLIC USE MICRODATA SAMPLE." 2015 DATA ARE FROM THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY.

Latinas also outperform their male counterparts in college degree completion. In 2015, 18.5 percent of Latinas had earned a bachelor's degree by age 29, compared with 14.5 percent of Latino males.¹⁵

A major reason that Latino college completion is so low is that nearly half of Latinos who attend a postsecondary institution go to two-year colleges, where the likelihood of their transferring to a four-year institution is much lower than for students from most other racial/ethnic groups.¹⁶ One study of California community college students with intent to transfer found that only 17 percent of Latinos transferred to a four-year college within seven years, compared with 30 percent of white students and 41 percent of Asian students. These students tend to “get stuck” in community college because they are more likely to work while going to school, to have insufficient funds, and to require remedial courses that delay their progress toward a degree.¹⁷ Research shows that Latino students, more than students from any other group, tend to enroll in less selective colleges, even though they actually qualify to attend more selective ones,¹⁸ usually because of financial concerns. And notably, more selective institutions tend to graduate all their students at much higher rates.¹⁹

Given that income in the United States is closely tied to education,²⁰ our country's economic and social well-being is tied to the educational success of Latinos. Needless to say, the stakes are indeed high.

Why Latino Students Fall Behind

The underperformance of Latino children has frequently been attributed to the fact that so many grow up in homes and neighborhoods where Spanish is the primary language. In fact, this notion has largely driven language education policy, which has pushed schools to adopt English-only instruction in an effort to reclassify their English learners to English-proficient status as quickly as possible.

Businessman Ron Unz, who spearheaded the English-only movement that began in California in 1998 and traveled as far as Massachusetts by 2002, said that most English learners who received English-only instruction would become proficient in English within a year and would thereafter catch up with their non-Spanish-speaking classmates. Of course, these claims did not come true.²¹ And earlier studies had routinely found this goal unrealistic.²²

The simplistic and misguided explanation that language is the primary impediment to academic achievement overlooks the much more powerful role of poverty. Nearly two-thirds (62 percent) of Latino children live in or near poverty, and less than 20 percent of low-income Latinos live in households where anyone has completed postsecondary education.²³ Taken together, these circumstances almost inevitably result in children living in poor areas with few recreational resources and attending underperforming schools where other children like themselves are isolated from mainstream society. As a result, they seldom encounter peers who are knowledgeable about opportunities outside their neighborhoods or who plan to pursue postsecondary education. Additionally, many parents may not have the time or knowledge to evaluate the quality of their children's education and may not feel empowered to press the schools to strengthen their offerings.

Moreover, these schools are qualitatively weaker in their ability to educate students than the schools that middle-income and white and Asian students attend.²⁴ Sean Reardon, professor at Stanford University, finds that “the difference in the rate at which black, Hispanic, and white students go to school with poor classmates is the best predictor of the racial achievement gap.”²⁵ Still, middle-income black and Latino households are much more likely to live in poor neighborhoods than whites or Asians with the same incomes.²⁶ And racial segregation adds an additional burden to economic segregation, as this double segregation is associated with a social bias against students of color. Latino students are now more segregated than black students across the nation.²⁷

As I noted earlier, this segregation is also associated with linguistic isolation. A linguistically isolated household is defined by

The misguided explanation that language is the primary impediment to academic achievement overlooks the much more powerful role of poverty.

the Census Bureau as one in which all household members age 14 and over speak a language other than English and none speaks English “very well.” More than one in four Latino students living in poverty lives in such a home.²⁸ Clearly, it is difficult for Latinos to learn English when they do not hear it spoken at home and they attend school with peers who do not speak English well either. The solution, of course, is not to require parents to speak to their children in English; rather, parents need to help students develop their home language while students are fully integrated into schools and classrooms that expose them to English both formally and informally through peer relationships.*

Research challenges the notion that speaking Spanish is the primary impediment to Latino students' academic achievement. Several studies²⁹ have now found that immigrant students or the children of immigrants tend to outperform subsequent generations of Latino students academically. Since speaking Spanish is a primary characteristic of Latino immigrants and children of immi-

*For more on dual language learning and English language learners, see the Summer 2013 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/summer2013.

grants, this would appear to contradict the idea that language holds them back. Researchers tend to explain this phenomenon as one of motivation.³⁰ The newcomers are acutely aware of the sacrifices their parents have made to come to the United States and often articulate a desire to pay them back by doing well in school. They strive to lift themselves and their parents out of poverty. As a result, they become real believers in the American dream.

However, when this social and economic mobility has failed to materialize after the second generation, and students find themselves trapped in the same low-income settings with few observable prospects, motivation wanes and they develop a negative view of school. Education then comes to represent failure rather than opportunity and threatens their self-worth. As a result, it can make more sense for them to reject school before it rejects them.



The fact that somewhere between a third and a half³¹ of all Latino students begin school without being able to speak English certainly has an impact on their achievement. But this impact can be reduced or possibly even eliminated, as part of this problem is of our own making. By making the primary goal moving these students to all-English classes as rapidly as possible, we undermine their acquisition of academic English—the more sophisticated use of language that supports comprehension and literacy.

However, when Latino students are placed in strong bilingual and dual language programs, they outperform their Latino peers in English-only programs and come closest to closing achievement gaps with other students.³² Where such programs are not available, Structured English Immersion programs—where English is the main language of instruction—can provide these students with access to the core curriculum, though it is a matter of debate whether they can provide the same breadth and level of rigor. The best programs build on students' native language, which ultimately helps accelerate their English skills.

There aren't as many bilingual programs as there once were, due to several decades of educational policies that promoted a

shift to English-only instruction,[†] but their popularity is again gaining ground.³³ In 2016, 73 percent of California voters overturned a 1998 near ban on all bilingual instruction in the state. Commentators attributed this extraordinary turnaround to much more positive attitudes toward immigrants and an explosion of interest in dual language programs, which many feel provide obvious advantages for all children.

Immigration and the Well-Being of Children

While most Latino children in the United States were born here and enjoy the full rights of citizenship, many have at least one parent born outside this country. That means these children often have to deal with the troubled history that can accompany migration—leaving homes and loved ones behind—and can traumatize families.³⁴ Moreover, some members of these families are not citizens and lack legal status. While no exact number is available, best estimates suggest that more than one in four Latino students live with at least one undocumented parent.³⁵ This figure does not account for siblings or other family members at risk of deportation. We can assume that, adding these family members, more than 25 percent of Latino students live in homes stressed by the threat of deportation. Latino students with undocumented parents experience higher levels of poverty, lower levels of educational attainment, and greater dependence on social services than Latino children with U.S.-born parents.³⁶ One can only imagine the psychological toll of sitting in school all day wondering if your parents will be there when you return home.

In 2012, President Obama signed an executive order announcing Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), a program meant to defer deportation for certain undocumented immigrants who entered the country when they were younger than 16. A 1982 Supreme Court decision (*Plyler v. Doe*) declared that undocumented immigrant children had a right to public education through high school, but until DACA began, they could be deported after high school. While DACA did not offer a pathway to citizenship, it did offer a temporary right to be in the country legally for the estimated 65,000 high school graduates who each year complete school but cannot legally work, join the military, or often even continue their education.[‡] These young immigrants entered the country with their families, frequently at such young ages they did not even know they were born outside the United States, and certainly had no say in where they were raised.

To be eligible for DACA, immigrants brought to the United States before turning 16 must have lived continuously in this country for at least five years; must have been attending or have graduated from a U.S. high school, or have served in the military; and must not have been convicted of a felony or certain misdemeanors (among other requirements). If they met all the requirements, produced certifying documents, and paid an application fee of \$495 (as of December 23, 2016), they may have received deferred deportation and a work

[†]For more on the history of bilingual education and the renewed interest in bilingual programs, see "Bilingual Education" in the Fall 2015 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/fall2015/goldenberg_wagner.

[‡]For more on DACA, see "Undocumented Youth and Barriers to Education" in the Summer 2016 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/summer2016/undocumented.

permit for a two-year, renewable period. By June 2016, more than 700,000 undocumented people had received a DACA permit.³⁷

While this policy provided considerable relief for many young Latinos, at least half of those estimated to be eligible did not apply. Reasons include fear of the immigration service having information about their families and the high cost of the application, especially in circumstances where more than one individual in the family is eligible. It was also understood that the permit could be revoked at any time, especially under a federal administration that disagrees with the policy. Given the program's uncertain future under the Trump administration, many students whose DACA terms have expired are returning daily to regular undocumented status without the ability to work legally. Among other challenges, this creates a hardship for paying for higher education.

According to estimates, roughly 500,000 U.S.-citizen youth currently live in Mexico as a result of deportations and economic circumstances that forced their families back across the border.³⁸ These young people, born in the United States, usually have no history with Mexico and most often have been educated only in English. Once in Mexico, they often have trouble integrating into Mexican schools, which have different curricula and standards than American schools and, obviously, require students to speak, read, and write in Spanish. They also often have difficulty convincing Mexican school officials they should receive credit for classes they took in the United States. If the new federal administration makes good on its promises to remove undocumented immigrants, the number of students in this situation can be expected to grow because many U.S.-born children of immigrants will accompany their deported family members.

President Obama attempted to address this problem in 2014 with his Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA) policy, which would have allowed parents of citizen children who met a series of requirements to remain in the country with renewable work permits, much like the DACA applicants. This policy would have prevented many of the "returned" students from having to leave the country to an uncertain fate in Mexico. A recent Supreme Court decision resulted in a stay of DAPA, leading many U.S.-citizen children to worry about being removed from the only home they have ever known.

In spite of these enormous challenges, stories of undocumented students who have excelled academically are recounted each year at graduation and in national newspapers.³⁹ Anyone teaching in colleges across the country is likely to encounter these students.

As a professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, I have taught many undocumented students. One I will never forget was always early to class, well prepared, and engaged. One day, she asked me if I had an extra copy of a text we were reading for class. She was having difficulty accessing the library's copy. As we talked, I learned that not only could she not afford to buy books, she could not afford a place to live and slept on friends' sofas. She was also frequenting a food pantry. She couldn't legally work because she was undocumented, having been brought to the United States in the third grade. But she was a musician in a Mariachi group, which, when they could get bookings, helped her

meet expenses. Andrea had excelled in high school and was admitted to UCLA, one of the most competitive public universities in the country, and she credited her parents' example of working hard and never giving up. But it was her involvement in extracurricular activities that fueled her hopes for the future:

Music played a very important role because it was a big motivator. ... I couldn't afford books sometimes, I couldn't afford rent, [but] I always had music to look forward to. It just kept me going so much, even when things got really, really hard. ... When I could have given up and I could have just thrown in the towel, I always had music to look forward to.⁴⁰

Of course, it was not only music that kept Andrea in school and moving toward her goals but also a supportive campus environ-



Students who are fluent in another language and culture can build bridges in a fundamentally interconnected world.

ment, a peer group that sustained her, and faculty members who saw her potential and encouraged her.

Primed for "Deeper Learning" and Bridge Building

Plenty of challenges remain in closing achievement gaps for Latino students. But these students represent enormous assets for our nation. Given that a majority of Latino students are the children of immigrants (and to a much lesser degree immigrants themselves),⁴¹ I have outlined five ways these students are primed for "deeper learning," a pedagogy that has been heralded as fostering the kinds of skills that best serve 21st-century challenges. That is, an emphasis on critical thinking, analysis, cooperative learning, and teamwork. The five characteristics that are typical of many immigrant students are a collaborative orientation to learning, resilience, immigrant optimism, multicultural perspectives, and multilingualism.

Psychologists have long noted Latina mothers' emphasis on cooperative and respectful family relations that foster a preference for cooperative learning by Latino children.⁴² Cooperative behavior lends itself to the kinds of shared inquiry and teamwork that

are the cornerstones of deeper learning and skills that many employers find crucial.

Because immigrants cannot rely on the normal routines of their homelands and must be adaptable to new circumstances and expectations, children learn to be resilient, to persist in the face of adversity, and to keep trying until “they get it right.” This persistence leads to deeper learning.

Research has also shown that first- and second-generation immigrant students tend to outperform subsequent generations academically, in spite of language differences and cultural barriers. This phenomenon has been labeled “immigrant optimism,” in which these students, taking a cue from their immigrant parents, come to be true believers in the American dream and strive to realize it, exhibiting extraordinary motivation.



Finally, and somewhat obviously, immigrant students typically have multicultural perspectives and are multilingual. These students are both immersed in American culture outside their homes and part of their family’s culture. Being able to view a problem from multiple cultural perspectives allows students to see that problems can have more than one right answer and is key to more creative thinking. And students who speak multiple languages demonstrate greater cognitive flexibility and executive function (for example, ability to maintain a focus when faced with multiple stimuli).⁴³

Also, students who are fluent in another language and culture can build bridges in a fundamentally interconnected world. Knowing another language quite obviously enables access to many more people, information, and experiences. But knowing another culture—understanding how others think and how to present oneself in a different cultural context—is an invaluable skill. Acknowledging this fact, one recent survey of employers across all sectors of the economy found that two-thirds preferred hiring a bilingual individual over a similarly qualified monolingual.⁴⁴ Clearly, employers view these multilinguals as assets to building client relationships and managing diversity within a company. As Nelson Mandela

said, “If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, it goes to his heart.” Both business and diplomacy are best served by speaking to a person’s intellect and heart.

Just as students who develop skills in more than one language are advantaged in many ways, so is the education system that understands the value of communicating in multiple languages. By speaking a language the student understands, school personnel help that student—and his or her family—feel more connected to the school and believe his or her teachers care.

What We Know Works

One of the most distressing things about the Latino education gap is that we actually know how to narrow it, and perhaps even close it. We simply do not act on this knowledge. For example, while schools clearly don’t have the power to eradicate poverty, they can use proven strategies to counter its effects, including providing “wraparound” services for students and families living in poverty.* Significant evidence shows that making social and medical services available to families and students in need helps reduce absenteeism (a major correlate of low achievement) and increase student engagement in school. And while the new federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provides for the use of such services, the funds available hardly cover the tremendous need that exists.

We also know that preschool works. Early childhood education introduces Latino children to the expectations of schooling and exposes them to English. Based on national data, researchers found that the Latino-white achievement gap narrows by about one-third during the first two years of schooling, but then remains constant over the next several years,⁴⁵ suggesting that early intervention can be especially effective.

Another bulwark against the effects of poverty is desegregation. In recent years, education reformers have claimed that equity in education could be achieved within racially and economically segregated schools. Yet the desegregation movement of the 1960s and 1970s was supported by research that showed how segregation fueled achievement gaps among racial and ethnic groups.⁴⁶ In fact, the primary finding in *Brown v. Board of Education* was that separate could not be equal.

Effective desegregation has become increasingly difficult, as the racial and ethnic composition of the nation’s schools has shifted dramatically. Nonetheless, segregation by class, race, and language can be improved through strong magnet programs and, in the case of Latinos especially, through two-way dual immersion programs.[†] These programs have a goal of enrolling equal numbers of English speakers and English learners so that both groups become bilingual, biliterate, and culturally aware.

An abundance of evidence suggests the effectiveness of these programs in both raising academic achievement and desegregating students.⁴⁷ While the demand for these programs is increasing,⁴⁸ they require strong bilingual personnel. Although there has been scant support for the recruitment and development of teach-

*For more on community schools, see the Fall 2015 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/fall2015.

†For more on socioeconomic integration, see “From All Walks of Life” in the Winter 2012–2013 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/winter2012-2013/kahlenberg.

ers to sustain these programs, states can use funds from ESSA to hire more bilingual teachers.

Where two-way programs that enroll both English speakers and English learners are not feasible because of local demographics, bilingual programs that allow Latino English learners to access the regular curriculum in Spanish as they learn English also show strong results for Latino students.⁴⁹ But they too require bilingual teachers.

Many programs serving low-income students, including Latinos, have as a goal to prepare them for high school graduation and college entrance. The most cost-effective programs include counseling components that guide students into the rigorous courses often denied to them because of the perception they “aren’t college material.” They also usually provide tutorial support. Teachers in these programs inspire students to prepare for college and provide the study skills necessary to succeed.⁵⁰

One such program is AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination),* which operates in most states and provides counselors plus a supportive peer group to help students stay on track in school. Another program, known as the Puente Project, operates in California and Texas and targets Latino students (though others can enroll); it provides a college preparatory English curriculum that incorporates Latino literature and integrates aspects of the Latino community into its activities. It also relies on building a supportive “familia” among peers and incorporates program personnel who can communicate with parents. Lastly, PIQE (Parent Institute for Quality Education), which originated in San Diego but now operates throughout California and in 10 other states, focuses on Latino parents, especially immigrants with little knowledge of how U.S. schools operate, and trains them to advocate for their children and monitor their school performance. The program also trains parent coaches to teach other parents; most PIQE programs operate in Spanish.

Research has found that Latino students are the least likely to take on debt for college and the most likely to forgo college (and sometimes even not finish high school) for financial reasons.⁵¹ It is especially important for Latinos to access financial assistance, so programs that encourage Latino students to attend college should provide information on how to pay for it. For many Latino students, money for their own education often comes at the cost of basic necessities for other family members. One study conducted in the aftermath of the Great Recession found that 40 percent of Latino students in a very large state university could not rely on their families for any financial support; instead, *they* were a source of support for their parents and siblings.⁵²


Finally, it is axiomatic that students must feel a sense of belonging in school if they are to be truly engaged and motivated to excel. Relationships are crucial. Somewhat paradoxically, though, Latinos are the least likely to participate in extracurricular activities in school, where many friendships begin.

In a series of studies that looked at the “sense of connectedness” of students of Mexican origin, the researchers concluded that among the most important school interventions for these students is connecting them to extracurricular, out-of-classroom activities in order to bind them to peer groups and to the school. Similarly,

researchers have found that those immigrant students “who had even one native English-speaking friend were able to learn English more rapidly and make a better adjustment to school.”⁵³ Another recommendation stemming from these studies was to offer extracurricular activities during the school day, so that all students could participate in something in which they had a particular interest with peers who shared that interest, but that did not involve additional cost or time after school, when they might be expected to help out at home or at work.⁵⁴

A typical observation about successful interventions for Latino (and all other) youth is that male students make up only about one-third of college access programs.⁵⁵ And, since it is males who seem to be in the greatest need of support and motivation, the programs often struggle to involve more young men.

Teachers can ensure that being labeled an English language learner does not limit a student’s access to all the courses and opportunities that English speakers enjoy.



Research suggests that a key to addressing this “male problem” is offering programs that are run by or have staff that include charismatic Latino adult males, who appeal to young Latinos and appear to attract and retain them more effectively.⁵⁶ In addition, male teachers have a significant positive impact on the academic performance of male students.⁵⁷ Thus, focusing on the recruitment of Latino male teachers, counselors, and program directors may improve outcomes for Latino male students.[†] Programs for these young male teachers may need to include some kind of part-time compensated activity, whether it is school based or work based, as they tend to feel a responsibility to be earners, as indicated in surveys of young Latinos.⁵⁸ In our own research, we have found, based on national data, that Latinas are more likely to attend college if they have Latino teachers (male or female). In fact, the more of these teachers they encounter, the more likely they are to attend college.⁵⁹ This, of course, suggests that an impor-

*For more on AVID, see “Focusing on the Forgotten” in the Fall 2007 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/fall2007/jacobson.

[†]For more on the importance of recruiting Latino male teachers, see “The Need for More Teachers of Color” in the Summer 2015 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/summer2015/wilson.

tant intervention for these students would be recruiting more Latino teachers.

In sum, several interventions are available that would help close achievement gaps. Often, they are not implemented because they require either a rethinking of our normal routines or a substantial investment of both time and money. Arguments based on economic studies show it costs more not to implement what we know works—“pay now, or pay more later.” But these arguments have yet to persuade policymakers, who have the ultimate say in giving such interventions a chance.

What We Must Do

Support at the state and federal levels for universal preschool would go a long way toward providing Latino children a strong academic



foundation. While it is critical that these children have access to high-quality early childhood education, it is just as important that it be culturally and linguistically appropriate. Underscoring this point, in June 2016, the Obama administration released a policy statement on the need to “foster children’s emerging bilingualism and learning more broadly” within early childhood programs.⁶⁰

At the federal level, there is great need for more funding for wraparound services or full-service community schools. This can be accomplished without breaking the bank by integrating the resources of the Department of Education with those of the Department of Health and Human Services and its various sub-departments that deal with early childhood education and youth services. While the old Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, which was disbanded in 1979, may have been too unwieldy for the 21st century, reorganizing these departments to provide more funding for wraparound services makes sense.

Additionally, U.S. education policy should reflect the commitment of other industrialized countries to producing a multilingual citizenry. It should incorporate support for what both of the last two U.S. secretaries of education have agreed on: all children in the

United States should have access to dual language education, and emerging bilinguals should not have to forgo the advantage of knowing another language in order to learn English and participate fully in their schools. To that end, the federal government must lend a hand in recruiting and supporting the development of bilingual teachers.

Additionally, states and school districts must create pathways for young people to become bilingual teachers. In recent years, we have witnessed the increasing popularity of magnet programs. Why not create magnet programs that seamlessly transition students from high school to college and teacher preparation programs, with special incentives for students who have acquired another language? Today, 22 states and the District of Columbia offer a Seal of Biliteracy on the diplomas of students who graduate from high school with strong literacy skills in two or more languages.⁶¹ These young people are perfect candidates to pursue teaching, and could probably be convinced to do so with full scholarships from state and federal governments.

To ensure that Latino students have the same access to high-quality education that meets college- and career-ready standards, school districts must place a higher value on counselors, especially those who can communicate with and engage parents of Latino students. Too often, when budget cuts require belt tightening, counselors and nurses are among the first to go. This may be penny-wise and pound-foolish in districts that serve many low-income Latino students, who need the guidance of trained professionals to help them enroll in the coursework required for high school graduation and postsecondary education.

A recent policy shift making it easier for students to earn college degrees holds great hope for helping more Latino students. Currently, 22 states allow students to pursue a bachelor’s degree in specific subject areas within their community colleges. In other words, students who attend two-year institutions in these states do not have to transfer to another campus but can continue seamlessly toward their undergraduate degree without leaving the community college campus. Such a program has the potential to enable many more Latino students to complete college degrees.

More colleges should take advantage of this opportunity and expand their program offerings, but unfortunately there is little evidence to date that they are moving in this direction.⁶¹

And what can teachers do? Teachers can nurture the assets that these students bring to school, such as their optimism and the persistence they have shown in difficult circumstances. Teachers can celebrate the cultural practices that have nourished immigrant communities and recognize the value of students’ bilingual skills. They can ensure that being labeled an English language learner does not limit a student’s access to all the courses and opportunities that English speakers enjoy. They can help Latino students find an extracurricular activity that truly engages them in school. They can be vigilant about creating equal-status relationships in the classroom so that all students feel they have something to contribute. And teachers can help Latino students see themselves as essential to our nation, which has flourished because of its diversity, not in spite of it. □

(Endnotes on page 42)

⁶¹To learn about the Seal of Biliteracy, visit www.sealofbiliteracy.org.



Leading on Latino Issues

BY EVELYN DEJESUS

As an AFT vice president, I am pleased that our union is engaging in a more formal and more public show of support for Latino issues. With my colleagues on the AFT executive council, I have often discussed the importance of advocating for Latino students and their families, as well as for all English language learners (ELLs) and Latino members.

Two years ago, AFT President Randi Weingarten, my Latina colleagues on the council—Kathy Chavez, president of the Albuquerque (New Mexico) Educational Assistants Association, and Catalina Fortino, a vice president of the New York State United Teachers (whose article appears on page 14 of this issue)—and I decided that the time was right to elevate Latino issues within our union. And so we created an AFT task force that crafted the resolution “¡Si Se Puede!: Improving Outcomes for Latino Children and Youth and Addressing the Needs of the Latino Community,”* which was passed at the AFT’s national convention in July 2016.

The resolution will enable our union to highlight the particular needs of Latino

children and youth and their families in our public education system and our communities.

In November 2014, before the task force’s inception, then-President Obama announced an expansion of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and the creation of the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA) program. Those policies inspired us to create the task force and draft the resolution. My colleagues believed our union could effectively advocate for Latino children, who historically have had no voice. We wanted our undocumented Latino children to know that they don’t have to wonder who’s going to fight for them, because we at the AFT will always have their backs.

As a union, we also wanted to improve the recruitment and retention of Latino educators. What can the AFT do to support those teachers who have benefited from DACA? What can we do to help their families?

It’s important to note that the AFT’s Latino task force stands for many nationalities. For example, we now have many nurses coming to the United States from the Philippines. How are we preventing them from being exploited in the workplace? Thanks to our task force, we are nurturing partnerships with allies in the

labor movement and throughout the immigration community at the local, state, and national levels.

Forming these relationships is now more crucial than ever under a Trump presidency. Our undocumented students and teachers are scared, and we must protect them.

A Sense of Validation

For me personally, the AFT’s resolution on Latino issues shows that Latinos have arrived. We’re here, and we’re not going away. I don’t feel we’ve ever been recognized by society at large in the way the AFT has recognized our contributions to public education and the United States in general. When Trump won the presidential election, Latino teachers in New York City and elsewhere called me to discuss the resolution. The document’s promise has touched many of our members, and it can serve as an organizing tool for our union as well.

Since the creation of the task force, the AFT has also sought to build alliances with Latinos abroad. For instance, our union has begun a cross-cultural partnership with the Mexican teachers union SNTE (Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación).

Closer to home, in New York City, the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) sponsored its first-ever ELL-focused conference this past fall, which drew 800 participants from across the country. The conference

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*To read the resolution, visit <http://go.aft.org/AE117link1>.

featured presentations on immigration rights and instructional strategies, among other topics. AFT members inquired about the union providing professional development for educators of ELLs with special needs, and we hope to offer such a program in the future.

It's incumbent upon the union to ensure that our members view their union as more than just the defender of the contract. As a union of professionals, the AFT stands for professionalism. To me, that means standing up for all aspects of instruction, in a safe teaching and learning environment, so that educators can help all children reach their full potential.

I truly believe our members work in education for the right reasons. It's a calling, as far as I'm concerned. We arrive at our schools very early. We prepare and plan instruction for all our students. We are ready



for every child who comes through the door. As educators and union leaders, we must make sure teachers get what they need and all children get what they deserve.

That's why two years ago, at the UFT, I spearheaded the creation of a new union position to support the work of ELL educators: ELL specialist. In September 2015, the UFT hired Christine Rowland, a retired ELL educator and founding member of the AFT's ELL Educator Cadre who had taught in New York City high schools for more than 20 years. Thanks to Christine's knowledge and guidance, the UFT is strengthening the district's bilingual and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) programs, while preparing educators to take on increasing levels of responsibility and leadership for ELL issues.

We're also building an ELL speakers bureau at the UFT. The bureau will include educators who can speak a foreign language

that New York City families speak at home. So if you're a teacher meeting with parents who speak Urdu, for example, you can bring along an Urdu-speaking UFT member.

Compared with the previous New York City mayor and superintendent, both current leaders have shown a greater awareness of the need to help ELLs maintain their home language as they learn English. Under the previous administration, there was scant support for dual language programs. But the tide has turned. There is now more understanding of and respect for

Our undocumented students and teachers are scared, and we must protect them.

the research that supports this approach to teaching students academic content in their home language at the same time as they learn English.

In New York City, many ESOL programs are actually becoming dual language programs. Throughout New York's boroughs, leaders from the Greek and Albanian communities, to name just two, are advocating for the creation of dual language programs within public schools so children can maintain their home language. The district already offers dual language programs in Arabic, Bengali, French, Haitian Creole, Korean, Mandarin, Polish, Russian, Spanish, and Yiddish. It's a fascinating shift and a testament to America's growing diversity.

Life as an English Language Learner

My own journey reflects the sense of possibility and educational opportunity that I wish for every ELL student. My parents were from Puerto Rico, and my first language was Spanish. When we came to New York in the 1960s, it was like *West Side Story*. I had to learn how to defend myself and became very tough because Latinos were picked on and called terrible names.

My siblings and I also grew up very poor, but we didn't know it because we were rich in spirit. The community raised us. Down the block, if you were doing something wrong, your mother knew about it by the time you got back home.

In school, I remember being bullied and

ostracized. People didn't see me as smart because I spoke slowly. As I was learning English, I always had to translate from Spanish in order to speak in class. So I did not respond as quickly or as clearly as my peers, and they often underestimated me.

It wasn't until I was a single mother with two children that I pursued higher education. In the early 1990s, while living on the Lower East Side, one of my daughters became sick from a school construction project,[†] and I started advocating for her and her peers. The New York City Department of Education

noticed my work and soon after hired me as a paraprofessional.

I earned my bachelor's degree in psychology from Baruch College by taking classes at night to become a social worker. But teaching was my true passion, and so a couple of years later I earned a master's degree in education and public administration from Baruch and eventually a master's degree in reading and curriculum development from Fordham University.

For more than 20 years, I taught preschool through second grade at P.S. 126 in District 2 in Manhattan, which is well known for its high-performing schools and focus on instruction and professional learning. Many of my students were Latino and Asian ELLs. Several had special needs, and our school's work with these students enabled my class to become a model for collaboration and instructional strategies districtwide.

In 2003, the UFT recruited me to work on behalf of educators full time. But I've never forgotten where I came from. I'm an English language learner and a teacher who found my voice through helping ELLs, and I could not be happier. I am honored to work on behalf of these students and their teachers because when I was a student myself, I didn't have the supports I needed. And that's what I'm fighting for. □

[†]For more on the importance of school building conditions, see "A Matter of Health and Safety" in the Winter 2016–2017 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/winter2016-2017/roseman.

Why Supporting Latino Children and Families Is Union Work



Professional educators—in the classroom, library, counseling center, or anywhere in between—share one overarching goal: ensuring all students receive the rich, well-rounded education they need to be productive, engaged citizens. In this regular feature, we explore the work of professional educators—their accomplishments and their challenges—so that the lessons they have learned can benefit students across the country. After all, listening to the professionals who do this work every day is a blueprint for success.

BY CATALINA R. FORTINO

When AFT members last year passed the resolution “¡Si Se Puede!: Improving Outcomes for Latino Children and Youth and Addressing the Needs of the Latino Community,” I was extremely proud

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of our union for championing an issue so close to my heart.* As an immigrant, a native Spanish speaker, and a former early childhood teacher of many English language learners (ELLs), I saw myself reflected in the body of this resolution.

After acknowledging that “Hispanic students are the fastest-growing segment of the public school population,” and that “Latinos will account for 40 percent of the growth in the electorate over the next two decades,” the resolution affirms the AFT’s commitment to elevating the importance of Latino issues. As a union committed to social justice and equality of educational

*To read the resolution, visit <http://go.aft.org/AE117link1>.

opportunity, the AFT is advancing the credo that supporting Latino children and families is union work.

That's why I was thrilled to be a founding member of the AFT task force that wrote this resolution. Its passage has prompted me to reflect not only on my own work with ELLs but on the work that I have done collectively with my AFT brothers and sisters over the last 10 years in launching the award-winning website ColorinColorado.org, along with the groundbreaking work of the AFT ELL Educator Cadre, a nationwide advisory task force. I was proud to be one of the first content developers and reviewers for [Colorin Colorado](http://ColorinColorado.org), which has become the most widely used online resource on how to work with and teach ELLs.

In fact, I was the teacher representative who announced the website's launch in 2004, at a press conference in Washington, D.C. The [Colorin Colorado](http://ColorinColorado.org) website first started as an educational initiative of the public television station WETA and the AFT; more recent partners include the National Education Association. It's been gratifying to contribute to this union-generated tool, which really laid the foundation for promoting the AFT's support of ELLs.

Life in a New Country

Each one of us, as educators, comes to our beloved profession with the richness of our personal stories, imbued in culture, language, and traditions. And so it is for me. My immigrant experience of coming to this country at the young age of 9 shaped me and defined who I am as a teacher of ELLs.

I was born in Argentina, and I came to the United States with my nuclear family. My parents, like so many immigrant families, fled political turmoil and economic despair. I can't even imagine the strength of resolve that it must have taken for my mother and father to uproot us and bring us to a land they hoped would hold a brighter future. It was an emotional sacrifice for my family, because we left behind all our extended family and friends.

I knew very little English, aside from "yes," "no," and "good morning," and at P.S. 59 in New York City, my first public school in America, there were very few English language learners. I was fortunate to have been placed in Mr. Aberbach's fourth-grade class. Even though he was a monolingual teacher, he had some basic command of the Spanish language because of his summer travels to Mexico. He turned out to be a wonderful teacher who embraced and supported me through what I refer to as my "silent period."

As difficult as it was for me to understand the academic lessons being taught, it was especially hard to sit there watching all the peer interactions in school, without having the words to understand and join in the conversation. I knew students were socializing around me, and it hurt knowing I lacked the language to engage in those friendships. But because of the way Mr. Aberbach approached me, the children in my class gradually began

to respond to my nonverbal communication as I attempted to participate in their conversations and games. This was not only a new country with a new language but a new environment where one had to learn a new set of rules and social norms.

It took awhile for me to really grasp English. It wasn't until sixth grade that I could begin to do academic work in English and socialize with my peers. Many years later, as an educator, I gained a deeper understanding of my school experiences as a new immigrant through the pioneering work of researcher Carola Suárez-Orozco. In her seminal work, *Children of Immigration*, she depicts how immigrant families experience stress, loss, and achievement. And she describes how second-generation children negotiate different identities within U.S. cultural settings.

While my parents overcame myriad obstacles in coming to this country and were passionate about being in America, one

constant that remained in our family was our native language. At home, we spoke, read, and wrote in Spanish, and my parents were very proud of that, as it was part of our culture. My mother loved poetry, and she read it and other Latin American literature aloud to us. Every two weeks, we wrote letters in Spanish to our family members in Argentina, under the careful eye of my mother, who would check for proper grammar, correct spelling, and the application of the right idiom.

This correspondence helped us maintain not only our native language but also our long-distance relationships with grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins. The

language afforded us an intimacy we would not have experienced if we had communicated in our emerging language, English. Speaking our native tongue at home strengthened our bonds as a family unit. And that source of strength helped us as children facing the challenges of our new school experience. For these reasons, the value of bilingualism was inculcated in me from an early age. Being bilingual and bicultural is at the very essence of my being. So, it is no surprise that this has informed my work with ELLs and their families throughout my career as an educator. The inner strength that I gained from being steeped in my native culture and language while I navigated a new world shaped the way I approached working with immigrant students. I always strived to promote resilience and fight any immigrant bias on the part of policymakers, education leaders, the mainstream media, and the general public.

Promoting Resilience

One researcher whose work deeply influenced my own in promoting resilience among students is Tara J. Yosso. In her article "Whose Culture Has Capital?," she presents a particularly useful model for understanding the factors that foster resilient behaviors among Latino youth.¹ She contends that these students, and

It was especially hard watching all the peer interactions in school, without having the words to understand and join in the conversation.

especially children of immigrants, bring specific strengths to the classroom and beyond—strengths that can serve as tremendous assets in their development. The following are Yosso’s six forms of “community cultural capital,” which all help to shape Latino youth:

Aspirational capital is the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future even in the face of real and perceived barriers. For 17 years, when I worked as an early childhood teacher, I would always ask my students’ families what their aspirations were for their children. I made such aspirations a part of my teaching, so I could help students and their families realize their dreams.

Linguistic capital is the intellectual and social skills attained through communicating in more than one language or style. A central question that I brought to my lesson planning was, How am I providing different opportunities for students to express their understanding in ways that acknowledge and support the language and communication strengths of each student?

Familial capital is the cultural knowledge nurtured within the family that carries the sense of community, history, memory, and identity. I have found this to be one of the most powerful, and often moving, teaching tools to engage students in tapping into their life stories as a source of knowledge and a springboard for new learning.

Social capital is the networks of people and communities that support families as they navigate society’s institutions. Often, the neighborhoods where our children live are underutilized sources of support. In my work with pre-service teachers, I would encourage them to create a map outlining community assets to uncover erroneous assumptions and biased beliefs before they began work with students in the classroom.

Navigational capital is the ability to maneuver through social institutions by drawing on culture-specific skills and experiences. This particular principle came to light for me when I was facilitating school teams to examine barriers that prevent our youth from successfully transitioning from middle school to high school, and then to college and career. It has been rewarding work to help school teams examine underlying beliefs that may hinder the achievement of ELLs and then to create new school policies and structures that promote success for these students.

Resistant capital is the knowledge and skills that foster self-esteem, self-reliance, and the strength to persevere. Promoting and advancing the work of student leadership is central to the mission of teaching and learning. By encouraging students to share their personal struggles and hopes, participate in school teams that make decisions affecting the school experience, and give their perspective on policy recommendations, I have

brought the voice of ELLs to the arena of advocacy outside of the classroom and into the halls of school boards, legislative chambers, and governors’ mansions.

What I have come to appreciate is the diversity of the immigrant experience. In our advocacy work for ELLs, it is always important to emphasize that this population is not monolithic. Each of our students comes to the schoolhouse door with unique immigration experiences.

Every stage of my career has encompassed a different aspect of teaching and advocating for our young people who navigate two worlds, engage in learning with more than one language, and embody the intersection of diverse cultures. Our role is to recognize the diversity of ELLs and continually ask ourselves, Are we meeting the diverse needs of this heterogeneous population?



Throughout my career, I have been especially interested in how educators are viewed in the home cultures of ELLs and what roles teachers play in their societies and in ours. I know that the images of my own beloved “maestros” are never far from my mind. When I was a young girl in Argentina, I grew up learning about “los maestros”—the teachers—and how they were always fighting in the streets to call out injustice. I also think of my seventh-grade science teacher in East Harlem, who encouraged me to fight past the unspoken boundaries that too often limit children who are immigrants. And I remember my

professors at Queens College who taught me that teaching—at its heart—is subversive because it challenges the status quo.

“Los maestros” inspired my life’s work, as a teacher and as a unionist, fighting to bring about justice for all. I became a teacher because my own teachers taught me the power of education to change lives.

As a young teacher, I became active in my union, the United Federation of Teachers in New York City, because I recognized the union’s role in advancing our profession. As I have humbly worked on behalf of ELLs, I know that I stand on the shoulders of union giants, and I am forever indebted to them.

As we begin to make the promise of “¡Si Se Puede!” a long-hoped-for reality, let us remember that at the very heart of the union movement is the belief that we don’t achieve anything in this world alone. We work together, in solidarity—and that always has been, and always will be, our strength. We live our history, and our union principles, in our daily actions. And that’s why I’m proud to say, and why our union has said, supporting Latino children and families is union work. □

Endnote

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Time to



Recognizing the Benefits of Recess

BY CATHERINE RAMSTETTER AND
DR. ROBERT MURRAY

One sunny day in May, Ms. Brown tells her first-grade class, “OK, boys and girls, it’s time for recess.” As the children leave the classroom in an organized fashion, three other first-grade classes join them out on the playground, an open field with one tree and a six-foot-tall monkey bar structure. Under the teachers’ watchful eye, the children climb and play.

After 15 minutes, one of the teachers blows a whistle, and the children run back to the building, where another teacher leads

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them in. Aside from a few latecomers to the door, every child has entered the building in less than 30 seconds. Back in the classroom, Ms. Brown begins a song about not dawdling, and the children move to the carpet for a group story discussion.

Earlier that day, Ms. Brown wasn’t so sure all of her students should go to recess. Connor had acted out one too many times, and she was thinking he didn’t deserve to go out and play. But then, she remembered her training last spring and summer with LiiNK trainers (a project described later in this article), who urged her not to withhold recess as punishment.

So when recess arrived, Ms. Brown decided to allow Connor to go out; she even let him be the first student out the door. The break from his desk ends up helping him refocus. Upon returning to the classroom, Connor apologizes to Ms. Brown and promises to behave better. She believes it. The rest of the day is pleasant for her and Connor—indeed, for the whole class.

While denying recess to a misbehaving student is common for many teachers, Ms. Brown’s response may not be. Her decision to allow Connor to attend recess and his subsequent apology show the power of unstructured play time for students during school.



Unstructured play, with adult supervision, gives children the opportunity to develop important social and emotional skills.

What Is Recess?

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), in its 2013 policy statement titled “The Crucial Role of Recess in School,” describes recess as “a necessary break in the day for optimizing a child’s social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development.”¹ Recess ought to be safe and well supervised, yet teachers do not have to direct student activity. The frequency and duration of breaks should allow time for children to mentally decompress, and schools should allow students to experience recess periods daily.

As the AAP makes clear, outdoor play “can serve as a counterbalance to sedentary time and contribute to the recommended 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity per day.”² An effective recess is one where children demonstrate their ability to stay within the boundaries of their play space, negotiate conflict with each other, and then return to academic learning. The peer interactions that take place during recess allow for communication, cooperation, and problem solving, complementing the classroom experience.³ Unstructured play, with adult supervision, gives children the opportunity to develop important social and emotional skills, which is essential to a well-rounded education.

The AAP’s policy statement on the role of recess in school cited four critical benefits of recess: (1) greater levels of physical activity and fitness, (2) improved attentiveness in class, (3) improved cognition and learning, and (4) practice of peer-to-peer social and emotional skills. The latter, often overlooked, is cited by child development experts as a fundamental skill set, laying the basis for social success in later life. As a result, the AAP concluded that “recess should be considered a child’s personal time, and it should not be withheld for academic or punitive reasons.”⁴

After all, “it is the supreme seriousness of play that gives it its educational importance,” said Joseph Lee, the father of the playground movement. “Play seen from the inside, as the child sees it, is the most serious thing in life. ... Play builds the child. ... Play is thus the essential part of education.”⁵

A Harvard-educated author and philanthropist, Lee advocated for playgrounds in city schools and parks in the late 19th and early 20th century. He was a leader in promoting school attendance and safe havens for play for all children, especially poor children in the urban core of Boston. In the 1890s, children were forbidden from playing games in the streets and there were no playgrounds in the poorest neighborhoods, where adolescent boys were routinely arrested for delinquency. Lee was from a wealthy Boston family, and, recalling the childhood he experienced—one filled with games, dancing, and play—he took it upon himself to find a solution. He gained permission to clear a vacant lot and provide materials and equipment he felt children would be likely to play with or on, such as dirt piles, large pipes, and sand. And, as he predicted, children came to play.

Over the next decades, Lee’s initiative spread from Boston to Chicago and extended into municipal investment in parks and recreation centers for boys and girls. Lee’s efforts also extended to public education. He was determined that poor children receive the same kind of educational opportunity in schools as their more affluent peers by being educated by teachers who were trained as teachers. He personally underwrote the creation of Harvard University’s School of Education in 1920. It was during this period of growth in urban education and play space for children that recess—

as a time during the school day for children to play in a designated space—came to be.⁶

Lee’s vision of play in education still resonates today. Given that the new federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) removes the emphasis on high-stakes standardized testing in schools and includes nonacademic indicators as a component of a student’s “well-rounded education,”⁷ schools that have narrowly focused on scores to the detriment of students’ well-being can now correct the imbalance. In doing so, they can ensure that recess, which plays a vital role in social and emotional development, maintains its rightful place in the school day.

The Current State of Recess

Beyond Lee’s advocacy of playgrounds and recreation, it is difficult to document a precise history of recess. In fact, when the School Health Policies and Programs Study (SHPPS) was initiated in 1994 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) with the purpose of providing “the first in-depth description of policies and programs related to multiple components of the school health program at the state, district, school, and classroom levels,”⁸ recess was not included.

It wasn’t until 1997 that the CDC defined recess as “regularly scheduled periods within the elementary school day for unstructured physical activity and play.”⁹ Recess was first included in the 2000 SHPPS, among various opportunities in schools for children to engage in physical activity. Prior to that, what we know about recess as an experience during the school day—an experience of childhood—is something that is informed by individual and collective memories.

Since then, in addition to SHPPS, other published research about recess practices and policies in the United States has included studies on a smaller scale, in a school or district. These explore various aspects of recess, under the assumption that recess is a given for every child in that school or district.¹⁰ Few studies, however, actually examine how recess varies within and across schools and districts (for instance, how teachers monitor and handle recess in the same school and grade).

Largely, the documentation of what happens in the daily, lived experience of recess in schools remains uneven and takes the form of blog posts, news stories, and other social media sharing. The limitations of understanding the delivery and experience of recess at individual schools aside, since the mid- to late-1990s, a growing body of evidence has emerged about the value of and practices and policies related to physical activity—of which recess is one part. Since its inception in 1994, SHPPS has been repeated in 2000, 2006, 2012, and 2014.

According to SHPPS data from 2014, “82.8 percent of elementary schools provided daily recess for students in all grades in the school.”¹¹ (For a summary of current recess practices, see the table to the right.) Because this study surveys principals and “lead health education teachers,” this statistic doesn’t necessarily paint a complete picture of where, when, or how recess is provided,* and the documentation about current practices only includes data collected from those schools that reported having regularly scheduled recess. Even with these limitations, however, the 2014 SHPPS

*To see the original questionnaires given to principals and teachers, visit www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/profiles/questionnaires.htm.

Elementary School Recess by the Numbers

PRACTICE	ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS
Students participate in regularly scheduled recess during the school day in ¹	
Kindergarten	94.9%
First grade	95.0%
Second grade	94.7%
Third grade	94.3%
Fourth grade	93.3%
Fifth grade	90.6%
Sixth grade	34.9%
Average number of minutes students spend in recess each day ²	26.9
Staff prohibited or actively discouraged from excluding students from all or part of recess as punishment for bad behavior or failure to complete classwork	54.4%
Recess structure	
Students engage in free play or physical activity	93.1%
Students are required or encouraged to use physical activity or fitness stations	2.8%
Other	4.0%
Recess is held outdoors, weather permitting	100%
When recess cannot be held outside	
Students participate in physical activity in the gymnasium, a multipurpose room, or the cafeteria	29.8%
Students participate in physical activity in regular classrooms	17.9%
Students watch a DVD/video ³	5.8%
Students engage in other sedentary activities (e.g., board games)	39.5%
Other	7.0%

1. Among elementary schools with students in that grade.
2. Among schools in which students participate in regularly scheduled recess.
3. Does not include physical activity DVDs/videos.

SOURCE: SCHOOL HEALTH POLICIES AND PRACTICES STUDY, RESULTS FROM THE SCHOOL HEALTH POLICIES AND PRACTICES STUDY 2014 (ATLANTA: CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION, 2015), 50.

research is useful. It shows that, among elementary schools with regularly scheduled recess, the percentage of schools providing recess decreases from first to sixth grade. The average number of days with recess per week across all grades was 4.9, and the average time spent in recess was 26.9 minutes per day.

Decisions about timing, duration, location, and activities for recess are typically made at the school or grade level. While there is no recommended duration (minutes per day) or timing for recess, one of the largest studies published on recess found that for 8- to 9-year-olds, at least one or more daily recess periods of at least 15 minutes was associated with better class behavior ratings from teachers than no daily recess or fewer minutes of recess.¹²

According to SHPPS data from 2000 to 2014, among schools that offer recess, the percentage of classes having regularly scheduled recess immediately after lunch decreased from 42.3 percent

percent or more of the students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

Decreased opportunities for recess have been associated with increased academic pressure. Recess has been the victim of the perceived need to spend more time preparing students for standardized testing and, generally, to meet increased demands for instructional time. Diminishing recess first began in the early 1990s, and it further declined with the enactment of No Child Left Behind in 2001, which emphasized English language arts and mathematics. To focus on these core areas, districts reduced time for recess, art, music, physical education, and even lunch.¹⁵ In addition, recess often was and is withheld from students as punishment for disruptive behavior and/or to encourage task completion, even though research shows this practice “deprives students of health benefits important to their well-being.”¹⁶

Interestingly, the emergence of a national health crisis in the United States—the rising rates of obesity in children—has sparked a reevaluation of recess. Recess was included, along with physical education and other opportunities for school-based physical activity, in the wellness policy requirement enacted in 2004 as part of the Child Nutrition and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Reauthorization Act.* (But, as we just noted, a recess-specific policy is lacking in 40 percent of school districts.) In 2014, this requirement was bolstered by an approved rule under the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010,¹⁷ which “expands the requirements to strengthen policies and increase transparency. The responsibility for developing, implementing, and evaluating a wellness policy is placed at the local level, so the unique needs of each school under the [district’s] jurisdiction can be addressed.”¹⁸ By June 30, 2017, all schools/districts must have a wellness policy that meets all required components.

In conjunction with these federal initiatives, some state legislatures have explored recess as part of a broader school-based wellness or physical activity education bill. Accurately documenting what these legislative actions mean for recess is difficult, partially because recess could fall under a variety of laws or policies, and also because the way the law or policy is written can vary. (For example, a mandate may require a set number of minutes per day for physical activity, with recess included, or it might require recess be specifically included in a district wellness policy.)

To supplement CDC and SHPPS information, the National Association of State Boards of Education’s State School Health Policy Database is updated as states enact or revise laws and policies. Within states, districts can add to or build on any federal or state requirement.[†] A similar database does not exist for district-level school health policies, but as indicated by Bridging the Gap’s research, such policies often do not include recess.

With the renewed emphasis on a “well-rounded education” thanks to ESSA, states and schools now have additional incentive

Recess has been the victim of the perceived need to spend more time preparing students for standardized testing and, generally, to meet increased demands for instructional time.

in 2000 to 26.2 percent in 2014. This may be a result of a decrease in recess opportunities, or it may reflect schools’ shifting recess times to before lunch, which has been shown to increase meal consumption and decrease food waste, while improving lunchroom behavior and increasing attention in the classroom following lunch.¹³

A comparison of results from the SHPPS surveys in 2006 and 2014 also indicates an alarming trend: in 2006, 96.8 percent of elementary schools provided recess for at least one grade in the school, compared with 82.8 percent in 2014. Using self-reported data from high-level administrators at the district level, these surveys show that even though more than 80 percent of districts claim to provide daily recess, a 2014 analysis conducted by the CDC and the Bridging the Gap research program revealed that 60 percent of districts had no policy regarding daily recess for elementary school students and that only 20 percent mandated daily recess.

Additionally, a 2006 analysis by the National Center for Education Statistics found noticeable disparities:¹⁴

- City schools reported the lowest average minutes per day of recess (24 minutes in first grade to 21 minutes in sixth grade).
- Rural schools reported the highest average minutes per day (31 minutes in first grade to 24 minutes in sixth grade).
- The lowest minutes per day of recess (21 minutes in first grade to 17 minutes in sixth grade) occurred in schools where 75

*The wellness policy language only includes recess as one of the ways schools can address student physical activity. Schools are only required to have a policy that addresses nutrition services, nutrition education, physical education, and physical activity. The federal law does not prescribe the duration, timing, or type of activities. Some states have laws, some have recommendations that are codified, and some have nothing (which is the case for recess in most states).

[†]For a state-by-state listing of recess policies in schools, see www.nasbe.org/healthy_schools/hs/bytopics.php?topicid=3120.



to elevate policies and practices for regular recess as part of a robust package of “nonacademic” health and physical activity initiatives, which research has shown to positively affect academic progress.

ESSA requires states to select at least one nonacademic indicator that each school district will report. Funds for implementing the federal law will be allocated to the states to distribute, and they include funds for professional development and programs to support students’ physical health as well as their mental and behavioral health. Recess offers a unique way to address both.

Integrating Recess into School Culture

In 2011, the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) announced it would reintroduce daily recess in the 2012 school year, making it “the first large urban district to once again require daily recess at the elementary and middle school levels.”¹⁹ This move was prompted by a groundswell of parents, community members, and concerned district employees, who led the push for recess reinstatement during their struggle to lengthen the school day. We could find no published accounts on the decision to eliminate recess in the first place; however, based on the timing (recess was discontinued in the early 1980s), we can surmise it was both a cost-cutting measure and a response to concerns that students spend as much time as possible on academics.

Thus, in the fall of 2012, when CPS extended the school day by at least 30 minutes across the district, recess once again became a daily occurrence at all elementary and middle schools. Exactly how these minutes are used varies at each school, but reinstating recess did not take away instructional time. Once recess was reinstated, the CPS Office of Student Health and Wellness codified daily recess by making it a provision of the district’s Local School Wellness Policy that was passed in 2012, which mandates that all CPS K–8 students receive a minimum of 20 minutes of recess each day.²⁰ The office provides ongoing support for teachers and administrative personnel to engage in daily recess and other wellness practices. Reinstating recess not only required dedicating the time for it but also required training and resources for schools and teachers to ensure it was safe and consistent across a large

The emergence of a national health crisis—the rising rates of obesity in children—has sparked a reevaluation of recess.

number of schools in a wide variety of neighborhoods.

More recently, in September 2015, the Seattle Public Schools and the local teachers union agreed to a guaranteed minimum of 30 minutes of daily recess for elementary school students, although teachers had originally asked for 45 minutes.²¹

Such changes in recess require schools to rearrange schedules. But even in districts where recess is required, how students experience it is sharply inequitable, as demonstrated at Detroit’s Spain Elementary-Middle School, where “students are forced to walk the halls during recess, because the gym is shut down due to mold and the outdoor playground emits burning steam—even during Detroit snowstorms.”²² Children in poverty also have less access to free play, fewer minutes of physical activity during the day, and the fewest minutes of recess in school.²³

Promising Programs

Ongoing research continues to expand our understanding of why recess and play are crucial. Some studies are exploring play spaces, specific activities, and the benefits of close supervision,

[†]For more on health and safety in schools, see “A Matter of Health and Safety” in the Winter 2016–2017 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/winter2016-2017/roseman.



Children in poverty have less access to free play, fewer minutes of physical activity during the day, and the fewest minutes of recess in school.

while others are examining the benefits of accumulated physical activity and social interactions. While much is being learned from practices in other countries, three programs in the United States are particularly instructive: Peaceful Playgrounds, Playworks, and the Let's Inspire Innovation 'N Kids (LiiNK) Project out of Texas Christian University.* Each offers a slightly different philosophy and approach, but the commonalities are that recess is well supervised and that every child experiences daily, safe play time during the school day. Each program is annually evaluated, and findings have demonstrated the benefits of recess as a component of a whole-child education.

Peaceful Playgrounds began in 1995 and is grounded in the following principles: teaching conflict resolution, establishing clear rules and expectations, providing low-cost equipment, and designing a play space that invites exploration and interaction and minimizes potential for conflict. Peaceful Playgrounds offers training for school personnel in the wealth of games available to children

and provides blueprints, playground stencils, and playground game guides. The program emphasizes free choice by students.

Playworks, which began in 1996 as Sports4Kids, focuses on using safe play and physical activity during recess and throughout the day to improve the climate at low-income schools. The program offers a variety of services that hinge on training or providing Playworks “coaches” to “enhance and transform recess and play into a positive experience that helps students and teachers get the most out of every learning opportunity.” According to a survey of Playworks schools, staff report a decrease in bullying and disciplinary incidents, an increase in students’ physical activity during recess, and an increase in students’ abilities to focus on class activities.²⁴

The **LiiNK Project**, a school curriculum modeled after one in Finland (whose academic performance consistently ranks in the top five countries in the world—well above the United States), was created three years ago to balance a focus on academics and the social and emotional health of children and teachers. Ms. Brown, the first-grade teacher mentioned earlier, teaches in a LiiNK school.

While LiiNK received national media attention in 2016 as strictly a recess program, it emphasizes more than just embedding additional recess into the school day. It also focuses on preparing teachers and administrators to redesign learning environments through recess, character education, and teacher training, in order to combat critical issues affecting the development of non-cognitive skills, such as empathy in students.²⁵ Preliminary pilot data are compelling: in schools implementing the LiiNK curriculum, student achievement significantly improved, as did students’ listening, decision-making, and problem-solving abilities.²⁶

Other recess practices, both in the United States and in other countries, have demonstrated positive effects for students and teachers. As discussed previously, the move to conduct recess before lunch is associated with decreased food waste, increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, and better behavior in the lunchroom and upon returning to the classroom.

In studies with British children, providing large equipment and playground markings increased physical activity levels.²⁷ A study in Belgium found a similar effect on physical activity levels

*For more about the programs described here, see www.peacefulplaygrounds.com, www.playworks.org, and www.liinkproject.tcu.edu.

through providing smaller, less costly games and equipment.²⁸ Across the globe, simply providing these kinds of portable play equipment, such as balls and jump ropes, encourages children to be active during recess.²⁹

Holding recess outside invites self-directed play where children choose what to do, from playing make-believe games, to reading or daydreaming, to socializing and engaging in physically active games; the experience is up to the child. Certainly, these activities can also occur in an indoor setting, but the opportunity for exploration is limited.³⁰ Interestingly, a large controlled study in China found that outdoor recess may help prevent or minimize nearsightedness in children.³¹

Meanwhile, children in Japan experience recess in five- to 10-minute bouts approximately every hour, based on the premise that a child's attention span wanes after 40 to 50 minutes of academic instruction.³²

Given the evidence of the value of recess for children and teachers, what can educators, schools, and districts do to promote this critical aspect of the education of the whole child? Daily decisions about who gets recess and when and where it will happen are often made by teachers; thus, teachers are a crucial link for recess. Policies that support daily recess for all children are also essential, especially when it comes to the practice of withholding some or all of recess for disciplinary reasons.³³

It is imperative to treat recess time as a child's personal time (similar to the way adults take breaks and choose how to spend them) and to make this explicit in policy and in practice. Recess time should not be usurped to fulfill a physical activity requirement. That is, if the school is required to offer opportunities outside of physical education classes, recess should only be included as an optional or supplemental opportunity. During recess, it should be as acceptable for children to engage in other types of play as it is for them to engage in physical activity. In addition to policy, teachers, administrators, and school staff would benefit from coursework during initial preparation, as well as from ongoing professional development, in recess management and in establishing and carrying out alternatives to discipline other than withholding recess.

Other ways to promote recess include:

- Advocating for district and school policies that require or recommend daily recess for every child.
- Disseminating information on the benefits of recess and the successful programs and practices described above.
- Including recess-type games and the practice of conflict resolution in physical education teacher training and in school physical education curricula.[†]
- Encouraging state and district boards of education to integrate the social and emotional benefits of recess in health education curricula.
- Collaborating with school wellness councils, school health and

[†]Physical education is intended to impart not only sport-specific physical and competition skills but also lifelong physical health skills, like rule and goal setting, rule following, and general fine and gross motor skills. While separate from recess, physical education is one class that offers a place where children can learn recess-type games, or games that require imagination and physical movement, as well as appropriate ways to negotiate conflict with others.

wellness teams, and parent-teacher groups to reinforce policies for recess, fund the purchase and maintenance of playground or recess equipment, and train playground monitors and teachers.

Daily recess for every child supports a school's mission of providing a high-quality, comprehensive, and meaningful education so students grow and reach their full potential. Participating in recess offers children the necessary break to optimize their social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development. It not only helps them get important daily physical activity but also requires them to engage in rule-making, rule-following, and conflict resolution with peers. These are essential life skills that children can learn to master through the serious act of play. □

It is imperative to treat recess time as a child's personal time and to make this explicit in policy and in practice.

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(Continued on page 43)

One Teacher's Take on Recess

A Q&A with Christopher Smith

For the last five years, Christopher Smith has worked at Thomas Hooker Elementary School in the Meriden Public Schools in Meriden, Connecticut. He currently teaches fifth grade and supervises his students' recess daily. Below, he shares why recess is crucial to student learning.

—EDITORS

Editors: How does recess work in your school?

Christopher Smith: In my school district, elementary school teachers are responsible for their own classes during recess, which is usually about 20 to 25 minutes daily.* At Thomas Hooker, we give the fifth-grade classes closer to 25 minutes on most days, and on Fridays, I typically give them 40 minutes whenever possible. As I know from my previous experience at a different school where recess was shorter, this time goes by quickly; we had only 15 minutes for recess, and by the time we walked the kids outside and came back in, recess was over and the students hardly got a chance to exercise.

Most days, it's just our class during recess, but sometimes a fourth-grade class joins us or all three of the fifth-grade classes go out at the same time. What makes recess special to students is being able to choose what they do. Kickball is really big for us in fifth grade, and we also play foursquare. Generally, when it's the three fifth-grade classes together, I handle kickball, another teacher monitors foursquare, and the third teacher walks around the rest of the area to monitor other activities. For instance, a group of my students sometimes practices gymnastics in a field off to the side, and other students prefer to just talk with their friends.

When it's just my class out there, we typically play kickball. The exercise and health benefits are obvious, but I see a huge social aspect to it as well. For example, the students take turns pitching and organize their own batting orders, and they work out any problems that arise among themselves without needing me to intervene, which is a big step developmentally. And the process of coming to a compromise is also important for them to learn.

There's a part of me that likes when recess is just me and the 17 students in my class. Kids who wouldn't normally play

kickball, for instance, will play because they don't feel overwhelmed by a large group of students. I often find that students really try to help their peers who aren't as athletic by giving them positive feedback. They're constantly encouraging them by saying things like "nice try" and "good job," and it's really an opportunity for the more athletic students to take charge and bond with peers who need more help.

I remember one student who was tremendous academically and also very artistic. But in earlier grades, he was always the last person chosen for teams because he wasn't very athletic. At recess, my students really rose to the occasion by encouraging him to participate in kickball and the other games we played. By the end of the year, he really felt like he was a strong part of our teams during recess, and he gained confidence in himself socially and athletically.

While we're often outside for recess, in bad weather we do have to stay in our classroom. Some teachers provide board games for students to play or give them free time to either work on the computers or read independently. With my class, I try to coordinate team-building activities.

Editors: Tell us about those team-building activities.

Smith: I rely on several different games. For example, this year when the weather was bad and we stayed inside, we did one exercise called "stranded," where students must use the rugs and furniture in the classroom to work their way from one side of the room to the other without touching the ground. The catch is they have to figure out ways to do it as a group.

For instance, students might need to push a chair backward so that another person can get on. At first, the students all just want to get to the other side, but they soon realize they must work together to succeed.

There's great value in students working in a group, as opposed to just working independently all the time, and recess is particularly great for team-building activities. I want my class to come together cohesively during recess so that the cohesion spills over into the classroom and makes it a positive environment for all the kids.

Even the way students are seated in my classroom in pods is designed so they can problem solve with each other. I like to ensure that opportunities for teamwork carry over from recess into actual classwork so students can get to know each other and take on leadership roles.

Editors: Do you ever withhold recess from students?

Smith: No. I allow everyone to go outside because I want them all to get the exercise. If a few students haven't completed their work or followed the rules, usually I won't let them take part in the games for the first 10 minutes or so, and that's plenty of time for them to reflect on how they should have done what they were supposed to do.

To me, denying recess completely is detrimental. These students need to be active and play for at least part of recess so they're not totally excluded from their classmates. It's also a time for them to reduce their own stress and learn to get along with their peers in a group.



*For the district's wellness policy, see www.bit.ly/2i74Lpr.

Spread the Word

In New York City, Encouraging Successful Schools to Share and Grow



BY JENNIFER DUBIN

“Where do you see your school in five years?” The question took Nancy Salomon Miranda, a fifth-grade teacher at the Brooklyn New School, by surprise. Nearly two years ago, she and her colleagues were attending a meeting at the headquarters of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) to discuss a new program that the union had negotiated with the New York City Department of Education.

The program, Progressive Redesign Opportunity Schools for Excellence (PROSE), was created to encourage schools like the

Brooklyn New School to replicate and build on some of the best practices they had spent years putting in place: shared decision making, classroom visits by peers seeking to improve, scheduling changes to allow for more planning time and in-depth student work, and support for diversity in student enrollment. At the time of this meeting at the UFT, the Brooklyn New School was considering applying to the PROSE program, which the UFT and the city’s Education Department had created in 2014.

Salomon Miranda recalls that she and her peers thought for a minute before answering the speaker’s question about their elementary school. Then they started talking. “Let’s really do something wild and crazy,” she recalls them saying. “Why don’t we have a performance-based assessment?”

Performance-based assessments* are essays, research papers, science experiments, and high-level math problems that the New

Jennifer Dubin is the managing editor of American Educator. Previously, she was a journalist with the Chronicle of Higher Education. To read more of her work, visit American Educator’s authors index at www.aft.org/ae/author-index. The photo above and the ones on the following pages show students and teachers from the Brooklyn New School and the International High School at LaGuardia Community College.

*For more on performance-based assessments, see “Putting the Focus on Student Engagement” in the Spring 2016 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/spring2016/barlowe-and-cook.



PROSE enables schools with a proven record of collaboration to make changes outside of the contract.

York Performance Standards Consortium, a coalition of about 40 public high schools, uses to engage students and measure their knowledge and skills in a deep and meaningful way over time. Salomon Miranda and her colleagues' flash of insight was that elementary school students could demonstrate their learning through performance-based assessments, too. Years ago, when her own children had attended a consortium high school, Salomon Miranda had seen firsthand how performance-based assessments challenged them in a way that standardized tests did not.

Two years after that initial meeting with the UFT, the Brooklyn New School is now using performance-based assessments to assess what third-, fourth-, and fifth-graders know and can do. Thanks to pitching the idea in its PROSE application—and as a direct result of collaboration between the teachers and administrators—it's now one of the first elementary schools in New York to engage students in performance-based learning modeled on the consortium's work.

The idea for PROSE, in which more than 140 schools currently participate, came from UFT President Michael Mulgrew. The program provides a structure to enable schools with a proven record of collaboration between teachers and administrators, like the Brooklyn New School, to make changes outside of the contract and regulations to support student learning and teacher development.

To participate, a school's leadership team of teachers and administrators submits a plan to a PROSE panel made up of equal numbers of members from the union and from management.

While plans can focus on almost any aspect of the school's day-to-day routines, many PROSE schools have focused on one of these five areas: distributed leadership structures; expanded learning time; support for increased diversity in student enrollment; teachers visiting the classrooms of their peers; and innovative scheduling that allows for flexible student grouping (for example, seminars, interdisciplinary projects, and remediation) during the school day.

At a time when the charter sector is viewed by many as a panacea for public education, and when the U.S. president is poised to revive a dubious school voucher experiment, New York City is very publicly promoting some of its successful public schools by enshrining their practices in a contract so that others will not only take note but follow suit. With PROSE, "there's a recognition that you do a hard job," Mulgrew says. "A lot of teachers don't want people coming into our buildings telling us they're going to save us. We're here doing the work. We'll figure these things out."

For teachers and administrators at the Brooklyn New School, PROSE has been a way to showcase how student excellence can be achieved within the public school system. And it is being done through labor-management collaboration.*

A Detailed Plan to Support Teaching

In New York City, which has the largest school district in the country, there are 1,700 public schools—and one contract for all of them. Often, schools want to make changes to the contract on a limited set of topics, a practice the district has long allowed. For instance, schools can request a change in the dates of parent-teacher conferences or an adjustment of school start times that are outlined in the contract by submitting a "school-based option," commonly referred to as an SBO. An SBO can only be adopted if at least 55 percent of UFT members at a school vote in favor of the change, which then goes into effect for one school year. To maintain an SBO, schools must vote every year.

With PROSE, the union has taken the SBO process and "put it on steroids," Mulgrew says. To that end, applying to be part of PROSE typically unfolds like this: a UFT chapter leader approaches his or her administrators about the program and explains how it allows schools to make innovative changes to the contract to support teaching and learning.

If the administrators agree the school should participate in PROSE, the school's leadership team, made up of administrators, the UFT chapter leader, and other teachers, crafts a proposal with input from the rest of the faculty. The plan is reviewed by the PROSE panel against a rubric that assesses five key traits, including the plan's degree of innovation, the school's level of collaboration, and the extent to which the plan was generated by and with teachers. If the school's plan is approved, the panel works with the school's team to refine the plan and prepare it for a vote. At least 65 percent of UFT members at the school then must vote for the plan before the school is accepted into PROSE for a five-year term. Because the PROSE plan lasts for five years, schools do not take a new vote each year, as they do for SBOs.

Given that educational ideas, like administrators, tend to come and go, five years can seem like an eternity. But the time enables

*For more on labor-management collaboration, see the Winter 2013–2014 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/winter2013-2014.

schools to see if their proposals will work as planned. And if principals leave during the five-year term, PROSE offers schools some stability, since a new principal cannot change the PROSE plan once it's in place.

Schools, on the other hand, aren't locked into something that doesn't work. If, during the five-year term, a school's PROSE leadership team finds the plan isn't taking shape as expected, the team can contact the PROSE panel and tweak the plan.

Unlike an SBO, a PROSE plan must detail how changes will support teaching and learning. "We're really encouraging schools to be more thoughtful" and "to share that thinking with us so that other schools could benefit," says Jackie Bennett, assistant to the president at the UFT. PROSE "really only works in schools where everybody is working together."

When the UFT created the PROSE program, Mulgrew specifically had successful schools in mind. He wanted to give them the recognition they deserved and the support to take their effective practices to the next level. Just as important, he wanted other schools to learn from and model their efforts on the work of these already high-functioning schools. That's why, as part of PROSE, a PROSE Pathways program enables schools to observe and learn from PROSE schools to help them craft successful PROSE applications.

The successful schools Mulgrew sought to highlight included those in the Internationals Network for Public Schools, a group of 15 high schools in New York City (in addition to 12 schools and academies elsewhere in New York state and in other states) that serve only English language learners; schools in the New York Performance Standards Consortium; and a handful of schools that have long succeeded in making their student bodies socio-economically diverse.

During contract negotiations, Mulgrew recalls telling city Education Department officials that the district could learn from schools that were known for high levels of collaboration, teacher voice, and student achievement but that had not been celebrated by the previous mayoral administration of Michael Bloomberg, which strictly focused on accountability through test scores and publicly derided collaboration. Joel Klein, who served as schools chancellor under Bloomberg, famously wrote that "collaboration is the elixir of the status-quo crowd."¹ His words revealed the administration's utter contempt for the teaching profession, the union, and public education.

In fact, schools in the New York Performance Standards Consortium and the Internationals Network for Public Schools, in particular, had often come under attack from past state commissioners of education who advocated a one-size-fits-all approach to curriculum, instruction, and assessment. (In consortium schools, students participate in performance-based assessment tasks in lieu of four out of the five Regents exams mandated for high school graduation; students must still take the Regents exam in English language arts.)

Two years ago, however, with Mayor Bill de Blasio in office and Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña leading the city's Education Department, the climate began to change. "Under this administration, we're moving back to a place where teachers are valued," says Kamar Samuels, executive director of the department's Office of School Design and a member of the labor-management PROSE panel. "We believe in teacher voice and professionalism."

With PROSE, that belief now extends to teacher evaluation. In New York City, teachers select from one of four options for observations that are part of their annual evaluation. In PROSE schools, teachers can select a fifth option, Option PROSE, in which teachers define an area of focus, create a plan, and implement it throughout the year. Often, the plan includes classroom visits with colleagues, and teachers frequently work together on the same area of focus and share their work. At the end of the year, they participate in a structured review of the year's activity with their principal. In many cases, colleagues are part of that final, summative discussion.

Ultimately, Option PROSE enables "teachers to talk about their practice together" and "share units of lesson plans," says the UFT's Bennett. "It encourages all of these really good practices that are



collaborative and that move schools forward," she says, as opposed to a principal just saying "I observed you, and here's what I think, and here is your score."

The success of PROSE has also helped lay the groundwork for the district's most recent move further away from using standardized test scores to evaluate teachers. In December, the UFT and the city agreed that evaluations of teachers at all schools will rely more on student work, including performance-based assessments. At a press conference with department officials announcing the change, Mulgrew said, "This is the first time where I can stand here before you and say we are moving in a better direction."²

Celebrating a Team Approach

Perhaps the best way to understand what PROSE has enabled schools to do is to look closely at two of them: the Brooklyn New School and the International High School at LaGuardia Community College (IHS).



Before the Bloomberg and Klein era, collaboration around hiring was actually written into the teachers' contract.

At IHS, collaboration has been a hallmark of its work since the school's founding in 1985. Located in Long Island City in Queens, IHS sits on the campus of LaGuardia Community College and enrolls more than 500 students in grades 9 through 12. After graduating, students can remain for a fifth year to take college classes at LaGuardia and still receive guidance and instructional support from IHS teachers.

IHS only accepts beginner- to intermediate-level English language learners who have been in the United States no more than four years at the time they enroll. Currently, IHS students come from more than 50 countries. Although teachers primarily use English, collaborative groups of students work bilingually and students also receive materials and support in their native language. At IHS, all students receive free lunch because such a high percentage of students qualify for it.

Despite the fact that many students enter IHS below grade level, the school does an extraordinary job of helping them become fluent in English and achieve academically. In 2016, the school's graduation rate was 89 percent, compared with the district's graduation rate of 72.6 percent.

Jaclyn Valane, the school's principal, attributes that success to IHS fostering students' sense of belonging. On their very first day of school, students "see they're part of this community of learners built for them," she says. "They're not a pulled-out section of the school who are the English language learners. Everything that we do here in every way is for students who are immigrants."

To ensure that educators meet students' needs, the school has always engaged in distributed leadership, which fosters communication between administrators and teachers and also enables consensus building. In fact, distributed leadership prompted IHS to become a PROSE school in the first place.

When Ernesto Vargas, a social studies teacher at IHS and the school's UFT chapter leader, initially told colleagues about the PROSE program, the decision to apply and be recognized as a model of what works was an easy one that the entire staff—not just the principal—made together. That's because, at IHS, teachers have a real voice in decision making.

For years, teachers have sat on and even chaired a number of committees to help run the school. Notably, IHS administrators serve with teachers on only two of the seven committees (the steering committee and the coordinating council); other committees are strictly teacher led. To serve on and chair any committee, teachers are elected by their peers.

"There's a sense of empowerment with this, just because you're involved in the day-to-day and the year-to-year operations," says Steven Dawson, a history teacher and the school's teacher leader (another democratically elected position at the school). "You aren't just told what to do."

Unlike many schools, IHS has a teacher personnel committee, which takes the lead in hiring. When the school must fill open positions, the committee solicits applications, interviews candidates, and makes suggestions to the principal, who then meets with the candidates herself and signs off on the committee's recommendations.

To faculty at IHS, the idea that teachers have a say in this process makes perfect sense. The school's founders "very much felt that the people who were working with each other should be hiring each other," says Allison McCluer, a guidance counselor and a member of the personnel committee, who has worked at the school for 28 years.

Vargas acknowledges that such an idea was unheard of at his previous school. "You didn't know who was going to be hired," he says. "You just walked in in September and you'd find out who's there."



Before the Bloomberg and Klein era, collaboration around hiring was actually written into the teachers' contract as an option for all New York City schools. Known as the SBO staffing and transfer plan, it gave teachers a voice in hiring at their schools. But in a major loss for teacher professionalism, Klein curtailed the option so that only principals had the power to hire teachers. However, IHS was able to continue involving teachers when bringing on new staff, just as it had always done, since its shared leadership structures, which ultimately became part of its PROSE plan, made collaboration in all areas, including hiring, one of its core principles.

The constant communication between colleagues at IHS has also helped them focus on students. Among the results of the school's collaborative work is an innovative schedule that was ultimately affirmed through PROSE. The school operates a block schedule, with 70-minute periods that give students large chunks of time to prepare portfolios for their performance-based assessment tasks. As part of the New York Performance Standards Consortium, the school has long relied on performance-based assessment tasks to engage students in their learning.

The scheduling flexibility also enables teachers to meet in grade-level interdisciplinary teams twice a week. At one such meeting on a November morning, it's clear just how well members of a joint 11th- and 12th-grade team know their students. The six classroom teachers and one paraprofessional on this team sit around a table, while one teacher with a laptop types notes that appear on a screen at the front of the room:

"Theon [a guidance counselor] and Melissa [a student] are going to SUNY Purchase."

"College Access fair for black and Latino students."

"Ivan's POSSE application is due Thursday."

The group then discusses students who are struggling. When someone mentions one girl who is avoiding working on her portfolio during the last class period, English teacher Amy Burrous suggests a colleague help the student work on it during a block period in the middle of the day.

A few minutes later, the group discusses how best to support a pregnant student, whose attendance has been spotty. The student has been making progress on a research paper and needs guidance in how to bring that research together. One teacher says if he can convince her to maintain her school attendance, he can work with her and help her see that she can complete the paper and submit it before her baby is due.

"Has anything happened with them in couple's counseling?" another teacher asks about the student and her boyfriend, who also attends IHS. "No," a colleague answers. "They're resistant." The group then decides to keep trying to convince them to seek help.

The attention that IHS pays to students' social and emotional needs, in addition to their academic work, is apparent in surveys the school administers at the end of the year. "When you ask students in this school how many adults they feel connected to, it's often three or four," says Dan Kaplan, the early college coordinator, who's worked at IHS for more than 20 years. Because students' academic success depends in part on their connections with educators,* Kaplan says students' survey responses

are a moving testament to the effectiveness of the school's team-based culture.

That culture also values teacher learning as much as student learning. Just as students present portfolios to move from one grade to the next, teachers must also submit portfolios of their work. Professional development for creating these portfolios is among the minor scheduling changes outlined in the school's PROSE proposal. Thanks to the program, IHS can schedule professional development time differently from the Education Department's calendar so that it aligns with the school's performance assessment system, "but with the same number of [professional development] days, or more, established by the contract."

IHS is also one of the many schools to use Option PROSE for teacher evaluation. Before PROSE, teachers at IHS had begun working with their colleagues on reviewing their own growth over time, and that team approach continues today.



IHS assigns teachers to four-person teams that include one member they select themselves. Each teacher submits a teaching goal and a plan for achieving that goal to his or her team, plus a self-reflection, which can take the form of an essay or several journal entries. Even the school's principal and assistant principal are not exempt from this process; they too submit portfolios of their work.

After reading portfolios and visiting classrooms, the peer team meets with the teacher being evaluated for a two-hour conversation about his or her progress. Then the principal meets with the teacher and members of the team to review areas where the teacher can continue to improve. "At its best, it's celebratory," says Amy Burrous. But, just as important, it also helps the school put supports in place if a teacher is struggling.

Before PROSE, teachers at IHS found this peer-to-peer feedback and the classroom visits so valuable they would engage in them—and the extra work they entailed—in addition to the evaluation the school district officially required. But now, as a PROSE school using Option PROSE, its peer team assessment approach counts toward teachers' official evaluations.

Valane, the principal, says such an evaluation is far more meaningful than if she were to observe a teacher's classroom for 15 minutes twice each year and fill out a checklist of what the

*For more on what contributes to positive school climates, see "It's About Relationships" in the Winter 2015–2016 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/winter2015-2016/ashley.



Performance assessments give teachers greater insight into students' strengths and weaknesses.

teacher did or did not do. "It's actually the teacher taking months to put together this portfolio and really looking deeply at what he or she wants to grow in," she says. The process also enables teachers and administrators to "solidify our feedback as a whole."

That team approach garnered the school an Innovation in Education award from the UFT during its annual Teacher Union Day celebration in November. Valane says that though staff members at IHS were honored to have their work acknowledged as exemplary, to them it hardly felt new. "We have always been about teachers and administrators working together because that's also a good school."

A Meaningful Way to Assess Learning

PROSE has enabled some elementary schools, such as the Brooklyn New School, to return to their roots as places that prioritize project-based learning and student diversity. Founded in 1987 by a group of parents and teachers, the school in Carroll Gardens is just down the street from the quintessential brownstones that the neighborhood is known for.

According to Anna Allanbrook, the school's principal, the Brooklyn New School joined PROSE to push back against teacher evaluation tied to student test scores. In recent years, around 95 percent of the school's students in third through fifth grades have opted out of taking standardized tests.

In their place, the school has focused on creating performance-based assessments for these grades, often referred to as the testing grades. Establishing the scheduling flexibility to create and administer such assessments figured prominently in the school's PROSE proposal. It requested and was granted changes to the number of attendance days for its more than 600 students and changes to the end-time of school days once each month so that teachers could engage in professional development geared toward performance assessments.

In its PROSE proposal, the Brooklyn New School also stated its commitment to maintaining a diverse student population. "Our children don't come from the neighborhood," Allanbrook says. "They're actually admitted by lottery."

When the school was founded, nearly 50 percent of students qualified for free or reduced-price meals. Today, that figure is a little under 30 percent. Since the Supreme Court's 2007 ruling against the use of race in public school admissions, the Brooklyn New School has struggled to ensure it enrolls students from all walks of life. But thanks to PROSE and the district's new Diversity in Admissions pilot program, it is now among a handful of schools allowed to give priority to low-income students. For instance, this year, after siblings and pre-K students, the school was able to give priority to students eligible for free or reduced-price meals. In September, it admitted a kindergarten class made up of 52 percent of students from low-income families, compared with 20 percent the previous year.

Fifth-grade teacher Nancy Salomon Miranda says the performance-based assessments were a natural outgrowth of the school's teaching and learning philosophy. For years, its students would focus on grade-level projects—studying China in third grade, New Amsterdam in fourth grade, and Mayan culture in fifth grade, for example—and hold showcases each year for other grades in the school, as well as for family members and students from neighboring elementary schools. The showcases took the form of "museums" where the "students were the docents and the curators," says assistant principal Diane Castelucci. Students researched a topic and created works of art, which also included long pieces of writing, and then presented their projects to demonstrate what they had learned.

In deciding to become a PROSE school, faculty members realized they could turn these "museums" into performance-based assessments and create an appropriate rubric for assessing student work similar to the one that the New York Performance Standards Consortium uses in its high schools. To that end, Brooklyn New School teachers asked teachers at the Brooklyn Collaborative School, a consortium high school located in the same building, to talk them through the process of creating a rubric for performance-based assessments.

That kind of collaboration exemplifies what the union had in mind when it created PROSE, says the UFT's Jackie Bennett. The program's purpose is to encourage teachers to work together so they can "spread authentic work in schools."

(Continued on page 44)

The Teacher Residency

A Practical Path to Recruitment and Retention



BY RONEETA GUHA, MARIA E. HYLER, AND LINDA DARLING-HAMMOND

Recruitment and retention challenges are once again leading to teacher shortages across the nation. Especially in urban and rural school districts, low salaries and poor working conditions often contribute to the difficulties of recruiting and keeping teachers, as can the challenges of the work itself. As a consequence, in many schools—especially those serving the most vulnerable populations—students often face a revolving door of teachers over the course of their school careers.¹

Turnover is higher in districts that meet shortages by hiring teachers who have not completed an adequate preparation, as

novices without training leave after their first year at more than twice the rate of those who have had student teaching and rigorous preparation.² Similarly, teachers who do not receive mentoring and support in their first years leave teaching at much higher rates than those whose school or district provides such support.³ Under these circumstances, everyone loses: Student achievement is undermined by high rates of teacher turnover and by teachers who are inadequately prepared for the challenges they face. Schools suffer from continual churn, undermining long-term improvement efforts. Districts pay the costs of both students' underachievement and teachers' high attrition.⁴

Newly emerging teacher residency programs seek to address these problems by offering an innovative approach to recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers. Residencies have typically been focused in hard-to-staff geographic areas (urban and rural) and subject areas (e.g., mathematics, science, special education, and bilingual/English as a second language teaching). They recruit the teachers that local districts know they will need early, before they are prepared, so that they can then prepare them to excel and remain in these schools. When used in this deliberative

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manner, teacher residencies can address a crucial recruitment need while also building the capacity of districts to provide high-quality instruction to the students they serve.

The Design of Teacher Residency Programs

Building on the medical residency model, teacher residencies provide an alternative pathway to teacher certification grounded in deep clinical training. Residents apprentice alongside an expert teacher in a high-need classroom for a full academic year. They take closely linked coursework from a partnering university that leads to a credential and a master's degree at the end of the residency year. They receive living stipends and tuition support as they learn to teach; in exchange, they commit to teach in the district for several years beyond the residency.

Residents apprentice alongside an expert teacher in a high-need classroom for a full academic year.

This model fosters tight partnerships between local school districts and teacher preparation programs. Residencies recruit teachers to meet district needs—usually in shortage fields. Then they rigorously prepare them and keep them in the district. While most teacher residencies began in urban districts, consortia of rural districts and charter school organizations have also created them.

Although many teacher preparation programs have evolved substantially, traditional university-based programs have often been critiqued for being academically and theoretically focused, with limited and disconnected opportunities for clinical experience. Conversely, alternative routes into teaching have been criticized for focusing on “learning by doing,” with limited theoretical grounding and little or no opportunity for supervised student teaching alongside expert teachers modeling good practice.⁵ These critiques, coupled with the challenge of hiring and keeping well-prepared teachers in hard-to-staff districts, have led to the “third space” from which teacher residencies have grown in the last 15 years.⁶

In part, the residency design emerged from the Master of Arts in Teaching programs started in the 1960s and 1970s—an earlier era of teacher shortages—as federally funded innovations at elite colleges and universities. Columbia, Harvard, Stanford, and the University of Chicago, among others, launched yearlong post-graduate programs that typically placed candidates in schools for a full year of student-teaching internships in the classrooms of expert veteran teachers, while the candidates also took coursework from the university. In those days, the federal government

provided aid to offset many of the costs of these teacher preparation programs. Even though federal aid has dwindled considerably, many of these programs continue today. This design created the foundation for the residency model, which adds a closer connection to the hiring district and provides additional financial incentives and mentoring supports for teacher candidates.

Key Characteristics

Several characteristics set teacher residency programs apart from most traditional teacher preparation and alternative certification programs. First, residencies are typically developed as a partnership between a school district and a local institution of higher education, with the goal of fulfilling the partner district's hiring needs. A second characteristic of residencies is a longer clinical placement than is found in most traditional or alternative programs, generally at least a full school year, with residents working under the guidance of an experienced, expert mentor—before becoming the teacher of record. Third, high-quality residencies offer teacher candidates a curriculum that is tightly integrated with their clinical practice, which creates a more powerful learning experience.

Although each teacher residency program is unique, a few of the key common characteristics shared by high-quality residencies are described below:

District-university partnerships. In contrast to traditional teacher preparation programs, which often do not recruit and place candidates in specific districts to fulfill the districts' particular needs, residents are recruited to work for the partner district (or charter management organization) and fulfill its hiring needs (e.g., filling shortage subject areas and/or teaching in specific schools). Residents commit to teaching in the local school district after the program ends. High-quality residency programs are codesigned by the district and the university to ensure that residents get to know the students and families in the communities in which they will be teaching and are rigorously prepared to teach in those communities and schools.

Candidate recruitment and selection. Districts and preparation programs partner in the recruitment and selection of the

High-quality teacher residencies feature:

1. Strong district-university partnerships.
2. High-ability, diverse candidates recruited to meet specific district hiring needs, typically in fields where there are shortages.
3. A full year of apprentice teaching under supervision.
4. Coursework about teaching and learning tightly integrated with clinical practice.
5. Ongoing mentoring and support for graduates.
6. Cohorts of residents placed in “teaching schools” that model good practices with diverse learners and are designed to help novices learn to teach.
7. Financial support for residents in exchange for a three- to five-year teaching commitment.
8. Carefully selected expert mentor teachers who coteach with residents.

residents to ensure that residents meet local hiring needs. In addition, the programs aim to broaden and diversify the local teacher workforce by selecting high-quality candidates through a competitive screening process. Residencies recruit candidates from a wide variety of backgrounds, both recent college graduates and midcareer professionals, and are highly selective.

Clinical experience. For at least one academic year, candidates spend four to five days a week in a classroom under the wing of an experienced and trained mentor teacher, and gradually take on more responsibilities over the course of the year.⁷ Most residents receive at least 900 hours of pre-service clinical preparation, while the norm for most traditional programs is in the range of 400–600 hours. Most alternative certification programs offer little or no student teaching.⁸

Coursework. Coursework in residencies is closely integrated with clinical experiences. Sometimes, courses are designed and taught by experienced teachers in the district.⁹ Often, the university faculty members who teach courses are involved in local schools and are themselves former teachers. Many courses are cotaught by school and university faculty. Candidates take graduate-level coursework that leads to both state certification/licensure and a master's degree from the partner university.

One study found that residents across 30 teacher residency programs took an average of 450 hours of coursework, roughly equivalent to 10 college courses; residents in these programs reported that the coursework was well integrated with their clinical experiences, a key goal of residencies.¹⁰

Additionally, many programs require frequent feedback and performance-based assessments of candidates' classroom practice.

Mentor recruitment and selection. Residencies not only allow districts to attract and train high-quality teacher candidates, but also provide career advancement opportunities for experienced teachers within those districts to serve as mentors, supervisors, and instructors in the programs. As it is for candidates, the selection process for mentors typically is rigorous because they must be both experienced and accomplished. A study of 30 teacher residency programs found that mentors in these programs had, on average, 10 years of prior teaching experience.¹¹ Some programs offer teacher mentors financial benefits, such as \$2,000 or \$3,000 stipends and/or money targeted for professional development, but there are nonfinancial rewards to mentoring as well, notably the benefit to mentors of improving their own practice. As a mathematics and science mentor from one program explained:

The mentorship experience re-inspired me. I became a more reflective educator by working closely with someone daily, and my students benefited by having two teachers in the classroom. Mentoring also made me think back to everything that I had stopped doing and reminded me how to be a better teacher.¹²

Cohorts placed in teaching schools. Another key feature of many residencies is the placement of candidates into cohorts; participants of a program may be clustered in university courses as well as school sites, to create a stronger support network and to foster collaboration among new and experienced teachers.¹³

In these kinds of teaching schools, often called professional development schools (PDSs) or partner schools, faculty members from the school and university work together to develop curricu-

lum, improve instruction, and undertake school reforms, making the entire school a site for learning and feedback for adults and students alike.¹⁴ Many such schools actively encourage resident teachers to participate in all aspects of school functioning, ranging from special education and support services for students, to parent meetings, home visits, and community outreach, to faculty discussions and projects aimed at ongoing improvement in students' opportunities to learn.

Studies of highly developed PDSs have found that new teachers who graduate from such programs feel better prepared to teach and are rated by employers, supervisors, and researchers as stronger than other new teachers. Veteran teachers working in such schools describe changes in their own practice as a result of the professional development, action research, and mentoring parts



of the PDS. Studies have documented gains in student performance tied to curriculum and teaching interventions resulting from PDS initiatives.¹⁵

Early career mentoring. Programs also provide early career mentoring and support for one to three years after a candidate becomes the teacher of record. This type of intentional mentoring in high-quality residency programs can be very important both for developing teachers' competence and for reducing attrition. Studies show that having planned time to collaborate with a mentor in the same subject area is a key element of successful induction that supports beginning teacher retention.¹⁶

Financial support and incentives. Unlike most traditional or alternative preparation programs, residency programs are organized and funded to offer financial incentives to attract and retain high-quality candidates with diverse backgrounds and experiences. These incentives include living stipends, student loan forgiveness, and/or tuition remittance in exchange for residents' commitment to teaching in the district for a specified period of time, typically three to five years. One cross-site study cites residency program contributions for candidates' training and master's degrees to be anywhere from \$0 to \$36,000 in the programs reviewed.¹⁷ Other kinds of resident funding and support, such as stipends and tuition reimbursements, also vary. Often, living stipends are lower when tuition reimbursements are higher.

Impact of Residencies

With recent federal and philanthropic support, there are now at least 50 teacher residency programs nationwide, which range in size from five to 100 residents per year. A small but growing body of research has been conducted on the impact of residencies on teacher recruitment, teacher retention, and student achievement. Most studies have been in-depth case studies of the earliest programs; to date, only one comprehensive study (of the Teacher Quality Partnership grant) examines characteristics and impact across several programs nationally.

The findings from these studies regarding the impact of teacher residencies on teacher recruitment and retention are promising, although more research is needed, especially with respect to teacher impacts on students. Research suggests that well-designed and well-implemented teacher residency models can

Studies of teacher residency programs consistently point to the high retention rates of their graduates, even after several years in the profession.

create long-term benefits for districts, for schools, and, ultimately and most importantly, for the students they serve. Key benefits include increased teacher recruitment diversity, higher teacher retention, and greater student outcomes.

Recruitment. Many residency programs have specific goals around recruitment, such as diversifying the teacher workforce by attracting more candidates of color or bringing in midcareer professionals. Research suggests that residencies bring greater gender and racial diversity into the teaching workforce. Across teacher residency programs nationally, 45 percent of residents in 2015–2016 were people of color. This proportion is more than double the national average of teachers of color entering the field, which is 19 percent.¹⁸

In addition to attracting a more diverse workforce, residencies aim to staff high-need schools and subject areas. Nationally, 45 percent of residency graduates in 2015–2016 taught in a high-need subject area, including mathematics, science, technology fields, bilingual education, and special education.¹⁹

Retention. National studies indicate that around 20–30 percent of new teachers leave the profession within the first five years, and that attrition is even higher (often reaching 50 percent or more) in high-poverty schools and in high-need subject areas.²⁰ Studies of teacher residency programs consistently point to the high retention rates of their graduates, even after several years in the profession, generally ranging from 80–90 percent in the same

district after three years and 70–80 percent after five years.²¹

In two of the most rigorous studies to date, researchers found statistically significant differences in retention rates between residency graduates and nonresidency peers, controlling for the residents' characteristics and those of the settings in which they taught. Higher retention rates may be attributable to the combination of program quality, residents' commitment to teach for a specific period of time in return for financial support, and induction support during the first one to three years of teaching.²²

Student outcomes. Because most residency programs are still in their infancy, only a few studies have examined program impact on student achievement. These initial studies have found that the students of teachers who participated in a residency program outperform students of non-residency-prepared teachers on select state assessments.²³

The teacher residency model holds much promise to address the issues of recruitment and retention in high-need districts and subject areas. This model also has the potential to support systemic change and the building of the teaching profession, especially in the most challenging districts.

Initial research is promising as to the impact residencies can have on increasing the diversity of the teaching force, improving retention of new teachers, and promoting gains in student learning. This research also suggests that the success of residencies requires attention to each of the defining characteristics of the model and the integrity of their implementation. Important factors include: (1) careful recruitment and selection of residents and mentor teachers within the context of a strong partnership between a district and university, (2) a tightly integrated curriculum based on a yearlong clinical placement in classrooms and schools that model strong practice, (3) adequate financial assistance, and (4) mentoring supports as candidates take on classrooms and move into their second and third years of teaching.

Residencies support the development of the profession by acknowledging that the complexity of teaching requires rigorous preparation in line with the high levels of skill and knowledge needed in the profession. Residencies also build professional capacity by providing professional learning and leadership opportunities for accomplished teachers in the field, as they support the growth and development of new teachers. These elements of strengthening the teaching profession can create long-term benefits for districts, schools, and, most importantly, the students they serve. □

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(Continued on page 44)



To read “Stories of Struggle: Teaching the Value of Effort and Persistence in Science” by Xiaodong Lin-Siegler, Janet N. Ahn, Jondou Chen, Fu-Fen Anny Fang, and Myra Luna-Lucero, which appeared in the print edition of the Spring 2017 issue of *American Educator*, contact ae@aft.org and request a PDF or hard copy.

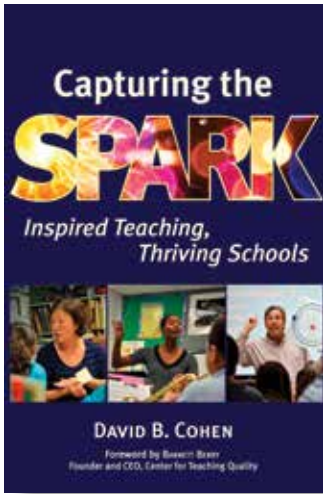
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CAPTURING THE SPARK: INSPIRED TEACHING, THRIVING SCHOOLS



Rare is the book that highlights the work of so many dedicated teachers in a single state as vast and varied as California. That reason alone makes *Capturing the Spark: Inspired Teaching, Thriving Schools* (Enactive Publishing) by David B. Cohen such a pleasure to read.

Cohen, a veteran English teacher at Palo Alto High School, spent the 2014–2015 school year visiting 50 California cities and towns and observing approximately 100 classrooms to see public schools “that defy stereotypes,” as he writes.

Throughout his book, the schools he describes include educators who are committed to their professional growth and teacher leaders who advocate for policies to strengthen the profession.

Importantly, Cohen examines the role that labor-management relationships play in supporting public schools. In a chapter titled “Unions and Education,” he cites the work of the Teacher Union Reform Network, a national organization dedicated to labor-management collaboration, improving educational approaches, and advocating for social justice. He

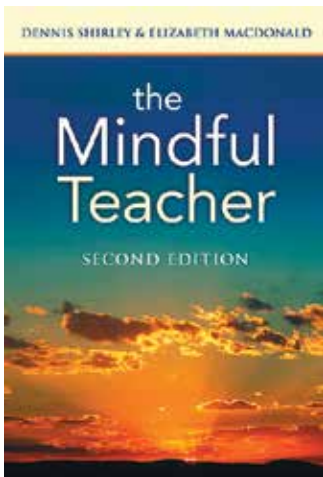
also gives several examples of schools and districts where partnerships between teachers and administrators are especially strong. Among them is Richard Gahr High School in Cerritos, California, which is part of the ABC Unified School District, 20 miles southeast of Los Angeles.

However, the exemplary schools and districts Cohen describes are not intended to serve as a blueprint for public education in general. Instead, he elevates what works to emphasize his book’s main idea: “The need to focus education reform efforts on cultivating the right conditions for improvement, rather than trying to simply import and replicate best practices.”

For Cohen, creating the right conditions includes ensuring equity in school funding, hiring school nurses and counselors, staffing school libraries with full-time librarians, and creating opportunities for teacher leadership and career pathways, among several other approaches. He also cites the need to improve teacher salaries and lauds his own experience in the Stanford Teacher Education Program, which enabled him “to work at one school for an entire school year,” as an exemplar of what teacher preparation should be.

Too often, Cohen says, “bad teachers” are blamed for whatever ails public education. But good teaching is, more often than not, a matter of context. “We have a system that neglects both average teachers and schools overall,” he writes. “We will not create a better teaching force operating from negative assumptions about the people doing the work now.”

THE MINDFUL TEACHER



From the hustle and bustle of the school day to external pressures driven by testing and accountability, it’s no surprise that a focus on mindfulness has been painfully absent from public education. But as Dennis Shirley and Elizabeth MacDonald write in *The Mindful Teacher* (Teachers College Press), “a quiet revolution” is underway to help schools and educators reclaim the joy of teaching and learning.

Shirley, a professor of education at the Lynch School of Education at Boston College, and MacDonald, a longtime

teacher in the Boston Public Schools (BPS), describe educators turning to mindful teaching, in which they reflect on their practice, collaborate with colleagues, and meet their students’ academic, social, and emotional needs. For more than 10 years, the authors have led mindfulness seminars for BPS educators, and they published a first edition of their book in 2009. Since that time, they’ve seen contemplative practices begin to take hold not only among educators in Boston but among those they’ve worked with around the world.

Much of the second edition of their book recounts the history of their mindfulness seminars, which include no more than 15 educators at a time. Through the seminars, Shirley and MacDonald create a space in which teachers share their professional concerns, review scholarly research related to instruction, and practice formal meditation. The seminars also engage teachers in discussing complex questions such as “What does it mean to be a teacher leader?” and “What factors should we be aware of when we differ from our students in regard to race, class, culture, home language, or gender?”

The authors emphasize that the seminars enable teachers to reflect on these questions, not necessarily solve them. They say that teachers find this type of reflection illuminating, and note: “The teachers were not anti-intellectuals who only wanted to be told what to do: They wanted to make sense of their situations.”

Too often, those situations have encouraged what the authors define as mindful teaching’s direct opposite: alienated teaching. Such teaching occurs when “teachers neglect teaching practices that they believe are best suited for their pupils and instead comply with externally imposed mandates out of a sense of deference to authority.” While the fixation on high-stakes testing in the last several years has fostered a sense of alienation among educators, the authors are hopeful that the recently passed Every Student Succeeds Act will make way “for a less punitive and more decentralized model of education.”

Teaching Immigration

THE UNITED STATES has always been a nation of immigrants, with many newcomers to our country currently learning in our public schools. Working with these students and their families often presents educators with a different set of rewards and challenges. Some immigrant students may be fluent in English and used to school routines, while others are not only new to the language, but also new to formal education itself.

Being the “new kid” and fitting in at school is hard enough for any child, but the degree of adjustment often faced by recent immigrants can seem especially daunting. Fortunately, educators can help ensure that school environments are safe places for immigrants to learn. And just as important, teachers can serve as trusted sources for immigrant families seeking essential information.

In partnership with the AFT’s human rights department, Share My Lesson has created a special collection of resources designed to empower educators and other school staff in their efforts to establish safe and welcoming learning environments for immigrants and their families. The collection explores the following themes: immigration policy and rights, building an inclusive classroom, the immigrant experience, and mental health resources. Teachers and advocacy groups have contributed more than 50 resources in the form of engaging lessons, blogs, and professional development.

Make Your Classroom Environment Count

Establishing a culture where all students feel welcome and safe takes work and is crucial for successfully managing a classroom. Dispelling stereotypes through open dialogue and encouraging empathy is one way to build community among students. To that end, Tina Yalen, a National Board certified civics teacher, created a lesson for her middle school students, titled “Lemon Exercise in Stereotyping,” that can be adapted to students of all ages.

Another way educators can send an inclusive message to students is by posting signs on classroom doors to show that all students are welcome. The AFT offers a colorful poster welcoming students in eight languages, featuring the work of Favianna Rodriguez, an American artist and activist.

Integrate Immigration into Your Curriculum

The topics we teach send important messages to students. Incorporating lessons or activities showing how immigrants contribute to our country can foster understanding and build empathy among students.

The Global Oneness Project, which features a collection of films, photo essays, and articles exploring cultural, social, and environmental issues, offers a new lesson plan, “A Refugee’s Story,” based on the short film *Welcome to Canada*, about a young Syrian refugee who was granted asylum in Canada.

Watching or listening to news stories and then discussing them as a class is a great way to begin conversations about immigration. Share My Lesson’s “Today’s News, Tomorrow’s Lesson” collection features current events from partners like *PBS NewsHour*, Listenwise, Science Friday, and the Anti-Defamation League.

Know Where to Find Support

All students have different needs and goals, and students who are immigrants are no exception. Familiarize yourself and your students with organizations dedicated to meeting the needs of immigrant students and their families. ColorinColorado.org is a terrific resource that provides information, activities, and advice for educators and families of English language learners.

When it comes to challenges that go beyond the scope of instruction, teachers can direct students to counselors equipped to handle serious situations. For information on mental health issues specific to immigrants, the National Institute of Mental Health and the American Psychological Association are two helpful resources.

Know Your Rights

Information is power. The AFT can help educators ensure that immigrant students and their families know their rights when responding to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents.

For more information, visit ShareMyLesson.com.

–THE SHARE MY LESSON TEAM



FAVIANNA RODRIGUEZ, WWW.CULTURESTRIKE.ORG

Recommended Resources

See Share My Lesson’s immigration collection at www.sharemylesson.com/immigration, which includes:

- “Lemon Exercise in Stereotyping”: <http://go.aft.org/AE117sml1>
- “AFT Immigration Poster: DREAMers Welcome”: <http://go.aft.org/AE117sml2>
- “A Refugee’s Story”: <http://go.aft.org/AE117sml3>
- “Today’s News, Tomorrow’s Lesson”: <http://go.aft.org/AE117sml4>
- Colorín Colorado resources: <http://go.aft.org/AE117sml5>
- “Psychology of Immigration 101”: <http://go.aft.org/AE117sml6>
- “A Resource Guide to Help Protect and Prepare Immigrant Youth and Families for an ICE Raid”: <http://go.aft.org/AE117sml7>

Looking for a particular set of resources? Send an email to help@sharemylesson.com.

Supporting Immigrant Students

AROUND THE COUNTRY, many of our immigrant students and their families are fearful. Understandably so: they were subjected to exclusionary, hostile, and divisive political rhetoric during the presidential campaign. And under the Trump administration, many of our students (whether they are legal residents, eligible for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, refugees, newcomers, unaccompanied minors, or even second- and third-generation children of immigrants) do not know what to expect. Many have been the targets of bullying or hateful acts based on their status and background as immigrants. Their fear can lead to school absences or withdrawal, increased anxiety, decreased focus on academic schoolwork, behavioral issues, and a host of other challenges.

Colorín Colorado, a national website for educators and families of English language learners, houses a collection of resources that outlines what educators should know about serving students who are immigrants or children of immigrants (www.colorincolorado.org). These resources provide information on helping your students and their families learn their rights, and offer suggestions that schools and classrooms can use to create more welcoming environments.

The following are some frequently asked questions and abbreviated answers from

Colorín Colorado. For the full list of questions and answers, as well as additional information and resources, go to www.colorincolorado.org/immigration.

Does immigration status affect whether students can enroll in U.S. public schools?

No. Every child has a constitutional right to a free public education, regardless of his or her immigration status or parents' immigration status.

Can schools ask about a student's immigration status during enrollment?

No. Public school districts have an obligation to enroll students regardless of their immigration status and without discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin.

Can immigration enforcement take place in schools?

At this time, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) limits immigration enforcement at "sensitive locations." These include schools, licensed daycares, school bus stops, colleges and universities, educational programs, medical treatment facilities, and places of worship. For up-to-date information, consult the DHS sensitive locations FAQ (www.ice.gov/ero/

www.nilc.org) or the National Immigration Law Center (www.nilc.org).

Do schools report student information to immigration authorities?

No. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) does not allow schools to turn over a student's file to federal immigration agents. School officials are not required to report undocumented immigrants to federal agents.

For more information on English language learners, strategies to help these students and their families, and research on what works, go to www.colorincolorado.org.

—AFT EDUCATIONAL ISSUES DEPARTMENT



RAFAEL LÓPEZ

RESOURCES

RACIAL EQUITY TOOLS

Three independent organizations—the Center for Assessment and Policy Development, World Trust Educational Services, and MP Associates—have partnered to create an online resource called Racial Equity Tools. This site is designed to support individuals and groups working to achieve racial equity by offering research, tips, curricula, and ideas to increase understanding and help others working for justice at every level—from organizations and communities to the culture at large. The site offers a monthly newsletter and guidance on such topics as how to use film to deepen the conversation about race. Read more at www.racialequitytools.org.

PROTECTING ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Since the November elections, college and university faculty members have been targeted and harassed for statements they have made inside and outside the classroom. To help faculty understand their rights and guide them with practical advice about how to continue to exercise their academic freedom, the AFT has joined with the American Association of University Professors to create a frequently-asked-questions guide (www.aaup.org/file/FAQs_2016_Election.pdf), informed by faculty experience and designed to prepare academics for the possibility of increased attacks on free speech on campus.

START STEM EARLY

The seeds of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) education should be planted early and in tandem with the supports necessary to enrich teaching and learning for prekindergarten children. That's a key message of *STEM Starts Early*, a new report supported by the National Science Foundation that calls for more robust training that can help early educators incorporate age-appropriate STEM topics in learning and play. From gardening to stacking blocks, "children demonstrate a clear readiness" for STEM, the report observes. The report also advocates a reframed conversation to help the public better understand the importance of prioritizing and investing in STEM opportunities for all children. Find it at www.bit.ly/2kxJIWB.

EARLY LEARNING ACTION

The Child Care and Early Learning Action Hub brings together grass-roots groups and four national organizations—the AFT, the Center for Community Change, the Center for Popular Democracy, and the Service Employees International Union—to advance child care and preschool education at every policy level. It also works to ensure that educators and providers are fairly compensated and can form a union in order to have a voice in the workplace. Details are available at www.childcareactionhub.org.

Latino Students

(Continued from page 11)

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The positive result of that work is apparent in the 15-minute presentations the third-, fourth-, and fifth-graders at the Brooklyn New School give once a year to a panel of teachers and parents (though not the students' own parents, of course) who engage students in a discussion of their work. Castelucci says that last year at least 100 parents volunteered to sit on these panels.

She says the performance assessments give teachers greater insight into students' strengths and weaknesses than a multiple-choice test would. For instance, she recalls how a very quiet fourth-grader surprised teachers with his enthusiasm and knowledge during his presentation of a historical fiction journal he created for a character living in New Amsterdam. His presentation of journal entries he wrote from the character's point of view showed teachers just how much he had learned.

Teachers new to the Brooklyn New School this year say they value the meaningful opportunities students have to demonstrate their learning. Jessica Berenblum, who teaches fourth grade, says that before the school year started, her colleagues showed her videos of last year's third-graders presenting performance-based assessments so she could learn what to expect from such assessments and, at the same time, learn more about those students coming into her class.

Before working at the Brooklyn New School, Berenblum taught elsewhere in the district, where she says teachers did not have the freedom to teach because there was so much pressure from standardized tests. The Brooklyn New School "was the first school I visited where I felt like the adults really trusted the children—even the smallest children—to use their common sense," she says. "And that's something that's really missing from schools, this idea that children have common sense, that teachers have common sense, and that you can just trust them."

In some ways then, PROSE codifies a commonsense approach to ensuring a successful school. The collaboration it requires and the votes that are necessary to turn a plan into action are designed to elevate teacher voice and to facilitate civil, constructive dialogue among educators.

Such a dialogue cannot happen without a mayor and a chancellor who view collaboration in a positive light. Since its inception, PROSE has helped to recapture much of the progress that occurred in New York City schools in the years before Bloomberg and Klein. A future administration that is hostile to teachers and to public education could do great damage to PROSE, and progress could be rolled back.

But for now, with the UFT and the New York City Department of Education forging the partnerships necessary to support students and teachers, a program like PROSE

can thrive as it helps schools define who they are. So when a teacher says she works at a PROSE school, "that means we share leadership," says Bennett of the UFT. It means "we're all in."

That kind of teamwork, however, cannot happen with classroom teachers alone. Alex Stimmel, a veteran New York City teacher who is new to the Brooklyn New School this year, knows all too well that principals must be willing to play a supportive role. In the past, says Stimmel, a fourth-grade teacher, "I was a UFT chapter leader, and I was always interested in trying to get my principal on board" with PROSE, but he was "very resistant."

UFT President Mulgrew acknowledges the efforts of those principals like Jaclyn Valane at IHS and Anna Allanbrook at the Brooklyn New School, who have been willing to make their schools models from which others can learn. "The administrators in these buildings, I give them all the credit in the world, especially the principals who pushed and worked with the staff on distributive leadership," he says. "When you bring a team together like that, and they're working with the parents like these schools do, there isn't a challenge you can't overcome." □

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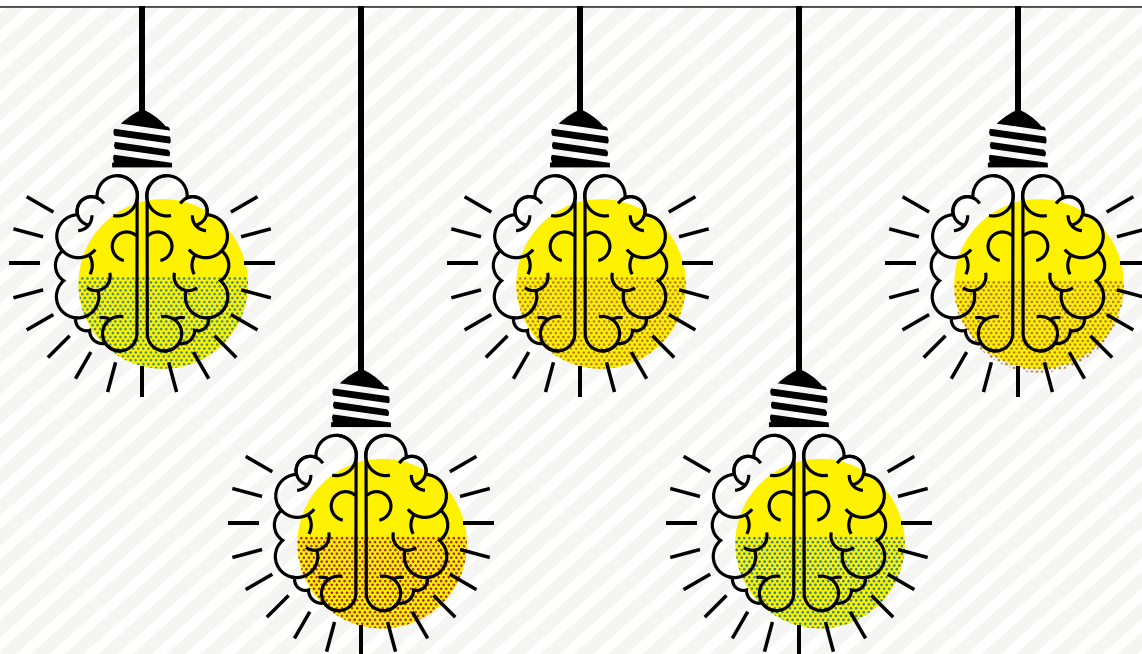
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