



A Union of Professionals

VOL. 42, NO. 1 | SPRING 2018  
www.aft.org/ae

# AMERICAN Educator

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND IDEAS

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

TEACHER  
LEADERSHIP  
PAGE 13

TEACHING  
EVIDENCE-BASED  
WRITING  
PAGE 18

NATIONAL  
HISTORY DAY  
PAGE 23

UNION  
MOBILIZATION  
PAGE 27

STRENGTHENING  
DEMOCRACY  
PAGE 36



## The Case for Summer Learning

WHY SUPPORTING STUDENTS AND FAMILIES  
ALL YEAR IS VITALLY IMPORTANT PAGE 4

# OPERATION AGUA



More than five months after Hurricane Maria, thousands of Puerto Ricans still don't have access to safe drinking water. Through Operation Agua, the AFT and our partners have raised more than \$1 million to bring water filters and purification systems to Puerto Rico—but we still have a long way to go.

Operation Agua's goal is to provide thousands of easy-to-use filters that require no electricity to homes and classrooms, and large-scale water purification systems to communities in need.

For our fellow Americans in Puerto Rico, these filters are a lifeline and a source of hope. Educators are using them in schools to provide safe drinking water for their students, and we are also distributing them to families and hospitals across the island.

We're asking you to join us. **A donation of \$30 buys a filter that can change a family's life.** Please help us bring safe water—and hope—to Puerto Rico with a contribution to Operation Agua.

[OperationAgua.com](http://OperationAgua.com)





## Fighting for the Right to Rise

RANDI WEINGARTEN, AFT President

I WRITE THESE WORDS after hearing oral arguments before the U.S. Supreme Court in *Janus v. AFSCME, Council 31*, but before any decision has been issued. The case is the latest attempt by a web of conservative donors—the National Right to Work Foundation, the Koch brothers, and others—to consolidate their economic and political power. Given the vitriol from two of the justices (*New York Times*' columnist Linda Greenhouse observed that Justices Samuel Alito and Anthony Kennedy acted not like jurists but anti-union “advocates and even ... close to bullies.”), it appears the court's five Republican-appointed justices are poised to undercut the interests of millions of workers by depriving their unions of the funds they need to function. That's not an unintended consequence—it's the entire point of these assaults on unions. Indeed, Justice Sonia Sotomayor told the lawyer for the National Right to Work Foundation, “You're basically arguing, ‘Do away with unions.’”

Unions help make possible what would be impossible for individuals acting alone. It's how we were able to lift teachers' salaries in New York City by double digits before the 2008 recession, so they were in line with surrounding suburbs, and how teachers in West Virginia are fighting for a living wage and to stop skyrocketing healthcare premiums. Unions advocate for good public schools for all our kids, affordable higher education and healthcare, and a voice at our jobs and in our democracy. After yet another school gun massacre, we are redoubling our efforts to make schools safe sanctuaries, not armed fortresses. And we are fighting with special urgency against arming teachers and for the school safety and mental health funds that President Trump's new budget eliminates.

We have daily reminders of the voice and agency that public employee unions afford their members so they can do their jobs well and support them-

selves, their families, the people they serve, and their communities. There are numerous examples within the pages of this magazine.

If the Houston Federation of Teachers (HFT) had not researched the deficiencies of using value-added methods in teacher evaluations, and built political strength to elect a school board that was responsive to the evidence, students in Houston would still be losing good

teachers tarnished by this indecipherable test-based formula. Beyond teaching and learning conditions, after Hurricane Harvey, I saw firsthand how Zeph Capo and members of the HFT doubled down to care for union and community members who suffered terrible losses.

Also in this issue, Jon Shelton examines the powerful connections between teachers unions' interests and the needs of the broader community. As he writes, the Chicago Teachers Union bargained for “the schools Chicago's students deserve”—negotiating for smaller class sizes; wraparound services for students; relevant, high-quality professional development; and an end to institutional racism in Chicago schools. And Emily Gasoi and Deborah Meier write eloquently about how teachers uphold the vital importance of public education as a keystone of American democracy.

You don't hear any of that from the billionaires backing the *Janus* case. They simply want the unions that public employees belong to out of the picture.

I am not prone to hyperbole, but we face a clear and present threat to American democracy by those who want to

further rig the system toward the already powerful. They're going after unions, public education, and the right to vote. Why? Because those are the vehicles for regular folks to secure a better life.

*Janus* is just one part of this. The conservative State Policy Network has pledged to spend \$80 million to “defund and defang” unions. The Kochs, after receiving the Trump tax cut, upped the ante with \$400 million to undermine

**We face a clear and present threat to American democracy by those who want to further rig the system toward the already powerful.**

public education and “break” the teachers unions. Why? Because unions fight for a better life for working people, and the right-wing sees that as a threat to their political and economic power.

When Mother Jones, a schoolteacher turned labor and community organizer, began organizing workers during the so-called Gilded Age, employers' power was virtually unchecked, the economic supremacy of the elite was entrenched, and the aspiration that Abraham Lincoln had advanced—“the right to rise”—was routinely denied to working people. The labor movement helped tilt the scales of oppression, and, by midcentury, American workers enjoyed safer workplaces and far better standards of living. That's the movement the right-wing wants to “defund and defang.”

“Never again” has been the *cri de coeur* for many—those opposing genocide, of course, and, more recently, those decrying mass gun violence. It is also fitting for those who insist that our country must not revert to a time when workers were systematically denied even the most fundamental rights—a voice and a better life.





## 4 The Case for Summer Learning

### *Why Supporting Students and Families All Year Is Vitaly Important*

BY SARAH PITCOCK

Students from different income levels achieve at roughly the same rate when schools are open, yet achievement gaps widen when schools are closed. For middle-class children, summer is full of enrichment opportunities that are often out of reach for poor students. It's time to support disadvantaged students and families beyond the school year and into summer.

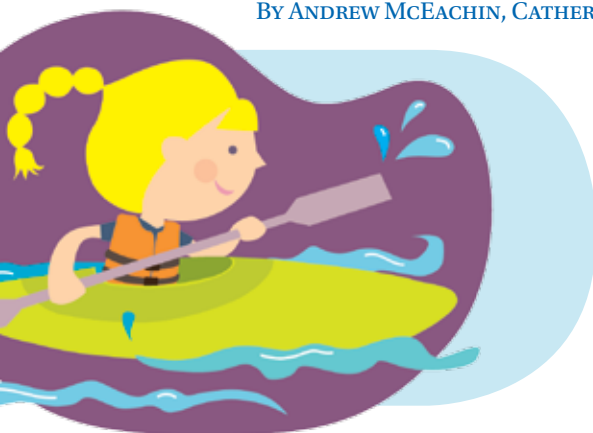
## 9 On the Need for Summer Learning

A Q&A WITH SHAUNTELL DUNBAR

## 10 Effective Summer Programming

### *What Educators and Policymakers Should Know*

BY ANDREW MCEACHIN, CATHERINE H. AUGUSTINE, AND JENNIFER MCCOMBS



## 13 Leadership Matters

### *Teachers' Roles in School Decision Making and School Performance*

BY RICHARD M. INGERSOLL,  
PHILIP SIRINIDES, AND  
PATRICK DOUGHERTY

Teacher leadership matters for student learning, and specific aspects of teacher decision making contribute to school performance.

## 18 For the Sake of Argument

### *An Approach to Teaching Evidence-Based Writing*

BY LINDA FRIEDRICH, RACHEL BEAR,  
AND TOM FOX

The National Writing Project highlights the importance of students backing up their assertions with evidence and engaging in civic life.

## 23 Making Meaning from the Past

### *A Program Inspires Students with History*

BY CATHY GORN

National History Day encourages students to view current issues through the prism of history to understand their cause and effect.

## 27 The Professional Educator

### *Union Strong Before and After the Storm*

BY ZEPH CAPO

A union leader reflects on the power of organized labor in Texas.

## 30 Teacher Unionism in America

### *Lessons from the Past for Defending and Deepening Democracy*

BY JON SHELTON

Teacher strikes show how teacher unions are central agents of modern democracy.

## 36 To Strengthen Democracy, Invest in Our Public Schools

BY EMILY GASOI AND  
DEBORAH MEIER

Threats to public education endanger the very core of our democracy.

## 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.

**RANDI WEINGARTEN**  
President

**LORRETTA JOHNSON**  
Secretary-Treasurer

**MARY CATHRYN RICKER**  
Executive Vice President

**AMY M. HIGHTOWER**  
Editor

**JENNIFER DUBIN**  
Managing Editor

**SEAN LISHANSKY**  
**JANE NUSBAUM FELLER**  
Copyeditors

**LAWRENCE W. McMAHON**  
Editorial Coordinator

**JENNIFER CHANG**  
Art Director

**JENNIFER BERNEY**  
Graphic Designer

**RACHEL ANDERSON**  
Production Assistant

AMERICAN EDUCATOR (ISSN 0148-432X, USPS 008-462) is published quarterly by the American Federation of Teachers, 555 New Jersey Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001-2079. Phone: 202-879-4400. [www.aft.org](http://www.aft.org)

Letters to the editor may be sent to the address above or to [ae@aft.org](mailto:ae@aft.org).

AMERICAN EDUCATOR cannot assume responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts.

Please allow a minimum of four weeks for copyright permission requests.

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the viewpoints or policies of the AFT.

AMERICAN EDUCATOR is mailed to AFT teacher members as a benefit of membership, and to faculty in colleges of education. Subscriptions represent \$2.50 of annual dues. Non-AFT members may subscribe by mailing \$10 per year by check or money order to the address below.

**MEMBERS:** To change your address or subscription, notify your local union treasurer or visit [www.aft.org/members](http://www.aft.org/members).

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to American Educator, 555 New Jersey Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001-2079.

Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices.

© 2018 AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS, AFL-CIO



Cover illustration:  
LIZA FLORES

## SCHOOL SHOOTINGS CAN'T BECOME THE NEW NORMAL

Not even two months into 2018, there had already been 18 school shootings. The latest of these (at press time) occurred on February 14 at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Broward County, Florida, where 17 people were killed and many others injured. “When is enough, enough?” asked AFT President Randi Weingarten in a statement. “We are devastated and horrified by yet another school shooting in our nation. We will be there today, tomorrow, and however long it takes to help the Stoneman Douglas community, and we will continue to fight to prevent gun violence from becoming the new normal in our schools.” Inspired by those in Broward, students across the country are rallying for gun control, while President Trump has proposed arming teachers in schools. Read more at <http://go.aft.org/AE118news4>.

## FIRST BOOK SURVEY SHOWS EDUCATOR, STUDENT STRESS

In underserved communities around the country, increased anxiety around Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and racism is impeding learning and increasing demands on educators, according to survey results released in February by First Book, a national nonprofit dedicated to donating books and raising the quality of education. The survey asked First Book’s network of educators—who exclusively serve kids in need—to identify the social and political issues that were most relevant to their students in the last year, how those issues affected learning, and what they needed to address the issues in the classroom. Nearly 50 percent of respondents stated that the kids they serve are directly affected by DACA and immigration policies. Read more about the survey findings at [www.bit.ly/2nDwDWW](http://www.bit.ly/2nDwDWW).

## STUDENT LOAN CRISIS UNDERSCORES INEQUITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A recent report by the Brookings Institution ([www.brookings/2EanLBr](http://www.brookings/2EanLBr)) shows that, in addition to the debilitating effects of the student loan crisis on students at large, it hobbles particular groups of students far more than others. Not only are default rates soaring, they are significantly worse for students at for-profit colleges, which target vulnerable populations for enrollment, including low-income students, single mothers, veterans, and first-generation students. The report, *The Looming Student Loan Default Crisis Is Worse Than We Thought*, calls for “robust efforts” to regulate for-profit colleges, improve degree attainment for all students, and address challenges faced by students of color.

## FIXING DECREPIT SCHOOL BUILDINGS

Deplorable conditions in schools and decaying school infrastructure result in illness and negatively affect teaching and learning, writes Jerry Roseman on the *AFT Voices* blog (<http://go.aft.org/AE118news2>). A veteran environmental scientist with the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, Roseman has seen his share of asbestos, lead paint, broken heating and cooling units, and water leaks in schools. “These conditions send a clear message to students and their families that their achievement and well-being don’t matter.” While he offers solutions that currently are being negotiated in Philadelphia, he emphasizes that they require the full collaboration of unions, school staff, parents, and the community. Read more at <http://go.aft.org/AE118news3>.

## SHEDDING NEW LIGHT ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS

In January, AFT President Randi Weingarten joined representatives of the National Superintendents Roundtable and the Horace Mann League to release *How High the Bar?* ([www.bit.ly/2GaUnZq](http://www.bit.ly/2GaUnZq)), a new report that demonstrates how students in other countries would fare if measured against U.S. accountability standards, and that seeks to help education officials use assessments to benchmark more constructively. “Teachers know that standards and assessments are essential in the pursuit of both educational excellence and equity,” Weingarten said. “They also know there is an art and a science to this; benchmarks can’t be unreasonably high or unacceptably low. But, too often in the United States, assessment data are used not to inform or improve public schooling but to hold schools to account or, worse, to penalize them.”

## GRADING DeVOS

Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos spends a lot of time listening to pollsters and profiteers who are trying to soften her image and make money off of students and public schools. But when parents, students, and educators went to the U.S. Department of Education in February, to mark the first anniversary of her tenure and deliver report cards and comments from 80,000 people about the needs of our public schools, she locked them out. The comments were intended to give DeVos advice on how to strengthen and support the great work happening in public schools across the country. “She chose once again to reject and ignore the voices of those who educate in, learn in, and send their kids to public schools—the schools that 90 percent of America’s children attend,” said AFT President Randi Weingarten. Read more at <http://go.aft.org/AE118news1> or watch the video at [www.bit.ly/2o3tzCV](http://www.bit.ly/2o3tzCV).



PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAMELA WOLFE

# The Case for Summer Learning

Why Supporting Students and Families All Year Is Vitaly Important



BY SARAH PITCOCK

For many people, the word “summer” evokes easier days, a time when life slows down. So does the term “summer break,” a time parents, teachers, and students alike value as a well-deserved respite from the labor of the school year. Unfortunately, a growing body of evidence shows that summer is far from a time to recharge for many families. Instead, it’s a time of loss and lack, a time of struggle and stress. With half of all public school children today living in low-income households, the reality is that summer is actually no vacation at all.

The truth is, public schools are a critical lifeline for low-income students and families. When they are open, students of different income levels—rich, poor, and middle class—achieve at roughly the same rate. When they are closed, achievement gaps widen

and a variety of academic, health, and social-emotional outcomes decline. So why are schools closed in the summer?

## A Brief History

It’s a question we hear journalists and commentators discuss from time to time. Many claim that the school year’s origins lie in our outdated agrarian school calendar, that our summer break is a vestige of a past when children’s responsibilities to the family farm trumped their educational needs. It turns out this is one of many myths associated with summer vacation. In reality, crops are planted in the spring and harvested and sold in the fall, making summer and winter historically good times for children in rural areas to attend school, which they did until the early 20th century.

Instead, the summer break as we know it today came from a desire to reconcile what were very different school calendars for urban and rural students. In 1842, New York City schools were open 248 days a year, significantly more than the 180 days or so they are open today. In many cities, school was essentially open

*Sarah Pitcock is the former chief executive officer of the National Summer Learning Association and coeditor and coauthor of The Summer Slide: What We Know and Can Do About Summer Learning Loss.*



year-round. Children came when they could; it was difficult to mandate attendance.

By the late 19th century, a variety of social and economic factors made standardizing the calendar seem prudent. The summer heat made schools uninhabitable in many parts of the country. Affluent and middle-class residents often left cities during the sweltering summer months, resulting in schools closing while they were away.<sup>1</sup> In addition, public health advocates at the time said it was unhealthy to be inside so much. President Teddy Roosevelt was pushing the benefits of exercise and getting outside, and the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts were taking root in the United States, adding to the nation's growing interest in nature and exploration.

So a compromise was made to standardize urban and rural calendars around a long summer break. The time would give teachers an opportunity to train and students a chance to get outside and recover from the school year.

With more students on the same calendar, it didn't take long for the issue of summer learning loss to arise. In 1906, William White tried to determine how much students forget academically during their summer break. White, a math teacher in New Paltz, New York, tested seven fourth-graders and eight seventh-graders on their recall of math facts before and after summer break. He found decreases in their learning, but didn't attempt to explain the decline, writing that "neglect for three months may blur the memory; but three months of open-air life may give an increased vitality that quickens the memory."<sup>2</sup>

White was the first known researcher of what is now called the "summer slide." Since he completed his small experiment, many researchers have taken on the issue in a similar way, comparing students' knowledge and skills before and after summer.

Barbara Heyns is one such researcher. With her 1978 book *Summer Learning and the Effects of Schooling*, she demonstrated that the achievement gap widens when disadvantaged children are cut off from the learning resources available to them at school. Her research of Atlanta schoolchildren from low-income families found that poor African American children came close to keeping pace with their more-advantaged counterparts during the school year but fell back during the summer months.<sup>3</sup>

As Karl Alexander, Matthew Boulay, and I wrote in the introduction to our edited volume, *The Summer Slide: What We Know and Can Do About Summer Learning Loss*, Heyns's "findings fundamentally altered our understanding of the forces that impinge on poor and minority children's learning."<sup>4</sup>

In 1996, Harris Cooper's meta-analysis of 39 summer school program evaluations first quantified summer learning loss in terms of months of grade-level skills. He found that all students lost at least a month of math skills every summer, with an average loss of 2.6 months. Cooper's findings confirmed what Heyns found: that children in lower-income families lost more than their middle- and higher-income peers.<sup>5</sup>

Cooper revealed a personal impetus for the work in a published interview:

While I was serving as a school board member, there was a threatened federal reduction in summer school support. I didn't think that seemed like a good way to save money, so after the meeting, I talked to some graduate students and said, "Let's look at what happens over the summer." ...

... Across the board, all kids lose some math skills. In reading, the middle class holds its own, but the poor lose reading and spelling skills, and that pattern emerged as a possible explanation for the academic achievement gap between those who have financial resources and those who don't. We also found that summer learning programs have a significant positive effect, and those positive effects are greater for middle-class kids than for poor kids.<sup>6</sup>

Researchers have observed that the difference in reading and math outcomes over the summer is likely related to the fact that reading is more naturally embedded in a child's life and that parents are natural reading teachers. On the other hand, math may not be a naturally occurring part of day-to-day life in many households, making math knowledge and skills more difficult to practice and quicker to decline.

## When public schools are open, students of different income levels achieve at roughly the same rate.

As researchers such as Cooper have pointed out, middle-class students experience better outcomes from summer learning programs than their less-affluent peers. One reason is attributed to the "faucet theory": public schooling creates a flow of resources to all students during the school year—books, meals, teachers, and organized activities, among others—that keep all students learning and growing. In the summer, the faucet continues flowing for middle- and higher-income students because of their home environment and/or the enrichment their families provide. But the faucet runs dry for lower-income students, who lose access to critical services altogether when the school doors close. That inequity at home makes it harder for low-income students to keep up academically in the summer, even if they attend the same programs as their higher-income peers.

Three researchers at Johns Hopkins University, Doris R. Entwisle, Karl Alexander, and Linda Steffel Olson, introduced the faucet theory in their book, *Children, Schools, and Inequality*, published in 1997.<sup>7</sup> Based on spring and fall test scores from their longitudinal Beginning School Study in Baltimore, they found that the difference in reading comprehension abilities between low-income children and middle-income children grew from half a school year in the fall of first grade to three school years by the spring of fifth grade. The real revelation, however, was that almost all of the increase in the achievement gap over the elementary school years could be traced to differences across social lines in

summer learning experiences. They found that two-thirds of the ninth-grade reading achievement gap could be attributed to how students spent their summers in elementary school.<sup>8</sup>

In 1992, Matthew Boulay, one of Alexander’s students, founded Teach Baltimore, a summer reading program, which paired Johns Hopkins undergraduate students with low-income elementary students from Baltimore City Public Schools. An evaluation of Teach Baltimore showed that participating students returned to school in the fall with a learning advantage instead of the typical learning loss. With growing recognition of the issue, Teach Baltimore became the Center for Summer Learning in 2001, known today as the National Summer Learning Association.



## Research and Advocacy in Recent Years

In 2009, the National Summer Learning Association began convening school districts as part of the New Vision for Summer School (NVSS) Network, a group of districts committed to transcending the remedial, punitive model of summer school. Spurred by stimulus funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, member districts were ready to use the summer months to serve more students in more innovative ways and test out teacher professional development and new curriculum and instructional strategies. New strategies included testing project-based learning\* approaches in the summer, partnering with community-based organizations to co-deliver programs, and pairing new teachers with veteran teachers for mentorship and training.

In 2011, five urban school districts, some of them members of the NVSS Network, joined with the Rand Corporation and the Wallace Foundation to answer two important questions: Can voluntary summer learning programs combining academics and enrichment help students succeed in school? And if so, how?

By reviewing existing research and interviewing providers, Rand found several aspects critical to successful summer programming. These included offering small class sizes and individualized instruction, engaging students in fun enrichment activities, providing transportation to and from the program, offering full-day program options, and notifying parents early before they

make other plans for the summer. Rand also found that partnerships between school districts and community-based organizations were mutually beneficial and cost less than separate programs.<sup>9</sup> (For more from Rand’s researchers on summer learning, see the article on page 10.)

In 2013, Rand began conducting a randomized controlled trial in five school districts—in Boston; Dallas; Duval County, Florida; Pittsburgh; and Rochester, New York—to evaluate summer learning outcomes. There were 5,600 third-graders who applied to summer programs and were randomly assigned to one of two groups—those selected to take part in the programs for two summers (the treatment group) and those not selected (the control group). The study analyzed outcomes for 3,192 students who were offered access to the programs.

The programs combined academic instruction from certified teachers with a variety of enrichment offerings from community partners, including dance, theater, martial arts, swimming, woodworking, cooking, and kayaking. Program leaders received substantial support from the Rand team through formative feedback that enabled them to strengthen and enhance their programs each summer.

Researchers found that students who attended a five- to six-week summer program for 20 or more days in 2013 (deemed “high attenders”) performed better on state math tests than similar students in the control group. This advantage was statistically significant and lasted through the following school year. The results were even more striking for “high attenders” in 2014: they outperformed control-group students in both math and English language arts (ELA) on standardized tests in the fall and spring. The advantage after the second summer was equivalent to 20 to 25 percent of a year’s learning in math and ELA. Regardless of attendance rate, students who received at least 25 hours of math or 34 hours of ELA instruction during the summer did better than control-group students on tests in fall 2013 and fall 2014.<sup>10</sup>

Rand’s work has contributed tremendously to the research base on summer learning. The findings qualify as promising evidence, also known as “Tier 3” under the Every Student Succeeds Act. The Every Student Succeeds Act offers many funding streams that are only available to districts if used to support activities that are evidence-based, which the law defines in four tiers based on the rigor of the research. The availability of qualifying research on which to base program design should make it easier for states to use federal funding for this kind of summer learning.

Additional research shows us that summer learning loss involves more than math and reading. When students do not attend engaging and enriching summer programs, the summer months can result in losses in health and well-being, college and career opportunity, and the support needed to break cycles of intergenerational poverty and move young people and their families forward.<sup>11</sup>

In fact, 84 percent of young people who qualify for free and reduced-price meals do not access them in the summer.<sup>12</sup> Reasons may include lack of availability, stigma associated with going to meal sites, or lack of awareness. In addition to hunger, food insecurity has other consequences. For example, some young people gain weight twice as fast during the summer. A recent analysis of the *Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2010–11*, shows a stark difference between school year and summer weight gain. The prevalence of both obese and overweight children increased signifi-

\*For more on project-based learning, see “Project-Based Instruction” in the Fall 2016 issue of *American Educator*, available at [www.aft.org/ae/fall2016/duke](http://www.aft.org/ae/fall2016/duke).



cantly between the start of kindergarten and the end of second grade, with all of the increase occurring during the summers.<sup>13</sup>

For many youth ages 14 and up, particularly those from low-income homes, earning an income in the summer is a necessity. Subsidized summer jobs were once an accessible reality for many, but the primary federal funding stream for such programs was eliminated in 2008, leaving cities to take up much of the responsibility. This loss of funding has contributed to a nearly 40 percent decline in youth employment in the last 12 years and a deficit of 3.6 million teen summer jobs. The decline has most affected low-income and minority youth. In 2013, white male teens from high-income families were five times more likely to be employed than African American male teens from low-income families.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to the loss of funding for summer jobs, other factors have made summer as much about family economic success as academic success. On July 6, 2009, then President Barack Obama declared the first National Summer Learning Day. His declaration reads, in part: “Families and community members play the most important role in the lives of their children. Demands at work and home mean that many parents have less time to spend with their children, but this time, care, and instruction is critical to children’s academic success.”<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, the composition and well-being of families and our workforce have changed dramatically, with major implications for summer learning, health, and safety. Today, more children are living with single parents. The share of children born outside of marriage now stands at 41 percent, up from just 5 percent in 1960. Since 1996, most recipients of public assistance must work in order to qualify for benefits, taking them out of the home year-round. Minimum wage has not kept pace with inflation, so parents are working longer hours for less pay. In short, there is no one home to care for kids in the summer and less money to pay for care inside or outside the home.<sup>16</sup>

Former Massachusetts Secretary of Education Paul Reville has been a vocal advocate for a radical reimagining of public education to catch up to the changing family and economic circumstances. Citing the growing achievement and opportunity gaps, Reville writes:

I believe we need a national campaign for a new concept: making summer learning, in effect, a third education semester each year. ... This concept is not about prescribing more formal schooling, but rather about providing enrichment, stimulation, and learning opportunities that are often, though not always, aligned with academic goals. ... Such an entitlement would ... guarantee that every child, irrespective of financial means, would have access to at least 6 weeks of high-quality summer learning and enrichment. ... We can no longer treat summer learning as incidental, an accident of birth; rather, we must see it as an essential ingredient in achieving student success at scale.<sup>17</sup>

### Why Summer Learning Is Not a Priority

The Hatcher Group, a public affairs and communications firm, has been tracking coverage of summer learning loss in the media for a decade. What started as 1,000 stories on the issue in 2007 grew to more than 30,000 stories in 2015, a more than tenfold increase in just eight years. The term “summer slide” is increas-



## The summer months can result in losses in health and well-being, college and career opportunity, and the support needed to break cycles of intergenerational poverty.

ingly well understood and used to describe the phenomenon. Perhaps as a result of steady media coverage, educators and parents seem to recognize the importance of the issue.

The Afterschool Alliance, a policy and advocacy organization,<sup>†</sup> conducts its *America After 3PM* national survey every five years to document participation in and perceptions of afterschool and summer programs among a representative sample of households. In the most recent survey, from 2014, 85 percent of families said they support public funding for summer learning. The figure is no surprise, given that the average reported cost of a summer program nationally was \$288 per week—putting fee-based programs out of reach of many low- and middle-income families.<sup>18</sup>

Where does that leave us? Research tells us that summer learning loss is a problem and a considerable factor in the achievement gap. Yet despite growing understanding of the issue and support for summer learning, it is still not a priority.

Why? One (unsurprising) answer is funding. It’s no secret that school districts have struggled to fully fund their schools since the Great Recession. From 2007 to 2009, state funding fell sharply, and local funding didn’t make up the difference. Most states still provide less support per student for elementary and secondary schools than they did prior to 2007. Even today, some states continue to make cuts.

<sup>†</sup>For more on the Afterschool Alliance, an AFT partner, see [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).

Regardless of state and district budgets, the lack of dedicated federal funding for summer learning makes the issue easy to ignore. Most offices within a school district and agencies within a city or state are directly tied to a public funding stream. As the saying goes, what gets measured gets done.

A variety of federal funding streams allow—but don't require—money to be targeted to summer learning, so such spending is rarely prioritized or tracked. One step in the right direction: nearly half of states now require or prioritize summer learning for their



## Parents overwhelmingly support summer learning, and community-based organizations stand ready to support districts in this cause.

federal 21st Century Community Learning Center programs, which are partnerships between schools and community-based organizations to offer academic enrichment programming before and after the school day and during the summer. Still, little local infrastructure exists for summer learning. For instance, in many districts, summer programs are often run by teachers on special assignment with little time for preparation or coordination across departments or agencies. Although summer learning is really everyone's problem, in practice, it's no one's responsibility.

Another common challenge for expanding access to summer learning involves physical infrastructure. Today, many schools still lack air conditioning, making them too hot for use in the summer. Moreover, summer is the favored time for improvements, repairs, and upgrades to be made to facilities, also taking many schools out of consideration for summer programming.

In his 2010 article for *Time*, writer David Von Drehle points to yet another common barrier to expanding summer learning programs: "Leaders in a number of states have tried to add days or even weeks to the academic calendar, but they quickly run into barriers of cost and culture. ... Entire industries depend on the rhythms of summer—think travel, camping, sports and theme parks. They use their influence to keep summers as long as possible."<sup>19</sup>

Indeed, a simple Google search for "tourism lobby and school calendars" yields news stories from multiple states covering the struggle between school systems and powerful tourism interest groups for more local control over school calendars. North Carolina has had a particularly hard-fought battle since the state passed a school calendar law in 2004. The law requires schools to start on the Monday nearest August 26 and end on the Friday closest to June 11. In that time, districts must fit 185 school days, nine teacher work days, several weeks of holidays, and makeup days for weather.

The superintendent of the Vance County Schools in North Carolina, Anthony Jackson, has criticized the calendar law, pointing out that an earlier start date would reduce summer learning loss and enable the district to align the calendar to the local community college, which, in turn, would help high school students enroll in classes there.<sup>20</sup> And he is not alone. In Virginia, a school calendar law was signed in 1986, and school administrators have been trying to overturn it ever since.<sup>21</sup> A 2005 law requires Michigan schools to start after Labor Day, and a 2016 Maryland executive order that went into effect in 2017 requires the same.<sup>22</sup>

While these laws exemplify the cultural value and perceived economic value of summer, they are ultimately shortsighted. The achievement gap, to which summer learning loss makes a significant contribution, suppresses high school graduation and college completion rates. It also results in long-term economic and social costs to society that far outweigh the benefits of one or two additional weeks of summer break.

**W**ith a swing toward more local control of federal education funding and meaningful evidence to support summer learning, perhaps more districts will take a serious look at the potential of these overlooked months. After all, young people who are behind need more time for learning, and more time during the school year alone will never solve the complex inequities of summer or close the achievement gap.

School districts should look to the wide-open space of the summer months to test their new approaches and partnerships, and they should have help along the way. Fortunately, parents overwhelmingly support summer learning, and community-based organizations\* stand ready to support districts in this cause. With more than 100 years of research on the academic setbacks related to students' unequal summers, and newer research on the employment and health implications of this disparity, it's clear that the summer slide is everyone's problem. Still, we'll only make progress against this outdated cultural and institutional norm when school districts, parents, employers, and state and local leaders agree that the summer slide is also everyone's responsibility. □

(Endnotes on page 39)

\*For more on community schools, see "Where It All Comes Together" in the Fall 2015 issue of *American Educator*, available at [www.aft.org/ae/fall2015/blank\\_villarreal](http://www.aft.org/ae/fall2015/blank_villarreal).

# On the Need for Summer Learning

A Q&A with Shauntell Dunbar

For the last three years, Shauntell Dunbar has taught first grade at Young Achievers Science and Math Pilot School in the Boston Public Schools. Last year, she taught reading and math in one of the school district's summer programs. Below, she shares her experience supporting student learning during the summer.

—EDITORS

**Q** Tell us about the summer program where you taught.

**A** In recent years, the school district has revamped its summer programs so that students can not only strengthen their academic learning but also participate in enrichment activities. One of these programs is Early Focus, where I taught math and reading to 12 first-graders. Early Focus is designed to help students who are almost, but not quite, meeting benchmarks in numeracy and literacy.

The program runs for six weeks. I taught during the academic part of the day, from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. After that, students participated in activities, such as arts and crafts, sports, and games, offered through the YMCA. Literacy activities and time for independent reading were also built into the afternoon. The fact that the program lasted until 5 p.m. was great for families, since many parents work and need full-day child care in the summer.

Boston's summer programs take place at sites throughout the city. I taught at an Early Focus site located at another school, Mildred Avenue K-8 School, which is down the street from Young Achievers. Because many school buildings are old and lack air conditioning, programs only operate in schools that have it, such as Mildred.

**Q** How do students qualify for Early Focus?

**A** Teachers at each grade level from Boston elementary schools select four students from their classrooms to enroll. The number of students is capped because funding is limited. Early Focus is for students in kindergarten and first and second grades. The city also runs summer programs for a variety of student populations—English language learners, homeless students, and upper elementary students, as well as those in middle and high school.

In my class at Young Achievers, I would have loved to recommend six or seven students for Early Focus, but there wasn't enough room. These are middle-of-the-road students who work hard but have not met

certain benchmarks by the end of the school year. And I know they could, if I just had a few more weeks to work with them.

**Q** Do you know how your students who do not have access to Early Focus spend their time during the summer?

**A** They're probably just hanging out and watching TV. They're not engaged in activities. The community where Young Achievers is located is low-income. All students at my school receive free or reduced-price meals because so many qualify for them. A lot of times, it's unsafe for students to be outside because of violence in the community. Since parents work, students often spend time on electronic devices at home. The neighborhood just does not have many programs for young children in the summer.

**Q** When you start the school year, in what ways do you see that summer learning loss has affected your students?

**A** Many are behind because they've done little or no reading over the summer. So, if students were meeting the standard for literacy in kindergarten but did not build on their skills or their knowledge base over the summer, we must catch them up. That's what we do for the first two months of school—we review phonics and math just to catch them up to where they were when they finished kindergarten.

**Q** At the end of the school year, what do you do to help students continue learning in the summer?

**A** As a school, we send home books with our students. Many teachers at Young Achievers actually provide the books themselves. For instance, I buy each of the 20 students in my class at least three books. That money comes out of my own pocket. I also give students a packet of materials to review what we did in first grade. And the school continues to give them free access to online literacy and math programs, such as Raz-Kids, MobyMax, and Lexia Learning.



© BOSTON GLOBE, GETTY IMAGES

For the first two months of school, we review phonics and math just to catch students up.

However, what students really need is a summer program, where the day is devoted to academics and enrichment. That enrichment piece is very important, especially for young children, because it enables them to continue building social and emotional skills.

I had one student last year who had a very tough time during the school year. She didn't make any significant learning gains until April and May. But then the school year was over. I selected her for Early Focus, and, fortunately, I was also her teacher for the summer, and she maintained and built on those gains. Now she's in second grade and performing above benchmark.

I often check in with her teacher, who says her academic and social skills have flourished. She used to be a student who threw a tantrum practically every day. And I know the improvement in her behavior and academics is because of the work we did during the summer.



# Effective Summer Programming

## What Educators and Policymakers Should Know

BY ANDREW McEACHIN, CATHERINE H. AUGUSTINE, AND JENNIFER McCOMBS

As many educators and parents know all too well, the summer is a key time in students' social and cognitive development, and it plays an important role in the development of achievement gaps. As a result, summer interventions have the potential to not only mitigate summer learning loss but also reduce persistent achievement gaps.

In our chapter from *The Summer Slide: What We Know and Can Do About Summer Learning Loss*, from which this article is drawn, we reviewed a foundational meta-analysis of summer learning programs conducted by researchers as well as evidence from 25 studies of such programs since 2000. The programs covered in our review included voluntary at-home summer reading programs, voluntary classroom-based summer programs, and mandatory summer programs that students must attend to avoid in-grade retention.

The evidence suggests that many types of summer learning programs have the potential to reduce summer learning losses and perhaps create learning gains. However, implementing a summer program does not guarantee positive effects on students' learning. A key question then is: What factors make a summer learning program effective?

### Components of Quality Summer Learning Programs

#### Small Class Sizes

Research has found that small class size is associated with summer program effectiveness. One study found that summer programs with class size capped at 20 students were more effective than others in

producing achievement gains.<sup>1</sup> In another study, researchers found no statistically significant relationship between class size and program quality, but they found positive effects when small classes were combined with significant program resources (defined as class sizes of no more than 13, at least four hours of participation per day, and at least 70 hours of total participation).<sup>2</sup> They analyzed 12 studies with enough detail to investigate whether program resources mediated students' learning. Of those 12, the five studies that met these criteria had large statistically significant, positive effects on students' learning, and the seven studies that did not meet the criteria had no statistically significant effect on students' learning.

Other researchers similarly combined instructional hours with class size to test whether more individual attention offered due to smaller classes might improve results.<sup>3</sup> Although they found a positive relationship between the number of hours of instructional time and math achievement, they did not find a relationship when it was further combined with class size. This may be because prevailing class sizes across the five studied districts were all small, ranging from an average of eight to 14 students per teacher. Furthermore, researchers found large positive effects of an intense summer literacy program on students' reading outcomes.<sup>4</sup> The program used daily small-group (three to five children), research-based instruction.

To sum up, programs with small classes and significant resources provide teachers with more time to work individually with students and to create greater opportunities to differentiate instruction based on student needs. Such programs may also be particularly beneficial during the summer, when teachers have much less time to get to know the students in their classrooms.

#### Aligned to Student Needs

Learning science recommends that in order to maximize the benefit of academic

experiences, especially in literacy, students' assignments should be well aligned to their interests and needs.<sup>5</sup> Summer learning programs should therefore align instruction to school-year activities, and instruction should be tightly focused on addressing students' needs with high-quality instruction.<sup>6</sup> The findings from the many replications of Project READS,<sup>7</sup> an at-home summer literacy intervention, clearly show that students are not only more likely to read over the summer when books are aligned to their interests and matched to their reading levels, but they are also more likely to comprehend what they are reading, and these comprehension effects persist into the following school year.

The results from Project READS also suggest that sending students books matched to their reading levels and interests over the summer with the expectation that they will read them is not enough. In the absence of a structured school

setting, struggling students also need continued support during the summer. For example, researchers tested whether students who were given resources meant to mimic school-year learning opportunities outperformed students who were just given basic prompts to read books over the summer.<sup>8</sup> They found that an approach that included a scaffolded summer reading intervention and prompts to read over the summer increased the amount of time students spent reading and improved their comprehension, relative to students who were either just mailed books home or not given any treatment (e.g., no scaffolding or books).

Finally, the Project READS work also tested whether incentives to read over the summer enhanced students' summer reading habits and comprehension. Researchers tested two different treatments. In the first, students were supplied with books to read over the summer aligned to their skills and interests. In the second, students were given books and points for each book they read (that could



DAN PAGE COLLECTION

Andrew McEachin is a policy researcher in the economics, statistics, and sociology department at the Rand Corporation. Catherine H. Augustine is a senior policy researcher and quality assurance manager at Rand. Jennifer McCombs is a senior policy researcher and the director of the behavioral and policy sciences department at Rand and a professor at the Pardee Rand Graduate School. This article was reprinted by permission of the publisher from Karl Alexander, Sarah Pitcock, and Matthew Boulay (eds.), *The Summer Slide: What We Know and Can Do About Summer Learning Loss* (New York: Teachers College Press). Copyright © 2016 by Teachers College, Columbia University. All rights reserved.

be redeemed for toys, games, etc.).<sup>9</sup> At the end of the summer, the intervention was effective only for motivated students (as measured by baseline surveys), and the use of incentives actually widened the achievement gap between motivated and unmotivated students. As such, it is important not only to align students' work with their interests and ability levels, but also to build in structures to support learning during the summer, especially for at-home programs.

#### Qualified Teachers

One study found a positive, statistically significant association between prior teaching experience and reading outcomes.<sup>10</sup> Specifically, it found that students who had summer teachers who had just taught either their sending or receiving grade performed better than other students on a fall reading assessment. In order to recruit and hire the right teachers, researchers recommend developing rigorous selection processes to recruit motivated teachers and, to the extent possible, taking teachers' school-year performance into consideration.<sup>11</sup> They also stress the importance of hiring teachers with not only grade-level but also subject-matter experience and, if possible, familiarity with the students.

#### High-Quality Instruction

In addition to the importance of recruiting qualified teachers, the teachers' instruction of the curriculum is important. In one study, researchers observed and evaluated instructional quality for each classroom in their study.<sup>12</sup> Their analysis found a positive association between quality of instruction and better student performance in reading. (They did not find a relationship between quality of instruction and student performance in mathematics.) Furthermore, researchers examined voluntary and at-home literacy programs that used research-based instruction, such as guided repeated oral reading, that related readings to students' prior experiences and explicitly modeled strategies for students.<sup>13</sup> Programs that included these practices had significantly larger positive effects on students' reading outcomes than programs that did not use such instructional practices.

In efforts to ensure high-quality instruction, researchers recommend

anchoring summer literacy programs in an evidence-based curriculum;<sup>14</sup> providing professional development to teachers;<sup>15</sup> tying small-group instruction explicitly to learning goals;<sup>16</sup> and providing teachers with instructional support, such as coaching, during the program.<sup>17</sup>

#### Site Culture

Researchers expected that students in more orderly sites would have better outcomes because they and their teachers would be less likely to be distracted by misbehavior.<sup>18</sup> To evaluate student discipline and order in the district programs they studied, they created a scale for each site within each district based on teacher survey data. On the survey,

teachers were asked for their observations of student bullying,\* physical fighting, and other indicators of orderliness. They found that students who attended more orderly sites outperformed other students on the fall reading assessment.

#### Policies to Maximize Participation and Attendance

Consistent attendance is crucial not only for school-year learning but for summer learning as well.<sup>19</sup> Researchers did not find differences in program effectiveness between summer programs that did and did not monitor attendance, so tracking attendance, while a good policy, is likely insufficient to increase attendance.<sup>20</sup> To promote consistent attendance, researchers recommend setting enrollment deadlines, establishing a clear attendance policy, and providing field trips and other incentives for students who attend.<sup>21</sup> They also found that it is not necessary to disguise academics to boost attendance: the district with the highest attendance rate in the study ran the most "school-like" program, with the most explicit academic instruction.

#### Sufficient Duration

Researchers generally distinguish between allocated time (the time on the school calendar for a given content area) and academic learning time (the amount of time

students spend working on rigorous tasks at the appropriate level of difficulty). Academic learning time is more predictive of student achievement.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, research also suggests that spaced practice (once a day for several days), as opposed to one long, concentrated lesson (all day long for just one day), appears to be more effective in facilitating learning.<sup>23</sup> When focusing on boosting students' literacy skills, researchers recommend that students receive at least two hours of teacher-directed daily instruction blended between whole-group and small-group (three to five students) lessons and that the program meet regularly during the week (four to five times) for at least five weeks.<sup>24</sup>

Similarly, researchers recommend that school districts plan for programs to run at least five weeks and schedule 60–90 minutes of mathematics per day to maximize effectiveness.<sup>25</sup> Because instructional time on task is reduced due to student absences and inefficient use of time during the day, researchers suggest special efforts to promote consistent attendance, maintain daily schedules, and ensure teachers maximize instructional time in the classroom.

**F**or educators, administrators, and policymakers looking to strengthen their summer learning programs, we suggest they keep the following information in mind. First, research shows that the effectiveness of summer learning programs is inconsistently influenced by students' backgrounds and the grade level of the intervention. This implies that there is no "best" target population of students for summer programming. Furthermore, simply offering a program does not guarantee it will benefit students.

Second, research indicates that for summer programs to be effective, they must be of sufficient duration (i.e., at least five weeks long or 70 hours of academic programming) and achieve consistent student attendance. Students also benefit from individualized and aligned instruction and class sizes smaller than 20 students.

In addition, high-quality instruction (promoted through careful hiring and professional development) by teachers who have recently taught the sending or receiving grade contributes to positive student outcomes, as does providing that instruction in orderly summer sites with low levels of physical fighting or bullying.

It is our hope that this research encourages districts and providers to enact quality components and ensure effectiveness in carefully planning for summer programming.

(Endnotes on page 39)

Summer interventions have the potential to not only mitigate summer learning loss but also reduce persistent achievement gaps.

\*For more on bullying, see "Understanding Bullying Behavior" in the Winter 2016–2017 issue of *American Educator*, available at [www.aft.org/ae/winter2016-2017/englander](http://www.aft.org/ae/winter2016-2017/englander).

# Spark Self-Directed Summer Learning

The struggle is real. Summer learning loss, or the “summer slide,” creates a need to reteach material and reorient students to academic learning at the start of each school year. While unstructured time to run and play is valuable, many students could also benefit from intellectual stimulation during the summer.

Program-based summer learning can be quite effective at preventing summer learning loss. But it is costly and certainly does not reach all students. Thanks to dozens of free resources from Share My Lesson and our partners, teachers can inspire students with self-directed—and joyful—summer learning.

## Make It Fun

Would your students jump at the chance to take photographs of their community? Make and launch a rocket? Evaluate the reliability of news reports on current events? For resources on helping students engage in activities like these, visit Share My Lesson’s “Summer Learning at Home” collection, where you’ll also find lessons devoted to baseball. An entire collection covers the sport’s significance, across nearly all subjects and grade levels, which lets a parent or teacher bring learning right to the ball field.

Students vacationing at the beach can learn more about ocean tides or the phases of the moon while gazing at the night sky by visiting the “Celebrate Science” lesson collection. Content-rich lessons and handouts are perfect to give students to take home before summer break. You might also e-mail ideas for summer learning directly to students and parents. Encourage them to post pictures and reflections on your class web page or your school’s Facebook page.

## Harness Screen Time

Most students will spend lots of time on electronic devices during summer break, so help them use screen time productively. If your students like to watch movies, find films they might enjoy, such as *Finding Dory* and *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl*, and distribute the corresponding reflection activities from Share My Lesson’s collection of “Teacher Resources Inspired by Films.”

One of our partners, Storyline Online, features famous actors reading stories. For instance, Karan Brar of the *Diary of a*



ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

## Recommended Resources

“Summer Learning at Home”  
<http://go.aft.org/AE118sml1>

“Baseball”  
<http://go.aft.org/AE118sml2>

“Celebrate Science”  
<http://go.aft.org/AE118sml3>

“Teacher Resources Inspired by Films”  
<http://go.aft.org/AE118sml4>

Storyline Online  
<http://go.aft.org/AE118sml5>

“Tap, Click, Read: Growing Readers in a World of Screens” webinar  
<http://go.aft.org/AE118sml6>

“Math Homework Help for Parents”  
<http://go.aft.org/AE118sml7>

*Wimpy Kid* films reads *The Kiss That Missed*, and Betty White reads *Harry the Dirty Dog*. Which actors do your students admire? Take advantage of these performers’ appeal to demonstrate that reading is cool. Each video comes with a home activity sheet.

Interested in learning how to use digital resources to foster students’ love of reading and build their literacy skills? Watch our webinar with the authors of *Tap, Click, Read: Growing Readers in a World of Screens*.

## Involve Parents

A recent study\* revealed that simply text messaging tips to parents of third- and

fourth-graders at risk of summer learning loss is a powerful strategy for increasing reading scores. Try sending a newsletter, e-mailing, or calling home to let parents know about ways they can support students’ summer learning. Or incorporate these resources at your next parent-teacher conference. Better yet, curate several ideas geared toward the ages and interests of your students and let us know so we can feature you and your efforts on our blog.

We can also create a collection of resources specifically designed for you and your students. Simply send an e-mail to [content@sharemylesson.com](mailto:content@sharemylesson.com) to let us know which Share My Lesson resources would be most useful.

Have a great summer!

\*Matthew A. Kraft and Manuel Monti-Nussbaum, “Can Schools Enable Parents to Prevent Summer Learning Loss? A Text-Messaging Field Experiment to Promote Literacy Skills,” *ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 674 (2017): 85–112.

—THE SHARE MY LESSON TEAM



# Leadership Matters

## Teachers' Roles in School Decision Making and School Performance



BY RICHARD M. INGERSOLL, PHILIP SIRINIDES,  
AND PATRICK DOUGHERTY

**I**t is almost universally recognized that how schools are organized and managed—the realm of school leadership—is crucial for the success of students and school performance.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, school officials and reformers have long held that the key to successful school leadership is to make the core activi-

ties of teaching and learning the primary focus of those making the decisions and managing schools.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, what is often called “instructional leadership” has been the equivalent of the Holy Grail in the management and administration of elementary and secondary schools.<sup>3</sup> In this view, effective schools almost invariably emphasize key elements of instructional leadership, such as developing a shared purpose and vision among faculty and administrators in schools; fostering an atmosphere of trust, respect, and teamwork in the building; promoting high and consistent academic standards; providing objective, consistent, and useful assessment of the quality of teachers and teaching; using evidence and data to make decisions about the instructional program; and providing support for and recognition of teachers.<sup>4</sup>

Along with how closely schools focus on teaching and learning, a second concern often arises in relation to school leadership: who or which groups should have a role in the decision making in schools. A long-standing aspiration of many school reformers has been to see that teachers are granted an important role in the leadership and decision making within schools, espe-

---

*Richard M. Ingersoll is a professor of education and sociology at the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education. Philip Sirinides is a senior researcher at the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) at the University of Pennsylvania. Patrick Dougherty is the associate director of analytics at the New Teacher Center. This article was excerpted from *School Leadership, Teachers' Roles in School Decision-making, and Student Achievement*, published by CPRE and available at [http://repository.upenn.edu/cpre\\_workingpapers/15](http://repository.upenn.edu/cpre_workingpapers/15). The research study summarized in this article was supported by a grant (#B9060) to the New Teacher Center from the Carnegie Corporation. Special thanks are due to Ann Maddock, senior policy advisor from the New Teacher Center, without whom this study would not have been possible.*

cially beyond the classroom. In recent years, efforts to expand teachers' roles in schools have increasingly come under the banner of "teacher leadership."<sup>5</sup> These new roles for teachers have taken a number of different forms and have used a variety of mechanisms. For instance, a growing number of states have enacted policies directing that public schools develop school-level leadership mechanisms, often called school improvement



## Schools are less likely to emphasize those elements of instructional leadership that entail recognition of, and support for, teachers and that are aligned with enhancing teacher "voice."

teams or school councils. The objective of these initiatives is to foster collective and shared decision making among key stakeholders in schools, specifically to include faculty. Often, such policies explicitly mandate that school teams and councils wield real authority over key decisions rather than simply serve in an advisory role.

A further development in teacher leadership and teacher professionalization is the small but growing number of "teacher-powered" schools\*—schools that are collectively designed and led by teachers.<sup>6</sup> Such schools are often explicitly modeled after the kind of partnerships that are common among white-collar vocations, such as lawyers, accountants, architects, auditors, and engineers, where the partners, as professionals, own, run, and are accountable for the success of the firm.

\*For more on teacher-powered schools, see "Leadership for Teaching and Learning" in the Summer 2016 issue of *American Educator*, available at [www.aft.org/ae/summer2016/berry\\_farris-berg](http://www.aft.org/ae/summer2016/berry_farris-berg).

Given the prominence of both instructional leadership and teacher leadership in the realms of school reform and policy, not surprisingly, both have also been the focus of extensive empirical research. But there have been limits to this research. It is, for example, unclear which of the many key elements of instructional leadership are more, or less, likely to be adopted in schools across the nation. Similarly, it is unclear which of these elements are more, or less, beneficial for school performance and for student learning and growth.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, though the extent of teacher involvement in school decision making has been widely studied, there has been almost no solid empirical research on whether teacher leadership is beneficial for student learning and growth.<sup>8</sup> These topics are the subject of a study we undertook, which this article summarizes.<sup>9</sup>

### Our Study

The source of data for our study is the Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning (TELL) Survey, a unique, large-scale survey administered by the New Teacher Center in Santa Cruz, California.<sup>10</sup> The TELL Survey collects data from teachers on an unusually wide range of measures of teaching and organizational conditions in schools and also obtains school-level data on student academic achievement. We analyzed data from almost 900,000 teachers, in about 25,000 public schools in 16 states, collected from 2011 to 2015.

We focused on the TELL Survey's set of questions on 11 key elements of effective instructional leadership, including whether teachers can raise concerns that are important to them, whether there is an atmosphere of trust in school, whether leaders support teachers, whether there is a shared vision for the school, whether there is an effective school improvement team, whether faculty are recognized for accomplishments, whether teachers get effective feedback, whether teacher evaluation is consistent, whether teacher evaluation is objective, whether school leadership facilitates data use to improve learning, and whether teachers are held to high standards. These questionnaire items used a four-point scale: strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree.

We also focused on the TELL Survey's set of questions regarding the role of teachers in eight key areas of decision making and teacher leadership in schools: selecting instructional materials and resources, devising teaching techniques, setting grading and student assessment practices, determining the content of in-service professional development programs, establishing student discipline procedures, providing input on how the school budget will be spent, selecting and hiring new teachers, and school improvement planning. These questionnaire items used a four-point scale as well: none, small, moderate, and large.

Our student achievement measure was the school's student proficiency ranking within its state as compared with all other schools in the state, in that year, for state tests in both mathematics and English language arts (ELA).

### Findings on Instructional Leadership

We found that schools vary dramatically in which elements of instructional leadership they emphasize and implement. For example, in over 90 percent of the schools, the faculty "agree" or "strongly agree" that "teachers are held to high professional standards for delivering instruction." On the other hand, in fewer than

half of the schools did “teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them” (see Figure 1 below).

In general, the data indicate that schools are more likely to implement those elements of instructional leadership that are aligned with enhancing high standards, teacher accountability, evaluation, and performance. In contrast, schools are less likely to emphasize those elements of instructional leadership that entail recognition of, and support for, teachers and that are aligned with enhancing teacher “voice” and input into decision making.

In addition, the data reveal dramatic differences in levels of instructional leadership across different types of schools. School poverty level was a key factor. In nine of the 11 elements of instructional leadership, faculty in high-poverty schools rated their school’s instructional leadership lower than did faculty in low-poverty schools. For instance, in less than half of the high-poverty schools, faculty reported that the school’s leadership consistently supports teachers; in contrast, this was true of about 60 percent of low-poverty schools. The gap was even larger regarding whether a school has an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect (38 percent for high-poverty schools, compared with 50 percent for low-poverty schools).

Not only do schools vary in the extent to which they implement key elements of instructional leadership, but the data show this is related to differences in how well their students perform on state achievement tests. We have found that instructional leadership is independently, significantly, and positively related to student achievement, after controlling for the background characteristics of schools (such as poverty level), and this is so for both mathematics and ELA.

Our statistical analyses show that schools with the highest levels of overall instructional leadership rank substantially higher in both mathematics and ELA in their state than schools with the lowest levels of overall instructional leadership. (For more details on these findings, see [http://repository.upenn.edu/cpre\\_working\\_papers/15](http://repository.upenn.edu/cpre_working_papers/15).)

What aspects of instructional leadership seem to matter most in terms of student achievement? Our statistical analyses show that some elements of instructional leadership have a stronger relationship with student achievement than others. Those elements are: (a) holding teachers to high instructional standards, (b) providing an effective school improvement team, and (c) fostering a shared vision for the school.

But the data also reveal that many schools lag in those elements. For instance, in only a minority of schools did faculty strongly agree that there is a shared vision (8.5 percent) or an effective school improvement team (7.6 percent), yet these elements have among the strongest ties to student achievement. On the other hand, many schools strongly emphasize elements of instructional leadership that have weaker relationships to student achievement, such as providing objective and consistent teacher performance evaluation.

Hence, we found an imbalance: schools often do not emphasize, and sometimes even neglect, elements of instructional leadership that are more strongly related to student achievement, while emphasizing elements that are less related to student achievement. In particular, schools are strikingly less likely to implement elements

that enhance teacher authority and leadership, even though some of these have the strongest ties to student achievement. And conversely, schools are more likely to implement elements that enhance accountability and teacher evaluation, which have the weakest ties to student achievement.

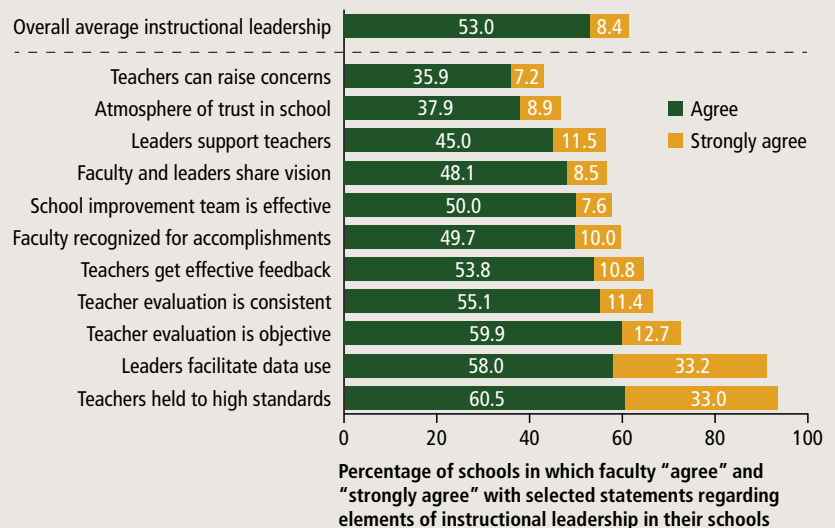
## Findings on Teacher Leadership

Our study also focused on teacher leadership—specifically, the role of faculty in key areas of decision making in their schools. As with instructional leadership, the data show large variations in teachers’ roles across different areas of decision making within schools. For example, in almost 90 percent of schools, teachers have either a “moderate” or a “large” role in “devising teaching techniques,” but they have such a role in less than 10 percent of schools when it comes to “providing input on how the school budget will be spent” (see Figure 2 on page 16).

In general, we found that teachers more often have a substantial role in decisions regarding classroom academic instruction, teaching techniques, and student grading. They less often have a role in

Teachers less often have a role in establishing student behavior policies, engaging in school improvement planning, and determining the content of professional development programs.

Figure 1: Levels of Instructional Leadership



“AGREE” IS DEFINED AS AVERAGE SCHOOL-LEVEL SCORES OF GREATER THAN OR EQUAL TO 3 ON THE 1–4 SCALE. “STRONGLY AGREE” IS DEFINED AS AVERAGE SCORES GREATER THAN OR EQUAL TO 3.5.



decisions that are schoolwide and beyond the classroom, both academic and nonacademic, such as establishing student behavior policies, engaging in school improvement planning, and determining the content of professional development programs.

Similar to the variations in instructional leadership, the data also reveal a wide range in the role of teachers in leadership across different types of schools. Again, school poverty level is one of the most prominent factors in these differences. For five of the eight areas of teacher leadership, faculty in low-poverty schools reported a larger role for faculty than in high-poverty schools. For instance, faculty have a substantial role in selecting new teachers in only about 9 percent of high-poverty schools; this was true for double that percentage in low-poverty schools.

Our analyses also show that teacher leadership is strongly related to student achievement. The results clearly show that teacher leadership and the amount of teacher influence in school decision making are independently and significantly related to student achievement, after controlling for the background characteristics of schools, and this is true for both mathematics and ELA.

For instance, schools with the highest levels of overall teacher leadership rank substantially higher in both mathematics and ELA in their state than schools with the lowest levels of overall teacher leadership. (For more details on these findings, see [http://repository.upenn.edu/cpre\\_workingpapers/15](http://repository.upenn.edu/cpre_workingpapers/15).)

What aspects of teacher leadership seem to matter most in terms of student achievement? Paralleling our findings for instructional leadership, some areas of teacher decision making are more strongly tied to student achievement.

Interestingly, the data suggest that faculty voice and control related to student behavioral and discipline decisions are more consequential for student academic achievement than teacher authority related to issues seemingly more directly tied to classroom instruction, such as selecting textbooks, choosing grading practices, and devising one's classroom teaching techniques. School improvement planning is the decision-making area that has the next strongest association with student achievement.

While student achievement is clearly linked to teachers' roles in both student discipline procedures and school improvement planning, it's important to keep in mind that, in the majority of schools, teachers report having little role in either area (see Figure 2).

The finding on teachers' role in school improvement planning is especially revealing when combined with the previously discussed instructional leadership data on school improvement teams. Collectively, these two sets of data—on instructional leadership and teacher leadership—indicate that having a school improvement team that provides effective leadership, and delegating a large role to teachers in school improvement planning, are among the most important practices associated with improved student achievement.

But the data also reveal that many schools do not have a school improvement team that provides effective leadership and, moreover, that most schools do not provide teachers a substantial role in such planning activities. This connection is important, as the data show that schools with more teacher involvement in school improvement planning are highly likely to also have a more effective school improvement team and better student achievement.

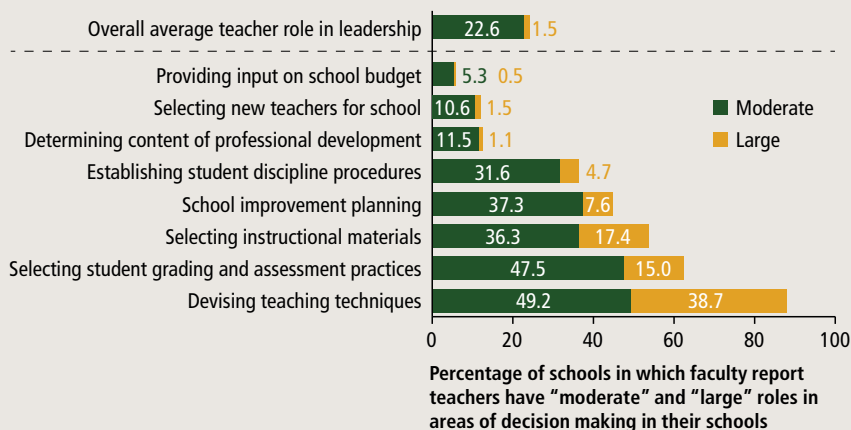
Once again, we find an imbalance: schools often do not promote some of the most consequential areas of teacher leadership, instead giving teachers a larger role in areas that appear to be less tied to student achievement.

In sum, we found that the degree of both instructional leadership and teacher leadership in schools is strongly related to the performance of schools. After controlling for school background demographic characteristics, schools with higher levels of instructional leadership and teacher leadership rank higher in student achievement, for both mathematics and ELA. Moreover, the data show that some elements of instructional leadership and teacher leadership are more strongly related than others to student achievement.

As mentioned, our analyses suggest the presence of an imbalance. Some of those elements of instructional leadership and teacher leadership that are most strongly related to student achievement are least often implemented in schools.



**Figure 2: The Role of Teachers in School Leadership**



"MODERATE" IS DEFINED AS AVERAGE SCHOOL-LEVEL SCORES OF GREATER THAN OR EQUAL TO 3 ON THE 1-4 SCALE. "LARGE" IS DEFINED AS AVERAGE SCORES GREATER THAN OR EQUAL TO 3.5.

The data indicate that holding teachers to high instructional standards—a key element of instructional leadership that is conceptually aligned with enhanced accountability—is among the most strongly related to higher achievement. Two elements of instructional leadership that are conceptually aligned with enhanced teacher authority and leadership—providing an effective administrator-teacher school improvement team and fostering a shared vision among faculty and administration for the school—are also among the most strongly related to higher achievement. Yet, schools are far more likely to implement high teacher standards than they are to have effective school improvement teams or a shared vision.

We found similar results for teacher leadership: some areas of teacher leadership that are the most strongly related to achievement are least often present in schools. The data indicate that teachers' roles in establishing student discipline procedures and school improvement planning are the most strongly related to student achievement. Yet, only a minority of schools give teachers a large role in either of these two key areas.

Our findings suggest the benefits of a balanced approach. In other words, schools that promote *both* teacher accountability and teacher leadership have better performance. In sum, our study suggests that leadership matters, that good school leadership actively involves teachers in decision making, and that these are tied to higher student achievement.

It is striking that teacher authority over student behavioral and discipline decisions appears more consequential for academic success than teacher authority over issues ostensibly more directly tied to classroom instruction. This raises the question: Why would teacher leadership in student discipline policies—a seemingly nonacademic area—so strongly relate to student academic success?

Earlier studies we have conducted analyzing other databases suggest an explanation.<sup>11</sup> These analyses indicate that teachers are given primary responsibility for establishing classroom climate and managing student behavior. But they also show that teachers often have little input into decisions regarding school-wide behavioral and disciplinary policies, norms, and standards for students. Instead, these rules and guidelines are largely conceived by others.

Similarly, teachers often have little say over the types of rewards or sanctions used to bolster or enforce these rules. These limitations on teachers' authority can undermine their ability to take charge of their classrooms and successfully meet their responsibilities.

It is important to recognize, however, that teacher input into student behavioral policies is much more than simply a pragmatic issue of classroom management necessary for academic instruction to proceed. Schooling is not solely a matter of instructing children in the three Rs (reading, writing, and arithmetic) and passing on essential academic skills and knowledge. Schools are one of the major institutions for the socialization of our children. Teachers do not just teach academic subjects. They are also charged with furthering the social-emotional learning of their students.\*

\*For more on the interrelation among social, emotional, and academic learning, see "The Evidence Base for How Learning Happens" in the Winter 2017–2018 issue of *American Educator*, available at [www.aft.org/ae/winter2017-2018/jones\\_kahn](http://www.aft.org/ae/winter2017-2018/jones_kahn).

Poll after poll has shown that the public overwhelmingly feels one of the most important goals of schools is and should be to shape conduct, develop character, and impart values.<sup>†</sup> In this view, the relationships that teachers successfully form with students are crucial to connect students to school, create a sense of community, and support their growth and learning.<sup>‡</sup> To the public, the good school is characterized by a positive ethos and climate and well-



**Our study suggests that leadership matters, that good school leadership actively involves teachers in decision making, and that these are tied to higher student achievement.**

behaved children and youth. Deciding which behaviors and values are proper and best for students is not a trivial, neutral, or value-free task. Our data here appear to suggest that it is important that teachers have a voice in these larger decisions related to creating the culture, climate, and ethos of their schools. □

#### Endnotes

1. For a review, see Dallas Hambrick Hitt and Pamela D. Tucker, "Systematic Review of Key Leader Practices Found to Influence Student Achievement," *Review of Educational Research* 86 (2016): 531–569.
2. Karen Seashore Louis et al., *Learning from Leadership: Investigating the Links to Improved Student Learning; Final Report of Research to the Wallace Foundation* (St. Paul: University of Minnesota Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement, 2010).
3. Richard F. Elmore, *Building a New Structure for School Leadership* (Washington, DC: Albert Shanker Institute, 2000).

*(Continued on page 39)*

<sup>†</sup>See, for example, PDK International's annual poll of the public's attitudes toward public schools, available at [www.pdkpoll.org](http://www.pdkpoll.org).

<sup>‡</sup>For more on the importance of relationships, see "It's About Relationships" in the Winter 2015–2016 issue of *American Educator*, available at [www.aft.org/ae/winter2015-2016/ashley](http://www.aft.org/ae/winter2015-2016/ashley).

# For the Sake of Argument

## An Approach to Teaching Evidence-Based Writing



BY LINDA FRIEDRICH, RACHEL BEAR, AND TOM FOX

In Spring 2017, the mayor of Purvis, Mississippi, sat down with the seventh-graders at Purvis Middle School to discuss the process of making positive changes in their community. This visit was the result of a class project in which students sought to answer the question, “How can we be humanitarians in our community?” Guided by their teacher, Brooke Ann McWilliams, the students conducted research to identify ways to improve their town and wrote proposals based on that research. One girl, as a result of the assignment, applied for a grant to set up and steward a Little Free Library,\* a neighborhood book exchange, and garnered city officials’ support for placing it on parkland if she receives funding.

*Linda Friedrich is the director of research and evaluation at the National Writing Project, where Rachel Bear is a senior program associate and Tom Fox is the site development director.*

In 2015, as part of a community research project in Columbus, Montana, two of teacher Casey Olsen’s 10th-graders wrote a letter to the editor of the *Stillwater County News* arguing for the use of Advanced Life Support, an ambulance service provider, to give small communities in their far-flung county access to ambulance services. The letter sparked community conversation and debate, leading to a ballot measure on the issue. On May 3, 2017, Stillwater County voters passed the measure, ensuring the continuation of these services.

Both projects grew out of two accomplished teachers’ participation in the National Writing Project’s (NWP) College, Career, and Community Writers Program (C3WP), which aims to improve young people’s ability to write thoughtful, evidence-based arguments. Formerly known as the College-Ready Writers Program, C3WP builds on the National Writing Project’s 43-year history of cultivating teacher learning and leadership for the purpose of improving the teaching of writing.

\*For more on Little Free Library, visit [www.littlefreelibrary.org](http://www.littlefreelibrary.org).



A national nonprofit, the NWP facilitates a network of local affiliates throughout the country that support educators in improving the teaching of writing. McWilliams recently completed her first year of C3WP professional development, and Olsen has been a member of C3WP's national leadership team since its inception in 2013. Their students' achievements show how engaging professional development prepares educators to lead lessons that teach youth how to not only write evidence-based arguments but also actively engage in civic life.

In an era where public discourse has become increasingly polarized, and “echo chambers” of narrow views populate people's social media feeds, teaching students to ground their arguments in evidence is more important than ever.<sup>†</sup> To the detriment of education, we live in what author Deborah Tannen calls the “argument culture,” where “winning” is more valued than “understanding.”<sup>1</sup>

## Teaching students to engage in public, civic, and civil arguments requires a focus on using legitimate nonfiction sources in their writing.

To equip students to thrive in this challenging environment, the NWP's approach to argument writing starts with having students understand multiple points of view that go beyond pros and cons and are based on multiple pieces of evidence, which ultimately enables students to take responsible civic action. At its core, C3WP supports students in navigating an increasingly dense informational world so they can become informed citizens who are prepared to participate in and ultimately strengthen a healthy and vibrant democracy.

### The NWP's Approach to Argument: Dialogue, Not Debate

Teaching students to engage in public, civic, and civil arguments requires a focus on using legitimate nonfiction sources in their writing. Readers recognize a thoughtful argument when it's clear that the writer deeply understands the conversation around the issue, carefully engages a range of viewpoints, and skillfully handles the evidence with commentary that advances the claim. In order to help students and their teachers define and teach the

<sup>†</sup>For more on how teachers can help students evaluate digital content so they can reach valid conclusions about social and political issues, see “The Challenge That's Bigger Than Fake News” in the Fall 2017 issue of *American Educator*, available at [www.aft.org/ae/fall2017/mcgregor\\_ortega\\_breakstone\\_wineburg](http://www.aft.org/ae/fall2017/mcgregor_ortega_breakstone_wineburg).

skills associated with using sources, we turn to Joseph Harris's *Rewriting: How to Do Things with Texts*. Harris understands academic writing as resembling a dialogue more than a debate.<sup>2</sup> Participating in a *conversation* is central to our understanding of argument. Before students develop a solid claim for an argument, they need to get a good sense of what the range of credible voices are saying and what a variety of positions are around the topic. Students have to first distinguish between credible and unreliable sources, and then identify the range of legitimate opinions on a single issue. This initial move counters the argument culture by seeking *understanding* before taking a stand.

Once students understand a range of perspectives around a topic and develop an initial claim, they begin to select evidence with which to build a case. A virtue of Harris's book is that he presents the use of evidence in academic writing as a set of possible actions. Writers don't just plop quotations into their arguments; as his title suggests, they do things. Harris categorizes the rewriting “moves” that writers make into two large categories: forwarding, which advances the argument by using sources to “think with,” and countering, which uses sources “to develop a new line of thinking in response to the limits of other texts.”<sup>3</sup> Through understanding and by applying the moves, students are able to “respond to the work of others in a way that is both generous and assertive.”<sup>4</sup>

### How It Works

C3WP is a program for teaching students how to marshal evidence in writing argumentative essays. It includes three interrelated components: professional development, a set of 25 instructional resources for grades 4–12 (most resources describe four to six days of argument instruction), and formative assessment tools. The National Writing Project's networked structure plays an instrumental role in making C3WP come alive in schools and classrooms.

Many schools, especially in high-poverty areas, are accustomed to professional development providers that materialize for a short period of time, promise success, and then disappear. The NWP, however, relies on well-established local Writing Projects to provide professional development, believing that local teachers are the best teachers of other local teachers. This relationship helps break down resistance to change. As one teacher said, “rather than something that you need to teach, [argument] became something that we can study and talk about together.”

Typically, C3WP provides 45 hours of professional development each year in which teachers undertake the kinds of reading and writing assignments they will later give their students. They also work alongside local Writing Project teacher leaders to develop plans for integrating new teaching and learning approaches into existing curricula. Specifically, during professional development, teachers engage with the C3WP resources as

C3WP answers the contemporary call for respectful, source-based argument. The program offers intensive professional development and instructional resources that support students in reading critically, exploring multiple points of view, and taking a stand on important issues.

To learn more about how to get involved, send an e-mail to [c3wp@nwp.org](mailto:c3wp@nwp.org).

learners and then plan how to use the resources in their own classrooms. This professional development is intensive, embedded, and teacher-to-teacher, with the goal of supporting teachers in learning the underlying principles of the program so they can adapt its instructional resources to their own teaching.

C3WP's professional development reflects the elements outlined in the Learning Policy Institute's report on effective professional development.<sup>5</sup> It is content-focused on the teaching of argument writing. Local sites create respectful relationships with teachers who then coach and model instructional resources and create occasions for collaborative feedback and reflection. And while professional development generally continues over the course of one school year, in many cases local Writing Project sites form multiyear relationships with partnering schools or districts.

At the latest count, C3WP has been implemented by middle and high school teachers in 41 states—including in rural and urban schools, in places such as Pontiac, Michigan; Gloversville, New York; Los Angeles; and East Tallahatchie, Mississippi—who rely on C3WP's instructional resources in teaching students how to make evidence-based arguments.<sup>6</sup>



The C3WP framework rests on what are known as “cycles of instruction” that integrate the program’s three essential components: instructional resources for teaching argument writing, formative assessment tools, and intensive professional development—all developed by teachers for teachers. The NWP makes the interconnections among these components explicit to teachers in the program, and we briefly describe them here.

First, teachers gather as a staff and meet with facilitators from their local Writing Project. They discuss their students and decide on a C3WP instructional resource to introduce argument writing to their classes. Through coaching or model lessons, the Writing Project supports the teachers as they teach the resource and collect the student writing. Teachers then bring the student writing to the next staff gathering. Using one of C3WP’s formative assessment tools, they collaboratively analyze their students’ work and use this information to select the next instructional resource that matches the level of sophistication in their students’ argument

writing. This cycle enables classroom instruction, professional development, and formative assessment to build on one another. To implement C3WP, teachers teach a minimum of four cycles, over the course of a year, until it becomes habitual for a school staff to gather and discuss student work and identify the next instructional steps. Students’ capacity for sophisticated argument writing thus builds over the course of an entire year or semester.

## Instructional Resources Focused on Nonfiction

Each C3WP instructional resource describes a four- to six-day sequence of instructional activities that focuses on developing a small number of argument skills (e.g., developing a claim, ranking evidence, coming to terms with opposing viewpoints). Ideally, teachers will teach at least four of these resources each year to help students gradually improve their ability to write evidence-based arguments.\*

Every C3WP instructional resource, developed by experienced Writing Project teacher leaders, also reflects six principles (described below) that illustrate the argument for our approach to teaching. The set of instructional materials are based on these principles, which ultimately sustain teachers’ practice.

As teachers engage with these resources in professional development and try them out in their classrooms, they enhance and deepen their understanding of how to teach complex knowledge and skills. We encourage teachers to explore and internalize these principles of effective argument-writing instruction, so they can adapt strategies, seek out texts responsive to student interests and curricular demands, and ultimately design their own instructional units. In this way, C3WP resources serve as generative structures rather than a curricular script to be followed lockstep. Below, we identify each instructional design principle and then illustrate it with an example from the set of instructional resources.

### ***1. Focus on a specific set of skills or practices in argument writing that build over the course of an academic year.***

Each C3WP instructional resource focuses on two or three key argument skills, such as organizing evidence in an argument or responding to opposing viewpoints, rather than attempting to teach everything about argument in a single unit. For instance, one resource teachers can use at the beginning of the school year helps students write and revise claims by researching articles on the effects of video games. This resource introduces the practice of making tentative claims that are revisable as students understand and digest new information. After students become adept at developing claims from evidence, the resources support students’ assessment and use of evidence in writing arguments. Each resource adds new argument-writing skills to the students’ repertoire. By the end of the year, students are researching self-selected topics and writing arguments that make change in their communities, as in the vignettes mentioned at the beginning of this article.

### ***2. Provide text sets that represent multiple perspectives on a topic, beyond pro and con.***

Most C3WP resources include multiple texts about a single topic,

\*For more on C3WP’s instructional resources, visit [www.bit.ly/2F3vPRy](http://www.bit.ly/2F3vPRy).

carefully curated by experienced teachers of argument, to support the development of the specific skills emphasized in that instructional resource. Texts are grouped in sets by topic, such as what to do about space junk or police use of excessive force, and present a range of positions, information, modes, genres, and perspectives with which a student can make and support a claim. A text set typically:

- Grows in complexity from easily accessible texts to more difficult;
- Takes into account various positions, perspectives, or angles on a topic;
- Provides a range of accessible reading levels;
- Includes multiple genres (e.g., video, image, written text, infographic, data, interview); and
- Consists of multiple text types, including both informational and argumentative.

### **3. Describe iterative reading and writing practices that build knowledge about a topic.**

C3WP’s “Making Civic Arguments” resource, which guided Olsen’s students in developing op-eds, illustrates this principle with a project-based learning capstone experience. For this cycle, students identify their own topics based on issues that affect their local community and then find their own sources, including surveys of or interviews with local stakeholders, reflecting a range of perspectives on the issue.

After gathering information, students draft detailed research reports, explaining how they conducted their research. Students construct their understanding as they write each part of the report. When carefully analyzing and writing about the evidence they have collected, they sometimes discover that their original position is not as strong as they initially thought. This detailed research report allows them to reflect on their research process and focus on how they unpack the complexity of the issue.

Students return to their detailed research reports as they begin thinking about their op-eds. Students often find that their claims change again as they think through their argument. Through repeated and varied opportunities to investigate, read, and write about their topics, students take more informed positions in their writing.

### **4. Support the recursive development of claims that emerge and evolve through reading and writing.**

To build the habit of mind of forming perspectives based on reasoning and evidence, this principle gets reinforced in every C3WP instructional resource. For example, “Writing and Revising Claims,” an early instructional resource, invites students to practice layering their thinking through reading, reflective writing, and critical thinking as they gather information from texts, consider multiple angles on a topic, develop and revise a claim, and write a full draft. Students write a first reaction to the topic and then experience three layering activities, adding to their initial thinking after each activity.

### **5. Help intentionally organize and structure students’ writing to advance their arguments.**

Organizing vast amounts of information into a cogent, pithy piece of writing is complex for writers of any age—and not easily

accomplished by following a single formula. Thus, several C3WP resources present planning tools and strategies for studying high-quality exemplars to support students in mastering the ability to make wise organizational choices. For example, in the “Making the Case in an Op-Ed” resource, students engage in a genre analysis of *New York Times* “Room for Debate” op-eds. They read several examples, identifying, describing, and explaining the decisions the writers make. And they specifically examine how the writers organize sources in their op-eds.

The goal of this process is for students to see that there is no single “right” way to organize and use evidence in an op-ed. This point is reinforced when students are tasked with planning to write four to six paragraphs by creating a logical order with a purposeful argument, rather than by relying on a predetermined formula.

Organizing vast amounts of information into a cogent, pithy piece of writing is complex for writers of any age.

### **6. Embed formative assessment opportunities in classroom practice to identify areas of strength and inform next steps for teaching and learning.**

Each instructional resource provides guidance about the formative assessment opportunities embedded in classroom instruction. For example, “Making Civic Arguments” highlights the importance of teachers holding writing conferences with students once they list possible topics. This allows teachers to determine whether students have chosen a topic that is researchable and of personal interest. If a majority of students appear to be struggling with this step, teachers can take time to provide additional support in helping students select a topic. If most students have identified productive topics, then the teacher can shift to providing guidance on research strategy for the whole class, while offering more individualized support to students.

As teachers internalize these design principles, adaptations to the resources, such as changes in the text sets to match students’ interests and abilities, become common. In this way, C3WP resources shift from a curriculum to be followed to a set of generative structures from which teachers and students can learn about writing instruction.

## **The Benefits of Formative Assessment**

The primary purpose of C3WP’s formative assessment tools is to support teachers as they plan instruction. Therefore, in addition



to formative assessment practices embedded in daily classroom interactions, C3WP engages teachers in collaboratively assessing students' written arguments to understand what students can already do and what they need to learn next.

For example, teachers use the C3WP Using Sources Tool during a cycle of instruction to provide a focused look at the quality of students' claims as well as the selection and use of evidence from sources. This digital tool combines a series of scaled questions related to use of source material and a short narrative question to outline next steps. Its accessible charts and graphs summarize whole-school data, sparking lively and productive conversations among teachers as they collectively identify next



teaching steps for their students. The Using Sources Tool focuses on students' handling of nonfiction sources, specifically on how students introduce and comment on them. This, in turn, helps teachers steer clear of general evaluation and, instead, provide specific information about how students are doing with argument writing. Two questions in the figure below offer a sense of the easy-to-use questions and the focus on sources.

In addition, the Using Sources Tool helps teachers within a school adopt common terminology about argument writing, such

as “claim,” “evidence,” “commentary,” “signal phrase,” and “countering.” This language enhances and extends teachers' assessment of writing beyond a more typical focus on grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors. Just as important, the tool also allows students to assess their own writing.

During the initial study of C3WP, teachers saw how beneficial the Using Sources Tool was for them and adapted it for direct use with their students. The Student Using Sources Tool enables student writers to learn from peers and allows teachers to learn from the way students respond to each other. The specificity of their responses, like the focus on formative assessment, is among the student tool's benefits. Like their teachers, students learn to use language about their texts that is specific to argument writing. As one student says, “I feel like it gave words to things I would have [had] ... a difficult time describing.”

Aside from anecdotal evidence that C3WP works, an independent, random-assignment study<sup>7</sup> validates the program's positive impact on both student and teacher learning. Researchers from SRI International evaluated the program's first iteration in 22 high-poverty, rural districts in 10 states: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, New York, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Tennessee. They found that students in districts implementing C3WP demonstrated greater proficiency in reasoning and use of evidence in their writing than those in control group districts.

They also found that teachers in participating districts used instructional approaches that differed significantly from those in districts in which teachers did not participate in professional development for C3WP. For example, C3WP teachers were more likely to teach students to connect evidence to claims and to select evidence from source material—key elements of college and career expectations.

Most participating schools and districts, including those in the original evaluation, are underresourced, are under pressure to raise test scores, and often experience high teacher turnover. Despite these challenges, we see success: in the joy teachers get from learning new practices and thinking deeply about writing instruction, in the high-quality student writing that teachers share and celebrate, and in the actual changes in communities spurred by students' writing. □

*(Endnotes on page 40)*

Does the writing distinguish between the student's own ideas and the source material, including the use of clearly indicated paraphrasing, quotation marks, or signal phrases?

Not present



Developing



Competently



Effectively



Does the writing select and use evidence from sources to support this claim?

Not present



Developing



Competently



Effectively



# Making Meaning from the Past

A Program Inspires Students with History



BY CATHY GORN

**O**n May 11, 1974, 127 students from middle and high schools in the greater Cleveland area gathered on the campus of Case Western Reserve University to compete in a contest called “History Day.” The idea was the brainchild of David Van Tassel, a professor of history at Case Western, who wanted, he said, “to counter the devaluation of history as a field of study in the aftermath of the cry for ‘relevance’ during the 1960s.”

Van Tassel had witnessed a generation of young people caught up in events during one of the most turbulent decades in American history, who felt that past events were irrelevant to their lives. He wanted to create a tool to invigorate the teaching and learning of history—to make history education exciting, interesting, and

relevant. He believed that future citizens must learn to look at current issues through the prism of history to understand both their cause and effect.

His idea would evolve into National History Day (NHD),\* a nonprofit organization based in College Park, Maryland, of which I am the executive director. While NHD offers academic and professional development opportunities as well as curriculum materials throughout the year, it is widely known for the National History Day Contest, in which students conduct historical research and submit their projects at local and state levels, with top students invited to the National Contest.

Watching students compete this year prompted me to reflect on the uncertain times we face today. Although history does not repeat itself exactly, many educators still share Van Tassel’s concern as we continue to see how harmful an ignorance of history

*Cathy Gorn is the executive director of National History Day and an adjunct professor of history at the University of Maryland at College Park.*

\*To learn more about National History Day, visit [www.nhd.org](http://www.nhd.org).

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GABY D’ALESSANDRO

and a lack of historical perspective can be.\*

In an era rife with accusations of “fake news”<sup>†</sup> and conflicts that at times have turned violent, it is ever more important that young people are taught to examine current events through a historical perspective and to back up their assertions and interpretations with solid evidence. Many recent events, including the clash between protesters in Charlottesville, Virginia, have shown how a misunderstanding or lack of historical knowledge can lead to dire consequences for our country.

The study of the past helps us make sense of the present and provides students with an understanding of who we are as a people and as a society, and the continuing challenges we face to preserve and protect democracy. In the current political climate, understanding history and its consequences is crucial. But such a study must go beyond memorizing names and dates and reading textbooks. Studying history should spark curiosity and prompt students to ask why and how, in addition to what, where, and when. Those questions deserve legitimate answers, ones backed by evidence. “Because I know how to question, I believe I am a better citizen of this country,” as one student put it in a paper detailing her project for the National Contest. “No blind faith or cynicism for me! History has made me see a strong connection between our past and our future.”

Participation in NHD demonstrates that students learn history when they extensively research and write about it. The NHD contest is not a secondary school version of Trivial Pursuit. It is not a “bee” in which students memorize information that they later recite in response to questions. Rather, it requires that they thoroughly and deliberately examine the world of the past through direct contact with original materials, including documents, photographs, film, newspapers, interviews, and visits to historic sites, such as battlefields, monuments, and memorials. By engaging with such resources, students can understand the motivations of individuals who lived in a particular time and place, why past events unfolded as they did, and how they continue to shape the present.

## Understanding History— and National History Day

Although the National History Day Contest is what NHD is most known for, activities and events sponsored by NHD take place all year. To be eligible for the National Contest, which occurs at the University of Maryland every June, students in sixth through twelfth grades first choose a topic in history, based on an annual theme.<sup>‡</sup>

\* For more on how history instructs, see “History and Tyranny” in the Summer 2017 issue of *American Educator*, available at [www.aft.org/ae/summer2017/snyder](http://www.aft.org/ae/summer2017/snyder).

† For more on fake news, see “The Challenge That’s Bigger Than Fake News” in the Fall 2017 issue of *American Educator*, available at [www.aft.org/ae/fall2017/mcgrew\\_ortega\\_breakstone\\_wineburg](http://www.aft.org/ae/fall2017/mcgrew_ortega_breakstone_wineburg).

‡ For more on contest themes, visit [www.nhd.org/previous-annual-themes](http://www.nhd.org/previous-annual-themes).

Each year, NHD staff members select a theme to guide student research. While themes are broad, they are also narrow enough to help focus students. The 2017 theme was “Taking a Stand in History,” and this year’s is “Conflict and Compromise in History.”

To enter the contest, students conduct research in libraries, archives, and museums. After thinking critically about the topic’s significance, students present their evidence and conclusions in their choice of a paper, exhibit, performance, documentary, or website. Many schools have clubs, or even classes, that help students in the creation and revision of projects.

The completed projects are entered into competition at local and state levels where they are evaluated by professional historians and educators. Top entries then move on to the national competi-



tion, where similar panels of judges evaluate their work. Projects are evaluated on historical quality, relationship to the contest theme, and clarity of presentation. The best projects combine excellent research with a strong argument supported by evidence.

Of the more than half a million students who create projects each year, only around 3,000 make it to the National Contest. More than \$100,000 in prizes and scholarships are awarded, including first-, second-, and third-place prizes, as well as special prizes to entries that focus on specific areas of historical research. The largest prizes are three college scholarships, including a full tuition scholarship to Case Western Reserve University, where NHD was founded.

One reason why the contest motivates so many students is that it allows young people to take ownership of their learning. They choose their own topics and chart their own research plans. As long as students can show their topic’s significance in history and back it up with solid evidence, they can choose from local, state, national, or world history. The program provides an opportunity for students to develop the knowledge and skills that are an inherent part of authentic assessment.

Every year, NHD students remind us that young people have not yet become jaded by the world. They believe in fairness and come fresh to their topics. They find primary sources that allow the historical figures to speak for themselves, using evidence to support their conclusions about their topic’s significance. In this way, students find the antecedents that shed light on today’s issues, as several students



did when the contest theme in 1998 was “Migration in History.”

The concept of migration prompted many students to look at the historical impacts of immigration. For instance, Juan and Guadalupe Medina, brothers from Houston, focused on a topic that was close to home: the agricultural guest worker (bracero) program established during World War II. Their documentary about the program explained how, as a result of a labor shortage, millions of Mexican citizens were brought to work on U.S. farms. During their research, the Medinas discovered that their own grandfather, Manuel Cruz, came to the United States as a bracero and stayed. After winning first place at the National Contest, Guadalupe said his research made him realize that as the descendent of Mexican immigrants, “I have a right to be here as much as anybody, because I can see the struggle our ancestors went through to help the United States.”

## In an era rife with accusations of “fake news,” it is ever more important that young people are taught to examine current events through a historical perspective.

Because many students like the Medinas have a personal stake in their topics, contest participants often continue their historical research after the competition. In fact, many make it their lifelong goal to pursue justice and tell the stories of those whom history may have forgotten.

In 2000, when the NHD theme was “Turning Points in History,” four students from Uniontown, Kansas, helped bring long-overdue recognition to a World War II hero and ultimately influenced the teaching of the Holocaust in Polish schools. In the fall of 1999, the students uncovered the forgotten story of Irena Sendler, a non-Jewish social worker in Warsaw who saved more than 2,500 children from the Jewish ghetto.

At great personal risk, Sendler talked Jewish parents into giving up their children, as they would surely die otherwise. She smuggled the children out of the ghetto in body bags, claiming that they had died of typhoid. She then changed the children’s names and placed them in non-Jewish homes. She wrote their real names on pieces of paper that she placed in jars and buried in her yard, with the hope that when the world was free of evil, she would dig them up and tell the children about their true identities. Although Sendler was arrested by the Nazis and severely beaten, she was rescued from prison when a colleague bribed a guard to release her.

The students discovered that Sendler was still alive, and with the help of a Polish student at a local college, the group wrote letters to Sendler, who was 91 years old, and received letters from

her in return. The students wrote a performance for their National History Day entry, which took them to the National Contest. But it did not end there. The students, with the help of the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous, started a trust at a Polish bank in Warsaw and raised money for Sendler’s care. After the national competition, the students continued to present their performance to community groups in Kansas, New York City, and Washington, D.C.

In 2001, the students and their teacher, Norm Conard, flew to Poland to meet their hero, returning several times. Even today, their work continues. In 2007, Conard helped found the Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes in Fort Scott, Kansas. As the center’s director, Conard works with program director Megan Felt (one of his students from the Sendler project), teaching educators and students worldwide about tolerance and respect.

Because of their efforts, Irena Sendler’s name and contribution to history are known throughout the world. The Hallmark Channel produced a television movie about Sendler. And the book *Life in a Jar: The Irena Sendler Project* tells the story of Sendler’s heroism and how the students from Kansas discovered her story. Although Sendler was recognized for her efforts by Israel’s Yad Vashem Holocaust museum in 1965, her story was buried under communist rule in Poland. But because of the efforts of a National History Day project, Sendler’s story came to light.

### The Critical Role of History Teachers

Teachers are the backbone of the NHD program. While a large number teach social studies, many also teach English language arts, graphic design, media production, art, music, and drama. School librarians also provide a critical role, helping students access and interpret sources.

They provide the resources and guidance students need to master a historical topic.<sup>§</sup>

NHD changes the way that teachers approach their classrooms; many integrate the program into their curriculum. By providing students opportunities to make choices—for instance, what topic to select, what project to create, and whether to work independently or in a group—educators use the program as a vehicle to drive student learning and engagement

Nick Coddington, an NHD teacher from Washington state now studying at Columbia University, recalls how the program captivated a high school freshman student named Taylor. Passionate about horses, Taylor wanted to study the Great Horse Manure Crisis of 1894. Coddington was skeptical. But Taylor focused on the political and technological reforms that helped to clean up American cities. Coddington was impressed, especially when Taylor’s project made it to the finals at the National Contest. “The lesson to me was that by letting students pick their own topic, they end up learning more than they otherwise would have and learn to love history,” he says. “I also enjoy it because I get to learn about topics in history that I was oblivious to.”

As students begin researching and their projects progress, teachers’ roles start to shift. Rather than simply providing infor-

<sup>§</sup>For more on the role of librarians in supporting student research, see “Beyond the Stacks” in the Winter 2014–2015 issue of *American Educator*, available at [www.aft.org/ae/winter2014-2015/freeman](http://www.aft.org/ae/winter2014-2015/freeman).

mation, they work with librarians to teach students how to find the information themselves. Dave Wheeler, an NHD teacher in Indianapolis, encourages students to look at the big picture in order to understand their chosen topic. Students learn “to take into consideration some of the larger issues of that time period that may have had an impact or influence on their topic,” he says. In addition, this process “allows them to start focusing on more specific aspects of the research process.”

Wheeler also supports students in strengthening their thesis statements and improving their argumentation and analytical skills. He notes that working this way can be accomplished with students at any level and at any grade; he has supported students in their NHD projects in general education classes as well as honors and Advanced Placement courses.

Other teachers use the contest as a way to improve written and spoken language. Carol Dallman, an NHD teacher from Minnesota who teaches at a high school for English language learners, notes that NHD helps students pace themselves through a large project and learn technological skills such as accessing research databases. In addition, students “learn the vocabulary of academics—citation, bibliography, annotation, credible sources—and they learn how to use an academic library.” She adds that participation in the contest provides them a chance to compare their work with the work of students of different backgrounds. In doing so, “they find their work is just as good, providing a great boost to confidence.”

Al Wheat, a teacher from Mississippi, recalls how an NHD project engaged LaVontae, a shy student who “didn’t say more than 10 words his first year in my class.” LaVontae used his video editing skills in an NHD group that produced a documentary. When his group was invited to make a presentation of the project at a Mississippi legislative session, LaVontae was the only member who could go. Wheat says that despite his quiet manner in class, LaVontae did a terrific job presenting the group’s project and “overwhelmingly impressed” the representatives.

Wheat says that LaVontae now uses the documentary and video editing skills he developed for the NHD project for his YouTube channel, which has more than 20,000 subscribers with more than 13 million views. “NHD took an extremely introverted, shy child that all statistics said should be struggling, and possibly even failing, and changed him,” Wheat says. “He’s now excelling in college, has excelled in large public presentations, and is clearly excelling in video creation and editing. LaVontae is one of my many NHD success stories, and one that continues to make me proud.”

### National History Day Works

While the stories above are powerful, documented evidence of student success further demonstrates National History Day’s effectiveness. In 2009, NHD commissioned a professional evaluation that validated 40 years of anecdotal evidence: the historical research that is part of the program helps transform young people into scholars.

With funding from the Behring Global Education Foundation and the U.S. Department of Education, NHD hired an independent research organization to explore the impact of the program. The evaluation, conducted during the 2009–2010 school year, found the following:

- **NHD students outperform their non-NHD peers on standardized tests in all topic areas, including reading, science, and math, as well as social studies.** For example, in Texas, NHD students outperformed their non-NHD peers on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills tests, and not just in history but in science and math as well.
- **NHD students in South Carolina outperformed their non-NHD peers on English assessments.** NHD high school students led their school district with a 61 percent passing rate in English, 1 to 9 percent above a comparison site.
- **NHD students are better writers, meaning that they write with a purpose and real voice, and that they marshal solid evidence to support their points of view.** NHD students had more exemplary writing scores and fewer low scores than comparison students. Overall, NHD students outscored comparison-group students on both pre- and post-writing assessments, receiving more exemplary scores (5 or 6) on a six-point scale.

**Young people who are exposed to high-quality history education are more likely to vote, volunteer, and take part in their communities.**

- **NHD students are critical thinkers who can digest, analyze, and synthesize information.** Performance assessments show that NHD students scored 18 percentage points better than their peers at interpreting historical information, earning an average of 79 percent correct, compared with 61 percent.

The study provides solid evidence that history education matters and that high-quality history education, such as the kind National History Day provides, plays a central part in helping young people gain a well-rounded understanding of our global community and the knowledge and skills necessary for their future success. Equally important, studying the past has a positive effect on civic involvement, especially voting. This study also shows that young people who are exposed to high-quality history education are more likely to vote, volunteer, and take part in their communities.

Ultimately, National History Day prepares young people to become productive and engaged citizens. By conducting extensive primary research at libraries, archives, and museums, hundreds of thousands of young people each year engage in rigorous explorations of history. And each year, these students learn that to fully understand the present, they must first find meaning in the past. □

# Union Strong Before and After the Storm



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 ZEPH CAPO

In August 1992, I began my teaching career at an elementary school in South Florida. On that first day in the classroom, I felt both excited and nervous. I looked forward to a rewarding year in my new profession. But days later, Hurricane Andrew hit, closing schools and destroying my home. I lost everything I owned.

Twenty-five years later, another storm would play a defining role in my life. In August 2017, Hurricane Harvey hit Houston, where I serve as the president of the Houston Federation of Teachers (HFT).

For several days, the storm and its aftermath ravaged the Gulf Coast. Severe flooding took lives, destroyed homes, and closed

schools. This time, my own house was spared. Others were not so fortunate. The homes of many of the 6,000 teachers, school nurses, counselors, and other support professionals the HFT represents were damaged or destroyed; their lives were completely upended.

Immediately, our local began helping members in need. We coordinated volunteers who spent countless hours delivering food and bottled water as well as cleaning and repairing damaged homes. We showed that, together, we were stronger than the storm.

I truly believe that our strength resulted in part from the battles the HFT fought, and ultimately won, in recent years. These battles centered on hot-button issues such as teacher pay and evaluation. After more than three years without a salary increase, we launched a successful pay-raise campaign for our members. We also filed a federal lawsuit against the use of value-added measures (VAM), securing a victory for the right of educators in our school district to be fairly evaluated.

*Zeph Capo is the president of the Houston Federation of Teachers (HFT), an AFT vice president, and a trustee for Houston Community College. A former middle school science teacher, he previously served as HFT vice president and legislative director.*



For videos of HFT members helping others in the community, visit [www.aft.to/HurricaneHarvey](http://www.aft.to/HurricaneHarvey) and [www.aft.to/TeachingInShelters](http://www.aft.to/TeachingInShelters).





five years. School nurses are on the same salary schedule as teachers and received the same increases, and paraprofessionals received a 2 percent increase.

As a union, we are very pleased with what we negotiated. The salary increases will help the district decrease turnover among experienced educators, whom we need to mentor novices. We know that it's vitally important in a teacher's development to learn from seasoned veterans. Ultimately, the increases validated the fact that experience matters. It matters in stabilizing schools and in creating a culture that can acclimate and induct new teachers into the profession.

\*\*\*

What helped set the stage for the salary fight—and the first real indicator the district wanted to partner with us in changing the culture—happened a few years ago. In 2015, the school board voted down the renewal of the teacher evaluation contract for a program called Education Value-Added Assessment. It was a draconian system that used a student's performance on standardized tests to predict academic growth and make decisions about teacher evaluation, bonuses, and termination.

The second major sign of the district's willingness to collaborate was the decision to choose Richard Carranza as superintendent. The HFT spearheaded a successful series of town hall meetings with parents and community leaders to decide together what type of leader would best meet the needs of our district. These town halls provided an important exchange of ideas among stakeholders so that they could better understand each other and begin to build trust. It was a beautiful thing to see educators, parents, and community leaders go into the official district search meetings speaking with one voice.

But before that collaboration, the union took the lead on defeating value-added assessment. In May 2014, the HFT and seven of our members filed a federal lawsuit to end the policy. And in October 2017, the school district agreed in a settlement not to use value-added scores to terminate teachers. It also agreed to create an instructional consultation subcommittee focused on teacher evaluation. The panel, made up of representatives from the district and the teacher workforce, will make recommendations to improve the district's teacher appraisal process. The settlement also required the district to pay \$237,000 for expenses, such as attorneys' fees, related to the lawsuit.

It's funny, but before becoming an educator, I wanted to be a lawyer, and I maintained an interest in legal issues after I began teaching. That interest has helped in my work as union president. I moved from South Florida to Texas in 1997, because, unlike Florida (at the time), Texas had several public law schools. Tuition there would be cheaper than at private law schools, so I established residency to defray costs.

Before applying to law school, though, I decided to teach high school biology in Austin. While the cost of living was less than in South Florida, the salary was too. I had done a lot of financial calculations before making this move, but I hadn't factored in that, in Texas, I would need to pay for my own insurance and supplement my retirement.

I started going broke really fast. So I moved to Houston and took a job as a union organizer recruiting and representing members for the HFT. I worked my way up to management positions, and in

2015, after longtime HFT President Gayle Fallon retired, I was elected union president.

Before Gayle stepped down, the Leadership Education and Development (LEAD) program, run by the AFT's Union Leadership Institute, was crucial in helping our union think through the leadership transition. The program enabled the union's executive board to engage with our members to set goals and create the buy-in needed for achieving them.

Well before her retirement, Gayle and I focused on increasing our political strength around school board elections and researching value-added measures. Our eventual victories didn't happen overnight. We worked closely with Audrey Amrein-Beardsley, a professor at Arizona State University who studies teacher evaluation. I had read a peer-reviewed journal article she had written that was among the first critiques of value-added measures. As soon as I read the article, I e-mailed her and said, "We're living through this stuff." Then I called her, and we talked about how she could partner with the union on this issue. She was happy to have access to the teachers and the district staff to continue her work. I knew I was going to make district officials a little nervous, but we gathered focus groups with our teachers in certain areas where we were seeing impacts and helped do large-scale survey work.

Amrein-Beardsley published her findings on the inherent flaws of value-added measures in *Educational Leadership*, a magazine put out by ASCD (formerly the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development), and she incorporated her research from the HISD into her presentations before the U.S. Senate. Her work, and that of others such as Linda Darling-Hammond, eventually led the American Statistical Association to caution school districts against the use of VAM.

\*\*\*

In recent years, our union's work on multiple fronts—from research on testing and evaluation to engaging members in campaigns—has helped to change the narrative around public education. In November, that work resulted in the election of two school board members whom the union endorsed because of their support for frontline educators and community-driven solutions for strengthening schools.

In the wake of Hurricane Harvey, we are continuing to advocate for our students. We have asked state education officials to cancel this year's standardized tests and spend the money that would have gone toward implementing them on rebuilding damaged schools instead.

Nothing we do in education happens in a vacuum. Our students are part of our cities and our neighborhoods—structures that go far beyond the schoolhouse walls. And so we must continue to engage families and community members and forge the partnerships necessary to ensure that together we can weather whatever storms may come. □

The success of our union still depends upon active and engaged members who are politically strong and savvy.

# Teacher Unionism in America

## Lessons from the Past for Defending and Deepening Democracy

BY JON SHELTON

In 2017, I published *Teacher Strike!: Public Education and the Making of a New American Political Order*.<sup>1</sup> The book was my scholarly attempt to understand how the hundreds of teacher strikes in the United States in the 1960s, '70s, and '80s affected American politics. I argued that, even in an era more favorable to public employee unions than ours is today, teachers' activism still collided with misguided labor law, institutional racism that sometimes pitted teachers against the communities in which they taught, and a tragic wave of fiscal crises. Activist teachers' critics—mostly on the Right but sometimes on the Left—often used these conflicts to try to discredit teacher unions. I used historical examples to develop my conclusion, where I argued that to transcend these legacies, organized teachers must forge powerful connections between their interests in the classroom and the needs of the broader community.

I made my final edits in October 2016. When I wrote the conclusion, I did not yet know what would transpire on November 8. Given President Trump's first year in office, it is not hyperbole to say our democracy faces its biggest crisis since at least the Great Depression, and perhaps since the Civil War.\*

In a deeper sense, however, the forces behind Trump's election have simply exacerbated the efforts by the Right over the past 40 years (the roots of which I document in *Teacher Strike!*) to undermine broad economic opportunity, workers' rights, and

*Jon Shelton, an assistant professor of democracy and justice studies at the University of Wisconsin–Green Bay, is the author of Teacher Strike!: Public Education and the Making of a New American Political Order. He is the vice president of higher education for AFT-Wisconsin.*

public education. Had Trump lost the electoral college vote, I would still have argued that forging member-driven unions and a broader coalition with our communities is more important than ever. As we face the racism, sexism, and unmitigated class warfare of the Trump administration, however, it is quite possible that teachers' efforts to wage successful political action represent the fulcrum through which we will either revitalize our democracy or slip even more drastically into authoritarianism.

To rebuild our democracy, working people must organize. And teachers, as professionals central to instructing our future citizens, share a special responsibility. By becoming more active in their own unions, they can build alliances with other working people in their communities.

Unfortunately, the framework in which most teachers have organized over the past half century—a framework that was already under threat—is likely to be dealt a severe blow as a consequence of Republicans' theft of a Supreme Court seat. For years, the National Right to Work Committee (NRTWC) and other shadowy organizations have tried to stop public employee unions from negotiating "fair share fee" or "agency fee" arrangements in which workers contribute to the costs of representing them. This argument has often been in the name of the First Amendment rights of a handful of workers who oppose the union (even though these workers only pay for representation costs and not for the campaigns of politicians).<sup>2</sup> Indeed, outlawing fair share fees would be like making federal income taxes optional. The conscientious would pay them out of a sense of obligation, but many others

\*For more on this topic, see "Hope in Dark Times" and "History and Tyranny" in the Summer 2017 issue of *American Educator*, available at [www.aft.org/ae/summer2017](http://www.aft.org/ae/summer2017).



would receive the same benefits of citizenship without contributing.

In 2016, the Supreme Court seemed poised to overturn the constitutionality of agency fees in the case of *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association*, but when Justice Antonin Scalia died, the court was left deadlocked. In spite of the long-standing custom of moving forward an opposition party's nominee for the high court (Ronald Reagan's nominee Anthony Kennedy was confirmed, for example, by a Democratic-controlled U.S. Senate in his last year in office), Senate Republicans refused to allow President Obama's nominee even a hearing. Trump instead nominated ultra-conservative Neil Gorsuch to fill the seat. With Gorsuch in the fold, the NRTWC and another right-wing group—the Center for Individual Rights—have fast-tracked a similar case, *Janus v. AFSCME*, in the hopes that the court will eliminate agency fees.<sup>3</sup> Unless teachers redouble their efforts to organize and build membership, teachers and communities alike will suffer the consequences of weaker teacher organizations.

Trump's vision for public education, reflected in his appointment of Betsy DeVos as secretary of education, is singularly threatening, too, as DeVos represents the most anti-public-education figure to occupy





The Chicago Teachers Union on strike in 2012. Inset: Margaret Haley, a leader of the Chicago Teachers Federation.

Democratic politicians not doing nearly enough to arrest it, a trend scholars have referred to as “neoliberalism”—organized teachers, as unfair as it might be to expect it, must do even more. I concluded in the book that “two examples of teacher unionism, one hundred years apart ... show that teacher organization is at its best when it is part of a larger social movement and when it can show how intimately related are teacher working conditions, student learning conditions, and social equality.”

## Organized teachers must forge powerful connections between their interests in the classroom and the needs of the broader community.

The two examples I used were both from Chicago: Margaret Haley and the Chicago Teachers Federation (CTF—a founding union of the American Federation of Teachers in 1916) in the early 20th century, and Karen Lewis and the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) in the early 21st. In this article, I explain what we can learn from each and share what my union (situated just a bit north of the Windy City) is doing locally to follow in their footsteps.

### A Feminist Union Fights for Chicago Children

Margaret Haley was born in 1861, the daughter of an Irish immigrant mother and Irish American father. Like many working-class women at the time, she sought the relatively stable wages of a public school teacher. In 1884, Haley took a job teaching sixth grade in Chicago. Her school was in “Packingtown,” the neighborhood made famous by Upton Sinclair’s fictionalized account of the brutal conditions immigrant workers faced in the meatpacking industry.<sup>7</sup>

Haley taught classes of 40–60 students, many of whom were malnourished and often sick, spoke little English, and would leave at age 11 or 12 to go work in the packinghouses. By 1897, the vast majority of

elementary teachers (virtually all of whom were women) “were working under practically the same salary schedule that had been in force in 1877,” while the salaries of male administrators had been increased significantly.<sup>8</sup> Female teachers in Chicago were discouraged from marrying. And without any retirement provisions, they typically relied on charity when they stopped working.

Teachers first organized for a pension plan and, in 1897, formed the Chicago Teachers Federation, the nation’s first real teachers union.<sup>9</sup> Haley and another teacher, Catherine Goggin, emerged as leaders. Goggin was appointed the CTF’s first president

and, concerned with both their own welfare (the new pension provision immediately faced political threats) and their students’, about half of the city’s 5,000 elementary school teachers signed up for the union in its first six months. Haley, the firebrand who would soon be dubbed “Labor’s Lady Slugger,” was elected vice president in 1898.

Teachers had no collective bargaining rights or professional organizing assistance at this time. In this climate, two key things made them effective: members themselves did the hard work of organizing, and they worked with the broader community when they did it.

*Teacher Strike!*, by Jon Shelton, is published by the University of Illinois Press, which is offering *American Educator* readers a 20 percent discount off the purchase of the book through June 15, 2018. To order, visit [www.press.uillinois.edu](http://www.press.uillinois.edu) and use promo code SHELTON.



the top post in the Department of Education’s 40-year history. Since her confirmation, DeVos has proposed diverting an enormous amount of federal funds to private schools.<sup>4</sup> What she (and by extension Trump) threatens is perhaps the most important innovation in American history: public investment in common education.<sup>5</sup>

The good news is that, in spite of the many things working against democracy nationally, politics is still mostly local. In my book, I document some astounding efforts by teachers across the country to build and wield collective power. One of the most important reasons for these successes (and why DeVos has been mostly frustrated so far in radically overhauling public education)<sup>6</sup> is that our education system is still highly decentralized. Further, schools—from elementary schools to public universities—are highly visible institutions that form a crucial piece of a city’s or town’s identity, and thus give teachers a phenomenal amount of political agency.

Indeed, as I began to consider my book’s conclusion, I couldn’t help wondering about the present and future of organized teachers. Given the grander scheme of American history—in which corporate America undertook an assault on working people beginning in the 1970s, with most

Just a year into its formation, the CTF presented a 3,500-signature petition for increased pay to the school board, which convinced the board to provide salary increases. In 1898, a commission was established by the mayor to look into reforming the education system. Headed by William Rainey Harper, president of the University of Chicago—a university founded by the nation’s wealthiest person, John D. Rockefeller—the commission opposed blanket salary increases for teachers and instead recommended merit pay and much more control for administrators. The state legislature introduced a bill based on the recommendations.

In 1899, the CTF held a series of community meetings to explain how schoolchildren would be affected by the new law, and teachers amassed signatures from parents opposing the bill. Haley deftly tied the reforms to Rockefeller in ways teachers today must do with proposed education reforms. As historian Kate Rousmaniere explains, “By highlighting Harper’s link to the millionaire Rockefeller and to moneyed interests, the debate over restructuring the city public school system was deflected to a debate about power and class interests in a democratic society.”<sup>10</sup> The legislature voted down the bill.

But Haley and the CTF did not stop there. When, later, city officials told them Chicago did not have enough money to increase teacher salaries and pensions, Haley spent four years investigating the city’s finances. She consistently updated the public on the investigation, crafting a common understanding in Chicago around why school finances were so dire. The investigation ultimately revealed that some of the city’s largest and most prosperous corporations had been dramatically underpaying their taxes. Teachers ultimately won pay increases, and Haley and the CTF made a powerful argument that education represented a key part of a modern American city. As Rousmaniere puts it, “Haley saw the economic advancement of teachers as an intrinsic part of broad social reform. Improving the education of future citizens would lead to an improved society, and improving the working conditions of teachers would help improve that education. If teachers gained, all society gained.”<sup>11</sup>

Though it faced opposition from the Chicago Board of Education, the teachers

union continued to build power, and teachers across the United States wrote to Haley and Goggin asking them for help organizing their own locals. The CTF forged connections with the wider labor movement in the city, joining the Chicago Federation of Labor in 1902, and in 1916, the Haley-led CTF became a charter local of the AFT. Haley and the CTF were important advocates for women’s suffrage, too, arguing that the troubles teachers faced stemmed from limits to their political agency.

In thinking about Haley’s legacy, we should note that she “resolutely ignored” the needs of the African American community that had begun to grow in Chicago in the early part of the 20th century. Even though such a stance was typical of some of the most progressive Americans at the time, historians must nonetheless acknowledge this important limitation.<sup>12</sup> Still, the example of Haley and the CTF is instructive: it shows that by building strength through membership, and allying with the community (even though Haley, clearly, did not include *all* members of the community) against corporate reformers, teachers could improve their own lives in addition to the lives of many of their students and their families. Just as importantly, Haley’s work provided a critical example for teachers elsewhere, building the foundation for a national movement of teacher unionization.

## Chicago Teachers Organize a Movement against Neoliberalism

Chicago teachers eventually gained bargaining rights in 1966, getting much improved salaries, benefits, and working conditions in the two decades that followed. Unfortunately, since that time, efforts to weaken the rights of working people and public education in the name of market forces have changed the trajectory of public education and other public services in Chicago for the worse.<sup>13</sup>

Chicago’s history illustrates how recent Democratic politicians have seen their own political assumptions shifted by the growth of neoliberalism. Though Harold Washington (1983–1987), the city’s first black mayor, was elected by a multiracial coalition with strong roots in labor, in the years since, Chicago has been administered by Democratic mayors—Richard M. Daley (1989–2011) and Rahm Emanuel (2011–present)—who have mostly favored corporate development. School “CEOs” appointed by Daley and Emanuel have closed neighborhood schools, especially in African American and Latino neighborhoods, while opening scores of charter schools, which are less accountable to the public.<sup>14</sup>

Haley and others calling for the resignation of John D. Shoop, superintendent of the Chicago Board of Education, in December 1913.



DN-0061817, CHICAGO DAILY NEWS NEGATIVES COLLECTION, CHICAGO HISTORY MUSEUM





AFT President Randi Weingarten, left, and CTU President Karen Lewis, right, stand together during the CTU strike.

35,000 teachers and their supporters marched through downtown in a massive show of solidarity.<sup>20</sup> Given the longer history of teacher strikes in the United States—particularly the relative unpopularity of the last Chicago strike in 1987—the well-documented public support for teachers in September 2012 was staggering indeed.<sup>21</sup> After seven days, Mayor Emanuel and the school board agreed to a deal in which teachers won raises and defeated efforts to curtail tenure and increase the use of test scores to evaluate teachers. The effort became a model for other unions across the country.

LEE BALGEMANN

Perhaps the most iconic example of Chicago's shift toward a more unequal city is the dramatic increase of what is known as "tax increment financing." In order to subsidize downtown development for wealthy investors, Chicago has siphoned off tax dollars from public education, leading to the justification for closing schools and reducing services for the city's neediest children.<sup>15</sup>

Given this financing scheme, combined with the fact that the state of Illinois subsidizes every other school district at far higher rates (particularly regarding pensions; until very recently, the state contributed almost no funding for Chicago teachers' pensions while significantly funding the pensions of teachers everywhere else in the state),<sup>16</sup> teachers in Chicago increasingly felt they lacked the necessary resources to teach the city's children.<sup>17</sup>

In the late 2000s, a chemistry teacher named Karen Lewis worked through a group of insurgents called the Caucus of Rank and File Educators (CORE) to fight the school closures and ally the union's goals more closely with the goals of families in the community. The result: in May 2010, CORE's slate of officers successfully won election to lead the union (a reminder that unions remain one of this country's most democratic institutions). The newly elected leaders started listening more to parents and pushed back against the neoliberal order that deprived their schools of funds. In 2012, Chicago teachers went on strike and won labor's most important victory in the past quarter century.

As soon as CORE took control of the CTU, it began to mobilize for upcoming contract

## The CTU's success stemmed from members putting themselves on the line to organize and mobilizing the community behind them.

negotiations. The legislature passed a law in 2010 that forced Chicago teachers to garner the incredibly high threshold of 75 percent of all teachers to authorize a strike. Assuming that teachers would have very little leverage in the upcoming contract negotiations, the school board unilaterally canceled a scheduled pay raise.

The board next sought concessions from the teachers: increasing the school day while effectively cutting teachers' pay by forcing them to contribute more to their benefits, limiting tenure, and tying teachers' performance even more closely to student test scores. The CTU had expressed its demands in a report released in February 2012 called "The Schools Chicago's Students Deserve." The report outlined the need for smaller class sizes, wraparound services for students, professional development, and an end to institutional racism in Chicago schools.<sup>18</sup> In addition, the teachers sought a modest pay raise, limits on student standardized test scores in teacher evaluations, and improved physical spaces in which to teach.

With an impasse on the horizon, the union got 90 percent of all teachers (and 98 percent of those who submitted a ballot) to authorize a strike.<sup>19</sup> On the strike's first day,

The CTU's success stemmed, as it did for the CTF in the late 19th century, from members putting themselves on the line to organize and mobilizing the community behind them. As sociologist Jane McAlevey points out, CORE's most important innovation was devoting its efforts to organizing—among the teachers and in the community—and doing so in a way that forged a broader argument about the undermining of public education: "If the labor movement's instinct has been [in the recent past] to reduce demands in order to sound reasonable, the new CTU took the opposite approach: they led every meeting with school-based discussions of billionaires, banks, and racism. (*Note to other teachers unions: they got reelected.*)"<sup>22</sup>

Certainly the timing of the strike mattered: striking during the 2012 presidential election campaign motivated Emanuel, a key ally of Obama, to negotiate in order to end the strike. But the strike was clearly also successful because the union had worked hard to mobilize members; with contract negotiations on the horizon, the CTU held a "structure test"—a mock vote—in order to ensure it could meet the high threshold needed to authorize a strike.<sup>23</sup> Further, the





BRENT NICASTRO

In February 2011, thousands protested inside the state capitol in Madison against Governor Scott Walker's Act 10, which hobbled public employee unions in Wisconsin.

## The fight to reclaim our country and restore democracy must come from the bottom up. Those who teach represent the crucial linchpin in this struggle.

final contract negotiations serve as a model for democratic unionism. In spite of a push from the school board to end the strike as soon as Lewis and the negotiating team had agreed to a deal, union officials postponed the strike vote for two days so that all members could read the entire contract before voting.<sup>24</sup> It is also important to note that the union garnered the support of the community by organizing around the issue of school closings and making student needs a substantial part of its contract demands.

The CTU has continued to be an outspoken critic of neoliberalism in Chicago since 2012. Lewis became so popular that many urged her to run against Emanuel for mayor in 2014, and she planned to do so until being diagnosed with brain cancer. Lewis ultimately chose not to run, and Emanuel was reelected in a very low-turnout election. The battle is far from over for the CTU, but the union successfully leveraged its widespread popularity to defend its gains in contract negotiations in 2016.

### Teacher Unions as Central Agents of Modern Democracy

The overarching lesson from Chicago's two pioneering unions is that what works in organizing, especially in teacher unions, transcends time. Haley and the CTF won collective victories in the face of a hostile city government around the turn of the 20th

century, as did Lewis and the CTU in 2012.

In both cases, however, these wins required patient and sustained effort. Educators must play the long game, meaning that we should think carefully about how to organize and build power in our locals, especially since it is widely expected that the Supreme Court will rule in the upcoming *Janus* case to impose "right to work" on all of America's public sector workers.

The way to combat the likely loss of fair share fees is to ensure we undertake the hard work of engaging every new teacher in a one-on-one organizing conversation. But we can't stop there. The best way to inoculate our workplaces against right to work is to organize those who are already members to become activists—both at school and in the broader community. It may be unfair to ask our colleagues to add these tasks to their already full plates of work and home life. But developing scores of new activist teachers is the only likely way to combat the efforts of DeVos and the many "reform" organizations out there hoping to privatize public education.

Further, as our economy has moved toward the centrality of service and education (and as many industrial jobs have been either outsourced or made obsolete by technology), schools and universities are the places around which we must build political organizations that ensure everyone

has access to economic security and the chance to have a fulfilling life. Education is now the pivot point on which our identity as a people is connected: it is foundational both to the civic knowledge necessary for a democracy to function and to the skills necessary for economic opportunity in a global economy, as well as a key driver of jobs in its own right.

And, above all, education is accessed locally. Teachers *not only* must organize but also should work to ensure that everyone in their town, city, county, and even region has equal access to jobs, education, healthcare, and the other opportunities—like museums and other cultural activities—that make life fulfilling.

In my home state of Wisconsin, we've been dealing with our version of Trumpism for some time now. Republican Governor Scott Walker, elected to represent the state's wealthiest citizens, used collective bargaining rights for public employees as a political wedge, revoking them in 2011, while slashing taxes for the wealthy and defunding public education. Not only did teacher unions in Wisconsin lose the possibility of fair share agreements (the subject of the *Janus* case), but Act 10 went even further. Also known as the Wisconsin Budget Repair Bill, Act 10 hobbled public employee unions in Wisconsin. We no longer even have the option of negotiating automatic dues deduction for members, and unions are not allowed to legally bargain for salary or wage increases higher than the cost of inflation. University faculty members are barred from any collective bargaining at all. These stipulations represent massive challenges to organizing strong educator unions.

The legislature also has diverted funds from K-12 education to expand the state's voucher scheme, and has gutted public higher education by imposing nearly \$800 million in cuts since Walker took office. Walker and the legislature also went after private sector unions, forcing right to work on the rest of the state's workers in 2015. Finally, Walker has provided a preview of what Trump's new tax law will do to our country, as he has offered massive tax credits to the wealthiest manufacturers in the state.

Walker no longer even restricts the giveaways to local millionaires. His recent deal to convince the manufacturer Foxconn to open a facility in Wisconsin currently offers the largest corporate subsidy any state has ever offered a foreign company in American history: \$3 billion in direct payments to a company led by a Taiwanese billionaire.<sup>25</sup> Each of the next 10 years, the taxpayers of Wisconsin will pay Foxconn around \$250 million—the same amount the legislature cut from higher education in a drastic round of cuts in the 2015–2017 biennial budget that has devastated our university system.

Predictably, unions in both the public and private sectors have lost members in our state, and the economy has largely stagnated. But we are fighting back, and we are using the model Haley and the CTF pioneered in the first Gilded Age. I know because I serve on the executive council of my own AFT local, UW–Green Bay United, which represents University of Wisconsin–Green Bay faculty and staff, and I’m also vice president of higher education for our state federation, AFT–Wisconsin. Last year, AFT–Wisconsin, led by President Kim Kohlhass, committed to a long-term member-to-member organizing plan. Our overall membership has now stabilized, and locals that have committed to organizing are growing their memberships and exercising greater power in their communities.

Here are a few examples: The Hortonville Federation of Teachers responded to intimidation from administration by working with community members to elect two new school board members in April 2017. Of

course, AFT locals have been working to elect school board members who support public education for decades, but this effort is particularly inspiring since it took place in the shadow of the infamous National Education Association local-led strike of 1974, when the school board fired and replaced 88 teachers.<sup>26</sup> The Milwaukee Area Technical College local, AFT Local 212, annually recertifies, most recently with 98 percent of those who voted affirming it as the bargaining agent<sup>27</sup> (under Act 10, public employees can still certify a union as a bargaining agent, and doing so continues to give workers a more unified voice). However, each year, the deck is stacked against the union, since under Act 10, to maintain bargaining rights, a local must receive 51 percent of the votes of the entire bargaining unit, not just those who turn out to vote. How does the local do it? Its union activists commit to organizing other members, and they have built a reputation on campus as advocates for their students by facilitating programs to support them. For example, Local 212 raises money for a program called Faculty and Students Together (FAST). FAST gets money into the pockets of students when they have a financial emergency so that they can stay in school, filling the void left by federal and state austerity.<sup>28</sup>

Just last spring, the higher education local at UW–Madison, United Faculty and Academic Staff (UFAS), led a successful “fair pay” campaign to properly compensate faculty assistants, a small category of campus instructors underpaid relative to their workloads. In their campaign, UFAS activists stressed that instructor working conditions *are* student learning conditions. When administrators declined to renew the contracts of several of the activist faculty assistants, UFAS organized a statewide petition drive to reinstate them.<sup>29</sup>

**F**inally, on my own campus, UW–Green Bay, our local voted in the AFT as the bargaining representative just before Act 10 rescinded the rights of university faculty and staff to collectively bargain in 2011. Since then, our union has become a visible advocate for all workers and students on campus and in our community.

More than 70,000 public employee union members and protesters took part in a February 2011 rally in Madison.

Working with other locals through our state Higher Education Council, we led a state-level campaign to “Fund the Freeze” last year, arguing that while the tuition freeze the legislature has imposed since 2013 benefits our students, it must also be accompanied by the restoration of state funding that has been stripped from the University of Wisconsin System. In the most recent state budget, Walker proposed, and the Republican-dominated legislature passed, a modest increase in funding. It does not go nearly far enough to compensate for the savage cuts made since he took office in 2011, but it is a start. In just the past few months, our union has also worked with the local-led racial justice group Black Lives United to march for women’s and indigenous people’s rights and to run a back-to-school backpack drive so that all of our community’s schoolchildren can have the school supplies they need.

We have also invited members of the Somali community to campus in an effort to combat the toxic speech they sometimes hear from those who hold anti-immigrant views in Green Bay. Most recently, activists from our local collaborated with activists across the state to craft a member-driven UW Worker Bill of Rights.<sup>30</sup> The Bill of Rights envisions a university that works for all; it includes demands for academic freedom, pay equity, access to high-quality health-care and child care, and stable working conditions for adjunct faculty and other contingent workers. Our higher education locals are successfully using this powerful statement as an organizing tool.

This work is far from over in Wisconsin, and it won’t be easy to advance our democratic vision. But to do so, we must tread the path of Haley, Lewis, and others who have been on the front lines of advancing the notion that everyone is entitled to a good job, a good education, healthcare, and a fulfilling life. We must also ensure that no one is excluded from this vision based on race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, immigration status, or other characteristics.

Our nation is at a crossroads. The fight to reclaim our country and restore democracy must come from the bottom up and must be rooted at the local level. Those who teach, now more than ever, represent the crucial linchpin in this struggle. □

(Endnotes on page 40)



BRENT NICAISTRO



# To Strengthen Democracy, Invest in Our Public Schools



BY EMILY GASOI AND  
DEBORAH MEIER

Who could have imagined that, more than 150 years into this bold project of preparing successive generations for informed citizenship, our system of universal education would be as imperiled as it is today? One of the original ideas behind establishing a system of “common schools”—as one of the early advocates for public education, Horace Mann, referred to them—was not that they would all be mediocre, but that children from different backgrounds, the children of

workers and the children of factory owners, would be educated together. As Mann wrote in 1848, “Education ... beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men—the balance-wheel of the social machinery.”<sup>1</sup>

Of course, Mann’s own understanding of equality and citizenship was surely limited, as he wrote these words at a time when only white men had the vote, the Emancipation Proclamation was yet to be signed, and the children of workers were more likely to be working in factories themselves than they were to be attending school. And while schools have historically mirrored society’s inequities as much as they have inoculated against them, our public institutions nevertheless have at their foundation the ideals set forth in Mann’s quote and in our most soaring rhetoric about individual freedom and the common good.

And yet, in our current reform climate, our system of public education is often referred to as a “monopoly” rather than a public good. As such, in districts around the country, public schools are being shuttered at an alarming rate, with more than 1,700

schools closed nationwide in 2013 alone.<sup>2</sup>

Nowhere is this trend more dramatically played out than in Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos’s home state of Michigan, where entire school districts are losing the battle against unregulated privatization through for-profit charter management entities and voucher programs. And while there is no evidence that school choice alone helps to create more equitable educational opportunities, DeVos seems determined to make Michigan a model for the rest of the country.<sup>3</sup>

With the very existence of our system of free, universal education hanging in the balance, there has not been much of a frame of reference for discussing the need to make our schools more democratic. However, in our recent book, *These Schools Belong to You and Me: Why We Can’t Afford to Abandon Our Public Schools*, we argue that the threat facing public education is a threat to our democracy writ large. Thus, if we are to take seriously our nation’s founding ideals, schools must remain grounded in the humanistic values underlying the original purpose of a system of education that aims

---

*Emily Gasoi, a cofounder of the consulting firm Artful Education, teaches in the education, inquiry, and justice program at Georgetown University. She was a founding teacher at Mission Hill School in Boston. Deborah Meier is a former senior scholar at New York University’s Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development and the author of numerous books and articles about public education. A former teacher and principal, she is also a MacArthur Foundation award winner.*



to prepare all comers for competent participation in a country governed of, by, and for the people.

\* \* \*

W. E. B. Du Bois laid claim to this original purpose in 1905 when he declared in a Niagara Movement speech: “When we call for education we mean real education. ... Education is the development of power and ideal. We want our children trained as intelligent human beings should be, and we will fight for all time against any proposal to educate black boys and girls simply as servants and underlings, or simply for the use of other people.”<sup>4</sup> All societies educate a ruling class to make important decisions in their own interests, as well as for the society over which they rule. The history of our democracy is defined by the struggle to expand who is part of that ruling class. Du Bois’s quote highlights both the enduring shortcomings of our system of public schooling and the promise it holds out to provide all children—the future stewards of our commonwealth\*—with a ruling-class education.

There are multiple and complex reasons why, more than a century after Du Bois spoke these words, and nearly two decades after the aggressive and ineffective accountability measures of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), our schools remain as segregated and unequal as ever.<sup>5</sup> Certainly one of the primary causes is systemic racism that continues to plague our society. While few schools, regardless of demographics, have ever done a good job at providing children or adults opportunities to engage in experiences with democratic life, in low-income communities of color, schools tend to be characterized by an authoritative school culture. In fact, the level of intellectual and physical freedom in schools tends to correlate directly with the socioeconomic status and skin tone of the student body.<sup>6</sup>

But another strong factor in perpetuating school inequality is our historic tendency to conflate free-market ideology with democratic ideals. The tension between economic

freedom—the right of individuals to enrich themselves—and the need for regulation, social services, and safety nets in the name of creating a strong civic fabric is longstanding in the evolution of our democracy. But over the last several decades, the ideas of free-market thinkers, such as economist Milton Friedman, who wrote the 1995 essay “Public Schools: Make Them Private,”<sup>7</sup> have increasingly gained currency, in education reform and beyond.

Within the free-market paradigm, a one-to-one correlation is drawn between what

## In democratic schools, teachers and families discuss, debate, and, as much as possible, make important decisions that affect the school community.

is framed as the “failure” of public schools and what is seen as the “failure” of economically disadvantaged groups to pull themselves up and out of their circumstances. If schools would just teach “those” students more effectively, then, the argument goes, they’d be as likely as their more advantaged peers to compete competently in the pursuit of material wealth and happiness.

But market-oriented reforms prioritize the interests of the already advantaged. This is evidenced in test-based accountability strategies used to leverage school equity, a centerpiece of NCLB. A quick scan of National Assessment of Educational Progress data reveals that white students perpetually do better on standardized tests than all other groups, ensuring their demographically less privileged peers a Sisyphean cycle of catch-up.<sup>8</sup> And yet, closing this elusive test-score gap has become a proxy for addressing the very real gaps in privilege. Thus, even as reform rhetoric champions the use of tests and privatization as tools to level the playing field, such tactics actually move us further from that goal.

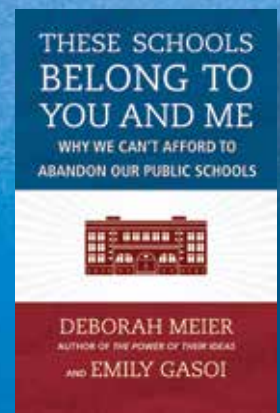
Although it may seem impractical, even naive, in our current reform climate to advocate for prioritizing democratic education, we argue that such a change in course is imperative if we are ever to get on track toward a more inclusive and, not incidentally, more productive and just society. Our work in democratically governed settings has taught us about the benefits, difficulties, obstacles, and ways forward for creating democratic public schools that prepare the young for engaged citizenship.



It was in working together with colleagues, students, and families that we learned more about the dilemmas a democracy inevitably runs into and how to get comfortable grappling with the inevitable flaws and tradeoffs that arose within the system we created in our school. And through such grappling, we were able to model democratic practices and values for students. In democratic schools, teachers and families discuss,  
*(Continued on page 40)*

\*The word *commonweal* is not often used in writing, let alone common parlance. And yet the meaning, “the common welfare of the public,” should be more familiar, especially in schools, where, we argue, students should be taught to care about the commonweal, their place in it, and what contributions they will make to preserve and improve it.

*These Schools Belong to You and Me*, by Deborah Meier and Emily Gasoi, is published by Beacon Press, which is offering *American Educator* readers a 25 percent discount off the purchase of the book through May 31, 2018. To order, visit [www.beacon.org](http://www.beacon.org) and use sales code AFT.



# Supporting Students with Autism

ACCORDING TO THE U.S. DEPARTMENT of Education, more than 655,000 children ages 3–21 attended school under the educational eligibility classification of autism in 2016–2017. And data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that as many as 1 in 68 children has an autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Given these statistics, most educators will work with ASD students at some point in their careers.

To receive an ASD diagnosis, individuals must show persistent deficits in social communication and social interactions and engage in repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities. People with ASD have a wide range of abilities, with some needing substantial support throughout their lives. Below, we



highlight key points from the AFT's publication *Supporting Students with Autism*, available at <http://go.aft.org/AE118tft1>.

## Effective Education for Students with Autism

When working with a student with autism, an effective educational program will capitalize on the student's interests, offer a predictable schedule, teach tasks as a series of simple steps, actively engage the student's attention in highly structured activities, and provide regular reinforcement of behavior.

Two of the core challenges for students with autism are communication and socialization, which can result in their responding to situations inappropriately. Behaviors may include loud vocalizations, leaving the instructional area, self-injury, aggression, or other inappropriate behaviors. With a high-quality, systematically implemented positive behavior support plan, students with autism can reduce inappropriate behavior and succeed in an educational environment.

To effectively address challenging behavior, the student's educational team must understand why a behavior is occurring. A functional behavior assessment can help. It should include a clear description of the problem behavior(s); activities, times, and situations that predict when behaviors will and will not occur;

consequences that maintain the problem behaviors; summary statements or hypotheses; and direct observation data to support the hypotheses.

Upon completion of a functional behavior assessment, a positive behavior support plan can be developed. It should include modifications in the environment that reduce the likelihood of the problem behavior, teaching plans for developing adaptive behaviors and replacement skills, natural and minimally intrusive consequences to promote positive behavior and deter problem behaviors, and a crisis plan (as needed). Specific training should be provided to all team members responsible for implementing the plan.

## Building Relationships with Parents and Families

Collaboration between educators and families is crucial. A phone call or home visit prior to the start of the school year can help build the relationship, and so can honoring parents' or family members' extensive knowledge about the child. Throughout the year, be sure to communicate frequently with families about areas where students can improve, as well as areas where they have succeeded. Every parent wants to hear about his or her child's accomplishments.

—AFT EDUCATIONAL ISSUES DEPARTMENT

## RESOURCES

### STRONG PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Learning First Alliance, a coalition of 12 national education groups—including the AFT—that represent more than 10 million teachers, parents, administrators, specialists, and school board members, has pulled together research and best practices that can help build strong, thriving public schools. *The Elements of Success: 10 Million Speak on Schools That Work* ([www.learningfirst.org/elementsofsuccess](http://www.learningfirst.org/elementsofsuccess)) identifies six elements common to successful schools: a focus on the total child; a commitment to equity and access; family and community engagement; distributed leadership; a strong, supported teaching force and staff; and a relationship-oriented school climate.

### PODCAST SERIES ON EXTRAORDINARY DISTRICTS

A new podcast produced by the Education Trust, *Extraordinary Districts* ([www.edtrust.org/extraordinarydistricts](http://www.edtrust.org/extraordinarydistricts)), highlights three school districts—in Chicago, Illinois; Lexington, Massachusetts; and Steubenville, Ohio—identified by Stanford University (see <http://cepa.stanford.edu/seda/overview>) as

getting extraordinary results. Featuring interviews with teachers, principals, superintendents, researchers, union leaders, and others, the podcasts touch on the union role in each of the districts.

### FIGHTING FOR OUR VALUES

At a time of unprecedented threats to public education, the AFT remains committed to fighting for the middle class and our democracy. Our revamped member engagement website, called "All In," helps support activists in this fight. Visit <http://allin.rtp.aft.org> for resources to stay mobilized, connect with our allies, and engage with our communities. We are all in—standing together for a fair and vibrant economy that offers good jobs and opportunity to all; a system of great neighborhood public schools that nurture all children in a safe learning environment; public higher education that is affordable and inclusive; high-quality healthcare for all Americans; democracy rooted in pluralism and equality, with a free press and a thriving labor movement; and a just society where every person can be free from discrimination, bigotry, and bullying.

## Summer Learning

(Continued from page 8)

### Endnotes

1. Saskia de Melker and Sam Weber, "Agrarian Roots? Think Again. Debunking the Myth of Summer Vacation's Origins," PBS NewsHour, September 7, 2014, [www.pbs.org/newshour/education/debunking-myth-summer-vacation](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/education/debunking-myth-summer-vacation).
2. William F. White, quoted in Rebecca Mead, "The Cost of New York's Summer Slide," Daily Comment, *New Yorker*, May 29, 2015, [www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/the-cost-of-new-yorks-summer-slide](http://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/the-cost-of-new-yorks-summer-slide).
3. Barbara Heyns, *Summer Learning and the Effects of Schooling* (New York: Academic Press, 1978).
4. Karl Alexander, Matthew Boulay, and Sarah Pitcock, "Introduction," in *The Summer Slide: What We Know and Can Do About Summer Learning Loss*, ed. Karl Alexander, Sarah Pitcock, and Matthew Boulay (New York: Teachers College Press, 2016), 2–3.
5. Harris Cooper et al., "The Effects of Summer Vacation on Achievement Test Scores: A Narrative and Meta-Analytic Review," *Review of Educational Research* 66 (1996): 227–268.
6. Harris Cooper, quoted in National Summer Learning Association, "More Than a Hunch: Kids Lose Learning Skills

over the Summer Months" (Baltimore: National Summer Learning Association, 2009).

7. Doris R. Entwisle, Karl L. Alexander, and Linda Steffel Olson, *Children, Schools, and Inequality* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997).
8. Karl L. Alexander, Doris R. Entwisle, and Linda Steffel Olson, "Lasting Consequences of the Summer Learning Gap," *American Sociological Review* 72 (2007): 167–180.
9. Jennifer Sloan McCombs et al., *Making Summer Count: How Summer Programs Can Boost Children's Learning* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2011).
10. Catherine H. Augustine et al., *Learning from Summer: Effects of Voluntary Summer Learning Programs on Low-Income Urban Youth* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2016).
11. Alexander, Boulay, and Pitcock, "Introduction," 1.
12. Food Research Action Center, *Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation: Summer Nutrition Status Report* (Washington, DC: Food Research Action Center, 2016), 3.
13. Paul T. von Hippel and Joseph Workman, "From Kindergarten through Second Grade, U.S. Children's Obesity Prevalence Grows Only during Summer Vacations," *Obesity* 24 (2016): 2296–2300.
14. Sarah Pitcock, "Summer Learning and the Opportunity Gap," in Alexander, Pitcock, and Boulay, *Summer Slide*, 70–89; and New Skills at Work, *Building Skills through Summer Jobs:*

*Lessons from the Field* (New York: JPMorgan Chase & Co., 2015).

15. Proclamation No. 8395, 74 Fed. Reg. 33135 (Jul. 9, 2009).
16. Sarah Pitcock, "Summer Learning and the Opportunity Gap."
17. Paul Reville, "Foreword," in Alexander, Pitcock, and Boulay, *Summer Slide*, ix.
18. Afterschool Alliance, *America After 3PM: Afterschool Programs in Demand* (Washington, DC: Afterschool Alliance, 2014), 11; and "Summer Learning Programs Help Kids Succeed," Afterschool Alliance, June 2015, [www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/AA3PM-2015/National-AA3PM-Summer-Fact-Sheet-6.11.15.pdf](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/AA3PM-2015/National-AA3PM-Summer-Fact-Sheet-6.11.15.pdf).
19. David Von Drehle, "The Case Against Summer Vacation," *Time*, July 22, 2010.
20. Jess Clark, "Despite Bipartisan Gripping over NC's School Calendar, Change Seems Unlikely," WUNC, April 12, 2017, [www.wunc.org/post/despite-bipartisan-gripping-over-nc-school-calendar-change-seems-unlikely](http://www.wunc.org/post/despite-bipartisan-gripping-over-nc-school-calendar-change-seems-unlikely).
21. Michael Pope, "Why an Amusement Park Has Dominion over Virginia School Calendars," WAMU, September 1, 2015, [www.wamu.org/story/15/09/01/why\\_an\\_amusement\\_park\\_has\\_dominion\\_over\\_virginia\\_school\\_calendars](http://www.wamu.org/story/15/09/01/why_an_amusement_park_has_dominion_over_virginia_school_calendars).
22. Erin Cox and Liz Bowie, "Hogan Orders Maryland Public Schools to Start after Labor Day, Sparking Political Fight," *Baltimore Sun*, August 31, 2016.

## Effective Summer Programs

(Continued from page 11)

### Endnotes

1. Harris Cooper et al., "Making the Most of Summer School: A Meta-Analytic and Narrative Review," *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development* 65, no. 1 (2000).
2. James S. Kim and David M. Quinn, "The Effects of Summer Reading on Low-Income Children's Literacy Achievement from Kindergarten to Grade 8: A Meta-Analysis of Classroom and Home Interventions," *Review of Educational Research* 83 (2013): 386–431.
3. Jennifer Sloan McCombs et al., *Ready for Fall? Near-Term Effects of Voluntary Summer Learning Programs on Low-Income Students' Learning Opportunities and Outcomes*, Rand Summer Learning Series (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2014).
4. Keith Zvoch and Joseph J. Stevens, "Summer School Effects in a Randomized Field Trial," *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 28 (2013): 24–31.
5. Cf. Benjamin D. Wright and Mark H. Stone, *Making Measures* (Chicago: Phaneron Press, 2004).
6. Cf. Zvoch and Stevens, "Summer School Effects in a Randomized Field Trial"; and Keith Zvoch and Joseph J. Stevens, "Identification of Summer School Effects by Comparing the In- and Out-of-School Growth Rates of Struggling Early Readers," *Elementary School Journal* 115 (2015): 433–456.
7. See Jonathan Guryan, James S. Kim, and Kyung Park, "Motivation and Incentives in Education: Evidence from a Summer Reading Experiment," NBER Working Paper Series, no. 20918 (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2015); James S. Kim, "Summer Reading and the Ethnic Achievement Gap," *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk* 9 (2004): 169–188; James S. Kim, "Effects of a Voluntary Summer Reading Intervention on Reading Achievement: Results from a Randomized Field Trial," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 28 (2006): 335–355; James S. Kim and Jonathan Guryan, "The Efficacy of a Voluntary Summer Book Reading Intervention for Low-Income Latino Children from Language Minority Families," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 102 (2010): 20–31; and James S. Kim and Thomas G. White, "Scaffolding Voluntary Summer Reading for Children in Grades 3 to 5: An Experimental Study," *Scientific Studies of Reading* 12 (2008): 1–23.
8. Kim and White, "Scaffolding."
9. Guryan, Kim, and Park, "Motivation and Incentives."
10. McCombs et al., *Ready for Fall?*
11. Catherine H. Augustine et al., *Getting to Work on Summer Learning: Recommended Practices for Success* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2013).
12. McCombs et al., *Ready for Fall?*
13. Kim and Quinn, "Effects of Summer Reading." See also, National Reading Panel, *Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature*

*on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction* (Washington, DC: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000).

14. Augustine et al., *Getting to Work*.
15. Susanne R. Bell and Natalie Carrillo, "Characteristics of Effective Summer Learning Programs in Practice," *New Directions for Youth Development* 2007, no. 114 (2007): 45–63; Suzie Boss and Jennifer Railsback, *Summer School Programs: A Look at the Research, Implications for Practice, and Program Sampler* (Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2002); David R. Denton, *Summer School: Unfulfilled Promise* (Atlanta: Southern Regional Education Board, 2002); and Brenda McLaughlin and Sarah Pitcock, *Building Quality in Summer Learning Programs: Approaches and Recommendations* (New York: Wallace Foundation, 2009).
16. Zvoch and Stevens, "Summer School Effects in a Randomized Field Trial."
17. Augustine et al., *Getting to Work*.
18. McCombs et al., *Ready for Fall?*
19. Geoffrey D. Borman, James Benson, and Laura T. Overman, "Families, Schools, and Summer Learning," *Elementary School Journal* 106 (2005): 131–150; Geoffrey D. Borman and N. Maritza Dowling, "Longitudinal Achievement Effects of Multiyear Summer School: Evidence from the Teach Baltimore Randomized Field Trial," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 28 (2006): 25–48; Jennifer Sloan McCombs, Sheila Nataraj Kirby, and Louis T. Mariano, eds., *Ending Social Promotion without Leaving Children Behind: The Case of New York City* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2009); and McCombs et al., *Ready for Fall?*
20. Cooper et al., "Making the Most of Summer School."
21. Augustine et al., *Getting to Work*.
22. Charles W. Fisher et al., "Teaching Behaviors, Academic Learning Time, and Student Achievement: An Overview," in *Time to Learn: A Review of the Beginning Teacher Evaluation Study*, ed. Carolyn Denham and Ann Lieberman (Sacramento: California State Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing, 1980), 7–32; Annegret Harnischfeger and David E. Wiley, "The Teaching-Learning Process in Elementary Schools: A Synoptic View," *Curriculum Inquiry* 6 (1976): 5–43; Willis D. Hawley et al., "Good Schools: What Research Says about Improving Student Achievement," *Peabody Journal of Education* 61, no. 4 (1984); Nancy Karweit, "Should We Lengthen the School Term?," *Educational Researcher* 14, no. 6 (1985): 9–15; and Nancy Karweit and Robert E. Slavin, "Time-on-Task: Issues of Timing, Sampling, and Definition," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 74 (1982): 844–851.
23. Doug Rohrer and Harold Pashler, "Recent Research on Human Learning Challenges Conventional Instructional Strategies," *Educational Researcher* 39, no. 5 (2010): 406–412; Doug Rohrer and Kelli Taylor, "The Effects of Overlearning and Distributed Practice on the Retention of Mathematics Knowledge," *Applied Cognitive Psychology* 20 (2006): 1209–1224; and Herbert J. Walberg, "Synthesis of Research on Time and Learning," *Educational Leadership* 45, no. 6 (March 1988): 76–85.
24. Zvoch and Stevens, "Summer School Effects in a Randomized Field Trial."
25. McCombs et al., *Ready for Fall?*

## Teacher Leadership Matters

(Continued from page 17)

4. Anthony S. Bryk and Barbara Schneider, *Trust in Schools: A Core Resource for Improvement* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002); Henry May, Jason Huff, and Ellen Goldring, "A Longitudinal Study of Principals' Activities and Student Performance," *School Effectiveness and School Improvement* 23 (2012): 417–439; and Jonathan Supovitz, Philip Sirinides, and Henry May, "How Principals and Peers Influence Teaching and Learning," *Educational Administration Quarterly* 46 (2010): 31–56.
5. Leading Educators, *Teacher Leader Competency Framework* (New Orleans: Leading Educators, 2015); and Kaitlin Pennington, *New Organizations, New Voices: The Landscape of Today's Teachers Shaping Policy* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, 2013).
6. Barnett Berry, Ann Byrd, and Alan Wieder, *Teacherpreneurs: Innovative Teachers Who Lead but Don't Leave* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2013); Kim Farris-Berg, Edward Dirkswager, and Amy Junge, *Trusting Teachers with School Success: What Happens When Teachers Call the Shots* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2013); Beth Hawkins, "Teacher Cooperatives: What Happens When Teachers Run the School?," *Education Next* 9, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 37–41; Education Evolving, *The Other Half of the Strategy: Following Up on System Reform by Innovating with School and Schooling* (St. Paul, MN: Education Evolving, 2008); and Ted Kolderie, *The Split Screen Strategy: How to Turn Education into a Self-Improving System* (Edina, MN: Beaver's Pond Press, 2015). For more on teacher-powered schools, visit the Teacher-Powered Schools Initiative at [www.teacherpowered.org](http://www.teacherpowered.org), which links to Education Evolving and the Center for Teaching Quality.
7. May, Huff, and Goldring, "Longitudinal Study."
8. Richard M. Ingersoll, *Who Controls Teachers' Work? Power and Accountability in America's Schools* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).
9. Opinions in this article reflect those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the granting agency. A detailed report of the study, titled *School Leadership Counts*, is available at <http://info.newteachercenter.org/school-leadership-report>.
10. New Teacher Center, "The Impact of Teaching and Learning Conditions on Student Performance and Future Employment Plans" (Santa Cruz, CA: New Teacher Center, 2013), [www.tellmass.org/uploads/File/MA12\\_brief\\_ach\\_ret.pdf](http://www.tellmass.org/uploads/File/MA12_brief_ach_ret.pdf).
11. Ingersoll, *Who Controls Teachers' Work?*; Richard M. Ingersoll, "Power, Accountability, and the Teacher Quality Problem," in *Assessing Teacher Quality: Understanding Teacher Effects on Instruction and Achievement*, ed. Sean Kelly (New York: Teachers College Press, 2012), 97–109; and Richard M. Ingersoll and Gregory J. Collins, "Accountability and Control in American Schools," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 49 (2017): 75–95.



## Evidence-Based Writing

(Continued from page 22)

### Endnotes

1. Deborah Tannen, *The Argument Culture: Stopping America's War of Words* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999).
2. Joseph Harris, *Rewriting: How to Do Things with Text*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Utah State University Press, 2017), 37.
3. Harris, *Rewriting*, 58.
4. Harris, *Rewriting*, 1.
5. Linda Darling-Hammond, Maria E. Hyler, and Madelyn Gardner, *Effective Teacher Professional Development* (Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute, 2017).
6. The National Writing Project has received funding for the College, Career, and Community Writers Program from the U.S. Department of Education's Investing in Innovation Fund (i3) and Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) programs, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Rural School and Community Trust, and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.
7. H. Alix Gallagher, Nicole Arshan, and Katrina Woodworth, "Impact of the National Writing Project's College-Ready Writers Program in High-Need Rural Districts," *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness* 10 (2017): 570–595.

## Teacher Unionism

(Continued from page 35)

### Endnotes

1. Jon Shelton, *Teacher Strike! Public Education and the Making of a New American Political Order* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017).
2. See Jon Shelton, "'Compulsory Unionism' and Its Critics: The National Right to Work Committee, Teacher Unions, and the Defeat of Labor Law Reform in 1978," *Journal of Policy History* 29 (2017): 378–402.
3. Sochie Nnaemeka, "Labor Movement vs. SCOTUS: The Bleak Future of Labor Law," *New Labor Forum* 26, no. 3 (2017): 44–49.
4. Emma Brown, Valerie Strauss, and Danielle Douglas-Gabriel, "Trump's First Full Education Budget: Deep Cuts to Public School Programs in Pursuit of School Choice," *Washington Post*, May 17, 2017.
5. Indeed, Betsy DeVos has almost no experience working with public schools, instead building a career spending her inherited fortune trying to siphon public tax dollars for religious schools in the name of school choice. Her

lack of knowledge about public schools during her confirmation hearings was truly astounding, as she had no idea about a number of different features of the American education system. AFT President Randi Weingarten perhaps best summed up DeVos's inappropriateness for the office, highlighting her "antipathy for public schools, a full-throated embrace of private, for-profit alternatives, and a lack of basic understanding of what children need to succeed in school." Quoted in Emmarie Huettner and Yamiche Alcindor, "Betsy DeVos Confirmed as Education Secretary; Pence Breaks Tie," *New York Times*, February 7, 2017.

6. Tim Alberta, "The Education of Betsy DeVos," *Politico Magazine*, November/December 2017.
7. To tell the story of Margaret Haley, I rely on two excellent accounts of her life and the history of the Chicago Teachers Federation: Marjorie Murphy, *Blackboard Unions: The AFT and the NEA, 1900–1980* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992); and Kate Rousmaniere, *Citizen Teacher: The Life and Leadership of Margaret Haley* (Albany: State University Press of New York, 2005).
8. Rousmaniere, *Citizen Teacher*, 45.
9. The National Education Association was formed in 1857, but it was not the union that it has become. Rather, it was an organization devoted to advocating on behalf of public education. It was led almost exclusively by male principals and superintendents in the late 19th century.
10. Rousmaniere, *Citizen Teacher*, 52.
11. Rousmaniere, *Citizen Teacher*, 90.
12. Kate Rousmaniere, "Being Margaret Haley, Chicago, 1903," *Paedagogica Historica* 39 (2003): 10. As Rousmaniere puts it, "This was not an unusual stand, even for otherwise progressive white people [at the time]."
13. Pauline Lipman, *The New Political Economy of Urban Education: Neoliberalism, Race, and the Right to the City* (New York: Routledge, 2011).
14. For this account of Chicago teachers and their fight against neoliberalism, I rely primarily on Steven K. Ashby and Robert Bruno, *A Fight for the Soul of Public Education: The Story of the Chicago Teachers Strike* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016); Jane F. McAlevey, *No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); and Micah Uetricht, *Strike for America: Chicago Teachers against Austerity* (London: Verso, 2014). On school closings and charters, an excellent overview can be found in Uetricht, *Strike for America*, 1–15.
15. Lipman, *New Political Economy*, 34–36. See also, Norreen Ahmed-Ullah, "School Closing Protesters March along Michigan Ave.," *Chicago Tribune*, November 12, 2012.
16. See "Chicago Public Schools Fiscal Year 2017 Budget," Chicago Public Schools, accessed December 30, 2017, <http://cps.edu/fy17budget/Pages/pensions.aspx>.

The state of Illinois also has one of the least equitable funding structures in the country. See Bruce D. Baker and Sean P. Corcoran, "The Stealth Inequities of School Funding," Center for American Progress, September 19, 2012, [www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2012/09/19/38189/the-stealth-inequities-of-school-funding](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2012/09/19/38189/the-stealth-inequities-of-school-funding).

17. Ashby and Bruno, *Fight for the Soul*, 46–52.
18. Chicago Teachers Union, *The Schools Chicago's Students Deserve: Research-Based Proposals to Strengthen Elementary and Secondary Education in the Chicago Public Schools* (Chicago: Chicago Teachers Union, 2012), [www.ctunet.com/blog/text/SCSD\\_Report-02-16-2012-1.pdf](http://www.ctunet.com/blog/text/SCSD_Report-02-16-2012-1.pdf).
19. Uetricht, *Strike for America*, 2.
20. McAlevey, *No Shortcuts*, 136.
21. Anecdotal evidence, from observers Micah Uetricht and Tom Alter, respectively, supports this contention. As Uetricht also points out, public polling on the strike in Chicago showed that "63% of African Americans and 65% of Latinos—in a city where 91 percent of the public school district is made up of children of color—supported the strike." See Uetricht, *Strike for America*, 70; and Tom Alter, "'It Felt Like Community': Social Movement Unionism and the Chicago Teachers Union Strike of 2012," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 10, no. 3 (2013): 11–25.
22. McAlevey, *No Shortcuts*, 122.
23. McAlevey, *No Shortcuts*, 131.
24. Uetricht, *Strike for America*, 72–74.
25. Tom Kertscher, "Would Wisconsin's \$3 Billion to Foxconn Be Largest Ever 'Gift' by Any State to a Foreign Company?," *Politifact*, August 15, 2017, [www.politifact.com/wisconsin/statements/2017/aug/15/one-wisconsin-now-wisconsin-3-billion-offer-foxconn-gift-and-it-lar](http://www.politifact.com/wisconsin/statements/2017/aug/15/one-wisconsin-now-wisconsin-3-billion-offer-foxconn-gift-and-it-lar).
26. See Adam Mertz, "The 1974 Hortonville Teacher Strike and the Public Sector Labor Dilemma," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 98, no. 3 (Spring 2015): 2–13.
27. Local 212 home page, accessed November 16, 2017, [www.local212.org](http://www.local212.org).
28. See "MATC Faculty Union Raises \$16,729 for Students," Local 212, accessed November 16, 2017, [www.local212.org/local-212-raises-17000-for-matc-students](http://www.local212.org/local-212-raises-17000-for-matc-students).
29. Maggie Chandler, "Petition Circulates in Support of Un-Hired Faculty Assistants Involved in Equal Pay Campaign," *Daily Cardinal*, October 2, 2017, [www.dailycardinal.com/article/2017/10/petition-circulates-in-support-of-un-hired-faculty-assistants-involved-in-equal-pay-campaign](http://www.dailycardinal.com/article/2017/10/petition-circulates-in-support-of-un-hired-faculty-assistants-involved-in-equal-pay-campaign).
30. "The UW Worker Bill of Rights," AFT-Wisconsin, accessed January 5, 2018, <http://wi.aft.org/take-action/uw-worker-bill-rights>.

## Investing in Public Schools

(Continued from page 37)

debate, and, as much as possible, make important decisions that affect the school community. Similarly, in such settings, young people have the opportunity to be "apprentice citizens" of their schools, in order to practice becoming active citizens in the larger society.

Ultimately, the purpose of public education in a democracy is to get more Americans, starting in early childhood, to internalize the idea that they are part of the deciding class, as entitled as anyone else to voice an opinion and to make a mark on the world. That, of course, is the ideal—one worth striving for. Given the increasingly

precarious state of our public and democratic institutions, it is clear that we are paying a price for not making democratic citizenship an explicit and urgent goal of our national education reform agenda. For how can we hope to educate for democracy if children and the adults in their lives never have the opportunity to observe or practice it? And if such an education doesn't take place in our public schools, then where will it happen? □

### Endnotes

1. Horace Mann, "Twelfth Annual Report of the Secretary of the Massachusetts School Board, 1848," in *American Educational Thought: Essays from 1640–1940*, 2nd ed., ed. Andrew J. Milson et al. (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2010), 163–175.
2. "Number and Enrollment of Public Elementary and Secondary Schools That Have Closed, by School Level,

Type, and Charter Status: Selected Years, 1995–96 through 2013–14," in National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics*, 2015, table 216.95.

3. Kevin Carey, "Dismal Voucher Results Surprise Researchers as DeVos Era Begins," *New York Times*, February 23, 2017; and Mari Binelli, "The Michigan Experiment," *New York Times Magazine*, September 10, 2017.
4. W. E. B. Du Bois, "Niagara Movement Speech," 1905, TeachingAmericanHistory.org, accessed January 2, 2018, [www.teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/niagara-movement-speech](http://www.teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/niagara-movement-speech).
5. Gary Orfield et al., "Brown at 62: School Segregation by Race, Poverty and State" (Los Angeles: Civil Rights Project, 2016), [www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/brown-at-62-school-segregation-by-race-poverty-and-state](http://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/brown-at-62-school-segregation-by-race-poverty-and-state).
6. Jason P. Nance, "Student Surveillance, Racial Inequalities, and Implicit Racial Bias," *Emory Law Journal* 66 (2017): 765–837.
7. Milton Friedman, "Public Schools: Make Them Private," *Washington Post*, February 19, 1995.
8. See National Center for Education Statistics, *The Nation's Report Card: Trends in Academic Progress 2012* (Washington, DC: Department of Education, 2013).



# Learning a new language starts here.

The American Federation of Teachers and Rosetta Stone have partnered to offer discounted online language instruction to AFT members.

Gaining new language proficiency prepares you to:

- Increase your community engagement
- Position yourself for greater career opportunities
- Reduce language barriers with colleagues
- Improve communication with students, patients, and families

Now it's easier than ever to add language learning to your can-do list. Why not take advantage of this resource and sign up now?

Start learning a language!  
Sign up now:  
[www.aft.org/RosettaStone](http://www.aft.org/RosettaStone)



A Union of Professionals

AFT+  
Member Benefits



©2018 Rosetta Stone Ltd. All rights reserved.  
EDU-AFT-HalfPg-AD-1801



## A home financing program created just for educators.

Amalgamated Bank's Home Financing Program<sup>1</sup> offers competitive rates, exclusive discounts, and more!

Learn more at [aft.org/benefits](http://aft.org/benefits) or call 800.701.8409.



1. To be eligible for the benefits under the AFT Home Financing Program, applicants must identify themselves as AFT Members during the loan application process. AFT membership is subject to verification.

© 2018 Amalgamated Bank. All rights reserved. Equal Opportunity Lender. Amalgamated Bank, NMLS ID# 898791.



PLEDGE TO JOIN THE  
**NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION** ON  
**APRIL 20** TO PROTECT STUDENTS AGAINST GUN VIOLENCE.



**IT'S TIME TO VALUE CHILDREN AND SAFE SCHOOLS OVER GUNS.**

On April 20, teachers, students, parents and those who support public schools will unite for a national day of action to stop gun violence in our schools. The same kind of military-style AR-15 that was used at Stoneman Douglas was used at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Conn., and in so many other massacres. **When is enough, enough?** It is time to demand that our leaders act to keep these guns out of the hands of people who shouldn't have them. **April 20**, the anniversary of the Columbine High School shooting, is a day for those who learn in, teach in, send their kids to and care about public schools, to take a stand and demand action. **Will you join us?**

[actionnetwork.org/forms/april20updates](http://actionnetwork.org/forms/april20updates)



*A Union of Professionals*

